

words; 'there must be no beating about the bush; we must go to work in a straight-forward manner. Come here, Cobeian, and let us converse like reasonable beings.'

Niette felt a little reassured, when she heard her father call her by this name, which was one the people on the coast give to their pet sea-fowl, and which had been conferred upon her on account of her beautiful black hair. She approached with an uncertain smile.

'You have not forgotten, I hope,' continued Goron, 'what I told you the other day of Lubert's intentions towards you. Well, the young man is not to be put off; he wishes it to be decided to-day; we have settled matters between us, and whosoever gainsays us is a scoundrel. Is this not true, Lubert?'

'Yes, indeed, a double scoundrel,' repeated Lubert, delighted with having had sufficient imagination to discover such a superlative.

'We wish to announce it to you in a friendly manner,' resumed Goron, 'but there must be no opposition, as my comrade is very impatient.' 'Very impatient, indeed,' interrupted Lubert. 'And then,' said Goron, 'I expect you to make yourself agreeable to him, for it is your duty to do so, and will besides be to your own advantage; for, you see, if his pockets reached even to his heels, he could fill them with livres. He will give you finer clothes and jewels than any one in the village. Have you not said so? comrade.'

'I have *said* it, and what's more I will *do* it,' replied Lubert.

'Then it is all settled, and you may embrace your betrothed.'

Lubert extended his arms to draw the young girl towards him; but the latter, who had hitherto been rendered mute and immovable by astonishment, now recoiled with a gesture so expressive that the fisherman was once more baffled. 'Do not be in such haste, Grand Lac,' said Niette, who was a little pale; 'before you marry a girl it is necessary for *her* to give her consent.'

'You do not mean to say that you refuse Lubert,' exclaimed Goron, fixing on her his sparkling eyes. The young peasant girl could not endure his fierce look: she said in a low voice, 'The meanest have free choice in their servitude, and my father will not refuse to give me to the Virgin, if such is my desire.'

'Your *desire*,' interrupted Goron, who was growing very angry, 'Is it the desire of *any* young girl not to take a husband? *Away with your lies*. What reason have you for refusing Lubert? Have I not told you that he has more than enough money to maintain you? Is he not the strongest lad in the parish, and well used to the salt water? I would excuse you for refusing a *peasant*; but a *good sailor*, the devil take me if I permit it. *You shall marry him*, and as a proof that I am in earnest, you shall come with us in a quarter of an hour to speak to the Curé.' '*I will not go*' exclaimed Niette, thoroughly roused and gaining strength from her despair. Goron seized the young girl by the arm and drew her rudely towards him. '*You dare to say so*,' repeated he, with clenched fists, and compressed lips.