

"Michael Ossory spoke to me this morning."

"Monsieur Ossory?"

Yvonne's face, naturally of a sanguine complexion, had been burnt brown by wind and sun; now it became ashen-coloured. Carne had the delicacy to bend down and pick a flower. When he looked up, Yvonne had recovered her self-control, and her face was composed, even smiling. But she said, in a slightly high-pitched voice:

"Monsieur Ossary may have heard this same story. But, in any case, you will keep what I have told you to yourself?"

"Of course," said Carne.

He lifted his hat, and walked slowly down the hill, with his mind in a welter of blurred images and emotions. He had divined the truth: Yvonne's friend and Ossory were identical. Yvonne's simplicity had betrayed her. Had not Ossory been acclaimed as a genius, even by the mighty G r me? Had he not left Port-Aven? But *where* had he gone? Carne had an instinct that in the back of his brain lay the answer to the question. But he could not find it. Then, when he had abandoned pursuit, the will-o'-the-wisp floated back into his memory. He had showed Ossory some studies. One, in particular, had provoked criticism, because Ossory contended that the coif was inaccurately drawn. Finally, Ossory had ended the discussion with an impatient: "Man, I have painted it scores of times. Do you think that I do not know the Port-Navalo coif?" Also Carne remembered how abruptly Ossory had changed the subject.

"I should like to know the facts," the Californian reflected. "And I suppose they may be found, even now, in Port-Navalo." He muttered Yvonne's words: "It killed her, and it killed him."

Carne composed an epitaph of two words:

"Poor devil!"

(To be continued)