



The Cradle
The Rose^{of}





UNIV. OF CALIF. LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

C.P.
21

1.00



THE WATCH-TOWER OF FORT ROZKAVEL

Conliffe-Owen, Marguerite

The CRADLE
of the ROSE

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE MARTYRDOM OF AN EMPRESS"

"EMERALD AND ERMINE" "GRAY MIST"

"THE TRIDENT AND THE NET" ETC.

OFFICIER DE L'ORDRE DE L'INSTRUCTION PUBLIQUE DE FRANCE



ILLUSTRATED WITH WATER-COLOR
DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

1908

Copyright, 1908, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

Published October, 1908.

ILLUSTRATIONS

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| THE WATCH-TOWER OF FORT ROZKAVEL | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| KÈRHARDÉC FARM | <i>Facing p. 128</i> |
| A CORNER OF THE MANOIR OF KREMARZÉ | “ 196 |
| THE CHATEAU DE ROZKAVEL | “ 264 |

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ROZKAVEL

Within the Rose, as once did lie
The Beauty of a day gone by,
Biding, till Hate had spent its power,
The sword, the Hero, and the hour
Of bud and bloom and summer sky;

So slumber on, undoomed to die,
Strength, Loveliness, and Honor high
(Leafless and withered though the bower)
Within the Rose.

One day in song the birds shall vie,
One day the swallows darting fly,
And hands undaunted shake a shower
Of fragrance from the Royal Flower,
Seeking those happy portals nigh
Within the Rose.

M. M.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

CHAPTER I

Unseen and strong, the brightness underlying
Not less than storm, whose rivers blindly run
True as a circling star, yet still defying
 The courses of the sun;

Knowest thou also 'neath his far uprising
Thy native source in times forever gone,
That thou hast held since days beyond surmising
 The Highways of the Dawn?

And warm with deep desire—a faithful presage—
Sweep'st the bleak skerries of Newfoundland's shore,
Smoking with fog, undaunted by the message
 Of iron Labrador?

Ah, sweet the quest along that path Elysian,
Primrose, or gold, or under midnight skies
Levelled in leaping silver to the vision
 Of weary, wakeful eyes!

The Gulf Stream.—M. M.

THE swimmer was floating on his back, a mile or so from shore, his clear-cut profile almost level with the silken list of a singularly quiet sea. He blinked now and again rather moodily through down-drawn lashes up at the delicately flushed morning sky, for he sorely missed the joyous tumble of waves which made his daily plunge so pleasant, and completely failed to appreciate

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the glassiness of the water and its warmth, unseasonable even there in the full sweep of the great Gulf Stream. The sun was bright for Brittany, where it is mostly veiled and discreet, so much so, indeed, that the trails of rosy dawn-mist behind which a flock of gulls, according to their time-honored custom, shrilly defied one another from three points of an imaginary triangle, were rapidly dissolving into the azure air, calm as on a midsummer day.

Very faintly the echo of a church-bell quite a bit inland, calling the faithful to early mass, roused Olier de Frèhél from the half-drowse into which he was drifting, and caused him to notice a strong pungency of sea-weed coming from Heaven alone knew where, since the nearest outcroppings of reef, with their briny fringes, were so far off as to be wholly beyond the possibility of perception.

"What the devil—" he was beginning, when a low, bubbling sound—a mysterious tearing of the still water, that suddenly dimpled and purred into millions of tiny shining blisters—made him open wide his eyes; and the next instant a broad bed of slimy growth, torn from the Atlantic floor, heaved up beneath him, lapping him closely in a tangled half-acre of supple thongs. In a flash he knew that to struggle against that floating mesh meant certain death, and he forced himself to lie in corpse-like immobility, though every separate nerve ached and strained under pressure of the maddening temptation to try and free himself at any cost. Corpse-like, too, the face would have seemed now, gray under its golden coat of tan, the gripping teeth showing white upon the colorless under-lip, had it not been for the savage anger of the eyes—fear had no place there, only rage: fierce, unreasoning rage at being held by an imbecile, inert force one could not even attempt to fight.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

One . . . two . . . three . . . Was it still the echo of the bell or merely the pounding of his arteries? . . . He gazed fixedly at a pink wisp of cloud immediately above his head, miles up there in the blue, and again began to count—the strokes of his own knell, for when that viscid snare went down again, as sooner or later it surely must, he would go down, too; that he never doubted for a second. Forgotten tales of such grim happenings, gleaned in boyhood among the fisher-folk, awoke in his remembrance with the vividness of just-heard speech; and one especially—of a bather who had thus been dragged down in sight of his wife and daughter, to be left by the tide three days later on the flats of Pen-Arzé, still wound inextricably in his shroud of sea-twine. He seemed to hear the grizzled narrator of the story using it to point the universal maxim of the Breton coast, that swimming is a useless accomplishment at best, and only makes it harder for a man to die. Why not, then, deliberately hasten the end, since it might delay, pitilessly imminent, during many hours?

. . . One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . he nevertheless mechanically continued to whisper within himself. It must be the bell, after all; and his wavering ideas formed themselves unwittingly into an oft-seen peaceful little picture: the old Curé, who twenty-four years before had christened him, walking hurriedly and a little breathlessly up the narrow path through the burial ground to his small lichen-grown church, his rusty black soutane brushing the tide of fresh new grass and pink witches-thimble rising about the granite of the tombs, his dim blue eyes a little anxious at the thought that he was late perhaps, neglecting his duties. . . . Duty? Why, it was a duty, too, to hold on to one's life; most certainly a duty to endure to the last, without weakness or faltering!

One . . . two . . . three . . . One . . . two . . . Oh yes,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

it was the church-bell, and its persistent echo became a fulcrum on which to lever up his remaining strength. He seemed to stand the insupportable swarming tingle of all those little tentacles better when he counted. But how long could he go on counting?

He was beginning to feel as though his brain were shrinking to the smallness of a pellet and rocking in his empty head, when, without warning, the whole undulating eyot of weed sank noiselessly from him, mysteriously returning whence it came. For a moment—a very long moment—Olier maintained the same unyielding rigidity, and then, with a choking gasp, rolled over on his side, as near unconsciousness as he had ever been in his strong young life.

The strange, dull feeling passed off almost at once, however, and though the gleam of the smooth water made him a little giddy still, after a while he managed to strike out shoreward in a groping, halting way—utterly unlike his usual manner, it is true, but with gradually stronger strokes, which at last brought him to the sloping shingle-beach. With a deep-drawn sigh of relief he stretched out at full length to get his breath again.

He had been much more shaken than he would have cared to own, and in consequence felt very unjustly disgusted with himself. Nevertheless, the barren, desolate, lonely beach, with its long stretches of gray pebbles merging into long stretches of coarse, salt-powdered grasses, looked actually beautiful to him just then, and he reflected, as he lay watching a tiny blue ripple break into transparent foam embroidery at his feet, that life was a marvellously agreeable possession, after all, and an uncommonly unpleasant one to lose—especially in so inglorious a fashion, snarled in tangle like a bit of driftwood. Even in his present somewhat exhausted condition, the very pose of his well-knit frame spoke of great

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

latent strength and activity, and of a life spent mostly out-of-doors, for so much wholesomeness is not bred between four walls. The face was perhaps a trifle too square, as was the obstinate Breton forehead beneath the short-cropped blond hair; but the deep-set, dark-gray eyes were in total disaccord with it, for they were distinctly those of a dreamer of dreams—of one who might on occasion look hungrily upon a lost cause, an impossible scheme, or champion an idea deemed wholly obsolete. Again, the grimly curved, clean-shaven lips were much too severe when not smiling, the nose uncompromisingly straight, and the chin and lower jaw just as uncompromising. Taken all in all, a fair, quiet, eminently self-reliant youth, possessed of enviably pure blood, a resolute will, an iron constitution, and a few wind-swept acres surrounding a little old Manor, which, together with half a dozen "family retainers" and the scant remnants of a once large fortune, had been bequeathed to him by his parents during his minority. For the last six months he had lived alone at Kremarzé, having asked for a year's leave immediately after reaching the rank of ensign, because he could not approve of the new ideas beginning to taint even the navy. Naturally, he had not given that as his reason for wishing to be relieved from duty for, comparatively speaking, so long a period; but still it was only because he had not been questioned that he had not done so, since he certainly was not one of those who hesitate to own their opinions or principles out of a fear of blame or ridicule.

Presently this very un-modern young man, but newly snatched from the jaws of a peculiarly ugly death, rose with a yawn from his recumbent position and sauntered toward a chaotic row of bowlders, between two of which he had contrived a sufficiently convenient substitute for

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

a bath-house. In a very few minutes he emerged again, gaitered and tweeded, paused in the middle of a patch of silvery sand-thistles to light a cigarette, and then started at a brisk pace along the rough track leading across the wide *lande* to his small domain.

Away up above him a sand-lark was singing at the top of its little voice, twirling and turning madly with the very vibration of its song, and Olier, fired by the example, fell to whistling a gay *ronde* tune between puffs, and now and again craning his neck so far backward to watch the antics of the bird, that he suddenly cannoned into the sole other wayfarer upon the vast stretch of heather-grown table-land for miles around.

"*Eh bien, M'sieu l'Comte*; you're good and unconstrained this morning!" the Garde-Champêtre grumbled, rubbing his broad shoulder and hitching up the strap of his old-fashioned musket at one and the same time.

"What about yourself, Guèmadeuc?" Olier cried, laughing heartily. "You must have been star-gazing at mid-day, too, or else how is it you did not see me coming?"

"I wasn't star-gazing, as you call it, M'sieu Olier," the other retorted, smiling grimly beneath his grizzled mustache. "Not star-gazing at all. I was . . . thinking."

Olier stared quizzically at the soldierly face on a level with his own. There was a harsh look in the light-blue eyes, a concentration upon the weather-beaten features that he had never seen there, though Guèmadeuc was a hard man, and not famed for amenity or amiability of manner.

"What's the matter?" he asked, dropping his banter and speaking in a quick, decisive tone.

"Everything's the matter," Guèmadeuc replied, shortly. "But where's the use of bothering you with my troubles . . . *mon officier*?"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The last two words, pronounced after an infinitesimal pause, had in them a ring that did not pass unnoticed.

"You need not remember that just now. Let's speak as between friends. What is the matter?"

"Oh! if you take it that way, it's different, M'sieu Olier. You've always been our friend, as your father was before you, and there are very few of your sort left to us poor devils nowadays—worse luck!"

They had struck into another cross-track, bordered with budding clumps of apricot-scented furze, leading to Cape Rozkavel, a couple of miles off, and away from Kremarzé, for Olier's interest was aroused now, and he dismissed all idea of breakfasting until he had thoroughly "disentangled Guèmadeuc's cordage," as he would have expressed it. He was essentially a sailor in heart and thought, was Olier, although he set some things higher even than the deep-rooted love of his *métier*; and, well aware that if he allowed the Garde-Champêtre to relapse into his characteristic Armorican muteness he would find it difficult to pull him out of it again, he proceeded to beat the iron while still hot.

"You were about to tell me something," he said, quickly, but without the least shade of curiosity in his voice.

Guèmadeuc did not answer at once. It was plain to Olier that the force of long habit made him reluctant to air his grievances, even in such safe company, and nearly a minute elapsed before he finally spoke.

"It's like this, M'sieu Olier," he began, with the hesitation of a taciturn and hereditarily silent man launching into reprehensible loquacity—"it's like this. I'm thinking of sending back that"—and he tapped the broad silver badge fastened to the lapel of his faded corduroy coat—"where it came from."

"Resign?" Olier said, amazed. "Yours is a fairly

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

good job, Guèmadeuc, well paid for the amount of work; and you have a large family to support. What ails you, any way?"

"The thought that I'm about to feed my little ones on dishonest bread, M'sieu Olier, that's all; and, by the cloak of St. Tugduald, I'd sooner let them go to the doors¹ than do that."

"I must confess that I don't understand a word of what you say," Olier interposed, narrowing his eyes, sailor-fashion, to observe the other more keenly. "Would you mind making yourself a bit clearer?"

"Certainly not, now that I've gone so far. And, to begin with, what am I hired to do? Run after poachers and report on ordinary delinquents—fighting drunkards, *tapageurs*, or wife-beaters—that's what I'm meant for, is it not so?"

"Assuredly."

"Does it include turning spy on honest, God-fearing folk, and crawling in the mud on my belly to do such—I who have won my three chevrons and the military medal in the field—think you, M'sieu l'Comte?"

"Of course not. But who is asking you to do dirty work?" inquired Olier, impatiently. "You are not going mad, are you?"

"Not a bit of it. I'm as sane as yourself, M'sieu Olier. But just let me ask you something. Are you acquainted with Dulac, our Deputy?"

Olier nodded. He was beginning to see the draw of the drift.

"Know his secretary, too?"

"I've seen him at the Concours Regional, I believe. . . . A swarthy, little, scrawny *mocco*,² with gimlet eyes and a blue chin?"

¹ Beg.

² Marseillais.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“That’s my man, . . . and a nasty little monkey he is, too. Well, he sent for me last week to meet him at Kerdikan’s inn, where he was lodging—with his valet, if you please! Wouldn’t it make you sweat pitch to think of a *voyou* like him giving himself the airs of a *seigneur*? But let that go. He sent for me, Alain Guémadeuc, Garde-Champêtre of Rozkavel parish, that’s the important fact, in order to tell me . . . what do you suppose, M’sieu Olier? . . . I’ll give you a magpie’s egg with a golden yolk if you can guess?”

“What?”

“Oh, a mere trifle. . . . Nothing he found difficult to ask, I could see, for he talked quite naturally in that buttery voice he’s got. . . . Only that I was to find out as quick as I could who goes to Mass in the *arrondissement*, and who does not; who is ‘pure red’—that’s his exact word—and who isn’t; . . . who grumbles against the *gouvernement Daux*, and who doesn’t; . . . who gives money to the Catholic missions, and who to help the cashiered Curés. . . . I was looking at him, open-mouthed, like a *crétin*, all the time he was talking, twirling my cap in my hand, and he, thinking I hadn’t understood him, repeated the whole string of tricks, adding to it, as he went along, speaking of my ‘civic duties,’ the ‘sacredness of the cause of liberty,’ and a lot of truck like that! Liberty! . . . pshaw! . . . liberty to starve or murder, that’s all the liberty one’s likely to find in the end. Little by little I began to see red, ‘pure red’ sure enough it was, and I came near to mopping the floor with his skinny carcass.”

“And then?”

“Then I called a halt to my appetite for his throat, just in time; but I broke loose, and told him what I thought of his good manners, . . . told him in terms I wouldn’t repeat before you, M’sieu Olier, naval officer

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

though you are, and accustomed to language. . . . Oh, yes! I told him, and slammed the door hard enough to bring down the ceiling, and left him gaping and choking with fright in his tight black frock-coat, that fits him as gaiters would a rock-rabbit."

"And you are still Garde-Champêtre?" Olier asked, in sincere astonishment.

"That's what torments me most, M'sieu Olier. I was certain sure that I'd be broken like a simple pipe-stem. But 'stead of that I've not heard from him again, nor his *canaille* of a *patron* either; and it disquiets me, because it's understandable that he is not likely to pocket my insults without peeping; . . . it wouldn't be natural, especially for a parvenu like him. So I'm thinking it would be much better to resign quick, of my own accord, before they've got a chance to fire me dirtily."

Standing stock-still, before his companion, in the middle of the sandy rut, Olier was doing some rapid thinking, for on his advice he knew much might depend; and his own position being under existing circumstances delicate, he felt himself to be in something of a quandary.

"Wait a bit Guémadeuc," he said at last. "This is a serious matter for you, and shouldn't be decided on the spur of the moment."

"To be sure; only I'm not going to lie down flat to my teeth waiting to be kicked, that's all. I've had, in any case, about enough of the whole *boutique*. D' you know that out Morbihan way a venerable priest of God has been arrested for carrying the Holy Sacraments to a dying woman? Have you heard that it's illegal nowadays to christen one's children by what they call the names of kings and queens. . . . Yes!" he suddenly shouted, pounding one thick fist in the palm of the other hand. "No more Henris nor Henriettes, . . . nor Louis nor

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

François, I dare say, . . . a while ago we saw Breton soldiers ordered to knock the stuffing out of Breton fishermen who were defending the nuns that brought up their little ones the way they should go; . . . our crucifixes are thrown down and trampled upon, our priests are cashiered like unfaithful employees; . . . our hospitals are filled with fast women, instead of the Sisters of Mercy that consoled and helped us when we were sick and wounded; . . . and still we must keep quiet, it appears! I have never been a malcontent, M'sieu Olier; I'm not against the Republic, if it's a good one; Badinguet¹ or a president above us is all one to me, since our kings have in one fashion or another left us in the lurch. Carnot was a good man, and so was our old Marshal.² I served under him in '70, and I know that if he could swallow that style of government, it can't be altogether bad. But now"—he raised his clinched hands furiously above his head—"bon Dieu de bon Dieu!—is there nothing we can do? Nothing at all to make those villains go to the right-about?"

"Softly, softly, my good Guémadeuc," Olier quickly interposed. "You are a little too seditious for your own safety. Remember that even heather and broom have been known to have ears round here of late. You must really be more careful."

"And since when have you yourself become so cautious, M'sieu Olier? You and Prudence have not often travelled the same road."

"I'm not thinking of myself," Olier impatiently retorted, "but of you, who are still in government employ, and as such must—" Here he paused in embarrassment. . . . "Well, must respect . . . the . . . the . . . the

¹ Napoleon III.

² MacMahon.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

principle of . . . of authority," he hastily concluded, angry at the lameness of his words.

"*Sapristi!* M'sieu Olier, it must have cost you something to disgorge that piece of advice," the other said, with a quick twinkle of his searching eyes. "More especially seeing that you're not on a year's leave to watch the almond-trees bloom at Kremarzé! I'm not such a fool as I look, *mon Lieutenant*, and your case may have some little likeness to mine, saving the respect I owe you."

"Nonsense," said Olier, irritably.

"Bah! It's not only us poor wretches who are galled by the harness that don't fit snug any more. I've been a soldier, and a good one, I flatter myself; I know the respect due to superiors—when they are superiors—and how to obey orders, when they are properly given; but everything is topsy-turvy now, and it's no longer worth while to try and do one's duty. Sailors, soldiers, or *va-nu-pieds*, *mètayers*, or fishermen, poor and rich, nobles and commoners, everybody has lost the North. . . . The ship can't answer bad helmsmen, can it? And that's why we are going to the dogs."

"You should become a public orator, Guèmadeuc. I had no idea you were gifted with such forensic talent."

"Oh, you can laugh, *mon gentilhomme*—although in your heart of hearts you don't feel so very much like laughing! Old Guèmadeuc, once Sergeant Guèmadeuc, of the 24th Spahis, if you please, can put two and two together. . . . And now as you don't look inclined to advise me, I am off to Rozkavel, where I have to cast an eye over whatever devil's cuisine a band of Parisian workmen, who are turning the place upside down, may be up to."

"Rozkavel, the dismantled fort?"

"Why, sure. I know of no other Rozkavel—at least

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

not since the poor old castle yonder," and he pointed over his shoulder to some invisible nook of the vaporous cliff-line behind him, "has been in the paws of the Citoyen Poteau. The dismantled fort, of course, rented now by our *gouvernants*" — he touched his velveteen cap with mock reverence—"to some rich *rastaquouères*, who must to my thinking be stark mad—excepting they have some queer purpose in view; for why anybody wants to go renting a pile of rocks miles from anywhere beats me."

"The millionaires, who fancy Rozkavel as a summer residence, should be people of simple tastes," Olier said, dryly. "But you must be mistaken, Guèmadeuc. It seems scarcely possible that anybody could dream of living there."

"No, M'sieu Olier, I'm not mistaken; and wait till a whole tribe of foreigners comes bag and baggage down upon us—you'll see gay times."

"Heaven forfend. I am here to be left in peace."

"Not if those same *rastaquouères* can help it. They've got fine noses for hunting up nobles, and if they have but one or two marriageable daughters—"

"I'm not in the market," Olier exclaimed, repressing a laugh. "Quit invoking evil upon a sorely troubled head, Guèmadeuc, . . . and listen to this. If . . . mind you, only if . . . you should find yourself without a place, I have heard that Monsieur de Tremoër is looking for a gamekeeper, and I might drop him a line about you, should you wish me to do so."

"Wish you to do so, M'sieu Olier! I'll never forget your goodness. . . . Gamekeeper to M'sieu l'Marquis de Tremoër! That's more than I ever dreamed of becoming. . . . Rozkavel and its workmen can jolly well take care of each other. I'm for home this minute to write out my resignation; you can take your oath on that. And,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

mind you, M'sieu Olier, you'll never have cause to regret this."

"But hold on, my man, don't be in such a deuce of a hurry. Think before you jump, at least."

"Think nothing! I've done all the thinking lately I'll ever do, and it wasn't a pleasing business; so don't detain me, M'sieu Olier. I'm too glad to wait another second." And Guémadeuc, beaming and joyous for once in his life, strode off, with long, plunging strides that swallowed the ground, swinging his cap above his head in his exuberance; while Olier, left planted in the heather, watched him out of sight with a clouded face.

CHAPTER II

Wakeful for all that was—the morn unveiling
Aloft the gusty downs, the gulls at speed
Plumbing the depth, or waveringly sailing
Above the wrack and weed

Out where the black reefs burst the surge asunder,
Fending the cliff, that sees the wrath below
Heave heavenward, and, towering, curve in thunder
Amid the undertow;

Offshore; no billow that unfurls a feather,
And noonday odors from the basking land
Blown through the cloven gateways of the heather
That meet the gleaming sand;

Flames of the West on cloud-banks fiercely rifted
Round some uprearing headland bold and free,
Graven by all the gales that e'er have lifted
The fleeces of the sea;

The pitlike dark, th' impassioned prayers and saintly
For souls abroad, the life-boat barely inned,
The desperate sirens laboring far and faintly
To pierce the wall of wind—

For oh! the pulses of my homeward yearning
Move with thy mighty current still and wide;
No swallow's flight, to go as oft returning,
But an unswerving tide.

The Gulf Stream.—M. M.

A STRONG nor'wester was whistling its way through the narrow, picturesquely gabled streets of St. Malo, and whipping the waters of its rock-girt harbor to milky

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

whiteness. Clean and dustless was the granite town swept that morning by its ancient antagonist, and the motto of Brittany's ermine shield carved upon the twin arches of the grim Porte St. Vincent—" *Potius Mori, quam Foedari* " ¹—seemed singularly appropriate to the present aspect of the little Malouin capital. Even the magnificent plane-trees of the Place Châteaubriand, though already festively decked with delicate tufts of April green, groaned and strained as the boisterous gusts caught them again and again in the none too playful grip of a last straggler left behind by a long series of decamping spring storms.

Olier de Frèhél, awaiting the advent of the plucky little steamer which twice a week shoulders its laborious way from Boulogne to Brest, was good-humoredly fighting the wind inch by inch down the almost deserted quay. He had come to St. Malo on Guémadeuc's behalf, and, much to his satisfaction, had just obtained from his father's old friend, the Marquis de Tremoër, still lingering at his superb winter residence of the Rue Broussais, the place of head gamekeeper which the Garde-Champêtre so greatly coveted. Filled with the thought of the good tidings he was bringing home, and walking head bent the better to withstand the blast, he did not catch sight of the *Étoile de Brest* until she had actually rounded the pier-head and was rolling sidewise toward her wave-washed moorings. Her commander, a typical broad-shouldered, deep-chested Breton mariner, was swearing lustily in his short, pointed red beard at the whistle-pull in his hand, which, like most things, alas, above or below his sorely tried decks, was more or less the worse for weather; but in another moment, having successfully brought his restive craft alongside, he descended from

¹ "To die, rather than be defiled."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the bridge, mechanically tested with his foot the tautness of a hawser or two, and faced round just in time to shake hands with Olier.

"Going back with us?" he inquired, beamingly. "That's right. It's a good-fortune to have a companion on that brute of a return trip, and," he concluded, casting a look over his shoulder at the open sea, "to-day it's going to be no pleasanter than usual."

Olier laughed. "Lucky you haven't any of your dainty lady summer-passengers, for they'd scarcely appreciate the kind of dancing we're likely to get."

"We have one!" Captain Querlescan burst out. "Not that she's likely to incommode us much," he added, his gray-blue eyes twinkling mischievously, "so you needn't look like that. Came aboard with a couple of servants and a couple of dogs at Boulogne, and made it plain to me from the first that she's used to salt water. You'll believe me if you choose, but she's stuck to the deck like a limpet ever since, though we cut some capers, let me tell you, that would have settled matters the wrong way for many a strong man."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed and indeed! She's English—a Lady Clanvowe"—he pronounced it "Clanvo." "And here she comes," he hastily continued. "Pretty figure, eh?"

Olier glanced up indifferently, but could not but admit this to be the truth. "Yes," he said, with curious reluctance, "but rather grewsomely veiled"; and pulling out his cigarette-case, he held it out to the captain, since here, partially sheltered by the deck-house, there seemed a latent possibility of lighting a match.

Meanwhile his sole fellow-passenger had taken up a position at the taffrail, and seemed wholly absorbed in the contemplation of a picturesque group of fishwives,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

who with their large baskets, bright-hued aprons and kerchiefs, and wildly fluttering coiffes, made a pretty spot of moving color near the landing-place. She herself, in her long, silver-gray Directoire travelling-coat, all little collars and little pockets, that emphasized, if anything, a remarkable slenderness of waist and breadth of shoulder, was certainly soberly clad enough; and yet the mere manner in which the folds of impenetrable gray gauze were wound about the small gray toque, with its pointed Mercury wings just peeping above them, proclaimed a real *élégante*—well worthy of notice in these days of huge head-gear and extravagant modes.

Nevertheless, Olier and the captain, puffing at their cigarettes and guarding them from the searching wind as best they could, had drifted into the exchange of coast news, and were not looking in her direction. They were both, in spite of differences of age and position, mild woman-haters, thus giving the lie direct to that old proverb which proclaims the unavoidable love of a sailor for a lass. Moreover, this particular woman was a "stranger"—which does not necessarily mean a foreigner, but in old Armorica the term is a sweeping and somewhat contemptuous one including all non-Bretons, who as such are utterly devoid of interest to the natives.

"I'll see you later. Come on the bridge as soon as we have cleared the channel. We are starting at once," the captain said at last, as a final bag of mail was thrown a-top of a pile of crates; and, hurrying off, he left Olier at liberty to watch a solitary sand-cart crunch and rumble up the quay while the gang-plank was being hauled in.

Slowly and cautiously the little steamer described a half-circle, and, turning her blunt nose to the short foam-topped seas, began at once to roll and lift in her most disconcerting way. Even Olier soon had his work cut

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

out to keep a dignified attitude, well seasoned though he was, and leaning as he did against the leeward wall of the deck-house, where, quite unconscious of his lack of gallantry, he fell to wondering how much it would take of this sort of thing to drive any one but the crew and himself below. His unkindly hopes were doomed, however, to be ruthlessly dashed, for the yawings and surgings and quivering swoops of the *Étoile de Brest* apparently had not the slightest effect upon the gray-clad little *étrangère*, firmly planted on her very small feet—the reckless wind, tossing back a frou-frou of dainty petticoats, had disclosed to him that they were truly exceeding small and admirably shod—and swaying as instinctively and easily with every disorderly motion of the ship as one to the manner born.

St. Malo was falling behind at a great rate; in a few more moments the capricious yellow line of shore, slipping in and out among the embattled waves, like the links of a fabulous golden chain between the folds of some opulent green-and-white brocade, would also have melted away—as had already the vague outline of his splendid namesake, Cape Fréhel—in the fitfully sun-shot lilac vapors, but still Olier nursed the unexplainable irritation aroused by the self-possession and nonchalance of that provoking little gray silhouette, so visibly at home there, and as undisturbed by the disgraceful capers of the “Star of Brest” as the captain himself. Her whole attire, too, seemed planned for just such work—the tight-drawn veil pinned down so snugly as to offer no loophole to the wind; the exquisitely fitting coat, practical and business-like, in spite of its delicacy of tint, not a ribbon or bit of lace loose anywhere; no jingling bracelets or *châtelaine*; just from head to foot a sheath of soft, uniform cloud-gray that seemed painted on, almost. An unusual type of

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

woman, indeed, but probably very unprepossessing of countenance, or else why this thick gauze mask?

After a while, utterly disgusted, Olier climbed to the bridge, where, square and immovable in his gleaming oilskins, stood his friend Querlescan, every minute or so wiping the salt spray from his eyes with an enormous blue silk handkerchief. The weather, though singularly unfavorable, was not of a nature, as yet, to trouble him much; unfavorable conditions were his daily portion, and he had long since grown accustomed to them; still, the horizon presented some anxious possibilities, and, without troubling to speak, he indicated to his visitor by an expressive gesture the great bank of congested gloom shouldering its way slowly upward.

"Yes," nodded Olier, "it's going to get dirtier by-and-by." And with a short laugh he added: "Probably sufficiently so to drive even your obdurate passenger below, where she belongs."

"I wouldn't bet on that," the red-bearded skipper retorted. "She may be harder to beat than you think. A woman who can stand what's going on now is out of the ordinary. Still, I don't propose to let her have her head much longer. I'd be in a nice mess if she got herself washed overboard."

At that very instant a hissing wave-top slashed diagonally up and flooded heavily across the full breadth of the deck, to cascade overside again. A swift bound backward saved Lady Clanvowe from a complete drenching, but the captain, though amazed at her prowess, and perhaps even filled with dawning admiration, considered that the time had come to call a halt.

"Quartermaster!" he roared, in his roughest voice, to the man standing within a yard of him, "tumble down and tell the lady to leave the deck! Say there is danger!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Leaning against the bridge-rail, Olier followed the smart-looking sailor with amused eyes, saw him salute and deliver his message, and at that short distance plainly read the surprise caused by its reception, though he could not hear a word of what was passing in that ceaseless din of wind and sea.

"He doesn't seem to persuade her," he remarked, mockingly, to his companion. "You were right, and now probably you'll have to remove her by force." He was overjoyed to observe that Querlescan's countenance, already sufficiently rubicund, was rapidly taking on a dangerously apoplectic hue. Not obey orders! . . . a passenger! . . . a woman! Evidently the next few moments might be as pregnant of happenings as the threatening sky.

"What's up, Quartermaster?" Thus the captain in the very surliest of accents to his returning *estafette*, who with impassive features, but suspiciously twinkling eyes, had just swung himself back upon the bridge.

"The lady refuses to go below, *mon Commandant*." The quartermaster, an old man-o-war's man, had been in the service under his present captain, and always addressed him with quarter-deck punctilio and etiquette, hand raised to cap, eyes fixed.

"Refuses to go below? What the hell does that mean, Quartermaster?"

"I don't know, *mon Commandant*, and she's laughing to split her sides."

"What for?" This with rapidly increasing savageness, and a side-long glance at Olier which signally failed to check that irreverent personage's obtrusive delight; for, indeed, the situation was turning out more comically than he had dared to hope.

"Well, *mon Commandant*, I think it's the idea that the deck's unsafe for her."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“But certainly, . . . that is precisely what made me laugh.”

The three men, as if on one pivot, turned to confront the possessor of that soft contralto voice, who might have emerged from a surprise box, so suddenly and unexpectedly had she made her appearance. The captain stared in speechless astonishment. In such weather skirts should have been an insuperable obstacle to the ascent of an almost perpendicular bridge-ladder, but here she stood before him as though she had just done the most natural thing in the world.

“I beg your pardon, *Commandant*,” she said, serenely, “for storming your position, after disobeying your orders; but the fact is I dislike to go below. Besides, I run no danger whatever. I am, if you must know it, a bit of a sailor, and hold a master’s certificate, which may explain to you how I come to be more at home on deck than in the saloon.”

One hand holding the bridge-rail in a fashion visibly practised and familiar, she waited for his answer; and Olier waited, too, but with less patience, for at last his interest was fully roused. His ear had just been caressed by that pure, eighteenth-century French, clear and level-toned, which nowadays, alas, throughout the length and breadth of France is only to be heard where a few scattered châteaux preserve the traditions of former days—a language not whined through the nose or gabbled from the lips or palate, but delivered with an open mouth, as high-bred Anglo-Saxons speak their own native tongue. Curious that an Englishwoman should speak French like that!

Meanwhile the nonplussed captain was saying: “Even if you run no personal danger, madame, you cannot avoid being wet through on deck, and unless you prefer to remain here with us—”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The scarcely veiled sarcasm passed unrebuked, and the offer was at once accepted with a simplicity that staggered Captain Querlescan.

"Yes, of course you are quite right, and thank you very much, *Commandant*; but I stay only on condition that I shall not be in your way. I hate women who get in the way of men's work or sport and expect to be waited upon."

Caught in his own net, Captain Querlescan winced. "Your coat, madame, is already soaked with spray," he argued with feeble doggedness, and, as if every word were being windlassed out of him, "You will catch your death of cold!" This was greeted with a laugh which had such a ring in it that it made the ungracious mariner suddenly change his mind and attitude—he could not have told why, but so, nevertheless, it was—and, though she had just dared him to his face and made him undeniably ridiculous, from that instant he liked her.

"Will you let me send for some oilskins?" he asked, in markedly altered tones.

"You can send for mine," she readily acquiesced. "Grafton — that's my servant — will give them to the quartermaster, if you don't mind his going after them. But here am I already giving trouble . . . so as soon as I get my storm-rig I'll subside completely."

"Subside completely!" Olier mentally commented. "She does not give the impression of belonging to the sort that can ever quite do that, or pass unperceived either." And he glanced at her beneath his eyelashes, carefully refraining, however, from letting his stealthy gaze rest upon the captain, who must, he thought, have by now reached the bursting-point. How complete was the *volte-face* of this usually brusque and intolerant officer he did not even suspect, until he beheld him

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

actually in the act of helping his *passagère* into the "storm-rig," which in itself was a corroboration of every word she had uttered, for it proved to be by no means the absurd makeshift of the common run of yachtswomen, but a hooded garment, uncompromisingly serviceable, practical, and much weather-stained.

Indeed, even apart from this, Lady Clanvowe's attitude left no possible doubt that she mostly meant what she said, for in another moment she had retreated to the farthest end of the bridge, where she enfolded herself in deepest silence, half turning her back upon the others in a way so expressive of a desire to mind her own business that Olier felt his first disapprobation disappearing by leaps and bounds.

During the last hour the half-gale had considerably freshened. The air was now full of spindrift, and the maltreated steamer, buffeted by savage cross-waves, labored hard. Twice Captain Querlescan took a step in the direction of the hooded figure silhouetted against those swinging seas, and twice, greatly to Olier's amusement, returned to his post with a smothered imprecation that broke at last into a torrent of low-breathed profanity.

"What are you bothering about?" the latter asked, imperturbably. "She's giving you no trouble. Why don't you leave her alone?"

"Huh! No trouble? D'you think I feel at my ease here, forced to act like a boor on my own decks?"

"She does not expect you to dance attendance upon her—that seems evident."

"I know; but ordinary politeness demands that I should see to her comfort, and how am I to go about it with such a stubborn piece of goods?"

"Couldn't you induce her to take some refreshment

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

or other? That would oblige her to go below, you see, . . . and since you're so anxious to do that . . . !"

"*Nom d'un chien!* Why didn't I think of it before? I'll give up the bridge to Goarec, although I had told him that I'd keep it all the way to Brest." And, whispering a command to his quartermaster, the much-relieved mariner moved hesitatingly toward Lady Clanvowe.

"Madame," he said, almost imploringly, "won't you come and have a cup of coffee and some biscuits? You have been standing here in the cold for hours, and . . ." he concluded, desperately, "I am getting really anxious!"

"My dear *Commandant*," she cried, with one of her contagious little laughs, "I am so sorry to have worried you. Of course I'll come; you must not imagine that my dislike of the 'tween decks goes to the length of starving myself." And, passing in front of him, she swung herself down the ladder before Olier, who was standing close to it, had time to offer help, seized an opportune righting of the vessel to run across the deck, and reached the companion-way.

"Well done!" the naval officer said aloud, in spite of himself. "Jove, but that's a clever little woman!" And, much puzzled and amused, he followed the captain, who had momentarily relinquished all responsibility to his second, through the fringe of a retiring wave-crest along a once more dizzily slanting deck.

The lamentable banality of marine dining-rooms was on the *Étoile de Brest* greatly diminished by the faded condition of its fittings and furniture. The once inflammatory red and gold had toned down with years to a pleasant shade of tawny brown, and on the long table great branches of pink-and-white May—flung there by the second officer, who, being a newly married man, had bought them at St. Malo for his bride, and forgotten all

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

about them immediately—gave a touch of spring and youth to the whole place. The steward was picking an armful of them from the carpet, where they had been thrown by the continuous pitching and rolling, when the two men entered; while in front of one of the sadly tarnished mirrors above the circular divan stood Lady Clanvowe, with uplifted hands, detaching one by one the long gold pins holding her veil in position. From the opposite side of the saloon Olier glanced with quick curiosity in the mirror, to try and catch the first glimpse of the features so carefully concealed until now; but the damp gauze was troublesome, and it was only after several impatient little pulls and wrenches that Lady Clanvowe finally dragged it upward from an oval face, still faintly flushed to shell-pink tints by the wind, large, black-fringed, dark-blue eyes, a short, imperious little nose, and a mouth of exquisite perfection and loveliness. Another quick tug, and both hat and veil came off together from a glorious mass of soft, silky hair, piled up in a fashion suggesting Madame de Lamballe—and, still further to enhance the resemblance, snow white and sparkling as if powdered all over with fine diamond-dust.

Involuntarily Olier drew a deep breath, startled by the beauty and pastel-like delicacy of that mirror-vision, and at that instant Lady Clanvowe turned round, and, with a noticeable lack of the clumsiness generally engendered by the erratic motions of a storm-tossed boat, crossed over to the table where Captain Querlescan was deftly slipping cups and plates in and out of the fiddles.

Raising his eyes at her approach, he too gave a start of surprise as he caught sight of her standing in the full light of the port-holes, slim and graceful and smiling.

“*Voilà!*” she said, seating herself on one of the swivel

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

chairs and beginning to draw off her gloves. "I'm quite ready for your coffee, *Commandant*."

"I trust it will not be too muddy. We are still distressingly unprepared for distinguished travellers, and . . ."

"It smells deliciously," she interrupted, turning one damp glove clean inside out, after vainly endeavoring to remove it in the ordinary fashion. Her hands, like her feet, were singularly small, and there was a vivid sparkle of many diamonds and sapphires as she dried them on her tiny handkerchief.

Olier had been waiting for the captain to introduce him, but, finding that the worthy skipper was forgetting all about this simple ceremony, here put in his word:

"Will you present me to Lady Clanvowe, Querlescan?" he said, a little stiffly.

Red as a tomato, the captain rose hastily: "The Comte de Frèhél—a Breton of the Bretons."

"Higher praise no man can desire," she said, frankly holding out her hand. "I am a profound admirer of Brittany, past and present. But let me see . . . de Frèhél . . . it must be your father whom I had the pleasure of meeting many years ago. You reminded me of him from the first."

"Many years ago, madame?" The incredulous intonation of the words was a spontaneous compliment which made Lady Clanvowe smile in a pleased little way.

"Certainly. It is quite eighteen years since my husband and I left Vienna, where he, the Comte de Frèhél I mean, was then French Ambassador."

The two men exchanged a quick, questioning glance. Was she joking? Surely she could not, in spite of her silver locks, be over thirty.

"My father was at Vienna about the time you mention, madame; but surely . . ." Olier paused, embarrassed, and,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

as if guessing his thoughts, she lightly touched her gracious coiffure:

"Genuinely white," she laughed. "Absolutely genuine."

"A freak of nature," the captain interposed. "I have a cousin who was gray at twenty."

"Well, so was I, . . . a little on the temples," she quietly continued, helping herself to a biscuit. "But I like it better now, . . . it's more complete."

She spoke so naturally that any flattering remark would have seemed almost a piece of rudeness. Even plain-spoken Querlescan saw this, and with unusual tact proceeded to change the subject.

"The season is early for visitors to our little country," he remarked, balancing his cup deftly half-way between the table and his mouth. "You are not going to make a long stay in Brittany, are you, Miladi?"

"I don't know, but I think it probable. You see, the wife of a diplomat is something of a slave; but Sir Hubert having been sent on a mission to Tibet, where it was difficult for me to accompany him, I am free to put into execution a long-cherished plan, which is to spend a whole summer in Brittany."

"If you have never been here before," the captain said, with a frown, "it's all right; but otherwise you will be hurt, I am sure, to see it becoming so changed."

Olier was also frowning, but at his indiscreet friend. He found it utterly useless to abuse their cherished country before a stranger; but not so the now fully aroused mariner, who between mouthfuls embarked upon a thorough exposé of the present situation.

"And," he at last concluded, "they have succeeded in transforming this classic little corner of the world into a place of virulent hatreds and suspicions, where brother

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

will soon be throttling brother, and father denouncing son."

Lady Clanvowe had listened in absorbed silence, her dark-blue eyes darkened still more by obviously sincere interest, and Olier, watching her, wondered much. What could all this matter to her, an English great lady, with a mere poetical fad for the old Land of Legend which was so dear to him? Pose? No, even strong prejudice could not make a keen observer read her grave, clever expression thus; and suddenly seized once more with the irritation she had earlier aroused in him, he said, almost roughly:

"How can all these nauseating *détails de ménage* amuse Lady Clanvowe?"

She turned quickly, and gave him a singularly penetrating look.

"Amuse?" she said. "You mean 'interest,' Monsieur de Frèhél. But I assure you that these *détails de ménage*, as you call them, do even more than that."

CHAPTER III

A flush of silver on the sea-line growing;
A point, an edge, a candent arc; the shade
Of cloud low-gathered rims with pearl, and, glowing,
Lengthens the pale moonglade.

All the wide Night awakes, and breathless waiting
Knoweth fulfilment in that mystic fire,
A soul of beauty, thrilling, palpitating
As the Cyllenean lyre.

Hearken the surf-song—herald waves apprising
The caverned rocks ashore, and mark, oh, mark
How the fleet footprints of the wind arising
Flash in the clearing dark,

Hasting the miracle abroad to blazon;
And through the thresh of waters, low, serene,
Moveth soft-shod that shaking diapason,
Circleth that treble keen!

How wild its fluting! 'Tis a wondrous leaven
To shape Night's harmonies, that near and far
Orb in its crystal as the lights of Heaven
Run backward to a star.

Unto one call of Power these assemble,
Choiring in unison to the hollow sky,
And all their lovely voices cry and tremble
Until the Night doth die.

So to a waiting dusk, illuming, winning,
Until the storied Morn that is to be,
You came, in light and melody beginning
Your gentle rule in me.

Moonrise.—M. M.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

THE long stretch of rough shingle beneath Fort Rozkavel was almost entirely covered by fleecy surf, shining white in the fitful rays of a round-faced moon that was busy playing hide-and-peek with a flock of black clouds. As it nearly always is there, the wind was strong, and the hollow clamor of the sea, worrying the ledges along low-water mark, betrayed the sudden plunge to great depths off that portion of the shore. A spot of tragic loneliness without one break in the monotony of water and stone, save the low, massive brow of the Fort, just now scarcely distinguishable from the masses of surrounding rock either in form or color, and without a single point of light showing anywhere within its looming bulk.

Splashing moodily along the soupy gravel, Olier de Frèhél, on his way home from one of the interminable walks he often took after his solitary dinner to try and tire himself out, was industriously attempting to think of nothing at all, when, just as he came abreast of the Fort talus, he was checked in his stride by a sudden flood of melody, marvellously attuned to the obligato of wind and waves, gliding higher and higher, and soaring piercingly sweet until it seemed to stab the dark heavens above. For a moment he scarcely breathed, tingling from head to foot with a never-felt emotion, for at that place and hour there really was something nerve-shaking in that rarest music of all, the utterance of a surpassingly well-played violin. So completely entranced was he that at first he did not even wonder whence it came—from the earth, the water, or the sky—what mattered? The very essence of those liquid notes was strange to him; he had never heard the like before, though that did not occur to him until afterward, for the night had found a soul and was made anew—the fresh salt breeze, the ghostly surf, the glittering bridge swung gently across

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the straining backs of the breakers with every re-emergence of the moon, were now all as living, breathing things that sang together with beautiful voices, each a separate part, and yet all in some wonderful way shaping into that exquisite central harmony, moulded and drawn into it as rays run backward to a star. Very gradually Olier began to realize what his inner mind had immediately and instinctively acknowledged—that whoever played that violin possessed a master-hand. None but a great artist could win from it those superhuman echoes of some unknown Paradise, and he stood absolutely motionless, straining every nerve to follow the delicious shading of every perfect phrase, until with one soft, fine-spun note—a lessening thread of moonbeam that died and lost itself in the sobbing of the waves—it all ended, leaving him dazed and amazed, uncertain whether he had not been dreaming.

For some time he remained rooted to the ground, vainly endeavoring to solve the puzzle, and gazing helplessly around him, from the heaving whiteness of the sea to the deserted shore, until all at once the words of Guéma-deuc flashed back to his mind. He had claimed that the Fort would shortly be inhabited, but Olier raised searching eyes to the sombre parapet without discovering the least bit of corroborative evidence. Then, fired with a sudden determination, he set off at a run, and, escalading the talus in three bounds, brought up at the foot of the walls.

These were discouraging, too; their regularly spaced loopholes, wherein once had lurked the grim muzzles of guns, were much too far above his head to be looked through, and with a nautical oath of great force and power he ran on to the solid iron doors which guarded the one entrance, only to find them hermetically closed.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“I dreamed it all, then!” he exclaimed, wrathfully. “Or else there must be musical *Farfadets* in possession of Rozkavel.” And, turning on his heel, he regained the beach in an absurdly angry mood. Fortunately, he knew every inch of the way, for just then the moon ducked derisively behind a cloud, leaving him in total darkness; and, as the rising tide made it expedient for him to hurry, he lost no time in climbing back to the *lande*. Before setting off across the heather, he once more turned mechanically to peer back at the blotch of intenser blackness he knew to be the Fort, and gave a gasp of surprise, for at his present elevation he was on a level with the windows of the guard-room, and he distinctly saw a faint, rosy gleam issuing from them. With a shamefaced sense of relief, he lingered there, trying to determine the nature of this peculiar illumination, and, finally convinced that it represented the light of shaded lamps sifted through tinted curtains, he resumed his lonely road, vexing his brain with one supposition after another as to who the wonderful musician might be, who had made the lonely night live and pulsate and throb with such indescribable harmony? Indeed, in his present solitary life the incident was assuming the proportions of an event, and immediately on reaching home he sent for his aged gardener, Hanvec, whom he knew would still be dozing over the kitchen fire.

Hanvec was a notorious gossip, inordinately proud of his sobriquet of *Skrid-pendézièk*, which in Breton means newspaper, or, textually, “relation day by day of what happens, has happened, or will happen”—a well-merited one, moreover; for what he did not manage to find out for miles around Kremarzé was not worth inquiring into. The peculiar picturesqueness of his statements invariably delighted Olier, usually the most incurious of men, and,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

while drying his wet boots at a crackling fagot-blaze that lent fantastic animation to the figures on the ancient tapestries of the hall, he smiled a smile of amused anticipation.

Carrying his red woollen cap in one hand and his heavy sabots in the other, Hanvec made his appearance almost at once, every separate wrinkle of his brown face alert with curiosity.

"*Avance à l'ordre, l'Ancien!*" Olier said, in a slightly raised voice, for Hanvec had lately become a trifle hard of hearing. "*Avance à l'ordre.*"

"*Présent, M'sieu l'Comte!*" the old man retorted, straightening his back and touching his white forelock.

"What do you know about the tenants of Rozkavel?"

A sharp gleam brightened the faded blue eyes of the ambulatory gazette of Kremarzé, and a malicious smile crinkled his lips.

"Tenant—not tenants, M'sieu l'Comte," he corrected, depositing his sabots on the carpet and resting his hands on his hips in an easy conversational way.

"Tenant, eh?" Olier questioned. "What is he like?"

For the second time Hanvec deprecatingly offered an amendment: "Not he . . . she . . . it's a she."

"A she? Alone in that God-forsaken hole? Nonsense!"

"No nonsense, M'sieu l'Comte—the truth; but there are servants . . . a lot of good-for-nothings who speak a villainous lingo, and look as supple as if they'd swallowed a marline-spike apiece!"

"Where do they hail from, do you think?"

"From no Christian land . . . that's sure."

"And the . . . the lady; what of her?"

"I couldn't rightly say, M'sieu l'Comte. I've only seen her at long range, though I did try to pull up closer;

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

but she's not easy to approach—one minute here, the other there, dancing on the outermost points of the rocks, running up the cliffs as a goat would; my old legs can't follow such a pace."

"Can it be she who plays the violin like an angel?" Olier asked, more to himself than to his worthy news-monger; but doubtless the latter was not quite as deaf as he pretended, for he instantly answered the comment as if it had been addressed to him.

"Or a devil!" he grumbled. "I heard her *crin-crin* one night, and it made my blood run cold. It's pagan music, that's what it is."

"*Crin-crin* . . . pagan music!" Olier exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders at such vandalism. "I've heard the best, but never anything to compare with that touch."

"Maybe, maybe, M'sieu l'Comte, but is there any reason in a woman locking herself in a dismantled fort to play for the fishes and the gulls when everybody else is asleep? It's not canny . . . You can laugh your fill, M'sieu l'Comte, it's not canny, nor lucky, either!" Hanvec indignantly protested.

"Bosh!" Olier interrupted. "But look here, *l'Ancien*, lucky or unlucky, Christian or heathen, this curious person and her following can't live solely on music. Where do they get their provisions, their fuel, and the rest? You know very well that all they can buy around here is bread and onions, and if, as you infer, neither mistress nor servants speak either French or Breton, how do they manage?"

"And what about the yacht, M'sieu l'Comte? Doesn't it bring them all they want?"

"The yacht! Oh, there's a yacht, is there?"

"Why, yes, there is, and a choice one, too, trim as a battle-ship, with its brass-work shining enough to dazzle

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the eye, and painted as white as the heart of an oyster-shell."

"Where in the world does it anchor? There's no safe place about Rozkavel."

"Nobody knows that, M'sieu l'Comte. It comes and goes unbeknown, just like its owner, and none's the wiser."

"Hold on a minute, *l'Ancien!*" Olier exclaimed at this point, half rising from his deep chair. "Did you ever get near enough to her to see what color her hair is?"

"Name of a one-eyed lobster, M'sieu Olier!" the old man remonstrated, "what's the color of her hair got to do with it? You've not stepped on a tuft of losing-grass, have you, M'sieu Olier, to-night on the *lande*? You seem all astray, as it were."

"Never you mind what I seem; answer me."

"If it comes to that, it's soon done," Hanvec said, more quietly. "I've never seen the color of her hair, M'sieu l'Comte, nor want to. I'm not at the age when one risks one's neck for such trifles!"—this in an offended tone.

"You're an old fool, *l'Ancien*. . . . I don't care a rush about her hair, either. All I wanted to find out was whether by any chance it happens to be white—snow-white, you understand."

"White . . . snow-white!" Hanvec echoed, falling back a little. "*Sainte Vierge de La Palude!* . . . You are not going mad, Our Gentleman? . . . white . . . and she hopping about like a sand-piper all day long?"

"It wouldn't matter in her case," Olier responded, absently.

Poor Hanvec dropped his limp cap into one of his capacious sabots, and came deliberately forward until he almost touched his master.

"Let me look at the clear of your eyes, M'sieu l'Comte,"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

he said, earnestly. "It isn't possible—something ails you! I never heard you talk wild like this before, and if defunct our good lady—may she rest in peace"—here he devoutly crossed himself—"hears you now, she'll never set foot in here again. Don't you trouble about that Rozkavel witch any more. She's here for no good purpose—I feel it in my bones—and there's trouble enough without her already."

Olier saw that the old man was really concerned, and he patted the bent shoulder reassuringly.

"There, there," he said, kindly, "quit worrying about me, and tell me instead what trouble you mean."

"What trouble? Every sort of trouble, M'sieu l'Comte. You know it as well as I do. Trouble everywhere, whichever way one turns."

Olier rose quickly to his feet and leaned against the monumental blue granite chimney-piece, his face turned from the bright, revealing flames.

"I'm not going to look at you any more, M'sieu Olier. You can sit down," said Hanvec, with perfect simplicity and not at all as if to exhibit his shrewdness. "You see," he continued, studiously gazing at the vague pattern of the faded Turkey hearth-rug, "we're in a bad way here, and there's something in the wind that's going to breed a fine tempest soon."

"I'm hanged if I understand what you're driving at," Olier interposed, impatiently, from the shadow of the high mantel.

"Don't you, M'sieu l'Comte?" the other continued, wholly undisturbed. "Perhaps you don't know also that before long every mother's son of us will have to rise up against those French, or be flattened as flat as the back of my hand. . . . I'm old to fight, but never mind . . . never mind . . . when the hour comes I'll load and shoulder

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

a musket or sharpen a scythe with the best—or I'll take my sabot in my fist if there's nothing else.* But what we want is a leader . . . one of the old sort."

Olier had let him go on unhindered, but at this he dropped his hand heavily on the white-bloused shoulder.

"Be quiet!" he commanded. "You know that I can't listen to such talk. What devil possesses you to-night?" They were eying each other now, man and master, master and man, as absolute equals, a dark flush slowly mounting to the roots of Olier's hair, while the older face was paling beneath the sun-stains of seventy long years. Then, suddenly, Olier let his hand fall to his side and turned his head away.

"Does M'sieu l'Comte wish the strawberries gathered to-morrow morning?" Hanvec asked, in the toneless, even voice of a well-trained servant coming for orders. "They are rotting on the stalk."

"Rotting on the stalk?" Olier asked, in bewilderment. "Who . . . what?"

"The strawberries in the south garden, M'sieu l'Comte," Hanvec respectfully explained.

"Oh, the strawberries! Gather them if they need gathering."

"And," the old man implacably persisted, "what shall I do with them when they are gathered?"

"Give them away, or throw them to the pigs; I don't care a damn!" Olier cried, in exasperation, turning his back full upon his unmoved retainer, who, noiselessly picking up his sabots and cap, stepped softly from the hall, a Machiavellian smile on his wrinkled lips.

Left alone, Olier threw himself in his arm-chair, thrust both hands in his pockets, and, fixing a pair of unwinking

* The heavy sabot of the peasant, wielded as a club, is a murderous weapon.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

and suddenly hardened eyes upon the red core of the fire, fell into a very abyss of vexatious thought. Hanvec's words kept ringing mercilessly in his ears. "We want a leader . . . a leader . . . a leader!" He, Olier de Frèhél, an officer in France's navy, had just been asked—unofficially, it is true, but by a voice which he knew spoke for the entire country-side—to lead an insurrection against France. This was what Hanvec had meant. Forswear his allegiance, show himself disloyal to the flag under which he served?

Involuntarily he detached his gaze from the incandescent coals, and winced as it encountered the drooping folds of a worn old banner fastened to the tapestry above the portrait of Hervé, Comte de Frèhél, captain of a ship-of-war in the reign of the twelfth Louis. The sumptuous satin, still dimly white between its thick-sown, golden fleurs-de-lys, gleamed faintly in the leaping glow of an outer fringe of small twigs burning more fiercely than the larger sticks, and the long, golden tassels hanging from the staff swayed a little in the draught from the chimney, as they had done in the winds of forgotten ages. The King's flag! The flag of that old France, who, whatever her faults, was the mightiest of European states, with whom her enemies dealt in coalition if they dealt at all—a France whose policy was not to be unsettled by a hint of menace from a foreign power!

With a groan Olier forced himself to look away from it. What had he, Lieutenant de Frèhél, of the steel-hulled, triple-engined, four-screw, twenty-four-knot cruiser *Marat*, in common with that ancient and unsullied emblem? And yet, duty or no duty, oath or no oath, how could he close his eyes to the glaring truth? The violent opposition of Brittany to the arbitrary doings of the French government during the recent Church and State crisis

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

was but a preliminary to further and worse conflicts . . . that could not be doubted . . . and upon Breton loyalty a great deal depended, since Brittany is to-day, as it has always been, the nursery of the French navy. It seemed incredible in the face of this that France should pursue her short-sighted and senseless war against Breton faiths, Breton customs, and even the Breton language—a sore point indeed with those arch-conservatives—but so it was.

*“Ar Brèzonek hâg ar Féiz
A zô breur ha C’hōar è Breiz,” **

he murmured, and, suddenly jumping to his feet, began to pace the floor restlessly from one end to the other of the immense room.

“Fools! Fools! Fools!” he repeated aloud, again and again, as in an unending procession the long tally of useless injustices and wrong-dealings to which his race had been subjected passed through his mind. It seemed all so inane, from the annulment of ecclesiastical influence—and that influence had certainly been on the side of morality, decency, and good conduct—down to the appalling system of organized delation, as baleful and fully as fatal in its effects for thousands upon thousands of victims as that described by Tacitus. Oh, yes, “informing” was now raised throughout France to the importance of a public institution. The army was daily becoming more gangrened by a wilful admixture of accredited and duly subventioned agents, who boasted the title of “*Franc-Maçons de la Solidarité Militaire*,” and who, forming a loathsome association, ceaselessly spied upon their brother officers, and reported to high quarters upon their religious and political opinions. There existed, as

* “In Brittany the faith and the language are brother and sister.”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Olier well knew, an official "Delation Bureau," by which, during the past year, twelve thousand brave officers had been besmirched and blacklisted in carefully docketed briefs. Untruthful and infamous *dossiers*, teeming, of course, with misrepresentation, but admirably catalogued and annotated in two ponderous volumes, respectively entitled *Corinth* and *Carthage*, as corresponding to the parabolic sheep and goats. "Delenda est Carthago" was the relentless motto of the originator of that modern Delation Bureau, which, according to his own statements, meant professional ruin, or at least the absolute loss of all hope of future promotion, for the unfortunates whose names were once engrossed upon the pages of *Carthage*.

And this was taking place under a republican régime flaunting the magnificent device, "*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.*" Liberty! Fraternity! What about the ferocity of those measures taken recently, then, with regard to the de-religionization at any price . . . any cost . . . of the army and navy? What about those latest decrees denying the comfort and consolation of the Last Sacraments to dying soldiers and sailors, excepting at the official and personal request of the moribund? Olier remembered the storm of indignation this had aroused far and wide. And how could it be otherwise, when even the peoples professing other creeds than Catholicism showed so different a comprehension of their duties? He thought of how, during the Boer war, the British authorities had sent a Catholic priest seven hundred miles by special train to hear the last confession of a dangerously wounded private soldier; and opposite this fact he set the case of Lieutenant L——, who, shot and taken unconscious to the hospital, had been left there to die like a dog, although his cousin, M. P—— de L——, demanded that a priest should be immediately summoned, pointing out, in justi-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

fiction of this request, the consecrated medals found hanging by a chain around the young officer's neck, beneath his blood-stained tunic. Alas, many other and yet more grievous instances of the same deliberate evil-doing made Olier clench his fists in impotent rage as he recalled them one by one.

Wearied and disheartened, he felt at that moment tempted to send in his resignation from the navy at once, and without any further paltering. But was it not perhaps a sign of weakness in him thus to avoid facing the music? And, besides, what could he, alone and unaided, do to stem the muddy torrent let loose upon his native land? He paused again in front of the hearth, where now only a few charred bits of wood smoked dismally, and racked his brain for the twentieth time that night in search of some possible solution.

"*We want a chief . . . one of the old sort.*" Pursued by the echo of old Hanvec's demand, he fled up the broad, shallow-stepped staircase where in sport one of his ancestors had once ridden his war-charger, setting other echoes to work beneath the groined stone arches that had sheltered countless De Frèhéls in the vanished days, when honor was no vain and empty word.

"I cannot! I cannot!" he said aloud; and, with a suddenly lagging and spiritless step, he passed slowly on to his room in the gray dawn-light, wishing, from his heart, that the sea-weed snare had dragged him to the bottom of the ocean a month ago.

CHAPTER IV

Under the dunes—those herded monsters tall,
Now basking warm, and now that vague and vast
Bristling their manes of sea-grass, writhe and crawl
 Before the smoking blast—

Skirting the naked shingle salt and dry,
Crannied aloft, or nodding to the spume,
By Earth uncherished, or the Heavens high
 My flower of flowers doth bloom;

Foliaged in frosty green from head to heel,
Petaled with spider-silk that cups the sun,
Frail as a moonbeam, yet the strength of steel
 To hold a growth begun.

Steadfast in sand, secure in strife and din,
You, dear heart, you and yours, she doth express;
Courage, and its yet undissevered twin,
 Unfaltering Tenderness.

For though step-daughter of the brooding sky,
The bitter sea-breath and the stony mould,
Sweetly she proffers to the passer-by
 Free and ungrudging gold.

The Sand-Poppy.—M. M.

THE shelving face of red rock behind and overtopping Fort Rozkavel forms a rather ineffectual barrier between the waves and the *lande*, for it has many wide gaps through which broad slices of turf have slid to mingle with the ruddy sand, and there become islets of vigorous greenery, that obstinately hold their own against biting

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

winds and bitter salt spray, until a storm rushes up to tear them to pieces and scatter the tough little plants of which they are composed in all directions. Bleaching bits of wreckage, suggestive of the dangerous nature of the coast, bestrew this narrow desert of foreshore, and sword-bladed maritime grasses, eternally shaking and whispering in the strong sea-breath, encroach even upon the so-called road leading to the hump-backed promontory crowned by the little Fort.

On the morning following Olier's torturing cogitations the present inhabitant of that grim dwelling left its granite archway and set off along the heather-path at a rapid pace. Upright and trim, she swung along with that ease and litheness which at one glance betrays perfect health and poise of body and mind, looking continually seaward as she walked, and rarely turning her eyes toward the land—a gray-green level, differing but little save by its immobility from the great plain of water to her right.

Before reaching the narrow *chaussée* on each side of which cluster the few cottages that make up Rozkavel village, she met two salt-workers, who scowled savagely from beneath the wide brims of their soft felt hats at the slender woman in navy-blue serge and dark béret, set squarely sailor-fashion upon her snowy coils of hair. "*Milligaden!*"* one of them growled, while the other, hastily crossing himself, whispered, glancing back over his shoulder at the stranger:

"Have you seen—the young face and old hair? . . . That's a *Korrigane* . . . a doer of evil and a caster of spells, depend upon it!" And he repeated the sign of the Cross.

Ignorant though she must have been of the purport

* Accursed.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

of their unflattering opinion, yet, had some perspicuous observer been concealed behind the tall clumps of furze that here crowded in upon the road, he might have been puzzled by the curious little smile, half-defiant, half-amused, which for an instant replaced the expression of musing sadness upon her lovely features. Sadness was not habitual with her. It may have been, therefore, merely the reflex of the Breton landscape, for Brittany in its grave and severe beauty strikes the minor dominant of Celtic song; still, it sat rather oddly upon such a woman, and offered a decided contrast to her self-reliant gait and bearing.

Quaint and delightful little old Rozkavel village looked that morning, its thatched roofs, all aglow with purple irises and pink house-leeks, basking in the pale-golden May sunlight, its tiny garden patches, reclaimed from the universal sand-dune, displaying row after brave row of cabbages and onions, graced here and there by the lace-like shade of a few clusters of rose-tufted tamarisks, while now and again the squat trunk of a fig-tree showed ghostly gray amid the gloom of its leathern foliage. Not a soul, however, was to be seen, though from the top of the rise Lady Clanvowe had plainly discerned many busy figures hurrying to and fro. Now the half-door of every little granite house was carefully drawn to, and not even a stray dog prowled about the boundary ditches as the visitor from Rozkavel, a little surprised at the profound silence and lifelessness of the place, slackened her pace and peered over a low wall of piled-up stones held together apparently by nothing more binding than a profuse felting of Bethlehem-moss, thickly powdered with its millions of imperceptible waxen starlets.

Her curiosity was rewarded merely by a view of other rows of prosperous cabbages, serried phalanxes of onions

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

pungently and pompously drawn to their full height of three feet odd, and the slate margin of a well, whereon reposed a dusky wooden pail, brimful of temptingly clear water. Between this and the back-door of the house a willow broom and a solitary overturned sabot appeared to indicate a line of flight, and Lady Clanvowe, distinctly puzzled, stepped back upon the road.

At that instant a stone, coming from nowhere in particular, but nevertheless creditably aimed, narrowly missed her temple and fell in the midst of the onion-army, breaking off short two of its most commanding units. Quick as a flash she turned on her heel and faced about. There was a sudden glitter in her eyes that made them seem rather violet than blue, but her color never wavered as she stood absolutely still, waiting for further developments. Still nobody was to be seen, and, far and wide, nothing louder than the monotonous drone of many bees and the soft mutter of the rising tide below the dune could be heard. Beginning to doubt the evidence of her senses, she determined to investigate the matter a little further, but before she could put the idea into execution a volley of stones and pebbles rattled viciously all around her, none of them, fortunately, taking effect.

Evidently the attacking party was ensconced behind those other low walls surrounding the cottages across the road, and she bent quickly forward as if to try and see over them. She was getting angry now—angrier than she had been for many years. “They’d murder me if they dared,” she thought, “only they probably won’t dare.” And, in spite of all, her irrepressible sense of humor asserted itself, and showed her the ridicule of the situation—being brought to bay by an enemy that seemed so desperately shy! “The battle is over for to-day, anyhow,” she mused, and for the sec-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ond time her strategic forecast was set at naught, as a jagged bit of flint hummed sharply through the air, catching her full on the point of the shoulder and making her flinch ever so slightly, to her extreme disgust.

"*Haloun!*"* she cried, her voice sharp with sudden fury. "*Falla ibil a vèz er c'harr, a onigour dà gentá!*" †

Dead silence followed this tirade—a favorite one with angry Bretons—and then a vast buzz of excited comment rose from all directions at once, punctuated by such exclamations as: "She spoke Breton!" . . . "It was Rozkavel Breton. Did you hear her?" cutting clear and high above the low-pitched voices.

"Yes, Breton, of course, you blockheads! What else should it be?" she called out, the soft gutturals of their beloved tongue acquiring a peculiar grace as she pronounced them; and at that a foam of white coiffes, with here and there the long, flowing hair of a masculine head, washed over the crests of all the little walls amid a deafening scramble of sabots, and the population of Rozkavel village swept toward her like a wave. Quite unmoved, she stood her ground, and saw them halt within three paces of her, bunching together like startled sheep.

"Well," she said, quietly, in the vernacular, "have you played the fool long enough? Can you recognize a friend now?"

Still huddled in a compact mass, they were staring stupidly at her, and there was a moment of dense silence; then, all at once, and as if moved by one impulse, the elder men and women began pushing and elbowing their way to the front, vague comprehension beginning to light the worn, sunburned faces craned eagerly forward.

* *Canailles*, contemptible people.

† "As always, the worst pegs of the cart grate first," which is equivalent to "Much fuss for little work."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Don't you know me?" Lady Clanvowe asked again, in her clear, far-reaching tones, and one tall old man, who stood head and shoulders above the crowd, cried out, hoarsely:

"*Vamèzel Rouanez!* Vamèzel Rouanez!*"

"Of course. Who else?" she said, with a breathless little laugh. "Rouanez de Rozkavel come back to you after all these years to be greeted with curses and insults! You're a nice lot!"

The man who had spoken was slowly taking off his hat. "Children," he announced, in a voice of awe, "it is indeed our Demoiselle come back to us from the dead." And at the portentous words there was a recoil, for those there who had never seen her, and had always heard her name numbered among the "blessed departed," took them literally; all the more readily since it was visibly impossible for her to be standing there, young and slim and vigorous as a sapling, after all those years . . . all those years! Fear was dawning in all the eyes fixed upon her, and, guessing their thoughts, she addressed herself to the old man, with a little hint of that unconscious authority which is inherited but never acquired:

"Come here, Iann Loudèac," holding out her hand toward him, "and see for yourself whether I am alive or not."

Slowly, leaning on his *pen-baz*, Iann Loudèac obeyed, his eyes, still keen as a hawk's, hungrily searching every feature of that face so unmistakably Rozkavel. His gigantic frame was trembling like a leaf, and, when he at last reached her side, a full second passed before he summoned courage to touch her slender, ungloved fingers.

"The Blessed Saints be glorified," he whispered, bend-

* Mademoiselle Reine.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ing low over the little hand strongly grasping his. "The Blessed Saints be praised; it is indeed our *Vamèzel*, our little *Rouanez-gèz!*" * All the antique loyalty and fealty, the whole-souled devotion of the Breton race, rang in the one sentence, and the rest who heard closed in around her, incoherent with remorse and shame and enthusiasm, trying to touch her dress, her hands, her feet, and showering benedictions upon her head as zealously and profusely as they had showered stones a few minutes before. She was not an emotional woman, and yet her eyes were full of tears as she listened and found herself surrounded again with the atmosphere she had so unconsciously missed during her long exile. Indeed, so utterly absorbed were all the actors of the little drama that nobody heard the quick beats of rapidly approaching hoofs, nor caught sight of horse and rider until they had brought up smartly on the very edge of the densely packed semicircle about Lady Clanvowe, and a voice demanded, in no uncertain terms, an immediate explanation of this ominous gathering.

From the brow of the sand-hill which partly shelters Rozkavel village from the north wind, Olier de Frèhél had watched the commotion anxiously, although quite unable to distinguish what was going on; but, since he was in a mood just then to translate almost anything into danger-signals, he had galloped down the incline at a breakneck pace.

"Lady Clanvowe!" he cried, bending in his saddle as he caught sight of her—"Lady Clanvowe! What on earth are you doing here?"

She raised her laughing, tearful eyes, and for a second they looked at each other over the coping of coiffes and rough, red, masculine heads in mutual stupefaction.

* Our darling little Queen.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Greeting old friends!" she called back at last, coming forward through a lane of curtseying people. He had jumped to the ground and bowed low over her hand.

"You gave me a fine fright," he said, quickly, in French, which, of course, save the men who had been in the service, none of those about understood; and, lowering his voice, he added: "These are unquiet times, and I thought those dare-devils were up to some mischief, instead of which I find them embracing your knees. What does it all mean?"

The Rozkavellians had fallen back, and were whispering excitedly between themselves and casting curious glances at them from a respectful distance.

"It means a long story," she said, sitting down on the top of the nearest little wall, "but I can summarize it in six words. I was once Rouanez de Rozkavel, and these faithful souls have not forgotten me. That is all."

"All?" Olier exclaimed. "What a fool I have been!" "Why?"

"Because I should have read you at once. Somehow or other you seemed so un-English, so very unlike a stranger, when I met you on the *Étoile de Brest*, and even when you . . ."

"Exasperated you most?" she suggested.

"Not that . . . but still the puzzle was irritating, and I see you noticed my priggish behavior."

"Not at all priggish . . . pronouncedly Breton, perhaps."

"Thank you, I like that better; and you are very indulgent. But what really humiliates me is not to have recognized you."

"Recognized me?" she asked, sincerely surprised. "How could you have done that?"

"Oh, simply enough; for I have at home a portrait of

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

your mother, whom you resemble—I see it now—to an extraordinary degree. It hangs in a room where I seldom go now, which is my only excuse, for otherwise . . .” He paused, and then went on, naïvely: “I understand why I have been vexing myself so constantly of late, trying to remember who you reminded me of, and it was the Marquise de Rozkavel . . . my special adoration since childhood . . . I mean . . .” He stopped short, blushing furiously, but she was quietly brushing the wiry little brown chevelures of the moss upon the stone beside her with her open palm, and, without raising her eyes from this absorbing work, she said, quite naturally:

“Yes, that might have helped you. I know I am like my mother, for my father often used to say so.”

“I wish you had told me who you were,” Olier resumed, speaking with more ease. “I could have been of some use to you perhaps on your arrival here. For, of course, it is you who have taken Fort Rozkavel, is it not?”

“It is.”

“And who . . . who play the violin?”

“Yes. But how do you know that, please?”

He glanced absent-mindedly at the cluster of people still curiously watching from afar, and said, almost in a whisper:

“I heard you last night from the beach . . . and oh! . . . it was a pleasure!”

“It’s nice of you to say that,” she responded, with a quick smile. “You must come and listen to my musical vagaries at close range, since you like that sort of thing. Your mother and I were playmates, and you may, if you feel like it, look upon me as a sort of long-lost aunt.”

She gave a final rub to the tough little moss perruques, and glanced up at him.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Why do you laugh?" she demanded, in her decided little way.

"Because you do not look like an aunt for a man of my age."

She nodded disapproval. "You are not," she explained, "given to making compliments, I hope. I dislike them, as I do everything savoring of triviality, and I'd sooner you would not displease me, even in trifles."

"That was not a compliment."

"Then it's worse. You are dealing in subtleties . . . no more, no less. Anyhow," she concluded, rising and brushing a few bits of moss from her skirt, "what I mean is this: I have come here in search of rest, silence, and luxurious loneliness. I do not intend to see anybody; but, nevertheless, since it is silly to overdo anything, I shall be very glad to receive you, provided you come *à la Bretonne* and not *à la Française*. Do you understand me?"

"I think I do," he answered, at once. "But you are hard on Frenchmen. There are some left who know how to behave."

"Are there? I am delighted to hear it. But they do not belong to the younger generation. And, by-the-way, I am anxious to remain, for the world at large, merely Lady Clanvowe. I am going to warn those impulsive but extremely reliable people yonder of my wishes in the matter, and I know that I can count on your discretion."

"You can. Moreover, I live at Kremarzé, like a hermit, and spend my time absolutely alone."

"Ah!"

She gave him a swift, searching glance, and took a step in the direction of her former vassals.

"You'll let me walk back with you?" he pleaded. "I'll send my horse home by one of those lads there."

"You are afraid of some fresh attack upon me?" she asked, laughing.

"Well, yes," he admitted. "Everybody around here is not aware of your true personality, and one can never know to what lengths our thorough-going people may go, where strangers are concerned."

"I've just had a taste of that," she said, lightly. "But I am generally quite able to take care of myself. Also, it will force you to make a long *détour*."

"You needn't trouble about that," he interposed, a little sadly. "I am the most useless of mortals since weeks and weeks. Indeed, it will be a charity on your part to give me something to do."

"All right; wait a second." And she went to make her adieus, leaving him to attempt a partial recovery from the succession of surprises to which he had been treated.

As a general rule, naval officers, even when still pathetically young, are not easy to astonish. They peep too early into the world's kaleidoscope for that. But Lady Clanvowe was so far from being an ordinary personality that Olier could be forgiven for being a little taken off his feet. The mixture of almost child-like simplicity and profound knowledge of life which characterized her, coupled with the flawless youthfulness which gave mocking and exquisite denial to the age he was now obliged to accept as a calendar fact, certainly made up a *tout-ensemble* that at the very least put him at an embarrassing disadvantage. She was something never before encountered, never even dreamed of or imagined, bursting upon his brooding solitude like an unexpected bouquet of fireworks against the dark background of a midnight sky; and perhaps just because he dreaded and disliked women—unable to accustom himself to their eternal coquetries and unconquerable passion for make-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

believe—this particular one, so diametrically different from the rest, created upon him a profound impression.

His own mother had died while he was still a baby, and, brought up entirely by men of a rather severe type, he entertained the frankest contempt for the Squire of Dames, as—from what he noticed—did Lady Clanvowe herself. She was free from all smallnesses, and spoke with the firmness and decision of a man when she spoke at all; her whole manner was singularly free from that latent striving to produce an effect which can utterly mar the charm of the most brilliant personality. Why should she and he not be friends, then, in the highest possible acceptation of the word? With a being so fascinatingly original, so devoid of wearisome femininities, one could surely stand on safe and invigorating ground. And what a boon it would be to find in her a reliable and sound-minded counsellor in his present dilemma! He was awakened from his reverie by her sudden reappearance at his side, and the “Come along,” full of *camaraderie*, with which she prefaced the walk to Rozkavel.

They had taken the narrow dune-path, and were going in Indian file, when all at once she checked her rapid pace with such abruptness, and bent herself almost double in so unexpected a fashion, that he just missed taking a header over her stooping figure.

“What in the world is the matter?” he asked, aghast.

“A long-remembered delight—sand-poppies!” she cried, kneeling down in the midst of a patch of sulphur-hued, broad-winged bloom.

“Isn’t it wonderful,” she continued, quickly pulling off her gloves, “to find this most delicate, perhaps, of all the flowers thriving and prospering in a perpetual whirlwind? Just look at that gauzy tissue! One can almost see through it!” She raised luminous eyes to his smiling

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ones, holding up toward him a great cluster of fairy-golden petals in their setting of frosty green. "Do you like flowers?" she demanded, peremptorily.

"Yes—very much," he admitted.

"Ah! I'm glad of that. So few men really do; and those who possess that wholesome taste are ashamed to acknowledge it."

"I also love jewels," he announced, gently fingering the velvety poppy foliage. "May I look at that extraordinary ring of yours? It is an asteria, is it not? But I never saw so pure or so large a one."

"Yes, it's a ruby asteria," she answered, promptly holding out her hand to him from where she knelt—"the Stone of Fate, you know."

The searching sun-rays were outlining the six-pointed star clearly on the deep carnation tints of the gem, and she turned it hither and thither for him to examine. "My husband gave it to me just before his departure. But, unlike you, he loves neither jewels nor flowers, though he is so good and kind that he always knows how to select both admirably for me."

She jumped to her feet again without the least effort, all of a piece and her arms full of flowers. Such unheard-of suppleness was disconcerting, and Olier stared at her for a moment before speaking.

"Why didn't you teach him to share your tastes?" he asked, taking from her all she would relinquish of her dainty burden.

"Why should I? It would have meant, to begin with, some sort of contest and struggle—a thing I dread extremely. A big fight when it's worth while . . . well and good. But continual little bickerings and pullings and tuggings at another person's soul-strings exasperate me. Besides, Hubert never interferes with my numerous fads,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

and it would be distinctly unfair of me to force them too insistently upon him."

"You are fair through and through," Olier said, convincingly.

"I don't know. . . . In a fashion I think I am reasonably so. You see, unfairness is not merely bad policy: it is unjust, and all injustice is, in my opinion, little less than a crime. I'm afraid you'll find that I hold odd views on most subjects, Monsieur de Frèhél — rather obstinate and unusual ones."

"*Pas Bretonne pour rien?*" he suggested.

"Exactly," she acquiesced. "But my life has been spent in keeping my views and opinions in the farthest possible background — throttling them mercilessly half the time, to be explicit. For years I, who abhor the world, have been obliged to go six nights out of seven to balls, receptions, dinners, and similar dreariness. I love everything simple, and the very air I usually breathe is of the most artificial. . . . I am given to saying out loud whatever I think at the moment, and as the wife of a diplomat I am bound to weigh and measure every word I utter. More than that: I, who am at heart as anti-foreign as the good folk about here, have had to live since early childhood on alien soil—for to me all non-Breton lands are alien. But I am speaking altogether too much of myself, which is another form of selfishness I don't admire. Let's look at this instead. Can there be greater beauty anywhere?"

She swept her hand from east to west, and stopped so close to the ever-crumbling edge of the sand-bluff that he involuntarily grasped her arm.

"It is never safe to go too near the brink here," he cautioned. But she was gazing at the magnificent panorama unfolded before her, and did not even seem to hear.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The swelling *landes*, green and golden with broom and whin, rippled as far as the eye could reach from horizon to shore, where the sea at its full danced with brightest laughter around the breasting rocks; while miles and miles away a purple line of pine forests barred the hazy lavender of the sky like a deeper brush-stroke upon some masterly aquarelle.

"How can anybody prefer even the finest of cities to this?" Lady Clanvowe said, suddenly. "Sordid, I call them, every one, with their insufferable reek of piled-up humans . . . glare, gas, noise, and dust! Oh, horrible!"

"You feel things strongly," Olier remarked, with a laugh.

"I do. But generally I steel-cage the temptation to such outbursts of feeling. I trust you do not imagine that I talk like this to the first-comer?"

"I don't think you do. And let me add that *I* accept the present exception as a compliment."

"You should. And I assure you that it has done me a world of good to unbend for once. I am unbending most of the time now," she continued, gayly. "It was for this especial purpose that I took that pink horror yonder off the hands of your government," and she pointed derisively toward Fort Rozkavel, squatting unpoetical and businesslike—save for its frivolous coloring—upon its gorgeous base of red rock. "It is, to my belief, the very loneliest spot in the whole world," she went on; "but why a misguided Ministry should have seen fit to bedaub it with shrimp-pink caramel passeth understanding."

Olier burst into the first hearty laugh he had indulged in for months.

"It does look like caramel," he admitted. "It's precisely what it looks like."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"You may well say so. I can scarcely refrain from running my tongue along the wall outside the windows of my room sometimes, it glistens so appetizingly there. Do you know, I think it is Socialistic varnish, meant to please the masses—a sugar-coated fort may be almost acceptable even to the anti-militarists."

"But why didn't you have it scraped, then?" Olier asked, still laughing.

"In order to remind me day by day that my dream is still incomplete . . . the past dead and too many illusions a mistake . . ." She broke off abruptly, and fell into a fit of abstraction so profound that he felt as if she had actually left his side and he were once more alone with his gloomy thoughts. "What a singular organization!" he mused, watching the momentarily expressionless face, which, but a moment ago, had glowed with enthusiasm. Now the wonderful deep-blue eyes alone lived, and he read pain there, and longing and infinite regret. Almost afraid to move, he stood as still as she, wondering what would come next; and when she turned to him and said in her ordinary voice: "Come along; I'll show you the inside of my *Schlaraffenland* house," he followed her without a word.

CHAPTER V

Through wood or field I could but trace,
Though loved of yore the strand,
A mask, and not a living face;
I did not know my land.

Remembrance was a fountain sealed,
A hoard without a key;
In greeting low you spoke, and oh,
It was my land to me!

Return.—M. M.

ANYTHING grimmer or more uninviting and prisonlike than the outside of the little Fort, in spite of its fancy tinting, it would have been hard to find. Blank and sleek the ramparts rose for thirty feet to the level of the square platform within, indicated by a row of empty embrasures, yawning dismally like toothless mouths. The tide was quite high now, and leaped musically around the red-rock base, blotched with the living green of great masses of samphire, and flecked with creamy foam.

"The entrance is not engaging," Lady Clanvowe stated, pausing before the ponderous iron door that fitted into the shiny wall like a cork in a bottle. "Discouraging, eh? Nothing short of explosives could break it in. But watch the marvellous workings of modern invention," she concluded, pressing the tiny ivory button of an electric bell that incongruously punctuated the solid archway. "Of course, this mode of summoning the guard is absurd and tasteless, but I am essentially eclectic, and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

when something seems convenient . . .” The iron panel rolling inward without a sound cut short the explanation, and Olier, who had imagined himself beyond any further surprise where she and her household were concerned, stared in amazement at a tall turbaned Sikh salaaming low within the narrow aperture, instead of the liveried servant he had expected to see.

“This is Jwala-Singh,” Lady Clanvowe said, preceding her guest across the stone-paved inner court. “I brought him back from India years ago as my personal body-guard, and a more loyal and faithful one none ever had. He is a perfect treasure, never absent, and never in the way; clever, honest, alert, and passably ornamental, as you see.”

“He looks like one of Barbedienne’s enamelled bronzes,” Olier commented, glancing back at the picturesque figure in cream and blue and silver bending over the complicated lock of the postern, and refastening it as carefully as though the Fort was sustaining a siege. “But if they meet him in the village he may get into trouble.”

“Nonsense!” she exclaimed, incredulously.

“Not in the least. You have forgotten your Brittany, Lady Clanvowe, if you believe that the good people hereabouts will accept him meekly. Last year they behaved really shockingly to a Spahi who had come to visit a Breton comrade on leave.”

“Ah! but that must have been a Senegalian—a negro.”

“Co’or prejudices are a trifle wholesale here. Fortunately your superb attendant looks as if he could take care of himself. Otherwise I would advise you to keep him within the ramparts.”

They had reached another grudging little postern opening directly into what had been the armory, where now the stone walls were hidden beneath wonderful arras and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the flagged floor by a heavy carpet of harmonious color. There was not much furniture, but every single piece was authentically, antiques Breton, and carved from that dark, lustrous pear wood which, oddly enough, is apparently no longer used, and has therefore become rarely precious. Masses of flowers filled every available nook and corner, foxglove and fern mostly, mixed with other blossoms quite undiscoverable upon that barren coast. Yet the huge room was not feminine of aspect. There were no knick-knacks, no beribboned cushions, no frail footstools or airy trifles of any sort: only a few trophies of arms disposed against the grave-hued tapestry supplied a clear gleam of metal, and, marking the exact centre, a bronze pedestal rose straight and slim, supporting a beautiful model of an ancient war-frigate under full spread of sail in massive silver. The row of small, high windows had been widened by cutting into the enormously thick masonry, until they now almost touched, forming a wide band of blue-and-amber light across the whole length of the wall facing the sea, whose all-pervading song filled the room with a melody that those two loved beyond all others.

"You have worked wonders!" Olier exclaimed, looking admiringly around.

"What merit is there in that," she said, simply, "when money is no object at all?"

"A fortunate state."

"Yes and no. In my case, yes, perhaps, because my money is free from the usual responsibilities of wealth. Until two years ago I was almost a pauper in my own right." She laughed, and continued: "My husband is very rich in his; but the income of my tiny dowry barely sufficed to pay my own personal expenses . . . which was a mercy, for I have no patience with women who allow

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

even their legal owners to pay for their clothes—it's degrading."

She was sitting sidewise on the arm of a chair opposite Olier and swinging her tiny russet-shod feet slowly to and fro. "The question of befitting dresses used to be a momentous one in those days, I can tell you," she explained, "because it costs a lot when one is forced to go out much. And then without rhyme or reason a relative of Hubert's, an aged female Harpagon, surly, crabbed, and disagreeable beyond description, left me her colossal hoards, because, as she stated in her will, I 'had never made any ingratiating attempts upon her,' and 'to be used for myself and myself alone.' What do you think of that?"

"'Colossal' hoards sounds good," Olier smiled.

"Oh, 'colossal' is the word! That unamiable old lady, who lived on bread and soup in two rooms of a ramshackle house, seems to have spent her eighty allotted years in piling up golden guineas and storing priceless gems."

"I congratulate you."

"Well," she said, speculatively, "in spite of what I said just now, I have not yet quite made up my mind whether it was lucky or unlucky for me to become so unexpectedly one of the richest women in the world. You see, there is that uncomfortable provision about the money being applied to my sole use. Now, I cannot wear cloth of silver fringed with fine pearls all day long, can I?—simplicity being a besetting sin with me! Naturally I do not take the clause too literally, and I give away a great deal. But do what I will, my purse, like the Wandering Jew's, can never be empty."

"You are not going to regret it?" Olier wondered.

"More or less, yes. Fancy what it is to feel so much capital getting mouldy on one's hands. Hubert is such

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

a scrupulous animal that he absolutely refuses to apply one sou of it to the estates; besides which, we have no poor people near Clanvowe Hall or anywhere else on our lands — none at all, to speak of. The peasantry live in rose-garlanded cottages which positively make one's mouth water with envy. And as to financing organized charities—no, thank you!"

"You don't approve of organized charities?"

"Rather not. Vanity traps, to catch mere simpletons, or socially ambitious persons who imagine that to have their names published broadcast, opposite an imposing row of figures, will open doors closed to them. It's a sell whichever way you look at it. But you must be wondering why I tell you all this. Truly, I have not chattered so much in ten years."

"You should know how deeply I appreciate the favor you do me. I think I am a very fortunate individual."

"Well," she said, absently, after a pause, "there is something in that—not about your being a favored or a fortunate individual, of course, though I suppose that to be made an exception of is to the exception's credit . . . but, oh!" she suddenly exclaimed, sliding to her feet and looking at him with shining eyes, "when one has kept silent for so very, very long about the things one thinks of most, it is delicious to be at last able to speak them aloud to some one of one's own race and breed and kind—a real, stubborn, obstinate, self-contained dreamer of a Breton like one's self. No, don't say anything; I am not paying you much of a compliment this time, but I seem to feel at home with you, and in absolute sympathy of tastes and opinions and ideas, which is a great deal." She had started to walk up and down in front of him, and he did not even get up from his chair, convinced that she was speaking more at than to him, and that any move

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

on his part might interrupt, if not actually check, this spontaneous self-revelation of character.

"I wonder if I could make you understand," she was saying, "how I have longed for Brittany? Why, not once have I been able to go to sleep at night without hypnotizing myself into the belief that those waves below there were breaking beneath my windows. In some parts of Ireland and Scotland, on the moors or the rocks, I have tried to trick myself into believing that I was not on the wrong side of the Channel; but even with closed eyes, and with the smell of the kelp or the gorse and heather in my nostrils to aid the illusion, I never succeeded, because I missed that nameless something which belongs here and nowhere else. Whether it dwells in the air or not, I can't tell. Here I drink my fill of it every second out of the twenty-four hours of each day. Even the little pink-and-yellow shells on the beach are the keenest pleasure to me. And now you come across my path, and the mere fashion of your speech brings back to me the feeling that I am once more Rouanez de Rozkavel, and not a useless *mondaine* playing a part for which she is as utterly unfitted as a sand-lark to sing in a cage. That is why I am treating you as a comrade, why I, in the most unblushing manner, make a confidant of you from the first, at the risk of your thinking, with some shadow of reason, that I have not escaped the contagion of eccentricity during my long stay in England. I have starved—starved, I tell you; and I am feasting now! Never mind, though; think what you please. It's of no consequence, even if you do suppose me to be a little unbalanced. What matters?"

Olier's heart was beating queerly. "Lady Clanvowe," he said, rising and standing before her, "I have never regretted my native clumsiness so much as now, when I

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

would like to tell you how deeply touched and grateful I am. I—I—can only ask you to accept all—my—my utmost devotion—and loyalty.”

“You are a good boy, Olier de Frèhél; I will do that joyfully,” she said, smiling up at him. “But you must not mistake me for that despicable object, a *femme incomprise*. I have the best and dearest of husbands, a brilliant and charming man, who has never given me a moment’s intentional worry or pain. The only difference of opinion between us is that he likes society, and all society means, while I don’t. He would wish me to take more pleasure in those things that interest him, and yet he has never asked me to attend a single function that he could spare me, and has allowed me to seclude myself whenever it was at all possible to do so. Oh, I am not easy or agreeable, as your father told me once at a court-ball in Vienna: ‘*Vous n’êtes pas facile à contenter, chère madame, car enfin ceci, c’est superbe!*’ I hear him now.” She paused, gave one of her characteristic little laughs, and resumed: “He was a Breton of the Bretons, too, your father, though not quite as much as you are. But now let’s have some tea. My throat is as dry as a lime-kiln, which proves that one is always punished for talking too much. Please ring that bell near the chimney.”

Olier obeyed, and then slowly came back to the broad window-seat where she had momentarily poised herself. His brain was in a maze—a pleasant one to roam through, but none the less puzzling or intricate for all that. What a captivating companion he had found!—so singularly generous and whole-hearted. He would have wished to tell her so, but doubtless she would have accused him again of flattery, and he was glad to see the door open in answer to the bell, since the little interruption would give him time to collect his thoughts. But, as he might

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

have guessed, it only offered a new riddle for his consideration, and, instead of merely glancing at the man who entered, he instinctively scrutinized him sharply.

Tall, thin, with beneath his steel-gray hair a face perfectly immobile and cold, this black-clad attendant would have made an admirable stage ambassador. Dignity could surely be carried no further, and the impassive expression with which he listened to his mistress's orders was in itself a *chef d'œuvre* of training. At the green-carpeted table of a ministerial council such a countenance would have been fittingly surrounded. But in the transformed armory of a dismantled sea-fortress it seemed distinctly incongruous, and struck Olier as the first metrical fault of the Rozkavel poem. "What in the world did she bring such a personage here for?" he asked himself. And as at that instant the object of his wonder glided away—gliding he thought was the only word which could express that silent, apparently weightless tread—he was on the point of putting the question to her, when, guessing his thoughts, as she had already done once or twice, she volunteered the explanation:

"He discords a little in the symphony, does he not?" she said, with twinkling eyes.

"A little," Olier admitted.

"No, glaringly—much more so than Jwala-Singh and his turban, who are at least deliciously picturesque. But Hubert positively venerates him, and thinks him the only being capable of keeping me from breaking my neck twenty times a day during his absence. I am bound to say that all the virtues are embodied in Grafton—but he is oppressive. Still, since he is otherwise perfect, I submit to his protecting airs, as it reassures Hubert."

"He reminded me of the *Statue du Commandeur* just now," Olier ventured, repressing a smile.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Oh no! The statue is a bit noisy compared to Grafton. Grafton is the very cream and essence of silence. I wish he would smash something once in a while, or bump against a piece of furniture . . . to break the monotony, if nothing else. But he evolves with a machine-like precision which precludes any such relief—it is hopeless! And now here he comes again," she finished, in a whisper, as, followed by two footmen bearing a fully set tea-table between them, Grafton drifted in, and stood over them until the correct angle had been attained in the disposition thereof, and a glance from Lady Clanvowe indicated that his tutelary presence was no longer indispensable to her comfort and happiness.

"Ouf!" she breathed, thankfully, as the heavy folds of the portière fell together after him and his satellites. "The tea will taste nicer without him."

"That is sublimated tea," Olier declared, gazing approvingly at the frost-rimmed crystal cup, wherein the iced and lemoned Golden Pekoe was served.

"Summer tea," she said, smiling. "Russian summer tea, if you insist upon a title. But drink it quickly, for I have yet to show you my dogs, my flowers, my familiars, and, in one word, what we will call the kernel of this my fortress."

The tour of inspection through that succession of rooms, one more original than the other, was an unusual pleasure to Olier, who at once became firm friends with Lady Clanvowe's almost constant companions—"Fëal"* and "Fubüèn,"† a Royal Dane and a bull-terrier of exceptional beauty. But he felt the greatest interest that day in what she called her "den"—a vast apartment widely opened to the light of waves and sun by deep-embrasured

* Faithful.

† Gnat.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

windows, and which taught to him in half an hour more about the true Rouanez than months of daily intercourse could have done. Every object there seemed to have an individual little voice to reveal her tastes, occupations, and talents, and his perceptions were keenly alive to each and every one of this concert of hints.

"You are very fond of sport," he said once, pausing before a panoply of curious weapons.

"Of some kinds of sport, very," she answered. "But I do not shoot at live targets, and neither hunt nor fish, though I can never have enough of sailing, riding, swimming—or walking, either—if that is sport!"

He understood without further explanation, and silently added one more item to the already long tally of her qualities. For, like most manly men, he abhorred the woman who prides herself on possessing a "virile" vein of cruelty, and struts "with the guns," greedy for the blood of pretty wood and field creatures.

"You will like my little 'K s' r l' even better than this," she said, suddenly interrupting his mental enumeration, as they paused for a moment in one of the deep windows. "That's my yacht, and as soon as she returns from her present foraging expedition you'll have to give me your naval-officer's opinion about her."

He drew a quick breath, and turned away rather brusquely from her scrutinizing glance. What would she say, he thought, with a sudden sinking of the heart, if she knew how the mere mention of his profession galled him—she who seemed to hold honor and duty so high?

"Poor old France," she said, softly, looking down the jagged line of coast sweeping eastward to the Breton frontier—"poor old France. What a holocaust of splendors is going on there!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"What made you say that?" he exclaimed, almost roughly, starting at the intonation of the words.

"You would think me unpleasantly meddlesome if I were to tell you," she replied, calmly continuing to gaze in the direction of the far-distant Loire-country.

"Yet you told me awhile ago that we were to be friends and comrades." There was disappointment and a touch of irritation in his tone.

"My poor boy," she said, dropping her hand for a second lightly on his sleeve, "did you imagine I supposed you to feel comfortable beneath the unfolding flag of anarchy? The tricolor *passe-encore*, but that . . . ! I am not utterly dense, and when I see a young and healthy man, and a sailor at that—passionately fond of his profession—apply for a year's leave to come and brood it away alone, as you are doing, I am able to account for that furrow between your eyebrows, which has no business there at your age, and also to guess the cause by the signs."

His broad shoulder was turned toward her with singular rudeness, some uninitiated observer might have thought, yet she spoke on, in the ordinary manner of a person discussing the current topics of the hour: "You have evidently puzzled your brain past endurance in trying to disentangle a hopelessly tangled problem. It is no use, believe me. I could stand here and discuss the subject with you for a year and get no further than that. It is no use."

"Tell me, for God's sake, what I am to do, then," he said, without turning toward her, "since you have divined so much?"

"I cannot do that now," she said.

"Why not?" came in the same repressed voice.

"Because I do not know you well enough yet, and, of

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

course, have not thought it all sufficiently over. As it is, I have not done badly, have I?"

"Will you be my conscience when you have done both . . . will you help me?"

"I will do all I can to help you, but our consciences are, I fear, too similar to work well in unison, unless we reverse the proverb and hold that two affirmatives make a negative, which does not sound very promising."

"You must think me strangely unconventional," he said, after a short silence, turning at last and looking at her with troubled eyes.

"No, I do not. I want you to say what you think to me, to come and go here as you please, and to remember that I was your mother's friend. By-the-way," she continued, in a lighter manner, "I am going to call you Olier. I never use empty formulæ with those I like."

And presently he left her—in the deep embrasure, with her two dogs gravely sitting at her knee and the boisterous breeze blowing her hair into little waves of silver—to stride off aimlessly along the edge of the *lande*.

On and on he walked, never once thinking of the miles he left behind him, until the quickening dusk began to mark the lateness of the hour. The sun had set some time before, and huge copper-red columns of crinkled cloud slanted up from below the horizon clear across a sky of dull, dead turquoise, soft to the eye as purest velvet. A low skerry, reaching far out into the sleepy sea, attracted him, and, making his way to its utmost end, he sat down on a flat, gray rock to watch the gorgeous West fade to ashiness. One by one the stars appeared, and untiringly he waited and watched them, following, perhaps for the first time since childhood, the old Breton custom of telling his beads upon those little twinkling worlds shining above in the darkening azure.

CHAPTER VI

Up from the darkling cloud that lay above the wreck of Rome,
Flung forth to stormy centuries, a trail upon the foam
Of fire, there sprang a flashing Star, by deathless Fate's decrees
The Lode-Light of the living world, the glorious Fleur-de-Lys.

This in the wild Crusading roar shook out "Our God's command,"
This lit with strength the ghastly track across the Syrian sand,
This wavered with the vulture-wings o'er thousand battles won,
From Dorylæum's field of fame to leaguered Ascalon.

This bound the hero-brows that met the Moslem's victor powers,
This clad Du Guesclin's silent breast beneath the vanquished
towers,
This filled the gaze of frenzied throngs, that mad and madder
swayed
As sea-like thunders swelled to greet the banners of the Maid.

On high, on high, it flamed the sky, unbroken and unbowed,
And struggling oft from pale eclipse within a misty shroud,
Cast over wreckful Circumstance, to burning song and pen,
An endless mirror-path of steel for strong and knightly men!

And brightly bloomed a smiling land behind the warrior-shield,
The envious ages stood to mark the foison of her yield,
Order and Honor kept her gates, and Kingship held the keys,
But ne'er a laggard sword to shame the sacred Fleur-de-Lys.

No force was then, my France, my France, thy will to bind or
break,
Then was no foreign menace made a coward mob to quake;
The banded nations whispered war, but how they cried for peace
When shimmering squadrons fiercely surged beneath the Fleur-
de-Lys!

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

And shall the Star be quenched for aye in clouds of base desires,
The folk imagine empty things and follow wandering fires?
Sans Loyalty there is no Law, there is a faith that frees;
Down the red rag of Anarchy, God save the Fleur-de-Lys!

The Song of the Fleur-de-Lys.—M. M.

“AND I hear, Miladi, that you think of remaining all the summer in this dismal hole. Surely Trouville or Étretat, or some other brilliant bathing-resort, would have suited a lady of your consummate elegance better.”

“There is no accounting for tastes—especially British tastes, Monsieur. We are credited with being all more or less eccentric across the Channel, are we not?”

Even Senator Dulac's pachydermatous vanity had not been quite proof against Lady Clanvowe's frosty politeness during the last quarter of an hour, for he was not a stupid man, and he was beginning to regret having forced himself upon her cherished privacy. At the beginning of this thorny visit a vague sense of his audacity had exaggerated his habitual pompousness into something almost resembling patronage, but swift retribution was now overtaking him, and he was instinctively lowering his tone.

“Depend upon it, you will die of ennui here,” he resumed, dangling exasperatingly the chain of his pince-nez to keep himself in countenance. He never wore it, since his small, keen eyes needed no such aid. “You are miles from the nearest château, and you will soon find the place untenable.”

“I am never bored when I am alone,” she said, coolly, “which explains why I have taken Rozkavel. I had hoped that it would be inaccessible to visitors.”

The complexion of this shepherd of the people had long since retired from business as a background for blushes, and at this direct thrust he was fain to content himself

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

with moving uneasily in his chair as a relief to his feelings, gazing fixedly the while at the tightly gloved sausages which did him duty as fingers.

"She treats me like a sweep," he was thinking, "but she won't drive me away till I have found out something more about her." And aloud he said: "It cannot be the first time you are in France, Miladi, for you speak our language with a purity not to be acquired abroad."

"Oh, I have often been in France, but I thought we were talking of Brittany."

"It's the same thing."

"Not in the least."

"How do you mean, Miladi? Surely you are aware that we have erased all petty frontiers, and that our great country is now one and indivisible."

"I know, as everybody else does, that you have tried to do so," she explained, with a curious little ripple in her voice.

"Permit me to correct this erroneous impression," the Senator put in, straightening his bulky person with reviving importance. "We have accomplished an unprecedented change throughout our rebellious provinces."

"Not for the better, unfortunately," she calmly stated, observing with pleasure his budding irritation.

"What!" he cried; "you do not think that the subduing of disaffected departments is praiseworthy? Why, we've got these obstinate brutes here under such control that I can report to the government with perfect truth that the spirit of the inhabitant is satisfactory. Do you call this nothing, Miladi?" She shrugged her shoulders, and, goaded by the action, he started off again without giving her a chance to answer his question in words.

"Their beastly patois is being eradicated, their idiotic superstitions will soon be a thing of the past, and within

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

an easily computable time we will have succeeded in levelling all Brittany to our own—”

“Flatness?” Lady Clanvowe suggested.

“Really, Miladi!” gasped the politician.

“Really!” she echoed, mockingly. “Oh no, not really, perhaps only apparently, and even that it is permissible to doubt. Moreover, if ever you should accomplish your purpose, you will only be by so much the nearer to ruin—for yourselves and your country.”

“In what way, pray?”

“In every possible one,” she replied. “Had you, who are at the head of affairs, troubled to use a little judgment and tact—a very little, mind you—you would have seen at once that you are doing your best to break the real backbone of France, with the usual crippling result. Your short-sighted policy—if one can ennoble wild work of that description by so high-sounding a name—has overlooked the fact, patent to all intelligent statesmen—for there are still a few foreign ones—that Brittany, with a trifling amount of humoring, might have been made to play the useful part in your none-too-healthy system that a well-set-up backbone always does. Now, however, you have antagonized your best province—since province you call it—past all possible reconciliation. The deliberate effort to destroy one of the oldest and finest languages in Europe, which you graciously describe as a ‘patois,’ the blows dealt at the beautiful and helpful faiths which are mere ‘odious superstitions,’ according to you, are your crowning mistakes. And let me hope, for your sakes, that you may never discover what the ‘conquered’ race can prove to be, if it ever takes the bit between its teeth.”

The Senator had listened with open mouth to this confession of opinion, and, even when she ceased speaking,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

remained for several seconds silent, visibly at a loss for words—an interval which Rouanez employed in picturing to herself the amused smile with which her husband had greeted similar lapses from true diplomatic poise in the past.

“You seem to have studied the question with surprising assiduity, Miladi,” the bewildered Dulac managed at last to say. He knew little of the English, except that they were an easy-going Protestant people, afflicted with a sentimental liberalism which had made their country the asylum *par excellence* of political criminals. Such sentiments as she had just expressed were rarely audible at his exalted height, but as an Anti-Catholic and “Liberal” he found them doubly astonishing in the mouth of one of the Islanders.

“I have a natural inclination toward lost causes, even when they in no wise concern me,” she replied, with apparent flippancy.

“But,” the other ventured, in a tone far more humble than he had used until then, “don’t you sometimes make enemies for yourself?”

“All the time. It’s one of my chief occupations.”

“I suppose an aristocrat like you is above caring for public opinion?”

“Oh, entirely. But so must you be, by-the-way, or else your roughshod riding over popular feelings can scarcely be accounted for.”

“On the contrary, it is pure devotion to a great and noble idea that actuates us. We seek by sure means to instruct those who need instruction most.”

Lady Clanvowe laughed outright. “Bravo, *Monsieur le Senateur!*” she said, with exquisite mockery. “You may end by believing what you say, if you say it often enough. Only you had better double the blinkers you have put over your eyes.”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"We see clearly enough for our purpose the havoc your highfaluting patrician principles have worked," he retorted, really angry now. "Sincerely, you cannot claim that the nobles have played a pretty rôle in France, especially since the Revolution."

"Since the Revolution? Most of them assuredly have not," she calmly rejoined.

"Ha! You admit that?"

"Certainly. But it appears to me that you have heard enough unpleasant truths for one sitting, and as I particularly dislike offending any one under my roof-tree"—she glanced quizzically at the massive stone ceiling—"I think we had better stop now."

"Not by any means!" he hotly exclaimed. "For, once that I am able to see the other side of the medal, I'm not going to be such a fool as to let you off like that. Fire away! I want to know what those duffers say of us outside France."

The elegance of his phraseology filled Lady Clanvowe with such delight that she suddenly turned upon him an almost amiable face.

"Of course," she said, repressing her amusement, "seeing that I did not ask you here, I may argue that wider latitude in outspokenness is allowed to me, and, since you insist, I will avail myself of it. On one point only I partially agree with you. The representatives of France's old aristocracy have done little or nothing to stem the muddy current of anarchy, because they were and mostly are so desperately poor. Of the rest we can make two heaps. The '*ralliés*' to the Napoleons or to the Republic, who have in so doing lost all right to call themselves nobles, and the unspeakable villains and degenerates who, by selling their ancient names and prostituting both blood and honor by degrading marriages,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

have found a shorter and dirtier road to prosperity. There are black sheep in every flock, and we needn't talk of those—”

“Who have bowed down before the Golden Calf?” the the Senator interrupted.

“No, the Brazen Serpent—the original dollar-sign, by-the-way—to stay the plague of poverty; and those have stooped so low that it is impossible for them ever to get up again. You will argue, it goes without saying, that there are some nobles left who are neither too poor nor too dishonored to come forward in defence of their beliefs and creeds. But these are not only hopelessly in the minority, they have also allowed themselves to become infected by the universal *je m'en fichisme* of the age, and this is why I would divide the responsibility for the ruin that is fast overtaking France almost in halves between them and you.”

“You are severe to us.”

“No, just—which is terribly difficult in the face of what one sees. You are making France the laughing-stock of Europe—France, which was once the greatest country of all—and that must cause all decent people, whatever their creed or nationality, to look askance at you.”

“You hate and despise all republics, evidently.”

“Not in the least. They are all admirable—in the abstract—and I have even seen one or two in working order. But what I do despise is unfairness of any sort, and your particular Republic, that knows neither freedom nor equity, is a mere farce.”

“I am glad you are not French, Miladi,” he said, looking for the first time straight at her.

“Why, please?”

“Simply because you might prove a dangerous mal-content and a too-convincingly eloquent one.”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"You overwhelm me!" she said, freezing up again immediately.

"Not at all. Not at all," he protested, with an unctuous wave of one pearl-gray-kid hand. "You would, indeed."

"Fortunately my being English must reassure you on that point, and there is only one other to which I care to draw your attention. I have come here, *Monsieur le Senateur*, to enjoy a well-earned rest, and I would be obliged to you if you were kind enough to tell all those who, like yourself, might conceive the gracious thought of brightening my solitude, that under no circumstances will I make any more exceptions, and that my doors are shut for good." She rose, and, clumsily following her example, the great Dulac, sadly diminished even in his own magnificent esteem, stood for a second staring at her.

"No wonder we hate your class as we do!" he suddenly said, in a burst of angry frankness.

"It's a pity you don't always speak like that," she approved. "One could endure you so much more agreeably."

* * * * *

"That's altogether the most extraordinary woman I ever met," Dulac commented, as, enthroned in his puffing, reeking, forty-thousand-franc motor-car, he whirled in a choking dust-cloud along the indifferently kept chaussée toward the Brest road—an emblem, had he but known it, of modern civilization, which dashes on to the object of the moment, childishly delighted with its own speed and distributing dust and a bad smell. "I was a fool to force her to receive me," he thought again, "and yet I don't regret the experience. . . . Still, I'd like to know why she bought Rozkavel from us—for she has bought, and not rented it as she pretends. Ah, it's about time to demolish what's left of those beastly aristocrats!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"*Le vilain bonhomme!*" Lady Clanvowe was at that very instant saying, aloud. "*Pouah!*" She threw some powdered amber on a perfume-burner, opened every single window in the room with hasty hands, and, snatching up her sailor-cap, flew down to the beach to get away from what she considered a "Dulacian atmosphere" as speedily as possible.

During the past weeks she had lost much of her first joy and enthusiasm at being once more on her native soil. At every turn some new discovery wounded or enraged her, and, pacing up and down the wet shingle, as she had often done of late, she began to fret and worry anew. Like Olier, she wondered whether nothing could really be done before the hopeless words "too late" stared Brittany in the face. Brittany had always been the little handful of salt that leavened all France. But the salt was melting fast, and, when it was gone, what then? What were all right-minded people thinking of? *Laissez-faire, veulerie*, a total want of energy and pride, seemed to spread each day more and more among the discouraged higher classes.

"*Les ex-dirigeants*," she muttered, pushing with the tip of her foot a huge medusa, abandoned by the tide to melt and shrivel in the sun. There was still a faint hint of the vivid azure and deep rose-pink which frilled its soft transparency when it floated like a great opalescent bell "between two waters," and she asked herself whether it could still be revived again. "It's a toss-up," she said aloud, seized by a fancy for superstitious experiment that often assailed her; and, promptly drawing on the leathern gloves she always carried in her pocket for similar fishy ventures, she lifted the drooping, trembling mass in both hands, carefully avoiding to tear or damage it, and ran across the rocks to a broad pool sunk in the sea-weed,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

beside which she knelt down to slide it in. For what seemed to her a long time, the limp jelly remained inert; then, imperceptibly, it began to pulsate, and one by one its dainty skirts spread out, expanding fold by fold, until at last, gloriously tinted again and shining, the living omen oscillated above the dusky bed of green Venus-hair carpeting the pool.

“Not too late! Not too late!” Rouanez cried, jumping up and clapping her hands together. “The next tide will carry it back to its home again; but its luck remains with me!” And, inexplicably encouraged and comforted, she went back to resume her quarter-decking on the shingle.

Extremely fair-minded in all things, Lady Clanvowe was in the habit of debating with herself the questions that interested her, consciously trying to consider them from every point of view. Now Brittany and Brittany’s fortunes had been her chief preoccupation ever since she had been old enough to form an opinion, but even her most judicial attitude had been unable to render the idea of a republic in connection with this old Celtic land other than absurd. Time and usage, however, had begun to dull the sense of this incongruity between the two, when the former’s persecution of the latter had revived and sharpened it to a keenness never previously felt. Long before her return from England, reports of the government’s abuses of power—abuses so continuous and varied as to show that a systematic and aggressive oppression was directed against the people of her race and kin—had roused her unforgiving anger. But now that she was able to see for herself the lengths to which the authorities were going, her fighting blood began to stir in good earnest.

How could it be possible that all that was honorable and true in France, regardless of birth and creed, did not

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

rise in indignant protest against such injustice committed in the name of liberty? After all, the questions involved were not merely local, but of vital interest to the country at large. The pressure bore heaviest upon Brittany only because there the state of things which the party in power sought to destroy found its pre-eminent example. Protest, indeed, of a sort, was not lacking throughout the land. Men of all classes, even those who by birth, education, and belief were diametrically opposed to the instinctive and hereditary Catholic Legitimists, denounced the governmental lack of policy in unmeasured terms. And yet nobody dared to act in open opposition. Wordy bathos? Oh, there was a plethora of that; but action? Even the famous Nationalist Party had merely contrived to cover itself with ridicule whenever occasion presented.

"How long is it to be endured?" she asked of a sand-piper, who, startled by her voice, brought up on one slim leg for a second, and then, with a contemptuous shrug of his dark-pointed wings, resumed his erratic, tail-jerking progression, without paying further attention to this inquisitive human being. He might have been a French Cabinet-Minister, for all the impression a sane question produced upon him.

"Happy bird," thought Rouanez, as she wearily returned to her irksome musings, "who can enjoy life according to his own ideas!" There were so many people in France now whose simple and harmless beliefs and modes of existence were being assailed by intolerance armed with power.

Eighteen thousand educational institutions of the Church closed, the hospitals, both civil and military, deprived of their admirable nursing sisterhoods, the wishes of the dead coolly set at naught by the passing of the latest Devolution Bill—nothing less than legalized sacrilege and rob-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

bery, that one—crimes large and small against the innocent and the defenceless! Even with an effort she could not dismiss the long list from her mind, nor its black and bitter import. France alone, for all that she cared, might take the shortest road to complete marasmus, if fallen France so desired; but what of poor little rock-strewn, stout-hearted Brittany, then? A shiver ran between her shoulders. A people of peoples, so brave and loyal and pure-minded and stanch—her Bretons; difficult to turn from the right path, but, when once led astray, worse than the worst in their terrible violence and recklessness; grim and unrelenting and hard as their own menhirs. They had borne poverty and privation with uncomplaining courage, and their faith and loyalty had remained unshaken through countless trials and tribulations, but she knew what would be the result of a long-continued course of the present treatment, and that result was no pretty one to contemplate.

For several days she had not seen Olier de Frèhél. That night he was to dine with her, and she suddenly made up her mind to withdraw from his path the tacit barrier which she had built up across the road to confidences. She had wished to study him for a while before allowing him to speak; but the need of a second opinion upon the subject of her vexatious cogitations was making itself so strongly felt that it decided her to provoke, if necessary, a full revelation of his views.

With a lighter heart she paused to watch a flock of gulls wheeling on lissome wings above the edge of the tide, and presently followed them out along the already half-submerged chain of rocks, that stretches its bizarre length from the shore to what has been known immemorially by the curiously Arabic name of *Le Tombeau d'Almanzor*—a huge, gray stone not unlike some monument fashioned by

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

human hands. In a moment she had escalated the steep side of the great block, and was inhaling deeply the invigorating breeze, all laden with the scent of violets and fresh brine, and bruised, stranded marine growths, which is the particular savor of that coast. The sea was smooth as a floor, and of a faint, pearly hue, striped near the indistinguishable horizon by delicate breeze-marks and cloud shadows into rich moiré effects, so that a far-away steamer with its plume of gray smoke seemed to be retreating, hull-down, in the sky. For half an hour she scanned the vast half-circle of water with expectant eyes, as the "Kestrel" was due from another foraging expedition; but no sign of the graceful white yacht was visible to its eager captain, who vainly narrowed her keen eyes beneath her hand to search the vagueness of the sea-rim, and finally, with an impatient little sigh, swung herself down to the rugged causeway and ran home to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER VII

Safety or rest is none; the deep, expanding
Dark under beetling cloud, without a sail,
Blind, helpless power void of understanding,
Heaves at the fret of every passing gale.
Cry, then, "A Cliff to breast the Sea!" my brothers—
 "The King!"

The land is sick, beholding fevered visions
Of Greed and Envy hard to be endured,
And o'er her trouble shout uncouth physicians
By worse infection shall the ill be cured.
Give us the Hand whose touch can heal, my brothers—
 The King!

Avaunt the "science" babblers make a trade of!
By weakling pens shall Want and War be banned?
States are not built on stuff that dreams are made of,
Nor is foundation in the shifting sand.
Pledge me the Corner-Stone true-laid, my brothers—
 The King!

Despoiled of strength, forgot their ancient chrisin,
The storied towers are sinking day by day;
Then, ere the ruin reach the red abysm,
Rise! and with fiery thought beyond dismay,
Gripping the sword-hilt, cry to God, my brothers,
 "The King!"

The King.—M. M.

THE dinner was neither long nor elaborate, for Rouanez always considered time spent at table a wicked waste, and, although careful of the menu for her young guest's sake, she gave far more attention to the beautiful sulphur-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

colored carnations of the surtout than to the admirably prepared dishes.

"Come to my den," she said, as soon as the dessert-plates had been removed by the oppressive Grafton. "It's pleasanter there for our coffee; besides which that room is the only one here that can lay claim to something resembling a balcony."

"This one is of your creation?" Olier asked, following her upon the broad balustraded ledge which, with a supreme contempt for difficulties, she had caused to be bolted to the granite of the wall.

"Yes, naturally. Forts lack such conveniences, as a rule," she replied, laughing. "And rightly so in more senses than one, for my little architectural effort is not exactly in keeping with the rest of this unadorned building. But, such as it is, it happens to be immensely comfortable. See how splendidly we can watch the moonrise from here." And she pointed to the strangely large red orb slowly emerging from the sea, its dim defaced human semblance seeming to bear an expression grim and wicked rather than grotesque.

"Br . . . rr . . . rr! I have seen more cheerful evening scenes," Olier remarked, glancing at the cold, black water and the sardonic moon amid the half-encircling frame of rocky shore.

"Won't you have a cigarette to warm you up, Lady Clanvowe?" he added, holding out to her his open case.

"No, I don't feel like smoking just now," she said, almost impatiently. "Please go and fetch my violin from the table in there."

"Are you going to play for me at last?" he asked, delighted.

"Go and fetch my violin," she repeated. And, a little surprised at her tone, he hastened back into the big room

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

lit by heavily veiled lamps, in quest of the precious instrument.

Without a word she took it from him, and without any preliminary poses or attitudes instantly began to play, her face turned almost completely away from him, one knee resting on the low balustrade in an easy, familiar attitude, utterly devoid of conventionality. Prepared as he was by his former experience out there on the shingle, he nevertheless felt a curious shock of all his nerves as he listened to what at first seemed but another outburst of impatience rhythmically expressed. But as the swift staccato melody proceeded on its erratic way, emotions and perceptions hitherto dormant awoke in him and more than once made him catch his breath.

Somebody possessed of more judgment than simplicity of expression has said that the voice of the violin is idealized sorrow; forgetting, however, that this instrument, which lies nearest the human heart, is supremely capable of being made to render every feeling, even when, as was just now the case, unsupported by any accompaniment but that of wind and sea. Olier, at any rate, found no flaw in its song as it flowed on and on, linking in effortless mastery quaintly sweet Breton berceuses — touching little epitomes of ancient mother-loves — to barbaric Tzigan airs that found an echo in the fitful sea-breeze; wonderful rhapsodies woven of heart-shaking hoof-beats, trumpets far off, and the ring of steel; and snatches of unknown entreaty, calling, calling onward, to something high and noble and divine; until, brutally almost, with one last, deep, stirring chord, as once before the whole superb sound-phantasmagoria ended, and the wash of the waves remained in sole possession of the vast night.

Leaning against the wall, Olier did not move or speak, and, glancing at his white face, Lady Clanvowe thought,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

anxiously, "Have I overdone it?" Then, in her coolest, calmest manner, she said aloud, putting her violin down on the ledge:

"Fortunately this mood does not often come upon me when there is some one listening."

"I agree with you," came from Olier, in a dull, half-awake sort of way, "unless you want to send people crazy."

"Nonsense!"

"I beg your pardon," he corrected, straightening himself and coming nearer to where she was standing. "Your genius is of a dangerous sort. It twists the soul like a rag, and turns the heart inside out."

"Your soul and your heart need not mind the process. They are of the right kind. I have stolen a peep into them, and I am satisfied of it," she added, more seriously.

"Both are sorely lacking in decision and courage, nevertheless."

"So you believe. But you must allow me to differ."

"Only because you do not know the worst of me," he said, almost sullenly.

"Well, supposing you sit here by my side and confess," she suggested, pointing to a basket-chair near the one she always occupied when on the balcony. "There's no time like the present."

He obeyed, and, after a pause, without looking at her, slowly began:

"For a long while, Lady Clanvowe, I have been questioning the possibility of my remaining in the navy. You guessed a part of my reasons, I know. But perhaps even your extraordinary penetration has not divined how hard it would be for me to abandon the sea." He drew a short, sharp breath as his eyes rested for a second

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

on the moonglade raggedly dividing the endless procession of foamless rollers.

"Perhaps I can do that, even," she said, gently; "but please go on."

"The fact is," he resumed, still gazing away from her, "that there are certain compromises nowadays demanded in the service that I cannot bring myself to accept. Those concerning religious matters I might have put up with, after a fashion. I make no secret of my ideas, and, although perfectly aware that they stand in the path of my future advancement, I think I could have succeeded in surmounting such obstacles as they present. But there are other difficulties much more arduous. You are acquainted, I understand from previous conversations, with the spy system which, first in the army, and more lately in the navy, has been wrecking career after career and life after life. That is getting very much on my nerves, more especially since, a year or so ago, it brought to grief the captain of my ship—a Breton like ourselves and a man of sterling worth. Summoned to Paris, he was ordered, in peremptory terms, to discontinue the religious observances 'which,' it had been reported, 'shocked and disturbed his comrades'—those were the terms employed; and knowing himself to be without fortune, and too old to hope for success in any other profession, he listened in silence. When, however, a further demand was made for the non-attendance at church of his young wife and his two little boys, he drew his sword, broke it across his knee, and, setting the two pieces on the official desk, left the room without further parley. He is at present vegetating with his little family in a fisherman's cottage not far from here. I don't think they have altogether more than seven or eight hundred francs a year to live upon. It's a heart-breaking thing

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

to see." He paused, and, as she offered no comment, he resumed, in the same monotonous way:

"You see, one must cringe and crawl or be broken. This is the outcome of the ferocious Jacobinism of to-day. The Powers that Be cannot endure any sort of intrinsic superiority in their subordinates. Wealth is the only distinction they acknowledge, for money is sacred in their eyes. An honored name, a title, are the blackest marks against a man. What they really want is slaves in every branch of the service. Why, even the liberal professions are becoming impossible! The judiciary is expected to stop at nothing, as has, I think, been sufficiently demonstrated by the case of the unfortunate Marquis de N——, who, as you may remember, was kept by his examining magistrate for two years in solitary confinement, and barbarously 'sweated' once a week at least, before the *Juge d'Instruction* was finally compelled to send him before a jury, which, as it was by chance composed of honest men, acquitted him on the spot."

"Being given that he is a Marquis, he can talk of luck," interposed Rouanez.

"You may well say so. And yet a plain citizen, a very worthy man indeed, whose only drawback in governmental eyes was that he had the manner and opinions of a gentleman, was not long ago indicted for murder, on patently manufactured evidence, and only after several months of secret confinement was allowed to appear before the tribunal; when the presiding judge, one of the old school, publicly congratulated the investigating magistrate upon his having succeeded on this occasion in breaking all previous records for 'asinine obstinacy and wilful prejudice.' Such arbitrary acts are of almost daily commission. Their number is increasing by leaps and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

bounds, and, honestly, one does not know any longer in France where to turn for common justice."

"France is disintegrating," she assented. "No one could have watched the process more carefully than I have—from afar off, it is true, but none the less constantly. Since my arrival here, indignation has crowded out nearly every other feeling I am capable of. But what can one do except fret and fume?"

"A great deal, perhaps," he muttered so low, that she guessed more than heard the words.

"Speak up! Tell me what you mean!" she exclaimed, sitting suddenly bolt upright in her chair and fixing him with imperious eyes.

"Wait a moment, Lady Clanvowe, I'm coming to that presently. Meanwhile, do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, is it true that you received that worm-eaten politician Dulac here to-day? Hanvec, my incorrigible news-gatherer, told me so, but I refused to believe him."

"He was well informed, as usual. Dulac did call upon me—forced his way in—after a fashion—because if I hadn't been seized with a sudden curiosity about him he wouldn't have got in at all. But thanks to the fact that he is the new proprietor of Rozkavel—"

"Dulac has bought the Fort?" Olier asked, incredulously.

"No, no. The Castle of Rozkavel—my old home."

"Good Heavens! Why didn't you buy it, Lady Clanvowe? I didn't know it was in the market."

"Neither did I until too late, unfortunately, although my agents have been on the lookout for a chance of purchase, year after year. I have never ceased to regret its

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

having been sold at my father's death in order to get together a little dowry for me. My guardian was an obstinate man, who would not hear of delay in the matter, and, since I was scarcely more than a child then, my entreaties fell upon deaf ears. Alain de Morsan got it for a song. His wife was a Meridionale, who hated Brittany, and hastened to get rid of it the moment she became a widow. Poteau, the rich manufacturer, was the next purchaser, as you probably remember, and my husband made him several offers through an agent, but he would not sell at any price. Now, however, Poteau's daughter has just married Dulac's son, it appears, and the wily Senator, who is extremely anxious to obtain a footing among his constituents, has paid a fancy price for the estate."

Olier shrugged his shoulders angrily. Dulac as châtelain of Rozkavel will be a pretty sight to contemplate," he grumbled. "Rozkavel—the Cradle of the Rose*—the Royalist Rose! A fine place for that porker to wallow in!"

"It can't be helped now," she said, quietly. "But tell me, Olier, why you seemed so perturbed at Dulac's visit?"

"Because Dulac is a thoroughly bad man, and, in spite of his heavy, coarse appearance and behavior, a singularly quick and shrewd one. Knowing him as I do, I believe he came here for some purpose of his own, certainly not from ordinary curiosity, or even snobbishness. Poteau would have been quite another pair of sleeves. He is a harmless old chap, proud of his wealth, reasonably stingy and passably vulgar, but by no means a bad fellow; whereas it is annoying to find that Dulac is interested in your presence at the Fort."

* The meaning of the Breton name Rozkavel.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Perhaps," Rouanez suggested, "since he intends to spend the summer a few short miles from here, and since he is a married man, he only wishes to establish neighborly relations."

"I am not at all of that opinion," Olier said, decisively. "Dulac is a beast, but, as I have just told you, a very intelligent and wide-awake one, and even social ambition of the most virulent sort would never induce him to commit such a *bêtise* as to bring you and Madame Dulac face to face."

"What's the matter with Madame Dulac?"

"Oh, a whole lot. To begin with, she is said to have been more than . . . lively . . . in her young days; at any rate, when Dulac, then a famished journalist—annexed her—she was occupying an unequivocal position behind the bar of a *brasserie* in Montmartre. They lived dishonorably together for several years, she paying the greater part of the expenses, and then, discovering that her lover was getting rich, she bullied him into marrying her, without drums, trumpets, or witnesses, except the necessary legal ones. To-day the couple are millionaires two or three times over, and the ex-barmaid gives herself excruciating airs of virtue. She is—if you will pardon the roughness of the simile—one of those self-made prudes who would put trousers on a pair of sugar-tongs, and she now exacts the most ferocious respect for the *convenances* from all who approach her."

"Of course—the zeal of the proselyte," Rouanez smiled.

"Exactly," Olier responded. "And my portrayal is not in the least overdrawn. May luck preserve you from ever convincing yourself of this with your own eyes. Bales of false hair and cascades of real diamonds; a blotched, vicious face, thickly powdered and painted, a voice like vinegar, only more so, and a shrewishness that

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

beggars all description. She is, I really believe, the worse of the two."

"That seems difficult!" Lady Clanvowe protested.

"No, bad as he is, she has the advantage of being callously cruel. It is she, for instance, who last year conceived the precious idea of importing American oysters into Cancale in order to send them on to Paris as native products, and sell them there at an enormous profit."

"Dear me! I think I read something about it at the time. Wasn't there a row of sorts?"

"I should think so. The Cancalais boarded the first oyster-laden vessel that entered their port, destroyed four million shell-fish, thrashed captain and crew to a jelly, and were only prevented from scuttling the ship by the untimely advent of the gendarmes, who had a hot time of it, too. That little venture cost Dulac something over fifty thousand francs. It is refreshing to think that if he tried it again, especially hereabouts, the bill would probably be footed with blood."

"It would serve him right, the villain!" she cried, indignantly. "Imagine trying to ruin the wretched little industries here! Haven't the poor devils suffered enough from the failure of the sardines? Oh, it is odious! Olier, what can we do—you and I—to help them? Tell me now, please, please!"

She had risen and began to pace the length of the balcony, her long, white train making a shining wake behind her, and he let her pass and repass him several times before answering her question.

"Why don't you tell me?" she demanded, irritably, pausing at last and almost striking her hand upon his shoulder.

"Because," he said, slowly, "I needed just those few additional minutes to make sure of myself. Now my

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

mind is made up—about a good many things. In the first place, I am leaving the navy.” His face was calm, almost expressionless, but there was an unmistakable ring of decision in his voice.

Bending quickly forward, she glanced scrutinizingly at him. “You are quite certain?” she asked.

“Quite. I cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, nor, in strict loyalty, sympathize with and abet Royalists and Catholics while serving the present style of republic. That is clear to you, is it not?”

“Yes. But can you afford to abandon a career which, if not brilliant in the monetary sense, is nevertheless acceptable in that respect for a man of your simple tastes. Forgive me, Olier, for my frankness, but it is well to count the cost sometimes.”

“Your frankness, like everything else coming from you, is all kindness and consideration,” he said, much touched; but, interrupting him, she continued talking, rather rapidly, and as though greatly troubled:

“You are quite, quite sure that it is not my harum-scarum influence which has weighed with you in deciding? You see, it would be a terrible responsibility to assume, and, although I am generally perfectly ready to face the outcome of my words and actions, yet in this case—” She broke off a little breathlessly, her delicate features drawn with anxiety. Gently taking her hand, he raised it to his lips.

“Your influence, dear Lady Clanvowe, is the best and most wholesome one I have ever felt. Please do not vex yourself with doubts as to the single-mindedness of my resolve. It was inevitable, and I would have reached it sooner or later in any case. That I did so now may be indirectly laid at your door, perhaps, and for this I am grateful to you, since the course I am adopting is the only

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

one for an honest man. Now, however, will you sit down again and let me tell you something more concerning a question you put to me awhile ago?"

Silently she did as he asked, and for more than three hours the bright moon-rays shone on two faces that seemed cast in the same mould of irrevocable resolve.

When at last he rose to go, he suddenly pointed to a plain little golden fleur-de-lys clasping a spray of white heather on the lace of her sleeve.

"Will you give me that?" he said, simply. "I think I might carry the emblem again now."

"You can, indeed," she murmured, and with quick fingers she snatched it off and fastened both flower and badge to the lapel of his dress-coat.

"Ah, well!" she said, softly. "At least the gloom and irresolution of the past are gone! Let Dulac have old Rozkavel, Olier; perhaps you and I can make this the true Cradle of the Rose!"

CHAPTER VIII

Coral, red coral? No, 'tis not the bruited
Blood of the Depths: a weed-growth drifting free,
By the strong ground-swell after storm uprooted
From ledges under sea.

Though tint for tint without a shade at issue,
And branch for branch in form and measure true,
It images that rare Capræan tissue
Framed in the stainless blue.

A quaint duplicity, but perhaps another
May show, sweetheart, before the eyes that mark:
What will you liken to this wandering brother
Of all the soundless dark?

The floating Flower of Sleep, along the edges
Of shoreward waves; its dreaded Twin of Stone
Deep-drowned and silent as Lethean sedges
Where never wind is blown?

Our Life that is, too restless for enjoying,
Fearful of all, forgetful of the slime
Strewn with those other selves, beyond destroying,
Lodged in the bones of Time?

No, to a dearer thought my choice is lessened,
One only gloss to which your heed I crave;
Song, though a flower slight and evanescent,
Rideth no shallow wave.

Up from the deeps that know her silent session
She lifts to ocean-music heaving slow,
To reach your feet, the poor and frail expression
Of all that dwells below.

The Red Coral-weed.—M. M.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

LIFE at and about Fort Rozkavel continued to go on in its usual placid and uneventful way—at least, to all outward seeming. But deep beneath the calm surface there were significant quiverings, like those in water when it has almost reached the boiling-point.

A terrible storm had swept along the coast a few days after Rouanez and Olier's long conversation, leaving in its track more than one ruined corn-field behind the dunes, and an increased weight of anxiety in many a heart, for the wheat and oats and rye of that region are famous, and sell at comparatively high prices. But the farmers were determined to recoup themselves a little in the only way possible by gathering from the beach the immense quantities of sea-weed wrenched by the waves from the rocks and skerries along the shore, thus augmenting the always insufficient provision that can be made on the one day annually allowed by the government for harvesting the living growth, which is strictly preserved during the remainder of the year.

The sea was still in a wallowing confusion, the water rising and falling in drunken-looking billows that topped thunderously over the reefs and crushed themselves out into spreading sheets of yellow foam; but to such dangers the coast population is hereditarily indifferent, and the spectacle presented by the stretch of stone and shingle abandoned by one of the highest tides of the season filled Lady Clanvowe with delight, as, clad in her bathing-suit, she stepped upon the Fort-glacis at four o'clock the morning after the storm. The whole space was black with people armed for the fray with sharp tridents, the women with their heavy *bélinge* petticoats kilted high from their bare legs with broad bands of cloth, and red or blue kerchiefs tied closely over their coiffes to preserve their whiteness from disaster; the men

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

wearing for the occasion — for it was singularly raw — the winter hood of greenish-blue swan-skin, no longer encountered in other parts of Brittany, which, closely fitting over the head and lower portion of the face, like a knightly camail, gave these gaunt giants a striking resemblance to the war-chiefs of feudal days. An interminable file of side-rack carts was ranged at the edge of the splashy stretches where the brown kelp-fleeces lay the thickest, and from everywhere resounded like a battle-cry the “*D’ar bezin! . . . D’ar bezin!*”* of the harvesters.

Bending far out over the parapet, Lady Clanvowe, completely fascinated, watched the concerted rush of the multitude, bent upon profiting by this lucky chance to “do the government”—as they joyfully called it—out of as much *bezin glaz*† as they could manage to tear up before the jealous sea galloped them off its borders. The other weed, the wreckage of the storm, already lying crushed and bruised in mountains at the foot of the cliffs, was for the present merely their pretext for appropriating something of much greater value—the fresh, living product—and they took it brutally, fiercely, floundering waist-deep into the wash of every receding wave, indifferent to the risk of being swallowed up by some hole or crevice, and storming every new position as if a personal enemy had been intrenched behind each successively emerging rock.

Carried away by her growing enthusiasm, Lady Clanvowe ran down to mix with the toilers. Her secret had been well guarded as far as the outside world went—the outside world meaning here all that was not strictly Breton—but among themselves the word had been passed

* “*Au goëmon*”—“To the weed!”

† Green, or live, *goëmon*.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

that "Kountez Rouanez" had returned, and as soon as she appeared a loud hurrah greeted her.

"Come along, *Itron!** Help us chase away that ruffianly sea who's keeping us from our own!" they cried, thrusting her forward with a willingness to make her head the fighting-line that came naturally to them, since their nobles had always been in the van since the beginning of time; and, laughingly entering into the spirit of the thing, she splashed her way to the front of the Rozkavel clan—no longer the great lady who created a sensation wherever she showed herself sparkling from head to foot with the Clanvowe diamonds, but almost again the same little Rouanez de Rozkavel who had been the life and joy of similar bygone raids.

"*Ai ta! Ai ta!*" † she called out, running at full speed after a viciously back-spouting wave, spitting and slaver-ing all over her, with the shouting crew at her heels. From beneath her down-jammed sailor-cap one long braid had escaped, and was floating behind her like a silver streamer, but her rosy, wind-beaten face was that of the *Vamèzel* of long ago, and her blue eyes sparkled with fun.

Old Hanvec, standing on a near-by point of rock, chuckled as he followed her inimitably graceful onward rush. "Here's the leader they are braying for!" he cried, in sudden enlightenment. "The last one left of the old blood. *Ah, Gwà!* ‡ What a pity she isn't a man!"

"She's worth twenty!" a gruff voice said at his feet, and, looking down in surprise, he saw Guènék, an ex-farmer of the Marquis de Rozkavel, who had stopped a moment to readjust his load of kelp.

"She is," Hanvec admitted. "But who's to tell her so and ask her to help us? They do say she's rich as a

* Lady.

† En avant.

‡ Malheur.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

queen, and, if she wanted to, we'd soon be provided with what we lack to tumble their strumpet of a republic into the ditch."

"Why don't you get your young master to do that?" the *metayer* demanded. "He is the only person she allows inside her gate. Why don't you?"

"He'd soon send me to the rightabout," Olier's old retainer replied. "I tried to approach him a while ago about something like it, and you should have seen his scowl, Père Guènek—it was worth the price of entry."

"Bah! Try again. In his heart he is with us. Gué-madeuc told me so before leaving for his new post. But here I am gossiping instead of working. King, President, or Devil, we must have kelp!" And, hitching his ungainly burden higher upon his shoulders, the worthy man turned and strode away without another word.

"He is right," Hanvec commented to himself. "Our Count could perhaps make her help us. But I'm not going to risk being sworn at again. Supposing I asked her myself? She couldn't eat me up."

For a little while longer he pondered, nodding his gray head and shifting from one leg to the other like a melancholy heron, and looking vaguely like one, too, with his gaunt figure and stooping shoulders, perched on his rock above the half-flooded tidal flat. During the last weeks he had heard much, and stored in his inexorable memory fact over fact of a decisive nature, and he knew well enough that if he could impart some of this knowledge to a personage able—perhaps willing—to act, it would weigh heavily in the balance.

"I'll risk it," he said aloud again, and, instantly descending from his observation post, he moved in the direction of the group, taking a short breathing-spell below the Fort talus.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The sun, a great crimson ball, half-swathed in angry whorls of purple storm-cloud, had but lately peeped above the rocking ocean-rim. But there was no time to waste, for the tide would soon begin to turn, and before he could reach them the line of harvesters with a wild hurrah went plunging in again.

"Confound them and their hurry!" he grumbled, sitting down on a boulder and pulling his short wooden pipe from his pocket. "I'd have liked to speak to one or two of those who live farthest inland. It will mean a fine long tramp to go and seek them out. But where's the use trying to get hold of such lunatics?" he concluded, carefully sheltering the weak, blue flame of a malodorous sulphur match in the hollow of his hand. "She, too," he growled on, "risking her good health in that cold water! Is there any sense in that? Every day, all day—and damn the weather—she's in and out of it. Should she fall sick now, we'd be in a fine plight."

Evidently the changes of the years did not weigh upon Hanvec's sanguine spirit. He scarcely had a doubt as to the success of his self-imposed mission. She could give but one reply. The daughter of the Rozkavels belonged to her people, he felt, overlooking with sublime indifference such trifling matters as marriage-ties and altered nationalities; and, considering these things, his customary philosophy was rudely shaken by her reckless behavior. Presently he quite lost sight of her, and the mere idea that she could be so foolish as to go and drown herself before his chance of enlisting her sympathies had come made him fidgety.

"*Hé! Jouan!*" he called out to a broad-shouldered lad backing his newly filled ox-cart up the slope. "What's become of the *Itron?*"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The young fellow's white teeth gleamed in a broad smile of amusement.

"She's away beyond the reef, taking headers in the breakers, and riding in upon them!" he shouted back. "She's a daring one with the water, she is!"

"But, sacred name of a pig!" Hanvec cried, rising with surprising alacrity and walking quickly toward the cart, "somebody should fetch her home! She'll be carried off! The sea's treacherous as Judas Iscariot after a high tide like yesterday's. What are you all thinking of?"

Jouan stared at the irritable old gardener.

"What ails yourself?" he asked, in astonishment. "Are you her guardian now, that you bristle up like that? Surely she's of age, and knows what she's about."

"She doesn't," Hanvec asserted, "else she wouldn't be going on like this. Here, boy," he added, "I'll mind your *calèche* and pair, and give you a pipe of tobacco into the bargain, if you'll go and watch her a bit. You're the best swimmer in five villages."

"Well, I'm damned!" the lad exclaimed. "You're not going dotty, old one, are you?"

"Shut your noise and do as I tell you!" Hanvec ordered, with sudden authority. "I have my reasons. Go now!"

To refuse obedience when graybeards speak is still a very serious misdeed in Brittany. Still, poor Jouan hesitated. He did not fancy missing the opportunity of hauling in another load of the precious weed. But Hanvec was not, as a rule, a man to be trifled with, and, besides, derived much dignity and importance from his privileged position with Olier.

"I must go if you say so, of course," he said, sullenly. "But she'll pick me up nicely for interfering with her. It's an impertinence you want me to be doing, that's

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

what it is. And like as not she'll slap my jaw for an insolent pup."

"Let her; what matters?" was the growling rejoinder.

"Much obliged, my lord gardener. You're a good plucked one where another man has to face the music."

"Enough!" Hanvec thundered. "Are you going, you ill-mannered, offensive, white-livered sand-louse! Must I help you on with my oak-leather slipper, or offer you my arm to lean upon?" His wrinkled face suddenly became malignant as he drew himself to his full height and towered over the tall youth.

"One's off . . . one's off!" Jouan hastily acquiesced. "You're peppery for your age, godfather!"* And, avoiding the old man's uplifted arm, he turned to go.

At that moment, however, a dripping little figure raced up the slippery slope, carrying an armful of those beautiful algæ, looking so wonderfully like soft, pink coral, that are sometimes washed from the bottom of the sea by a deep ground-swell.

Two sighs of profound relief greeted her appearance, and as she passed them, still at a run, with a quickly thrown "good-morning," the old man and the young one exchanged a glance.

"There!" Jouan mocked. "There's your baby that I was to go and watch over! She doesn't look as if she wanted much help, does she?"

"Oh, get along!" Hanvec retorted, "How do you know she hasn't caught her death of cold, you slow-brain?"

Apparently convinced that his "godfather" had suddenly fallen into dotage, the *gars* shrugged his shoulders, spat in his hands, and, seizing hold once more of his long ox-goad, returned to his job without one glance at

* A title often given by young people to their elders.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the gaunt shape of the gardener, already ascending the talus in Rouanez's wake.

"Is it possible to say two words to your lady?" Hanvec demanded a few minutes later of the servant whom, oblivious of electric bells, he had summoned by a fearful thundering on the iron door. The man, a tall, blond, blue-eyed Saxon, gazed at the tall, blue-eyed, gray-haired Celt with instinctive hostility and the offensive hauteur of flunkeydom. He spoke neither French nor Breton, and, scanning the humble working-attire of the intruder, was already turning to reclose the postern-door in his face, when the latter, coolly setting his back against it, repeated his question in the loud voice which most people seem to think will assist a foreigner's comprehension of an unknown tongue; and eye and head reinforced well a distinct flavor of command.

"Well! Of hall the himpudence and haudacity!" the footman exclaimed, measuring the native's wiry frame and broad shoulders. "Get out of it, you 'eathen!"

Hanvec wasn't one to "get out of it," even had he understood the order, and matters were assuming a serious aspect when Jwala-Singh, who had seen the encounter from the other side of the yard, came opportunely between the two angry men.

"Let him come in," he said, in his soft, flexible voice. "My lady does not want these to be turned away."

The footman scowled, but drew off, unwilling to dispute the Sikh's authority, since Jwala-Singh, his mistress's personal attendant, had never been known to make a mistake. Meanwhile, Hanvec was taking stock of the picturesque mediator. He had served in the navy in his distant youth, and a dusky countenance was no novelty to him, while the rich costume appealed to his Breton eye for gorgeous color.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Come," Jwala-Singh said, with a courteous gesture of unmistakable welcome, and Hanvec, disdainful to so much as glance at the discomfited footman, followed his brilliant guide, who, judging further parley useless, ushered him into a sort of waiting-room, indicated a chair, and left him to contemplate the granite walls at his leisure.

In a very short while he was there again, silent as ever, to lead him along a bewildering labyrinth of inner passages to the "den," where Lady Clanvowe, wrapped in a loose, white cashmere dressing-gown, her astonishing tresses falling like a silver cascade almost to her feet, was breakfasting from a tray in the sunny window-seat. She did not speak until Jwala-Singh had vanished like a shadow beneath the portière; then, smiling up at her venerable visitor, she asked him in Breton to be seated.

"Not in your presence, *Itron*," Hanvec deprecated, standing straight and proud midway between door and window.

"Please do!" Rouanez persisted. "We can talk better so," and, without more ado, the newsmonger of Kremarzé took possession of an escabeau, which he fetched from a far corner rather than accept the comfortable arm-chair to which she had motioned him.

"Aren't you one of the Frèhél men?" she asked, putting down her cup.

"Yes, *Itron*. I have been gardener at Kremarzé ever since I came back from the service, many years ago."

"That was after my father's death?" she inquired, watching him from under her long lashes, curious to find out whether he, too, knew who she really was.

"Yes, *Itron*; which is why I only 'remind' you from your likeness to Madame la Marquise that was. You're the very spit of her," he admiringly concluded.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"And tell me, my friend," she returned, repressing a smile, "have you come on an errand from Monsieur Olier?"

Hanvec gazed into the depths of his red-knitted cap for a moment, turned the bright object slowly inside out, like a stocking, and coughed.

"No, *Itron*, no!" he declared at last. "And, to be honest, I'd sooner not have the master know that I have made so bold. I've come on an errand, it's true, but not his."

"Ah!" she said, bending over the little silver tea-pot as if wholly taken up with an investigation of its contents. "Ah!"

"And," Hanvec continued, mastering an unusual embarrassment, "that's just the rub. I'm afraid to tell what it is."

Rouanez looked up and fixed her dark-blue eyes upon him. "That's not as it should be between old Bretons like us two," she quietly put in.

The wrinkled, troubled face smoothed suddenly and grew beautifully calm and hopeful.

"You haven't disremembered the Rozkavel ways, *Itron*," he said, with a gleam of triumphant gratification.

"Do we ever forget?" she asked, simply.

"No, sacred-good-blood! No! And, being as it is, I can speak out, after all. You'll not mind what I've got to say, even if you don't take up with it." He passed the back of his hand twice across his mouth, shifted on his inhospitable seat, and glanced first over one shoulder and then over the other at the corners of the huge room.

"Can we be overheard?" he whispered, bending toward her.

"No," she reassured him, "certainly not. And, moreover, we two alone here speak and understand Breton. Go ahead."

CHAPTER IX

Abeam, abeam, abreast the gleam of sullen-sinking day,
Ghostlike, a shadow glimpsed and gone behind the sleeting spray,
Our island lies, a grimmer guise than haven yet hath worn,
A blotch of Night, a loathlier sight than ere the world was born.

Her ploughing skerries lift the wave to smite the viewless verge,
Her strangled sea-caves gulp and roar disgorging to the surge,
Her headlands tear the racing rack, and beastlike in their den
With cracking jowl the bowlders growl to grip the bones of men.

Bear up! bear up! the gunnel's low to scur the leeward spume,
And Darkness driveth down to bid the sea-smoke writhe and fume;
Hark! down the corridors of fog the blasting squalls do blow—
Boom, boom, the bellowing cliffs defy their everlasting foe!

Ahead, ahead, the breakers spread a monstrous moony-white,
A phantom flame that pallor came to beacon all the night;
Through, through we go—one gasping throe, and in the reef are we,
For drownèd souls that ever tolls the bourdon of the sea.

A lantern close beside the surf, another far and high,
A lane in line betwixt the crags that thunder as we fly,
And, lo, th' eternal walls are cleft, and into blackness blind,
We jam her through the champing jaws with half the deep behind.

There's lace, and knives, and Yankee weed, and English cloth to wear,
As lightly flung as e'er was swung the foam of Finisterre;
And many a *gars* from Er to Groix, and maid of Monts d'Arrée
Shall bless the sail that dared the gale and beat the Douaniers.
The Fraudeurs.—M. M.

GRAFTON was not pleased. Born at Clanvowe, and in the employ of the Clanvowes since at the age of eight

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

he had been intrusted with the cares of knife-cleaning in the manorial pantry, he considered himself part of the family dignity and pomp—and by no means the most negligible part, either. So profound, indeed, was the opinion he held of his own value and importance that Sir Hubert alone, though even he was still and would always remain to him “the young master,” ever ventured to oppose or chide him.

From these circumstances sprang Grafton's defects, similar to those sometimes observable in other human institutions of long and unquestioned standing. He was meddlesome, he was officious and authoritative and obstinate to an incredible degree, but, since undeniable virtues remained as a counterpoise to these vices, the mere idea of pensioning him off had never entered anybody's head. It was he who had suggested with deferential cleverness that he should accompany her ladyship to Brittany, “in order,” as he had told Sir Hubert, “to relieve her of all the troubles and cares of a foreign sojourn.” And fully aware that no one else on earth could be so efficient in the organization and stewardship of her establishment, the just then somewhat worried diplomat thought that this seemed the best possible plan.

Sir Hubert and his lovely wife had never been separated for any great length of time, and it was not without qualms that he contemplated an enforcedly protracted absence; for although he knew how well she was qualified to take care of herself under all circumstances, she was so infinitely precious to him that his ordinary impassibility was not proof against haunting anxiety, that curse of all true affection.

“You will watch over Lady Clanvowe, Grafton,” he had said, at the last. “She is so unselfish that she never considers herself at all.” And the “Yes, Sir Hubert, I

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

will watch," constituted for both a solemn engagement to try to prevent if possible that Lady Clanvowe should drown herself, break her bones, starve herself by forgetting the hours of meals, or otherwise damage her exquisite, impulsive little person. Further those two British minds did not soar at the time.

Since the arrival at Rozkavel, however, Grafton's ideas on the subject had been widening painfully. To begin with, he found himself in the position of a hen attempting from the bank to follow up the adventures of a duckling in forbidden waters, since—to continue the simile—beyond the safe standing-ground of Rozkavel Fort lay an element utterly unknown to him—namely, Brittany. Language, customs, people, manners, all were equally strange, and he included all in a heartfelt and sweeping hatred. He had sojourned with his master and mistress in most parts of Continental Europe, and had even accompanied them to Asia and America, but no other country had aroused his insular prejudices or inspired him with distrust and apprehension to the same degree.

"Her ladyship's just like a colt let loose in the paddock after a rainy week in the stable," he thought to himself. "She's not the same at all." And he turned malevolent ears and eyes upon all who approached her—all excepting Olier de Frèhél, for, as he reflected, eagerly grasping at this small crumb of comfort, "he's a respectable young man, at least, and his dress-coat was cut in London, I'd swear!" It would require some forceful combination of circumstances to convince him that daily intercourse between his beautiful mistress and so very good-looking a youth could so much as cause local gossip. Lady Clanvowe of Clanvowe Hall and Grassmere Castle was above such things. Besides, to do him justice, he knew and respected her far too much to connect the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

mildest sort of flirtation with a woman of her rare and refined type.

On all accounts save this one poor Grafton's days and nights were loaded with carking care. If it had always been irksome to Lady Clanvowe to be watched over and followed about, now she looked absolutely resentful when he approached her with a coat or a scarf during her nightly promenades along the Fort glacis; and once when he had condescended so far as actually to implore her not to swim out beyond the breakers unaccompanied by a boat, she had come perilously near telling him to mind his business. Of course, she had not said so; but the flash of those deceptive eyes, that were never two minutes alike, had spoken for her, and he had made—for him—a precipitate and almost undignified retreat. What could the wretched man do? Sir Hubert was now entirely beyond reach, and Jwala-Singh, instead of siding with his colleague, saw only with Lady Clanvowe's eyes, and would have calmly preceded her down the crater of a volcano had she bidden him do so. It was enough to make a devoted majordomo tear out his hair in handfuls to find himself so helpless, but, fortunately, Grafton's gray locks were getting too thin to allow of undue wastefulness, and he perforce abstained.

"If her ladyship," he ventured to Olier (who spoke perfect English), while helping him out of his light summer overcoat one night—"if her ladyship should happen to go on board after dinner, would you be so kind, my lord, as to suggest her changing her evening-dress for something warmer? Her ladyship had a severe cold in the early spring, and her throat is still delicate."

For the first time Olier looked kindly at the hatchet-faced butler.

"I shall certainly attempt what you ask, Grafton, but

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

I am afraid Lady Clanvowe may not like it. She is not fond of being taken care of, I have noticed."

Grafton's pale eyes turned ceilingward as if to take Heaven to witness that this was indeed the case.

"Thank you, my lord," he said, bringing them respectfully down again to the level of Olier's amused face. "I beg your lordship's pardon for having presumed so far." And with the gesture of a grand chamberlain ushering the ambassador of a friendly Power into the presence of his sovereign, he threw wide the door of the transformed armory.

"I've got my job cut out if I am to mediate between Lady Clanvowe and Grafton," Olier thought, as he advanced to greet her. But for the present at least his mission was turned into a sinecure by the appearance of Rouanez, who wore, instead of one of her customary diaphanous white dresses, a blue serge of the simplest make, with two tiny golden anchors serving as its sole adornment on the tight-fitting high collar.

"The 'Kestrel' is here once more," she called, joyfully, "and as I want you to come for a short cruise to-night, I took it for granted you wouldn't mind my being in my captain's uniform!"

"I don't mind it in the least," he answered, delighted to be quit of his promise so cheaply, "and there is nothing I shall enjoy more than going out on that model boat of yours, Lady Clanvowe. But I wouldn't be surprised if we are in for rough weather. It's beginning to blow up pretty lively!"

"All the better. It will just suit my purpose," she added, in a lower tone.

"Oh! You have a special purpose to-night?" he asked, offering her his arm to pass on to the dining-room.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“Yes, a very special one, which I’ll tell you later.” And she began to speak of something else.

It was blowing freshly when, immediately after swallowing their coffee, they descended to the beach, where the “Kestrel’s” *canot* was drawn up on the shingle. Darkness had not yet quite set in, and a young moon, as yet lustreless and dull as unpolished silver, hung listlessly above a low bank of fog that gathered half the horizon in a veil of mystery. Later, the night would be velvet-black, and Olier, glancing at the dark rocks where the surf was already spouting in tall jets of foam, wondered a little at the “special purpose” which made the lovely captain of the “Kestrel” risk her darling yacht along so grim a lee shore. But he did not venture to question her, for on the water she was a very different person from the easy-going “comrade” he always found her at Rozkavel.

As to the “Kestrel,” Olier knew that she was always ready for anything: a quiet, proud, dignified, plucky ship, where every object was to be found in its proper place, every man at his proper post, and really ordered more in the style of a man-of-war than of a luxurious pleasure craft. She was a big boat, too, with a crew of forty sailors, engineers, and stokers, under the command of a master and three mates. But, contrary to all rules followed on private yachts, there were no stewards, no butler, and not the shadow of a stewardess, though the galley was occupied by an excellent cook and his efficient assistants. Once when Olier had asked Lady Clanvowe her reason for dispensing with functionaries usually regarded as so indispensable, she had explained that “land-lubbers exasperated her,” and that, moreover, she had never felt the need of having a woman staggering in her track from one end of her stateroom to the other. Smart was certainly the word best expressing everything aboard, from

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the manner in which the men handled the *canot* that took them alongside her white ladder, to Lady Clanvowe's business-like and entirely natural way of ascending the upper bridge and relieving Captain Penruddock of command. Olier already knew that Cornish mariner well, and held him in a high esteem, which was in no wise diminished by the captain's unaffected modesty and his profound confidence in his owner's talents as commander and navigator of the "Kestrel."

"Her ladyship's a wonder, sir," he had told Olier during a previous excursion. "I've known in my time—and for the punishment of my sins—yacht-owners who played at navigation. Some of them had really studied the craft, and some had not, but the results were the same, more or less: a capful of breeze blew all trace of knowledge out of their brains. Now, her ladyship is different. She's a better sailor than I am myself; never at a loss what to do, and always cool as a cucumber—that's the only way to express it. Indeed, I never feel the 'Kestrel' so safe as when in her hands."

To-night, however, Olier noticed that though Captain Penruddock's period of responsibility had come to an end for the time being, he was keeping up a sort of aimless pendulum-promenade along the deck—up hill and down dale, as the ship climbed the rough combers—instead of retiring to his room for a smoke as he invariably did; thus indicating with unconscious ostentation how useless he considered his presence the minute Lady Clanvowe took charge. Then, too, after watching him for a few moments as he passed and repassed in front of the lighted chart-room, Olier became almost certain that he could read a worried expression in the deep lines of the captain's face.

"What's the matter with him?" he thought, bracing

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

himself as the ship suddenly dropped her nose into a watery valley, and, turning round, he glanced at Rouanez, who with a quartermaster at her side, was heading the "Kestrel" into the black heart of the rising gale. In a few minutes she ran down the steps of the ladder, and, quickly consulting the aneroid in the head of the companion-way, went back to her post without speaking. Something unusual was certainly taking place. Could it be—and yet how could it be?—related to Rouanez's "special purpose"? For the captain had certainly not been admitted to that secret, of which he himself was still ignorant. Considered thus, Penruddock's attitude acquired a sudden interest, and Olier presently bore down upon that perturbed officer with intent to discover what was in the wind.

"Where are we off to?" he asked, smiling. "From present indications I should say America!"

Captain Penruddock did not smile in answer; his eyes narrowed a little as if seeking something in the gray murk ahead; then he softly and nautically swore to himself.

"Why, what's up?" Olier asked, genuinely astonished this time. "Has anything gone wrong?"

They had reached the door of the chart-room, and, with the brusqueness born of sudden resolve, the "second in command," as he always punctiliously designated himself, beckoned the naval officer in. "Can you give me a few minutes, sir?" he asked, formally, dropping the tone of deferential camaraderie to which Olier had led the way from their first meeting.

"Certainly. I don't suppose Lady Clanvowe needs us."

"Neither do I," Penruddock answered, almost curtly, and again Olier stared.

"Well, then, tell me what weighs on your mind, captain, for certainly something does, and, if I can be of any

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

service to you, I need not add that it will give me much pleasure."

Penruddock sat down on a swivel-chair before the chart-table, ran the forefinger of his right hand inside the collar of his smart, gold-laced white drill coat, and cleared his throat, as if something stuck there obstructing his power of speech. He was about fifty-five; a tall, gray-haired man of the British naval-officer rather than the conventional merchant-service type, with the finely modelled features of his Celtic shire, and small, close-cropped side-whiskers, almost white. Once he must have been remarkably handsome, and even now, in spite of weather and hardship, his was a striking face, lighted up by eyes of singular keenness that seldom smiled and yet never looked sullen or harsh.

"Monsieur de Frèhél," he said at last, "are you—yes or no—aware of what is going on?"

"What is going on?" Olier asked, looking straight at him. "Going on where?"

Captain Penruddock pointed over his shoulder in the direction of the Breton coast, then, bringing his hand back in front of him, said, significantly, "There—and here."

"No," Olier said, quietly.

A puzzled look amounting almost to bewilderment came into Penruddock's eyes. He caught up a pair of compasses and mechanically measured the width of the "Passage du Four" on the huge chart before him; his fingers, led by habit, accurately fixing the two sharp points on Ouessant-town and Brêlès respectively, but his mind for the time being as unconscious of these two points of a sailor's reckoning as though they had never existed.

"I cannot bring myself to the rudeness of putting my question differently," he hazarded, without looking at his

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

companion, "and I must ask you to believe, sir, that in any case I am not prompted by impertinent curiosity or the faintest shade of disloyalty to Lady Clanvowe."

Olier nodded. "Please repeat your question in any form you think best," he said, evidently quite unruffled by his interlocutor's persistence.

Captain Penruddock threw down the compasses, half rose, and, sitting down again, passed his hand across his forehead.

"I am in a—a—a—very disagreeable predicament," he explained, "entirely at a loss how to act, and, if you don't consent to help me, I do not know what I shall do."

There was so much distress in the voice now, the honest, bronzed face was so troubled, that Olier spoke at once in quite a different tone.

"How can I help you, my dear Penruddock, if you do not tell me what disturbs you?"

"I thought you could guess."

"You thought wrong, then."

"You seemed to me to be in Lady Clanvowe's confidence, you see."

"What's that got to do with it? Speak, man. Don't beat about the bush like that."

"Strictly speaking, then, I am concerning myself about matters which are beyond my province. I am hired to command this ship in its owner's and official captain's absence, nothing more. But, as it happens, Lady Clanvowe has made me her debtor for life by doing for me more than any other living creature has ever done, and I am grateful. When, therefore, I am led to believe that she is running into a grave danger, is it not pardonable that I should forget everything else, including discipline? I would not say all this even to Sir Hubert, Monsieur de

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Frèhél, and it is only because you are Lady Clanvowe's compatriot, and perhaps her ally, that I do so to you."

Olier had lighted a cigarette and was industriously blowing rings of blue smoke straight before him. His attitude was not in the least defiant, nor even lacking in courtesy, and the smoke rings were useful guiding points to focus his eyes upon.

"Will you tell me what leads you to believe that Lady Clanvowe is about to run into danger?" he asked, calmly. "You are not dramatically inclined, Captain Penruddock, and your words are too significant not to be taken seriously. Yet for my part I am absolutely at a loss to account for them."

"Since you will have it so," Penruddock rejoined, "I'll tell you the whole story from beginning to end."

"I wish you would," Olier said, with admirably repressed curiosity.

"Well, a week ago, while on my way to rejoin the 'Kestrel,' lying alongside the quay at Falmouth, where we had gone for provisions of sorts, I came face to face with a fellow-townsmen of mine who is forwarding-agent to one of our chief gun manufacturers. I would have passed on with a quick 'good-evening,' for I was in a hurry, and he seemed a bit the worse for liquor, but he insisted on buttonholing me in order to find out where I was bound to, where I had come from last, and other similar trivial details.

"'Going back to Brittany, eh?' he said, with a sidelong look. 'There'll be a rumpus there before long, or else my name's not Tregarthen.'

"'What are you talking about?' I asked, pricking up my ears a bit, for I thought how annoying it would be for Lady Clanvowe, who is enjoying the thought of a long, quiet summer, if what Tregarthen designated as a rumpus

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

came to upset her plans. Still Tregarthen, whom I have known ever since we were boys together in Penzance, is not a very clever chap, and on second thoughts I felt like laughing at myself for listening to his gab, but for once I was doing him an injustice.

“‘Some political party or other there is arming itself,’ he said, lowering his voice, ‘and that pretty completely, too. I could tell you who’s conveying the contraband of war, and the name of the consignee, but mum’s the word. I don’t want to get into trouble.’

“‘Nonsense,’ I said, to lead him on. For, although I couldn’t have told what impelled me, I was getting anxious to hear all he knew.

“‘Not a bit of it,’ he asserted. ‘Walk with me to the end of the parade and I’ll tell you.’

“It was raining, and we had the place almost to ourselves. ‘See here, Penruddock,’ he said, puffing the smoke of a vile cigar in my face, ‘what I’m going to say is to remain between us,’ and, without giving me time to acquiesce, he went on. ‘The man who’s carrying those guns is the owner and master of a little steamer that seems to be all hatches, and has a curious habit of changing its name whenever convenient. He knows his business, and he has had a finger in every revolutionary deal of the past twenty years. Now he’s been crossing back and forth to some little God-forsaken island on the Finis-terre coast, and his bills of lading are made out to a man by the name of Ros—Ros—Roscaivle, a rich chap I should imagine, if it’s his own money that pays the freight.’ Fortunately we were walking in the middle of the street just then, and he could not see my face.

“‘Queer name,’ I said, after a while. ‘How do you write it?’

“‘R-o-s-c-a-i-v-l-e,’ he spelled, slowly. ‘Some Breton

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

chief, I should think. They say those old beggars are sour on the government.' To make a long story short, I got rid of the man as soon as I could by means of a drink or two in a near-by bar, and went aboard puzzling my head sorely. The different spelling of the name might be due to Tregarthen, and yet again it might be done on purpose by . . . by . . . the consignee." Captain Penruddock paused long enough to give Olier time to say something if he wished, and, finding that that imperturbable man was quietly lighting a fresh cigarette from the butt of the old one, slowly resumed:

"Lady Clanvowe is the last of the Rozkavels, Monsieur de Frèhél." And again he paused.

"Yes, I think so," Olier said, indifferently.

"Also," Penruddock continued, "she is passionately fond of her country."

"That's nothing extraordinary for her to be, is it?"

"Yes and no. Because she was practically brought up in England, as you know, and has seldom set foot on Breton soil since her marriage."

"Even so, I'm still in the dark, Captain Penruddock. You do not imagine, I suppose, that Lady Clanvowe is plotting against the French Government, do you?"

There was a moment of tense silence. The two sailors—the blunt, matter-of-fact Cornishman and the polished, keen-witted Breton noble—were looking straight into each other's eyes, and neither gaze was lowered.

"I admit," Captain Penruddock said, "that it does not seem unlikely to me."

Olier shrugged his shoulders. "You are raving, my dear captain."

"Perhaps. But for many reasons too long to detail I have some cause to hold this opinion. I would go to hell and back again for Lady Clanvowe's sake, Monsieur

de Frèhél, if it could give her a minute's pleasure. But, by God! this is a tall order—if I am right—for her I mean, because for myself . . ." He broke off, rose, and came closer to Olier.

"It's a life-and-death game, sir . . . for her—do you understand?"

Olier, too, had risen, his face suddenly set like flint.

"Why don't you tell that to her?" he asked, stiffly. "Do you suppose that I would dare approach her with such a cock-and-bull story?"

Penruddock's suspicions for the first time began to seem to him less well-founded, and his scrutinizing eyes wavered.

"It would be unfortunate to put the idea into her head if it is not already there," he slowly pronounced, his brow puckered with anxiety.

Olier burst out laughing. "That's a new way of looking at it," he said, lightly. "I wouldn't risk it if I were you . . . and," he suddenly added, more gravely, "if I were you, too, Penruddock, I wouldn't breathe a word of all this to a soul, here or in England. It is never advisable to spread unfounded rumors of that sort."

"Who d'you take me for?" the elder man indignantly remonstrated. "Bandy her name about? I told you why I spoke to you; but I give you my word of honor that come what may I sha'n't do so to any one else."

"Thank you. And now let's go and see what your charming conspirator is doing. The weather must be still thickening, to judge by the way the 'Kestrel' is putting down her forefoot."

"You go, Monsieur de Frèhél," Penruddock suggested. "If I've been accusing her wrongly, I'd as soon not meet her just now." And he held the door open for Olier to pass out.

CHAPTER X

I love you, dwellings of the long ago,
Whence my youth issued to unclouded skies;
Beneath your eaves my heart her nest doth know,
And with the wren and martlet homeward flies.

Fair-walled ye stand, unworn by time or change,
Yet your deep-linteled windows seem to be
Like to an old man's faded eyes and strange,
Musing upon a near eternity.

Round ye a glamour of old sunlight shines,
Drowned by the lulling call of dove to dove,
(Ah, wingèd memories!) and your woven vines
Flower and breathe sweetly from the dust of Love.

Shades of the generations darkly drawn
Lengthen themselves athwart your thresholds gray;
Cradled have ye the dreams of many a dawn,
And covered o'er the fires of many a day.

La Chanson de la Bretagne.

To his surprise, the first thing that caught Olier's eye on stepping on deck was the life-boat hanging outboard in davits, ready to be lowered at a minute's notice. The night was every bit as black and stormy as he had expected, and the wind was plucking the wave-tops into pelting spindrift with a continuous hissing sound; but the "Kestrel" scudded from crest to crest as unconcernedly and nearly as lightly as a toy boat on the ripples of a duck-pond, and Olier felt his heart warm to the perfect ship.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Above him, on the upper bridge, Lady Clanvowe, in sou'wester and oil-skins, thrust her chin over the canvas dodger and peered down; then she beckoned, and, as he obediently climbed the ladder, he heard her hailing the forward lookout:

"Fo'c'sle there! do you see anything broad abeam?"

"No, nothing yet, m'lady!" came back in muffled monotone, and Olier, who had reached her side, asked, smiling: "Watching for derelicts?"

"No," she answered, a trifle irritably as he thought—"for a confounded rock that must have melted into the dark."

"I would leave that rock be for to-night," he said in Breton, low and distinctly, looking gravely at her.

"What for?"

"Because I have something serious to tell you before you go further in any direction."

She glanced quickly at him, read the weight of meaning in the deep, gray eyes fixed upon hers, and, with her usual quickness of decision, clapped a whistle between her square, little, white teeth and blew shrilly. In twenty seconds the "Kestrel," with engines un-reduced in speed, was tracing a large, wallowing circle across the charging seas, heading for home, heeled to a wind alive with scurring spume that stung the faces of those on the upper bridge like nettles.

"What's up?" Lady Clanvowe demanded, as soon as the manœuvre had been successfully accomplished.

"I'd sooner tell you later," Olier bawled in her ear. "It's too long a story to be discussed whilst we are pirouetting like this."

As a matter of fact, the change of direction, bringing the "Kestrel" broadside to the wind, made the keeping of one's feet a matter of paramount importance.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“Don’t,” Olier began again, “relinquish the bridge. Act as you always do.”

Lady Clanvowe nodded, shrugged her shoulders, and went on staring before her into the thick blackness that hid the bight of Rozkavel Bay, while Olier wondered at her submissiveness. Another woman, he reflected, would have either declined to act without further enlightenment, or else would have showed temper at being asked to remain in ignorance until better opportunity offered. She, on the contrary, seemed wholly taken up with her present duties, not one of which she neglected, until, on reaching the partial shelter of the cliffs, she sent for Captain Penruddock, handed over the command, and, acting on another hint from Olier, told him to run the yacht out to sea for the night, and to be back for orders next morning at ten. The slung-out life-boat screamed her way down to the water, unhooked, shoved off, and, hustled by the waves like a cork, made for the shore; Olier, who could have steered blindfolded there, standing up at the tiller in the stern; and after twenty minutes of lively dancing, he and Rouanez were left alone on the shingle, to watch the white boat labor back into the thick gloom, its oars straddling through the surf like some very precise and methodical insect’s legs—an insect too self-respecting to be worried or put out of time by mere weather.

Neither spoke, even then, and it was only after several minutes that Rouanez, unbuttoning the ear-flaps of her sou’wester, lifted to his a pair of questioning eyes that gleamed curiously in the clear white light of the little lantern he held. “Tell me at once,” they seemed to say, and, walking slowly by her side toward the Fort, he did so.

“Poor old Penruddock!” she commented, when he had concluded. “Nice, devoted soul, Penruddock, but I am

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

sorry to find him so inquisitive. However, it does not in the least matter; he's honor personified, and, besides," she concluded, with a sudden low laugh, "I hold him in the hollow of my hand." She formed a cup with her little palm, held it up toward Olier, and, pointing with calm assurance to its rose-leaf concavity, repeated: "The hollow of my hand—there!"

"Will you tell him that I spoke to you of what he said?" Olier asked.

"Certainly not. Why should I? Forewarned is forearmed, you know. No need for that sort of explanation."

"Well!" Olier exclaimed. "Well!"

"Well, what?"

"Oh! I was only wondering how it comes that your soul and heart and pluck should have been imprisoned in a feminine envelope."

Again she laughed at the naïveté of the compliment. This boy was in the way of becoming an indispensable source of amusement, she felt. "Envelope and contents make *très bon ménage* together," she retorted. "But look here, Olier, things are going awfully slowly, I am afraid. If we don't hurry, the hour will be missed—I mean the psychological moment for action."

"I know that as well as you do," he said, stopping short a few yards from the iron postern. "I will see Kébèn de Kèrhardéc to-morrow, and come in the evening to report to you."

"You needn't do that; I'll join you at the cross-roads of Tremaza, near the Calvary, and go on from there. You'll ride, of course?"

"Yes, naturally; it's too far to walk. I had better not go in with you now, perhaps."

"Not perhaps, but certainly. It's awfully late already, and your clothes must be drenched. Good-night, Olier—

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Kenavo.* Await me to-morrow at four sharp, at the foot of the Cross."

"At the foot of the Cross," he echoed; and then they looked at each other for a second, as if the words had fallen strangely on the thick, damp air.

"Shall I ring?" he asked, stepping toward the preposterous electric button.

"No. I've trained them never to expect me, but never to be out of the way when wanted; and this surly entrance has a new perfection. Wait and see."

She slipped her hand into her pocket, pulled out a gold chain weighted with pretty trifles, and showed him the tiniest of keys. "Bluebeard's task would have been simplified if Joseph Bramah had lived then," she said, lightly. "See how an inch of silver masters tons of solid iron." She pushed aside one of the seemingly firm bolt-heads, felt for the small key-hole, and without an effort unlocked and rolled back the whole well-oiled mass. "I merely tell them to leave the inside bars down," she explained.

"But where in the world do you find workmen capable of executing such things?" he asked, much entertained.

"I have a sapient locksmith in my train, my good friend—the under-footman. It's always well to be provided against emergencies when one goes to forlorn places!"

She turned to shake hands, and, before Olier could raise a finger to assist her, she had closed the door, and the light patter of her little sea-boots on the pavement of the court-yard reached him over the wall. He listened to them as long as they could be heard, and longer, for in the silence of that sheltered corner of the night they seemed to merge into the beating of his heart.

* Au revoir.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The succeeding day was a most brilliant one. The storm had left no traces this time, save a clean-washed sky of delicate blue, arching cloudless from horizon to horizon like an inverted bowl of precious enamel, and a few additional pieces of drift-wood on the beach, with here and there a long, thorny branch torn from the big blackberry bushes clustering on the ledge of the *lande*.

Rouanez had not brought many horses with her to Rozkavel, but she rarely left England without her favorite hunter, Sacripant, a golden bay that had carried her cross country for two years now, and who had been raised on the Clanvowe stud-farm. She was riding him that afternoon, and they made a pretty picture, as, preceded and followed alternately by the two dogs, they galloped across the firm grass-bound sand behind the dunes. Sailors are proverbially bad horsemen, but proverbially only, for there are many exceptions to the rule, Olier being one of those, and Rouanez another, who, when not at sea, practically lived in the saddle—a saddle, in her case, by the way, as light and unobtrusive as the best maker of Vienna could fashion from special materials, for she disliked being separated from her horse by double thicknesses of leather and padding, even more than holding him in with a bit, or even a pelham. The mere snaffle was always effective enough in her persuasive, coaxing little hands. To-day she spoke twice to Sacripant in the tone she adopted when he was expected to put his best foot forward, and, when in a fit of mischievous gayety the young thoroughbred shied at a fluttering net hung up to dry over a hedge, she stretched forward and slapped him, half warningly, half tenderly, on the side of the head, without—thanks to her suppleness—checking his pace by the least weight upon the reins.

The farm of Kèrhardéc, whither she and Olier were



KÉRHARDÉC FARM

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

bound, was a good distance off, in a green, fertile nook sheltering under the rock walls of a gorge, where a tiny river—scarce deserving so ambitious a name—ran down to meet the sea. The Kèrhardécs had once owned thousands of acres; in fact, the entire *coulée* of arable land that extends as far back as the village of Houlik, six or seven miles up country; but since the Revolution their property had steadily dwindled, until to-day, even counting a tract of salt marshes to the west of the farm, it barely sufficed to nourish the last remaining representatives of that still influential family of provincial noblesse—comprising Kébèn, his little boy, and his grandmother, Dame Isilt, a typical old Royalist whom time had left unchanged in opinions and vigorous in body. Little remained of the ancient *manoir*. One peaked-roof tower was still intact, and on each side of it a solidly built, blue-slatted wing extended across a quaint, high-walled garden, where the flowers of other days bloomed nearly all the year round. Rouanez was eager to renew her acquaintance with the splendid old Chouan widow whom she remembered so well, and once more she chirruped to Sacripant, who profited by the permission to break joyfully into his hunting gallop.

Seated on the Calvary steps at the cross-roads of Tremaza, Olier had thrown his horse's reins down, in token that, if the sagacious and faithful animal so willed it, the short grass mixed with wild thyme and delicately frosted with salt was his to crop. Above him the huge granite Crucifixion rose in tier after tier of primitively carved little shapes of saints, angels, and archangels, framing the great central Figure on the Cross—all of the soft, uniform gray of granite, time-toned and melting into exquisitely faint shadows of scarcely deeper velvetiness in the slanting mellowness of the afternoon sun. A few months be-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

fore a fierce struggle had taken place there, when the assembled *gars* of ten parishes had successfully defended the Calvary against the gendarmes of the Republic, bent upon overthrowing this monument of the dead ages, and one corner of the massive entablature was newly broken, the ragged tear of the weather-worn coat showing the fresher tint of the inner stone. Olier himself had been far away on his cruiser then, but the newspaper reports of that fight had thrown him into one of his rare fits of anger, and he had not forgotten. Indeed, he was thinking bitterly of it now, his eyes fixed on three or four tiny patches of brown lichen on the step where his feet rested, that looked really like dried blood; and so absorbed was he that he did not hear the muffled thunder of Sacripant's lightly shod hoofs until Rouanez's clear voice roused him from his brooding.

"*Hé, Olier!* Are you asleep?" she called out. "C'Haro is treading on his reins."

Olier, a little dazed still, ran to his horse, and, readjusting the bridle, mounted. "I am incorrigible," he said, shamefacedly, joining her, cap in hand. "But this spot is full of haunting ghosts."

"We're going to lay those ghosts, once and for all," she interrupted, with a suddenly hardening face. "Come, Olier, we are late, and it's still quite a distance off."

He glanced toward her, and for a long moment continued to look at the graceful figure, in its tight-fitting, pale-gray habit made in one piece, and the small, silver-crowned head with its pale-gray straw sailor hat—almost the exact *nuance* of those shining tresses—pushed off from her forehead at a singularly becoming angle. She was an artist in small as in big things, and instinctively attended to the merest details of attire with a security of touch that was never at fault. In spite of present

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

worries, her native air had been good to her, for never had she seemed so absurdly young. Indeed, while dressing for her ride, suddenly tempted to consult what she called her "cruelty mirror"—a large looking-glass set purposely in the crudest possible light—she had smiled at her smiling reflection. Even the scarce visible crumpling of the delicate skin beneath the eyes, like that of an apple-blossom petal twelve hours gathered, which had sometimes showed there when she was very tired, had now entirely disappeared. "I have no vanity," she had once told her husband, "but still I will hate to grow old and ugly, because it is such a humiliating surrender." To which that gentleman, both gallant and truthful—a rare combination—had replied: "You will never do either; the stuff you are made of renders both impossible."

Some similar idea was groping about in Olier's brain just then as he watched her, and he suddenly said aloud:

"Astonishing!"

"What's astonishing?" she demanded, turning in her saddle and narrowing her blue gaze questioningly.

"Nothing! A—a—a—passing thought!" he hurriedly replied.

"I'd take care of myself if I were you. Thinking aloud is the first sign of incipient paralysis, they say," she mocked, mischievously crinkling her eyes at him.

"I shouldn't wonder," he answered, in great good-humor. "And here we are in sight of the Farm—before worse prognostications follow, I am thankful to say."

"You don't like to hear disagreeable truths," she cried, reining in Sacripant to let him precede her down the side path to Kèrhardéc. "That's proof of a selfish and arbitrary disposition. But, dear me, what extraordinary pink lilies!" she delightedly concluded, hardly able to resist the temptation to dismount and appropriate them at once.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"*Diadèmes de la Reine*," he called back over his shoulder, still pounding ahead on the soft moss of the *sentier*. "Don't you remember them? They are the pride of Kèrhardéc."

"*Diadèmes de la Reine!*" she mused, flushing like the flowers themselves with pleasurable reminiscence. How often she had driven away from here with her father, carrying home a fragrant lapful of those glorious blooms, with satiny pink petals curling back in palest blush-rose from the haughty gold-tipped aigrette within. But this was no time for poetical fancies, past or present, since they were already at the arched stone doorway of the Farm, and Kébèn de Kèrhardéc himself was standing there to greet them, his gigantic height almost blocking the narrow entrance. Red-haired and blue-eyed, as all the Kèrhardécs had been before him, with the rather long features and peculiar gauntness of his race, he carried his pedigree on his severe face, just now, however, lighted by a brilliant smile of welcome.

"*Grandmaman* will be so glad," he said, using the simple, childish appellation as they do there. "Come in quickly," and he made way for Rouanez. "Go with her, Olier," he added, stepping down to where his friend stood holding both horses. "I'll attend to those till old Tord makes up his mind to appear. He must be getting deaf, for I whistled for him as soon as I heard you turn off the road."

"You'd never find your way," he explained to Rouanez, standing within the dusky porch, "without Olier; he knows the labyrinth." And a labyrinth of corridors it was, indeed, winding to this side and to that, with only here and there a loophole of a window, heavily glazed and leaded as was customary generations ago. But at last from the half-light of this stone-walled maze they

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

suddenly emerged into a wide, sunny room, opening upon the garden on the other side of the house by a row of long French windows. A room uncarpeted, and draped only with pink-and-green chintz that time had dulled to the softness of old brocade, and furnished somewhat scantily, but with massive bahuts, chairs, and tables that would have made the fortune of an antiquarian; and the whole apartment so daintily clean and airy and sunny that merely to enter it was to feel refreshed and invigorated.

Sitting within one of the wide-open windows, beside her spinning-wheel, was a slender, black-clad woman, straight as a lance, busily drawing flax from the snugly loaded distaff through her thin fingers. Her back was toward them, and the click of Olier's spurs made her turn round with the alertness of a girl.

"Kébèn told us to come and find you, Madame Isilt," he said, advancing a little ahead of Rouanez toward the mistress of Kèrhardéc Farm who, rising, took two steps toward her guests, then stopped and bent her tall figure in a curtsy that would not have been out of place in a throne-room.

"I am glad to welcome you," she said, without offering to shake hands, but with real welcome in her deep, musical voice. "It is an honor for Kèrhardéc to receive the last of the Rozkavels."

Rouanez had curtseyed as low, if a little less stiffly than the stately old woman, and now accepted the proffered chair near the spinning-wheel. "Surely," she was thinking, "nowhere else in the world could one find such simple dignity." And her eyes rested admiringly upon the cameo-like features, the proud eyes, and the masses of smooth, banded hair, creamy white (as hair that once was brilliant red-blond is wont to bleach), graced by the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

daintiest of tiny lace coiffes* on its foundation of golden tissue. It was a beauty that seemed part and parcel of the place, like the sunlight in warm squares upon the dark, polished floor, and the musical cooings from the stone terrace ledge outside, where a flock of pigeons were fluttering and preening, amid the trailing branches of a far-spreading Marshal Niel rose now just bursting into bloom.

"What an exquisite home you have!" Lady Clanvowe could not help saying. "One could never feel dull or unhappy in such surroundings."

"Dull, no," Dame Isilt quietly replied. "Dulness and ennui are modern inventions—bad ones, too, like the rest."

Her son, who had just entered, laughed a little as he leaned on the high, straight back of her seat. "*Grand-mère* is ferociously old-fashioned," he remarked, glancing at Rouanez over the soft, ivory-tinted lace of his grandmother's pretty head-dress.

"She is right to be so," Rouanez retorted. "I for one entirely agree with her ideas."

A flush of pleasure rose to Dame Isilt's scarcely wrinkled face. "It does one good to hear young people speak like that," she approved, looking sympathetically at her visitor.

Rouanez gave a short laugh. "Oh, Madame Isilt!" she cried. "'Young' is excessive when you speak of me."

"I think not. I am seventy-two, and I do not feel old—not old at all," she insisted; adding, in a suddenly rasping tone: "Not old enough, at any rate, to despair of seeing the old days and the old faiths brought back again before I call myself that."

*Many women of the impoverished "petite noblesse" in Brittany pride themselves on wearing an idealized coiffe (while rejecting the rest of the costume) as a sign that they identify themselves with the life of the peasant which has become theirs.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Her three listeners said nothing, and, letting her undimmed blue eyes wander toward the irised wings of her feathered pets fluttering about the open window, Dame Isilt went on in sonorous Gaelic, with the air of one building up the fragments of dormant memories:

"I have seen much in my time, fighting and peace, dearth and plenty, great hopes broken and deep sorrows healed." She turned for a second to Rouanez, then gazed once more away from her, as if seeking the ghostly silhouettes of the past in the depths of the great trees that had been full-grown when she herself was a little child. "But never, never, did I witness such horrors as at present. You have come, Olier de Frèhél, I doubt not, to talk in confidence with my son Kébèn. You can say your say here before me, and before the Rozkavel who has come from so far to break the spell at last, and to awaken young Bretons like yourselves from your sleep of inactivity." She swung round, her eyes alight with enthusiasm, her slim, tall frame trembling, her beautifully shaped, toil-worn hands extended. "The Saints be praised and blessed for her coming, since it has put an end to your shameful acquiescence and clothfulness. Oh! shame, shame indeed, upon you whose blood is that of Chouans, of true Royalists and Catholics, for having let your churches be desecrated, your priests driven away, and your kings reviled and mocked! Shame! Shame! Shame!"

"Mother!" Kébèn cried. "Mother, recollect yourself. Don't speak like that."

"Silence!" she commanded, shaking off his deprecating hand. "You have deserved to hear this, and if it hurts you, all the better. Do you fancy that if our *gars* had found fifty men like you and the Frèhél here to lead them, they would have been beaten and clubbed into submission by those unspeakable ruffians who came to de-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

stroy their altars? Ah! If I had not been a woman I would have known how to rekindle the sparks in every heart, in every soul, from one end of Brittany and Vendée to the other; and that once done the rest would have followed! Normandy and Picardy are not quite gangrened yet! Think you that there our example would not have told? But no; you who are men, strong and hale, and fitted for the task, have shunned it. Twenty times the hour came when success would have been easy; twenty times you let it pass by; and now you would have me recollect myself and mince my words! You will hear me, I tell you, and hear me to the end—for, indeed, if a crime lies at my door it is to have forborne so long!”

She was pale now to the lips, and those three who heard were as white as she; for there was something terrible in the fiery denunciation that held both men silent, while Rouanez, too stirred to interfere, stared in dumb astonishment.

“And now,” she concluded—“now that once again the dial points the hour of action, rise up all of you, never to sit down again till you have shouldered your way to triumph! Give no quarter and take none; and especially never yield nor falter on any single point of Faith and Creed!”

Here Rouanez at last roused herself. The spell of the old Druidess’s grand presence and wild inspiration was broken.

“Might you not have considered, Dame Isilt, before you denounced them so bitterly, that the fault was not theirs?” she said. “Can one carry out an insurrection successfully without funds? Who was to arm the *gars*? Could Olier have done it? Could Kébèn, or the other sons of dead Chouans, whose hearts are as stout as their purses are empty? Where is the use of recrimination

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

when there was no sin? Why, even the united fortunes of the de Tremoërs would have been but a drop in the bucket, and you speak of inertia, Dame Isilt, of acquiescence and slothfulness? Look at Olier here, who has left the sea and sacrificed his career without a murmur. Kébèn, too, has borne much, and is ready enough, now he has the chance! God knows they have nothing to be ashamed of!"

There was indignation in her tone, and Dame Isilt glanced across at her with flashing eyes.

"I don't see . . ." she began, angrily; and then abruptly broke off. "Yes, I do," she resumed, in an altered voice. "I do see, after all. There is much in what you say, Rouanez de Rozkavel, much that never occurred to me, and I fear I have been unjustly harsh perhaps."

Kébèn gave her a look of extreme surprise, for he had never heard his haughty grandmother acknowledge herself in the wrong.

"Your views were excusable," Rouanez admitted, but without a trace of gratification or friendliness. It seemed evident that even this partial dipping of colors did not efface in her opinion the rank injustice done to Olier and Kébèn. "Our present undertaking is—well—I am not blind to its difficulties, and that's expressing myself mildly; but we are going to do our best; so it's useless to harp upon that chord. On the other hand, it is on the cards that it may be already too late to accomplish what we desire, because, speaking generally, the present generation lacks enthusiasm, *feu sacré*, and backbone."

"The Royalist spirit exists to-day as it did sixty years ago," Dame Isilt stubbornly protested—"here in Brittany, at least."

Rouanez shrugged her shoulders. "It still exists, but not as it did sixty years ago," she coolly stated. "The

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

fibre has relaxed. Of course, there are some who . . .” she smiled suddenly, . . . “who show fidelity, as, for instance, Hidrik Brók, the blacksmith of Kremarzé, who, after a good many bowls of cider, told me the other day with tears in his voice that he didn’t stomach the state of affairs now; what he wanted was a real king, ‘not a . . . a . . . cardboard one . . . curse it . . . but a live King . . . like that little King of Spain, who . . . hasn’t caught cold in his eyes . . . and isn’t afraid of anybody dead or alive. Why?’ he hiccoughed, ‘did not that same King of Spain come and help Brittany out of the mess? He was rightful King of France, was he not? and he had a little boy to succeed him, at least — all the same family as Henry V., who had none—never; and why didn’t that *fîer garçon* step across his frontier, damn it all! to get busy and make things buzz. Wasn’t he a Bourb . . . Bourb . . . Bourb . . .?’ Here his tongue gave out, and I finished the word for him, adding some timely advice, in the middle of which he rolled over into the ditch—to listen more comfortably, no doubt—and went fast asleep, tears of distress rolling down his cheeks. That may be a proper survival of Legitimistic feeling, but as for me I would prefer to find it less spirituous.”

Even Dame Isilt had unbent during this recital, and the two men were laughing.

“Your blacksmith is an extreme case, Olier, of course,” Rouanez continued, “but there are many like him, even here in loyal old Brittany, to whom a monarchy means simply increased prosperity, and who wholly lose sight of the loftier idea that animated their forefathers. Still, even this belief can be made use of, and in the mean while we happily have the true ones to lean upon.”

“I cannot understand why you are ready to risk your

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

skin and your money, if that's all the faith you have in final success," Dame Isilt said, dryly.

"One has always faith enough to risk that much," was the quiet reply. "What I regret far more to hazard are the lives of the people under our orders—of those who, as somebody I know expresses it, would follow us through hell and out again at a word of command."

"I have here," the old woman hastened to put in, waving off with one impatient gesture such trivialities as wholesale bloodshed in a great cause, "a list of all the chiefs you have not yet seen—the braves who—"

"One might almost fancy one was listening to Fenimore Cooper," Rouanez thought, while her grim vis-à-vis unfolded a yard-long strip of paper.

"You will find here a résumé of what remains of the Armorial de Bretagne," she proudly explained: "de Tremoër, de Lannilis, de Kerdrén—"

"I know," Rouanez interrupted; "I have the same."

"Who made it out for you?"

"I did it myself."

Dame Isilt and Kébén stared at her in surprise. Not so Olier, who had long since ceased to wonder at her methods.

"You came here to Brittany prepared, then, on purpose to help us?" Kébén exclaimed.

"Not in the least. But there's been plenty of time since my arrival. I had enough besides to convince myself that the greatest possible prudence is necessary. I am here to-day because nothing can be more natural than for me to come and pay my respects to Madame de Kèrhardéc, and to visit this beautiful old *manoir*—most interesting for a foreigner—but neither Olier nor myself shall under any circumstances come again—openly, at least."

"You think you are suspected?"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"No, not that, but I more than think—I know—that there are some . . . not imbeciles either, but very shrewd and cunning persons, who are always on the alert, and who . . ."

"Bah!" Dame Isilt sneered; "those common louts of *Gouvernementaux*."

Rouanez glanced up at her. "Common louts if you like, but nevertheless clever enough to have landed you where you are, and brought to their way of thinking a great part of France. It is always best not to undervalue one's enemies."

"You estimate yours so highly that you seem inclined to award them the victory, *sans coup férir*," the old woman scornfully exclaimed.

Rouanez flushed slightly. She was not accustomed to such a tone, and the age and inferior rank of Dame Isilt alone saved her from a very lively retort. She was rising with the intention of leaving the business of the day in the hands of Olier by asking to go and see the gardens, when there was a patter of little running feet on the terrace, the pigeons whirled upward in a great tinted cloud, and a small boy, still wearing the long, blue apron of Breton babyhood, tumbled in at the window and cast himself, laughing gleefully, across Kébèn's legs.

"Oh, *Mâbik!*"¹ the young man exclaimed, reproachfully. But Rouanez had already crossed over and was bending toward the child.

"What a delicious little fellow!" she murmured, gazing at the round, sunburned face, the glorious tangle of red-gold curls, and the roguish blue eyes peeping through their long, curving, brown lashes with unconscious challenge.

"A bad, disobedient boy," Kébèn scolded, but with

¹ Little son.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

such a caress in his deep voice that "*Mâbik*" once more began to laugh.

"Is—is he yours?" Rouanez asked.

"Yes," Dame Isilt answered for him. "He is Kébèn's son. A good little man usually, although," she added, with characteristic rancor, "he cost his sweet young mother her life."

She had adored her granddaughter-in-law, and never had been able quite to forgive little Ineo for having caused this bitter loss. Rouanez, now on her knees beside the baby, frowned slightly. Dame Isilt certainly carried things rather too far in one way and another, and personally she, Rouanez, would find it no hardship to forego the pleasure of further visits. She had never had a child, and her eyes suddenly filled with tears as Ineo, fascinated by the pretty lady's sweet face, spontaneously held out his arms to her and allowed himself to be carried out on the terrace, while Olier, noticing her unusual emotion, hurriedly launched himself into a discussion with Dame Isilt, so as to prevent her from following them. In a minute the three within the room were deep in their campaign plans, but Rouanez remained away, and returned only when it was time to go.

"Olier," she said, after a long silence, as they dropped behind the rise of moorland that hid the Farm from view, "if I was fortunate enough to have a son I think I would fight shy of insurrections." She bent to rearrange the huge sheaf of Kèrhardéc lilies fastened to her saddle, and in a dreamy voice, quite unlike her usual crisp, clear tones, repeated: "Oh, yes, I would fight shy of everything likely to separate me from him."

CHAPTER XI

Breton, I sing those wandering prows to you
For whom no harbor lighteth on the lee,
High-piled Armadas of th' unfathomed blue,
The crowding galleons of a shoreless sea.

How oft with them my nomad thoughts would pine
To cleave the unvexed levels of the sky,
Such flights illimitable and divine
As haply we may follow when we die!

Silvered or dark, as sun or storm decree,
Nightly, unheeding of the Shining Seven,
Squadrons of God, they ride eternally
The sweeping tide-rift of the open heaven.

The ancient stars their lanterns be, that swing
Glimmering aloft until the dawnlight pales,
Voices and mystic murmurs faintly wing
From the deep shadows of their towering sails.

La Chanson de la Bretagne.

IN the billiard-room at Kremarzé, Olier, sitting cross-legged on the massive corner of the green-cloth-covered table, was talking to Arzur de Tremoër, his life-long comrade and still his best friend, despite that slight difference of age which in the early twenties may draw so sharp a line between the boy and the man. Anyhow, Arzur's height and breadth made him look older than his twenty years, and the past weeks had very considerably altered the boyishness of his dark, handsome features. Just now his brown eyes were showing the curious green high-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

lights that excitement always brought there, and as he bent enthusiastically toward Olier—

“Splendid!” he exclaimed. “Splendid! My father thinks she is the most wonderful creature in existence, and as usual that old gentleman is dead right. Fancy a woman building up a plan like that!”

“She is so little of a woman,” Olier interposed, tossing the end of his cigarette out of the window with a jerk.

“Upon my word, I honestly believe that you have brought yourself to the point of looking upon her merely as your commanding officer,” Arzur said, impatiently. “I am, I must confess, not quite so blind to her extraordinary charm.”

Olier offering no comment, he continued: “I wish to God there was another woman like her in the world. You would then see your humble servant recant and turn his thoughts to matrimony.”

Olier shrugged his shoulders. “I wish you would stop talking nonsense, Arzur!” he said, irritably. “It is scarcely respectful of you to make Lady Clanvowe a subject for pleasantry.”

“Pleasantry!” the lad cried, indignantly. “I’m not joking, I assure you, my sage mentor. Just let her husband be bowled over by the Afghans, or whatever you call ’em, and see whether I am in earnest or not.”

An angry flush rose to Olier’s face. “I am afraid,” he remarked, cuttingly, “that your father has made a mistake in judging you grown-up enough to take so important a part in our affairs. You are acting like a school-boy.”

Never had those two come so near quarrelling, and Arzur walked the length of the room before trusting himself to reply. What had come to Olier? he wondered. Were the cares of a conspirator weighing too heavily upon

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

him?—or else . . . He paused half-way back, planted himself before a mirror, and, after a critical examination, called out in a manner not exactly forced, but sufficiently jovial to have cost him something.

“When a man has got such a conquering little pair of whiskers as mine, he scorns being teased about his youthfulness.”

Olier, however, was already feeling foolish.

“You’d be twice the man you are now if you’d only cut those beastly little rabbit’s-feet!” he replied, laughing.

“Rabbit’s-feet! My exquisitely mown *favoris d’ordonnance!*” Arzur grumbled. “Why, they give me the appearance of a seasoned sea-dog.”

“Seasoned noodle! But come—enough time wasted; we have still important work to do to-night.”

Instantly Arzur dropped his banter and advanced sober as a judge. “All right,” he said, “I await your further orders.”

“They won’t be difficult—so far as this evening goes, at any rate—and they won’t be mine, either. We are going out to get them now.”

“We are going out, are we?”

“But, of course, you don’t imagine that we can afford to assemble in plain sight of everybody? Of course, when I say in plain sight,” he added, glancing out at the moonlit loneliness of the park and vast, somewhat neglected gardens, “I mean above ground.”

“A meeting underground is exactly what we lacked to make the thing complete,” Arzur declared, with amazing gravity. “I had not dared to hope that we could indulge in such proper atmospheres.”

“We can, and, what’s more, we must; which, as Lady Clanvowe says, supplies a touch of fun that we need badly. I do, at any rate. For one thing, I am not quite

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

happy about that man Grafton. He watches her altogether too closely for my peace of mind."

"Who's going to bring her to-night?" Arzur asked.

"She'll bring herself," Olier answered, pulling out his watch and pressing back the lid, "but not before one o'clock, and this leaves us a little over an hour to reach the rendezvous ourselves. It isn't a bit too much, for we must avoid the high-road."

"Let's start, then; the shore path is twice as far."

"Not so fast, my lad. Listen to what I'm going to tell you. My people here are as loyal as loyal can be; but, nevertheless, I do not propose that they shall know what we are about until every single detail has been finally adjusted. So you will kindly go to your room now, undress; and get into bed."

"What for?"

"Because merely to pretend won't do. It's not at all the same thing. As soon as you have done that, ring the bell for Pierrek, and give him minute orders about your things to go yachting to-morrow morning, and a quarter of an hour later get up, put on the *paludier*¹ clothes I showed you before dinner, and wait for me."

"Really, Olier, don't you think that such precautions are a bit overdone?" Arzur asked, smiling.

"I do not. We are playing a far more dangerous game than you seem to realize. Our lives, yours and mine, and even those of others, are of small consequence if you like, but there is . . ."

"Hers?"

"Yes, hers, and if we do not try to guard it in every possible fashion, she will not do so for herself, you may depend on that."

¹ Salt-marsh worker.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The lad was genuinely serious now. "I'll do all you say, and more if necessary," he murmured, in so chastening a tone that Olier felt annoyed with himself for having perhaps uselessly dampened his spirits, but, remembering his friend's extreme buoyancy, he did not attempt to cheer him up.

The moon had disappeared behind a bank of light summer clouds when the two young men let themselves out by a little door in the park wall and struck out in the direction of the sea. Anybody meeting them would have taken them for salt-workers on their way to the marshes, for Olier had insisted that they should act to the disguise. Even their walk was altered, and, though not a soul was in sight, they dragged their feet as men do who have just been roused from heavy sleep to attend an unwelcome task. Their soft, broad-leaved hats were pulled down over their eyes, casting their faces into deep shadow, and when once or twice they spoke, it was on indifferent topics, and in rough coast Breton since it was, after all, possible that behind the piled-up rocks at the side of the path a *douanier*, if nothing worse, might be lurking on the lookout for salt-thieves. Indeed, as they came abreast of the semaphore tower, rising far above the beach on a gaunt promontory, with its tall, slender mast and spidery rope ladder profiled against the silvered sky in trim, dark lines, a man came close to the edge of the stone platform and peered down.

"Who's that?" Arzur whispered.

"Only the night guardian on duty. He can't recognize us from up there and in this light, even if he's seen us," Olier whispered back, and just then the sound of a lively *ronde* tune, thinned by distance, floated down to them:

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

*"On lui r'mett'ra sa Couronne
De plume de paille,
De plume de geai,*

*On lui rendra sa Couronne
De plume de geai
De plume de blé!"*

"*Sa Couronne!* A good omen," Olier murmured, repressing a laugh.

"Only his won't be made of straw, let's hope," chuckled Arzur, and he began to hum between his teeth:

*"Sa Couronne de plume de paille
De plume de blé,
Sa Couronne de plume de geai!"*

It is good to be young, and to see the funny side of things sometimes, especially in periods of storm and stress.

For another mile they skirted the foot of the cliffs, until they came to where a succession of tall, jagged spurs, loopholed here and there by natural arches—a rock formation common on the coast heading toward the Cap de la Chèvre—cut across the strip of shingle to advance boldly far into the sea. This is perhaps the most dangerous spot of the shore, for, although at low tide one can walk very nearly to the end of the point, the flood has a sudden knack of rushing in upon it, especially in certain sets of the wind, that has proved a terrible trap for more than one unwary loiterer upon these sands.

The moon had kept appearing and disappearing behind its veil of clouds during their whole trip, but now, swung low in a clear band of deep blue, it brilliantly illuminated the bay, leaving in deep shadow that part of the beach which Olier and Arzur had reached, and where the two rock-walls, of cliff and spur, converge in a deep embay-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ment. The silence was complete, for the sea was very quiet and seemed asleep far out there beyond the weed-clad reefs, and the two young men paused to listen.

"It's all right!" Olier whispered, presently. "Come along; here is the place." And he pointed to the sheer face of the precipice.

"Where?" questioned the other.

"Here, here!" Olier muttered, impatiently, and, taking the lead, he silently began to climb like a monkey, with foot and hand, up the almost perpendicular base of the *falaise*, closely followed by Arzur. For the first twenty feet the ascent was not too difficult for such active young fellows, but the next fifteen proved arduous even to them, and they were both a little short of breath when they at last hoisted themselves into the arched mouth of a crevice slanting sidewise into the rock, and partially closed by a sharp, screen-like projection.

"Ouf! that was a tough job," Arzur grumbled, straightening himself to his full height. "I've got kinks all along my spine!" But Olier was not minded to listen, and, feeling his way with one hand, preceded him along a narrow passage black as pitch.

"Can't we light the lantern?" Arzur asked, stumbling after him on the uneven path.

"Not yet . . . s-s-s-st!" came from Olier; and for five minutes more they advanced, Arzur stretching both arms in front of him to avoid bumping against some sudden angle.

"Halt!" Olier said at last, and Arzur heard him fumbling with a box of matches. In an instant the little lantern he had brought in his pocket was lighted, and Arzur, looking about him, found that they were standing in the center of a small cave of red granite, pierced at the upper end by a perfectly round hole.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Hurry up!" Olier commanded, diving through into another winding gut, so narrow that it allowed just space enough for a man to pass, but so high-roofed that the top could not be distinguished amid the general gloom. The rough sides were exquisitely spangled and veined, and Arzur was wondering what made them glisten so prettily to the lantern-rays, when his cogitations were suddenly cut short by another bright light flashing into his eyes and a voice asking as calmly as if the speaker were awaiting a guest at the door of his own little *manoir*:

"Is that you, Frèhél?"

"It is, I'm happy to say, and so no doubt is Arzur," Olier responded, shaking hands with Kèbén de Kèrhardéc.

"I should think so!" the lad exclaimed. "The way of the transgressor is hard, and no mistake. But where to now?" he added, as, Kèbén leading, they wound their way still deeper into the cliff.

A sharp turn, and they stood on the threshold of a much larger cave than the first one, where fifteen or twenty people were already assembled, and, as each had on entering deposited his lantern on the floor or on some projection of the wall, the place was quite bright enough to recognize each face at first glance. In the midst of them was Rouanez, wearing the short, striped under-petticoat and rolled-up skirt and apron of the *paludière*, while over her coiffe the customary kerchief was bound. In her hand she held the twisted cloth, or *torche*, that cushions the head beneath the weight of those huge wooden bowls, in which the daughters of Brittany bear load after load of salt along the perilously narrow strips of dried mud that gridiron the *marais-salants* into shallow little harvesting squares, while at her feet lay the bowl itself, empty, save for some few adherent and sparkling particles. It was a costume far too business-like to be

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

embellishing, and yet seldom had Rouanez looked more to her advantage than standing there in her tiny sabots and rough, blue woollen stockings, the almost nun-like severity of her head-gear emphasizing the purity of her profile, and even the clumsiness of the *bélinge* corsage utterly failing to hide the perfection of her supple figure. She was talking with unwonted animation when Kébèn approached with his companions, and she merely nodded to them without pausing.

“. . . Not one of the rank and file,” they heard her say, “can in any case be endangered, come what may, provided the instructions have been followed and no written orders have been allowed to be sent.”

“I think,” replied the Marquis de Laoual, to whom she was speaking, “that you can rest easy. Every order has been verbal—passed on from mouth to mouth. Indeed, your idea—and especially your manner of carrying it out—was little short of a stroke of genius; for it is the seizure of papers that has wrecked so many plots, or turned them into disasters in the event of failure.”

“Yes, there can be no doubt of that,” she continued. “And it is an iniquity to hazard uselessly the life and liberty of thousands in such a way. However, the idea is not mine: I borrowed it from the Arabs, who proceed in precisely the same fashion. . . . Desert telegraphy, swift and sure and traceless! Come here, Hanvec!” she called out, and Olier’s retainer stepped forward briskly, his back straight as the *pen-baz* he carried, and his whole appearance that of a man who has suddenly dropped half his burden of years.

“Present!” he cried, raising one hand to the edge of his broad-brimmed hat.

“This man, as you know, Laoual, is our chief news-gatherer, and, so far, he has not discovered the least cause

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

for believing that our projects are suspected—a reassuring fact, for little escapes Hanvec's keenness."

The old man flushed with pride. "Thank you, *Itron*," he murmured; "I watch night and day, as for that, and it will have to be a famous weasel that gives me the slip."

"There is one famous weasel who will bear watching," Olier interrupted, "and that is Flochard, Dulac's secretary. Guémadeuc sent me word this morning that, under pretence of preparing Rozkavel Castle for his chief's arrival, he is prowling all over the neighborhood. I need not add that he is very wide-awake and sharp."

"Ah, the filthy hog!" Hanvec burst forth. "If ever I could get him alone on the cliff I'd make him acquainted with the Hell of Plogonak—a corpse-swallower that never gives back what one lends to it."

"Hush, you old brigand" Olier chided! "No private violence is permitted. I've told you that before."

Rouanez laughed. "'Private violence' is good," she said, glancing at him. "An excellent specification. As to you, Hanvec, you are too well known to that particular weasel to spy upon him successfully. We have found you a lieutenant, and a quick-footed one, for the Senator's *mouchard* is getting too ubiquitous."

"You had heard of his present doings?" asked the young Comte de Massérac, who was standing at her elbow.

"I try to find out all I can," she replied, almost apologetically, "and it's the part of my task I dislike most. Kèlèren¹ is on Flochard's track, and, as he more than deserves his sobriquet, I think he has a chance of keeping him in sight. Indeed, the boy has already proved valuable, and we cannot thank Kèrhardéc enough for

¹ Will-'o-the-wisp.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

having procured him for us." She paused, looked up at the Marquis de Laoual, and added: "Please tell them now what Vendéens have joined us this week, and let them repeat the list aloud several times, together with that of their own chiefs, so that they may memorize them."

And then followed an enumeration which alone was sufficient proof that the Legitimist party was not, as so many claimed, greatly diminished since the days of the ill-starred Duchesse de Berri. One after another the grand old names fell from Laoual's lips, and like an echo each was twice repeated by the listeners.

"The registers of the Bastille can scarcely have equalled this," Rouanez said, very low, with glistening eyes. "Oh, we may succeed, after all!"

"In opposition, we have to set down the names of those most likely to prove dangerous among our opponents," Laoual resumed. "Fortunately they are individually not greatly to be dreaded."

"There is one," Rouanez put in.

"Dulac?"

"No, higher up than that—in power, that is."

"The Prime Minister?"

"Yes. He is clever—very clever, even—in most things. And had it only occurred to him to use this cleverness in persuading his colleagues to avoid the error of exaggeration, we might have whistled for the present chance . . . if chance one may call it."

"Misdirected talents are worse than useless," young Massérac interposed, sententiously, "and not much to be feared, I think."

Rouanez turned to look at him, and shrugged her shoulders.

"His case," she said, quietly, "must be a peculiar one,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

then, for he has certainly managed to gain influences that can scarcely be overlooked. Were he alone, instead of being surrounded by a crowd of fanatics and corrupt demagogues, I for my part would consider our plight practically hopeless."

The Marquis de Laoual nodded. "I am very much of your opinion," he admitted; "all the more so because I know the man personally, and have been able on more than one occasion to observe his undeniable qualities. But, clever or otherwise, we must do our best to prove ourselves cleverer still; which brings us back to our muttoms by a direct road. When do you think that all will be ready for action, Rouanez? Do not forget that time presses. This renewal of the famous *Affaire*, thanks to the imprudent step taken the other day in connection with the transplanting of what's-his-name's remains, is all we could desire, and we should beat the iron while it is hot. You have accomplished miracles in three months. How many weeks will it take you and your lieutenants to complete the work?"

"That, my dear Laoual, I cannot tell you off-hand like this. But to-morrow I may possibly do so. The armament of the volunteers is nearly complete, and I want you to come with me to Gull Island in order that you may inspect our magazines. We are assured of the enthusiastic co-operation of the regiments stationed at Lorient, Brest, Châteaulin, Quimper, Morlaix, and Lannion; which, in effect, gives us control of the most important portion of Brittany. One regiment at Nantes is pretty certain to join us, while Vannes will bodily come over to the cause as soon as the more western districts have risen. You know already that our sister-province is good. Rochefort, La Rochelle, La-Roche-sur-Yon will all bring their contingents of soldiers and civilians, while the navy

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

I do not for an instant hesitate to say belongs to us, almost *en bloc*. This should be enough to set the North ablaze."

"Then surely we have in hand the means of bringing all France to arms!" Laoual exclaimed, enthusiastically. "That is, if you do not view the situation too favorably."

"I don't," she energetically asserted. "All that has been lacking hitherto was the leaders. We have those now, and no mistake."

"Thanks to you, who have known how to gather up the four corners of the *Parti*," Olier said, his gray eyes shining oddly in the lantern lights.

"Nonsense!" she remonstrated, really annoyed. "Anybody could have done the same. I have merely brought to bear some surplus energy and idle money that had lain dormant too long; nothing more. Please don't say such things again, Olier. I hate it!"

"Very well, I sha'n't, then," he promised.

Then followed the real business of the night, the swearing-in of several new subordinate leaders, the verbal reports of independent agents, approval of recent transactions, including the disposal and concealment of arms and ammunition, and the assignment of new passwords; all of which took so much time that Olier, who seemed curiously restless for once in a way, suddenly exclaimed, almost impatiently:

"Let me warn you, good people, that we had better make tracks now, for it is past two o'clock, and in an hour it will be so light that we will be recognized by the first urchin we meet; more especially Arzur and I, who have farthest to go."

"Why, I had no idea it was so late," Massérac cried. "How are you going home, Lady Clanvowe—surely not alone, as you came?"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Surely alone, as I came, my good Massérac; it is the safest way."

"I am not at all sure of that," Laoual interrupted. "You see, Rouanez, young *paludières* do not run about the country alone. They go in groups to and from their work in the marshes, and a solitary one might attract notice."

"Young . . . ? You make me laugh! Besides, who is to catch sight of me at this hour on the *lande*? Do you propose to put on petticoats and a coiffe, in order to form a group with me?"

"No, certainly not . . . naturally. But suppose you came along in my boat, and I were to take you to your yacht?"

"And have my crew informed of my nightly promenades, disguised, and with gentlemen wholly unknown to them? You are talking feebly, Laoual. My conduct is sufficiently outrageous as it is, even to the uninitiated, who only see the best side of it. I must think of my husband sometimes, and not risk my good name any further," she concluded, with a laugh.

"It's no use trying to oppose you," returned the Marquis, "but it is perfectly absurd to hint that your husband needs any pity. He of all men does not."

"He does, on the contrary," she said, in an altered voice, thinking of the horrible scandal in which the failure of the plot might involve him. "One must risk something for one's King, however," she hastily added.

"For which one?" the sarcastic voice of the Marquis whispered in her ear—"since we have more Pretenders than Monarchs ready to hand."

"The rightful one," she answered, smiling. "And when the throne is comfortably prepared and cushioned, he'll cut no bad figure there."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"*Sapristi!*" muttered Arzur to Olier, who had been close enough to overhear, "those two at least are not blinded by partisanship."

"Who could be with their eyes open? Who would have risked such an adventure, were it not that matters have come to so ugly a head that some cutting is sorely needed?" was the sober reply. "And since Lady Clanvowe does not need us, let's be off, you and I; as it is, we'll have to run." He hurried his adieus, bowed to the remaining few, for several had already departed, and, picking up his lantern, re-entered the passage, the others filing off by an opposite entrance that led through similar tortuous windings to the *lande*.

Last of all, Rouanez left the sheltering rock, and, when assured that every one had disappeared, struck out through the wet heather across the broad shoulder of the point. Her step was less buoyant than usual, not on account of her tiny sabots—the quaint foot-gear fitted with perfect comfort—but because what was for her the only sore point of the whole matter had just been touched, and that was—Hubert. Poor old Hubert! What if he came back from the other side of the world to find her in prison or else a fugitive from the laws of her native land? Had she been quite within her rights when she placed herself at the head of the Royalist party and set afoot so gigantic a plan of revolt? She paused for a second, knee-deep in the heather, her big wooden bowl resting on her hip, and searched the velvet darkness for an answer.

"It isn't the first time the Clanvowes have had to do with Brittany," she argued, irrelevantly, thinking of that far-away Sir John, who was a captain of Chandos, and who, as old Froissart says, fought like "a man out of hys mynde" over the body of the great Seneschal in that

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

obscure skirmish which sealed the fate of Guienne. The moon had set, and the stars alone, twinkling in the deep blue of the sky, prevented the chill hour before dawn from being absolutely black. A faint breeze rustled the tough twigs of the heather, and far below the edge of the *falaise a c'harc-houat** was mournfully calling to its mate, still drowsing, no doubt, in some rock-hollow.

"Rather late for regrets, anyway," Rouanez muttered. "All I've got to do is to stick by my guns and hope for the best. Hubert will forgive me anything, and then . . . one can always end things decently if the guns miss fire!" She raised her disengaged hand, dashed from her eyes a moisture for which the thickly falling dew was in no wise responsible, and straight as a homing swallow made for Fort Rozkavel, reaching it just as the narrowest of pale lemon-colored streaks was beginning to cut the welded curve of sea and sky, away over in the mysterious East.

* Widgeon.

CHAPTER XII

Stone-built and low, its irised cap of thatch
Quaintly askew above two windows small,
The footway to the half-door on the latch
Was ranked with stocks and gillyflowers tall;
And fast above the lintel to the wall
A holly-bush gave token of good cheer,
And to the worn wayfarer seemed to call,
For three red apples was her merry gear,
That said, "Three coppers is the price of cider here."

Seen from the low-walled lane a haven fair
Of peace it seemed, not elsewhere to be found,
For pigeons stooping through the golden air
Made on the gable-end a grateful sound;
Some strawen hives spread quiet all around,
And lacy tamarisks timed the wind's refrain,
And, visioned o'er the gray dune's gentle mound,
The still gray sea, a broad and boundless plain,
Rolled on the creaming sands, flowed back, and rolled again.

From bench and bird-cage at the door one passed
Down two rough steps into a stone-floored room,
With bulging ceiling raftered dark and vast,
Where all was turfen scent and kindly gloom;
Black oaken tables solid as a tomb
And stools to outlast centuries were there,
And provender until the day of doom
Hanging on strings—unless one must prepare,
On such a monstrous hearth, a huger bill of fare!

The Breton Inn.—M. M.

THE little inn of Douar-mat* was filled that evening to its uttermost capacity—not in itself an extraordinary oc-

* Bonne-terre (Good Earth).

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

currence, since Kerdikan was celebrated for miles around for the excellence of his cider; but as the sardine season had not been turning out favorably, thirst had of late been forcibly curbed, and the vastness of the present gathering would have been surprising to those who did not know that both cider and *calvados* were on this occasion to be had for the asking. Indeed, several brilliantly labelled flagons of that latter bottled curse glowed wickedly in the light of the smoky oil-lamps planted here and there on the dingy tables, while the reek of a battery of clay pipes rose thickly toward the strings of onions and clusters of lard-filled bladders garnishing the low ceiling. Of those present only a very few puffed away at cheap cigarettes, and these were progressists of the first water, young men who inclined toward new ideas, or else ex-soldiers and sailors, "lighting paper" as they call it there, from habit contracted during their years of service. In Finisterre the cigarette is in ill-repute, as being too effeminate and dandified, and inspires the inhabitant with no confidence.

Outside, the night was sympathetically wet; the wind waltzing in from the sea whistled shrilly as it came, and the three apples jauntily stuck on the twisted branches of the bunch of holly over the door, to announce to all comers that the monetary value of a bowlful of cider was three sous precisely, banged roughly against each other, as though they were enjoying, on their own account, the quarrelsome pleasures of a drunken spree.

Blue blouses and white ones, woollen jerseys and broad breeches, embroidered jackets and pailletted waistcoats, mixed their disparate hues all along the lengthy oaken benches, and before the hearth, where a few fagots crackled beneath the huge earthenware *marmite*, one glossy black frock-coat displayed its incongruous bour-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

geois presence above a pair of soulfully pearl-gray trousers and immaculately varnished boots. The wearer, a ruffianly featured, narrow-shouldered, hollow-chested man of thirty or thereabouts, was orating in the raucous accents of the Parisian faubourgs, and it was plainly evident that he took himself and his present mission with complete seriousness. Unfortunately for him, however, he did not understand his audience. Ignorant of the important fact that while a Breton will drink with anybody, when drunk all his racial prejudices become exacerbated, and blinded by the memory of former forensic triumphs in the industrial sections of France, he and his brandy were rapidly raising the temper of the assembly against himself.

"I tell you, my friends," he shouted, at the top of his unpleasant voice, "that your day is at hand: you who have for so long been heavily burdened by the oppressors! Your wilful blindness has been the primary cause of the frightful evils from which you have suffered; your obstinate loyalty to ideas and principles so old that they stink with decay has landed you into utter starvation and degrading penury. However, we who from the true intellectual centre of France have watched your struggles with odds too great for you to bear are here now to lend you a helping hand, to show you the error of your past, and to usher you into a brighter future. All men are equal, my friends; all men are equally entitled to the goods of this world. Long ago you should have tumbled your damned nobles into the gutter!" He paused long enough to gulp down a generous bumper of *mêlé-cassis*, wipe his thin lips on a dazzling crimson silk handkerchief, which he had once or twice brandished like a patchouli-perfumed banner, and resumed.

"We do not promise more than we intend to give, as

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

I have already told you a while ago. Look at my chief to-day: many times a millionaire, raised by a grateful Government to the Senate, an Officer of the Legion of Honor, and what means more still, my friends—much more—a man who holds your destinies in his beneficent hand. What were his beginnings? Tell me that: what were his beginnings?"

No one seemed to know what these beginnings had been, which saved the orator an awkward minute, and, satisfied on that point, he felt safe to bluff along as before. "Ah!" he bellowed, banging his fist so violently on the nearest table that the thick glasses with which it was littered rang dully, "you do not know that, but I do, and I am proud of the knowledge; prouder still to be able to impart it to you. This great and good man was, like yourselves, born in a lowly cottage; nay, so poor was his parents' habitation that it might better be compared to a stable—to the stable where—" Here alcoholic enthusiasm inspired so sacrilegious a comparison that a growl of indignation ran from bench to bench, and Dulac's prudent secretary, bolting down the rest of his panegyric upon the advantages conferred by the Great and Indivisible Republican Scheme, attempted to turn the general attention into a safer channel by means of a more concrete example.

"Behold this idiot crouching at my feet!" he cried, pointing contemptuously to the hearth-stone where huddled the pitiful figure of Grégor the Innocent, lank, tall, ill-built, with a forest of drab-colored hair falling upon his dirty face and completely hiding his eyes; a poor wretch, who wore by choice over his gaunt limbs a dilapidated skirt, torn and tattered, and draped his square, high shoulders in a once garish shawl, now faded and fringed with brambles. "Look at him! He might have

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

been a man like you and me had not his evil fate caused him to be born where ignorance reigns supreme, and where he was allowed to fall into neglect until he has become an object of disgust and mockery to all!"

Alas! Monsieur Flochard had made yet another mistake!

"No! No!" several voices protested, indignantly; "Grégor is an innocent, but he is a good lad, and he brings us luck. Nobody laughs at him here!"

More than one fierce face was stretched out toward the somewhat discomfited windbag. A few of the most hot-headed or the most drunk got to their feet and forced their way noisily toward him. Decidedly the meeting was assuming a stormy aspect, and the agitator's sallow face began to whiten, when suddenly a huge man, who had been quietly sitting in a corner, rose and pushed through the crowd.

He wore the short brown homespun jacket and knee-breeches of a *métayer*, and on his white locks the flatterbrimmed, velvet-bound hat that distinguishes the farmer classes from the salt-workers.

"Be still, you fools!" he called out through the rising turmoil, in a voice that commanded instant attention. "I warned you what you would hear from that carrion-crow, but you wouldn't listen to me. You came to drink his poison through your ears and through your besotted mouths. Now don't you dare to lay a finger on him. Listen some more, on the contrary, and let him fill your heads with more rubbish. You owe it to him in payment for his treat!"

"Who are you?" the Senator's *Agent Provocateur* asked, quaveringly. "Not a Kremarzé peasant, nor one from Rozkavel, I think."

"No, my master," the old man answered, contemptu-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ously, "neither from Kremarzé nor from Rozkavel either, but from Laoual, where such vermin as you are not given free entry. I know you well, Monsieur Antoine Flochard, for it was you who carried out your *Patron's* fine plan of bringing foreign oysters to our shores, which must have been his little way of bettering our lot!"

At this a murmur rising louder and louder filled the low-ceiled room. Every man there was leaning forward eagerly in his seat, and it was evidently only intense curiosity as to what the tall farmer would do next that held the crowd quiet.

"You weren't so proud then, my fine cockerel. I was there visiting my daughter, who's married to an oyster-man up that way, when the *frères de la côte* mashed up every accursed foreign shell, and I saw you decamp before they could get their fingers on you. You talk of our old ways. They were the good ones. Yours are filthy, and I don't mind telling you so to your face, you black-guard, who come here to rouse the devil in our young men's hot brains!"

The secretary's bile-injected eyes were rolling in his head, like little wheels, with fright. The tense stillness, the cold, concentrated stare of that hostile gathering were disquieting things, but his formidable accuser seemed to assure him protection, and also his pay was too big to be risked, so he plucked up enough courage to try and turn the tables on his opponents.

"And what are your great people doing for you at Laoual?" he shrilly demanded, standing on tiptoe in his unconscious desire to emulate the giant's magnificent poise. "Has your fine Marquis who drives four-in-hand and owns a yacht given up those to feed the hungry and clothe the naked that abound on his land?"

A sudden roar of laughter greeted the question, and the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

tall form of Kerdikan the innkeeper shouldered itself between the two angry men.

"I've let you go on a good little while, M'sieu Flochard," he said, grimly, "for the reason that it's not in the interest of my business to fall foul of you, and furthermore, because more than half of those here don't understand a word of what you say in your French lingo. But don't you go throwing your slime on M'sieu l'Marquis de Laoual, who gives three-quarters of his revenues to the poor, and who stood by all of us, even of Kremarzé and Rozkavel, during the last spell of cholera, when he and Madame la Marquise went from bedside to bedside as unafraid as if the complaint was toothache. Is it your Dulac who'd do the same, or give one centime when nobody knew of it? Pah! You make me sick; you and your big speeches! In Morbihan perhaps, or the Loire-Inferieure, you might talk so. But we of Finisterre don't listen out of the same ear. Pack up your wares and go offer them somewhere else, if you don't want your head cracked open."

The idiot crawling on the floor gave a blood-curdling croak of glee—no doubt at the uproar, which agreeably tickled his sense of hearing—and Flochard turned with staring, frightened eyes to look whence the sound came.

"So you choose to stick by the old ways!" he shouted, out of the extremity of his terror. He had lost all chance of power over them—for the present at least—and he knew it. He knew, too, that he was in danger, for he had maddened most of them with drink. Every nerve of his mean little carcass trembled, but he made the last desperate effort of a cornered rat. "Remember that we hold the handle of the axe," he screamed again; "that we can cut your bonds or else your necks!"

"Go to Hell with your axe, or use it on yourself!" a

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

young fisherman bellowed, his eyes red with rage and brandy, lurching forward to shake a leg-of-mutton fist under the orator's nose. "Here Hanvec, Hoël, Jouan, Kerdikan, all of you men of Kremarzé, come here and we'll roll him down the *falaise*. Down the rocks with him. *Hardi les gars!* Over the edge with the *failli chien!*"

In a second the whole place was in an uproar, and there was no time to be lost if murder could still be avoided. There was a ghastly livid patch on each of Flochard's cheeks, and his lips were working convulsively. With one stride the huge farmer from Laoual reached him, seized him by the collar, and lifting him bodily from the floor, rushed him to the door, which he kicked open. "Run for your life!" he said, throwing him out into the darkness, and then slamming to the heavy oak, set his back against it and faced the struggling mob.

"Take it easy, boys," he said, in his quiet voice of command. "He is out of reach by this time, for his devil's car was waiting for him at the cross-roads. And now listen to me!"

The snarling, savage pack fell back before the calm unconcern of the white-haired man, whom, by-the-way, no one had seen there before that night. This in itself, however, in nowise diminished the influence he had rapidly gained over them; for there is so little visiting in Brittany between villages, even when only a few miles apart, that it occurred to none of these for the most part rather befuddled brains to question the *mètayer's* genuineness.

"You'll excuse me, who am old and have seen much," he began again, amid a sudden silence, and in the courteous tone which they invariably adopt out there for public speaking, "if I, although not belonging to your communes, ask you to have nothing more to do with that man of evil words and deeds whom I have just saved

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

from your fists. I have been many years, boy and man, in the service of our Marquis, and it gives me, I think, title to make a few remarks to you of Kremarzé and Rozkavel. You heard that Flochard just now advise us to roll our nobles in the gutter. The same was done long ago at the time of the Revolution, and what was gained by it? Are we better off than our fathers were then? Do we get more to eat? Do our fields yield more or our stockings hold a greater quantity of silver bits? He says that one man is as good as another, and that there should be equality of rights and property. But he took good care not to explain to you that the manner in which he and his kind get on is by rifling their neighbor's plum-trees. One can always do that when one is clever enough; but it isn't a clean way to fill one's belly. Our nobles have their faults; why shouldn't they? But at any rate they have always stuck by us, and even the poorest never refuse to share their bit of bread with those of us who belong to them."

"That's true! That's true!" came from several of the slowly sobering listeners.

"Yes, it's true," the Laoual farmer resumed. "You think perhaps that if you gave up the old faiths you'd be out of the mire; but you would not. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves—all of you here—to have drunk at that bad adviser's expense. Drink is your curse. You men and boys, here, for a pint of *calvados* would sell your last measure of wheat. It makes you beat your wives, neglect your work, and come home dissatisfied with your lot. In a little while your very blood will turn into brandy, and it's then that you'll become the prey of the Flochards and Dulacs, and other miscreants who want to use your backs to climb to high places. Fools that you are, can't you see that it is so? They'd soon show

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

you how fair and generous they are if you asked them for help! How did they treat the vine-growers of the South, men of their own kidney, who were only putting into practice their own ideas, when they asked for assistance? Did they loose their purse-strings, as from Socialist to Socialist? Not a whit. They gave them bullets to chew; nothing softer; nothing more nourishing; just lead! I dare say you are hungry for some too. You used to be good Christians once. You went to Mass with your women, and did mostly what was right. But now you are catching the same disease that these accursed *Francs* have, and if you don't look out it will gain on you, till you have become as rotten as the rest . . . yes, rotten to the core . . . to the point of blaspheming the Holy Saints and Martyrs, disregarding decency and morality, murdering your unborn children, and striving after illicit gain. That is what such progress as is held up before your eyes means; progress that is depopulating France so rapidly that those who read of the numbers of the people in the newspapers are frightened. Do you know that the navy—our navy, for it always has been ours more than anybody else's—is falling behind those of other countries? Monsieur le Marquis read that to me the other day. We are only fourth now, after being second. That is progress, is it not? I wish I could speak better than I do, so that you might better understand. Take my poor little warning, however, men of Finisterre, take it as it is given, from the heart of my soul. And now I've had my say out, and there's nothing more."

He had been feeling for the door-fastening behind his back while finishing his harangue, and, slipping it noiselessly, he stepped out backward into the stormy night, fastened the latch from the outside, and was gone.

A babel of voices broke forth, and every single man rose

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

to his feet and rushed forward to bring once more among them the speaker who had managed to tell them hard truths, and yet reach their better selves, but Kerdikan and Hanvec stood between.

"Let him go!" the innkeeper ordered. "He's said his say. Go home, boys, and chew on the quid he's handed you. He's a wise one, is that Laoual man!"

"He is that! He is that!" every one cried.

"Well, then, do as he bade you do," Hanvec cried, peremptorily.

"But who is he?" they demanded, pressing closer. "Tell us who he is, at least. His tongue is famously long, and he knows what he is talking about."

"A farmer from Laoual. He told you so himself. Go home, go home; there's been enough babble for one night. Take them away, Hanvec. I must close up, or else that Flochard will have the law on me."

Slowly, silently, the crestfallen and greatly sobered crew filed out and marched off beneath the sluicing rain in different directions. The idiot had crept from the *auberge* without being noticed a little while before. Immediately the place was cleared, Kerdikan put up the stout bars of the front entrance, then crossed over to the other side, and, quickly unfastening a narrower door giving on a small garden-plot, called softly: "Monsieur le Marquis! Monsieur le Comte!"

The wind had risen to a half gale, and he had to repeat the call a little louder. "Where are they?" he was anxiously muttering, when two shadows detached themselves from the rain-beaten wall and passed into the house, dripping from head to foot.

"The Saints have pity on us!" Kerdikan muttered. "But you are wet through, my gentlemen. Fortunately your own clothes are in the bread-hutch, safe and warm."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Pitiful figures, indeed, those two cut, in their bedraggled, borrowed plumes. The farmer of Laoual, with his venerable white wig soaked and limp beneath the half-melted, broad-leafed hat, and the pseudo-idiot, shaking out his grotesque skirts; more of a scarecrow than the real Grégor—safely sleeping somewhere with the pigs—had ever been.

“*Gwâ!* M’sieu Arzur,” continued the innkeeper, “it’s not nice to see you like that. Take off these clothes while I throw a fagot on the fire.”

Arzur was laughing, but a little ruefully. He had not relished his loathsome disguise, and disgustedly threw his own wig upon the floor, before plunging a sadly begrimed face in a bowl of water standing on the broad window-sill.

“*Pouah!*” he spluttered, emerging from the soapsuds. “What a wretched business!”

The Marquis de Laoual’s handsome features were set and stern. “I don’t like playing spy any better than you do,” he said, with a touch of severity, “but we had to know what that individual would tell them, and this was the only way.”

“I know. Don’t think I am complaining, Monsieur de Laoual,” Arzur hastily interrupted. “And one can scarcely call it playing spy, either. You were superb. Lord! I came very near applauding you aloud. I can’t imagine how you managed to change even your voice and give it that characteristic intonation. Oh, it was perfect! Such a make-up! I never would have dreamed that forty could be made to look so like seventy!”

Here Kerdikan, who had coaxed the dying embers into a satisfactory blaze, began to add his praise to Arzur’s.

“They’ll not soon forget what M’sieu l’Marquis told them. Every word carried its weight,” he said, enthusiastically. “And served them right, too, the thin-brains!”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

But all this bodes no good," he continued, scratching his luridly blond head thoughtfully. "That *particulier* will not forget either! He is not quite a fool, though, in spite of all. Suppose he twigs that there's something more afoot than usual, what then?"

"He won't have a chance to do much, my good Kerdikan," the Marquis reassured him. "Everything is all but ready for the final surprise, and in a very short space of time . . ." He stopped long enough to get into the tweed coat the innkeeper was holding up to him, carefully settled his tie and collar, and concluded: "We will conduct him and his precious *patron* back to where they belong, I hope."

"We all who know wish that moment was already here, M'sieu l'Marquis," Kerdikan said, feelingly. "You'll have done a great deed for us."

"I?" Monsieur de Laoual protested. "I merely obey orders, as you do yourself, Kerdikan. It is Miladi whom you will have to thank, if we succeed. She's the soul and spirit of it all."

"A mighty extraordinary Lady! I saw her yesterday for a moment. She was riding past on that gold-colored horse of hers, and stopped to shake hands with me as friendly as you please: 'You remind me of your father, Kerdikan,' she says to me, smiling; 'and every time I look at you I think of the time when I used to come and bring my pony to be shod at his forge.' Isn't it wonderful, M'sieu l'Marquis, to hear a thing like that from a Lady who doesn't seem much more than twenty-five, saving the presence of her white hair; and beautiful it is, too, shining like threads of mica at full-moon time."

"You're a poet in your way, Kerdikan," Arzur approved from the hearth-step, whereon he sat enthroned, calmly toasting a thick crust of brown bread over the layer of embers fronting the fire.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Monsieur de Laoual turned to look at him in surprise. "You don't mean to tell me," he exclaimed, "that you are hungry?"

"As hungry as a bear. You cannot imagine how emotions always rack my stomach. And this," he complacently continued, "sopped in a bowl of cider will about satisfy its cravings."

"Oh, very well, have your . . . supper, then; but don't be too long about it, for the tide waits for no man, and in an hour my *canot* will not be able to approach the rocks. And now as to you, Kerdikan, I want you to go to Kremarzé early to-morrow morning and tell Monsieur de Frèhé! that the rendezvous is at the edge of the little cove of Sten, between half-past eleven and twelve o'clock."

"To-morrow night?" Arzur inquired, grinding away at the crisp crust.

"Yes, naturally. We can't go to Gull Island in broad daylight! And, come to think of it, I wish you could manage to accompany us, Kerdikan. Is there any possibility of your finding somebody to mind your inn for a few hours, or can you simply lock it up?"

"I can get my nephew to attend to it until the closing hour, M'sieu l'Marquis, and he'll sleep here. All I've got to do is to tell him that I am obliged to ride to the Fair, which, as luck will have it, begins day after to-morrow in Poulduro-town."

"Excellent! You were armorer of your squadron, were you not, Kerdikan?"

"Yes, M'sieu l'Marquis."

"That makes everything easy. And now if you happen to have satisfactorily allayed the cravings of your stomach, Arzur, we'll be off. Lord, how it rains!" he added, as a noisy torrent of wind-whipped water slashed the thick window-shutter. "We were wise to wear oil-skins

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

and sou'westers. We'll go out through the turf-shed, Kerdikan, so as to avoid opening the door of this lighted room. I don't know why, but during the past few days I've had the feeling that somebody's watching me!"

Kerdikan, on his way to unlock the turf-shed door, turned swiftly.

"Walk close to the walls, gentlemen, and I'll follow you at some distance. *Nom de Dieu!* I wish I could catch somebody spying on you!" he said, with sudden ferocity. "I'd soon silence him, whoever he'd be." And as the two walked on together through the wall-enclosed lane, the huge form of the innkeeper, indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness, padded noiselessly after in his heavy woollen socks through the ankle-deep mud.

CHAPTER XIII

High on the promontory's seaward limb
A marvellous great pit-hole sloped adown
Unto a mouth of darkness rude and grim,
Wherein—so ran the whisper of renown—
Souls of the damned eternally did drown:
Churned in the gorge of hell the live-long day,
Night brought a boon—to drink upon the crown
Of that great cliff until the dawnlight gray
The sea-wind, speeding fresh from thousand miles of spray.

The pit-wall was y-broken toward the sea,
A great cleft reaching almost to the tide,
But here the hell-mouth from its surgings free
A lip of world-old granite did divide.
There in sleek circuit horribly did glide
An evil pool, or foamed a boiling stark,
That, after gulping high in ghastly pride
Until the utmost edge its slime did mark,
In sick green swirling rings sucked downward to the dark.

None but low, dreadful devil-sounds it made
To chill the very heart (and suiting so
Its raw, dank breathing struck the soul afraid
As of some dead abysm far below),
Save when the high surf in a wrath of snow
Stormed in, and then the roaring current-swale
Fought like white dragons in the Pit of Woe,
And far abroad, 'neath sun or starlight pale,
Wild thunder flowed and flared upon the veering gale.
The Hell of Plogonak.—M. M.

LADY CLANVOWE, seated at her desk, was busily writing to her husband. There was, she knew, no certainty at all of these weekly letters reaching him before he once

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

more re-entered civilized regions, but this was no sufficient reason for her to neglect her promise, and the agile pen flew easily over page after page of exquisite description.

Barring the one great occupation of her present life, which, of course, she could not even distantly allude to, there was little for her to tell; but having been endowed among other gifts, with an extreme facility for saying things prettily, whether she spoke or wrote, she was never at a loss for material. Still, this morning the task did not seem quite so grateful as usual, and once or twice she paused, first to straighten mechanically the heavy head of a carnation, a thick hedge of which fragrant blossoms encircled three sides of the desk-top, and then to blow away some few dust-specks that had settled on the big enamel-framed photograph of her lord, occupying the place of honor immediately in front of her.

"Poor Hubert!" she said, softly, letting her gaze linger upon the clean-cut, severe features and kindly eyes of the portrait. "What would he say if he knew?" She leaned her round chin in her palm and continued to contemplate the picture, but her thoughts wandered, and so absorbed was she that the slow opening of a door behind failed to arouse her. To be sure, since Grafton's was the hand on the knob, it followed naturally that the little operation had been silently performed; but even the faint click of the portière-rings as he glided in was unheard, and several minutes elapsed before an uncomfortable sensation brought her back from her reverie, and she glanced up.

Immediately behind the desk hung a curious antique mirror, a long, narrow bit of glass, framed in very old carved pear-wood, and reflected in its slightly dulled surface she saw a hitherto unknown countenance, intense and straining, with wide eyes and parted lips. Not a muscle of her face moved; she did not stir, but through her eye-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

lashes she concentrated all the force of her keen sight upon the craning head and shoulders of the watcher.

Could this really be the impassive, correct, dignified Grafton? she asked herself, almost doubting that what she saw was real. For she read devouring eagerness on those tense features, and something far more surprising yet—actual dread, the dread that takes possession of a man and becomes his guiding power. What under the sun could so disorder a correct conventional individual like him, Lady Clanvowe's keen and quick understanding was unable even distantly to guess just then. Surely the great, peaceful, sunny, flower-filled room, with its one quiet occupant, could produce no such strange impression; and yet there could be no doubt of it—Grafton was in the grip of some unknown apprehension of which she was the cause. Step by step she saw him approach, utterly unconscious of having been perceived, and bend further and further forward, evidently to try and catch a glimpse of the sheets of paper scattered about the blotter. Fortunately the first one, where "My dear Hubert" was inscribed in her clear writing, lay uppermost, and suddenly Grafton began a retrograde movement toward the door, walking backward, and with such care and deftness that a shadow would not have been more noiseless. Still she sat motionless, her chin in her palm, and this time the portière-rings did not click; but in a few seconds she heard the door-handle turn deliberately, after a light knock, and some one enter slowly.

"Who is that?" she asked, in her ordinary manner, and turned quite naturally at the "Grafton, my lady," which came in answer.

"What is it, Grafton? Has Captain Penruddock arrived?"

"No, my lady," the butler replied. "I came to ask

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

whether your ladyship would ride out this afternoon. James is below waiting for orders."

Rouanez glanced out of the window at the pale-blue sky and sun-shot waves, and appeared to ponder. "I am not sure," she said, twirling her penholder between her fingers. "Tell Jim to come again just before luncheon. Perhaps since the weather is so fine I will paddle about in the canoe—and, by-the-way, Grafton, have you any message for Sir Hubert? I am writing to him," she explained, waving the penholder toward her letter and turning a smiling face toward the faithful and devoted old servitor.

"No, my lady . . . that is, yes, my lady; since your ladyship is so kind . . . my service and respect to my master as usual."

"Certainly, your service and respect as usual," she slowly repeated. "I will also assure him of the way in which you fulfil your mission here. He will, I know, be pleased to hear how you watch over me and attend to my comfort."

The shrewdest observer could have detected no trace of irony or double meaning in the even, friendly tone, and yet Grafton's pale eyes wavered, and he so far departed from his stringent principles as to shift his weight from one foot to the other—though of course noiselessly.

"Thank you, my lady . . . I hope I know my duty," he murmured, staring at the points of his patent-leather pumps.

"I am sure of it, Grafton. And now please send Jwala-Singh to me. I have some instructions for him."

She turned her back on his retreating figure, and apparently sank once more into the depths of epistolary composition; but as a matter of fact, her pen did not touch paper again until the tall form of the Sikh suddenly appeared at her elbow as if it had risen from the carpet.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"I have remarkably silent attendants," she thought; "but Jwala-Singh's noiselessness is neither stealthy nor disquieting, which forms a pleasant contrast to—" And aloud she said to the salaaming Hindu: "I want to know, Jwala-Singh, whether you have noticed lately any change in Grafton's manner." She knew her man too well to caution him to keep secret what she was about to tell him; discretion from him was a foregone conclusion.

"Since we are here, my lady?" Jwala-Singh spoke almost faultless English, although he had an Oriental weakness for excursions into the decorative and hyperbolic.

"Yes; but more especially lately. He seems . . . afraid of something or other, and I have noticed that he prowls about a good deal."

"He watches day and night, my lady, but for what I cannot find out yet."

Lady Clanvowe smiled a little grimly. "You saw it, too, then?" she asked.

"I have, my lady, and ever since I have followed in Grafton's footsteps, like an echo upon the sound of a call at night."

"What is it he fears, do you think?"

"He fears this land of stones and thorns, and the people whose speech he cannot understand, my lady; also he fears some other thing, and that thing is what I search." The Sikh's dark features were as impassive as usual; but the lips were just now ever so slightly curled back from a double line of dazzling teeth, and this alone sufficed to give the whole countenance a peculiarly fierce and forbidding expression.

Lady Clanvowe turned right round in her chair and fixed her most penetrating gaze upon him.

"Tell me, Jwala-Singh," she quietly asked again, "is it

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

of me, or of something he fancies I might do, that he is afraid?"

For a short second the Hindu did not answer; and when he did it was with a noticeable emphasis.

"Perhaps, it may be so, my lady."

"But what in the world can it be?" she exclaimed, her eyes beginning to blaze. "What can suddenly make him so outrageously insolent? Does he flatter himself that I intend to put up with such behavior!"

Jwala-Singh glanced over his shoulder at the heavy tapestry folds of the portière behind him, and his mistress, noticing this, lowered her voice.

"He would not dare to listen at the door?" she whispered, angrily.

One of Jwala-Singh's rare smiles came and went with—to use one of his own forms of speech—the swiftness of a shadow on running water; but there was no mirth in its fleeting.

"He will scarcely listen when I am on the other side of the door," he explained, "because he knows what very little, little sounds I can hear, but otherwise—" He left the sentence expressively unfinished.

"It is intolerable!" Lady Clanvowe cried, rising quickly, "and I am going to send him back to England this very day—that is exactly what I am going to do, Jwala-Singh . . . and more: I will write at once to Sir Hubert and tell him why I have done so!"

Jwala-Singh did not move; he did not even change the direction of his look, and yet Rouanez stopped short under the weight of his mute disapproval.

"Why not?" she demanded, as if he had spoken.

"I cannot speak freely—I, the servant of my lady, and her slave—of things too high for such as I am; but as I hope to be considered faithful, no such step should be taken."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"And I am to submit to being spied upon and lorded over?" she questioned, quivering with suppressed anger.

The Sikh silently inclined his head.

Slowly Lady Clanvowe sank back on her chair without ceasing to question him with her eyes. For what might have been perhaps but a few seconds, though to both of them it seemed hours, she did not speak. A faint light was gradually dawning on her comprehension, and an ugly light she found it likely to prove. Jwala-Singh, she knew, was what one could truthfully term a gentleman—during years she had been enabled to put his blind devotion to the test; he was, moreover, the only creature save Olier from whom she would accept advice in her present isolation. Why not force him to speak out? Why not take his counsel, if she found that counsel sound?

"Jwala-Singh," she said, at last, "you have never once failed in your loyalty to me and Sir Hubert, and I want you now to forget all ideas of distance and differences of blood, creed, . . . and . . . position. I want you to speak to me as if I were of your own people. Do you understand, Jwala-Singh?"

The Hindu's immobile face became suddenly expressive, as, bending, he grasped the hem of her dress, touched it gently with his lips, and straightened into his old attitude. There had not been the faintest touch of servility in the spontaneous homage.

"I find Grafton's strange attitude all the more embarrassing, Jwala-Singh," she began, "because I am unable to explain my present position. Now, if you can throw any light upon his behavior, be it ever so faint, you will do me the greatest possible service. Therefore, you must speak frankly, Jwala-Singh."

The Sikh's intelligent eyes gave evidence of a thorough comprehension of her meaning; but still he remained

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

mute, and she was on the point of trying to urge him further, when he held up one slim hand, as if to entreat her to be patient a little longer.

"My lady," he said, at last, "if Grafton is sent away his dismissal will put a dark look upon what none but himself has until now observed. It will be thought that you, my lady, do not desire witnesses of what you do here."

Having made up his mind to speak, Jwala-Singh spoke now in a firm, unfaltering voice, which gave the words a grave meaning.

"What I do here?" Rouanez questioned, with a sudden sinking of the heart. "How do you mean it?"

"My lady knows that here she does not act at all as she does when at the Hall, or even in the many foreign places where Grafton and I have accompanied her."

"Naturally not, since I am here taking a holiday, in my native land, and free to do just what and as I please, without any constraint."

"Yes, my lady, that is true talk, and yet it does not explain many things that appear strange to one of Grafton's small thought."

"Indeed!"

"Since your ladyship wants me to make statement, I must warn you, my lady, of Grafton having it in his mind that lately your ladyship has more than once been absent all night from the Fort."

"What nonsense!" Lady Clanvowe cried. "And where does he suppose me to go?" She spoke nervously now, for the truth of the accusation left her almost defenceless, and permitted—she saw that in a flash—of a singularly unpleasant interpretation.

"I have not been told what he supposes, happily for him; if it be something disrespectful—" Jwala-Singh resumed

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

in the same calmly even tone: "Neither did he tell me his suspicion concerning my lady's absences from the Fort at night. But an hour or so before sunrise a week ago I found him concealed at the end of the long corridor leading to your ladyship's private apartments, watching, and when I asked him what he was doing there he began to stammer, lost courage, and told me he feared that you, my lady, were out on the water, adding that he must find means to put a stop to such imprudences. As was my place to do, I awed him into returning to his own room, and ever since then I have scarce let him out of my sight; so much so, that peace no longer reigns between us."

Rouanez was cold all over now. What a situation! Hundreds, thousands, perhaps, of lives were at the mercy of Grafton's discretion, or else, as her quick wit indicated, she must lead him to believe that she, Rouanez de Rozkavel, Lady Clanvowe, was engaging in some vulgar intrigue, leaving her home at the dead of night to keep a tryst like any love-sick chambermaid! Even if in defiance of Jwala-Singh's advice she sent Grafton home, would he consent to go, she wondered, so shaken was she for the moment by the unanticipated prospects suddenly unrolled before her? He had his mission to heart; he considered himself in Sir Hubert's absence her natural guardian.

Then her normal self returned, and she smiled grimly. Oh yes, Grafton would go if she wished it! But what if he talked to Penruddock; what if he wrote to Sir Hubert himself, and the letter were, as doubtless might happen, intercepted? Olier had warned her not to write a single compromising word, since the post-mistress of the nearest town through which the mails passed was known to be a Government spy. Also, how much had Grafton really discovered? Had he perhaps seen her creep home in her

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

paludière disguise—perhaps even followed her and witnessed the rapid meetings which once or twice had taken place for hurried councils on the *lande*, or at the foot of the cliffs, between herself, Kébèn de Kérhardèc, de Laoual, Arzur, Olier, and de Massèrac? In this case the lover question fell before a far more terrible one. What should she do to find out how she now stood? Jwala-Singh alone could help her; but then she must unreservedly confide in Jwala-Singh. And why not? She knew how absolutely she could trust him. And yes . . . he of all men could understand the plight of her Bretons . . . because his own people had been conquered, and were held in bonds, that if more kindly and merciful, yet galled, as all bonds must a proud race. He could hoodwink Grafton—since Grafton she seemed bound to keep near her, after all.

“Listen, Jwala-Singh,” she said, with swift but irrevocable resolve, “I will tell you the truth about all this, now and at once.”

Jwala-Singh once again raised a warning hand. “Not now and at once, if it please my lady. I have dwelt here the half of an hour already, and Grafton must not suspect that I am to be honored by confidences in which he has no part. Let my lady go out riding after tiffin along the path of pink flowers (the path across the heather), and I will await her horse’s hoof-beats near the old powder-tower on the edge of the precipice. There we can talk; not here.”

Rouanez brought her square little teeth together with a click; her delicate nostrils were quivering like those of a mettlesome horse who feels the curb. There was so much wisdom in the Hindu’s words that she was longing to strangle Grafton, and once left alone she gave way to one of the rare fits of rage which were the pitfall and snare of her well-governed nature—a fit of rage which

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

left her white and trembling; and firmly resolved also to hurry the completion of the plot as much as it could be hurried. The situation was no longer tenable.

An hour later she had to force herself to eat a few morsels under Grafton's tutelary gaze, and that small effort cost her almost more than in her present mood she could compass. She was beginning actually to hate that pink of respectability, and Rouanez's hatred was no lukewarm thing; but she managed to maintain an outward composure, and cutting the unwelcome meal as short as possible, she slipped into her habit and rode off at a tearing gallop in a direction precisely opposite to the old *Poudrière*.

The spot selected by Jwala-Singh for the rendezvous was as safe from surprise as any spot on earth could well be, for from that high elevation, mile upon mile of coast, naked of any cover that could possibly conceal an approach—a vast stretch of land and sea—could easily be scanned. The dismantled and now roofless powder-tower rose from the sheer edge of the cliff, and occupied a point of rock, beneath one side of which the narrow shingle beach ran back toward Rozkavel; while immediately beneath the other raged the frightful "Hell of Plogonak," where they say the souls of sailors and fishermen who have died impenitent are churned all day long, and are cast at night, panting, bruised, and battered, upon the jagged lip of the precipice, to lie in an inextricable tangle, moaning and crying aloud for mercy. After sundown no native of that region is bold enough to approach within a league of the promontory, and it cannot be denied that the wild clamor which—especially during the dark hours—rises there, low or loud, according to the shifting of the wind, is of a nature to justify the belief concerning it.

Jwala-Singh, waiting for his mistress, was standing at

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the foot of the crumbling tower-wall, and after a little he crossed the yard-wide path encircling it and bent over the brink of Plogonak. The rock beneath dropped away in a great funnel to a smooth, round well that pierced to unknown depths and communicated with the inmost arteries of the ocean. Toward the sea one side of the funnel was broken away to within a few feet of low-water mark, so that when the tide rose it flooded in, and the two currents, surface and submarine, fought with ghastly, roaring, sucking noises. But it was when the tide was out—and it was out now—that the Hell of Plogonak most deserved its name, for when the sea retreated from the broad lip of the well, in that sleek, black gorge, the dark water, running oilily round and round, rose and fell at almost regular intervals, as if in answer to some horrible pulsation. Again and again a soft, resistless heave lifted the grayish foam-fringes encircling the fluid column nearly to the top, and then with a throaty gulp it sank swiftly, down, down, down, in dizzy corkscrew rings, streaked and lashed with bands of wicked green. A raw, dank air, as of lifeless abysses, rose from below, and beneath his feet Jwala-Singh felt the quiverings of the solid cliff.

“It is, indeed, the Devil’s throat,” he murmured, drawing off to the place he had occupied before, and a Devil’s throat it seemed to be, with those gasping regurgitations and sudden slimy swallowings—a hideously convulsed throat, choked with foam and froth and incessant turmoil.

Just then, however, the Hindu’s quick ear caught another sound, that of hoofs swiftly approaching over the elastic heath, and, quitting the shadow of the tower, he advanced in the golden afternoon sunlight at the precise instant when Rouanez reined in Sacripant.

She did not speak, but jumped from her saddle, and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

leaving him to fasten the emergency bridle-strap to an iron ring in the inner tower wall, sat down on a flat stone with her back toward the grumbling precipice. Her face was pale and set with the anger she had not yet succeeded in subduing.

"Here we are safe," the Sikh said, emerging from the tower and taking his stand before her. "You can talk now, my lady, to your servant."

But Rouanez seemed in no hurry to begin, and for some time she remained motionless, her eyes fixed on the distant dip in the capricious cliff-line, where the square, pink tower of Fort Rozkavel could still be distinguished. At last she breathed an impatient sigh and turned to her companion. Slowly, but without once pausing, she gave her attentive hearer a short history of Brittany's troubles, ending in a clear and concise exposé of her plan to remedy the evils from which her land and her people suffered.

"And so," she concluded, in Urdu, for she had lived in India for several years, and the narration, beginning in English, had dropped unconsciously into the native speech, "and so this is the sum of the matter. We are a small people, but we have been a people from the beginning of time, and would fain keep to the ways and customs of our forefathers. You of the Khalsa should understand this thing."

"I do, indeed, understand," he replied, gravely, in the same tongue, "and it is a good cause; for it is good to maintain old customs, and it is not meet that the base-born should be the masters. But"—and he salaamed superbly—"it needed not that my lady should have told these matters. Am I not her servant to do her bidding? Have I not eaten of her bread and dwelt in her shadow these many years? There is no more to say."

Rouanez rose and gave him her hand. "Thank you,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Jwala-Singh," she said, simply. "I expected nothing less from you."

She turned toward the *Infern*, and, walking slowly to the dizzy rim, stood gazing down into the gulping well, her slim form swaying slightly in the strong wind. In two steps Jwala-Singh was beside her and caught her arm, as once Olier had done on the top of the sand-bluff near Rozkavel.

"I am not troubled with vertigo," she said, smiling for the first time. "But it is an ugly place, is it not?"

"A good burial-place for enemies," the Sikh murmured, his glittering eyes following the ceaseless motion of the water; and unconsciously quoting Hanvec, he added: "It must not easily give up its dead."

"They say it does—after a while," she replied, stepping back upon the path; "but they say so many things about it."

A little color had returned to her white face, and her expression was more calm and controlled as she remounted and, nodding to her stately retainer, cantered away, leaving him there gazing after her with eyes lighted by unswerving devotion and loyalty.

CHAPTER XIV

Indeed you spoke no word, and your true eyes
Told but of laughter and of kindly things;
Clear Honor wore you for a poor disguise,
And Simpleness, and all she with her brings.
I had not thought to sue; I saw you only
As might a boatman on a midnight mere,
See on the velvet surface, black and lonely,
A friendly planet stooped, and floating near.
But as a bell sharp-smitten doth awake
Her kindred metal dreaming in the spire,
Bronze answering murmurous bronze until they make
Sweetest accord as of an heavenly choir,
So, though I dreamed I heard your bitter cry,
My soul stood forth and answered, "Here am I."
Hidden Accord.—M. M.

OLIER and Rouanez were taking after-dinner coffee on the balcony in the lilac-and-amber light of an astonishing sunset. The day had been warm for Brittany, where intense heat and intense cold are alike unknown, and the little aerial terrace, with its half-raised awning of white and pink, its comfortably cushioned cane furniture, and the great clusters of roses filling its green-bronze jardinières, looked invitingly fresh and pleasant.

"How you will hate leaving all this!" Olier said, abruptly, sweeping one hand comprehensively in front of him, and Rouanez, who had been absent-mindedly plucking the fragile petals from the big rose-bowl on the little table before her, stared at him in surprise.

"Why should I leave it all?" she asked, resuming her occupation with quickened fingers.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Because whichever way the cat jumps, you will not, I fancy, be able to continue living here."

"Your mode of expressing yourself is of an elegance which paralyzes one's power of repartee," she commented. "But I must nevertheless assure you that the cat's antics will in all human probability have scant influence on my possession of Fort Rozkavel, since in any case it will remain for me the real Cradle of the Rose."

"It's pink enough for that, at any rate," he said, almost irritably.

"So is this," she countered, suddenly dashing a handful of petals at him, so that for a moment he was blinded by the fragrant shower. "You are in an ungracious mood to-night, it would appear."

He laughed a curious, constrained laugh, and slowly began to gather the strewn flower-silk from the table-edge without speaking.

"What ails you?" Rouanez impatiently interrogated. "Have you received bad news?"

"No, not in the least. That's a queer chain you are wearing. I never saw anything like those parti-colored stones."

"Parti-colored nonsense!" she exclaimed, slipping the long, glittering *sautoir* from her neck and holding it out to him. "These are kunzites, my eager searcher after knowledge—given to me in America by a very charming savant, and those," she added, pointing mischievously at the intervening brilliants, "are the ordinary diamonds of commerce."

"Really! You surprise me!" he replied, vainly trying to enter into her mood. "Kunzites . . . well, they *are* parti-colored—rose-shot lilac at the edges, rose in the middle, but altogether exquisite, and strikingly original."

"Have it your own way. I'd have been simpler of de-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

scription myself, and called them crystallized chatoyancy. But since you wish it, let them by all means be parti-colored."

"'Crystallized chatoyancy' is certainly extremely simple and unadorned language," he remarked, handing the chain back to her. "Will you accept a cigarette in return for your kindly information?"

"Yes, on condition that you leave off contradicting for a full hour. The habit is gaining on you, Olier, and it would be wise on your part to grapple with the evil before its roots have gone too deep for painless extraction."

"I will endeavor to follow your most excellent advice," he gravely retorted, rising to light her cigarette.

"While you are on your feet, would you mind shutting those windows," she said, glancing behind her. "I have particular reasons for seeking strict seclusion to-night."

"More so than ordinarily?" he questioned, obeying orders with his customary alacrity.

"Considerably more so. And oh! while you are about it, pick up that wonderful warming-pan and lean the handle against the fastening of the farthest window, so that it will fall with a clatter if the fastening is touched."

Olier swung round in bewilderment.

"Warming-pan . . . window . . . fastening . . . clatter . . ." he said, helplessly. "What are you talking about?"

She gave one of her old merry laughs and, getting up, walked toward him.

"Don't you see there in the corner that guitarry-looking brass instrument? It's a genuine Louis XIV. warming-pan I bought from a farmer a few days ago; a bona-fide antique, which gives it a clear title to help our cause. Here, let me show you."

She bent, picked up the shining object, and, adjusting

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

its long ebony handle in the round loop of the window-bolt, smiled triumphantly up at him.

"But that's a 'monk' . . . a good, old-fashioned 'monk'!" Olier exclaimed, with recaptured lightness. "Lord, how I used to laugh at my grandmother's story about a similar homely utensil."

"Tell me," Rouanez commanded. "We are both badly in need of a laugh."

"Oh! It's a silly yarn. You know the grandparents used to receive a good deal during the hunting season. Also they were exceedingly pious people, especially Grandmamma."

"I remember her. What a beautiful antiquity she herself became, with her perfect features and tall, slender figure! Go on, Olier."

"Of course the wandering religious were always greeted enthusiastically at Kremarzé, and made much of, until one fine autumn night—or rather a very cold and rainy one, to be correct, when the house was full of guests. My grandmother had shortly before brought a new maid from distant parts, where she had been visiting friends, and soon after dinner she sent for the girl in question, and said: 'It is so raw this evening that I wish you would personally see that the monk is passed through all the beds, so that the sheets will not be too cold.' An hour later Grandmamma caught sight of her maid standing within a little side door and signalling desperately to her. 'What is it, Celine?' she asked, hurrying across the room toward the distressed damsel. 'Is anything amiss?' 'Oh yes, Madame la Comtesse,' she sobbed, the monk refuses to get into any more beds . . . and . . . and he has excommunicated me for . . . playing pranks upon him!' 'Monk? What monk?' Grandmamma gasped. 'Are you crazy, girl?' And then little by little she drew from

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

her the story of how a begging monk who had sought refuge from the storm, and had been served dinner in a small refectory opening from the kitchen, had been conducted 'by orders of Madame la Comtesse,' to that high and mighty chatelaine's own room, and a dainty couch, all lace and satin. He was not surprised, it seemed, at being routed out of this ten minutes later, for, as he told Celine, he had thought at the time that she was making a mistake. But he began to be annoyed when the same thing happened again, and finally, when he had just succeeded in dozing comfortably off in the last of seven successive beds, only to find that his travels were not yet done, the remnants of his temper broke into bits, and the thunders of the Church descended upon poor Celine."

Rouanez was wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Dear me!" she cried. "I am glad I bought that warming-pan. I wouldn't have missed that story . . . But how did your grandmother pacify the 'brown robe'?"

"With difficulty, I believe. The rooms were not heated at Kremarzé then, and he had not enjoyed the experience. Indeed, I think that no other member of his particular *confrérie* ever passed our doors again, much to Grand-mamma's grief; although she never could speak of the event without making herself ill with laughing."

"I sympathize with your grandmother," Rouanez declared. "And yet nothing is so wholesome and invigorating as a real bona-fide laugh. My doctors tell me that it is better for any ailment than a pint of medicine. Indeed, this little intermezzo has given me strength to proceed to business now. I was really feeling absolutely averse to it this evening. So draw up your chair; I have something to tell you." And in a lowered voice she communicated to him her discoveries with regard to Grafton, and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

her subsequent talk with Jwala-Singh, a little modified in one portion only.

"Have I done right?" she asked, in conclusion. "It seemed the safest way. But perhaps you won't think so?"

"You have done perfectly right, as usual," he replied. "Personally I have a real esteem for Jwala-Singh. And as to Grafton, the strangest thing about his performances is that he is acting—or so it seems to me—from an exaggerated sense of duty and loyalty. Poor old idiot! It is a nuisance one can't spirit him away, nevertheless."

"The result of all this, Olier, is that we must hasten the end as much as we can. What remained of my peace of mind is gone, and," she added, with a queer little break in her voice, "I hate being watched. The idea that this 'old idiot' has his eye or his ear glued to every key-hole in turn drives me wild. It frightens me more than twenty gun-muzzles pointed straight at me would do."

"I understand that. But, Lady Clanvowe, you must conquer the feeling for a little while longer . . . you really must!"

He began the sentence calmly enough, but toward the end his voice struck a strange note of harshness wholly foreign to the words. Then rising suddenly, he walked to the balustrade of the balcony and stood gazing at the now brilliantly moonlit waves with unseeing eyes.

"I wish to God," he said, fiercely, "that I had never let you embark on this scheme! What matters the happiness of all the rest?"

She, too, had risen, and, joining him, she glanced at his set, white face.

"Why, Olier!" she remonstrated; "it is not like you to talk like that!"

He had turned away, and anxious to discover what

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

vexed him, she put her hand on his arm to draw him around; but at the touch he started violently, and grasping her slender wrist with fingers cold as ice, he positively flung her hand from him.

"Leave me alone!" he said, roughly, and the autocratic, self-willed woman, accustomed all her life to the utmost deference, and splendidly able to compel it always, felt no anger, but a sudden pang of dismay clutching at her heart.

"I have done a pretty piece of work!" she thought, like a flash. "God! What can I say now to help him out?" And her little mocking laugh was somehow misleading enough to save the situation, as she dropped him a low courtesy. "When Monseigneur has recovered his temper," she gayly pronounced, "we will resume our argument."

Had he looked at her then he would have seen that she was of an absolute pallor, but her brave, blue eyes did not flinch.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Clanvowe," he stammered, with pitiable shamefacedness. "I cannot imagine what made me act with such abominable rudeness."

"I can," she said, quietly. "We have all of us racked our nerves past endurance lately, and this last *contretemps*, coming on the top of the rest, is enough to make anybody angry. Besides, between comrades-at-arms one must not be too touchy."

In her heart she was passionately praying that he would go away and give her time to readjust her thoughts. Fortunately for her, a similar desire on his part made him equally anxious to be alone, and with the help of her graceful raillery anent what she dubbed "his unbearable boorishness to-night," he managed to shorten by an hour his usual after-dinner lingerings, without, as he fondly hoped,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

arousing her suspicions, and left her waving him a smiling "*Au revoir—à demain!*" from her rose-garlanded balcony.

Hardly had he disappeared than the mask fell from her suddenly drawn and haggard features. "A pretty piece of work . . . a pretty piece of work!" she repeated, again and again to herself, pacing back and forth like a caged animal, her hands clinched at her sides. "And an old hag like me, too! I, who never, never for a second dreamed such a thing possible." She paused, looked around her from the starry-blue vault curving about the ocean-rim to the scattered leaves at her feet—those same delicate petals she had mischievously pelted him with—and then rushed across the flagged flooring to the furthest window, which she wrenched open, displacing the guardian warming-pan with a deafening clatter, and fairly ran through the softly lighted "den" to her dressing-room, where on the broad, lace-shrouded toilet-table a tall lamp burned brightly.

There, sitting in front of the faithful clearness of her mirror, she bent forward, her chin in her palms, and stared angrily at herself until her eyes ached and slowly filled with tears. One by one the big drops glided down, falling with tiny splashes on the perfume-boxes and gold-backed hair-brushes, and through their crystal shine she still tried to pick herself to pieces. "An old woman! An old woman!" she whispered, wearily. "But what am I doing here—taking mental notes so as to be able to write my own passports?" Her unconquerable bent toward self-mockery was as keen as ever. "I can't even see myself any more, and it would read as they all do: 'Round face, round chin, medium nose, medium forehead—medium everything else!'" She flung out of her chair, and returned to the balcony, drying her angry tears with her small fists, as babies do.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

After a while she grew calm enough to resume her great arm-chair and review the past weeks with something like method and order, but seek as she would she could not discover a single act on Olier's part—a look or a word—that might have served her as a warning. Of course the boy had been attentive to her wishes, he had shown pleasure in being with her, and had danced pretty constant attendance; but every man she had ever met had done that more or less. She was used to it. Why, even in her servants she had always been aware of something that strongly resembled involuntary homage, and her sailors obviously adored her, and vied with each other in “jumping extra lively” when she spoke. How could she have noticed the difference with this calm, self-possessed boy, who had never permitted himself even a gesture of excessive *emprèssement*? She was not to blame. That she was forced to admit. But what mattered it since the evil was done? And what evil! Had she not been so sincerely attached to him, perhaps her present grief would have been lessened. A surpassingly lovely woman, an irresistible *charmeuse* like her, does not go through life without damaging many hearts—and knowing that it is so, becoming resigned to the inevitable. But he was different. He was all alone in the world, and so pathetically young and whole-hearted. He had given up his beloved career, and now with his grand old name and no money—or very little of that, at least—his empty life and impossible love, what would become of him?

If the insurrection which he and she had brought about succeeded, would the greatest honors—a place at the King's side even—console such a nature as his? And if it failed? She in any case must disappear. Lady Clanvowe, the wife of a British Ambassador—for that distinction was to follow closely upon Sir Hubert's return,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

as she knew—had no title to a *tabouret* at the Court of France, even should that Court, owing to her, be reborn from dead ashes. And again, if failure rewarded their efforts? It was maddening to so much as think of that alternative, and Rouanez, as Olier had done earlier, gazed at the dark, silvered waves without in the least perceiving that they were dancing and singing musically there below.

One thing was certain. She must never let him guess that she knew his secret. They were bound to spend the next weeks together almost constantly—there was no help for that. And so it would be the duty of every minute to avoid this of all other dangers.

She rose with a weary sigh, and shivered in the cool breeze preceding dawn. Then slowly, with the dragging step of utter exhaustion, she went to her room. More slowly yet she undressed, and drew out one by one the shell forks from her hair, until the long braids slipped down over her pale-blue peignoir. Still lost in heavy thought, she loosened first one braid and then the other, and shook out the royal ermine mantle that fell far below her knees, lustrous and shining, almost luminous. Then with a sudden sob she threw herself across the foot of her bed, and burying her face in the perfumed silky mass, lay quite still and sleepless until sunrise.

Olier, too, did not sleep much that night. He had driven his dog-cart home at break-neck speed, only to find that he did not know what to do with the hours left to him before it would be time to resume his daily routine. He was shaken by a furious anger against himself, as he quickly paced up and down the dim garden walks all gray with dew, and it was only when dawn began to show a rosy gleam through the interlaced branches of the surrounding trees that sheer fatigue made him pause. Still



A CORNER OF THE MANOIR OF KREMARZÉ

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

he did not feel like going in-doors, and after some more aimless loitering sat down on the curb of the old verdure-smothered well in the north parterre to resume his stormy meditations.

Never until that evening had he clearly realized that he loved Lady Clanvowe, for her elder-sister — almost motherly — attitude toward him had deceived him into believing that his own feelings, if never filial, were brotherly — although now the idea made him laugh suddenly, in a way which it was not good to hear. He cudgelled his tired brain to reconstruct the wretched scene on the balcony, hoping against hope that she had given no serious importance to his unexplainable conduct. Unexplainable? A cold shiver ran between his shoulders. Too easily explained, alas, if she used only half her ordinary shrewdness; in which case he, Olier de Frèhél, had proved himself unworthy of her perfect trust, of her delicious tone of affectionate *camaraderie*; unworthy even of remaining her friend and “lieutenant,” as he had been so proud to term himself.

But surely if she had put the true meaning on his brutal outbreak, she could not have joked him about it as she did—even she could not possess such mastery over herself; for he knew how intolerant she was of what she once or twice had contemptuously alluded to as “the passions.” To this well-poised, wholesome-minded woman, no man in his senses would dare, he reflected bitterly, to make such an exposé of his feelings as he had been on the verge of doing. And yet his love for her was pure and lofty, if ever love was. But even if it were so she was unapproachable, and usually so impulsive that a mere hint in that direction would, he firmly believed, have been enough to make her dismiss him from her presence as she would an insolent lackey.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Perhaps then—perhaps there was a chance that, wrought up by their previous discussion, she had really ascribed the miserable incident to an ill-bred but nevertheless pardonable fit of temper. Anyhow, he would soon know, for the exigencies of their great undertaking forbade his keeping away, had not the most ordinary common-sense dictated—until further enlightenment at least—the absolute necessity of making no change in his manner of coming and going at Rozkavel.

He saw suddenly, too, why Arzur's outspoken admiration for Rouanez had galled him past endurance; why he had always so carefully avoided glancing at Sir Hubert's photograph on her desk; why even his old friends, de Massérac and Kèrhardéc, had become obnoxious to him. Jealous? Oh yes; he was jealous of every being and object upon which her eyes rested for a moment kindly!

He rose brusquely, and a few faded rose-petals fluttered from within his sleeve, where they had dropped when she flung her two little fistfuls at him, and fell on the gravel at his feet, reminding him once more of the exquisite hours they had spent together. He bent, gathered them up tenderly, and holding them in the hollow of his hand, ran up to his room, where he spent half an hour placing them to his satisfaction in a little, old, rock-crystal locket he had worn in nursery days; then slipping the thin gold chain round his neck, he lay down on the sofa, still gazing at the childish trinket with suddenly child-like eyes, and fell without knowing it into a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XV

The cellar-stock, though lacking in the signs
Of cultured choice, could make the rustic glad
And something over; two rough country wines,
"P'tit bleu" and "p'tit vin blanc," were to be had,
And fiery "calvados," the spirits bad
Off dissolute potatoes; but indeed
Their cider was clear nectar, oversprad
With lightest froth, begot of many a bead
Sprinkling from depths more fragrant than a clover mead.

Here of an evening if you knew their speech
From big, grave, red-haired fellows you could hear
(Saboted, Chouan-hatted, broad of breech)
How went the salt-crop in the marshes near,
If the sardines had failed, and how the year
Promised of harvest. While they drank amain
All were on good behavior, under fear
Of stalwart escort—or if need be, twain—
To brawl at large, or slumber in the moonlit lane.

The hostess helped her lord to make them go
(A strapping man to lift four hundred-weight);
Not ill of face or figure she, although
A fine moustache had come to her of late,
Suiting her thews of Anak; but that Fate
Had given them one only child whose dower
Of beauty was a thing to conquer hate,
Made those to wonder who forget the power
Oft lent to rudest rocks, to grow a lovely flower.

Her features purely proud and sweetly sad,
And blue her eyne as skies have never been,
No sabot but a small black slipper clad
Her graceful foot, her hair was amber sheen,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

She stood a lily, and she moved a queen;
Merely her wordless presence stopped a fight
More than her forebears' tongues and fists, I ween,
And faces shamed to red that erst were white;
And this "vierge de missel" Vamezel Enora hight.
The Breton Inn.—M. M.

MONSIEUR ANTOINE FLOCHARD had not forgotten—nor forgiven—the undignified manner in which his worthless bones had been saved by the unexpected intervention of what he called "one of those boors of peasants." There is nothing so sweepingly complete as the contempt of the lower middle-classes for the simple-minded toilers of the fields; and the gifted Flochard, whose progenitor had been a drunken mechanic much given to pummelling his wife and family, was not behind-hand in declaring, when he could do so without prejudice to his political objects, that next to the nobles, none were so pestilential as those who sought a precarious living from mother earth or the depths of the sea. This rancor was, of course, quite unabated by recent events, and he promised himself vengeance upon the populations of Rozkavel, Kremarzé, and even distant Laoual, as soon as his all-powerful patron, Senator Dulac, arrived upon the scene.

Meanwhile, having fully recognized the perils attending his propaganda, he restricted his efforts to the ordering and "embellishment" of Castle Rozkavel, including a reckless partitioning of the grand old halls and lordly salons into box-like little rooms, lined as real bonbon-boxes are, with gaudy satins, and crowding the same with that horror of all modern horrors, plush and gilt furniture. He was only obeying orders, it is true, but his own taste and Madame Dulac's being trained around the same uncompromisingly bourgeois prop, his small eyes sparkled with appreciative delight as he saw one grotesque mon-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

strosity added to another; and when, finally, the whole magnificent interior of the six-hundred-year-old Château had been scraped and polished, varnished and lacquered, hung with glaring draperies, and coated with meretricious bullion until not one square inch remained to spoil, he felt that he, indeed, had more than fulfilled his honorable mission, and sat himself down to wait as patiently as he could; with the help of innumerable fat, black cigars, and almost as numerous bottles of costly liqueurs—for the provisioning of the vast cellars had not been neglected by this thoughtful soul.

Another and by no means negligible pastime was afforded him in his luxurious solitude by the daily reports of the two shady ex-police agents whom he had imported from Paris after his mishap at Kerdikan's inn. Carefully instructed by him in the way they should go, and disguised as stablemen, these worthies, scarcely more courageous but considerably shrewder at such a game than Flochard, mixed with the frequenters of neighboring cabarets as often as they could in quest of news. This had been scanty hitherto, for even when drunk a Breton remains unpleasantly cautious and close-mouthed. Still that detail was not of a nature to embarrass two such wide-awake persons as Messieurs Perron and Luvel, and since what they did not actually discover they invented, their delations suffered neither in bulk nor interest, and filled the Senator's secretary with joy. Indeed, the pseudo-grooms played their parts creditably, abusing their august employers, as real servants take untiring satisfaction in doing, bawling aloud about Monsieur's parsimony, Madame's false hair and sadly real if now outlawed pranks—one would have sworn this gave them as much pleasure to do as if they hadn't been paid for it—and in short deceiving their hearers as to their status . . . all

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

excepting that curious little bundle of natural astuteness, Kornèli, surnamed Kèlèren, or "Will-o'-the-Wisp," and one of the Royalist party's most active agents.

From the day when Rouanez had bidden him watch Antoine Flochard, Antoine Flochard had been watched with a completeness little short of the marvellous, and the advent and import of the two ex-police spies had not remained a secret to Kornèli for a single minute. "They have as good an opinion of themselves as if they had lighted up the sun with their own little pocket tinder-boxes," he had told Rouanez, when signalling their presence at old Rozkavel, "but Lilik"—Kornèli was fond of calling himself soft-sounding pet names when in a good humor—"has a tinder-box of his own to set fire to their paper castles!" At which Rouanez had laughed, and advised him to turn incendiary as speedily as possible.

A few nights later Kornèli Kèlèren, his face buried in his arms, was slouching half across the clumsy black oak table of the old inn on Rozkavel high-street, apparently fast asleep, for his well-knit frame seemed utterly relaxed, and now and again a smothered snore gave further evidence in favor of this theory. This inn, which bore inscribed both in French and Breton on a once brilliantly azure-and-white board fastened to the door-lintel the extraordinary and misleading appellation of *Au Rendez-vous des Amiraux*, had been kept by two women, mother and daughter, since the untimely death of the head of the house, from an over-consumption of his own wares, some five years before. There was also a tobacconist's shop attached to the establishment, and this being throughout France a highly prized governmental monopoly, is usually granted only to those who have deserved it by faithful service. In the present case, however, the modest *Débit de Tabac* presided over by pretty Enora, while her mother

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

dispensed liquid refreshment in the inn proper, had been bestowed upon the family many years before the existing political state of affairs—indeed, as far back as the dignified rule of the long-regretted President Carnot, which would have excused the two women for entertaining any feeling they chose for his successors had they not been far too busy to think of the matter at all. As it was they were doing well, for tobacco and drink are always the most remunerative of comestibles. Nor did they greatly feel the want of a man to help in the business, since Mother Roparz was always equal to the task of reducing to silence the most unruly brawler, and Enora's extraordinary beauty attracted customers from far and wide.

This daughter of a long line of village publicans—the Roparzes had kept that little inn, father and son, for over a hundred years—belonged to a type now rarely met with outside the pages of an illuminated missal, and which seemed doubly startling in the smoky atmosphere of that dusky drinking-place. Pale and delicate, with that purity of profile which is ascribed by tradition to the Madonna, but is seldom realized by painters, ancient or modern, she had a perfectly oval face, a lovely, grave little mouth drooping ever so slightly at the corners, and gold-lashed lilac eyes—lilac as the hare-bells are, with no hint of blue or gray in the clear, candid iris—while the golden eyebrows, pencilled down the centre with a single darker line and set curiously high above the orbit, lent to the whole countenance beneath its narrow bandeaux of pale blond, almost amber-colored hair, and the severe white folds of the unadorned coiffe, a touch both archaic and pure. The girl literally breathed purity, and her manner of doing anything, whether she was filling with coarse pipe-tobacco the little twists of rough paper which she sold for one sou, or busying her slender, aristocratic fingers with the piece

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

of knitting that Breton women invariably carry in their apron-pockets and drag forth immediately they have a spare second, made the employment a dignified and fitting one. Also she loved flowers, as a tenderly-cared-for row of geraniums and veronicas on the wide window-sill behind her abundantly proved.

"She has tastes that don't go with her rank," the mother often proudly explained; and this being so, the worthy woman took care to spare her daughter all the rude work of the establishment, preferring to see her sit in her dainty kerchief and immaculate apron behind the narrow counter than to be herself relieved of any task which she deemed unsuitable for Enora.

Only a couple of fishermen, besides the slumbering Kornèli, were just then occupying the drinking-room of the inn; and those two were lazily shuffling a pack of greasy cards while sipping the usual *bolées* of cider well laced with coarse spirits. They had just returned from a fairly satisfactory day's herring-fishing; hence the unwonted treat which they slowly and silently enjoyed to the full. Bending over the iron pot simmering on a dull turf fire, Mother Roparz paid not the slightest attention to her guests. She was a tall woman, who in the long ago had been admired for the regularity of her features and the brightness of her blue eyes; but age had somewhat too strongly emphasized the heroic lines of her figure, and of late years a small mustache had added much superfluous virility to her already rather forbidding exterior. Her really Herculean strength stood her in good stead with her often difficult customers, who respected her fists almost as much as they dreaded her tongue-lashings.

Suddenly the half-door was pushed open, and two men wearing the gaiters, tweed breeches, and striped, long-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

sleeved waistcoats of well-found stablemen slouched in, chewing spears of straw in the approved fashion of their kind.

"Hallo, Mother Roparz!" cried the burlier of the two, a square-jawed individual, whose rubicund nose was the meanest of libels if he were not an habitual drunkard. "We've got ten minutes to spare from their infernal *boutique*, and we thought we'd come and take a pull at your A No. 1 spinach-juice. But be quick about it, before that hollow-stomached Flochard discovers our absence, or he'll be sending the stable-cleaner after us—damn him!"

Mother Roparz, who spoke and understood French passably, although she made use of this advantage only when unable to avoid it, and then but grudgingly, shook the last fagot twigs from her apron into the fire she had been reviving, and crossing over to a sort of small, zinc-covered bar in the corner, reached for a bottle of absinthe and two glasses, which, together with a stone jug full of well-water, she placed before the horsey gentlemen, sprawling side by side on the end of the bench where Kornèli still audibly slumbered.

"Pass the ingredients to me," the thinner and until now less assertive groom said, in an odiously raucous voice. "There's no one like yours truly for beating a parrot—*battre un pèrroquet* means in France to mix scientifically that exquisite-hued but deadliest of all beverages, which they call there *l'Apéritif*, with a big A—and Perron, for the red-nosed one was no less a personage, eagerly complied with his comrade's request, and fell to watching the delicate operation with covetous, blood-shot eyes. The quick little tap-tap of spoon against glass no doubt accomplished what the noisy entry of the aggressive couple had failed to do, for Kornèli ceased

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

snoring, raised his head with a loud, dismal yawn, and began to stretch himself like one painfully cramped.

"Eh, *L'Enrhumé!*"* Perron cried, slapping the youth on the shoulder. "Been hugging Mamma Roparz's cognac bottles too tight?"

Kornèli yawned once more cavernously, and fixed his sleepy blue eyes stupidly on his gay interlocutor, but forbore to answer.

"You're a good one," the latter resumed, "to come and spend your hard-earned sous here as soon as they've been doled out to you. Why don't you try and get a job at our shop? The head gardener might find something for you to do, and you wouldn't need to be up all night long raking salt."

Kornèli half turned away from the absinthe-drinkers. "It isn't my idea to be any man's servant," he said, gruffly. "Better earn less and be on one's own."

"Bah!" Luvel exclaimed, still bending over his task, jug in hand. "It's with such ideas that one remains poor. Look at us! D'you think we fancy slavery better'n you do? Not a bit of it. But my maxim is to scrape the bourgeois first, last, and all the time. And mind you, one can do a lot of scraping in a gold-lined thieves' cave like ours."

"Possible. But it takes clever chaps like you to do the scraping. I wouldn't know how."

"*Sacré farceur!*" Perron interposed. "It's easy enough to learn. We'd soon show you the ropes. Want to try?"

"You must have too much for yourselves, if you're so set on sharing," Kornèli muttered. "It ain't natural to be so generous . . . or perhaps there's some dirty business you want me to do."

* Literally, "man with a cold" — about equivalent to "sleepy-head" or "numskull."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Both grooms shrugged their shoulders with one accord, and equal contempt for such crass imbecility.

"If it was that," Perron candidly admitted, "we'd keep it for ourselves. It's too well paid to be passed over to some one else."

"I don't know," Kornèli drawled, carefully stuffing some shreds of tobacco into his short clay pipe. "A while ago a lad from hereabouts was caught like that . . . promised clean work and then set to spy . . ." He spat sideways on the hard-beaten earthen floor. "Yah! . . . to spy, no less, on some harmless good people who had taken a fine house for the bathing-time, Morgat way, and had a big boat of their own, too, fitted up grandly."

The two agents had pricked up their ears and put down their glasses at the word Morgat.

"What sort of parishioners were they?" Perron asked, in a suddenly quickened, eager voice, which caused his mate to look at him with angry warning.

"I've told you . . . a good sort, specially the mother . . . she was a thundering fine one she was, with a big nose and eyes like a hawk's. A Countess, too," he concluded, dragging on the two syllables of the title as if they tasted good.

"You bet . . . I know who you mean now!" the irrepressible Perron cried. "Hadn't she got a name the same as a city . . . think well . . . of a very great city . . . the biggest in . . ."

"Aw! Shut up," the exasperated Luvèl here roughly interrupted. "What does it matter to us who she was?"

Among Perron's less objectionable qualities, there shone with subdued lustre a great delight in teasing; and now under the influence of his second glass of absinthe he refused to be downed.

"'Course it does!" he stated, with one finger raised

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

knowingly to the side of his nose, and a leer of intense malice. "'Course it does. Don't it, *L'Enrhumé?*"

"If it's to me you're talking, I can tell you I don't care a damn what she was called," Kornèli said, rising to go and light his pipe by the aid of a brand from the hearth. "What does it matter, anyhow, one way or the other?"

"Think well," persisted Perron, who, having already imbibed before coming to the inn, was now getting drunk. "Wasn't it the name of a great city . . . of the greatest city in . . ."

"Maybe, maybe," Kornèli observed, with crushing indifference, "or maybe not. I don't remember."

"But I do," Perron cried, triumphantly. "I remember very well indeed; and what's more, if that thundering fine woman had only been her own son she would not have come there for nothing either—as they say he did, once or twice, on his yacht during his mother's stay. He mustn't have inherited those famous hawk's eyes of hers, nor much of her grit neither; and he isn't by half as up-standing as his little brother, who's at least a wide-awake rabbit. It's a poor look-out for a would-be King to be content to sit in a corner watching his country from across the water. No wonder with such a sleepy leader that those stinking aristos should all have collapsed, though there are some who do say—" But here a slender hand dropped smartly on his shoulder, and facing round he found himself confronted by what but few in Rozkavel village had ever seen: dainty little Enora Roparz in a red fury of wrath.

"Hold your tongue, you foul-mouthed land-crab!" she stormed. "Hold your tongue! You've said more than enough already. And don't you ever presume to speak again like that under our roof, or else you'll be sorry for it!" The French syllables borrowed a strange intensity

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

from her unaccustomed lips, and she managed to make her meaning exceedingly plain. Even Perron's befuddled brain could not misunderstand, and he instantly began to apologize—though in terms that might perhaps have been better chosen.

"All right, all right, you little Royalist spitfire," he hastened to say. "I'm sure I didn't know you were stuck on His High Mightiness, nor for the matter of that, that you'd ever clapped eyes on him."

"Neither I have," she contemptuously interrupted, "but it isn't for a drunken good-for-nothing like you to make free with such people's names, and you sha'n't do so when I'm about. Yes, yes, Mammik!" she exclaimed, in a different tone, as at the sound of her voice Mother Roparz came hurrying out of the near-by scullery. "I'm going back to my *niche*; don't bother about me." And turning with a last gesture of disgust from the group by the table, she walked away, leaving her amazed parent—arms upraised above her coiffe—muttering in incoherent Breton: "Didn't I always say that she has ideas that don't go with her rank? But Holy Virgin Mary, what ails her to-night?" Then she strode toward the drinkers.

"You've understood, I fancy, what my daughter has told you!" she said, fiercely. "For myself I don't give a rotten strand of hemp what you say or think; but she's not to be annoyed; and if you try that game again I'll spit in my hands and bundle both of you into the gutter before you can so much as set your caps straight. So mend your manners if you know what's good for you!" She too meant no idle threat, as the pair of muscular fists she shook under Perron's brandy-nose amply testified, and the prudent Luvell hastened to attempt her pacification.

"Cool down, cool down, Mamma Roparz," he coaxed.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"It's only Perron's nonsense. He's a bit of a joker when he's had enough liquid; otherwise he'd be the last to go against any lady's political opinions—in her presence at least."

"I'm not a lady, and I haven't any political opinions," the formidable widow thundered. "Poor, unprotected women like me don't get time to meddle with such. But just the same, you behave yourselves when you're here, my men, that's all!" And still grumbling, she turned heavily on her clattering wooden heels and followed Enora into the little partitioned *Débit*.

"It's all your fault, you cursed imbecile," Luvel growled, angrily, in Perron's ear. "What d'you want to come raving here about your mothers that should be their own sons, and the rest of that balderdash? You're drunk, that's what you are, and we'd better be moving on before you do worse!"

But Perron, who during the altercation had been rapidly swallowing another of his favorite opalescent mixtures to bolster up his startled feelings, received the proposal in a sour spirit.

"Go home if you like," he said, thickly, bending further over the glass he was cuddling, "or to Hell if you like that better. I'm for comfort first and bed afterward. Keep your dirty paws off me, will you?" he added, squirming in Luvel's grasp. "I won't go with you now, burn your eyes! And what's more, I'll say what I please about Pretenders who don't pretend the right way and Pretenders who do; d'you hear?" He was as red as a turkey-cock now, and his wicked little eyes blazed so fiercely that Luvel let go of his coat-collar rather abruptly, dreading a rough-and-tumble with him even more than a continuance of his imprudent disclosures. After all, the rough-and-tumble might mean a rent in his precious

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

skin, while the indiscretions would later on be visited on the culprit's own head. Besides which, Kornèli was far too dull, he thought, to have understood, the two women were now out of ear-shot, and the card-playing fishermen had fortunately long since departed.

"Oh, let's stay on by all means!" he acquiesced, magnificently. "I'm not set on carrying you back by main force. I'll even stand you another drink to show there's no hard feeling." His policy now was to thicken the cloud obscuring Perron's brain as speedily as possible, and in order to hasten this desirable end he turned amiably toward Kornèli and asked him to join them.

"No, thank you," the youth replied; "I don't care for the taste of absinthe. If it were cognac now, I don't know but what I would perhaps take a hornful, but no poison for me, I say."

"The baby's right!" Perron gleefully exclaimed. "Cognac's the thing to give us tone," and he began calling loudly for Mother Roparz to bring him some of her best "potato sap," an order which filled Kornèli with hope, for *he* knew the effect that the fiery stuff would produce on top of those copious draughts of absinthe.

"You never told us," Perron re-began, nudging Kornèli fraternally in the small ribs, "what happened to your good friend the spy. Wasn't he paid for his pains?"

"Oh! don't let's talk about him," Kornèli grumbled. "He wasn't to blame, since he didn't know what they were hiring him for. But in spite of that his people wouldn't recognize him afterward, and he signed on a deep-sea trawler, so as to keep away from home."

"Plague and pestilence! You're a squeamish lot round here; a mighty . . . what d'you call it . . . par . . . ticular crowd of aristos! No wonder they're afraid of Brittany if all of you are . . . like that." Perron stuttered, tumbling

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

over his words, and leering at Kornèli. "D'you know that Princess—who—who roosts all alone . . . at . . . I can't recall the name of the blasted place . . . you tell, Luvel . . . Fort . . . Fort . . ."

"Rozkavel," Luvel said, suddenly, with surprising promptness and obliging good-nature, for in encouraging his friend to drink deep he had trapped himself unaware, and had now reached that degree of mellowness which loosens tongues and principles with like ease.

"That's it, Roz—Roz—Rozkavel!"

"The English lady?" Kornèli promptly interposed. "They say round here she's crazy."

Perron, lying almost entirely across the table, began to rock himself waggishly from side to side. "English and crazy—crazy and English—some think it's—one and the same thing . . . but—" Here he unexpectedly straightened up, banged his two fists on the edge of the table with such violence that two glasses and the brandy-bottle—now three-quarters empty—toppled over on their sides. "But I have a . . . good . . . n-n-notion that she is neither the one n-n-nor the oth-other. I tell . . . you"—he rose to his unsteady feet, swaying jerkily backward and forward, and victoriously concluded — "I—I—I've . . . g-got a lit . . . tle . . . idea!"

"*Pas de bêtises!*" the momentarily sobered Luvel fiercely whispered, and taking him by the arm, he dragged him bodily out of the house, muttering a torrent of abuse in his face.

CHAPTER XVI

Mysterious in the mist-light milky-clear,
Spread by a shrouded moon, the marshes lay,
And islanded with salt-mounds there and here
Slept the broad glimmering level silver-gray.
All blackly cross-barred with thin banks of clay,
It seemed a pale abysm, covered in
With a huge grate, whereon till Judgment Day
Strange fiends and spirits unassoiled of sin
Trooped hideous, but forbore to make their hellish din.

A briny violet odor filled the air
When any wandering night wind drowsily
Dulled at a breath those mirrors still and square,
And swift and still as though by gramarye
Moved the black shapes in files of four or three
This way and that about their labor drear,
With uncouth burdens laden heavily,
And some with poles seemed puddling the mere,
And ape-like others clomb the white mounds shining near.

And if perchance a shadow spoke or screamed
A seldom jest or message, therewithal
Part of the vast inhuman night it seemed,
As might a frog's cry or a heron's call,
And down the silence settled like a pall
Of heaviest loom, and through her velvet sway
A murmur from the dead stars seemed to fall,
Or from one's throbbing heart—one could not say—
And morning seemed a dream, and wondrous far away.

The Salt Workers.—M. M.

OUTSIDE, the night had lightened to the whiteness of falling snow, thanks to the sudden rising of one of those filmy summer mists which on that coast envelop every-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

thing in the daintiest of semi-transparent veils, and which, though not really hiding any object from view, yet, on account of their distortion of distance and perspective, are to be classed among Nature's most misleading freaks. The squat granite houses on both sides of the village street seemed gigantic, and their unambitious chimneys looked twice the usual size, while the gauze-shrouded dunes behind loomed like dream-mountains against the pale sky, where a small moon was doubtless hanging mischievously out of sight to add by its deadened gleam to the bewilderment of home-goers.

"Damn this trick-box of a country!" Luvel growled, endeavoring to pilot his unsteady companion through these uncharted seas of luminous fog. "Hold up, you swine, you're breaking my arm. D'you think I can stand your full weight?" And he gave the swaying Perron a savage dig in the ribs.

Unused as yet to the confusing criss-cross tracks that zigzag through the heather and twist in and out of the sand-hills, his own imperfect sobriety caused him to mistake the path leading to the vast stretch of salt-marsh belonging to the Kremarzé domain for that winding toward Rozkavel Castle; and dragging Perron after him, he labored on, quite oblivious of his error, but waxing more and more profane as one hazily remembered landmark after another failed to materialize—waxing drunker, too, for his last hasty drink was taking effect.

The salt season was at its height, and in the dip of the dunes, where the great stretch of shallow water—neatly banked for the purpose of evaporation into small checkered squares—connects here and there by wooden sluices with the vast tidal reservoirs from which these *œillets de marais* are flooded when need arises, the tiny mud-dikes were crowded with workers, moving swiftly back and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

forth and bearing their heavy burdens with the ease that is only to be attained by a life-long training. The vaporous mist did not worry them, but when all at once Luvel, by now almost exhausted, debouched upon the broad, low embankment half encircling the "salt-field," the spectacle of what might have seemed even to less tipsy eyes an endless military camp, studded with preposterous tents between which an army of giants rushed wildly, brandishing uncouth weapons above their monstrous heads, sent him with a howl of terror to the hard-bake ridge on top of Perron.

"That comes from meddling with this hellish land!" he groaned, staring in horrible fascination at the towering, fog-distorted peaks, some ghostly white, others — those where the mounded salt had already been coated over with protecting mud—dark and threatening on their mysterious island platforms; and at the inhuman shapes storming position after position along the glimmering level, to rush off again at an always undiminished speed, constantly breaking and reforming their satanic ranks.

Luvel's moans were sobering Perron, and after a little that able secret agent struggled to a sitting posture and demanded in no uncertain accents what was up. There was, he argued, with rapidly clearing discernment and much justice, no sense in making the night hideous with discordant sounds such as now fell upon his, Perron's, ears, and he further marked his disapproval of the performance by offering to fight the offender then and there, single-handed. But at this point of his discourse, having painfully regained the perpendicular and cast a challenging eye around him, he collapsed ignominiously, and lay panting and sweating beside his unhappy comrade.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" he gurgled. "What did that old hag put in the absinthe?" And in a shuddering whisper

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

added: "Are we dead already . . . poisoned? I don't s-s-sup-pose, Luvel . . . you'll . . . deny . . . that this place l-looks . . . unc-c-commonly like . . . Hell!"

For a few minutes more the two boozers squirmed and rocked themselves to and fro in their terror. But little by little, the sharp, briny air of the marshes aiding, they grew calmer, and began to regain the use of their scattered intellects. Of course they had been drinking too much—more especially Perron, as the candid Luvel did not hesitate to assure him—but they were still in the land of the living; no doubt of that. Ordinary reason proved it. This was earth upon which they sat, and that thorny bush near by was real enough; for on being fumbled by an experimental hand it proved its genuineness with absolutely Breton ferocity.

"You blasted idiot!" Luvel suddenly exclaimed. "Don't you see where we are? Why it's the *marais-salants*, and you accuse *me* of not seeing straight! But what did you bring me here for, I want to know . . . what for? What for? Eh? Can you tell me why?"

Perron, though beginning dimly to realize that he had made a considerable fool of himself, felt that his entire ignorance as to how he got there was a strong point in his favor, and proceeded to enlarge upon this. But Luvel, bent only on repairing his own blunders as speedily as possible, rose and plodded off unsteadily in the direction whence he had come, without so much as deigning to answer, leaving him to follow, as best he might, through the clinging sand of the dune. After all, he was not sorry to have proofs in hand of Perron's unreliability; for had he not been forced to support him, and prevent him from falling down at every step, he would not have missed the road, and all this would have been avoided. Moreover, there was no knowing what harm those partial disclosures

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

at the *Rendez-vous des Amiraux* might not yet cause. He did not want to lose his job by an unduly chivalrous generosity toward his brother spy. Possessed with thoughts that ran uncertainly along these lines, he kept doggedly on until he had once more reached the firm high-road. Then he paused and glanced back along the deep rut, clouded as far as eye could reach with soft, drifting masses of what a more poetical mind might have found uncommonly similar to faintly silvered tulle.

"*Sacré nom de nom!*" he grumbled, straining his eyes. "Where has he got to?" His gaiters and shoes were full of fine sand, his head ached abominably, and from second to second his ill-temper increased, until he felt ready to strangle Perron the instant he appeared. But no such chance was granted him, and finally, beginning to feel unaccountably creepy alone in this ghostly landscape, he started his tired limbs upon the road again. Let Perron get home by himself, since he was not man enough to keep up with him. And casting fearful glances at every clump of furze, he made what haste he could in the direction of Castle Rozkavel.

Meanwhile, far down a contiguous sand-lane, the second ex-ornament of the Rue de Jerusalem lay at full length, his back propped against a convenient mound, gazing up at the shrouded heavens—"laughing to the Angels," as the *paludières* toiling a quarter of a mile farther on say of the expressionless skyward grins of new-born infants. Only half sobered, the effort of his relaxed muscles to battle against the yielding, crumbling sand had proved too much for him, and with the sublime insouciance of confirmed tipplers he had soon given up the struggle, pulled from his hip-pocket the flask with which, being a man of precaution, he invariably ballasted himself, and, tipping it to the proper angle, drained it to the last drop.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Now, as it happened to be three-parts full, the effect was such that in five minutes not even the crash of heavy ordnance could have aroused him from his deathlike torpor. Corpse-like indeed was the picture he presented in the milky mist-light, and a moor-rabbit stopped his scampish gadding long enough to focus a round, unblinking stare on this fragrant intruder upon his domain, then with a sardonic twist of his inquisitive nose and a farewell flourish of his white scut, decamped in search of more edifying spectacles.

In the broad inlet beyond the opening of the dune-path the midnight tide was rising calm and quiet under its curtain of shifting gauzes, stealing inch by inch upon the whispering sand. Gradually the muffled silence was broken by a faint approaching sound of footsteps crunching slowly along the stretch of fine gravel that edged the beach in the direction of the Fort. It was evident that whoever it might be indulging in this belated promenade was in no hurry. Indeed, the footsteps paused once or twice, for the time a man might take to leisurely survey his surroundings; and once the crack of a match scraped upon metal was followed by the smell of an excellent cigar oozing through the mist. The minutes passed. Little by little the vapor-gorged moon, a core of clearer radiance toward the west, was triumphing over her enemy, and all at once over the edge of the retreating fog-bank she cocked one sarcastic eye full upon Grafton, according to his now inveterate habit waiting up for Lady Clanvowe.

Just what purpose he was serving he would have found it even more difficult to explain now than earlier in the game. To-night, for instance, he knew, without the possibility of a doubt, that his mistress was safe aboard the "Kestrel," under the double protection of Penruddock and her faithful Jwala-Singh. He had been from the first

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

striving to satisfy a warped and greatly magnified sense of responsibility, to compliment the unconscious pose that marred his genuine devotedness, and to stifle a growing sense of unwarrantable curiosity, by telling himself that whatever happened he would be found at his post; but just now unusual qualms were disturbing his extreme self-righteousness; perhaps because the above-mentioned curiosity had become so obvious that he was unable to disguise it decently under an extenuating name; perhaps merely because that very morning Lady Clanvowe had done him another of those thousand and one nameless little kindnesses that the real aristocrat is wont to lavish impersonally upon his or her dependents. Perhaps again, it was simply because during the past few hours he had had more than ordinary opportunity to view his conduct in a more judicial light. He felt, indeed, singularly down-hearted and uncomfortable at that moment, pacing up and down there beneath the moon, alone in the mist with the accusing sea. It would seem that he had stumbled all at once upon the unpleasant meaning that attaches to the word "spy," even when, as was the case with him, it is plausibly allied to the most excellent of motives.

At the same time, through all this remorse on the moral count, a strong sense of personal grievance was making itself felt, and for the first time in his life he was inclined to self-pity, because the splendid isolation of his position in the family, and his duty to his master and mistress, forbade him to ease his overwrought mind by confiding in somebody. Now, when a man begins to regret the restraints of scruple he is within measurable distance of breaking them. Grafton, in fact, was bursting with his subject, and in a dangerously communicative mood.

Again he paused, removed his cigar from his mouth, and glanced uncertainly about him. In a few seconds the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

whole scene had changed: the mist, with the sluggish and fitful breeze, newly risen, was drifting westward, while the disburdened sea breathed deeply in her recovered freedom, and was, as the Breton sailors say, "illuminating from underneath." As far as the eye could reach the calm waters, which all day had been of the blue of molten turquoise, were now rolling every smooth undulation in exquisite glowworm tints of frozen fire. The deeps of the ocean seemed to be brewing the wonderful greenish light, and everywhere along the surface tiny flames—millions of fairy wicks—sprinkled forth, burned a few seconds, and blew out, to be replaced by others as short-livedly brilliant across the immense phosphorescent mirror. The sight was one seldom equalled in non-equatorial regions; but Grafton, who was not an admirer of nature in any of its moods, saw in it only a fresh outrage—another evil trick of this heathenish country—and turned away from the beautiful spectacle with a rare and uncomfortable superstitious thrill.

As he did so he saw in a now clear-lit sand-lane running up from the shingle a human form flat on its back, with arms and legs a-sprawl in that curiously flaccid fashion which no ordinary sleeper adopts; and seized again on the instant by his wildest apprehensions, Grafton, who to do him justice was no coward, made hastily for the spot and bent over the estimable Perron.

It was a great relief to find it was nobody from the Fort; but then the question still remained, what was the matter with the man? The blotched, chap-fallen face, the irregular breathing, the empty flask hard by, and the pungent, all-pervasive aura would have assured most people as to the diagnosis. But Grafton, who liked certainty in small as in large things, and had helped sometimes in sick-nursing, knelt on one knee; and discovering the weak and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

fluttering pulse of profound alcoholic coma, felt all the concern of the Good Samaritan for this person who had so considerably proved to be a mere stranger.

"It can't be merely the drink," he soliloquized, surveying the disgusting carcass. "Perhaps he has been hit on the head by one of those savages about here. He don't look like a native, anyhow . . . a groom by his clothes . . . an English one like as not . . . poor devil, from the old Hall on the hill; and if so I can't leave him lying here."

His patriotism once awakened by the unmistakably non-Breton appearance of those smart tweed breeches and gaiters, Grafton easily rose to the occasion, and turning on his heel with surprising quickness for so dignified a personage, marched off in the direction of the dismantled guard-house half a mile away, which Lady Clanvowe had caused to be transformed into a roomy and comfortable substitute for the absent stables. This was perched on a rock fifty yards or so from the little Fort, but was not too difficult of access even for carriages, provided these were not of a very ambitious kind. As a matter of fact only a light phaeton and a dog-cart had been brought, and no coachman at all, since the head-groom—"Sacripant's nurse," as Lady Clanvowe called him—was a very efficient and reliable man, well able to take charge of so succinct a summer outfit. To Mervin and his understrappers "Mr. Grafton" was a person of no mean importance, and the latter never doubted that he would find in them willing assistants to convey his new-found protégé under cover and administer first aid to the injured. Great was his astonishment, therefore, when Mervin, aroused by repeated poundings upon his door, flatly refused to bear a hand himself or allow his men to cooperate in the rescue.

"Hi'm sorry, Mr. Grafton," the worthy head-groom ex-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

plained, "but 'er ladyship 'as given strict horders as to hour getting acquainted with any hother stablemen in these parts; and since she 'as been so thoughtful as to allow us double rations of beer to avoid gadding, it wouldn't be right, Mr. Grafton, sir, for us to so much as squint in the direction of a comrade, 'ooever 'e might be—British or hotherwise."

"Don't be an ass, Mervin," the irritated Grafton interposed. "There can be no harm in letting him sleep off his liquor here, on a bundle of straw, if he's only drunk. You can pack him off at sunrise before the household is stirring. And if he's hurt, as I believe he is, I'll make myself responsible to her ladyship. You know very well she's not one to object to our helping a fellow-creature."

"That's hall very well, Mr. Grafton," Mervin said, scratching his sleek head; "but horders is horders, and Hi'm not going to hoverlook mine for hanybody. Hi'll go with you, 'owsomever, and give a squint to your precious corpse, although Hi'm blessed if Hi know what good that'll do either you or it."

Had such an incident happened near Clanvowe Hall, Grafton would in all probability have asserted himself in a wholly different manner. But though inclined by long habit to have his own way, his troubled conscience advised him not to attract Lady Clanvowe's attention just then by going counter to her slightest desires, and though grumblingly and with a sour visage, he accepted Mervin's offer.

"'Urt?" the latter contemptuously exclaimed, as soon as with the help of a stable-lantern he had closely inspected the object under discussion. "Hi'm surprised at you, Mr. Grafton; hit's a drunk; an uncommon fine drunk to be sure, but just a drunk. Fancy you thinking 'e was 'urt!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“Well, drunk or hurt or otherwise, he can’t stay here all night,” Grafton angrily retorted. “If he was one of those brutes of peasants, well enough. But seeing that he may be an Englishman, I feel it my duty to afford him some protection.”

Mervin stepped back a pace and considered his hierarchical superior with undisguised disapproval.

“Hi wouldn’t boast of ’is being one of hus, Mr. Grafton, that Hi wouldn’t if Hi was you. But since you’re so per-tickler about the beast’s precious ’ealth, you take a ’old of ’is feet, Hi’ll take the shoulders, and we’ll lay ’im as tender as a babe in that ’ere mud-sty yonder, where the coast-guards shelter in bad weather. Hit’s too good for the likes of ’im, hany’ow.”

Grafton turned and surveyed the small, dome-shaped mud-hutch at which Mervin was pointing, that strongly resembled a beaver’s lodge. He knew, from having more than once peeped inside, that there was clean straw on the flooring of hardened mud, and, satisfied that Mervin would concede no more, he yielded—and not a minute too soon; for just at that moment there rose from the inlet below a sound of oars, precise and regular as though the long blades were being handled by man-o’-war’s-men. Then a clear command followed, and the sharp keel of a *canot* scraped bottom.

“You needn’t come any further, Penruddock. Jwala-Singh will look after me,” came in Rouanez’s prettily-modulated voice.

Mervin and Grafton had crept into the *douanier’s* hut by now, and were crouching there like two school-boys afraid of being discovered in an act of flagrant disobedience; Grafton inwardly cursing his luck, and Mervin, inwardly also, cursing Grafton for having led him into such a scrape. Suppose her ladyship were to come up by

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

that way instead of along the beach now! Surely the stertorous snores of their unappetizing salvage could not escape her sharp hearing, and then . . . ! Fortunately for them this did not happen, and in a little while the culprits heard the *canot* being pushed off, and the grating of Lady Clanvowe's and Jwala-Singh's steps diminish and finally die away on the shingle.

"Don't tell her ladyship, Mervin, there's a good-fellow!" Grafton actually stooped to implore, as soon as he was reasonably certain that their mistress and her "body-guard" were safely housed.

"Of course Hi won't," the other grumbled. "But if you hever catch me at such a gime again, Mr. Grafton, Hi'm willing to become a Turk." With which dark threat the head-groom marched off, leaving a thoroughly humiliated and crushed Grafton to minister as best he pleased to the limp and comatose Perron.

CHAPTER XVII

Fitly you wear above your breast of snow
Jewels of old and blossoms of to-day,
Lights that the lapses of the ages know,
And buds new-blown, and dewy on the spray.
Of old your beauty is, the crown of Song
Beareth a thousand such in golden rhyme,
But your pure essence is of labor long,
'Tis the last dream that witch'd the sleep of Time.
Oft has this loveliness to make or mar
Burned on Ilyssus or the elder Nile,
In your clear wisdom I can read how far
Your soul has journeyed since that early while,
Then in your heart I glimpse, a vision true,
What never was before, and that is You.

The Essence and the Vase.—M. M.

THE large, tentlike awnings of the Hôtel de Tremoër at St. Malo were drawn down to within an inch or so of the carven ledges of its broad balconies, effectually concealing the fact that although the family was naturally out of town—as it behooves great families to be in summer—yet the casements beneath their half-lowered, inner silken blinds were suspiciously wide open.

Inside, the splendid house was in its all-enshrouding, warm-weather attire of brown holland and gauze, much to the detriment of the general aspect, as the Tremoër paintings and tapestries were celebrated. But the main drawing-room showed signs of having been hastily prepared for some particular occasion, for flowers in fresh and fragrant profusion overflowed from every available jar-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

dinière or vase, and here the priceless *tapis de la Savonnerie*, woven with the family armorial bearings, as well as the unique furniture embroidered in small-stitch, were freed from their disfiguring envelopes. The immense apartment opened only on the *Cour d'honneur*, thus making it possible to leave the tall French windows frankly unclosed without danger of detection, and in the embrasure of one of these, gazing idly down upon the large fountain lifting its complicated sculptures from the middle of this secluded patio, stood Arzur's mother, the Marquise de Tremoër. Tall and still slender as a girl, she carried her fifty years with absolute unconsciousness, and had it not been for the two or three ribbons of silver which undulated through the heavy chestnut braids wound coronal fashion about her proud little head, a girl she would have seemed almost, so smooth was the tea-rose complexion and so pure the contours of a face which had but one fault, and that too much habitual gravity. Just now, however, there was a happy light in her dark-green eyes, *vos yeux d'émeraude*, as her ever lover-like lord called them; and suddenly she began to sing, in soft, rich, mezzo-voce, a ballad of the long ago:

"Met arru ez èo ar mandat,*
 E-touez ar bôtred vad
 Da dennan d'ar billet, en faveur ar Roué
 Doué da gonzolo neb a digwezo d'hê!"

The last line was uttered with a little mocking accent, plainly showing that the Royalist Great Lady scorned even in this musical trifle the idea that any one could need consolation for serving one's King.

* "Mais il est arrivé l'ordre,
 (Il est arrivé) parmi les bons gars,
 (L'ordre) de tirer au sort pour le service du Roy
 Dieu console ceux a qui il echerra!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

*“Da dennan d'ar billet, en faveur ar Roué
Doué da gonzolo ncb a digwezo d'hê l’”*

She repeated, derisively scanning the words again, and then paused with an involuntary start as she thought of her husband and her five sons, engaged even now in a precarious Legitimistic uprising. A couple of impudent sparrows who had just flown over the high-gabled roofs of the Hôtel were loudly quarrelling on the fountain-margin, and she bent farther out to watch them pecking viciously at each other. “Street rowdies,” she murmured, with an amused laugh, “but they are plucky little devils!” And so absorbed was she that she failed to hear a door swing open behind her and a quick footstep on the thick carpet.

“Caught you spying, too!” Arzur’s gay voice rang out, as he threw his arms around her slim waist and kissed her pretty little ear.

“You frightened me!” she cried, half angrily. “You know I don’t much like those pleasantries.” But her eyes were already relenting as she looked up at her stalwart last-born—her Benjamin.

“You frightened, M’man? That’s what I’ll never believe,” the lad expostulated. “You’re the bravest soldier of us all. It’s you who should be Rouanez’s chief of staff instead of any of us.”

“You call her Rouanez?” Madame de Tremoër inquired.

“Oh! Not to her face, of course, although I’m often tempted to do so. She’s such a *gamin*,” Arzur impudently declared, his dark eyes dancing with mischief. “We’re all in love with her, M’man, including P’pa himself. If I were you I’d look out.”

The Marquise shrugged her shoulders. “My poor baby,” she remonstrated, “when will you begin to be serious? Surely the time has come to try.”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“Not a bit of it. It’s now, on the contrary, that we feel like being merry. Has *Grandpère* already come? There’s one who’s jolly — *Grandpère*, in spite of his seventy-six years; you and he resemble each other as much as two raindrops.”

“No, he has not arrived yet; I don’t expect him till after dark; a little while only before the others.”

“And they will be here when—the others?”

“You know that as well as I do. Just before your beloved Rouanez and her . . . guest.”

“What a lark it will be! We are getting on famously M’man, aren’t we? I wish it wasn’t risky to go for a tour on the promenade. Perhaps I’d meet our worthy Mayor, which would give me an opportunity of staring solemnly at him. Poor man! if he only guessed what a *coup* he could make here to-night!” Arzur jubilated, dancing a spirited *pas-seul* all around his mother. “*My Lady Clanvowe, the wife of the illustrious British diplomat, sailed into St. Malo harbor on her palatial yacht ‘Kestrel’ last night to visit our ancient city, always so fascinating to foreigners. Accompanying her was her husband’s relative, Lord Alpaca, equally interested with herself in antiquities.*” He interrupted his corybantic exercises to declare, pompously: “That’s what we may read to-morrow morning in the columns of the *Petit Malouin*.”

“Oh, Arzur!” Madame de Tremoër exclaimed. “Lord Alpaca!”

“Well, isn’t his real and ancient cognomen the time-honored equivalent? You never appreciate my small witticisms, M’man. I think ‘Lord Alpaca’ sounds splendid. It might have come straight from the pages of one of poor old Ouida’s novels.”

“I do hope everything will go well,” the Marquise interrupted, with a little frown of worry. “It would be

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

horrible if the meeting were discovered here in our house."

"We would have to stand a siege, like Fort Chabrol, and defend Lord Alpaca to the last ounce of our blood."

"Don't talk of that farce!" she chided, really angry this time. "It is unbearable to think that our cause was made ridiculous by those grotesque people!"

"Grotesque is severe," he interposed. "They meant kindly, poor souls, I don't doubt, although the details as furnished by the press did not redound to their credit. I can just remember how the brothers and I laughed at their sausages and sardines, and other siege delicacies. I was a little shaver then, but I remember it all quite well. Doesn't it strike you, M'man, that we—in bulk, that is—have not displayed much heroism until Rouanez and Olier showed us the true road here lately?"

Madame de Tremoër had seated herself on a low ottoman before the window. The eyes she raised to him were grave again now, and when she spoke all mirth had gone from her voice.

"One must never judge others too severely, Arzur," she said, slowly. "It is not death, a quick, brave death in the field, that has cowed so many, but that far more terrible thing: exile from all that one loves, and," she added, impelled by strict justice, "confiscation of one's old homes, too. It is not very noble, perhaps, to feel like that; but still I should like you to see the matter in its true light, Arzur."

The lad also had grown serious, and drawing forward a pile of cushions he settled his elbow upon the ottoman beside his mother.

"You see," she continued, "it is not as if the . . . the King had seemed to expect us to achieve success for him. There has been a hint of *laisser-aller* in that quarter, too,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

perhaps, and this was not as encouraging as it should have been. Also of late years—I mean during the past twenty or so—several Royalist conspiracies have been killed, more by ridicule, unfortunately, than by anything else. In 1889, for instance, the list of so-called Legitimistic conspirators scarcely included a single old patrician name, but was composed of mere rabble, searchers after sensation, *ésbrouffeurs*, people who had nothing to risk or to lose, while later on during Monsieur Loubet's term of office even foreigners, male and female, proclaimed themselves Royalists because they thought it looked *chic* to identify themselves with a movement they had not the figment of a right to join. It was lamentable, and the cowardly attack upon the aged President of the Republic by a band of crack-brained members of the 'smart set'—she pronounced the two words with bitter contempt—"did more to strengthen the Republic than one might think. Such degrading nonsense and pusillanimous absurdity! Do you think that such people as ourselves or the de Frèhèls, the de Kerdrens, the de Brissacs, the de Noailles, de Rohans, or Doudeauvilles could identify their blazons with comedies of that kind?" She paused again, and a little more hurriedly resumed:

"The Marquis de Lur-Saluces—a true Royalist in heart and soul, this one—nevertheless took the precaution, before he involved himself in the affair which brought him and other monarchical leaders before the Senate on charges of treason in 1892, of transferring his estates and property to his brother; and in this way, although condemned to exile, he escaped the penalty of confiscation. We have not imitated him, Arzur, and this is only one more reason why we should do all we can to succeed this time." She laughed with suddenly recovered cheerfulness, and concluded: "I trust that your father and I

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

would worthily follow in the footsteps of the *émigrés* of '93. But still I must admit that I do not see you giving dancing lessons in London, or your brothers making salads at a guinea a bowl for the Guildhall banquets."

Arzur remained silent for a second, and then in almost his usual bright manner took up the joke.

"I would be a splendid dancing-master, M'man; don't you think so?" he asked, smiling up at her.

"Very probably; but I prefer to see you belong to the King's Household."

"The King . . . *le Roy* . . . with a 'y' and not an 'i,' of course; it sounds good," he mused, twirling between his fingers the end of her white satin waist-ribbon. "I wonder whether he really, really wishes to be the King—with a 'y' and not an 'i'—and plant the dear old white flag and the Fleur-de-Lys where something so different flutters now?"

"Why, Arzur! Of course he does. How can you doubt it? He is a very brave . . . a very fine character . . . the fibres have been ever so slightly relaxed, I dare say, by long waiting—long discouragement—but I who have known him all his life can assure you that he will be a good King. As to his brother, he is altogether delicious, a lovable dare-devil, with the real Family spirit, the real Family features, and the real Family manner of ever so long ago . . . Oh yes, a *Prince-Héritier de derrière les fagots*. Quite that; I am not exaggerating."

Twilight was falling, and the great room was slowly filling with shadows, while over the encircling walls of the *Cour d'honneur* a fresh breeze blew in from the sea, stirring the lace curtains and scattering the somewhat heady perfume of a mass of white lilies grouped on a near-by console.

"Heigho!" Arzur said, rising and stretching himself.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"I must go and make myself presentable, M'man, or what would Lord Alpaca think? Are you going to remain as you are, or must you add what you call a few touches?"

"I'll remain as I am, without any touches at all. Don't you think this well enough?"

He caught her little hands, drew her to her feet, and in the failing gray and golden light gravely examined the exquisite lace Princess gown, clasped across the breast by one single large diamond Fleur-de-Lys.

"I hadn't seen you well!" he cried. "You are perfect . . . perfect as you always are; and Lord Alpaca will rinse his eye when he sees you."

The Marquise looked imploringly at him. "Please, please, Arzur. Do be correct—this evening at least! Remember you are a Royalist leader now." A little faint smile quivered on her lips, in spite of her efforts to be impressive, and the lad, detecting it, burst forthwith into the *Chœur des Conspirateurs*, mincing his way toward the door in an inimitably comic fashion, keeping time to the music with pointed toes, and holding the outer seams of his trousers as ballet-dancers do their skirts. On the threshold he stopped, pirouetted, and blowing a graceful kiss from the tips of his long, brown fingers, dived head-first beneath the drooping Louis XIV. baldaquin of the portière.

"*On aime ce qui est crâne en France!*" she murmured to herself, "and those youngsters are all *très crâne*, it can't be denied." Then, since under the circumstances no servants had been brought, she got up to light the few heavily-shaded lamps which must suffice to brighten after a fashion to -night's gathering, and to prepare with her own hands such refreshments as it had been possible to smuggle into the supposedly closed house.

Fortunately there was to be no moon, and as the older

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

quarters of St. Malo are not as yet illumined with ultra-modern brilliancy, the approach to the Hôtel de Tremoër was comparatively speaking safe; more especially since the bathing season brings to the picturesque little town a large influx of visitors, mostly English and Americans, who seek in the hostelries of Paramé, Saint-Servan, or even of the newer St. Malo proper, the illusion of having spent a summer in poetical Brittany, and go away in the firm belief that they have seen the true thing. To-day these *Divrôidi** would unwittingly serve the Legitimistic cause, for the scanty police force had not time just then to look every new-comer over, and thus, the darkness aiding, twenty-five or thirty persons one after the other would be enabled to reach the Rue Broussais unobserved.

A little before midnight—that fateful hour equally beloved by novelists and evil-doers—they were all assembled in the shadowy, flower-decked drawing-room, waiting for Rouanez and her party. There was no sign of nervousness detectable in those various sympathetic groups, and several times subdued laughter greeted the mordant sallies of that surprisingly youthful septuagenarian the Duc de Porskear, who, to believe Arzur, was so much like his daughter de Tremoër. Nor was the boy far wrong in saying this, for there was more than an ordinary resemblance between those two, in character and manner, as well as in feature.

“It runs in our family to remain young forever,” the Duke was just explaining to a friend whom he had not seen for years. “Look at Gwennoläik,” and he pointed toward his daughter, chatting near a half-closed window with the Marquis de Laoual. “Doesn’t she still remind you of what she was at twenty?”

* Strangers.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"She looks like a tall Ascension Lily," the other said, softly. "Gwennoläik has always been in my opinion the incarnation of what a Royalist Great Lady should be. There are, by-the-way, few left nowadays," he added, with a little sigh. "I wonder why. Because, after all, *bon-sang ne peut mentir.*"

The handsome old man at his side laughed. "How much real, unadulterated *bon-sang* do you fancy remains?" he asked. "Machine-made, cotton-warped aristocrats are the order of the day. All-silk goods are almost impossible to find now. And then the younger generation—the feminine younger generation more especially—has been bitten by the demon of haste and hurry, tinsel glitter and showy sensationalism. Women have no longer time to be well-bred; they must be in the front row. They automobilize and balloon, and rush from one exaggerated toilet into another, to appear in all sorts of places where they have no business to be. In their ardor to emulate the worst of men, they have lost both their delicate femininity and the strength and resiliency which made the heroines of Chouan days. But what will you? It is what they call progress, with effeminate men and hysterically unsexed women as a result. Still, as you say, there are a few. . . . Wait! . . . You are going to see presently another jewel of genuine lustre: a surprising revival of the charm of other days, plus something exquisite, all her own—Rouanez de Rozkavel. And, talk of the angels," he added, quickly rising, "here she is!"

Between the pale brocade folds of the portière came Lady Clanvowe with, at her side, a remarkably tall, dark, handsome youth, lithe and straight and active of build in his tweed travelling-suit, which commonplace attire did not quite succeed in satisfactorily modernizing a face and form that seemed to belong to another age—a remote

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

and very admirable age, when men were men, in the finest acceptance of the word.

Everybody had risen, and Rouanez's simple "*Voila Monseigneur*" bowed every head in silent salutation. Madame de Tremoër had come forward, and as the last arrival kissed her hand she looked affectionately at him, for she had dandled him on her lap shortly after his appearance in this disappointing world twenty-four years before.

"You have grown still taller since our last meeting," she whispered, retaining his fingers within her own, and leading him toward the others. "That's very nice of you, and very clever, too."

He laughed, "Very clever; why?"

"Because the French, who are supposed to be among the smaller races, naturally adore a lofty stature," she explained, and, drawing back, left him to greet the rest with a deeper expression in his lingering smile, while she herself turned to Rouanez.

"How did you manage?" she asked that efficient introductress of Personages. "Did the sapient Penruddock notice anything?"

"The sapient Penruddock was satisfactorily kept in total ignorance of the honor done the 'Kestrel,'" she replied, gayly. "But I must admit being glad to have my supposed relative here safe and sound. He has such uncomfortably telltale features, and he is known all over the world—France included."

"Yes, that is a pity. But we can smuggle him out again to-morrow on the night tide. Laoual's yacht is coming on purpose. Meanwhile the boys and I will turn cooks, valets, and major-domos. Unfortunately, it was impossible to bring servants or decent provisions."

"Olier is bringing the last," Rouanez gleefully an-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

nounced, "in a disgraceful canvas bag, under cover of a coat negligently thrown over his arm. Lamb chops in quantities, and a lordly steak, and lots of unimpeachable peaches, and a mass—really a mass—of cold meats, *foie-grasse*, and other agreeable things, with delicious little crisp breads, not to mention—"

"Enough! Enough!" Madame de Tremoër expostulated. "Poor, dear Olier! Monseigneur must have inherited the illustrious appetites, too, if he is to do justice to all this forethought."

They were both rocking to and fro in a smothered burst of merriment that put to flight all thought of the only too real gravity of the moment, when at the sound of a step in the gallery outside the door near by, they hastened to join on the landing the sorely-burdened Olier, whose appearance—much to his astonishment—seemed only to redouble their mirth. In a few minutes, however, they all three re-entered the extemporaneous council-room, their faces duly serious, and joined the group that had formed around Monseigneur.

"I do not see," the latter was just saying, "why we should be kept both out of the dangers and the expenses of the undertaking. We can afford—especially I—to pay with our purses and persons." This "especially I" brought a smile to every lip; there was so much eagerness in the tone, so much genuine desire to join the prospective *mêlée*; also it was well known that this youthful Prince was the richest member of his family, having fallen heir, while still a mere boy, to his august grandfather's plentiful millions. "My brother," he continued, "was deeply grieved not to accompany me. He would, I know, feel touched to the heart by so much devotion and loyalty. But naturally, since your verdict was unanimous as to the unwisdom of his risking recognition, he

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

bowed to its severity. He made, however, a special point of insisting that at any rate we both should take up our due share in the enormous expenses already entailed."

"Not to be thought of, Monseigneur!" Rouanez said, in her quick, decisive tone. "We do not wish to begin by impoverishing our Kings. Besides, the thing may fail; and in that case it is only fair that the originators alone should suffer."

"I do not see why," was the prompt response. "You want, it seems to me, to take upon yourself, my Lady Rouanez, all the fatigues, all the troubles, all the dangers, and leave us ultimately nothing but the honors of the game."

"Those are primordially yours," she said, quietly. "Don't you see, Monseigneur, that if you get your heads broken in the fray, after emptying your purses, there will remain but a sadly diminished outlook for the future of Royalty?" She had stepped close to him now, and was looking beseechingly at the resolute face towering so high above her own. "Please, Monseigneur, please let us do what we have planned. We wanted to acquaint you with all the details of those plans, and writing was not possible, since our main effort has been to avoid that of all things. Indeed," she explained, in a lower voice, "if the plot were discovered, even at the last minute, nobody could possibly be compromised; probably nobody either seized or punished, save those clumsy enough to be caught in some undeniable act. We pride ourselves greatly on this. No! I can guess what you are about to say, Monseigneur—you must go back for a little while. I know you don't like it, but yet must you do it."

His eyes were curiously softened as he listened, and two or three times he moved his hands restlessly.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“You want to make cowards of us?” he asked at last, with a queer little smile.

Her clear laugh was echoed by every person in the room.

“That alone seems beyond even Rouanez’s power, Monseigneur,” the Duke de Porskeär said, dryly, and the Prince flushed with sudden pleasure at the spontaneous homage of that ripple of sincere amusement from those true connoisseurs of courage. “Our Kings have had their faults, some have had more than their share,” the original old aristocrat resumed, “but a lack of pluck has never been counted among them—nor never will. All who have eyes to see can assert that even now.” And to temper his outspokenness he let his hand rest lightly for a second upon the square, tweed-clad shoulder on a level with his own.

“Lèse-Majesté!” Madame de Tremoër whispered in her father’s ear. “Lèse-Majesté! *Vous n’en faites jamais d’autres!* But to work now”—turning to the others—“it is getting late; and we have much to do before Rouanez and I, as the sole representatives of a weaker and more frivolous sex, go and broil chops and steaks down-stairs.”

CHAPTER XVIII

Love, let us turn our gaze to what may be;
With you but little would I need to live,
But oh, it is a bitter thing to see
Treasures it never will be mine to give!
I cannot bear to feel your secret eyes
Dwell on some beauty closed as in a shrine,
Knowing that instant I may not arise
To say, "Thou askest, and the boon is thine."
And yet, and yet, there is an after glow;
Once has the vision fled beyond our view,
Almost I would not wish it were not so,
For then I could not bear the pain with you.
For you I could wish all things, and befall
The worst, with you could meet the loss of all.
The Unattainable.—M. M.

"It went splendidly. Not a hitch anywhere, excepting just at the last, when he positively balked—claimed that it was after all his right to be with us and help set fire to the fuse. Then for a moment I was really frightened, for it looked two to one against getting him away."

"You can't blame him for resenting being sent back to the delights of verdant parks and velvety lawns, when every gray Breton rock and green Vendéen hillock is already bristling with bayonets. How'd you like it yourself?"

Olier did not answer, and kept plodding along the crumbling sands below the semaphore at Rouanez's side, his head half averted.

It was an exquisitely veiled Breton morning, perfumed by a light breeze, which, having flirted all night with the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

gorse and heather and whin of the *lande*, was now hurrying oceanward laden with fragrance. The tide was falling, and the endless belt of red-and-gray rocks, bare to their weed-grown bases, seemed draped with golden-brown ivy, while in the middle distance whole flocks of sea-larks, like animated puffs of foam, danced above the snowy fringes of the scampering wavelets. The usually grim landscape was smiling indeed, and so curiously diffused was the softened sunlight that the off-shore reefs took on rounded outlines, and an aspect as of heaping mounds of freshly-gathered violets floating on the pale, flax-blossom azure of the water.

"It is good to see, this old Breton land of ours, is it not?" Rouanez began again, and she paused to inhale deeply two or three times before continuing. "Such air is to be found nowhere else."

"No, nowhere else," he acquiesced, still without turning his head, and his dark-gray eyes changed for a moment to that clear blue-green transparency seen only in those of the great unresting birds of the open sea.

"You are pleased to be laconic this morning," she could not help saying, a little irritably. "I had thought that this little expedition in search of the commonplace and toothsome *langoustes** of commerce would brighten you up; but not at all. . . . Yes, no! . . . No, yes! . . . That's all I get for my pains."

"Wait till we are face to face with the delicacies aforesaid, and you'll see me on the broad grin," he assured her, in the tone of forced banter which of late had only too often struck her unpleasantly when alone with him. "And here is the commodious road we must needs ascend if we are to reach the guardian's block-house to-day," he

* Spiny lobsters.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

added, pointing to a succession of rude notches cut in the scarcely - sloping cliff wall, and forming a zigzag three-hundred-foot ladder from bottom to top.

"We'll do so at once," she announced, passing in front of him to put her words into instant execution. Her short, white drill skirts were eminently well suited for such work, as were her low-heeled tan shoes—a foot like hers could afford to disdain stilt-shaped size-diminishers—and Olier watched her mounting easily from ledge to ledge, followed by her scrambling dogs, with a wonder that familiarity had never yet dulled.

"Aren't you coming?" she called back, pausing half-way up, and as if suddenly awakened from a dream he took the perilous steps two at a time in his hurry to rejoin her. "You'll break your neck," she warned him, resuming the rough climb, but she smiled to see him reach the top as soon as herself after all. Neither seemed in the least out of breath, and following the bend of the cliff, they hurried over the short salt turf, studded with tough little faintly rose-colored *willets de falaise*, to the small, square guard-house where the telegraph and semaphore men lived. Thick-walled and massive was the official building, flat-roofed and whitewashed and trim, beneath the towering mast whence the signals are displayed, and the tiny garden girdled with big blocks of stone was kept with a minute care that betrayed the long hours of leisure the two employés were at liberty to bestow upon it. As Olier opened the bright, green-painted iron wicket a man wearing the gold-buttoned blue-serge and gold-banded cap of his office came hurrying to meet them.

"Good-morning, *Chef*," Olier cried, and Santeik, first in command of the post, gave him back the cheeriest of greetings, for he was a Breton, too, born some forty-odd years before on the lands of Kremarzé.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"How's business?" Olier asked. "I have brought Miladi to choose some *langoustes*. Got any freshly-caught ones?"

"From this morning, *mon Lieutenant*," the ex-sailor answered, "fresh as the eye, and if you'll come this way—" preceding them along a small path strewn with sifted gravel, and bordered on each side by a tiny palisade of firmly-planted scallop shells, beyond which blossomed thickly a miniature hedge of those pretty pink-and-white little flowers called *coquillages*, and which look their name.

"What a pretty thing you manage to make of your garden!" Rouanez said, in French; for it was certainly not to a Government servant that she was going to betray her knowledge of Breton. "It is as fresh and dainty as the morning itself."

The guardian's good-natured face beamed with gratification.

"It's our only amusement," he murmured, as if apologizing; "and we have many idle moments to give to gardening, since of course we cannot absent ourselves, excepting once a month each, for a whole day. Would Madame care," he added, emboldened by her winning smile, "to see our new baby? My wife would be honored."

"A new baby!" she exclaimed, delighted. "How young is it?"

Olier, smiling at her way of expressing herself, fell back to let her follow Santeik beneath a neat wire arch—where a thriving colony of white sweet-peas displayed, as Rouanez remarked, hundreds of broad-winged little Breton coiffes fluttering in the wind—through the white-curtained glazed door, and finally into a white-wainscoted living-room fragrant with dainty cleanliness. Everything there shone, from the snowy walls and ceiling, filleted with pale green just as on board ship, to the elaborately

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

waxed cherry-wood furniture, the little mantel-piece on which two big, rose-hued conch-shells flanked a great branch of madrepore coral brought back by Santeik from the South Sea Islands some years before, and the few spotless saucepans hanging from brass hooks in a corner near the tiled cooking-stove. The two low, square windows opened directly upon the immensity of sea and sky, for so close was the little *poste* to the cliff brink that from within, except one bent clear over the sill, the impression received was that one had reached the edge of the world—the very last foothold above eternal and unfathomable space.

All this, however, Rouanez noticed only a little later, for she had instantly gone to where an osier cradle rocked softly to and fro under its protecting green-and-white calico curtains. The young mother had risen, her hand still moving mechanically to and fro on the rim of the skiff-shaped basket, her pretty face, a little thinned and paled by recent maternity, flushing delicately beneath the spreading wings of a coiffe that might have been cut from the pattern of those perfumed little flowers, nodding out there in the garden around their green-painted arch.

Rouanez held out her hand. "God be with you," she said, after the fashion of the country. "Monsieur de Frèhél and I have come to see your baby. Is it asleep?"

"Not quite," Madame Santeik shyly admitted, dimpling into smiles, and throwing back the tiny coverlet she lifted the little one from its downy nest.

"Look, look, Olier; it is in swaddling-clothes!" Rouanez cried, taking it from its mother. "It's just like a big Christmas doll, and bronzed, too, as if it had already circumnavigated the universe." She was holding it with instinctive cleverness. "A real sailor-baby," she continued, turning to the father, who was trying hard not to

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

betray too much foolish pride. "A Breton sailor - baby—the nicest of all!"

Olier had approached, and was gazing dreamily at the small, round face nestled in the crook of Rouanez's arm. "Yes," he said, softly, "he does look like a little *mousse** already, doesn't he? All the Santeiks are born sailors. But, Lady Clanvowe," he added, suddenly, "if you want to go home by the shingle we'll have to hurry; the tide is rising."

She glanced up at him, almost annoyed. "All right, go and choose those *langoustes* then. I'll stay here meanwhile." And as soon as the two men had left the room to go in search of the delectable crustaceans awaiting their fate in a neighboring shed, she accepted the chair Madame Santeik had been offering to her for the past five minutes, but without relinquishing the baby, which she established on her lap.

"Has Madame no children of her own?" the young mother asked, on polite conversation bent.

Rouanez, who was gently touching the satiny-brown cheek with the tip of one finger, did not look up.

"No," she answered, abruptly.

"It's a pity," the other said, "Madame seems so fond of them." This time there came no reply at all, and taking silence for consent the guardian's wife drove her point home. "They are a comfort," she explained, in the slightly sing-song tone of Bretons talking French. "A care; yes, but what does that matter? All the time before his birth I kept feeling happier and happier. Whenever I went out to walk on the cliff there was a little white bird flitting a few yards in front of me. Oh, I knew him well; it was always the same . . . and it sang

* Ship's boy.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

so sweet! They do say around here that they are the souls waiting to come and dwell in the babies—those little white birds. And now I believe it; because, since my Bernez is born I see that one no more.” She paused, her blue eyes fixed on the square of azure framed by the window, and as if all her timidity had flown away like the white bird of legend, she went on: “Now I am happier still. I could dance on the tops of the ripening wheat, I feel so light-hearted. Oh yes; it is unfortunate Madame does not know that joy, because it is the greatest, surely. But it is not too late. Madame should make a novena to Our Lady of La Clareté.”

Rouanez was bending so low over the now peacefully-sleeping infant that nothing but the pompon of her white *bérèt* could be seen. Seized with remorse, the young housewife rose quickly. No doubt she was boring Madame with her nonsense.

“Won’t Madame accept a glass of something? We have a nice cool well, and with a drop of red wine to corrupt the water—”

This hospitable offer, coming on top of the rest, nearly ripped apart the last shreds of poor Rouanez’s self-control.

“No, no, I must be off. Thank you ever so much,” she exclaimed, hurriedly relinquishing the little bundle she had held with such curious tenderness. Then, slipping her fingers inside her collar, she drew out a thin gold chain, to which was attached a pearl-rimmed enamel medal, and hastily put it about the baby’s neck. “That may bring him luck,” she murmured, and was out of the house before the enraptured mother could utter a word of thanks.

Outside the garden wall Olier and Santeik were endeavoring to overpower two superb blue-armored *langoustes*, and to thrust them into a reed basket; so she crossed

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

over to the iron-stanchioned foot of the semaphore-mast. The swaying rope-ladder, with its gleaming rungs and thick hempen uprights narrowing gradually in perspective as they climbed higher and higher toward the tiny round platform away up there in the sky, interested her. What a view one must have from that point! Her mood was odd and unsettled just then, and in another instant she was running up, sailor fashion, her white skirts too snugly fitted to flutter in the wind, and her light form scarcely causing the ladder designed for heavy men even to swing. From the middle of the "main-top," as Santeik called it, another mast, slender as a flag-pole, rose, and as soon as her foot had touched the boards she clasped this lightly with one arm and looked out to sea. More than four hundred feet below a flock of gulls showed smaller than a handful of petals fluttering above the water, and even Feäl and Furbuën, sagely awaiting her on the sun-tanned grass of the cliff-edge, seemed humiliatingly diminished, while Olier, Santeik, and Kerlaz, the other guardian, still bending over their laughable task, looked like marionettes from that distance.

But all at once the fun was driven out of them by a startled exclamation from Kerlaz—a new recruit coming from a distant part of Brittany, and as yet unacquainted with Olier—who cried, suddenly:

"Look at your wife, Monsieur, aloft there! She'll kill herself!"

Olier's face blanched, in spite of his knowledge of Rouanez's prowess in the rigging, for this was a different matter. That sheer depth of thin blue air from the top of the mast to the bottom of the cliff was a thing to make even a trained topman giddy at first.

"God!" he whispered through dry lips, and, dropping *langoustes* and basket, raced to the ladder, up which he

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

literally flew; the two others watching him from below, with, as they later declared, their hearts in their mouths, for that little white silhouette poised upon its small, wavering foothold looked light and delicate enough to make one dread its being blown into space like thistle-down.

Olier had reached the last rungs before it occurred to his almost frozen brain that to step upon the platform without warning was to court disaster, and, pausing, he called softly and unsteadily:

“Lady Clanvowe! Lady Clanvowe!”

She turned, and, catching sight of his face peering just above the scant edging of oak, laughed.

“Come to see the view?” she calmly asked.

“No, to fetch you down,” he managed to say, without betraying further emotion, adding as she seemed to hesitate:

“Please—it’s getting late.”

Unhurried by the reminder, she gathered her skirts in one hand and backed quietly toward the ladder. “Go down first,” she commanded. And he obeyed; but, slipping underneath the slowly oscillating rungs, risked something few would have dared by descending hand under hand on the reverse side, so as to face her all the time and cut her off from the view of the void. But she guessed the stratagem, and a little frown of displeasure gathered between her eyebrows as she nimbly accomplished her part of the task.

“I’m not overfond of being treated like an irresponsible idiot,” she said, shortly, as they took ground at the same time; and, turning her back upon him, she nodded to the guardians, whistled up her dogs, and sauntered toward that other perilous descent leading to the beach below.

“Not there!” poor Olier entreated, catching up with

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

her, basket in hand. "The tide has turned quite a while ago. Let's go by the cliff path."

Unfortunately Rouanez was for once beyond being reasoned with—in fact, quite perversely unmanageable; and, ungraciously inviting him to go by the upper road if he so desired, continued to go down the face of the *falaise*, not moved even by the dangerous antics of her usually tenderly considered dogs.

"What is the matter with her?" Olier thought, meekly following, though fully aware that to return to Rozkavel by the shore was just now more than risky. "I'll hurry her along somehow," he decided, "if she'll only let me." This, however, he doubted, in view of her—to him—completely new and unexpected unruliness. Indeed, he expected to receive shortly another hint as to the wisdom of minding his own business. But, much to his surprise and relief, she began to talk in the most unconcerned and natural fashion as soon as they reached the sands, and without making the faintest allusion to what had just happened.

"Give me the other handle of the basket," she said, after a while. "We can sling it between us. I hate to see a man carrying something."

"Excuse me, Lady Clanvowe," he demurred. "And we mustn't stop to argue. As it is, I am afraid that we will have to double the pace if we mean to get past the point dry-shod."

She shrugged her shoulders, and with a quick motion of the arm caught the basket-handle nearest to her, and, grasping it tightly, began to run.

"One doesn't prevent the other," she explained. "We can argue, hasten, and share the ridicule of this basket simultaneously. And the dogs are delighted. See them go!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Her teasing smile was irresistible, and Olier gave in to this new mood with suspicious promptness; all the more so since he noticed that the feathery crests of the incoming breakers were already showing above the sharp ridges of the reef which cuts the shingle in two half-way between Rozkavel and the semaphore. Growing in height as it nears the shore, this reef becomes a rock-spur, similar to those beyond the semaphore near the cavern which served the Royalists as a secret meeting-place, and near the point where it merges into the cliff proper it is pierced by two lofty arches of so precise and symmetrical a sweep that one might think some super-human chisel had done the work, rather than the silky impact of water repeated during uncounted centuries. A second and similar spur faces this one, three hundred yards farther on, and between the two is what is known as the "Chapel Cave," although no trace of a legend connecting any sort of religious ceremony with it, even during the Reign of Terror, can be found. It is a curious place, this grotto; for, strangely enough, the red or gleaming gray granite of the cliff yields the *pas* all along that ledge to a deep stratum of slate-blue, almost navy-blue, basalt, profusely veined with glittering tin. The floor of the cave slopes rather sharply up for a hundred feet or more, so that, although the entrance is magnificently high, the upper end—which, by-the-way, narrows to the width of an ordinary drawing-room and is carpeted with fine, white sand—is comparatively low-roofed, and lies beyond the reach of all but the highest tides.

Still running, the two passed beneath a lordly arch of the first mighty buttress, when Rouanez, a little ahead of Olier, felt a drag upon her arm, and, turning to see what caused it, found that he was looking toward the further one with fixed eyes.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"What's up?" she asked, irritably. "Something more to worry about?"

"Yes," he said, stopping short. "The tide has caught us, and we'll have to stop in the cave for three hours before we can pass. The dogs are better off—they've got through."

A flush of extreme annoyance rose to her face, but annoyance with herself alone this time, for she saw now what her headstrong mood had done for her. Three hours imprisoned in this poetical grotto with the man whom she knew beyond the possibility of a doubt loved her, and who, although she was justly convinced would never tell her so, she had yet studiously avoided to meet on awkward ground since the night of the rose-shower.

"Can't we climb up somewhere?" she demanded. "Or else go back to the semaphore?"

"No," he replied, a trifle abruptly. "This is the highest part of the shore—a sort of camel's-back, as you well know—and the sea is already on both sides of us?"

"Oh, well, then," she murmured, fighting hard to retain her temper, "let's wait. It's a fearful bore. But grumbling won't mend anything."

"I'm not grumbling," he was on the point of saying, but the mere set of her shoulders as she walked toward the shell-strewn antechamber of the grotto warned him to make no comments. Indeed, the pronounced crunching of her little heels on the loose pebbles was ominous, and, bearing the no-longer-disputed basket, he hastened to follow.

For a few moments neither spoke. She had seated herself at once on a conveniently flat bowlder just within the entrance, and he was asking himself how he could break a silence that threatened to become oppressive, when he suddenly heard her laughing. Not mockingly or even

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

nervously, but with the delicious joyousness that characterized her usual laugh—by no means one of her least seductions.

“Oh, dear!” she cried, tremulously. “And I thought I had conquered all feminine smallnesses! Behold the downfall of my dearest illusions!—and give me a cigarette.”

Olier was looking at her in such utter stupefaction that once again she burst into a long, rippling peal of mirth.

“Please don’t stare at me like that,” she gasped at last. “I can’t help the quickness of my changes of mood. I was born that way—long ago.”

It was Olier’s turn to shrug his shoulders, though he did this so unobtrusively that she could let the gesture pass conveniently unnoticed. But she sat up and frowned incredulously when upon her quick, musical ear fell the softly whistled refrain of an old catch. The words she knew well:

“Long ago? I don’t know,
And, what’s more, I don’t care.”

Was this deliberate impertinence, or was the action merely unconscious and mechanical? His profile, which was all she could see of him just then, was of disarming innocence, and he seemed so fully occupied with searching in his pockets for cigarette-case and match-box that she turned away her eyes as if the distinctly significant tunc meant nothing to her at all. In another moment she had accepted cigarette and light with the customary little friendly nod, delaying, however, as much as possible the necessity of beginning to while the time away by conversation.

Three hours . . . that certainly was a terribly long spell under the circumstances, and she was just deciding to embark upon an absorbing discussion of their joint duties

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

in the immediate future, when Olier, still standing beside her, suddenly pointed to a spot half a mile or so from the last fang of the farthest reef.

"There seems to be another one of those confounded weed-mattresses floating out to sea," he said. "Of course they are more accountable here than on the sand beaches of Kremarzé; but, none the less, they give me the horrors since last spring."

"Weed-mattress? What are you talking about?" she asked, eagerly, glad that he had found a subject of conversation for himself.

Intently gazing at the slowly vanishing stain upon the ocean's sumptuous blue mantle, he forgot that he had always avoided telling her of his narrow escape, and almost before he knew it he was relating it in full.

"It was no fun, I assure you; and, although I am thoroughly ashamed to own as much, truth compels me to confess that it took me days to get over it."

He was telling his story with the unconsciously dramatic force of perfect simplicity, and, as he came to describe the grip of those thousand writhing tentacles, her hand was quickly stretched toward him.

"Why did you never tell me that before?" she interrupted, roughly, and there was an alteration in her voice which made him turn in astonishment. But already the dread of any emotional situation between them had triumphed, and her face was so calm, her hand so quiescent in her lap, that he thought he must have been mistaken.

"Why should I have done so?" he questioned. "You have had quite enough coast stories related to you lately. Indeed, I wouldn't have done so now, but for the passage of this replica of my death-trap out there."

"I see," she said. "A mere coincidence. And tell me, are such surprises frequent around here? You see, I

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

was a child when I left Rozkavel, and do not remember ever hearing of them then."

"Frequent? No, not at all. As a matter of fact, they are fortunately rather rare. But still they happen. And when one comes to think of it—although as a means of decease the process is apt to be tediously slow—the idea of such a shroud, and a final resting-place upon a bed of gorgeous sea-flowers somewhere below, has nothing repulsive to a sailor. It sounds pleasanter, somehow or other, than six feet of brown earth and half a dozen planks."

"You *are* a cheerful companion," she dryly remarked, "and your views of death are interesting, although some over-particular people might be inclined to find them trying. Personally I do not object to them, seeing that final dissolution—as far as the mere body is concerned—does not in the least alarm me. One should not worry unduly over the disposal of a cast-off garment."

Olier swung about quickly on the rock whereon he sat cross-legged.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Clanvowe, but you must be used by now to hear me talk like a fool. It looks as if I couldn't help doing so every time I open my mouth—lately."

She pushed the *langouste* basket suddenly with her foot, and with almost more than her usual irrelevancy made it serve as a theme for her next sentence:

"Do you think those lobsters are still alive?"

"Not the least possible doubt about it," he answered, after a cautious glance beneath the lid. "They are, I can assure you, enormously wide-awake."

"This being so, we will liberate them at once," she announced, getting briskly up to put her merciful design into execution. "Here comes a fine big wave to meet them. Untie them—quick, Olier—untie them!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Indeed, the waves were chasing one another in the most lively manner up the steep incline, but both the prisoners in the Chapel Cave knew that they would pause in their pursuit when they had approached within about ten yards, except the wind should suddenly veer, in which case it might be necessary to pass a long and difficult hour within the low-roofed, narrow niche forming the very uppermost end of that admirable blue-and-silver grotto. But the wind would not veer—at least, Rouanez hoped desperately that it would not, as she shook the two *langoustes* into the fringe of the wave, where they stood stock-still, from astonishment, no doubt, before scuttling backward after the retreating freshness of the water, and finally plunging out of sight side by side.

“A good deed,” she said, merrily waving her wet hands, from which the drops fell like a shower of diamonds. “A good deed. And good deeds bring good luck.”

“If that is true,” Olier put in, “you should be exceedingly lucky, Lady Clanvowe; for if anybody ever had the habit of the helping hand, it is you.”

“Oh! I don’t know about that,” she said, with so faint a tinge of weariness in her voice that only he would have noted it. “Honestly, I think that it is sheer cowardice on my part to pull people out of trouble.”

“Cowardice?” he exclaimed. “How do you make that out, please?”

“Very simply,” she retorted, drawing back from a spreading hem of foam. “I cannot bear to see anybody suffer, even when the somebody is displeasing to me, and so, sooner than look on with crossed arms . . .”

Olier laughed. “You are capable of risking bone and sinew to spare yourself so ungracious a sight. Your cowardice, like your much-vaunted selfishness, is of a curious brand.”

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

The sea was rising very fast, and the band of shingle between *falaise* and ocean was almost entirely covered already. Another and livelier wave came hurtling against the jagged block of basalt that flanked the magnificent portal on the right, and sent a splashing shower full in their faces, then, with a musical clittering of tiny pebbles, slid downhill to melt once more into the foam-feathered green and blue whence it came.

An anxious look suddenly replaced Olier's amused expression. At this season, and with the wind in that direction, the water ought not to reach as high up as it was already doing, and, seizing the moment when a high-banked comber resurged with corresponding ampleness, he ran out of the grotto, and, springing upon a rock close by, took a quick survey. Rouanez was herself too good a sailor not to guess his purpose, as the little frown bringing her straight, dark eyebrows together testified; but she did not move, and went on watching the ivory veil at her feet bubble itself into the spongy sand without so much as glancing in his direction, even when she heard him hastily redescend and scramble back from projection to projection amid a pursuing welter of lashing froth.

"By all that is devilish," he cried, landing ankle-deep beside her with a final vigorous jump, "the wind has gone about without rhyme or reason, and we'll have to stow ourselves away on that last hospitable ledge up there if we don't want to sit up to our necks in water for an hour."

"That's all right," she said, carelessly. "As long as the ledge remains, we shouldn't complain. I have been struck lately by the amazing talent we display for getting into useless scrapes. There is a guileless imbecility about our doings which could scarcely be surpassed."

Olier had mechanically picked up the empty basket, and was walking immediately behind her up the smooth incline.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"When I say we, I am wrong," she corrected over her shoulder, in the same indifferent tone. "To-day I should speak for myself alone, since it is only fair to admit that you made yourself as disagreeable as possible about my selecting this road. I therefore take back half of the speech and add my humble apologies to the remainder."

He could not help thinking that she looked anything but humble as she swung herself up to a seat on the divan-shaped ledge barring the furthest end of the cave, and according to her habit began to swing her little feet backward and forward. Indeed, in anybody else he might have resented a peculiar shortness, almost a sulkiness, of intonation that he had never been treated to before.

"I am sorry," he said, penitently, "to have made myself disagreeable, but I hope you did not think I would take my revenge by saying 'I told you so'—it's a cheap pleasure I never could appreciate."

"I didn't think you would. It's too feminine altogether for you. Your misdemeanors have backbone, at least. But I'm in a vile temper, so don't let's argue about anything. Tell me a sea story; this is a fitting scenario."

"Why will you persist in maligning yourself?" he asked, warmly, standing on the fast-dampening sand a yard or so from her throne. "Your tempers are only the little gusts upon the surface. Beneath there always lies the beautiful, clear deep of endless goodness and patience."

"I beg your pardon," she exclaimed, a trifle irritably. "Beneath there always remains my indestructible bias, my dislike of humanity, my disgust of pretty nearly everybody and everything that isn't pure nature. But your feet are getting wet, and the next wave will swamp you. Come up here!"

The order was too peremptory to be disregarded, and Olier, just as the prophesied wave came swashing into the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

grotto, leaped to a place of safety on the other end of the ledge.

"Agreeable!" he commented, glancing down at his white canvas shoes and flannel trousers, where little spatters of foam sparkled. "Anyhow, this is the worst that the tide will accomplish. In half an hour it will be on the turn, and, after all, it throws a pretty light in here, doesn't it?"

The whole high-arching space had gradually become filled with singularly soft, glauque reflections, mysterious and charming, that bathed the dark ruggedness of the stone in moving pale gold, as roller after roller, transpierced by brilliant sunlight from behind, rose across the entry, balanced, and fell thunderously, awakening murmurous vault-like echoes, and spreading from wall to wall a short-lived pool of troubled, gold-shot aquamarine.

Apparently Rouanez was not poetically inclined at that moment, for she did not condescend to corroborate the statement by so much as an appreciative glance, and, as though she had not even heard it, went on:

"It's true, too. One gets more and more exasperated as the years accumulate. Men seem with few exceptions to be all selfish, brutal, licentious, and money-grabbing, while women more than match them in craftiness and egoism, adding thereto coquetry, insincerity, mendacity, cowardice, and an utter absence of wholesome tastes or even ordinary moral sense."

Olier, staggered by this unaccountable sortie, was staring helplessly at her.

"Wait till you're older and you'll see!" she continued, truculently. "Try and do a service to anybody; they'll bite you to the bone in acknowledgment. Lend money and you've made an enemy; give it, and you'll find that nothing but the sour dregs of your kindly deed will be

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

your portion. The first thing a drowning creature does when you attempt a rescue is to try and drag you under—that takes place every time, whether in water or otherwise. And so one naturally leaves all one's illusions by the roadside, as sheep do their wool. Bah! It's enough to make one escape to a desert island and pull it in after one's self."

"You do not look at life through rose-colored glasses to-day?" the puzzled Olier hazarded.

"When one begins to feel the need of spectacles, pink is not the hue one generally chooses," she tersely replied. "I've had enough of humanity for a while, I can assure you, and, whatever happens, I will give myself a real rest after our great affair is settled one way or the other. The number of people I have mentally consigned to the devil during the past years, and who have nevertheless been left on my hands—probably because the Satanic markets were already overstocked—is incalculable. I'm tired of it all."

She turned her head sharply away, and fixed her eyes moodily upon the bluish gloom of the jagged fissure behind them. "He'll not extract much material for sentimentality out of to-day's conversation," she thought, viciously, for her harsh mood was not entirely assumed. And at that moment Olier leaped to his feet, made a desperate lunge, and drew her up and backward just as a mass of pale-green water crashed against the ledge and leaped frothing over it to cascade heavily down on the other side.

"That was a close shave!" he said, a little breathlessly, utterly unconscious that his arm was still about her shoulders and that he was holding her close to him.

"Yes," she admitted, in a voice suddenly calm and even, "it was."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

She quietly disengaged herself, bent over to watch the wave slide tumultuously out of the cave, and then, as coolly as if the whole incident had been the most natural thing in the world, stepped back into the crevice and began to climb between its narrowing walls upon the inequalities of the dusky rock.

"I don't think," she called out to him, "that the water will follow us here, and, as you say, the tide is on the turn. Still, I did not expect it would have done quite as much as it has."

"Neither did I," he muttered, with an angry glance at the sea, dancing beyond the lowering archway in its gold and azure gala-robe. Nothing could have been more unwelcome to him than the awkwardness of these hours, and he set his teeth as he rejoined her in two bounds up the uncomfortably narrow *couloir*. There certainly was no sense in being thus imprisoned together, he reflected bitterly. Matters were difficult enough for him without such uncalled-for complications, and, raising his eyes as if looking for a means of escape toward the slanting flue-like shaft of the crevice, he suddenly gave an incredulous exclamation:

"Can this be light? See, Lady Clanvowe! Don't you notice a bit of imitation sunshine far up there?"

She slipped past him, and, looking in the direction indicated by his pointing finger, stood for a minute without speaking.

"Yes," she said at last. "But not imitation; the real thing shining through underbrush of some sort—broom or blackberry bushes. It may be another way out. But in that case it is queer smugglers didn't discover it and make it practicable long ago."

"Too near the semaphore," he explained. "It is still more extraordinary that I never discovered it myself."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

I've been a long way up this chimney several times as a boy, and yet I never saw the least gleam of light ahead, or anything to tempt me farther. Perhaps it was then completely overgrown at the top. Wait here, please. I'll investigate."

She drew back against the rock-wall to let him pass on, and, herself standing on a broad projecting knob, watched him climb further and further up and in.

"Good boy!" she murmured, softly. "Good, honest boy!" And there was a very tender little smile on her lips.

In a comparatively short time he was there again, grimy and slightly dishevelled, but with an expression of relief on his handsome face which she read as plainly as if he had spoken.

"There is a way," he said, almost gayly. "It is not easy, nor particularly clean, either. But if you don't mind spoiling your dress we can try it. Else we shall be here another hour and a half at least."

"God forbid!" she said, fervently, and then hoped he had not heard this candidly rude remark, for he was already preceding her into what, now that she had entered the cleft behind him, was almost total darkness.

Even to a sailor like herself the road was indeed not an easy one, and Olier, who had just gone over it, wished he could facilitate it for her, but wisely forbore to say so. However, though scratched and somewhat bruised, they managed at last to reach the long, narrow outlet, concealed, as Rouanez had surmised, by a thick patch of broom and a sort of evergreen bush which bears so unequivocal a name in Breton and French alike that it may as well remain anonymously useful here. Through this they forced themselves to the open air on the brow of the *falaise*.

"Ouf!" Rouanez murmured, pushing from her temples

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

the little silver curls, damp and disarranged by the rough branches of that unsociable bush—"Ouf! I'm glad we're here."

"So am I," Olier echoed. "But you are a wonder, Lady Clanvowe. There isn't another woman in the world who'd have negotiated that stifling stone ladder as you did—not even a professional acrobat."

She laughed outright. Now that they were in the open she could afford to be herself once more. "Compliments again? And as usual so artlessly conceived. You are incurable! But do you realize that all our trouble has not been quite in vain to-day?"

"How so?" he asked.

"Well, it seems to me that we have stumbled—stumbled is exactly the word—upon a nearer way of escape from cliff to beach which is not to be despised or overlooked in our present situation. Don't let's disturb this unmentionable overgrowth more than we can help. It'll continue to guard the secret for us. And now I think we should try to tidy ourselves up a bit. We are not to our advantage!" she added, glancing ruefully at her torn and crumpled skirts. "Just think what the sanctimonious Grafton will say if he sees me like this!"

"Oh! *A la guerre comme à la guerre!* Anyway, we don't look so awful, after all, especially you. Besides which, damn Grafton!" he concluded, to himself. But she heard and broke into another laugh as they cautiously edged their way through the salt-coated clump of verdure.

CHAPTER XIX

Like breedeth like; but Nature may—to scorn the ages' flow—
Root in forgotten Wrong, or Good deflowered long ago:
Thus may old stocks deny their race,—and greet the laughing
 morn,
The fig upon the thistle-spray, the grape upon the thorn.

Atavism.—M. M.

SENATOR DULAC, clad from head to foot in pale mustard-colored English tweeds, which he deemed eminently suited to confer distinction upon the wearer, his comfortable stomach held in bondage by a truly pastoral cream-hued waistcoat, brocaded gayly with rosebuds, and the brilliant ensemble topped by a rakish Panama that had cost much and didn't look it, was taking a first survey of his new estate. According to his lights, he looked the complete country magnate, the man who is owner of the soil but not of it; and certainly no detail had been omitted which could aid in the interpretation of this flattering rôle, from the rural suggestions bound to emanate from a scarf of spring-leaf green, whereon sparkled a bunch of grapes, each berry a needlessly large ruby, to the striped silk socks and tight patent-leather pumps encasing his hopelessly flat feet. In one hand he carried jauntily the slenderest of bamboo canes, adorned with turquoises, and in the other a cigar of expensive corpulence, cravatted with gorgeous red and gold.

Arriving only that morning, the over-combed and pomatumed gardens had already furnished him an op-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

portunity to display his lordly authority; and the brigade of helpers whose duty it was to pursue relentlessly every vagrant leaf or twig, had without loss of time been severely taken to task for having overlooked a cluster of acorns that even now were sprawling unashamed on the south lawn.

"It is really extraordinary what trouble one has to be well served nowadays," he pompously declared. "Look at those calladiums; they are not set at equal distances. I would bet a hundred francs that the spacing is radically faulty."

"I had no idea," a laughing voice replied, "that you were so well up in horticulture. Your treasure of a head-gardener will have to look to his laurels."

The Senator turned on his heel and stared at his younger son with pitying tolerance.

"Before becoming a landed proprietor," he sharply retorted, "I took the trouble of visiting a number of justly celebrated parterres, in order to see with my own eyes how the trick was done."

"My compliments!" Pierre Dulac gravely approved. "That is what I call taking one's duties seriously."

"A reproach one will never address to you," was on the elder man's tongue, but he checked the impulse, as he often did in the presence of this stalwart son of his—so diametrically different from his other children—who had a knack of inspiring in him a discomfort that was frequently akin to respect, a feeling that few persons had ever evoked in the breast of this brazen politician.

How in the world this good-looking, straightforward, and altogether prepossessing young man came to be the son of his parents was one of those marvels into which it is perchance better not to pry too deeply; but at any rate he bore no resemblance, physical or moral, to either of

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

them, a fact which should have filled him with profound gratitude. Just then, his hands thrust into the pockets of his white flannel jacket, his tennis cap set well back from his forehead, he was contemplating the Senator's elegant array with ill-disguised amusement; the immaculate pumps seemed especially to fascinate him, and two or three times he squinted sideways at them admiringly.

"What are you staring at?" his father asked at length, in the faintly uncomfortable tone which no one but Pierre ever heard.

"Your *éscarpins*," the other frankly admitted. "They hurt one's eyes, they're so brilliant."

"Well! You didn't expect me to wear cowhide boots to walk in my park? That's well enough for those poseurs and starvelings around here who call themselves gentlemen-farmers and are neither the one nor the other. Happily I can afford to hire men to do the drudgery of my estates."

Pierre said nothing. When his father mounted his high-horse, as he irreverently called it, silence was advisable, and he therefore contented himself with following him around the criticised calladium-bed and down an overarched rose-path to the lake. This lake had but lately been a thing of beauty, with its frame of silver willows, and undulating bordures of forget-me-nots, irises, and pond-lilies—a picturesque bit of nature at its best, because left to its own sweet will. Now, however, thanks to Antoine Flochard's ministrations, it had been transformed into what real-estate advertisers describe as an "ornamental sheet of water," and with its newly scraped stone pier—once velvety with delicious green moss—its boat-house varnished and painted like a Nuremberg toy, it looked ashamed of itself.

"Ha!" Dulac approvingly exclaimed. "Here at least



THE CHATEAU DE ROZKAVEEL

(A distant glimpse)

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

my orders have been carried out properly. You have no conception what a mess the place was in before."

"Oh, but pardon me, I saw it last year and admired it," Pierre said, regretfully. "Couldn't you at least have spared us the crimson-and-gold weather-vane on that freshly scoured roof there? Really, the only thing the place lacks is a row of mirror-glass globes set along the edge of the terrace on ornamental cast-iron stanchions."

"They are already on the way," replied his father, curtly. "I received the invoice from Nantes this morning. An extra large size, made specially to order. One of Flochard's neatest ideas, I think. Many of the improvements in and out of the house are to be credited to his excellent taste."

"I do not doubt it for an instant."

"You don't seem convinced."

"Oh! It is necessary to seem convinced?"

"Certainly. Flochard has proved quite invaluable here recently in many respects. He is a very remarkable young man; but you never did him justice."

"I do, my dear father, full justice," Pierre said, quietly. "It is you who are mistaken, I fear, in your valuation of the fellow. And I can hardly think, for instance, that it is also owing to your orders that he has managed to make himself hated for leagues around, or that he has engaged some of the low types who swagger in your stables—there are two grooms, for instance—"

The Senator had turned slightly away, and seemed absorbed in the contemplation of the scrupulously cleansed water, shining like silver over its bed of golden sand—a veritable millionaire's lake this, metallic and costly looking, like the rest of the establishment.

"How do you know that he is hated?" he asked, abruptly, but without facing round.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"You must remember that I have been here over a week now—long enough to notice, at any rate, that far from smoothing your path for you, the invaluable Flochard has soured an already sufficiently acid neighborhood. The first time I rode across the *lande* to Rozkavel village and Kremarzé, I was convinced of the disgust with which our arrival fills the people."

"They had better try and show it before me!" the Senator cried, turning a surly countenance toward his too-perspicacious offspring. "A pack of ragged, potato-fed beggars! I'll teach them!"

Pierre raised his shoulders imperceptibly. His sire's angers, like his sire's pretensions, left him cold. But he, in his good-natured, light-hearted way, always disliked to see him make a fool of himself, and determined to do what he could to counterbalance Flochard's unhappy influence.

"You'll scarcely achieve much by violence with Bretons," he judiciously remarked. "They are not so bad when one knows how to take them. But if you're going to display your democratico-autocratic side to them, you're done. If I understand right, you are anxious to play a certain rôle here, to assume certain dignities. Well, then, you should begin by making yourself popular with the villagers . . . and . . . especially try to make them forgive you your wealth."

"Forgive me my wealth!" Dulac senior said, aghast. "Forgive my wealth! What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I say. You are occupying the place of a man who is still remembered here, though he's been dead a good many years. He was not rich, but . . . well, I'd like to think that some day the old women in the chimney-corners would speak of me as I've heard they speak of him. Yes, I mean the Marquis de Rozkavel. You are

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

more like the Marquis de Carabas now, since you own half the countryside already and are buying more of it every day. But unfortunately the good-will of your vassals is not included in the bargain. There you will be in need of a different kind of coin. Lord! I speak like a financial oracle! But in any case, my good father, don't listen to Flochard if you care for success."

The Senator was slowly poking holes with the end of his splendid bamboo in the shorn velvet of the bank. His expression was extremely sulky, and two or three times he opened his thick lips as if to speak, but presumably thought better of it, for during the space of quite five minutes absolute silence reigned. At last, with a familiar hunch of his heavy shoulders, he ceased disfiguring the smoothness of the soft emerald grass, and said, roughly:

"I know what I am about, and I don't want the advice of a boy with milk still hanging to the end of his nose."

Pierre laughed. "As you like," he said, lightly. "I thought you wished to take root here, though the soil is markedly unfavorable for vegetation of our sort. But if you are going to be satisfied to do like the marionettes—three little turns and then good-bye—it's of course your own affair. Upon which I may as well draw your attention to the fact that it is twelve o'clock, and that neither my mother nor your priceless butler like luncheon to be kept waiting."

"It's astonishing," the Senator said, bitterly, "how little you seem to appreciate the advantages of your position as my son; 'vegetation of our sort,' indeed. You make me sick. D'you imagine that every lad of your age has such an allowance as yours, rides such horses, or enjoys such luxuries as surround you? You've only got to ask for a thing and it's yours, without doing a stroke of work."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"That's something I have long wanted to speak to you about," Pierre hastily interrupted. He was quite serious now, and all hint of persiflage had vanished from his voice. "You have been very generous to me, and have afforded me the best of education and opportunities, but now the time has come for me to make you some return, at least in so far as I can do it by choosing a career for myself and ridding you of a portion of what I cost you."

The Senator stopped short and stared at his son. The luncheon-bell might have rung itself cracked for all that these preoccupied people cared.

"What flea is biting you now?" he asked, angrily. "Can't I say a word to you without your flying off the handle like a lunatic? Have I asked you to do anything but—" He was on the point of saying "live like a gentleman," but stopped in time; why, it would have troubled him to explain.

"Certainly not. But now that my military service is done, I think that I should prefer to be occupied in some way."

"And would it be indiscreet to ask you what you consider yourself fit for? Diplomacy, perhaps, or—"

"Diplomacy? No. I do not recognize in myself any aptitude for poodle tricks, such as are expected of young attachés—bow and scrape, flirt with dowagers, and lead cotillions—decidedly not."

"The army, then?" Dulac mockingly demanded.

"The army as it is now in France? No."

None better than Senator Dulac knew what was meant by that "now," and he winced a little as he heard it.

"You are difficult to please," he sneered. "But since both army and diplomacy fail to meet with your approval, perhaps you will tell me upon what branch of science or art you have deigned to cast a favorable eye.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Or do you, perhaps, desire to emulate your elder brother's performances on the Stock-Exchange?"

His father's tone was probably beginning to grate upon Pierre; for his silent reply to the last proposition was this time a most unmistakable shrug of contempt.

"I see," the Senator translated, "that also is beneath Monsieur's dignity."

"Not in the least; but, on the contrary, much above my talents. I admire simpler callings, that's all. In fact, I think I have a weakness for railroading."

"Railroading? Railroading what, or who?"

"Plain freight-cars if necessary at the outset, and, subject of course to your sanction, I shall start from the lower end of the profession this very autumn, and expatriate myself to do so, if need be."

"Begin as a coal-shoveller, like an American millionaire's son? You are indeed ambitious!"

"Eh! Eh! Some of them have done pretty well from that beginning, or so I've heard," Pierre said, in the tone of banter that he was apt to employ for the discussion of subjects that touched him nearly. "There is no shame whatsoever in making use of one's hands, is there? And I have no objection to overalls as a disguise. It beats a Spanish cloak and a sombrero any day," he cheerfully concluded, opening the small iron gate that separated the gardens from the park and falling back to let his father pass.

The Senator's face was a study. For many years he had not encountered so puzzling a problem. That there was more than met the eye in all this he never doubted, but what it could be he failed to see, and, counselled by the innate prudence which had helped him more than once during his checkered career, he forbore from pursuing his investigations until more certain of his ground.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"We'll return to all this nonsense at a fitter moment," he said, gruffly. "And meanwhile keep your noble aspirations to yourself; d' you hear?"

Pierre nodded and followed his perturbed parent up the noble flight of steps leading to the dining-room, where Madame Dulac and her son and daughter-in-law were already seated at the table.

Olier had not darkened the picture when describing the present châtelaine of Rozkavel to Rouanez. She was all that he had said, and much more besides, that he had, perhaps from a feeling of respect for his hearer, avoided to mention. A terrible woman, indeed, in the full acceptance of the word, of a semi-veneered coarseness of body and mind to set the teeth on edge, and with scarcely a quality, be it ever so small, upon which to base a valid excuse for her existence. With money had come ambition of quite an inordinate sort. But since money had been powerless to purchase tact, or even the faintest possible social polish, she remained to-day what she always had been—utterly unacceptable, even in the least exigent bourgeois circles.

The purchase of Castle Rozkavel had been her idea, for she had imagined that in this impoverished corner of France—which is not of France, though that she did not realize—the length of her husband's purse would tell. Poor Poteau had not known how to make use of his opportunities, as she took care to tell her daughter-in-law twenty times a day. And when young Madame Dulac, née Poteau, who was not a bad little soul, timidly tried to point out facts that had come under her own observation during the few weeks which she used to spend at Rozkavel every year, facts that held out no encouraging prospect, they were swept aside by the older woman as mere worthless dross. With her lord's political and

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

financial omnipotence, and what she considered her own inimitable *savoir-faire*, she felt confident of her ability to bowl over those proud-stomached *nobliaux*, and revenge herself for the galling oblivion to which she and her amazing toilettes had been relegated during previous trips about the old Duchy, when accompanying the Senator on his electoral visitations. Oh! if she ever could hold them by the throat, those cold-blooded, emotionless men and women who seemed content to live the year round in their dilapidated manoirs, upon sordidly narrow incomes! Until now this pleasing opportunity had not been granted her, however; but, as she elegantly expressed it, with patience one ends by weaving silk from a sow's bristles!

"Where have you two been?" she asked, acidly, as her husband and son entered the room.

"For a little tour around the gardens," the Senator answered, seating himself opposite to her, while Pierre took the chair beside his sister-in-law, and glanced in astonishment at his mother's tea-gown—a "creation" of crimson and bullion, which, but for an ermine border and a few golden bees, strikingly resembled the coronation robe of the first Napoleon. The most flamboyant youth could hardly have carried it off, and it only served to show with cruel emphasis the wreck that evil years had made of her brutal beauty.

The five covers were laid on a lace-bordered cloth, but on the silk-embroidered centrepiece of doubtful freshness there was no flower-filled jardinière or any of those pretty little contrivances of silver and crystal which so greatly enhance the enjoyment of a meal. Such small customary daintinesses were alike unknown to Madame Dulac and to the curious breed of servitors who in a long and loud succession attempted the taming of that shrew.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"You might have remembered that I am going to make calls this afternoon," she now said, thrusting a wedge of bread so energetically into her soft-boiled egg that a Vesuvian eruption immediately followed.

"Make calls?" the Senator asked, in astonishment. "But upon whom? We are miles from anywhere, as you very well know, and, moreover—"

Here he stopped, overawed by a ferocious frown from his worser half and a glance indicating the insolent-looking butler and his two silk-stockinged assistants, whose countenances, it must be owned, would have contributed to the adornment of any jail, foreign or domestic.

"With the motor-car, distance no longer exists," she affectedly recommenced. "I have here a list of the châteaux nearest to ours, and these will suffice for to-day."

"More than suffice," said Pierre, beneath his breath, and his sister-in-law, who was in the act of drinking claret-and-water, choked herself with disastrous results to her sumptuous morning-gown.

She was not pretty; but her round face was rosy and pleasant, and she obviously deserved a better fate than to have become the wife of the puffy, sallow-skinned individual whose name she bore, and who for unredeemed commonness ran a neck-to-neck race with his overpowering mother.

"I don't see what there is to laugh about," this pleasing personage remarked, bending half across the table to reach the butter-dish. His early youth had been less gilded than his very much younger brother's, and had lacked the present staff of footmen.

"Agénor!" Madame Dulac reminded him; "Jean will pass you what you want." That distinguished functionary had tardily precipitated himself, and was presenting the desired lubricant with inimitable condescension.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Nothing in particular," Pierre responded, ignoring the interruption and looking askance at his brother, "excepting that our ladies will probably find no one at home."

Madame Dulac turned upon the son whom she frequently described as a hopeless dolt a pair of eyes like pink-rimmed jet buttons, but emitting a vicious glitter that no jet, be it ever so assiduously polished, could hope to rival.

"And why that, if you please?" she sourly demanded.

"Because the whole Breton race is chiefly remarkable for its lamentable lack of sociability," he coolly rejoined, helping himself to salad.

"Oh, indeed! We must teach them better manners, then!" she muttered, still glaring at him. "There are always means when one has the whip-hand."

She would have said more, but, catching her husband's eye, she stopped abruptly, and, addressing him in a less rasping voice, announced that she would begin her tour by stopping at Fort Rozkavel, to leave cards at least upon that poseuse Miladi Clanvowe, who had so greatly impressed the Senator.

"You will decidedly waste your time there," the latter said, with a certain grim enjoyment. "Your cards may or may not be acknowledged, but never will you be allowed to pass the iron door of that little Fort."

A flush of richest wine-color swept over Madame's cross-grained countenance.

"That's what we shall see!" she said, furiously. "A creature whom Flochard tells me is no better than she should be, and spends the clearest of her days and nights careering round the country alone with young men. That husband of hers must assuredly have a wide sleeve!"

"If Flochard is well informed," the Senator put in,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

austerely, "I am surprised, Anais, to find you desirous of making her acquaintance."

For a moment Madame Dulac hesitated between treating Monsieur Dulac's lead with the contempt it assuredly must deserve as coming from him, or returning it in accordance with her habitual virtuous pose; but, deciding to do neither, and speaking, as the French say, from the top of the head—*du haut de la tête*—she answered, almost civilly, to her audience's extreme astonishment:

"Of course, of course, in ordinary cases you would be right. But these English great ladies have curious ideas about morality, so different from ours in France. One cannot judge them by the same standards. And," she concluded, in a sudden burst of frankness, "I'm dying to see what she looks like."

"There we are!" the irrepressible Pierre murmured. "That's more like it." And, having finished his dessert, he availed himself of the lax decorum presiding at the Dulac board to rise and walk out of one of the tall French windows opening directly upon the great stone terrace.

"Thank Heaven," he thought, "I shall soon be far from all this. I may be a revoltingly undutiful son, but I cannot get used to their ways. No, I can't!" He strode wrathfully off toward the stables, disregarding a call in his father's most peremptory tones, and, kicking the gravel irritably before him with the toes of his well-fitting brown shoes, entered the "yard."

There the most amiable disorder reigned. The staff was evidently dining somewhere in the basement of the great house, and the place was deserted. Through the yawning doors of coach-rooms and garage were to be seen rows of costly equipages and automobiles laden with dust, their canvas coverings heaped beside them on carelessly swept floors, dried mud adhering to more than one set of

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

wheels, while the saddlery shelves seemed littered chiefly with empty bottles that had never contained either varnish, leather-polish, or blacking.

"A fine state of affairs!" the young man commented, half aloud. He loved horses, had just served his time in a cavalry regiment, and he reddened with anger when, turning into the long stable, he found the fine animals therein contained scarcely groomed, the mangers and drinking-troughs revoltingly grimy, and all the rest in keeping.

"*Sacré nom de nom!*" he exclaimed. "Who is the swine in charge here, I wonder? Here! You! somebody! —is every one dead?"

Perron, returning toothpick in mouth from enjoying a mid-day meal, washed down with wines that the butler reserved for down-stairs, as too fine to be tossed down the *patron's* throat, selected this unfortunate moment to stroll into the yard, and was met by a stinging volley of what for politeness sake may be termed "language," for Pierre, though little given to swearing, was by now in a perfectly vile temper. At first Perron, like Brer Tarry-pin, "sot an' tuck it," but, the butler's singularly heady brand of after-dinner Madeira aiding, his gorge soon rose against such mishandling, and with an insolent swagger he delivered himself of the following surprising sentence:

"Go tell that to the right man. I'm not here to do that kind of dirty work."

Pierre ran his eyes from the gaitered legs to the tweed-capped head of the horsy personage confronting him, and then ran them down again.

"You are not here to groom horses?" he asked, in a tone lowered suddenly by amazement.

"Certainly not," Perron calmly declared.

"What are you paid for, then?"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Perron hesitated for the fraction of a very short second. He had been cautioned against revealing to anybody his real status. But here was, after all, a son of the house—a Dulac, no doubt tarred with the same brush as the rest of the pestilential brood. Why, then, let himself be treated like a common menial when one word would take down this young cockerel a peg or two?

"I s'pose I shouldn't rightly tell you," he said, throwing a searching glance over his shoulder; "but I have been engaged—that is, my mate and I have been engaged—to keep an eye on the *ci-devants* around here. We're grooms only as far as the rig goes. *Yes, sir*"—this in English, which the wretch spoke very well, and cultivated just then as in graceful accord with his character for the time being—"yes, sir, grooms only as far as the rig goes, I'm happy to say."

"You are a spy, then?" Pierre was not inclined to mince matters.

"I say, there's no occasion to call everything by name. I flatter myself that the Rue de Jérusalem harbors worse blood-hounds than yours truly."

"Possibly. But is it my father who employs you?"

Perron, tempted by circumstances to wax familiar, unbent amiably.

"Yes and no. M'sieu Flochard is the accredited news-grubber, but you see, Flochard—who between you and me and that hitching-post has a wonderful regard for his own skin—sent for us to do his work for him." Perron bared his tobacco-stained teeth in a sly smile, nothing having for a long while afforded him more enjoyment than thus to thrust a knife between his superior's ribs. For Flochard had promised more butter than cake, and now seemed inclined to hand his understrappers an all-too-dry crust, thinly spread with mere oleomargarine.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"We were told to come here as grooms, and we did," he continued, drawing himself up, "but blessed if either of us knows more about a horse than to tell his head from his tail when we look close enough."

Pierre scarcely listened to this last interesting piece of information. He was staring straight in front of him, with wrinkled brows, not able to make up his mind what to decide. It would not do, he clearly realized, for him to give his father wrong, especially before this slyly watching brute; and yet for no consideration whatsoever could he even tacitly approve the presence, authorized or unauthorized, of a corps of spies at Rozkavel. Of course, his sanction had not been requested, and his disapproval would be as effective as water on a duck's back; but still his whole honest being was in revolt, and, when he at last spoke, there was a certain quality in his voice which made Perron suddenly doubt the wisdom of confidences.

"Does anybody besides my father and his secretary know your . . . profession?" he asked, sharply.

"No, Monsieur," Perron replied, without a trace of his former familiarity or *goguenarderie*. "Leastways, not until I told it to you just now," he corrected, evidently eager to conciliate a person who could look so unequivocally fierce.

"I'm glad of that!" Pierre said, raspingly. "And I trust you will be very particular about keeping the matter strictly to yourselves, for it is not one that reflects credit upon anybody concerned." And, whirling on his heel, the youngest scion of the House of Dulac left a much-disconcerted man behind him muttering uncomfortably, "Not easy, this *particulier*—not easy at all."

Meanwhile the aforesaid *particulier* was making rapid progress toward home, where he still hoped to find his

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

father. He wanted an explanation, and that at once. For broad as his conception of the paternal methods had always been, this was too large a morsel to be swallowed by a youth whose honorable nature had always been more or less at war with his surroundings.. Unfortunately, the Senator was closeted with the Mayor of the nearest little town, and somewhat cooled by the delay, Pierre determined to look further into the matter before speaking.

CHAPTER XX

Such as you give me I cannot return,
After its measure must each heart repay;
Night's altar hath but twinkling stars to burn
To the full glory of her Lord the Day:
Also the Sea—that gray as barren sand
Drinks her deep draughts of sun-warmth undenied,
Till the soft mist lies like a hushing hand
On her unquiet tossings far and wide—
When the clear dark her beauty would disclose
And she would wear her royallest attire,
Has but the sprinkled phosphor-flame, and glows
Limning her breaking crests with frozen fire.
Yet can the gray Sea chant a strain divine;
Would that the fulness of her song were mine!

Unequal Measure.—M. M.

ANGRY and sore, Pierre once more descended the terrace steps and strode across the lawn, just as his mother's motor-car, containing that lady herself, in her most dazzling plumage, and her little daughter-in-law almost equally magnificent, whirled down the avenue on its punitive expedition among the natives.

"I hope they'll be despoiled to-day of any desire to recommence," the undutiful son muttered as he reached a side entrance, and, passing out of the gardens upon the open *lande*, made off in the direction of the shore. He felt in need of a long, lonely walk to recover his equanimity, and for the next hour or so he put his long legs to a severe test. The end of this summer afternoon was marvellously clear and beautiful, sea and sky flew the same

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

azure pennants, and in the offing a flotilla of becalmed sardine-boats alone gave a faint tinge of humanity to the unpeopled vastness of Nature.

It was not the first time that Pierre had visited Brittany. Twice before he had stayed for a few weeks with the Poteau family, and on both those occasions had keenly enjoyed himself, having instinctively understood and appreciated a land which admits of no faint affection or lukewarmness of feeling toward itself—holding the balance sternly between hatred and love. The path he now followed was, however, new to him, for he had never gone so far on foot toward the cliffs, but the pungent fragrance of the sea was drawing him on, and since a few minutes a large, heavy sound rising and falling on the light wind like soft, unsteady thunder, and seemingly proceeding from some point a mile or so ahead, had begun to arouse his curiosity.

What could it be? Not the surf beating against the rocks, since the ocean was almost as calm as an Italian bay just now; also the subdued rumble was neither regular nor continuous enough for that, and seemed to leap feverishly, unequally, like some hurried gigantic pulsation, quite different from the placid, soothing throb of summer waves. Withal, it was an insidious elemental sound, that a preoccupied ear might long refuse to perceive, and Pierre had probably been hearing it for a considerable time before it focussed his attention. But now he paused to listen more at ease. Unable to decide as to its character, however, he turned in what he judged to be its direction, leaving the cliff path and striking out across the heather, punctuated here and there by pale-gray rocks rising peaklike from mounded gorse and black-berry bushes, the long branches of which wound themselves in the most amazing loops and knots from point to jagged point of the rough supporting stone.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

All at once as he strode along a thin human cry, faint but piercing, cut through the mysterious grumble, which had been steadily growing louder, and once or twice had swelled into a hollow, churning roar. It made his heart jump, that cry, coming so suddenly upon the inhuman solitude, and, when it came again, his feet of their own accord seemed to pick themselves up and fly, for it had struck the unmistakable note of agony and appeal. At the same moment he became dimly aware of a figure running along the converging edge of the cliff at a distance so great that it looked as yet scarcely bigger than a large doll, but, as their combined efforts diminished the separating space, he saw that it was that of a woman wearing a white gown; something white, too, on her head, though certainly not a coiffe. She was preceded by a couple of dogs, one big and dark, galloping shoulder-high through the gorse, the other a darting, intermittently seen speck of white that could only be a bull-terrier.

Just then the mild sunset air was rent again by that piercing scream, and Pierre caught the flutter of the white skirts flying toward the cliff-point and the crumbling walls of a dismantled little tower, as he himself, redoubling his speed, raced past a viciously projecting granite fang, cleared another at a bound, and brought up with an exclamation of dismay on the very lip of the Hell of Plogonak. Not ten yards from him the white figure was already crouching half over the ghastly edge, while ten feet below it another smaller form, clinging desperately to a slowly uprooting bush, hung suspended.

"Have you a rope, or something?" The breathless question did not even surprise Pierre under these circumstances; he instinctively began to search his pockets as if accustomed to carry there a few fathoms of cable; and suddenly, with quick fingers, he started to unwind the

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

very long silk sash he wore, *Faya*-fashion, about his middle with his suit of summer flannels. The boy in such dire peril of his life had ceased shrieking, and raised the eyes of a tortured animal toward his possible rescuers.

"Quick! Quick!" she cried, and with a furious jerk Pierre tore apart the strong silken fringes that he had succeeded in tangling inextricably.

"Give it to me!" she ordered, without even looking at him. "Quick!" And here, manlike, he tried to take command of the situation.

"Please let me do it!" he pleaded. But, half raising herself from her dangerous position, she snatched the scarf from him.

"You wouldn't know how. I'll lie flat over. You lie flat behind me . . . on your face . . . hold my ankles, and hold them tight! Quick, now! the bush is giving!"

There was something so peremptory in the quality of her tone, joined to a note of such habitual authority, that Pierre was silenced and did exactly as he was bidden. He had had neither time nor opportunity to scrutinize his strange fellow-rescuer, but when at this last moment she for a second glanced up at him he was startled by the loveliness of the face under its tangle of silver curls, and the white *bérèt* tilted backward by the wind of her flight.

Swift as thought she accomplished her difficult manœuvre, while he conscientiously "held on" to the trimmest ankles he had ever seen. Then he heard her voice, no longer abrupt and impatient, but quietly persuasive and reassuring, as she told the terrified boy what to do. He could not plainly distinguish what she said, for the Hell below them had again begun to growl and ravin for its prey in a wild-beast exasperation that made every other sound indistinct, though in a second he could have sworn

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

that the cajoling French syllables had been abandoned for the stern gutturals of quite another tongue. But this was not the moment for certainties of any kind, and, stretched out at full length in the most undignified of sprawls, his feet hooked around a stone projection of some kind that offered itself conveniently behind him, he went on clasping the silk-clad ankles, and wondering what degree of ridicule he was destined to reach.

"Crawl backward and pull me with you . . . slowly!" The words roused him from his absurd cogitations, and he obeyed unhesitatingly, as most people did when Rouanez used that particular tone; wriggling slowly like a snake, and dragging her gently but continuously along with him until she called "Halt!" and there was another pause.

"I am entirely on the rock now," she announced. "You can let me go . . . then come here . . . quick . . . for my arms are being wrenched out of their sockets." The voice, notwithstanding this alarming declaration, was surprisingly steady, and Pierre, jumping up, thought: "Whoever that woman is, she is a marvel."

How she had managed it all he never knew; but when he stood up behind her he saw that she was supporting nearly the full weight of the twelve-year-old lad at the end of the stoutly woven scarf.

"If you are not dizzy, go . . . to . . . the edge," she said, a little breathlessly now, "grasp the scarf below my hands, and haul."

Once more Pierre did just exactly what he was told, without either hesitation or clumsiness, and in a minute more the shuddering, gasping boy lay on the tough grass between them, his livid face thickly glazed with sweat.

"What a tiresome child you are, Azen Cradek, to give

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

us all that trouble! Rouse up now; it's all over. There's no occasion for you to faint."

This easy fashion of taking things after what had just passed was so original that Pierre came instantly to the conclusion that this could be no other than the Lady Clanvowe of whom he had already heard so much, and just then, too, she took his opportune presence upon the scene into consideration.

"We are very much obliged to you," she said, standing slim and straight before him, although he noticed that the hands hanging at her side were trembling. "Without you we probably would both be in there now."

Pierre stared at the perfect oval face lit by those marvellous dark-blue eyes, at the delicate little nose and perfect mouth—perhaps slightly tremulous, but so slightly—and found nothing at all to say; while she, having at last a chance to scan this tall, square-shouldered youth, of decidedly pleasing appearance, did so in two keen, searching glances, and then, bending over the cause of all the "trouble," as she called it, took hold of his collar and unceremoniously dragged him to the perpendicular.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she asked. "A Breton *mousse* to first let himself tumble over a cliff, and then shake like a woman for fright . . . afterward, too, when it's of no earthly use!"

"Some women—" Pierre began; but the boy, to whose freckled countenance a bit of color had returned, was stammering excuses and explanations in unmistakable Breton, a torrent of incoherent, incomprehensible words—to Pierre at least—for at first Lady Clanvowe—assuredly it must be she—nodded as if she understood. Then she turned with a curious little flush, of anger one might have thought, and said curtly in French:

"Get along with you, since you can't speak an in-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

telligible language to-day. Run home to your mother." And in the most self-possessed fashion she shook out her skirts and again bent her searching orbs upon Pierre.

"To whom," she asked, courteously, "am I indebted for such excellent help?"

"My name is Pierre Dulac, and I am only sorry that you should have had to do all the work, Madame," he answered, and bowed a trifle shyly, for the almost imperceptible recoil caused by his name had not been lost upon him.

"The son of the Senator?" she asked again.

"Yes—the younger son."

"Well, Monsieur, you have done me a service to-day that I am not likely to forget; also I want to apologize for my curtness with you awhile ago. You will understand that this was one of those occasions when politeness comes last."

"And courage first," he said, with a look of undisguised admiration that had yet nothing offensive in it, "first—and last too," he concluded, "for your hands and arms must be excruciatingly painful."

"Excruciatingly is exaggerated," she smiled, suddenly speaking with winsome informality, and displaying her two little palms. A few drops of blood were slowly trickling from the fingers cut by the collection of rings she wore.

"Oh, Madame, you have indeed hurt yourself!" he exclaimed. "I am so sorry."

She laughed outright. "You are too easily alarmed, Monsieur. When one goes in as I do for all sorts of nonsense one should discard vain adornments." She was sponging the blood with a scrap of handkerchief too small for the task, and he drew from his pocket an unfolded one.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"May I," he ventured, "offer you this?"

"Yes; thank you very much; it will be much better than mine," she replied, tossing the lace-edged bit of batiste, with its cherry-colored stains, over her shoulder into the churning depths of Plogonak. "But really I am shamefully abusing your kindness of heart. Here, while you are about it, would you mind holding these for me?"

With a tiny grimace of pain she slowly drew the big gems from her rapidly swelling fingers, laying them one by one in his hand. "I think," she added, "I'll go down to the beach and soak these 'excruciating' wounds in sea-water—a sovereign remedy for us sailors."

"You are Lady Clanvowe, then?" Pierre asked, in turn.

"Yes, but how do you know that Lady Clanvowe and a sailor are practically one and the same thing?"

He smiled beneath his small, fair mustache. "Everybody knows that," he answered. "But I was sure of it almost before your last remark. Will you allow me to accompany you—as far as the beach?"

"Certainly, and it will procure you the doubtful advantage of becoming acquainted with another unsociable neighbor," she added, smiling. "For if my 'nautical' eye does not deceive me, that is Olier de Frèhél striding along the lower path yonder."

"I am afraid Monsieur de Frèhél will scarcely like my being forced upon him," Pierre said, drawing back slightly. "The name of Dulac is not . . . what shall I say? . . . appreciated around here."

Rouanez turned and glanced up at him curiously. In her expressive eyes he read as plainly as if she had spoken: "How do you come to be rowing in that galley?" Then her long, dark lashes closed down over that tell-tale gaze, and she quietly walked on.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Monsieur de Frèhél, like myself, is not in the habit of coloring his opinions at a public dye-vat."

"That being the case," Pierre remarked, "I think I will go on with you, Madame, because otherwise. . . ." He left the sentence unfinished, and followed her down one of those disconcertingly steep rock-slides which, a mere pleasantry to her, were newer to him, and consequently worthy of his undivided attention. Not for an instant led into the mistake of offering her his help, obviously futile under the circumstances, he landed on the shingle immediately behind her, and smilingly received her compliments upon his "promising" manner of negotiating this new difficulty.

"You will become acclimatized here in no time," she assured him, already kneeling at the edge of a tiny pool with her hands in the water. "And that is not easy for most people to do."

"I am afraid," he rejoined, "that the one thing needful for the accomplishment of your flattering prophecy, Madame, is just what I lack—I mean opportunity—for I have decided recently to begin fending for myself in a less poetical country."

Why he was telling her this he could not have explained, even to himself; but the fact remains that he did tell her, and in a tone which spoke clearer and louder than his words.

"Ah!" was all she said in reply; and yet he felt that she understood and approved, which on such short acquaintance meant volumes in favor of that fifth sense which some privileged beings possess, and which for want of a better term may be called insight.

Olier, greatly puzzled, and perhaps—who knows?—a little disquieted, to see her chatting, apparently in the friendliest spirit, with a total stranger who even at a dis-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

tance looked rather prepossessing, had meanwhile quickened his pace with such excellent effect that he was close upon them now, and spared Pierre any further private explanations, creating a diversion extremely welcome to Rouanez, since the difficulties of continuing the conversation along such lines were easily foreseen.

Pierre, who was no stranger to Olier's reputation for a stand-offishness even more marked than that of his class in general, was agreeably surprised by this meeting. He sat with those two on the rocks discussing the late adventure—which in the rendering by Rouanez became somehow or other inimitably humorous—and seemed outwardly as gay and light-hearted as his new acquaintances. Yet all the while he felt a dull resentment gradually rising within him at Fate's unjust ordering of his affairs. For here were people of a stamp never before encountered, but already understood and appreciated, and who seemed to return both these feelings. And yet he keenly and bitterly realized that once he had turned the angle of the cliff yonder, where the great rocks deployed like skirmishers into leaping sea-froth, they would be utterly lost to him. They on one side, he on the other—in more senses than one, alas!—and this barrier, in the most ordinary loyalty to his parents, he could not cross again.

His face was clouded when he rose to go, and Rouanez, who had risen also, glanced at him for a moment sympathetically before speaking. Then, in her peculiarly gracious and impulsive way, she said, quickly:

“I don't want you to feel hurt, Monsieur, by my not asking you to call upon me, and especially do I wish you to understand that under other circumstances I would deem it a genuine pleasure to have you do so. You may have heard that I make or return no visits whatsoever,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

having come here for a thorough rest. Olier de Frèhél has been the only exception to my rule, and this only because I knew his parents intimately . . . during the late Count de Frèhél's diplomatic wanderings through Europe. My husband was on two or three occasions accredited to the same courts." She paused, and, underlining her words with a kindly look, added, "Remember that personally I should like to number you among my friends."

Pierre was touched, and had the good sense not to conceal it.

"I understand, Madame," he said, simply, "and I thank you. If ever—which is not very probable—I could again be of some service to you, it would make me happy." And, bending over her hand, he touched it with his lips, turned, and walked quickly away.

"A remarkably nice boy!" Rouanez commented. "How in the mischief can he be Dulac's son?"

"There are some," Olier began, "who assert that—" But just then Pierre ran back toward them, red with confusion.

"Really, Miladi," he said, stammering a little in his embarrassment, "I do not know how to apologize for my stupidity. I was carrying off all your rings!"

Rouanez and Olier burst out laughing at his concern, as he nervously extracted the sparkling handful from his pocket and anxiously asked if "they were all there?"

"He's an uncommonly decent chap," Olier observed, thoughtfully, in belated answer to her previous remark, as they watched Pierre's active form disappear behind a projection of the *falaise*. "And thank God he was there to help you, since you will insist upon risking your life on every possible occasion."

"Was I to let old Mamm-Goz Cradek's hopeful grandson tumble into Plogonak?" she asked.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Better a hundred hopeful Cradeks than you!" he answered, impatiently. "I should never leave your side for a minute. And yet even when I am there you manage to run into constant danger. It is enough to drive one wild to watch you at that game."

Her clear laugh made him look up in astonishment, for lately somehow it had lost some of its contagious joyfulness.

"Don't be a fool," she said, lightly. "Are we not going to face far greater risks in a few days, you and I?"

"Ye-es," he grumbled. "Yes, I suppose one must call them greater, although that little whirlpool yonder is not half bad in its way. But for those we are prepared. We expect them, and we will meet them together."

Here was a line of thought which it was better to break through at once, considered Rouanez, and with a coolness of tone perhaps a little overdone, she launched herself headlong into a deep explanation about the last orders to be given, the last details to be attended to, Olier listening attentively—or so it might be supposed from the perfect gravity of his expression, although his eyes seemed just then strangely vacant and lost to present surroundings.

"Hanvec has done wonders," Rouanez was saying, her own blue orbs fixed on the soft heave of the sea, her hands clasped idly in her lap, where the rings returned by Pierre lay carelessly between the folds of her dress. "We owe more recruits to him than to almost any one else, among the peasants and fishermen at least. Kébèn, too, has been remarkably active, he is so impossible to tire out, either physically or mentally; and even Dame Isilt came off her stilts lately to aid us in the arrangement of minor details. Oh, ours is a reliable crew, Olier, and we might well be proud of it."

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"I believe we are," he retorted, "and with good reason. Would you ever have thought that Arzur could have sobered down as he has . . . and Massérac, whom we used to laugh at so unmercifully; why, he is transformed—positively transformed."

She was still absently gazing at the smooth undulations slowly turning from shadowless blue to a deeper tone of sapphire, netted with warm gold by the rays of a misty sunset.

"Yes," she said, dreamily, "they are all and every one doing the cause stout service. Kornèli told me yesterday that the Roparz women, in imitation of our old Kerdikan, have made their inn a sort of headquarters for the Royalists. Little Enora, it appears, has thrown herself heart and soul into the work, and as that child's heart and soul are faithfully mirrored in the purity of her lilac eyes, you can judge what she accomplishes. It is extraordinary . . . extraordinary!"

"No, perfectly natural," Olier corrected, with curious emphasis. "Perfectly natural—since all these sentiments that you are admiring so guilelessly have been awakened and fostered by you. Would even the Tremoërs, would Kébèn and his grandmother, Massérac, Laoual, or Hanvec himself, have stirred a finger but for your appearance among them? And what about me before you came—with my slack nerve and fallow brain—spending my time in profitless regrets and impossible schemes? But where is the use of trying to show you all you have done . . . to return to you one-millionth part of the feelings you have inspired?" He paused, and, without turning her head toward him, she said, as if roused from some far-away dream:

"The least said about all that the better." There was faint annoyance in her tone, and he did not attempt to

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

refute her statement. "We are all but ready now," she continued, "which, after all, is the chief thing. In a week—ten days at most—the signal can be given, and then 'A Dieu vat'—as they have not yet given up saying here . . . for the rest is in His hands."

Still he remained silent, and she began, a little hurriedly:

"I hope that this young Dulac won't make mischief—unintentionally, of course. His parents are here; also his brother—a shady *boursier* that one, it appears, mean and ugly and vulgar beyond all conception. I am told that they have determined to subjugate the whole countryside. You say I am always starting for the conquest of a star. Their ambitions are more earthly, and no *canailerie* would be too great for them to perpetrate in the achievement of their purpose. Ah! Perhaps it would have been wiser under the circumstances to have received them—to have been less stiff-necked. God only knows what they are capable of! I can only hope that Monsieur Pierre did not notice the few words of Breton I was forced to use in order to urge Azen on to a last effort, just as the accursed bush he hung from was parting company with the cliff. That might prove inconvenient. You know how the least spark can sometimes start a blaze from frontier to frontier. Fortunately, Plogonak was making such an infernal racket that probably he could not tell the difference. Besides—though I may be mistaken—somehow or other I have a premonition that no harm will come to us through this lad of the honest eyes. I am tempted, in fact, to accept the *Chronique Scandaleuse's* verdict. Those eyes are not of the Dulac type."

"As usual, you must be right," he replied at last. "I was agreeably impressed by him, too, and I don't think he is the sort to boast of his adventure. If he is the man

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

we think he is, he probably holds his family at arm's-length. Perhaps he won't even mention it at all."

"That, of course, would be the best thing that could happen for us in every respect," she admitted. "Because there are moments when an uncomfortable foreboding comes over me, Olier; superstitious you would call it, probably. We have succeeded too completely, so far. It is not quite natural, for there has really been no hitch of any sort—no serious hitch, I mean—has there?"

"I cannot say there has," he said, slowly.

"That's just it. I would feel much more reassured if some minor contretemps had come to rob us of any possible over-confidence. At least we can be thankful that, even if we failed at the eleventh hour, nobody would be endangered, no lives risked, since the last signal alone will throw down each individual mask." She shivered a little, and paused abruptly.

"You," he indignantly protested—"you try to make me believe that there is anything on earth that can disquiet or alarm you? Do you for a second imagine that I'll swallow that?" He gave a sudden short laugh, more expressive than any words, and resumed: "Read the daily papers if you wish to see how circumstances are fighting for us. The Labor Unionists and the Government have at last come to actual blows. The hour is near when labor and capital will be completely at loggerheads, and everybody sees what the consequences of such a state of affairs must necessarily be. How did Louis Napoleon reach the Imperial Throne, if you please?"

"Through a sewer full of blood and mud," she said, curtly.

"Yes, that is true. But would he have had even that uninviting opportunity if the Second Republic had not been compelled to jettison all its laboriously acquired

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

popularity, in order to subdue the hordes of revolted workmen that constituted a national danger? General Cavaignac made full use of his powers then . . . and the glorious brand-new principles of anti-militarism, equality, fraternity, and the rest were rather ruthlessly trampled under foot, were they not?"

"Assuredly."

"And," he went on, speaking for the first time in her knowledge of him with a youthful enthusiasm she had scarcely believed him capable of displaying openly—"and if, instead of a Louis Napoleon, France had found at its head a real man—a real King born to the task—strong and unyielding, but whose heart beat in unison with that of his people, who understood their needs and knew how to rekindle their loyalty and their pride, would not France have come to her own then?"

Rouanez gave a long, shuddering sigh.

"Yes," she murmured, "of course. But for such deeds a Henry IV. is needed. Not," she added, "that I do not think highly of our Prince, both as a man and as a future sovereign. He has not always been well surrounded or well counselled, but he is plucky—he showed that often enough during his dangerous explorations—and never loses his head—a good trait that for a King of France! He has a high ideal of right and justice, a limitless capacity for hard work—oh, he will surprise many people when he comes into power. Besides, he is manly, well-set-up, and good-looking, which still counts for much with the French, and he can look very royal indeed when he chooses. Also, he has had the good sense not to make a *mésalliance*. But one's times, after all, are one's only opportunity, and ours are scarcely as favorable as former days."

"The times are what they are made to be!" he ex-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

claimed. "Talk about the will of the majority! It has always been the organized and militant minorities that have moved the world. The masses have never done more than shout the catch-words of the hour. And remember how abject the situation is here in France. If things get a trifle worse something is bound to happen, anyway. So, even if we fail, somebody will succeed soon. But we won't fail! We will all put our shoulders to the wheel, and, never fear, the Saints helping, we will unmire the monarchical car."

She turned about, swift and graceful, and for the first time looked full at him.

"If they all feel as you do," she cried, with a sudden happy little smile, "we cannot fail; not even in the face of a thousand treacheries."

"That's an ugly word," he said, impatiently. "What made you think of treachery? Surely there is no one in our ranks who could have suggested such a thought to you?"

"You know very well that there is not. We are all as 'White' as snow."

"Grafton, then?" he asked, quickly.

"Grafton is a fool, a prig, a kill-joy if you like; but for two reasons he could never turn traitor. First of all, because, knowing nothing, he can betray nothing; and secondly, because, even with all his defects, he is a strictly honest and incorruptible man. No, it is merely a phase of the feeling that I mentioned awhile ago. Grafton was not in my mind; nor, for the matter of that, any one else in particular. Of course, I wish I had never brought him here, for he has bothered me more than I can express, especially before Jwala-Singh took him in charge. I devoutly hope, for Grafton's sake, that Jwala-Singh will never have a serious cause of complaint against

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

him, for my body-guard has a somewhat relentless nature."

"I can easily believe that," he answered, with conviction. "And now just look at that sky!"

The sun, sinking through thinly diffused vapors, was floating just awash upon the glowing water, a sphere of blood-red magnificence, from which great rays of crimson-gold smote fiercely upward. So intense was the coloring that the cloudless heavens and sea were alike slowly becoming masked in sombre flame, and their eyes blinked as they watched the transformation of all the pensive beauty of that late summer afternoon into such a vision of infernal splendor as scarcely seemed to belong to the world at all.

"In eighteen-seventy," she said, softly, shielding her blue gaze beneath both hands, "I remember being carried out of my bed, little more than a toddling baby then, to see a sky just like this one. There was no sun, of course, for it was ten o'clock at night, but half the heavens and half the sea were of that same color. The peasants said it was an omen—a bad omen it proved to be. Eighteen-seventy," she repeated—"a long, long time ago."

She was watching between her interlaced fingers the face of the man at her side. Would he understand now what long years separated his youth from hers? But not a muscle of the steady countenance moved, the loyal, deep-gray eyes kept looking straight ahead, without the faintest change of expression, and the sun slipped out of sight before he spoke again.

"A bad omen then, a good one now," he said, simply. "A good omen for our Cause and our King, and for you and me, too. The best of all; I feel it."

She rose very slowly, holding the rings—that seemed all turned into rubies by the lingering splendor above—

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

within a fold of her white skirt, and there was something in the eyes bent upon them which it was perhaps a pity—probably a blessing—that he did not see.

“Let us hope so,” she said, lightly, evidently busy beyond all more serious concerns with the sand that adhered to the hem of her skirts.

That evening when he had left her, after a late dinner, during which they had both been more silent than usual, she stood for a long while on her balcony, lost in the wonder of the phosphorescent sea, which, as on the night when it had so greatly disturbed Grafton, was doing its best to prove to poor purblind humanity that there is even here below a silver selvage to the dark—a foretaste of some unfathomable reward for all we must first endure. All the doubts and restless dreads of the earlier day had left her; she was no longer heavy-hearted or distressed, and, suddenly stretching out both arms straight in front of her, she gave one of her little laughs.

“A good omen!” she said, aloud. “The best of all!”

CHAPTER XXI

Silence doth keep her temple, hushed with stars,
The winds are all her worshippers, and lo!
The red moon, sinking to the western bars,
Swings like a heavy censer, soft and slow.
La Chanson de la Bretagne.

“TO-MORROW? . . . To-morrow?” Rouanez twice repeated, questioningly, to herself, laying down upon the balcony ledge the violin from which for over two hours she had been drawing the music that never failed to soothe her unrest.

To-morrow, indeed, the signal would at last be given, and although, there was a certain sense of exultation in her heart at the thought of the splendidly accomplished task, yet tears were not as far from her brave eyes as they usually remained even in her darkest moods, when she recalled that after to-night the long, unforgettable months she had spent at Rozkavel were at an end. Her place henceforth would be either at Clanvowe Hall or else in the foreign capitals to which her husband would be accredited, and of the recent experiences which had made weeks fly like days, and hours like minutes, there would remain little indeed to increase the pleasure of living, unless success should crown all those united efforts that she had set in motion, and the satisfaction of having rescued her people from many undeserved miseries could be hers. That was something, of course—a great deal, even—and yet, as she touched the chords of her violin

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

absent-mindedly with one idle finger, she sighed wearily once or twice.

The weather was rather mournful, too, this evening, gray and sleepy, with masses of thin, silvery fog drifting about in the offing, through which the graceful silhouette of the "Kestrel" riding at anchor a good bit further up the coast could intermittently be divined for a moment. Olier and, for the first time, Arzur were coming to dinner, in order to decide about one or two final details, and, in the hope that the mist would rise after sundown, Rouanez had ordered Captain Penruddock to have the *canot* in readiness if a flare should be set off from the Fort. A short cruise would be soothing, perhaps, to more or less strained nerves, and also she had always promised Arzur to show him the yacht, without hitherto finding a convenient moment for it.

"I must go and dress," she now thought. "This may very well be my last dinner at Fort Rozkavel, and a little more ceremony than usual seems appropriate." But still she lingered, straightening the flowers in one or two of the big bronze bowls screwed to the stone ledge, patting the dogs lying at full length on their luxurious cushions, and finally becoming so absorbed in the pages of a book she had picked up at random, that she went on reading it, half kneeling on her basket-chair with the volume resting on the curved back, until the deep-voiced clock in the neighboring "den" roused her with a start of surprise to the knowledge that she had left herself hardly sufficient time, after all, to get into something more elaborate than one of her usual plain white evening gowns.

Haste was not detrimental to her, however, as far as general results went, for when she stepped again on the balcony to meet her two guests she had succeeded even

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

beyond her purpose, and looked so lovely that Arzur actually gasped.

"I am so sorry to be late," she apologized. "Olier will tell you, Arzur, that I am generally not so rude."

Olier was apparently not inclined to say anything just then, for he was gazing at her from a shadowy corner, beyond the lamp already lit on the little table, as if he had never seen her before. Could this be the "comrade" who had wandered all over the *lande* and beach with him, who had run up the semaphore-mast like a boy, and, wrapped in oil-skins and sou'wester, taken charge of the "Kestrel" in the worst squalls? Often and often he had dined with her here, and had sat at table opposite that slim, white-clad figure, but on none of those occasions had he seen what he saw now before him—the great lady, and nothing but that . . . a comb of aquamarines set high in her diadem of silver braids, her long train of snowy gauze giving her additional height, and rope upon rope of pearls, large and soft and iridescent, like little misty moons, falling about her dazzling throat. It could not be Rouanez, he felt, with a sudden ache at the heart. No! It was Lady Clanvowe, the future Ambassadress . . . and his "comrade" was no more!

Fortunately for him, Arzur's exuberant exclamations about his *chère petite Madame's* magnificence gave him opportunity to pull himself together, and when the running fire of teasing and repartee, which often turned into a regular skirmish the greetings exchanged by those two, came to an end, Olier was to all outward appearances himself again; a little colder, a little quieter, perhaps—but then he was never very boisterous—and so he could flatter himself that this new pain, added to another bitter one which never altogether left him now, would pass unnoticed.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

“Do you think, Olier,” Rouanez asked him, just as Grafton, more solemn and imposing than ever, advanced to announce dinner—“do you think we can go out on the yacht later?”

He turned before offering her his arm, and, bending his tall form to glance beneath the pink-and-white scallops of the balcony awning, scanned the weather.

“Well,” he said, doubtfully, “the fog is still there, but it is early yet, and it may blow away by ten o’clock; so if you really want to go—”

“Yes,” she answered, “I really would like to. It’s sad here to-night, for some reason or other.”

The dining-room, with its flowers and crystal and silver, lighted by many pink-veiled lamps, was, however, anything but sad, and Arzur’s laughing voice and boyish gayety contributed not a little to drive off any possible hint of melancholy, all the more so, indeed, since before the servants the talk could only be of every-day topics, which were wittily discussed or turned into ridicule now and again with incomparable drollery by Rouanez and this youngest of all her admirers.

Nobody watching the scene would ever have dreamed that here were three prime movers in an undertaking involving countless lives and the future of a great country; and—be it said to their credit—there was nothing forced in their attitudes or their words, excepting perhaps in the case of Olier, and that for very private reasons, indeed, which in no manner concerned the heavy political responsibilities weighing upon his shoulders.

The mist had thinned considerably when at Arzur’s particular request they came back to the balcony for coffee, as being more comfortable than any other place, and so much so did it prove that for a moment Rouanez

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

questioned the wisdom of putting her plan into execution at all.

"Let's wait awhile, anyhow," she said, nestling into her arm-chair. "We needn't go before eleven, in any case, and you are right, Arzur—it is pleasant here."

"I am always right," he gravely declared. "Don't you know that? But if I am to grant you a reprieve from those more arduous nautical duties which you appear to disdain so greatly to-night, you will have to bribe me."

"What now?" she asked, laughing. "Do you want me to delegate the command of the "Kestrel" to your abler hands when we go aboard?"

"Not much! I am a land-crab, if ever there was one. What I demand as my due is that you shall play for me. I have never heard you." And, pleading in good earnest now, he concluded: "Please, dear little 'Miladi,' please. Don't refuse me the first boon I ask."

"Play like that, immediately after a heavy dinner?" she mischievously objected.

"A heavy dinner! You did not eat enough to break the fast of a butterfly. Ah, if I were your *chef* I would hand in my immediate resignation to so unepicurean a mistress." And, pouncing on the violin-case, he dropped on one knee, holding it aloft like a viaticum to present it to her.

"If I must, I must," she said, lifting the priceless instrument from its bed of ancient brocade and rising to take up her favorite position when playing without accompaniment—half turned from her small audience and leaning lightly against the broad-ledged balustrade.

Olier had retreated once more into the shadow; Arzur, absolutely serious for once, sat bolt upright on the pile of cushions where he had unceremoniously lounged until

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

then, and as usual, without even the slightest flutter of pre-luding notes, the star-song began. But, as was not usual when others were present, she let her thoughts clothe themselves transparently in harmonies that melted from one exquisite shade to another in a continuous delight of tremulous sound, sad and gay, slow and rapid, without a break, as she rendered with that inimitable touch of hers wellnigh all the phases of her innermost feeling during the past few months—forgetting more and more that she was not alone, and so sunk in her marvellous improvisation that the violin itself no longer existed for her, and she scarcely felt it moan or laugh beneath her caressing fingers.

Nearest the human heart! Ah, surely so, for this was the voice of her very soul they were hearing that night, although she herself did not know, for she was not one consciously to give it utterance, even before those two dearest friends. Olier's eyes were hidden under his hand; Arzur was white to the lips—not very steady lips, indeed—as he listened to this full tide of harmony gathering itself as the sea gathers to a wave; lifting high in passionate crescendo, to plunge downward in sonorous cadences that were like moving light upon dark waters. Neither Rouanez, drifting far away on the wings of her dream, nor those two rapt listeners who scarcely dared to breathe for fear of breaking the thrilling charm of it all, noticed the tall form of Jwala-Singh suddenly obscure the lamp-shine from the French window behind them.

Never during all his long and loyal years of service had he ventured to come unsummoned—yet now he hastily crossed over to where his mistress stood and actually touched a fold of her dress.

With eyes widened by anxiety she turned, and at the sight of his face let her beloved violin clatter unheeded to the stone floor.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"What is it?" she whispered, bending forward, every nerve on the alert, and the Sikh answered in the curt tone of one who knows there is no time for stately formalities:

"There is a man — a gentleman — who brings news. Pierre Dulac—that is the name he gave, and he said he must be received at once."

"Pierre Dulac? Pierre Dulac! Show him up instantly . . . yourself, Jwala-Singh!"

Her voice was crisp and masterful now, and Jwala-Singh, who had been a trooper of the Queen, drew himself up, gave the military salute, wheeled and retired. There was something in the instinctive action like the flash of a drawn sword to the three silent people waiting there, they knew not yet for what. In an instant the Sikh was back again, effacing himself on the balcony threshold before Pierre Dulac, breathless, hatless, and in an evening-dress that bore unmistakable witness to some mad race through dew-laden gorse and brambles.

"Speak in peace," came from Jwala-Singh, "I guard the door."

"From the inside, then," Olier, once more keen and ready, commanded, and for the second time Jwala-Singh touched his turban in stiff salute.

Pierre, holding one hand to his left side, was leaning heavily on the table with the other.

"You must go . . . at once . . ." he gasped. "You, Madame, and these gentlemen . . . the gendarmes may be here any minute."

Rouanez was looking at him so intently that her eyes seemed almost black.

"The gendarmes? What for?" she asked, sharply.

Pierre gave a quick gesture, which swept away all further possibility of equivocation.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"You have been betrayed," he hurriedly exclaimed. "There is no time to explain. One of your servants has been talking—innocently perhaps—and to-night I overheard by chance Perron and Luvél—the two spies—discuss the whole thing. I jumped on a horse to come and warn you . . . he is a mile back in a ditch with a broken neck . . . and then I ran the rest of the way."

From the coffee-tray Arzur caught up a glass of liqueur-brandy, and silently held it out to him.

"Drink it, Monsieur," Rouanez urged, and watched him gulp it down gratefully. "Your opportunity to do us service seems to have come swiftly," she added. "But are you certain of what you say? The least mistake would mean so much." She was speaking quietly, almost conversationally, although her extraordinary eyes were still probing his with a persistence that to nine out of ten people would have proved insupportable. He, strong in the truth of his terrible message, met them squarely.

"Yes, Madame, certain. There is no possibility of error," he said, more calmly now. "As I tell you, these spies became acquainted with one of your household—Grafton they called him—and made him talk. Since then you have been watched night and day. Flochard, my father's secretary—an abject canaille—somebody found him out, perhaps, for he's missing since this morning—secretly summoned cleverer men than Perron and Luvél, whom I suspected of some sort of dirty work—but not that—not that—!" There were tears in his eyes. "Oh!" he cried, suddenly beating his fists violently together, "the shame of it all! But what are we doing? You must go now, Madame, just as you are, without wasting another instant—and if there are any papers—which is what they're after first, it appears—!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"There are none, Monsieur Pierre—none at all. Every one will be safe, thanks to you — unless we three are caught, which matters less." She had moved to the table, where lay a long, black, Spanish mantilla, and threw it over her head and shoulders. "Come, Olier; come Arzur," she said, still without a trace of emotion. "And you, Jwala-Singh, go burn the flare to summon the *canot*. If others see it, it can't be helped. You must stay here and take charge—full charge, you understand. Join me in England when you can. Nobody can annoy you. And remember that you know nothing, save that we have gone out on the yacht. For the rest, do in all things as you think best."

"I will stay with him," Pierre said, simply, as the Sikh, his eyes burning like live coals, bent low over the hand she extended to him in farewell and touched it with his lips.

"No, it's better not. You could do nothing, save compromise yourself and him. You must not be found here. Officially you know none of us. Come, we'll go down together."

She nodded to Jwala-Singh, and passed out, without a look behind.

Left alone, the Sikh ran down the long hall and through the armory to the window from which the flare was always burned, sent the vivid blue signal to cut its dazzling way through the transparent mist, and sped on, muttering fiercely in his native tongue as he traversed the winding intricacies of other corridors.

"When they are well away," he said, below his breath, pausing at last before a closed door, "I, who am in charge, will do as I think best!" For half a minute he waited, breathing hard; then with calculated violence threw open the door and strode into Grafton's comfortable

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"parlor," where that personage, coatless and ensconced in one deep arm-chair with his feet in another, was dallying luxuriously with a cigar and a cup of fragrant coffee.

"Come!" he commanded. Grafton had jumped up as if he had been stung. "Come; my lady needs you."

"Needs me . . . now . . . what for?" the startled butler stammered.

"Doubtless she will tell you. There is great trouble, and we are wanted. Make haste—it is an order!"

The conscience that Grafton had been carrying around for some time rendered him peculiarly vulnerable to a sudden and crafty attack; but he was neither so startled nor so entirely flustered as not to notice the strangeness of Jwala-Singh's expression and attitude—certainly not those of one servant summoning another. And Jwala-Singh had never been his friend.

"Where is my lady?" he questioned, trying to gain time by the slowness with which he slipped his shaking arms into his coat-sleeves; but the other, who had no intention of allowing him to collect his wits, entered into no explanations.

"By now she has gone out upon the cliff-path," he said, fiercely. "And if you don't come this instant, I drag you!"

This did not look like an idle threat, and in another instant Jwala-Singh was dexterously steering his bewildered companion through the maze of corridors, downstairs and across the yard. The iron door clanged heavily after them, and they were out upon the open *lande*.

For a little while longer Grafton allowed himself to be urged on, but the loneliness of the narrow heather-track, empty of everything save trailing wreaths of fog, soon made him slacken his pace.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Can't you tell me at least what has happened?" he asked, peevishly, his voice decidedly unsteady from the unwonted rapidity of the pace and an increasing fear which was beginning to take him by the knees.

"There is no need," Jwala-Singh replied, curtly. "You will very presently discover."

The ring of triumph in the voice was in itself a warning, and Grafton came to a full stop.

"Now, look here," he cried, vainly trying to reassume his usual impressiveness, "I am not under your orders. You say my lady wants us. Well and good. But I will not go a yard further until you tell me what's happened."

They were already out of sight of the Fort, over a shoulder of the moor. A red old moon was rising somewhere unseen behind the fog, and the two men could almost clearly discern each other's faces. That of Grafton was ghostly white now, the Hindu's darkly implacable, and for a second they confronted each other without a word. Ahead of them a low, pulsating sound troubled the gray gloom, but neither heeded it just then, not even Grafton, who, if he heard it at all, mistook it for the beat of his arteries pounding in his ears. It was too soon yet to use force, Jwala-Singh realized; a call, a cry from Grafton, might bring the gendarmes, who, if that young man just now had spoken true, might well have reached the Fort. He decided to curb his impatience a little longer, though this was hard to do.

"I will explain as we go," he temporized. "Only you must make haste. You must!"

A little reassured, Grafton started off again, and humored the other to the point of hurrying as fast as his trembling legs would allow.

"My lady has been trying to free her country," Jwala-

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Singh presently forced himself to say. "But some treacherous hound betrayed her, and the soldiers will besiege the Fort. Do you understand?"

Assuredly Grafton did understand, and a moan of horror came from his ashen lips. Indeed, the blow was so severe that he tottered and would have fallen had not the Sikh seized his arm and held him up. Once or twice a vague idea that his mistress's erratic doings might be connected with politics had passed through his mind, though without dwelling there, but now he saw what he had done, and he felt the very earth rock beneath his feet.

"Ha!" said his captor. "You know that treacherous hound, I think." And, quite indifferent to further consequences, he began to drag the unresisting man onward. But suddenly Grafton put out his remaining strength and held back.

"I don't!" he snarled, weakly. "You lie, you black beast!"

Jwala-Singh did not speak; he made a quick gesture, and Grafton found himself looking down the muzzle of a revolver.

"Come on!" Jwala-Singh commanded, and Grafton, wondering whether this could all be real, or merely some hideous nightmare, did not dare to disobey, though his limbs nearly refused to support him. Every word he had let Perron coax out of him during several "chance" meetings on the beach when he, Grafton, went to smoke his post-prandial cigar, seemed now burned into his stricken brain. But how much of this did Lady Clanvowe know?—how much that devil, now half carrying him, as one might a drunken man, along the misty path? His mouth was dry, as if filled with sand; before his eyes tiny wheels of fire danced; and the strange throbbing

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

sound was now in his head, now outside, and now somewhere in front of him along the cliff, rising and falling, like a sinister accompaniment to the whirlwind of thoughts that were driving him mad.

He felt he must try and find out more before overtaking his mistress, but he had not breath enough left to speak just then, and he let Jwala-Singh drag him up a heather-clad rise toward what looked like a ruined tower, though his eyes were too dim to be sure of what he saw. Then suddenly the strange noise that had gone far away rose in a choking growl at his very feet, where the solid earth gave downward to a gulf of gray darkness and appalling sound.

"My God!" he shrieked aloud, with a recoil of all his miserable, shivering body, sure now of the vengeance that was overtaking him. He was no coward, although no longer young and nearly spent with the horror and exertion of the last half-hour. Starting backward, with a supreme effort he gained his freedom for a second and tried to throw himself upon his formidable adversary, but Jwala-Singh was too quick and cool for him, and meeting the rush with a forward step and a bent body he locked his arms about the other's loins, straightened himself with a tremendous heave, and over his head Grafton flew like a stone into the abyss.

For one instant there was a dark blotch against a white upboiling of water far below, then with a hideous, devouring gulp the whiteness was gone also, and only rumblings of the inner depths rose to the panting watcher from the black mouth of the pit.

"It is well done," Jwala-Singh muttered, licking his dry lips. He spat downward into the ghastly chasm, and, turning on his heel, left the Hell of Plogonak, running swiftly.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

And, though he did not know it, far away beyond Castle Rozkavel another avenger had left his completed work, where Antoine Flochard lay at the bottom of a lonely ravine, his scheming brains laid bare by a blow from old Hanvec's heavy sabot.

CHAPTER XXII

The long, gray weed of the nether ooze, where the blind, slow currents glide,
Cares not at all 'mid the sea-blooms tall that such are to him denied;
"They flow'r more fair in the upper air, unbathed of the ocean dews,
And they come to shine in my tangled vine," quoth the weed of the nether ooze.

"There's a prouder red than the corals spread where my tendrils flow and furl,
And a jewelled white that the green sea-light ne'er glimmered upon a pearl."
Then he rose at the rocking ground-swell's call where the wave her foam-flake strews.
"At fitting hours do I cull my flow'rs," quoth the weed of the nether ooze.

And he spread such nets as the fisher sets, a snare of a floating twine,
All lithely leaved to the lift and heave of the blowing starlit brine;
"'Tis 'a couch of rest for a troubled breast, and Beauty will not refuse.
Let others weep, it is time for sleep," quoth the weed of the nether ooze.

For his prey was nigh, and with ne'er a cry the cling of his mesh it bore,
(Death could not be in the kindly sea—it crept to the heart before),
Then he closed, and drew on his cordage true as the careless fishers use,
Life, love, and grace to the still embrace of the weed of the nether ooze.

The Flowers of the Weed.—M. M.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

As they passed through the outer hall Olier snatched up a long storm-coat and threw it upon Rouanez's shoulders to conceal her white dress, the train of which she held bundled under her left arm. Pierre's manner even more than his words compelled haste, and the short pause necessitated by the withdrawal of the heavy bars which, after admitting Pierre, Jwala-Singh had securely replaced, seemed strangely exasperating.

"You had really better come no further with us," Rouanez whispered to Pierre. "You have risked enough already. Good-bye, and God bless you!"

"Let me come as far as the beach," he pleaded. "Perhaps three will not be too many to help you."

But as usual she was quite determined.

"No, please don't. Run home at once by the upper *lande* path. It won't do in any case for you to be found here. Jwala-Singh will say that we are out yachting—it's the only safe thing."

She pressed his hand, and, passing through the half-open door, was lost in the deep shadow of the Fort wall.

The fitful breeze, which since sundown had played with the lazy trails of summer fog, was gently sweeping clear the shores of the bay as Rouanez and her two lieutenants reached the narrow path forking toward beach and moor behind the stables, when suddenly from the sands the dull gleam of steel—a mere hint of steady gray against all that soft moving grayness—caught Olier's trained eyes.

"The gendarmes!" he said, with an odd catch in his voice, and, scanning the irregular outline of the heather-fields above, added:

"On both sides, too. Well, we must run on, that's all!"

"The cave!" Rouanez whispered. "That's our only chance to reach the water. Quick! Come along!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

In an instant they were running at full speed, Olier on one side, Arzur on the other, of that resolute, little, dark figure in the direction of the overgrown opening discovered so opportunely a week or so before, never pausing to breathe, for a faint echo of voices seemingly drifting back from the Fort glacis urged them to do their best.

At last the inky patch of bushes began to silhouette itself upon the constantly moving background of vapor, and they slackened their pace a little.

"Have you any matches?" Olier asked, a little breathlessly, of Arzur, who had moved up to the front, both on account of the narrowness of the track, and to scout for possible obstacles.

"Yes, a boxful," he answered, promptly.

"Give them here. I'll go down first, and when I show a light hand her down to me."

A day or two before he had shown Arzur the mouth of the old *souffleur*, and the lad nodded his perfect comprehension of the order.

They were in the thicket now, and, grasping the capacious silver box which, having only recently begun to smoke, Arzur considered it a proud privilege to sport, Olier slipped into the opening of the grim "chimney" and disappeared.

There was a curious lump in Arzur's throat, not brought there by self-pity, but by the sight of the brave woman who, without a murmur of complaint, was coolly tearing off the skirt of her long-trained gown.

"There!" she said, letting the frothy billows of lace drop about her feet like a circle of snow. "It's much better like this." And she actually gave one of her little, low laughs as she shook out the silky folds of her underskirts, and, rolling the discarded draperies into a

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

ball, thrust them out of the way among a tangle of roots and branches. Just then a feeble glow outlined the narrow chasm before them, and Olier's voice, scarcely raised above a whisper, came floating up.

"Lower her down!" it said, and Arzur, catching Rouanez firmly beneath the shoulders, let her slip into the arms out-stretched to receive her.

It was pitch-dark in the twisted cleft now, and a dank, briny freshness rose between the salt-grimed walls, but luckily no strong air-current, so with the aid of a match scratched now and again on the rough granite, the task of descending to the bottom of this ungainly staircase was not as difficult as Olier had feared, thanks especially to the silent, clever, unhesitating fashion in which Rouanez accomplished her share of it.

When they took ground on the fine, firm sand of the Chapel Cave, they saw that the falling tide had already laid bare the lower beach, which left them no doubt that in less than half an hour the "Kestrel's" *canot*, supposing they could still intercept it, would be unable to approach the outer rim of rocks. After a short consultation, therefore, they left the grotto, turning to the right under the cliff, and, profiting by every band of shadow thrown by the capricious rock formation, began to make their way toward the point of the western spur—the longer of the two. It was slippery work, for the wet sea-weed offered no hold to feet inadequately shod, and yet a fall might have been followed by such grave consequences that they forced themselves to be extraordinarily careful, in spite of their eagerness to reach the end of the long chain of bowlders before the boat went past. Fortunately the flight thus far had consumed but an inconsiderable time, and, hoping that the fog had delayed the *canot*, they pulled up alongside the tallest and most uncouth rock of all—a

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

toothlike cone bearded with dark weed, terminating the grim range—and flattened themselves against it.

Certainly no three pairs of ears ever listened with better will for the least hint of oar-blades in the water, or three pairs of eyes sought more keenly to pierce the fluctuating dimness of a veiling mist. For a moment they thought they could just distinguish the "Kestrel's" riding-lights above the hazy outlines of the point beyond, but certainty of vision was impossible, and again they fell silent, until a hardly perceptible cadence, unmistakable to sailors, made Rouanez suddenly touch Olier's arm and whisper:

"The boat!"

"Yes," Arzur said, instantly, "and I'm going to stop it before it goes by."

He kicked off the wreck of his patent-leathers, tore out of his dress-coat, and let his lithe body slip without a sound into the dimness creaming at their feet.

"Don't hail them till you are quite close!" Olier warned him, bending over the place where he had vanished, and where a scarf of mist fluctuated to and fro as if purposely concealing him from view.

"Only a little longer now," Olier murmured, rejoining Rouanez. "He swims like a fish, and he can't fail."

"Yes," she whispered back, "but the gendarmes are not always as stupid and clumsy as their reputation. Perhaps they will be here first." And, like an echo of her own shrewdness, a sound of awkward boots crunching heavily on the shingle became audible some two hundred yards away along the beach. There was a pause, and then the sound came nearer.

"Here they are!" she said, without a trace of surprise or disquietude. "We must swim, too, Olier."

He ground his teeth. "Can you manage it in those skirts?" he asked, hurriedly.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"Of course."

She let fall her cloak, and, gliding down the thick, leathery mantle of broad-ribbed kelp, dropped into the water, followed instantly by Olier.

"Right ahead, and go slow," he explained, advancing with long, easy strokes as close to her as he could without hampering her.

The night was so calm that even the soft wash of the drowsy tide against the base of the skerry behind them now seemed unduly loud; yet the breeze was freshening a trifle, for a wide curtain of shining mist passed over their heads, rolling upon itself like smoke and leaving a clear lane through the shrouded night.

Again the sound of advancing men was wafted toward them, and suddenly a voice raised to its highest pitch called out:

"*Là, mon Officier . . .* beyond the rocks . . . !"

Olier smothered a curse. "They're going to shoot!" he muttered, and, grasping her by the shoulder, went under with her just as the word "Fire!" streaked the darkness with bright flame, and a shower of lead tore the water where the two swimmers had been. And then the capricious fog rolled back again, and in momentary safety the two heads reappeared still further out.

"That was a near thing," Olier grumbled as soon as he could speak. He still held Rouanez, who was pushing her hair from her eyes. "Where in thunder can that boat be?"

Accustomed as they both were to the sea, their short submersion had not troubled them much, but the position was a terrible one none the less, in spite of their trust in Arzur and Penruddock. In a few minutes more they had made further progress, and in that uncertain light were practically out of reach of the gendarmes' carbines,

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

even if the mist should lift again. But what if the boat failed to find them?

"Try to float," he advised, his very heart wrung with pity and admiration by that steady pluck which not once had weakened.

"I don't like to float; it makes me dizzy."

"Not if you lean your head on my out-stretched arm; try!" he pleaded, well aware that she must be almost exhausted, though she would never own it, and, with an obedience which touched him more deeply still than all that had gone before, she turned and did as she was told.

"There," he whispered, trying to make his voice sound cheerful, "we are awfully comfortable."

He knew that she was smiling, which intuitive knowledge came near to breaking him down utterly, and he was vaguely conscious of the taste of blood in his mouth as he brought his teeth upon his lower lip to keep back the words that must not be spoken. He could scarcely distinguish her delicate profile faintly outlined against the dull water, but the touch of the little head pillowed on his arm made him wince; it had something so inexpressibly childlike and confiding.

So they lay, saving their strength, slowly rocked by broad, almost imperceptible undulations, and above them once or twice the mist parted upward to the quiet stars and softly closed again.

* * * * *

Beyond the fog, once more thickening to a cloud upon the bay, Arzur was clinging to the gunnel of the boat gasping out his story to Penruddock, who had come himself to fetch his Captain.

* * * * *

"Are you dizzy?" Olier asked, presently.

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

"No, not at all."

In a little while she stirred uneasily, as if to try and relax the swathing folds of her saturated garments, that seemed to cling more and more heavily about her.

"What is it?" he asked again.

"Nothing much, only these silly skirts twining themselves around my ankles," she hesitatingly admitted, but in a moment more, her voice altered for the first time, she cried out:

"It is not that. We are caught in something—there's something moving under us!"

His thicker garments and perhaps the disposition of the tangle had prevented him from noticing it sooner, but now a shudder shook him from head to foot. *He* knew and recognized that soft, insidious clutch.

"The weed!" he gasped, tightening his hold upon her. "The weed!" A prickling, blistering sound came from the water all around.

She understood at once, in a flash that left her trembling, too, but she did not try to struggle.

"Yes," she whispered, "the weed!"

"Don't move, Rouanez—for your life, don't move!" he implored. It was the first time her name had ever passed his lips.

She shifted her head ever so gently on his arm, with a little, tender, fearless smile. "Why should I?" she said, very low, and with that undying self-mockery which was her second nature she added: "The best of omens—for you and me?"

Then, and then only, the iron reserve that had held him in its grasp for all those months gave way. "Yes, the best," he cried, with a sob, drawing her passionately to him. "The very best!"

THE CRADLE OF THE ROSE

Her face was hidden on his heart now—and, with a slight swirling of the surface, the weed went down.

* * * * *

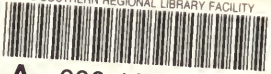
“Olier! Olier!” Arzur was calling softly from the bows as the boat slid noiselessly through the curling mist-wreaths. But no answer reached him across the silky hollows of the sea.

THE END

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

REC'D LO-ORE 11
JUL 20 1977
JUL 26 1977

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 127 424 0

