

A Ladder of Swords

done her. She had remained standing; now, as he made a step towards her, she sank down upon the seat and waved him back courteously.

"A moment, Monsieur of Rozel," she ventured. "Did my father send you to me?"

He inclined his head and smiled again.

"Did you say to him what you have said to me?" she asked, not quite without a touch of malice.

"I left out about the color in the cheek," he answered, with a smirk at what he took to be the quickness of his wit.

"You kept your paint-pot for me," she replied, softly.

"And the dove-cote, too," he rejoined, bowing finely, and almost carried off his feet by his own brilliance.

She became serious at once—so quickly that he was ill prepared for it, and could do little but stare and pluck at the tassel of his sword, embarrassed before this maiden, who changed as quickly as the currents change under the brow of the Couperon Cliff, behind which lay his manor-house of Rozel.