

Niette mechanically made a few steps towards the opening, and then stopped short, and gazed earnestly at Launie. The latter who understood her intention, hastened to take his leave of her.

'Excuse me, Niette, for having detained you,' he said, 'I dare say you are in a hurry to drive home your cow; I saw her in the meadow waiting for you.'

He took the path which wound round the top of the cliff; and Niette, having assured herself that she was unobserved, glided into the ravine which sloped down to the sea.

The beach which she soon gained, was interspersed with pools of water, in the midst of which rose a natural causeway of granite, covered with seaweed. The seaweed deadened the sound of the young girl's footsteps, and she reached the grotto without her approach being perceived.

The summit of the rock in which the waves had hollowed it, was attached to the cliff but by a few fragments; but its base was secure enough. The cavern consisted of two apartments united by a long arcade, and had a double outlet on two shores separated by a wall of reefs. On its sides of dark schistus, ran ferruginous lines and some veins of white quartz. In the first enclosure, a cleft partly opening into the grotto, admitted like some fantastic light the last rays of the setting sun. They fell on the face of Marzou, who was lying on the damp sand of the grotto with his head resting against a projection of the rock.

'You here,' cried he with astonishment. 'Is it possible, and what is it you seek?'

Then seeing the troubled countenance of the young girl, he added. 'In the name of God, has anything happened to detain you so late upon the rocks?'

'Tell me first why you remain here yourself,' replied Annette, looking at him earnestly. 'Generally when you come to Castelli, it is to set your lines, and not to sleep in the grotto.'

'I was not sleeping, Niette,' said the young man, sadly.

'What were you doing then?'

'I was thinking of our conversation at your cottage, just now, dear girl. While I am with you, I feel no sadness; but in solitude I have reflected, and thinking how little hope there seemed for me, I lay down here bereft of courage, like some unfortunate wretch who has no heart for anything.'

'God protect us! Is this keeping your promise to me, Louis,' replied Annette, very much moved, 'are you, then, no longer a man? Summon your fortitude (mon pauvre ami) for neither you nor I are at the end of our experience.'

'Ah,' you come to announce some misfortune,' cried Marzou.

'The more reason for keeping up a brave heart,' replied the peasant girl.

'But what is it? What is it?'

'It is that my father suspects our affection; that Lubert and he are furious, and they are looking for you.'

'Well, all in good time,' replied *le traineur de greves*, with a sort of des-