

UNDER THE ENGLISH CROWN

heaped-up slate—like torn masses of lava—they had a strange and unnatural appearance. Had one stepped into a frozen and deserted planet? No, but merely into the heart of the slate quarries. A wooden rail which went up a slope marked the pathway used by the workmen; the line running along the top was used for the quarry trucks. Half way up, a little slanting roof was visible, and when one's eyes had grown accustomed to the general greyness one perceived a small cottage hanging on, as it were, to the strong flanks of the hillside. In truth, one seemed to have come into a ruined world, inhabited by a primitive population, and so old that time, wearied by the labour of centuries, had stopped short at destroying it. A fine, opaque, imponderable rain, which was nothing else but a pulverised fog, enveloped all the steepnesses of the mountain side, filled the valleys, poured into the gorges, and blurred and drowned the whole outlines of this extraordinary landscape. I followed some workmen who were going along the road. A pair of waterproof overalls covered their legs, and they wore immense boots and tarpaulin hats. No umbrella would have withstood the force of the rain, and would in any