

'You see, he dares not!' cried Lubert in a tone of triumph, turning up his sleeves, and showing his athletic arms, 'but I have no less a mind to correct him.'

'No,' said Goron, 'that concerns me;' and approaching Marzou so as almost to touch him, he resumed through his closed teeth: 'you are afraid of Lubert, miserable coward; let us see if you will show more courage with another.'

He slowly raised his hand, and struck the young man in the face.

The latter staggered; a stream of blood reddened his lips, but he made no effort to return it.

'What!' exclaimed the patron, whom this immobility seemed to set beside himself; 'have you not the courage to defend yourself?'

A second blow, then a third struck Marzou, who still remained passive.

There arose then a hooting among the fishermen. Raillery and insult assailed the *traineur de greves*. Without replying he wiped away the blood which covered his face.

At the first blow given by Goron, Iaumie sprang to the assistance of his brother with a stone in each hand; but seeing that he did not defend himself, he remained at some distance stupefied and almost indignant.

As to Goron, arrested by the passive attitude of his adversary, he resumed his threats, when he was suddenly interrupted by loud cries, in the midst of which his name and that of Lubert were distinctly audible. He turned and perceived several inhabitants of the village, who were running towards them, and pointing to the sea.

'Well—where are they hailing from?' demanded Pierre.

'Down there from the Isle of Met,' replied the voices.

'From the Isle of Met! what is the matter?'

'The signal of distress.'

All eyes were turned towards the point indicated, when they perceived the flag, which fluttered in the wind, lighted by a sunbeam.

'The Devil! this must indeed be a signal of distress, for the Bearnais does not hoist his flag for a trifle.'

'Then who will go to his assistance?' asked one of the women.

'It is the business of the owners of the Isle,' answered Pierre.

Every body looked at Goron and Lubert, but the former after examining the sea for an instant, shrugged his shoulders.

'The owners are not porpoises,' answered he roughly; 'let the sailors, if there are any here, look at the sea before them.'

The waves had really at this moment a threatening and terrible aspect. Agitated by a violent North West wind, which was increasing every moment, they separated into dark furrows, on the summits of which rose a white foam.

'To say truth, the weather looks bad enough,' replied Pierre; 'those who leave the harbour will do well to recommend themselves to their patron saint, for neither oar nor sail will be of any use.'