

"That is well said ; but how do you propose to pull down, to destroy what is invisible ?"

"We must see it first," she murmured.

The curé rose from his chair and walked to the windows. Téphany was glad that he had taken time to weigh his answer. She wondered whether he guessed the little that she had left unsaid. Presently he turned, and faced her.

"I am not quick," he said. "I do not shoot my bird on the wing, you understand, but I have had experience, and I am patient. But you," again his voice softened delightfully, "are young and impatient. Yes, yes ; that is so natural. And then, again," Téphany could see that he was laboriously fitting himself into her shoes, "you are a visitor to Pont-Aven ; you are leaving soon, may be, and if you are to pull down walls, granite walls," he added with a shrewd allusion to the almost indestructible walls of the Province, "you wish to go to work at once. Is it not so ?"

"Yes ; you read me easily, my father."

"No, no ; I cannot read you easily ; it is doubtful if you can read yourself—*easily*. But this is plain to me : you ask me to help you to discover some secret which our friend has chosen not to reveal to us ? You ask me to join you, first of all, in a hunt for some hidden sin—your own word, my daughter. Having found this sin, we unite to destroy it. Put bluntly, I am a blunt man, that is what you ask ?"

"It sounds very dreadful," said Téphany ; "and I think the case might be stated less bluntly. Yes ; I ask your help to find, if it be possible, the brave, the gallant man whom Yvonne says is lost."

"You move too fast. Do you think that you and I can destroy a sin, my daughter ?"

"The sin itself, of course not."

"Or its effects ?"

"You force me to confess how badly I have worded my thoughts. The sin and its effects cannot be destroyed by human hands ; but the barrier, the shadow—my first word was