

was bound. Beside this *auberge* at Senneville there are two or three cottages; and there is between them and the inn a wheelwright's house and shed. This group of buildings stands alone on the main road. The village, which is composed of scattered dwellings opposite to the inn across the fields, extends in the direction of the sea above the cliff, but is partially concealed behind trees where the church steeple rises up, the only prominent object on this misty afternoon.

As I approached the inn, and was passing the wheelwright's, I heard angry voices, as though in dispute; and as I came nearer I saw two figures standing within the shed—a young man, whom I recognized as the wheelwright, and a girl the daughter of the innkeeper next door. The man had a forbidding face, and at this moment, when his small black eyes were flashing with anger, and his thick jaw firmly set, it was the face of an imp of darkness. He was short, almost dwarfish, and in his hand, with his powerful arm uplifted, he held a large hammer.

"Jealous," said he, striking a heavy blow on the iron hoop of a wheel at which he was working. "Have I not good reason to be jealous? He is always coming here."

"That is not true, Faubert," said the girl, quickly; "he seldom comes near Senneville."

She cast at the man an indignant glance, and her large eyes filled with tears.

"Ah," said Faubert, with another heavy blow, "I don't know that. You meet him—that's evident. I saw you at Fecamp, in the market-place, together, last Saturday. Is not that true, Marie?"

Marie folded her arms, and raising her handsome face replied, "What then? There is no harm in that."

The wheelwright answered in a passionate tone, though too low for the words to reach me. At the same time he struck heavy blows upon the iron hoop one after another, in a manner which bore significance in every stroke. Then looking up he caught sight of me, and his angry expression softened as he slightly raised his cap.

The girl turned and welcomed me with a smile struggling through her tears.

"Good-evening, Monsieur Parker," said she. "Come into the house, sir. You look cold."

She led the way as she spoke toward the inn. I followed, the sound of the wheelwright's hammer still ringing in my ears as I stepped into the inn.

On the left-hand side of the entrance there was a *café*, with wooden chairs and tables ranged round the walls, where I saw through the glass door some workmen, talking loudly, drinking and playing dominoes. The room on the opposite side, which I now entered, was half *café*, half kitchen. A long table stood under the windows, and at the end of this table nearest the fire was seated, with a cup of coffee and a glass of cognac at his elbow, a youth in a fur overcoat, with his legs stretched toward the fire, smoking a cigar.

"Still raining, Marie?" said he, touching his small pointed moustache.

"Yes, Monsieur Leonard," said Marie; "still raining."

He blew a cloud of smoke from his lips. "Abominable!" said he, with a gesture of impatience. "Is it not, monsieur?"

I seated myself near him at the table.

"Do you return to Fecamp to-night?" I enquired.

Marie, who was stooping over the fire to serve me with coffee from an earthen pot upon the hearth, looked up into his face anxiously for the reply.

"Yes," said he. "The fact is, I must be back in Fecamp

before seven o'clock. We have some old friends coming to dine with us; and," he added, "the worst of it is I must walk."

"Not pleasant," said I. "The night will be dark. The road is dangerous."

"Dangerous?" said he with surprise.

"Yes, Monsieur Leonard," said the girl, pouring out my coffee; "it is dangerous."

"In what manner?" said he. "I never heard of highway robbers in these parts."

He cast, as he spoke, an involuntary glance at a diamond ring which flashed on his little finger against the bright fire.

"I mean," said I, concealing my thought, though half tempted to express it, "I mean that the road is not safe at night, because—"

"Because?" he repeated inquiringly.

I refrained, I know not why, from mentioning what I actually feared, though I seemed to see the wheelwright's angry face and to hear his passionate voice.

"Because," I continued, "the road winds about distractingly among the hills. One might easily step over the sides, which are steep, and so come to harm."

He burst into a pleasant laugh at this answer. It was a somewhat weak one, I confess. But if I had told him my true reason for dissuading him from leaving the inn that night, he would, I thought have laughed perhaps still louder; so I made no reply, though I followed Marie's uneasy glance toward the windows.

Without it had grown almost dark; but the room, which was warmly lighted by the log fire, was only in shadow near the walls. We sat smoking and sipping our coffee in silence.

Suddenly Marie, turning her head toward a corner near the door, uttered a low cry.

"Faubert!" she exclaimed; "is that you?"

The wheelwright was seated at a table near the entrance. We had not heard him come in. The light from the fire flashed across his dark face as he looked up at Marie and said, "*Café noir*."

Marie hastened to supply the order. As she filled the little glass with brandy for his coffee, I thought her hand seemed to be trembling; certainly her face had a troubled look. As I was seated in a shadowy corner, I could regard the wheelwright without attracting any attention. I was tempted to observe him closely; for there was a cruel expression on his face. He did not once glance toward me. His dark, angry eyes were fixed constantly upon the face of Monsieur Leonard, who sat with his back half turned toward him, looking thoughtfully into the fire. The wheelwright remained, however, only a few minutes. Finishing his coffee quickly, he went out of the house as quietly as he had entered it.

Meanwhile Marie had lit the candles, and was moving about the kitchen, occupying herself in various ways, though with a remarkably serious face.

Presently Monsieur Leonard rose from his seat and stood before the fire buttoning his coat tightly round him. "A light, if you please, Marie," said he selecting a cigar from his case.

Marie brought him one, her hand trembling very visibly now. "What is the matter, Marie?" said Monsieur Leonard, gently placing his fingers round her wrist and looking earnestly into her face.