

MOONDYNE.

BOOK SECOND.

THE SANDALWOOD TRADE.

By JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY.

I.

THE MATE OF THE CANTON.

It is midwinter, in a little Luncheon village on the coast, not far from Liverpool. One quiet main street, crossed by three or four short side streets, that lead in the summer days into the sweet meadows and orchards. One of these side streets has only three houses on one side, separated by goodly gardens. The house in the center is the smallest, but it is extremely neat, and the garden fairly glows with color.

This is the home of Mrs. Walmesley, a widow; and the garden is looked after by herself and her daughter Alice, about sixteen years old. The house on the right of Mrs. Walmesley's belongs to Mr. Draper, the richest man in the village, a retired storekeeper. The house on the left belongs to Captain Sheridan, a bluff old Irishman, retired from the Navy, and now Inspector of Coast Guards, whose family consists of his son and daughter—Will Sheridan, the son, being just twenty years old.

At the gate of Draper's garden, opening on the street, stands a handsome young man in the uniform of the merchant marine. He is Sam Draper, first officer of the Canton, arrived a few weeks before from China.

"Good-morning, Alice," he says in a cheerful but not a pleasant voice, as Alice Walmesley passed down the road. Alice stopped and chatted lightly for a minute with her old schoolmate. Draper evidently paid her a compliment, for her cheeks were flushed as she entered her mother's gate, standing near which was young Sheridan, whom she slightly saluted and hurriedly passed, much to his surprise, for their relations were, at least, of the oldest and closest friendship.

"Alice," said Will, in a wondering tone, as the girl passed with her flushed face. "Well—did you speak?" And she paused and turned her head.

Will Sheridan loved Alice, and she knew it, though no word had been spoken. He had loved her for years in a boy's way, cherishing her memory on his long voyages, for Will, too, was a sailor, as were almost all the young men of the village; but he was soon to leave home for a two years' service on Sam Draper's vessel, and of late his heart had been urging him to speak to Alice.

He was a quiet, thoughtful, manly young fellow, with nothing particular about him, except this strong secret love for the prettiest girl in the village. "Yes," he answered hesitatingly, as if wounded; "but perhaps you haven't time to listen."

"What is it, Will?" she said in a kinder tone, and smiling, though before she spoke she saw with a side glance that Sam Draper had gone away from the gate.

"Oh, it isn't anything particular," said Will; "only there's some skating on the mill pond, and I was going there this afternoon."

"Ad—? I queried Alice, archly. "Yes—I wish you would," said Will, earnestly.

"Well, I think I will," she replied laughing, "though you haven't told me yet what I am to do."

"Why, go skating with me," said Will, highly pleased; "Sam Draper and his sisters are going, and there will be a crowd from the village. Shall I come for you at 2?"

"Yes," she replied, "I'll be ready," and as she turned toward her mother's house, the flush was in her face again.

Will Sheridan walked lightly on, thinking happy thoughts. Passing Draper's gate, Sam Draper stepped from the shrubbery, whence he had observed the interview. He was a tall, handsome fellow, with fair hair and blue eyes; not the soft blue which usually denotes a good nature, but a bright blue that has a hard and shallow look. He had a free and easy way with him that made people who met him for the first time think he was cheerful and amiable. But if you observed him closely, you would see, in the midst of a boisterous laugh, that the cold blue eyes were keenly watching you, without a particle of mirth.

There was something never to be forgotten by those who discovered this terrible expression in Draper's face. He had a habit of waving his arms in a boisterous way, and bending his body, as if to emphasize the heartiness of his laugh or the warmth of his greeting. But while these visible expressions of jollity were in full play, if you caught the cold calculating look from the blue eyes that were weighing you up while off your guard, you would shudder as if you had looked into the eyes of a snake.

Draper knew, too, that his face could be read by keen eyes; and he tried to mask even the habit of concealment, until at last his duplicity had become extremely artful and hard to be discovered. But he always knew the people who had caught his eye and read his soul. He never tried his boisterous manner on them again, but treated them gravely and quietly. But these were the people he hated.

Seven years before, when he and Will Sheridan were school boys, Sheridan not only saw through the falsehood of Draper's manner, but exposed it before the whole school. Nearly every boy in the school had had some reason to dislike Draper, but his loud good-natured way had kept them from speaking. But when Will Sheridan publicly pointed out the warm laugh and the cold eye, the friendly word and the cruel act, every one saw it at a glance, and a public opinion against Draper was instantly made among his school fellows, who no after effort of his could quite remove.

From that day he nourished in his soul a secret desire to do Sheridan some injury that would cut him to the quick.

Not that Draper had no friends—in deed he was always making new friends; and his new friends were always loud in his praise; but when they ceased to be new, somehow, they ceased to admire Sam Draper, and either said they were mistaken in their first impression, or said nothing.

Both young men were sailors. Some years ago, the English merchant service was almost as well ordered and precise in

discipline and promotion as the Royal Navy, and young men of good position entered it as a profession. On his last voyage Draper had become first mate; and Will Sheridan had lately engaged to take his old place on the Canton as second mate.

As Draper stepped from the shrubbery and hailed Will with a cheery word, his hand was outstretched in a most cordial way, and his lips smiled; but his eye was keen and smileless and as cold as ice. He had known for years of Will's affection for Alice Walmesley; and it was commonly said in the village that Alice returned his love.

"Why don't you ask Alice to go skating this afternoon?" said Draper. "I have just asked her," said Will, "and she is going."

"Bravo!" said Draper, in a hearty tone, so far as the sound went; "I thought she would like to be asked, when I told her half an hour ago that we were going."

Will Sheridan had some light word on his lip, but he did not speak it; and his smile faded, though without apparent cause, while he looked at Draper's pleasant face.

"She didn't say he had told her," he thought, and somehow the thought troubled him. But he put it away and forgot all about it before the afternoon.

The mill pond was covered with skaters when Will and Alice arrived. They had often skated together before, and because Alice was timid on the ice, she used to hold Will's hand or take his arm; and now, then, and as often as he could, Will's arm was around her, as he struck out strongly and rapidly.

Unconsciously they had assumed settled relations toward each other—she resting on him with confidence, and he quite assured of her trust.

To-day there was a disturbing element somewhere. Before they had been ten minutes on the ice, Will noticed that Alice was, for the first time in her life, listening inattentively to his words. And more than once he saw her looking over his shoulder, as if seeking some one in the crowd of skaters. After a while she evidently found whom she had sought, and her face brightened. Will, at the moment, asked her some question, and she did not hear him at first, but made him repeat the word.

With a strange sinking of the heart, he followed the direction of the girl's eyes, and was just in time to see Sam Draper kiss his hand to her—and Alice smiled.

Will Sheridan was a sensitive and proud young fellow, and his quick feelings of honor were wounded by what he perhaps too hastily deemed the deceit of Alice Walmesley. A change had certainly come in her relation to him, but what right had he to change her with deceit? He had no claim on her—and he never spoken a word of love to her in his life.

The evening had closed when he left her at her mother's gate. They said "Good-night!" in a new fashion—the words were as cold as the wind, and the touch of the hands was brief and formal.

After that Will did not ask Alice to walk or skate with him. He called no more at her mother's house as he used to do. He went to none of the usual places of meeting with her. If he had gone, he should have been all the more lonely, for he could not pretend to be pleasantly engaged with others while his heart was full of pain and unrest. But he could not help watching for her from his room window; and surely it were better for his happiness had he overcome this, too.

He saw that where he used to be, there every day was his rival. He heard Draper's loud and happy voice and laughter; and he noticed that Alice was happier and far more boisterous than ever he had known her—and that her happiness and gaiety became even louder when she knew he was observing.

But at last came the time of the Canton's sailing. On the evening before leaving, Will Sheridan went to Mrs. Walmesley's to say good-by, and as Alice was still there, he remained talking with her mother, with whom he had always been a favorite. After a while he heard the gate rattle, and he saw Alice approaching the swing, and Draper looking after her from the gate.

When Alice entered, he was standing and bidding farewell to her mother, who was weeping quietly.

Alice understood all, and the flush faded from her cheek.

"Good-by, Alice," he said, holding out his hand. "I am going away in the morning." He had walked towards the door as she spoke, keeping her hand, and now they stood in the porch.

He saw the tears in her eyes, and his courage gave way, for he had only a boy's heart to bear a man's grief; and he covered his face with his hand and sobbed.

In a few moments he was calm, and he bent over the weeping girl. "Alice!" he whispered, tenderly, and she raised her tear-stained face to his breast. Poor Will, yearning to take her in his arms, remembering what he had seen, only pressed her hands in his, and stooping kissed her on the forehead again and again. Then he walked, tear-blinded, down the straight path to the gate.

A moment after, he felt a man's hand on his collar, and, turning, he met the hard eyes of Draper. Sheridan's face was still quivering with the powerful emotion.

"What do you mean, Draper?" he demanded angrily, darting the hand aside. "I mean to let you know," said Draper, contemptuously, weighing the words, "that I saw all your swivelling scene, and that I have seen all your impudent attentions to that girl."

Will Sheridan controlled himself by a violent effort, because the name of Alice Walmesley was in question.

"That girl, as you impudently call her," he said, calmly, "is one of my oldest friends. My attentions have never been impudent to her."

"You lie, you cur!" brutally answered Draper.

Though few words had been spoken, there was the culmination of an omality that was old and rankling. On both sides there had been repression of feeling; but now the match had touched the powder, and the wrath flamed.

The word had barely passed the insulters' lips, when he reeled and tumbled headlong from Sheridan's terrible blow. As soon as the blow was delivered, Will turned, and walked toward his own home, never even looking behind.

It was half a minute before Draper plucked himself from the frozen earth, still dazed with the shock. He showed no desire to follow, or continue the quarrel. With teeth set like a vice, and a livid face, he looked after the strong figure of Will, till he turned into his father's house.

Next day, the young men left the village, and entered on their duty as officers of the Canton, which lay in Liverpool dock. No one knew of their quarrel, as neither had spoken of it, and there had been no witnesses.

The preparation for sea kept them apart for several days. The vessel called from Liverpool, and soon cleared the Channel. Two weeks later when the ship passed on a beautiful night within sight of the Western Islands, the young men came face to face on the poop. Will Sheridan had some on deck to enjoy the delightful scene, not thinking that the first mate was officer of the watch.

"Draper," said Will, in a friendly tone, holding out his hand when they met, "I did not know you were engaged to Miss Walmesley. We should both be sorry for what happened that night."

"The eyes of Draper glittered like steel as he answered in a sneering tone— "And who told you, sir, that I was engaged?"

"I judge so from your conduct," said Will. "You are not a good judge, then," answered Draper.

"Then there's all the less reason for us to quarrel, man. Take back your insult now, and then, and as often as he could, Will's arm was around her, as he struck out strongly and rapidly.

"My insulting words—let me see, what were they? Ah, yes," he spoke slowly, as if he meant to wound with the repetition—"I think I said that I had been a witness to your swivelling scene of farewell—and that I was acquainted with your unthought and impudent attentions to that girl. By the way, I may tell you that she herself made me acquainted with the offensive persistence of her obtuse admirer."

"She told you?" said Will, staggered by the word. "She said my love was offensive to her?"

"Ha! no—not love exactly," said the other, with the same biting sneer; "I believe you never gave her a chance to fling that in your teeth."

"Well, let us go on with the insulting words, as you choose to call them. I also said you were a liar, if I remember well; and a cur—did I not?"

"Why do you repeat the foul words, man?" asked Sheridan, indignantly. "Why? Because I used them after careful choosing—because they are true! Stay!" he added, raising his voice, and backing to the rail, as he saw Sheridan approaching. "I am the first officer of this ship, and if you dare to raise your hand against me, I will shoot you like a dog. We'll have no mutiny here."

"Mutiny!" cried Sheridan, more astounded and puzzled than angry. "What in heaven's name are you talking about? I want to be calm, Draper, for old time's sake. You call me vile names, and threaten my life, and yet I have given you no earthly cause. What do you mean?"

"I mean, that he who pretends to be my friend, while he rains my character, is a liar; and he who tells a slander in secret is a coward."

"Slander your character?" said Sheridan. "I never said an ill word of you—though I have unwillingly become acquainted with some things that I wish I had never known."

The latter part of the sentence was slowly added. Draper winced as if cut with whipl.

"You have made a charge," continued Sheridan, sternly, "and you must explain it. How have I slandered you?"

Draper hesitated. He hated the man before him, like a fiend; but he hated still more the subject he had now to touch.

"You know about that girl in Calcutta," he said, now fairly livid with passion; "no one in England knew it but you."

"Yes," said Sheridan, slowly, "I learned something about it, against my will."

"Against your will!" sneered the other, "was it against your will you told the story to—her?"

Draper never repeated Alice's name, as if it were unpleasant to his tongue.

"I never mentioned your shameful affairs," answered Sheridan, with scorn and indignation; "but you are justly punished to have thought so."

"You do not," cried Draper, terribly excited; "you told her about my marriage in Calcutta."

"Your marriage?" said Sheridan, stepped back, as if recoiling from a repulse. Then, after a pause, as if speaking to a condemned culprit,— "Your infamy is deeper than I thought. I did not know till now that your victim in Calcutta was also your wife."

The lightning rapidly Draper saw the dreadful confession his error had led him into. He knew that Sheridan spoke the truth, and he hurriedly attempted to close the grave he had exposed.

"She is dead," he said, searching Sheridan's face; "you should have known that, too."

"Dead or alive, God have pity on her!" answered Sheridan, whose face and voice were filled with revulsion and contempt. "For her sake, I pray that she may be dead; but I do not believe you. I shall see that those who warned in time who are still in danger."

Sheridan deliberately turned on his heel and entered the cabin, while Draper, confounded and dismayed at his self conviction, leant on the rail looking out at sea, cursing his own stupidity that had betrayed him.

"Who else could have known?" he muttered; "and who else could have told her? But the doesn't wholly believe it—and, when I wore it was false that last evening, I think she believed me. I'll take care, at all events, that she shall have no chance to unsee my word."

For hours the brooding rascal walked the poopdeck, till the watch was changed, when he went below, and tried to sleep.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE ABBE OF THE BIRDS. A CHRISTMAS STORY.

L. When we were all young together in the Academy of Montpellier there was not one of us but predicted for Cyprien Coupiau, the smallest boy in the school, honor and advancement in the priest's calling for which he was preparing himself.

Such ardor, such unselfishness, such sweet humility and devotion distinguished him that it was hard to tell whether we most loved or admired him. The professors alone shrugged their shoulders—from jealousy rather than judgment; when they repeated, as they often did, "That boy's vocation runs away with him." But there was no one to agree with them.

The one weakness of this pure and ardent soul was his passion for birds. As we took our daily walks together in the park of La Vallette or in the fields near the sea-shore, he would raise himself on tiptoe, with hands and eyes lifted to heaven, at the least whir of wings or ripple of song, murmuring in an undertone of ecstasy, "Evisving! evisving!"

Signs or sound of the little flying creatures seemed to carry wholly out of himself. But who could reproach so amiable a fault when he shared it with such good company as St. Basaventure, friend of the sparrows, and St. Francis of Assisi, who loved all those "small beasts of God?" Little we dreamed, as we laughed at his foible, how it was to affect his life.

At an ordination he was sent to the best living in France. But how could a fastidious congregation tolerate a curate who ran through the streets like a boy with a nest of linnets or a twittering finch rolled up in the skirt of his cassock? You may be sure it was not the poor or the maimed of body and spirit that found fault with him; his ministrations to them were too tender and constant. But when his rare moments of leisure came he was off to the woods or the marshes with his horse hairs and his little pot of glue; and the bare walls of the presbytery were filled cages and with chirping, flying morsels which were a heavy weight to the heart of Angeline, his housekeeper, and a subject of gossip to the town. His parish priest expostulated, but he might as well have hoped to keep the sun from shining. So a fine day came at last when he was met in the churchyard, his soutane torn in two places and the heads of a brace of red partridges showing through the rents, and the outraged Superior appealed to the Bishop. A week later he was transferred to Roque-selle, a village of three hundred souls, as poor as St. Fulcrans had been rich.

Here for a year he kept clear of temptation; but, alas! one September morning as he read his breviary in the little garden a shadow fell on the book, a jubilation fell from heaven, and a long line of larks dropped into a neighboring corn field. Next morning all the empty cages in Roque-selle were borrowed and filled; Angeline's life was again a burden; and history repeated itself to a certain degree. The Vicar General, coming with the Curé of the next parish to visit, surprised the little Abbe returning from the fields, hatless, collarless, scratched, breathless, and happy. In two days came a mandate from the Bishop, citing Monsieur the Abbe Cyprien Coupiau to appear before the official tribunal of the diocese.

In the midst of his larks and finches, sparrows and blackbirds, Angeline saw her master shrink away before her very eyes, day by day, like a prisoner awaiting execution. Was he to be degraded again in the eyes of men? Keener torture yet—were his beloved companions to be taken from him? Driven to desperation, the good soul, who did not want for courage to scold her master on ordinary occasions but who had kept silent now for very pity, came to him one morning where he sat feeding a sick dove with little pellets of meal.

"If I were you, Monsieur, I would go to-morrow, without waiting to be called, and ask pardon of Monseigneur."

"Pardon!" stammered the Curé; "pardon?"

"Yes, pardon!" repeated the housekeeper, firmly. "Perhaps Monseigneur is not so bad as they make him out to be."

"Monseigneur Charles Thomas Thibault bad? He is goodness itself, Angeline; goodness itself!"

"Then, if you're not afraid of him, what makes you waste away from morning till night and from night till morning?"

"I waste away!"

"Why, you dance in your clothes until it's a pity to look at you."

"Me! I dance?"

Pere Coupiau, flushing to the roots of his thin hair, put the dove back in its basket, unfastened the big linen apron he wore while attending his pets, bent his head for a moment as if in meditation, and then:

"Yes, Angeline, you are right. Pardon, and I should ask pardon. But this now I will go, without waiting for to-morrow. Quick, my Sunday soutane, and hat!"

"Ah! here you are, Monsieur, the repented sinner!" said the Bishop as he entered.

"I am come to throw myself at the feet of Your Grace. The knowledge that I had offended you was killing me."

"Killing you?" Then, with a kindly look at the kneeling figure before him: "Rise, my child; this is not a hanging matter."

"I have disobeyed my Bishop."

"Your Bishop remembers the best boy in his seminary long ago; he does not confound your edifying virtue with this foolish fancy. Simply he would like to see your deportment as dignified as your character is true."

"I understand you, Monseigneur. Unhappily, even the seminary could not weed out of me the peasant nature which loves every winged creature. I have trouble—oh! such trouble—in—"

"In separating yourself from birds! Are you insane?"

"If you could but know the snares I used to make in my native woods of Ginestet! All my family were the same; my father was known through the whole country-side as 'Coupiau, the Part-

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And you cannot but know that, partly from your size and partly from your bird-loving mania, you are called 'Abbe Coupiau, the Wren?"

"I like the nickname, Monseigneur! It is such a slender, bright, brisk little creature. Only its voice is somewhat dry and weak—"

"Precisely like your own, my dear Abbe. But with your sportsman instincts—or poacher's, I should rather call it—you must live on game all the year round."

"I eat game, Monseigneur! I could not touch it!"

"What do you do, then?"

"Why, my sick people and my poor! who never have a good morsel if I could not help them." stammered the poor little Curé of Roque-selle, his eyes cast down, half in sorrow, half in shame.

"But even for them I could not kill my little creatures. I give them away, and then—"

The Bishop stretched out both hands and pressed those of the Abbe warmly. "You are from Ginestet?" he asked, after a moment's silence. "Isn't Cabrecolles somewhere near it?"

"Just a short league away, on the mountain slope."

"Knowing now better than ever your love for the poor, it will not be painful to you—answer me now frankly. I do not wish to leave you at Roque-selle under the authority of those not in sympathy with you. The Abbe Calmeaux of Cabrecolles is dead. Would it please you to have the parish?"

"Ah! with what gratitude, Monseigneur! To go back to my own country. To be among the graves of my own people. To live among the mountains where I was born. Monseigneur! Monseigneur!" And large tears wet his pale cheeks.

The Bishop lovingly addressed him. "Monsieur, the Abbe Wren," he said with a smile, "my dear brother, to-morrow you will pack your trunk for Cabrecolles. All your sins of bird catching are forgiven. And lifting his arms over the bowed head of the Curé, who had fallen again on his knees: "Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum."

II. During the month of December, 1874, there was a general gathering among all our people of the Cevennes to hunt the wolves, which had been more than usually bold that winter. I took a gun with the rest and joined the party at the rendezvous. One can imagine the tumult that a hundred and fifty sportsmen, armed to the teeth, singing, shouting, wild with hunger and thirst, would make each evening in the small inns and large farms of the neighborhood. According to popular report, we were to free the Black Espinozas for ever from any trace of the stealthy and cruel beasts which were the terror of the place, and return to our own homes covered with wolf skins and glory. It was all very well while we remained in the valleys, stalking the fields all day and gathered about the enormous fireplaces of the too comfortable and hospitable farm houses in the evening; to scent the omelettes and fat pullets that were to ease our ravenous appetites, and to sleep at night in the great barns fragrant with fresh hay and the sweet breath of the cows. But it was a different thing when the question arose of climbing the steep and frozen sides of the valleys, stalking the fields all day and gathered about the enormous fireplaces of the too comfortable and hospitable farm houses in the evening; to scent the omelettes and fat pullets that were to ease our ravenous appetites, and to sleep at night in the great barns fragrant with fresh hay and the sweet breath of the cows. But it was a different thing when the question arose of climbing the steep and frozen sides of the valleys, stalking the fields all day and gathered about the enormous fireplaces of the too comfortable and hospitable farm houses in the evening; to scent the omelettes and fat pullets that were to ease our ravenous appetites, and to sleep at night in the great barns fragrant with fresh hay and the sweet breath of the cows.

When the morning came on which the bit was to make its way up the mountain its members, with their dogs and rifles, had vanished away on this side and that among the peaks and precipices, as the passengers of some brave craft that has faded away among the degles of the Espinozas, being altogether too poor a spot to console the Count for the desertion of his followers, I took one of the steep paths which would lead me into the valley of the Urb, where I was to celebrate Christmas with some of my own people at Bedastet. In the little cabaret of the hamlet of Ginestet I had a stable companion at my 2 o'clock lunch the most determined hunter and best fellow of the whole band, who had himself killed five of the seven wolves that formed our record. He was sitting before the fire when I entered, cutting with his pocket knife into the side of a fine ham which sparkled pink and white on the platter before him.

"Ah, Miguel, you here?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Won't you try a slice of our comrades here? It smells good enough to raise the dead." "So, you, too, are returning home," said I, sitting down on the bench at his side, having discovered at once by sight and smell that "our comrades" really was excellent.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Why should I stay any longer up there with that handful of pea-shooters?—those fellows from the plain who go up into the mountains, and instead of shooting the wolves howl at them. Besides, they sing the midnight Mass at our place to-morrow night."

"And you are one of the choir?"

"No! but I promised Monsieur le Curé to be St. Joseph at the church, and you understand—"

"Faith, no! I don't understand at all."

He looked at me half suspiciously, as if he thought I might be pretending ignorance. Then, alarmed by my frank curiosity:

"It's a very old custom in the Black Espinozas at the Christmas festival."

"But what is a very old custom, my dear Miguel, if I am not too curious?"

"It is a fashion among us that the father and mother with the next male child born in the parish shall be the Holy Family in the stable of Bethlehem at the church."

"And this year it is you?"

"Yes"—then a little hurriedly: "I married Jeanne Targan fifteen months ago. She was the only daughter of the people at Border-Lands, the richest farm in the Espinozas. I was only a farm-laborer on the estate before I went to the war with those cursed Prussians of Germany; and I never could tell why Guillaume Targan gave her to me, unless it was that I had cracked a good many Ublan helmets."

"You are not so badly built. Perhaps Jeanne herself found the young soldier to her taste."

"Oh!" he muttered, half shamefacedly, "so long as a man is sound and not as ugly as a Tirebore wolf— Then standing up and caressing his soft beard, claimed in two shapely points, while his face lighted with a brilliant smile: "Three months ago Jeanne brought me a boy, as handsome as day-dawn; as handsome as she is herself. For, Monsieur, Jeanne Miguel is the prettiest woman in the mountains. She has hair as blonde as a distaff of hemp, which is seldom seen among our people, who are as black as moles. It is the color of a stalk of yellow broom when it flowers in summer time. Upon the faith of a Miguel, who doesn't know how to lie, Monsieur le Curé Coupiau hasn't had such a Blessed Virgin before for—"

"Monsieur le Curé Coupiau! The Abbe Cyprien Coupiau!"

"You know him, then?"

"Knew him! Why? We were school friends, the best, the truest. It is ten years since I saw him."

"Ah! Monsieur, if you would but go to see him, now that you are in the neighborhood. We are within half an hour of Cabrecolles. It would be such a delight for him, and he is so good. He gives everything away in charity. He is poorer than a church mouse. But if his ladder is empty, why Border-Lands is not a gun shot beyond, and there is plenty, with a fine carpeted chamber where the Bishop slept when he came last to give Communion and confirmation. You will be so welcome to him and to us."

"You tempt me sorely, Miguel."

"Mother Bermonds!" shouted the stout peasant. The landlady entered. I was forced to let him pay my reckoning with his own, and the next moment he had shouldered my gun, for fear I might be inclined to change my mind, and I was following him down the hillside.

An hour later, as we turned a sharp angle of the rocky path, the last rays of the sun touched the red roof of a little hamlet gleaming in the valley before us. "Cabrecolles!" cried Miguel, with eyes widened as if he already saw Jeanne, with her hair yellow as the broom in summer and a baby like day-dawn upon her breast; and ten minutes after we were knocking at the door of the priest's house. What a joyful meeting! And yet for me it had a touch of sadness. I had always known him thin and spare; but the head was massive, and the features refined to a degree rare among the peasantry from which he sprang. He had superb eyes glowing under bushy brows, and a mass of closely-cropped black hair like a cap of fine piled velvet. Now all was changed. He was quite bald; the face was covered with a net-work of fine wrinkles, so web-like that they seemed to strange expression; the cheeks were emaciated and scarred; the eyes deeply sunken.