

The Cradle

By A. Le Braz

Marie Gouriou lived in the village of *Min-Gueun* (La Pierre Blanche, or White Stone) near Paimpol. Her husband was at Islande, fishing.

That night Marie Gouriou had gone to rest after placing on the “*barte-tossel*” (bed-steps) the cradle in which her little child was sleeping.

She was half asleep when she thought she heard the child crying. She opened her eyes and looked about her.

“Jesus ma Doué!” (Jesus my God) she exclaimed. The room was filled with light, and a man leaning over the cradle was gently rocking the infant, singing to it a sailor’s ditty in a low voice.

The man had drawn the hood of his tarpaulin coat over his face, so that his features could not be distinguished.

“Who are you?” cried Marie Gouriou in alarm.

The man raised his head. The wife recognised her husband.

“Have you returned so speedily?” It was only a month since his departure.

She observed that his garments were dripping, and that they exhaled a strong odour of the sea.

“Take care!” she exclaimed, “the child will get wet! Stay, I will light the fire.”

She was already half out of her bed, and about to put on a petticoat. But the strange light which had filled the house faded suddenly. Marie groped for the matches, and having lighted one could see no one, and felt sure that her husband was no longer there.

She never saw him again.

The first fishing smacks which returned from Islande brought word that the ship to which her husband belonged had gone down with all hands and cargo on the night on which Gouriou had appeared to her bending over the cradle of his child.

(Related by Goanvic, Road-Mender, Paimpol.)