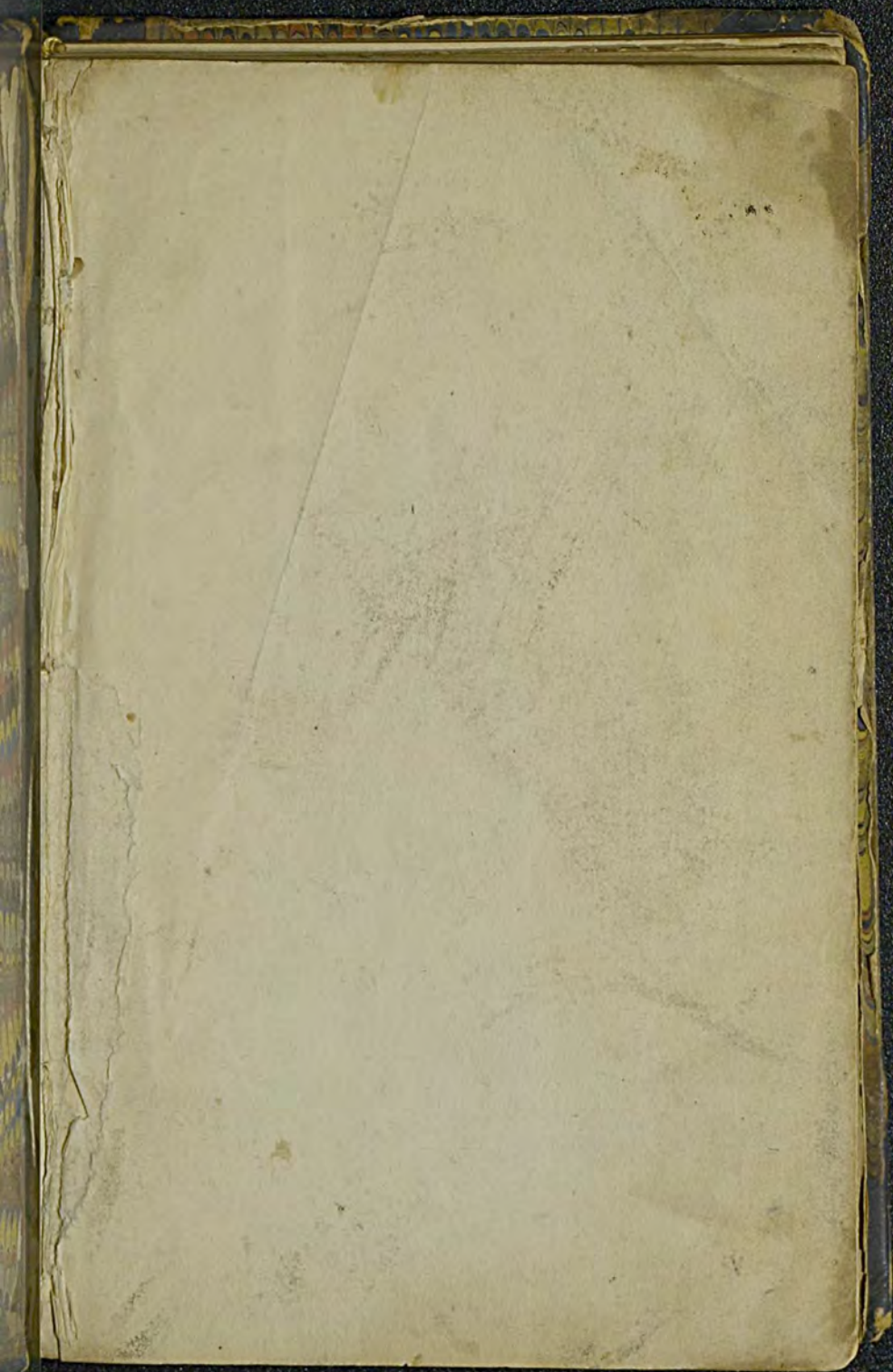


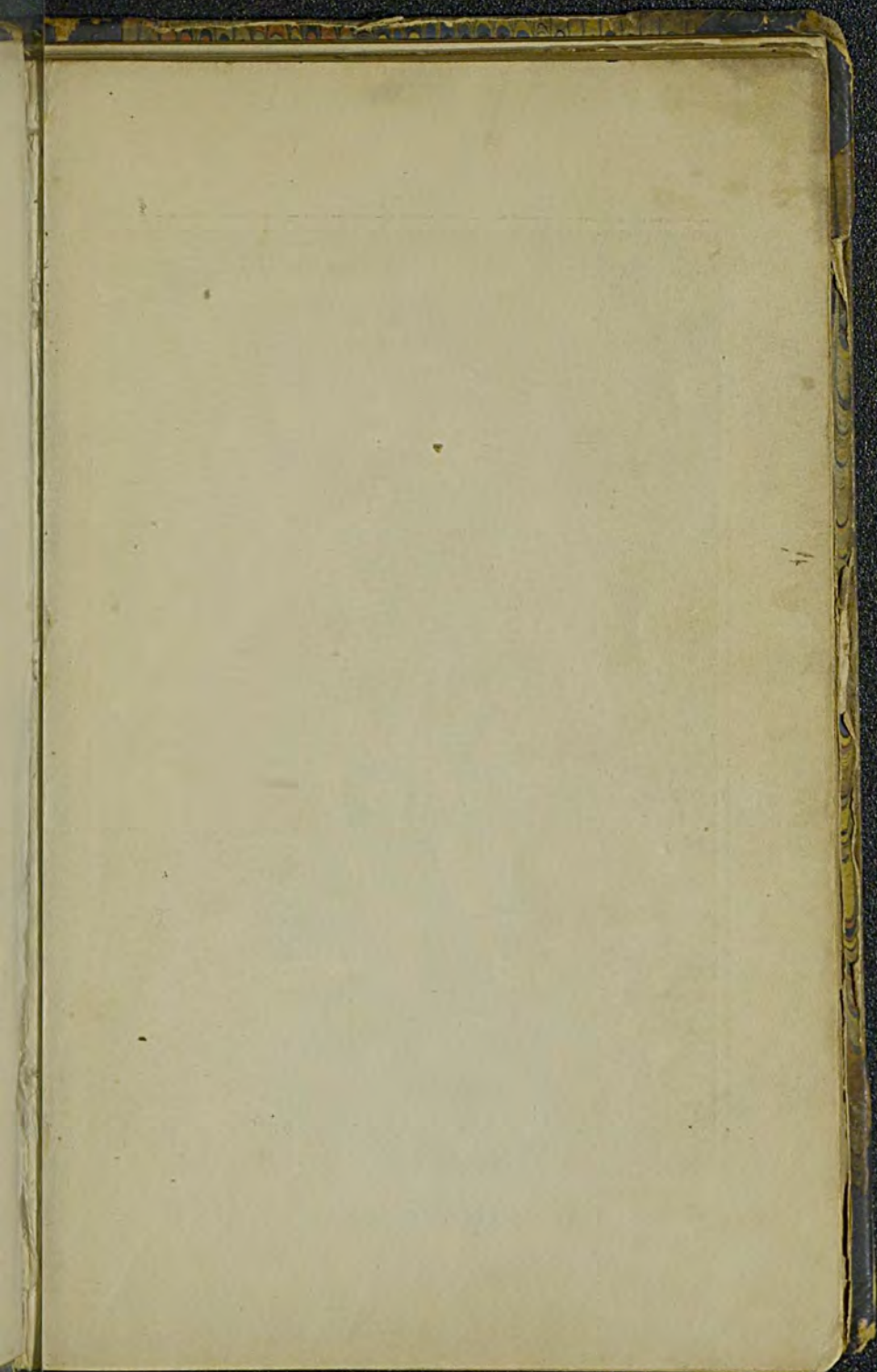
TBC (SB)
SHERWOOD
FLOWERS:
1836



37131 054 863 485









The Flowers of the Forest. See page 77.

an
THE
FLOWERS OF THE FOREST.

BY THE AUTHOR
OF
"LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER."



FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;
SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1836.

Chiswick Press:
PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM.

THE
FLOWERS OF THE FOREST.

I SHALL commence my narrative by stating that I am a native of France, though now residing in England, and a very old man. More than forty years since I was a curé, or, as such a one would be called in England, a minister, of a small parish situated in the beautiful province of Normandy, in France; that province which gave her conquerers and her princes for many generations to the country in which I have now taken up my abode.

Whilst residing in Normandy I was a Papist, though now, through the influence of a clearer light shining upon my soul, I am a Protestant;

and I humbly pray that my mind may never again be brought under the dark delusions in which it was involved in my younger days.

It is possible that my youthful reader may not precisely understand the points on which the Protestant and the Papist are at variance. These particulars are numerous, and many of them are not easily ascertained, because the Papists do not present the doctrines of their church in a simple or well defined form. When a Protestant refers to the works which are held in authority among them, and points out the errors contained therein, they shift their ground, and in all possible ways evade a straightforward line of argument. Their most authenticated modern formularies are deduced from the decrees of the Council of Trent, which commenced its sittings in 1545, and continued, though a long interval intervened, until 1563. That council was held by the command of the pope at Trent, a city in the north of Italy, and many authoritative decrees were issued by it, both as to matters of faith and ceremonies. These were sanctioned by the highest authority of the church

of Rome, and never have been in any way repealed or modified; they may therefore be referred to as the authorized statement of popish doctrines, and Protestants may reason respecting them as the rule of faith of the Romish church. It is true that they were not received with the same degree of implicit submission, by all the countries which continued to profess themselves followers of the church of Rome; and in Protestant countries at the present day, the Papists are unwilling to admit fully, that they, as such, are bound by the decrees of the council of Trent: their policy appears to consist in continually shifting their position, and presenting new forms of defence, which, being of a shadowy, mysterious, and irresponsible nature, are incapable of being overturned by the artillery of reason, or other means which might be used against their errors if advanced in a more substantial form. The Protestant, on the other hand, uses no subterfuge whereby he may confound his enemies, and escape the consequences to which the principles he recognises must lead, but simply maintains his belief in Scripture, and asserts that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be

proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

But I forget that I am writing for such as cannot be supposed to enter fully into discussions of this nature. I shall therefore avoid going more deeply into them, simply requesting my youthful reader to bear these things in mind, namely, that of the two principal orders of persons calling themselves Christians, the first, namely the Protestants, profess to take the Bible as their rule of life and of belief; the second, the Papists, bind themselves to obey the commandments of their church, of which the pope is, as they pretend, the father, the spiritual head, the absolute and infallible ruler; and the priests of that church assume to themselves a power and authority far beyond that of any mortal being, in all matters connected with religion.

But to proceed with my narrative: as I before said, I was born in France, and educated for the pastoral office; the parish which was appointed

me lies upon the Seine ; it extends along the left bank of that beautiful river, which, as is well known, rises near Saint Seine in Burgundy, and mingles itself with the sea below the city of Rouen.

It is a region rich in orchards and vineyards, in fragrant meadow lands, and thymy downs : to the north thereof lies a forest, extending itself for several leagues over a space most beautifully diversified with hill and dale, and affording within its deep recesses such a great variety of cool grottos, waterfalls, and natural bowers as I have seldom seen in any other part of the world. There is the sweet village, each little dwelling of which has its thatched roof, its rural porch, and its gay flower garden. We had our chateau also, which being built of gray stone, and having a commanding site, afforded a pleasing object to the road which runs from Paris to Rouen on the other side of the Seine ; its fanes and turrets at that time being exalted above the neighbouring woods, though, as I now understand, they are levelled to the dust ; and near the chateau was the Tour de Tourterelle, which gave the title to

the family—a huge old tower coeval with the first dukes of Normandy.

When first admitted to my cure, the family at the chateau consisted of many individuals, but one and another of these being removed by death or marriage, Madame la Baronne only was left to us after a few years ; and such was the kindness and amiable deportment of this lady, that it was commonly said of her, that all the virtues of the long and illustrious line of ancestry, of which she was the last in that part of the country, had centred in her. In fact, her conduct merited our sincere affection and gratitude ; but when we are made acquainted, through the Divine teaching, with the fallen and corrupt state of human nature, we dare not use or admit that high strain of panegyric which more presumptuous individuals employ without apprehension.

Between the village and the chateau stood our church, built also of gray stone, in the Norman Gothic style, and near to the church was a large black timbered house, with two gable ends point-

ed with wooden crosses, where lived a decayed gentlewoman, a widow, whom I shall call Madame Bulé.

This lady being an accomplished woman for that day, and much reduced in her fortune, received young ladies in her house for their education, and was, I believe, as far as the dark state of her mind would admit, a faithful and laborious guide to her young people.

Near to Madame Bulé's seminary was my own little mansion, nay, so near, that the window of my study, which was an upper room, projected over the garden wall of the seminary; and I used often to amuse myself by showering bonbons from thence upon the little ones who were assembled on the lawn beneath.

From the period of my entering my cure until I was more than forty years of age, I enjoyed a long interval of comparative peace. I was fond of a retired life. I had a particular delight in the study of nature, and in that part of it especially which refers to the habits and forma-

tion of the vegetable world. I made a collection of all the plants in the neighbourhood, and would walk leagues for the chance of obtaining a new specimen. I had other pursuits of the same kind, which filled up the intervals of my professional duties, and, through the Divine goodness, kept me from worse things during those years of my life in which I certainly had not that sense of religion which would have upheld me in situations of stronger excitement. Thus I was carried on in a comparatively blameless course through a long period of my life, for which I humbly thank my God, and take no manner of credit to myself; though I feel that it is a mercy for which an individual cannot be too grateful, when he is brought to a sense of sin and to a knowledge of his own weakness, to find that in the days of his spiritual darkness he has been guarded on the right hand and on the left, from shoals and rocks and whirlpools, in which wiser persons than himself have made terrible shipwrecks. But, as I said above, I was led on from year to year in a sort of harmless course; and whereas I enjoyed much peace, so was the same bestowed upon my neighbours in

general, in a larger proportion than could have been expected, when the agitated state of our country as it regarded religion and politics is brought under consideration. In the mean time, the little establishment of Madame Bulé was carried on in a manner so peaceful and tranquil that it can hardly be questioned but that the protecting hand of Providence was extended over this academy, although undoubtedly the instructions there received, partook of the spiritual darkness at that period spread over the whole country.

At length, however, as Madame became less able to exert herself, and as new modes of instruction and more fashionable accomplishments became requisite, in order to satisfy the parents of the pensioners, (or boarders,) she thought it right to procure an assistant ; and Mademoiselle Victoire, a young lady who had been educated in Paris, was appointed to the situation. Thus the wolf was admitted into the fold ; for this young person, being exceedingly vain and worldly-minded, no sooner found herself established in

the family of Madame Bulé, than she began to disturb the peace of its inmates.

All those accomplishments which delight the senses were what were chiefly held in esteem by Mademoiselle ; she had no value for the qualities of the heart, and no discernment of retiring and humble merit : hence her favours were ever lavished on the vain and frivolous, provided they were possessed of such qualities as she admired ; whilst some of the most amiable young people in the seminary were continually exposed either to her ridicule or her reproaches.

In consequence of this unjust conduct, she presently raised a very unamiable feeling among the young people, many of whom began to form false estimates of each other's merits, and to hate and envy those individuals among their companions who possessed any of those qualities or distinctions, whether mental, personal, or accidental, which were calculated to ensure the favour of Mademoiselle. And then it was that I first observed a change in the air and appear-

ance of the young people when they came out to amuse themselves in their garden during the intervals of their studies ; then it was that the voice of anger first arose towards my window, and my ear was then first saluted with the tones of discord, disturbing the beautiful harmony of the scene. I observed also, after a while, that there was an entire cessation of those games and diversions in which the young people formerly seemed to take such interest ; neither did I hear those cries of joy proceeding from the playground which were in former periods so delightful to my ear as I sat in my study : for worldly purposes and feelings had crept into this little society ; and I, as if aware that these symptoms, observed amongst these young people, were only the beginnings of misfortunes, frequently at that time looked back on the days of innocent (comparatively innocent) pleasure which were fast passing away, with a sort of regret which seemed even more bitter than the occasion warranted.

The time had been, nay it was hardly gone, when it had been the chief delight of the pupils of Madame Bulé to cultivate flowers in all

attainable varieties, and Madame had given a small piece of ground to each little girl for this purpose.

I had often busied myself in procuring rare seeds and fine specimens of flowers for these young people, by which small services I had obtained the name of "Le Bon Père*," "Le Bon Père Raffré," and was saluted with cries of joy



whenever I appeared in the garden. Then with what eager delight did the little rebels gather

* The good father.

round me, and some indeed were daring enough to thrust their hands into my pockets to rob me of the small packets of seeds or bulbous roots which had been deposited therein to attract the pretty thieves. More than once I have seized a dimpled hand in the very act of felony, and then it was my custom to take out my large clasp knife, to open it wide, to whet it on the nearest stone, and to pretend that I was about to take instant and cruel revenge; whilst the sparkling and blooming delinquents shrieked and danced around me, now receding, now advancing, now approaching, now retiring, till every avenue of the garden reechoed with the merry notes of innocent delight. Oh joyous days of happy and unapprehensive youth, when the light heart never wearies with the same jest, however often reacted or repeated, nor yawns at the oft told tale!

Often too was I invited to the collation at four o'clock, when the weather would permit the little party to enjoy that simple meal in the open air; and when Father Raffré promised his company, most happy was that little fair one who

could contribute the most elegant decorations for the feast, or supply the most beautiful baskets of reeds or osiers to stand in lieu of the china or plate which adorn the tables of more magnificent orders.

As I before said, I was then a Roman Catholic ; it was the religion to which I had been brought up, and although I will not say that from time to time some faint apprehensions might not have crossed my mind even then, respecting the soundness of the principles in which I had been nurtured, yet these gleams of light had hitherto been transitory as the irradiations which fall upon the earth when the morning is spread upon the mountains, and the clouds are driven forward along the path of the sun. But this I trust that I may say of myself, and of many of my brethren at that time, that, as far as our knowledge went, we were sincere ; and that if we sometimes appeared to be otherwise, it was because we were not always assured that our faith had that foundation in truth, which it must needs have in order to be effective. Notwithstanding which, I think I may add, that I

did endeavour, when thus familiarly associated with these young people, to press upon them the importance of spiritual things, and with this view directed them often to raise up their hearts to God when employed in their most ordinary actions. To this piece of excellent advice I added, as might be expected, certain admonitions respecting forms, of a nature which I now see to have been decidedly prejudicial, inasmuch as outward forms so frivolous as those which are commanded by the church to which I then belonged, have a direct tendency to lead the mind from seeking that inward and spiritual grace, of which outward forms are but the types. Amongst those forms which I particularly enforced, I well remember one, which was that of making the sign of the cross many times during the day ; I also insisted that these young people should repeat the Ave Maria, and certain other prayers which I taught them in the Latin tongue, as often as they could make it convenient so to do ; assuring them that by their obedience or disobedience in these particulars, they would rise or fall in favour with God and with the church. Thus I endeavoured, though on false

principles, to shed the odour of sanctity on our little assemblies, and for some years I had no strong reason to perceive that the weapons of warfare which I had placed in the hands of my little pupils, were not sufficiently powerful to enable them to resist the snares of Satan and the dangers of the world. For, as I remarked above, whilst Madame Bulé alone presided over her school, and whilst her pupils were small, the ill effects of the heartless and formal system inculcated by me did not appear; neither did the evil break out till the general agitation of the country was in some degree extended to this little society, by the arrival of Mademoiselle Victoire, who, according to the prevailing spirit of the age, no sooner found herself established in the seminary than she took the lead, before her superior, and commenced that work of disorganization which was already advancing in the capital.

At the time of which I am about to speak, namely, the year 1789, there were in Madame Bulé's seminary three young ladies, whom I shall have particular occasion to mention by and by,

and shall therefore proceed to describe in this place. The eldest of these was named Susette, and was, in point of external perfection, the rose of the parterre—a blooming, lively young person, but of a high and haughty spirit when opposed; yet one, I think, which might have been led to any thing by a kind and gentle hand.

Susette was a chief favourite of Mademoiselle Victoire, and had her warm partisans, her open admirers, and secret enemies in the little establishment. Neither was she without her rival; for what favourite is so happy as not to have sometimes reason to dread the influence of another. Mademoiselle was capricious, and whereas at one time she caressed Susette, at another time she was all complacency to Fanchon, the only young lady amongst the pupils of Madame Bulé whose pretensions could be brought in comparison with those of Susette: but whereas I have called Susette a rose, Fanchon, whose hair was of a bright and rich auburn, might best have been compared to the golden lily, the pride and glory of the oriental gardens—that flower which is, as some pretend, emblazoned on the arms of

that noble house, the star of which at one time seemed to have sunk in hopeless darkness, though it has since arisen again, we trust, to shine with superior splendour, and with a purer light than in the period of its former exaltation. It is my prayer, my daily and hourly prayer for my king and my country, that the same light which has been vouchsafed to me may be bestowed on them ; and that as the holy Scriptures are now, I trust, my only rule of life and test of faith, so also they may henceforward be the strength and bulwark of the people and land of my fathers.

But to return to my narrative : I must confess that the character of Fanchon never pleased me. She had none of that candour and openness of temper so agreeable in youth, and which I would rather see in its excess than its deficiency, although that excess may border on imprudence ; for age assuredly must add prudence to the character, whereas it seldom deducts from a spirit of cold and selfish caution.

The third among the pupils of Madame Bulé,

whom I must particularly describe, was an English girl, and an orphan. I never knew by what chance this child had been consigned to the care of Madame Bulé, neither do I recollect her real name; but she was called Aimée by her preceptress, and by that name she went amongst us. Neither do I know more of her age, than that she was thought too young for confession till she had been in the house more than two years, and therefore I judge that she was between eleven and twelve years of age at the time of which I am speaking. This little girl was small for her years, and was one who would generally have passed unnoticed in a group of children, yet when closely examined, she had one of the sweetest countenances I ever beheld: her hair and complexion marked her Saxon origin, and the tender innocence and dimpled beauty of her face brought her frequently in comparison, in my imagination, with some such figure as I have often seen of an infant Jesus, whom the artist has represented in the arms of his mother, looking down from some high altar with love and compassion on the multitude kneeling before him. Such were the high comparisons which I

made for the lovely little Aimée—yet why do I call the comparison high? Are not images, however beautiful, however exalted, however held in honour, but blocks of wood and stone, carved into the similitude of man by the hand of man? and is not the body of man the work of God himself, and in every instance wonderful and past imitation, and even past comprehension? for what doth David say on this subject? “I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.” Psalm cxxxix. 14,

Nevertheless, I own that the time has been when I bowed with religious awe before the graven image, and poured forth my soul thereunto in solemn prayer, without considering any of those subtle distinctions which the learned of the papal church pretend to make respecting relative and inferior honour: for the Roman Catholic church, when making its comments on the first commandment, uses the following expressions, which I shall give in the form of question and answer, as I found it in the authorized catechism published in England:—

“Does the first commandment forbid us to give any kind of honour to the saints and angels ?

“No ; it only forbids us to give them supreme or divine honour, which belongs to God alone ; but it does not forbid us to give them that inferior honour, which is due to them as the faithful servants and special friends of God.

“And is it allowable to honour relics, crucifixes, and holy pictures ?

“Yes, with an inferior and relative honour, as they relate to Christ and his saints, and are memorials of them.”

But as I have already remarked, when kneeling before these crucifixes and images, I fear that I too often retained but very imperfect ideas of these metaphysical distinctions, and in the too visible type or representation too often lost the recollection of the antetype.

To return to little Aimée : she was a child exactly formed to be the delight and joy of some venerable grandmother, or of some widowed and bereaved wife and mother. One who in retirement would have been the sweetest friend and

companion which sadness or sorrow could ever know, being no doubt divinely endowed with that holy peace of mind and tranquillity of spirit which the world can never disturb, because the world can have no intercourse therewith. Yet at the same time, being a character which was so entirely overlooked in scenes of bustle and worldly commotion, that her companions seemed seldom to take any farther notice of her than to push her aside when she crossed their paths; still, however, she possessed in so large a degree the spirit of harmlessness so truly congenial with the christian character, that it would have been impossible (one should have thought) to have hated this little girl. Nevertheless she did incur the active hatred of Mademoiselle Victoire, and this in a way which such as are not somewhat skilled in the nature of the human heart will not easily comprehend, but which will be evident enough to those to whom the secret recesses of that fountain of all that is impure are in some degree revealed. Some fault had been committed in the house soon after the arrival of Mademoiselle, the blame was laid on Aimée, and on the bare suspicion Mademoiselle punished her severely,

neither would she remit her punishment till Madame interfered : it was found afterwards that Aimée was innocent, but Mademoiselle never pardoned her.

I had observed, as I have before remarked, that since the arrival of Mademoiselle Victoire the simple, cheerful spirit which had formerly animated the family of Madame Bulé had disappeared ; and instead of the lively games in which the pupils of all ages had hitherto engaged, I could see from my window that there were parties formed in the young society. It was very evident that there was an open rivalry established between the rose and the fleur de lis, (by the by, a rivalry of old and renowned establishment ;) also I could perceive that there were few of the young people who did not enlist themselves under one or other of these banners, and I could sometimes hear words running very high amongst individuals of the different parties, though I could not exactly understand the precise subject of these controversies.

At length, however, it happened as I was

sitting one afternoon with my window open, it being two days before the feast of Easter, that I saw the young people proceeding in a body from the porch; Mademoiselle Victoire was in the midst of them, and she was talking with great vivacity on a subject which seemed to interest every one. They advanced in a direction which brought them nearly under my window, and then Mademoiselle sat down on a garden chair in the centre of the grass plat, whilst her two favourites stationed themselves on each side of her, and one by one she called each of the other young people to the footstool of her throne, for she sat in much state, and after having looked into the palm of every hand with the grimaces used by a fortuneteller, for so I understood the scene, she dismissed each individual, with some prognostic or witticism, which, as I perceived, excited peals of laughter, but not such laughter as I felt agreeable to me. It appears that the young people had at that moment forgotten that it was possible I might be so near them; for although I could see them well, and distinguish every gesture, yet I was myself so concealed by a jessamine just bursting into leaf, which I had

trained over a part of my window, it would not have been easy for the most penetrating eye to have detected me behind this natural screen, and thus as I was not within their view, neither was I in their thoughts at that period.

This pastime, of whatever tendency it might have been, had proceeded for some time, and each of the young people then present had presented her palm, and heard the prognostics of her future fate from the self elected prophetess, when suddenly a sort of demur arose among the party, and I saw every one turn to look around her; at length I heard the voice of Mademoiselle calling Aimée, and at the same time I perceived that the little girl had not been present. The next minute all the young party began to scatter themselves over the garden, as if in quest of the child, and the name of this little one proceeded from the various parts of the pleasure ground, and was returned by an echo, caused by an angle formed by the tower and the body of the church. Some minutes elapsed, it seems, before the little lost one was discovered; she was (as I afterwards learned) at last detected in a bosquet

formed of flowering shrubs, at the very bottom of the garden, cowering down under the shade of a laurustinus, and deeply engaged in reading



a very small book. She was instantly seized upon by Susette and Fanchon, who both sprang upon her at the same instant, and dragged her between them into the awful presence of Mademoiselle Victoire.

The little captive uttered no sound, and used but little resistance; but when brought directly

before Mademoiselle Victoire, she fell on her knees, and, pointing to Susette, seemed to be earnestly imploring some favour of the utmost importance. What this favour was I could not discover; but I was made to understand that, so far from having obtained it, she had only incurred more violent displeasure by the strength of her pleadings, for I saw Mademoiselle push her away several times, and then I heard my own name repeated, with an assurance that something, I knew not what, should not be concealed from me.

Being thus, as I considered, called upon, I arose, and putting my head out at the window, I called to Mademoiselle, and asked her what had happened, and wherefore my name was mentioned.

Mademoiselle, who had stood up to correct the child, turned hastily at the sound of my voice, and approaching as near to me as possible, My good father, she said, we have need of your advice and counsel; and we hope that you will insist that this child shall endure a severe

penance : here she stopped to recover breath, of which her passion had deprived her, and then proceeded. This wicked little heretic, she said, whom Madame has always upheld as a sort of saint amongst us, has it seems retained in her possession, ever since she came into this place, a volume of the Holy Scriptures in her native language, though she knows that children like herself are not competent to use these holy books to any advantage. She has actually been discovered, in a bosquet of this garden, deep in the study of this volume, using such art in so doing as shows the blackness and depravity of her heart. Thus speaking, she gave the child a push from her, with that sort of expression of abhorrence as one would use to a loathed animal.

And where is this book ? I asked. It was immediately held up to my view by Susette, and I perceived that it was an abridgement only of the sacred Scriptures, being an exceedingly small volume, not above four inches square ; it looked old and much worn : and it struck me that there was a malicious feeling shown towards the child

in making so much of this insignificant matter ; and not, as I thought, much policy in it, as it related to the interests of the church to which I was then attached. I therefore said, Let the book be given to Madame, and to-morrow I will come over and speak to her on the subject.



I hoped by this that I should have satisfied all parties ; but in this I was mistaken. No sooner did little Aimée understand that the tiny volume in question was to be given to Madame, than she dropped on her knees upon the grass, and looking up to me with streaming eyes and

united hands—Oh! dear father, kind father Raffré, she said, order me the severest penance, let me live on bread and water for a year to come, but do not take away my book—my lovely little book—do not take my poor little book!

Dear child, I replied, dear child, wipe away your tears: to-morrow I will meet you in the church; you shall confess all to me about your little book; and do not fear, you shall have justice done to you. And thus I dismissed the whole party, though I felt that I had not given satisfaction to either side by the manner in which I had answered the appeal. Neither was I mistaken in this my opinion, for Mademoiselle returned in a very ill humour to the house: and though Aimée and the affair of the book were spoken of no more that evening, yet the young ladies began to quarrel with each other upon these grounds; namely, that Mademoiselle Victoire had promised to one a prince and a coach and six, a duke to another, a barouche and four and a marquis to another, a simple baron to another, a rich burgher to another, and to a less favoured one a mere roturier. As I had sus-

pected, and I afterwards learned, Mademoiselle had been telling her pupils their fortunes, or rather had taken this way of giving them some idea of their several pretensions, and by this means had excited in their minds every sort of idea which ought to have been held back from them; and indeed so high did the rancour of the several parties rise on this occasion, that Madame Bulé was obliged to exert her authority, and very severe was the reproof she gave when she understood the cause of this uproar which had disturbed her peace. Do you not know, said she, that the day after to-morrow is Easter, and that to-morrow you are to meet Father Raffré for confession; and in what spirit or temper will you be for this sacrament if you retire to rest in the indulgence of such angry passions? For shame, young ladies; do not thus convert an innocent jest into a subject of discontent and rancour.

It is needless surely here to remark, that in this reproof of Madame Bulé, which was faithfully reported to me, there were two important errors; in the first instance, confession is no

sacrament, neither a part of a sacrament, there being but two sacraments appointed by our blessed Saviour, namely, baptism and the supper of the Lord*; and the jest of Mademoiselle Victoire was every thing but innocent, therefore Madame should not have so designated it.

Early the next morning, it was signified to me that Madame Bulé desired to speak with me; and when I had obeyed her summons, the amiable woman opened her mind to me to the following effect: My dear Father Raffré, she said, my mind has lately been much troubled respecting my pupils; the time was, as you well know, when we enjoyed a degree of peace which is now utterly foreign to our household. I was then, she added, and the tear was in her eye when she spoke, more alert and active than I now am, and better able to endure the fatigues of my situation. It was then, she continued, that every hour brought its pleasures, and every

* The church of Rome considers that there are seven sacraments; adding to the two mentioned in the New Testament five others, namely, penance, confession, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction.

change its delights; my children came with cheerfulness to their lessons, and left them with glee to enjoy their sports: if one did amiss, all were humbled; if one was praised, all were pleased; if one received a present, all were to have a share in it; if one was unwell, all partook in her pain. Now the case is entirely altered, I hear of nothing but of rivalries and of ill-will: if I praise one individual, I offend twenty; and if I find fault with one offender, I give cause of triumph to twenty more. It is not now a question who can do best, but who is most accomplished or most genteel; and instead of joy and peace, my household is one continued scene of dissatisfaction.

And cannot you account, Madame, I said, for this change in the character of your household? are you sure that the person whom you employ to assist you is exactly suited to your purpose?

Mademoiselle Victoire, she replied, is diligent and accomplished; I might not get a better were I to dismiss her: but you, my good father, shall confess my children, and I am sure that

they will find in you a faithful and pious counsellor.

After this conversation, I took the earliest opportunity of calling the young people to confession. The church was set aside for that duty; and Madame Bulé made a point of being in the church with us, although she did not remain within hearing.

As a confessor, I have, through the course of a long ministry, heard many awful secrets, and though I am now no longer of the Romish church, I still would make it a point of honour not to betray any confidence which was placed in me under the character which I formerly held of a father confessor. The confessions, however, which were made to me by the pupils of Madame Bulé were not of such a nature as to render it of the smallest consequence whether they are or are not divulged; neither, even if they were more important, can they possibly now affect the penitents in the smallest point. I shall therefore venture to inform my readers of what passed

that morning in the church between me and those of the young ladies of the establishment with whose names and descriptions I have made them acquainted. Susette was the first who was brought to me ; and when she appeared, the traces of tears were upon her cheeks.

Daughter, I said, you are sad ; what has afflicted you ? Open your whole heart to me, and be assured that the counsel I shall give you shall be to your advantage. She immediately burst into tears, and speaking passionately, made it appear that injustice was done to her by her companions, especially by Fanchon.

Fanchon, she added, who was once my dearest friend, is turned against me, and that because she is jealous of me. Some persons think me handsomer than she is, and she cannot endure a rival, and she bears herself maliciously and spitefully towards me ; and if she can find a flaw in my conduct, she is pleased, and makes it a rule to exhibit it, and to make little errors appear in the light of serious offences.

I shall not repeat all I said to her on this

subject. No doubt my advice, though in some points good, was mingled with error, for I remember well that, after having pointed out to her the beauty of charity, and recommended the exercise of it towards her companions, I added, for know you not, my daughter, that "charity remits sin, and gives spiritual life to the soul?" By which assertion I set charity in the place of the Saviour, and gave to our good deeds the power of redeeming us from the consequence of our evil ones; whereby I denied the words of holy Scripture; for are we not taught "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ?" Galatians ii. 16.

In reply to what I had said, Susette answered with a frankness which was natural to her. She acknowledged that she had a considerable portion of pride, and that she could neither bear a rival amongst her schoolfellows, nor refrain from despising those whom she thought her inferiors. She spoke again of Fanchon as of one whom she looked upon with envy and jealousy; and amongst others whom she heartily despised she mentioned Aimée. In reply to all which I told

her "that pride was counted by the church among the seven deadly sins. Pride," I said, "is an inordinate love and esteem of our own worth and excellence: it is a mortal sin, and can only be remitted by hearty contrition and the sacraments of baptism and penance."

At the word penance Susette started, as under fear; on which I spoke soothingly to her, and added, that she need not be afraid, that I would not be severe.

"The sacrament of penance, my daughter," I remarked, "consists of three parts, contrition, confession, and satisfaction." 'The tears of contrition I have seen on your features; you have performed the duty of confession; and what now remains to be done is satisfaction.

And in what, asked Susette hastily, does this duty of satisfaction consist?

In what I shall require of you to do, I answered.

Then, dear Father Raffré, she answered, you surely will not make me ask pardon of little Aimée, or seek a reconciliation with Fanchon—and she looked imploringly at me.

I shall exact of you, I replied, before I can venture to give you absolution, that satisfaction which the church requires. "For satisfaction, which is the third part of the sacrament of penance, is a faithful performance of the prayers or good works enjoined by the priest to whom the penitent confesses."

I am willing, father, she replied, to repeat as many prayers as you could desire.

Be it so, my daughter, I answered: and I know not how many Ave Marias and Pater-nosters I enjoined, to be repeated before the image of the virgin in the closet of Madame Bulé before the hour of mass on the following day: and thus having slightly healed the wound of my penitent, or rather administered fresh subject for future self-satisfaction to one who was already but too well pleased with herself, and as it were added fuel to the fire I should have sought to have quenched, I dismissed Susette, and proceeded to confess her rival, who soon afterwards entered the church and approached the confessional.

The confession of Fanchon was but a repeti-

tion of that of Susette, with this difference only, that this second penitent was more reserved and guarded in her acknowledgement of error than the former had been. I was in consequence less satisfied with her, and doubled her portion of Ave Marias and Paternosters, giving her also for the performance of her service the gloom of evening, instead of the bright morning hours : and this young lady being withdrawn, I requested that Aimée might be brought to me.

There was some interval between the departure of Fanchon (with whom Madame Bulé had gone out) and the entrance of Aimée. I was left alone, and the scene was an impressive one. The church was an ancient Gothic edifice, richly decorated with carved figures and ornaments ; I was in a chapel of the virgin, which was situated at the end of a long arched aisle ; all was motionless around me, and no sound was heard but the soft low murmuring of the wind among the towers and battlements ; my mind was full of what had just passed, and the anxious inquiry of Susette respecting what satisfaction I should require of her recurred to my thoughts. It was

very natural, I perceived, that she should expect me to insist on her seeking a reconciliation with those whom she had offended : common sense dictated such a satisfaction, and common justice required it ; but the church (to which I then belonged) had demanded no such hard service ; to put its votaries out of humour with themselves was no part of its policy. In the case in question I had acted as a faithful son of the church, I had regarded its interests ; and the question was suggested to my mind, Had I or had I not applied a remedy which would have the smallest efficacy in humbling a haughty spirit ? Is then the policy of my church calculated merely to promote the pleasure and present comfort of its votaries, and to quiet and sooth the conscience, or to remedy the real evil of our fallen nature ?

I endeavoured to repress and banish these thoughts, which appeared to me almost blasphemous. I crossed myself, and looking up to the image of the virgin, repeated the angel's salutation, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou among

women : to which I added in Latin, "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

I had scarcely concluded this prayer, when a soft footfall sounded along the aisle, and turning round, I saw a small figure just entering through the narrow side door of the church. It was Aimée ; she was dressed in white, and the air from without agitated her flaxen ringlets and snowy drapery as she advanced towards me, giving almost an ethereal lightness to her appearance. At one moment, as she passed under each archway, a deep shade was cast on her figure, and again a golden gloom was shed upon it, as she traversed those portions of the pavement on which the rays of the sun descended through the richly decorated windows above. The lightness of this infant figure, together with the innocent expression of her gentle eye, as she ascended the steps of the little chapel at the door of which I was standing, and looked up to me

half timidly, yet as it were in the noble consciousness of having nothing to conceal, suggested to my mind the idea of some blessed spirit just restored to its glorified body, and ascending from the grave to mount to that place of happiness which is prepared for the redeemed. The ideal resemblance was presently heightened in my imagination by the smile which illuminated every feature, and sparkled in her eye, as



I extended my hand to her, and said solemnly,
“The Saviour of men, and the Lord of angels

bless my little girl, and as she is called the beloved on earth, may she be truly the beloved in heaven!" I then took my usual place, and invited her to confession, by asking her to account to me for the scene of the past night. This question led to many others, and in the end I obtained from the dear child the following narrative of her short but till then comparatively perfect course, for indeed the words of the wise man could never have been more justly applied than to this blameless infant: He being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled for a long time, for his soul pleased the Lord; therefore hasted he to take him away from among the wicked. Wisdom iv. 13, 14.

I was born in England, my father, said the dear child. I remember well my native place, it was a white house, and there were woods near it, and a garden full of flowers; the house stood on the side of a hill, and from the windows we saw flocks feeding in green fields, and blue hills at a distance, and villages and groves of trees, and the woods were so near to us, that when the windows were open in the summer, we heard the

wind rustling among the trees, and blackbirds and linnets singing in the branches, and waters rushing, and bees humming. My father used to make me hearken to these sounds, and now I never hear sounds like these without thinking of my home. My parents were alive then, my father dear, continued the little girl, and my mother, my kind mother, I remember her dressing room, and her guitar, and her cabinet. And I had a brother too, he was a year older than myself, he had golden hair, and soft bright eyes; and I had a very little sister too, father, when she was asleep she looked like an angel; but she died first, and then, sir—and the poor little girl burst into tears—then grief came; my little sister died, and my brother died; it was a fever; and I was taken away, and was never sent home again; and my parents are dead too, and I am here. I was brought to this place I know not wherefore, and I have no home in England to return to: and the child wiped away a few tears, and then looked up again, as if awaiting my further questions.

And are you happy here, Aimée? I asked.

Yes, father, she replied ; Madame is very kind to me.

And have you nothing to complain of ? I asked.

None, father, she replied, if I might have my book again.

Why do you love that book so much ? I asked.

It was my brother's, she replied ; and she wept again. May I not have it ?

But it is not a proper book, Aimée, I said ; and I think you know that it is not proper, otherwise why did you go into a retired place to read it ?

I always do, she answered.

And why do you, I asked, if you do not think you are doing wrong when reading that book ?

Because nobody here cares for the things that are in that book, she answered mildly ; and those are the things which make me happy.

What things ? I asked.

The things I learned when I was a baby : I cannot forget them, she replied.

I again asked, What things ?

The things papa and mamma taught me, father, she answered.

Please to explain yourself, Aimée, I said. What things did your parents teach you?

They taught me that my heart is bad, sir, and that I can do nothing good without God's help.

Go on, I said.

And that God had sent his Son to die for me, and his Holy Spirit to make me good; and they taught me to read; and told me that I was to love my Bible, and follow all that is written in it.

But how, I asked, can a child like you understand the Bible?

I don't know, father, she meekly answered.

Do you pretend to say, that you do understand it? I asked, and drew her near to me as I sat.

I have not got a large Bible, she answered; there are only small bits of the Bible in my little book; but even my little Bible tells me many pleasant things.

What pleasant things, Aimée? I asked.

It tells me, she replied, what my Saviour has done for me, and I find in it the promises of that happy world where I shall enjoy a home more pleasant than that which I have lost, and see my papa and my mamma, and my brother and sister again. And sometimes, my father, when I have been reading that little book all alone in the garden, or wherever I can get unseen, I have had such sweet dreams and such delightful thoughts ; I fancy I see the world in that time when Christ shall be King over all the earth. And then I fancy I see places like what I remember of my happy home, and my papa and my mamma, and brother and sister, all glorious like angels, and the Lord Jesus Christ in company with them, and I am so glad to see them happy ; and every thing that is pleasant in this place brings these things fresher into my mind ; and there is a valley, sir, in the forest, which I often visited last summer, which reminds me too of these things. And when I hear music, or the bells ringing, or the organ at mass, all these things fill my heart with pleasure, and make me wish that the time would come when I might go to my dear parents ; but I know that

I ought not to be impatient to leave this world, where you and Madame and so many people are kind to me.

You talk of much kindness, Aimée, I said; have you no unkindness to complain of? have you no feelings of malice or envy in your heart? You know that if you have such feelings, it is your duty to confess them.

She looked very earnestly at me, and repeated the word "malice," as if she did not understand the signification, or at any rate as if she did not take in the purport of my question.

To be plain with you, Aimée, I said, are the young ladies your companions so kind to you that you never feel any thing like anger or ill-will towards them? are you in charity with every one?

They were cross with me last night, my father, she answered.

And are they not so often? I asked.

I don't think they are, she replied.

That is, you do not think much about them, I said.

I do, she replied; I love them, yes, I hope I love them.

Then you have not perceived that they are unkind to you? I added.

Not to me particularly, she answered; they sometimes quarrel a little amongst themselves; but is not that what we must expect? Are not our hearts bad, father, and do we not all do wrong at times? But when they are cross, I think of my happy home, and then I do not mind it; and I have such delight sometimes when I am alone in my room, and see the sun set, and think of that distant time when I shall be with my beloved Saviour, as I could not describe.

Then it is because your mind is fixed on the world which is to come, that you do not enter into the quarrels of your companions. My little Aimée, I said, if this be the true state of the case, you are a happy child indeed, happy and blessed beyond all the children I have ever known; and tell me, my little girl, how long your mind has been thus devoted to heavenly things?

I do not think that I am devoted to heavenly things, father, she replied; for I am not good, and people who are devoted are good, I have

heard Madame say so; but it is now many months since my parents died, and since I lost my brother and sister, and from that time I have never had so much pleasure in any thing as in thinking of the time when I shall see my relations again; and I know that I never shall see them unless I love my Saviour, and am enabled to obey him; and these thoughts are always coming to my mind, and I cannot get rid of them.

And why, my dear child, I answered, should you wish to get rid of them? Do they not make your happiness, and do they not mark your call to a holy life? But think you not, my daughter, that if you were to intercede with the holy virgin and the blessed saints, that they would join their prayers with yours, and that you might in this manner more easily obtain all that you desire? and I pointed to the image above the altar, and directed the child to observe the benign and beautiful expression of the countenance of her whom I then called my Lady.

That image cannot hear me, she replied.

But she whom it represents, namely, the holy Mary, can and will hear you, Aimée, I answer-

ed ; she will unite her prayers with yours, in order that all you ask may be granted you.

Was not she a woman ? said the little girl doubtingly.

She was, I replied ; “but as our Lord was truly God, so she, his mother, was the mother of God, and therefore is worthy that we should address our prayers to her.”

The little girl looked down upon the pavement, but did not speak till I had repeated some part of what I had before said ; she then lifted up her gentle eyes, and asked, Do you pray to the saints, my father ? Is it right to pray to them ? My mamma told me that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved but that of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have before hinted that I had already had some little misgivings respecting the foundation of my faith ; and at that instant such a gleam of light shot through my hitherto darkened soul, that I could not answer the child. I remained silent and confused, whilst the little one stood meekly before me, being wholly unconscious of my embarrassment. The tolling of the clock

was at that moment heard from the tower of the church ; I availed myself of it to say that I had an engagement which demanded my immediate attention, and bestowing a rapidly pronounced blessing on the little girl, I hastened from the church, assuring her that I would not only procure the little book for her, but obtain permission for her to study it whenever she pleased. I spent the remainder of that day in the solitude of my study. This little girl is a heretic, I said to myself ; what our church indeed calls such ; but there is no malice or bitterness in her heresy : she has not yet even discovered how widely our religion differs from her own ; there is therefore no prejudice mingled in her mind with her prepossessions. She takes her faith entirely from the Bible, as she has been taught to do by her excellent parents ; and surely if the fruit is to prove the nature of the tree, we cannot doubt, from the beauty of the fruit which this dear child is able to produce, that the root is excellent. Whilst meditating on these subjects, I took a dusty Latin Bible, which had once belonged to a priest of the church of Geneva, from its shelf in my study, and began to compare

its contents with the received doctrines of our church, and was struck with the comparison of Matthew xv. 19, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," with the following clause in our catechism, namely, "Is it possible to keep them all? (speaking of the commandments.) Answer. It is, by God's grace; Zacharias and Elizabeth were both just before God, walking in all the commandments of God without reproof." I felt more and more confounded whilst meditating on these things; and the result of these reflections was, that I resolved not to speak even to Madame Bulé of the heretical state, as I then apprehended it to be, of the little Aimée.

Under this embarrassment of mind I remained in my study several days, or walked in the most solitary places I could find, meditating on many things. In the mean time, Susette and Fanchon having wiped away their offences, as they thought, by the repetition of the prescribed modicum of Ave Marias and Paternosters, returned, not in the least humbled thereby, to

their usual situations in the school room, where presently they failed not to administer fresh cause of dissatisfaction to each other, which being taken up by the parties on either side, the whole household was shortly again all in flames; and Madame Bulé found it more difficult than ever to set things in order. After various admonitions, all of which she found inefficient, the worthy lady sent a second time for me, and I undertook to admonish the young people in a discourse, which, accordingly, I delivered in an apartment of the house set aside for purposes of this kind, where I had formerly given many lectures on different subjects to the young people.

I took the text or motto of my discourse from the various beauties exhibited in a highly cultivated garden. I understand, my daughters, I said, that your minds have lately been painfully, and I may say sinfully agitated by envious feelings respecting each other, and by the vain desire of outshining and surpassing each other in those qualities which you esteem admirable in a human creature. Of the sinfulness of these

feelings, my dear daughters, (I continued,) I need not speak ; but on their folly I will enlarge, inasmuch as it seems that you are not aware of this folly. The Almighty is not so partial a Parent that he has not bestowed some beautiful and excellent quality on each of his children. Look at the flowers in that blooming parterre which extends itself beneath the window ! amongst these some attract the eye from a distance, some shed powerful odours in the air, some are endowed with healing qualities, some retire from the view, and are only admirable when closely inspected ; some excel in only one point, some in several, some in every quality attributable to the vegetable creation ; but all are so exquisite in their way, so perfect in their conformation and their internal construction, that the utmost art of man would endeavour in vain to imitate the simplest, the most humble flower amongst them. Go forth into the forest, and observe the leaves of the trees ; compare them one with another ; remark the delicacy of their texture, the infinite variety of their forms, and make a comparison, if it lies in your power, of the beauty of one with that of another ; say, if you can,

that one is worthy of admiration and another of contempt, that one is surpassingly fair and another despicably ugly. And such are each and all of you, my fair daughters; all and each of you have some beauty, some perfection, some lovely quality, external or internal, which sets you more on a par with each other than an inconsiderate observer would at first suppose: thus the rose of this parterre has no cause to triumph over the violet, neither has the tulip any occasion to envy the whiteness of the lily.

Having finished my exordium much to my own satisfaction, though I believe with little effect upon my audience, I withdrew, and that very evening met Madame Bulé at the chateau, where Madame la Baronne happening to mention that she intended to give an entertainment to the young ladies on the day of her fête, (her birthday,) Madame Bulé thought it necessary to tell her the state of her family as it regarded the jealousies and rivalries which subsisted among her pupils.

Madame la Baronne smiled at this state of

affairs, and after some reflection said, Make my compliments to your young ladies, Madame Bulé, and invite them on my part to the chateau. Tell them that my fête this year is to be called the Feast of the Flowers, and I shall expect each young lady to appear adorned with a garland or wreath of her favourite flower ; adding, I shall bestow a crown on that young lady whose ornaments please me best ; and lest, she added, my taste should be disputed, there shall be a motto woven with the myrtle of which my crown is to be composed, which shall signify the rule by which I am to make my selection.

Madame Bulé assured Madame la Baronne that her message should be faithfully delivered ; and I was very solicitous to know of the lady what was to be the import of her motto.

I assure you, father, she replied, that it shall be one you shall not dare to disapprove ; but lest you should give a hint to some little favourite you may have, I cannot tell you. I was therefore obliged, after having shrugged up my shoulders several times, to acquiesce in my ignorance.

Madame Bulé did not fail to inform the young ladies of the kind invitation of the Baronne ; and the next day, when these young people had concluded their morning exercises, an envoy was sent to request my company at the collation, in order that I might be consulted respecting preparations for the Feast of the Flowers.

As soon as I arrived, various questions were put to me by one and by another, to many of which I was not able to answer.

To whom, said one, does Madame la Baronne mean to give the crown, father ? to the one who has the fairest garland, or to the one whom otherwise she likes best ?

With respect to the beauty of the garland, I answered, it might perhaps be hard to judge ; tastes may differ, one person may think that no wreath can be compared to that which is formed of roses, whilst another perhaps might prefer a garland of jasmine as being more elegant.

Then you do not suppose, said another of my inquirers, that she will bestow the crown on her who has the fairest wreath ?

Indeed I cannot tell, I replied.

You are in the secret, we know, Father Raffré, said Mademoiselle Victoire, we are sure of it.

Well, it may be so, I answered ; but you shall none of you be the better for my knowledge. I will for once keep what I know to myself.

Mademoiselle would have been angry at this, had I cared for her anger ; but as I did not, she proceeded to discuss the choice of the garlands with her favourite pupils.

Each one was, it was understood, to select a different flower, and the eldest chose first ; Susette chose the rose ; Fanchon would, she said, be royal, and adorn herself with the fleur-de-lis ; a third selected the jasmine ; a fourth the white thorn. The laurel, the honeysuckle, the sweet scented clematis, the convolvulus, and the orange flower were none of them forgotten ; and as there was a fortnight to elapse before the day of the fête, great pains were taken to nourish and preserve such flowers as might then be required to add beauty and fragrance to the festival.

It was on the eve of the fête, as I was

walking with Madame Bulé in one of the avenues of her garden, being deep in conversation on subjects which at that time exercised our minds, in common with many others—subjects which had indeed some tendencies to what our church would have deemed heretical, for my opinions on many of our doctrines were beginning to be more and more confused—when we suddenly heard several angry voices, proceeding from a bosquet, in the centre of which was a circular range of seats, where the young people often assembled during the hours of leisure. Standing still and looking through the openings of the trees, we saw several of the lesser children gathered round Aimée, who had formed a small wreath for her waxen baby from an azure flowering creeper which hung in festoons from an archway of lattice work at the entrance of the bosquet. The exclamations of rapture uttered by the lesser children had, it seems, attracted the attention of Susette, Fanchon, and several others of the greater girls; and Susette had expressed so much admiration of the wreath, as to declare that, after all, Aimée had made the best choice, and that there was no wreath hitherto thought of that would prove so light and beautiful

as that she had chosen. It was just at the moment she had uttered this opinion when Madame and I stood to listen to what was passing.

The little sly thing ! said Fanchon. I doubt not but that she had a wreath of this kind always in her mind, and that she would not mention it, lest any of her elders should have insisted on taking it from her.

If she had such an intention, she would have done well to have waited a little longer, said Susette ; for it is not now too late for us her elders to change our minds. I am out of humour with the idea of wearing red roses ; I have been thinking this very day that I should prefer another colour for my wreath ; I like that beautiful azure, and I will wear it ; and therefore, my little lady, you must please to look for some other ornament for yourself.

I am content, replied Aimée, meekly : adding, If you approve it, mademoiselle, I will help you to make your garland.

And what will you wear yourself ? said Susette : you shall, if you please, adopt the rose I have relinquished.

I beg your pardon, Susette, said Fanchon ; there is no one who can come before me but yourself ; you have given up the rose, and I claim it. I here give notice, that to-morrow I shall wear a garland of roses ; and, as we are all to be different, no one else is to dare to assume even a rose bud.

So violent an altercation then ensued between the rivals, that Madame Bulé thought it necessary to interfere ; and requiring each of the rival ladies to declare the name of the flower she meant to adopt, she desired that no change of plans might henceforth be resorted to. She did not, however, insist upon the blue wreath being relinquished to Aimée, as I should have thought but just ; it was evident that she was under some dread of Susette and Fanchon, and was afraid of provoking them too far ; and it certainly was not my business to interfere, neither did I think the matter of sufficient consequence to induce me so to do.

Susette accordingly declared again for her wreath of roses, whilst Fanchon adopted that

of the azure creeper, which was in fact a most elegant ornament. Madame and I then withdrew ; but I had scarcely reached the garden gate on my way home, when I was overtaken by Aimée, who, placing her little hand within mine,



said, My father, you walk out, I think, every morning before breakfast.

I do, my child, I answered.

Will you permit me to accompany you tomorrow ? said the little girl. I have obtained permission from Madame. Will you take me to the forest ?

Most willingly, I replied. But for what purpose, my child?

She smiled, and with a sweet innocent air repeated these words of an ancient ballad of her own province:—

The garden is gay with the gaudy weed,
And attired like the jewell'd queen;
But the flowers of the forest are fair indeed,
Though oftentimes doom'd to blow unseen.

The words, Charming little creature! what innocent device has that gentle bosom now conceived? were upon my lips, but I did not utter my thoughts, and simply answered, I will be at the garden gate before six o'clock to-morrow morning, my dear Aimée; be sure that you are punctual.

The dew was still upon the herbage, and glistening on every leaf, as I knocked at the garden gate; it was opened to me at the first signal by the little maiden: she ran out to me all prepared for her appointment, with a neat basket in her hand.

Good morning, lady fair, I said; a blessing

from above be upon my little girl ! But whither are we to bend our steps ?



To the forest, my father, she replied, where I know of certain deep shades in which those flowers grow of which I wish to make my garland. I only feared that some other person might have thought of these flowers of the forest, which are my delight, and have asserted a prior right to them; but they have not entered into the mind of any one ; and now no one can take them from me.

Oh ! oh ! I said, smilingly, you have, I see, been acting a cunning part, my little one.

Cunning ! she repeated ; ah, Father Raffré, that is an ugly word ; do not call me cunning. I would rather wear a wreath of asphodel than be called a cunning girl.

And why not wear a wreath of asphodel ? I asked.

Because it is bitter, very bitter, she replied ; but, continued she, was there any harm in my thinking of a flower and not mentioning it, lest it should be chosen ? I would not be cunning, indeed I would not, for the whole world ; and I have no pretensions to that crown of myrtle which the lady is to bestow, indeed I have not ; but I wish for my favourite flower for a very particular reason.

What might be that very particular reason ? I asked.

I will give you my reason, father, she answered, when you have seen my favourite flower : but I must tell you that the discourse you made to us about a fortnight since was what led me to think of these things ; and then I remembered a hymn which I had learned when I lived at my happy home, and some things which my dear papa taught me when I was a very little child, and I put all these things together ; and when I

heard of the feast of the flowers, I then fixed upon the garland I should like to wear, though I did not suppose it would have been left for me.

Indeed, my Aimée, I answered, you must be a little more explicit before I can understand you ; please to explain yourself ; of what things did my discourse lead you to think ; and how was what I said connected with what your father had taught you, and with the hymn you had learned ? please to explain all these matters to me.

You compared us, sir, replied the little girl, to so many flowers growing in a garden ; and what my dear papa taught me when I was a little child was this, that the church of God in this world is compared in the Bible to a garden, in which grow all sorts of beautiful plants and flowers ; he taught me the very verses, and I have not forgotten them.

Repeat them, if you please, my dear child, I said : for, although I confessed it not, I knew so little of Scripture as to be utterly ignorant of that beautiful passage to which the child alluded. She immediately obeyed, and repeated what follows.

“ A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants

are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices; a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." Canticles iv. 12—15.

Very beautiful, I replied, and well remembered; but tell me who is it is supposed to repeat this passage?

She answered, Our Saviour, sir, and he speaks it of his church.

Then you imagine, I replied, that the garden enclosed is the true church, and all the plants therein are the people.

Yes, sir, she said; those who love God are the plants growing in this garden, and some of them are tall and noble, like the cedar tree, and others are small and of less beauty, others supply pleasant fruit, others are good only for shade, others are very lovely to look at, and others fill the air with sweet odours, but altogether they make the garden very beautiful, and none are to be despised.

And do you suppose, Aimée, I asked, that you yourself are one of the members of this garden?

She hesitated a little, and at length said, I desire to be one, and I hope I am ; but I know that my place, if I have a place in this happy garden, is a very low one, down in some very deep valley, and under shade, and out of sight. I think I should not do so well if I were to be removed to the higher parts of the garden, and clothed with many colours, and made to be an object of admiration, for when I am praised I become vain, and take less delight in holy things than when I am not noticed.

I was on the very point of commending the ideas of this little girl, when her last remark gave me a timely check, and I simply said, Apparently your parents took much pains to give you instruction.

It was the Bible they used to make me understand, she answered ; and when they taught me any thing in the Bible, they showed me something out of doors by which I was to remember it ; and by this means, now that they are gone away, every thing almost which I see when I walk abroad, reminds me of something I learned when I was a baby.

That is, I said, they took pains to associate

natural with spiritual things, and by this beautiful mode of instruction they have succeeded in impressing their holy lessons so strongly upon your mind that you never can forget them. Let me tell you, my daughter, that you have reason to bless God for having given you such parents.

Two gentle tears dropped from her eyes as I spoke ; and at the same moment my conscience reproved me for having bidden a child to thank God for having given her parents who were heretics ! and then again such doubts arose in my mind respecting my own principles, and their foundation in truth, that I walked on a considerable way in silence.

We had left the village and the chateau behind us, and were entering on the precincts of the forest, before I extricated myself from the labyrinth of perplexing thoughts in which I was involved. At length, as we passed under the shade of the trees which skirted the wood, I recollected myself, and said, Aimée, where are you leading me ? How far are we to go ?

Are you tired, father ? she said. If you wish

it, I will go no further ; I can make a wreath of any flower I see in the hedges.

Tired ! my dear child, I said, tired in your company ! No ; could I not take you by the hand, travel the world over with you ! but you have raised some anxious thoughts in my mind. I have been considering what place I occupy in that garden of which we have been speaking. She made no answer. I know not what she thought, but she took my hand and kissed it with a courtesy and tenderness which in one so young was peculiarly touching. I think she had a religious dread of flattering me on a subject so important, yet was anxious to show her gratitude and affection.

We passed on, and for the space of a quarter of a mile pursued a straight and wide road which leads through the centre of the wood. At length, coming to a spot where the shade was exceedingly thick, she pointed to a very narrow pathway which put itself into the road, and asked me if I should object to follow her. I knew the path, it led to a small but deep valley, at the bottom of which ran a pure cold stream ; but I was

surprised at its being so well known to the child, and asked her how she came to be so well acquainted with the windings of the forest.

Last summer, she replied, I was sent, after an illness, for change of air to a cottage in these woods, and then I learned to know where beautiful flowers grow, and sweet birds sing ; and I have not forgotten these places, she added, smiling and tripping lightly before me.

But my little guide in her glee had forgotten, that, where she could pass with ease, I, being taller and larger, would find a thousand obstacles. Accordingly, when she told me that she had but a very little way to go for the accomplishment of her object, I bade her hasten forward, whilst I followed at my leisure, and in consequence I soon lost sight of her ; but still pursuing the same wild and tangled path into which she had led me, I presently arrived at a more open part of the forest, from whence I looked down upon a dingle, in the bottom of which was a pool, and on the side of the pool a sward, which, from its smooth deep green, intimated the moisture of the

place. A ruined cottage, of which the gable end and doorway alone remained entire, peeped out from amid the trees and underwood. The rays of the morning sun shot slantingly over the forest, and shed a flickering, trembling light on the whole scene, presenting the most beautiful varieties of light and shadow. This also was a place for the sweet singing of birds, and for balmy zephyrs, which, as they passed, produced that agitation of the leaves which, together with the rushing of a waterfall, heard but not seen, filled my senses with a degree of delight I had not often experienced. At the moment when I had reached the brow of the dell, my little guide appeared near the bottom springing, like the gazelle, from one rude step to another, and anon I beheld her stooping down to gather certain flowers which grew here and there on the green sward. The rude trunk of a tree near which I stood formed a convenient seat ; I placed myself upon it, and quietly awaited the return of the little Aimée. A quarter of an hour had hardly elapsed, when I saw her reascending the rocky side of the glen, and presently she stood before me, all glowing with delight. At my feet she

set her basket, which was filled with that lovely flower we call the muguet, better known by its more appropriate name, the *lys des vallées*, the lily of the valley.

There, my father, said she, there are the flowers which are to compose my garland ; and those are the flowers I would choose for my device. The rose, added the little girl in high glee, is the emblem of beauty, the laurel of glory, the hearts-ease of content, and the fair maids of February of innocence ; but what are all these without my lily of the valley ? Tell me, father dear, what is any good quality without humility ?

Aimée, I said, in amazement and admiration, not only of the sentiments of this dear child, but of the elegant manner in which she expressed them, Aimée, my little one, who taught you all this ?

She looked innocently upon me, and said, Papa and mamma used to instruct me in these things ; it was poor papa who taught me that the lily of the valley was the type of humility, and sometimes when I pleased him he called me his lily. Ah, sir, I wish I were really like the lily ;

for the lily loves the cool valley and shadowy places by the streams of living waters.

Dear child, I answered, you are indeed a lily of the valley. Would to God, and I crossed myself as I spoke, would to God I were a lily too !

No, sir, no, she replied, you shall not be a lily, but you shall be a noble tree, planted by the water side, and I will dwell under your shade.

I was affected—I could not help it ; the tear trembled in my eye ; which the little girl observing, she stooped down and kissed my hand, at the same time taking up her basket. Having obtained what we wanted, we turned our steps towards our home, and as we went along we remarked other flowers growing in the forest ; amongst these the wood anemone and the party coloured vetch particularly attracted our attention, and we wondered that things so beautiful should have been formed in places where none saw and none admired ; and this led me to speak of the infinite goodness of God, and of his bounty towards the children of men.

At length we reached our village, and parting

at the garden gate, I retired to my study to examine the Holy Bible respecting those passages to which my little companion had alluded. And in that long quiet day, a day never to be forgotten by me, such convictions flashed upon my mind respecting the errors of my church, that before the evening hour I was almost, if not entirely, as much what my people would have called an heretic, as I now am, although I had not yet made up my mind to acknowledge my belief, and give all up for the truth.

Scarcely had the ardent heat of the day subsided, when, according to appointment, I repaired to the chateau; where, on my having passed the avenue of linden trees, which then extended from the gate of the domain to the lawn in front of the mansion, I entered upon a scene which chased away, for a time, the perplexing thoughts by which I had been agitated during the greater part of the morning. Figure to yourselves, my gentle readers, an ancient, many-windowed, stone mansion, whose fashion spoke of at least two centuries past, in the almost perpendicular roof of which were three tiers of windows, peeping out from the moss-covered tiles, closed with

wooden shutters instead of casements. In the front of this ancient, and in some respects dilapidated mansion, extended the lawn, in the centre of which was a square marble bason, where a huge Triton spouted water from a cone to the height of many feet, affording rather the idea than the reality of freshness. On each side of the lawn, yet answering exactly to each other, a statue, a bosquet, an arbour, and an archway of trellis work opening into certain gardens beyond, alternated with each other, according to the formal taste then prevalent in my country. The lawn was set forth with several long tables, covered with fruit, cakes, cream, and other refreshments; whilst on an elevated scaffolding near the centre of the open space was a band of musicians, who from time to time gave us a national air, whilst waiting the commencement of the dancing, which was to take place towards the end of the evening. The company for whom this fête was prepared were, without exception, every inhabitant of the village who was able either to walk or be carried to the chateau, together with some superior persons from the neighbourhood, who had come by special invitation.

These, the superiors of the party, were, with the Baronne, grouped at the upper end of the lawn, sitting, standing or moving about, as it suited them; the inferior persons being at the lower end, or in the centre, according to their stations in society, but all seemed equally gay and happy; I saw not a solemn countenance as I made my progress round the circle. I had almost omitted to describe a very important part of the show, whereat I much wonder, considering that it is the feast of the flowers to which I am endeavouring to bring my readers in imagination, and this was a statue on a pedestal which stood exactly in a line with the front of the house, at the bottom of the lawn. This statue was a female one, and therefore suited very well to serve as a representation of the goddess Flora; she was richly decorated with garlands and wreaths, and on her head was placed the crown of myrtle, through which was twisted an azure ribbon, on which a motto was wrought in threads of gold. The crown on the statue was pointed out to me by the persons who stood near it, and I attempted to decipher the motto, if such there might be, but I was not able, the ribbon

was so curiously and artificially twisted that I could only make out part of a word here and there, and was therefore obliged to rest in my ignorance.

The party were all assembled when I arrived on the lawn, with the exception of the family of Madame Bulé, but whilst I was paying my compliments to the Baronne on the arrangement of the scene, the amiable instructress and her numerous train appeared at the end of the avenue.

There come our queens of the May, said the Baronne, and she ordered a beautiful and lively air to be struck up, whilst she advanced with the ladies and gentlemen of the party to meet the elegant procession. And elegant indeed it was, elegant and gay, and various and fragrant. First came Susette and Fanchon, the rival queens, all attired in white, and decorated, the one with rose buds, the other with the azure creeper before mentioned; ribands of rose colour and of blue were mingled with the several garlands; the next pair were the acanthus and the

laurel, with scarfs of green and purple; then came the fragrant hyacinth, and the auricula; the woodbine and the columbine adorned another smiling pair; and as each couple passed by the group of ladies and gentlemen, they greeted and were greeted by smiles and courtesies, as gracefully bestowed and received as if the lawn had been a royal presence chamber, and the Baronne a crowned head. As each pair passed the Baronne, the parties separated, and formed a variety of blooming and lively groups around the company, meriting and receiving that admiration which was due to their smiling and pleasing figures, and the taste which each had displayed in the arrangement of her fragrant ornaments. The last of the procession was Madame Bulé herself, leading the youngest of her pupils and little Aimée by the hand; the exercise and excitement of the scene had given an extraordinary lustre to the complexion of my little favourite, yet her eyes retained their usually placid and gentle expression. She seemed to be attentive to what passed, and also pleased, but there was not that restless anxiety in her countenance which was remarkable in all those

amongst her companions who thought they had any chance of obtaining the crown ; her enjoyment of the scene was therefore as unmixed as



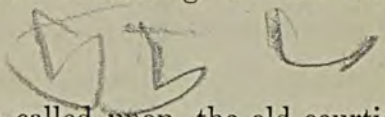
it had been when she was gathering her favourite flowers in the depths of the forest. She, like the rest of her companions, was attired in white, and with no other headdress than those clustering ringlets which, together with the delicate tincture of her skin, marked her Saxon ancestry. She had formed a lovely garland of her lilies, having woven them together with a band of light green ribands, tied on her right

shoulder with a knot, and falling under her left arm. I saw the eyes of the Baronne rest upon this dear child for a moment ; but as soon as Madame Bulé dropped her hand, she receded into the back ground, and her elegant form was soon wholly shrouded by the more splendid figures of her companions.

Our nation are remarkable for being able to pay a compliment with grace and delicacy ; and what occasion, I would ask, could have administered fairer opportunities of doing this with truth than the present ? Neither were the gentlemen, or even the ladies, then present, slow in availing themselves of these opportunities ; every comparison or simile in which flowers have any concern was called forth on the occasion, and the exhilaration of the moment enabled even the most dull to do this with effect. But did I say dull ? What Frenchwoman was ever dull in a scene such as the lawn then presented ?

Your Feast of the Flowers, Madame la Baronne, said the Viscomtesse de T——, is splen-

did, is superb : it surpasses all I could have conceived of a thing of the kind. Yet I cannot say that these elegant garlands add beauty to these charming young ladies ; I would rather say that these flowers derive new splendour from the beauty of those who wear them. And she appealed for the confirmation of her assertion to the Conte de S——, one of the few specimens then remaining of the court of Louis xv.



Being thus called upon, the old courtier endeavoured to produce some compliment of a superior nature to that of the lady, and asserted, that the roses were grown pale, and the jasmines yellow, for envy to find that their bloom and sweetness were entirely surpassed by those who had chosen them for ornaments.

This species of light and trifling conversation had proceeded for some time, when the Baronne took her place beneath the statue, and having commanded the band to cease their strain, caused the crown to be handed to her ; whilst by the direction of Madame Bulé, the young ladies

formed a half circle around her, the rest of the company, of whatever degree they might be, gathering close in the back ground.

There was a momentary pause and dead silence in the company, whilst a servant climbed up the high pedestal of the statue and carefully lifted the crown from the head. It was then delivered into the hands of the Baronne, and as I stood next to her, I saw that it was a beautiful thing; it was not of real myrtle, which would presently have faded, but was an imitation of myrtle, the leaves being formed of foil, the flowers of gold and mother of pearl, and the berries of coral; it was beautifully executed, and the motto, in letters of gold, wrought on a blue riband, twisted into the wreath. The Viscomtesse de T——, who stood on the right hand of the Baronne, as I did at the left, would have taken it for a moment into her own hands, exclaiming, Permit me, Madame! ah, how beautiful! it is perfectly captivating! But the Baronne would not part with it from her hand, nor suffer the golden letters on the blue riband to be read.

I am, I feel, she said, in a perilous situation ; I am about to make a choice amidst so many beauties, that I shall be in danger of incurring the odium of possessing a bad taste in still rejecting the most worthy, let my choice fall where it will ; and I, therefore, have nothing but my motto to depend upon to extricate me from this difficulty, therefore none must see my motto till I choose to show it myself.

The Baronne then paused, and looked around her, and as her eye ran along the lovely circle, I saw that several of the young ladies changed colour, especially the two at the head, namely, Susette and Fanchon ; and such was indeed the glowing bloom of one of these young ladies, and the elegance of the other, that I never doubted but that the crown would be adjudged to one of them.

You are at a loss, Madame, I see, said the Conte de S——, and I cannot wonder at your embarrassment ; there are so many beautiful figures in this circle, that it would be very difficult to say to whom the golden apple ought to be given.

Pardon me, monsieur, replied the lady, in a voice which, though low, was so distinct as to be heard by all present ; but you have mistaken my intention : it is not to the most beautiful or the most accomplished, the fairest or the ruddiest, the most witty or the most discreet that my crown is to be given ; but to her who, in my opinion, understands how to select the most becoming ornament.

So far we understand Madame, said the Abbé, nor would we be so impolite as to question your taste. Madame la Baronne can never be supposed to judge amiss in the eyes of persons of discernment, but perhaps we may not all here present be persons of discernment ; and Madame has undertaken to render every person in this company satisfied with her decision, and she depends upon her motto to stop the mouths of every malcontent. Upon my honour, Madame, unless your motto is a very extraordinary one, I do declare, (and he shrugged up his shoulders and smiled,) you are in great peril. I am, I confess, in great pain for you, Madame.

Well then, my friend, replied the Baronne, I will hasten to place you at ease. Ladies and

gentlemen, you shall hear my motto, and I am assured that no one here present will dispute its authority when I assure them that it is divine, and that it is taken from the holy Scriptures. So saying, she untwisted the riband from the myrtle crown ; and stating that the passage was addressed by St. Peter to his female converts, she proceeded to read it in a soft, yet clear and distinct voice ; it was to the following effect :—
“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ; but let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter iii. 3, 4.

When the Baronne had ceased to read, she looked up, and her eyes were directed to Aimée. The lily of the valley, she said, is the acknowledged emblem of humility ; this sweet flower conceals its beauties within its verdant covering ; it is spotless, pure, and fragrant ; its leaves have a cooling and healing influence ; it loves retirement and shade, yet when brought to view is exquisitely lovely. The lily, therefore I must consider as the best chosen ornament for a

youthful female, and therefore I must adjudge my crown to her that wears the lily.

There was a murmur of applause throughout the assembly on this decision, and every eye was fixed on the little girl, who came blushing forward at the command of the lady.

Aimée, said the Baronne, as the dear child bowed humbly before her, I rejoice that I can, with a sincere feeling of love and esteem, bestow on you this simple preference; your character has long been known to me, and the humility and meekness of your conduct, since you entered the family of Madame Bulé, has not only been noticed by me, but has filled me with admiration. In those talents and external qualities which are pleasing in our sex you have many equals now present, and you will thoroughly understand that the regard I now express has no reference to these qualities; it is your humility and your holy harmlessness, your exemption from envy, and your freedom from bad passions which are your chief and crowning ornament, even that ornament which is above all price.

So saying she raised the myrtle crown above the head of Aimée, and was about to place it there, when the little girl, bending low, and fall-



ing on one knee, in a manner which I thought exceedingly graceful, raised her lovely eyes to the lady and said, Ah, Madame, could I wear that crown I should prove to all here assembled, what is but too true, that I have not deserved it. I desire, indeed, to be like the lily; but I am not so. I know my own heart; I know that it is full of evil passions, and if I do not betray these evil passions so often as I feel them, it is

not to my own strength I dare to give the glory. My dear lady, I implore you, do not put the crown upon my head.

There was a dead silence in the assembly, every one was impressed with a solemn feeling : at length it was broken by the lady, who said, whilst holding the myrtle wreath over the head of the kneeling child, Aimée, my beloved, indeed you must not resist our united entreaties, you must submit to wear the honour you have so justly merited.

Ah, no, lady, lady dear ! she replied, lifting up her face as she knelt, with a sweet and unaffected earnestness ; no, no ! it cannot be ; and at the same time gently removing the garland of lilies from her shoulders and laying it on the grass at the Baroness's feet. I am neither worthy to wear the lily or the crown ; sweet lady, place the crown upon the garland, and then I will endeavour to merit both ; at least, she added, if not in life, yet perhaps in death, for then—then I shall be ——. But we could not catch the last part of the sentence, for the little girl was unable to speak clearly by reason of her tears.

Aimée ! lovely, lovely Aimée ! sweet, sweet child ! you have conquered, exclaimed the Baronne, laying the crown at her feet upon the garland, and then coming forwards, she embraced the child, and wept as she pressed her to her heart.

It was an awful feeling that impressed the company at that moment ; the tear was in every eye. The Abbé whispered to me, Heaven have mercy upon me, a sinner ! If that child thinks herself impure in the eyes even of her fellow-creatures, what am I in the sight of God ? and he crossed himself. I heard expressions of the same nature from many mouths ; and Susette pleased me much, by assuring me that she now felt ashamed of herself and of her own vain-glorious opinions of her merits.

It is hardly necessary that I should assure my reader that the conduct of Aimée on this and on all other occasions evidently showed that there was no art or affectation in her conduct—no pretence of humility which she did not actually feel, but really a deep and heartfelt

sense of her own unworthiness, and an utter disregard of what effect might result from her conduct, or what impression it might make on those who were present. I mention this, for although it is a lovely thing to see *true* humility in a child ; nothing is more displeasing to God, or more offensive to those of our fellow-creatures whose minds are well regulated, than to perceive attempts to display a humility which is not really felt.

In the mean time the Baronne ordered the garland and crown to be carried to the church and to be placed in the lady chapel there ; and it was some time before the assembly could so far divest themselves of their serious feelings as to enter into the amusements of the evening. As to myself I must confess that it was during that evening that I for the first time made any serious reflections on the violence which the mind suffers in being drawn from solemn feelings into those which are merely earthly, and the contrary ; and I was led to think that human wisdom consisted in avoiding those excitements of earthly pleasure, by which the feelings more

suited to our state as dying creatures are rendered distasteful and uncongenial to our minds.

After the Feast of the Flowers, several months passed during which nothing particular took place in our private circle worthy of record.

During this period our minds were much agitated by public affairs ; that dreadful revolution in my country which was so awful in its progress and so wonderful in its effects, had commenced. The capital was already in confusion, but we in the provinces still only heard the thunder rolling in the distance.

In the mean time, the remainder of the summer and the whole of the autumn and winter passed away. In the middle of the winter, I was seized with a rheumatic complaint, which confined me to my bed till towards the end of spring. During this period a friend took my duty, and I saw little of my people ; my Bible was, I thank God, my constant companion at that time, and the reading thereof I have reason to think, was blessed to me in a degree which

can hardly be conceived. It was thought, however, necessary when I left my bed that I should change the air, and accordingly I was carried from my bed to the chaise which was to convey me to the house of a married sister, who lived not very far from Rouen ; there I remained two months, but at the end of that period was much distressed by letters from the Baronne, who informed me that a contagious disorder had broken out with violence in the house of Madame Bulé, that many of the children were very ill, and that our little Aimée was in peril of her life. It was very late in the spring when I received this news, and as my health was nearly reestablished, I lost no time, but hastened back to my flock—that flock which I was destined soon to quit under the most painful circumstances, and to quit for life ; for the door of my restoration to my former place is for ever shut against me—my principles would now be held in abhorrence by those who loved me formerly—nor could I, even if permitted, now take a part in services of whose idolatry I have been long assured. But no more of this ; it has no doubt been good for me, and for others of my

countrymen, that their ancient ties have been dissolved—ties which bound us to the world and to a false religion, and which we should never have had strength to break by our own efforts.

It was a glorious evening in the end of May when I arrived within view of my own village, from which I had been absent many weeks. I had quitted the public vehicle in which I had travelled, on the opposite bank of the Seine, and having crossed the river in a small boat, I proceeded on foot the short remainder of my journey. As soon as I left the boat, I was in my own parish, I was in fact at home, and I was walking my way along an embowered path-way towards the village, when I overtook a decent peasant in her best apparel going the same way. To my inquiry, How is it with you, neighbour Mourque? How are all our friends? she replied, Ah! Father Raffré, we have lost one of our fairest flowers, and I am now going to see the last duties paid to her blessed remains.

Our flowers, I repeated; not my lily, I trust; is it Aimée who is no more?

It is, sir, she replied : and when I last saw her at the chateau, I thought the little angel would never live to enjoy another fête ; such as she, father, are not for this world : nay, her own very words, when she refused the crown and spoke of what she should be, proved to me how it would be ; and others said the same. But the crown and the garland are to be placed



on her coffin, sir ; the garland indeed, sir, is withered and shrunk, but the crown is not made of such things as can fade, they tell me ; but

it will be a touching spectacle, and surely, sir, there will not be many absent from the church this evening who were at the lady's Feast of Flowers.

I could not speak—so the good woman proceeded without interruption.

She informed me of many things concerning the sickness and death of the poor child, and of the grief of the Baronne and of Madame Bulé, who both together, as she said, waited on the dear child day after day and night after night; and she told me how she had prayed whilst her senses had been continued to her, and how she had again and again called upon her Saviour, and spoken of her hope of being speedily taken to him who had died for her; and how she had expressed her love for her instructress and the lady of the chateau, and her tender regard for her schoolfellows—but, added the peasant, with some emotion of manner and some expression of regret, it is a grief to me to think that the poor child was so insensible when the priest attempted to administer

the last sacrament, that she knew nothing of what passed, she was as insensible to the holy anointing as the still-born babe ; neither did she take the smallest cognizance of the holy cross which was held before her—the Lord have mercy on her soul ! I am thinking, father, could she have been a heretic ? Was she not from England ?

Ah ! I said, was it so ? 'tis true, she was from England.

The woman started at the manner in which I spoke, and looked anxiously at me, saying, Do you doubt, sir, do you doubt of her final happiness ?

I interrupted her, Ah, would to God, I answered, that I were as blessed and happy as that dear child now is ! On whom did she call in her dying hours, whom did she live only to please, to whom did she give all the glory, but unto the only true Saviour, he who is above all saints and angels, the God incarnate, he by whom alone the sinner can be saved ?

The poor woman crossed herself as I spoke, and assented to my assertion.

Blessed little lamb ! I exclaimed, and art thou

gathered to the fold of the only true Shepherd ? Sweet lily of the valley ! and art thou removed to a more congenial soil ; but who shall fill the place which thou hast left ?

At that instant the tower of the church broke upon my view as we turned an angle of the road, and a distant sound of choral harmony burst upon my ear. I was ashamed of it, but I could not help it ; I burst into tears, and wept like a child. I did not know till that moment how dear the orphan Aimée was to my heart. I roused myself, however, and walked on, and a few steps brought me into the entrance of the village street, and in full view of the western front of the church, the great door of which being open, I could distinguish the crowd within, and hear the soft melody of the human voice attuned with the full toned organ within in such a chant, so solemn, so touching, so sublime, as seemed to raise my mind above all earthly feelings, and make me (I was about to say almost, but I will say entirely) desire to be with my Aimée, absent from the body, and present with my Lord. As I advanced, I perceived that

all the houses in the street were deserted, and the deep silence which reigned amid these dwellings enabled me to hear the requiem more clearly and more distinctly. At length, as I passed under the doorway of the church, I found myself in a crowd, not only of my own parishioners, but of persons from the neighbouring villages, who had assembled on this solemn occasion : way was, however, immediately made for me, and I advanced towards the high altar, before which was the coffin of my beloved Aimée, covered with a white pall, and beyond it, in a semicircle, stood all her former companions. But there, in that sad hour—sad for us who remained, yet most blessed for her who was gone—were no garlands of roses, no flaunting ribands, no gaudy attire : each fair young creature wore a long white veil ; and even the once blooming cheeks of Susette were pale with grief and moist with tears—nay, the very levity of Mademoiselle Victoire had given way on this affecting occasion, and she stood a monument of silent woe. Ah ! did she not remember then all her cruel carriage towards the gentle child whose cold remains were stretched before her ?

On the white pall lay the faded garland of the lily of the valley ; an affecting emblem of her who had plucked those flowers and woven that garland, affecting to all, yet how much more so to me, who so well remembered the gay delight of the beloved Aimée when she had obtained the object of her innocent and elegant desires—an emblem consecrated by holy writ, which says, “ As for man, his days are as grass ; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth ; for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” Psalm ciii. 15, 16. No eye looked up when I approached the altar, though all, as I afterwards found, had been aware of my presence. I came up near to the coffin at the moment when the last note of the requiem was dying away along the vaulted aisles, and at the same instant Madame la Baronne came forward with the myrtle crown in her hand. The garland had been formed of perishable materials, but not so the crown—as compared with the garland of lilies, at least, it was imperishable—it was fresh and fair as it had first appeared ; it thus formed a beautiful emblem of that “ crown of glory which fadeth

not away ;” and it was an emblem which all present understood, though no one spoke to point it out. It was laid upon the coffin over the faded garland by the Baronne herself, and



when she had stooped to kiss the pall, Madame Bulé and all her pupils stepped forward to follow her example, after which the service proceeded, and the remains of our little beloved one were consigned to the dust in the vault of the family of the chateau.

I remained alone in the church when all the

congregation had withdrawn; and it was then that I solemnly resolved to renounce the vanities in which I had been educated, and, with the Divine help, to quit all earthly considerations to follow the truth as it is stated in the holy Scriptures, unto all extremities to which my abandonment of the church of Rome might reduce me.

I was speedily strengthened in this resolution by the afflictions of my country, and forced by persecution to fly from that land in which, under more prosperous circumstances, I might have been again involved in the mazes of error and of death.

And here I close my little narrative, leaving my Aimée to rest in her cold grave in a distant land.

This lily of the valley was indeed nipped ere yet it had attained its perfect growth; its stem was cut down to the earth whilst yet its flower was in the bud; but the root has not perished, it lives still beneath the sod, and in the morning

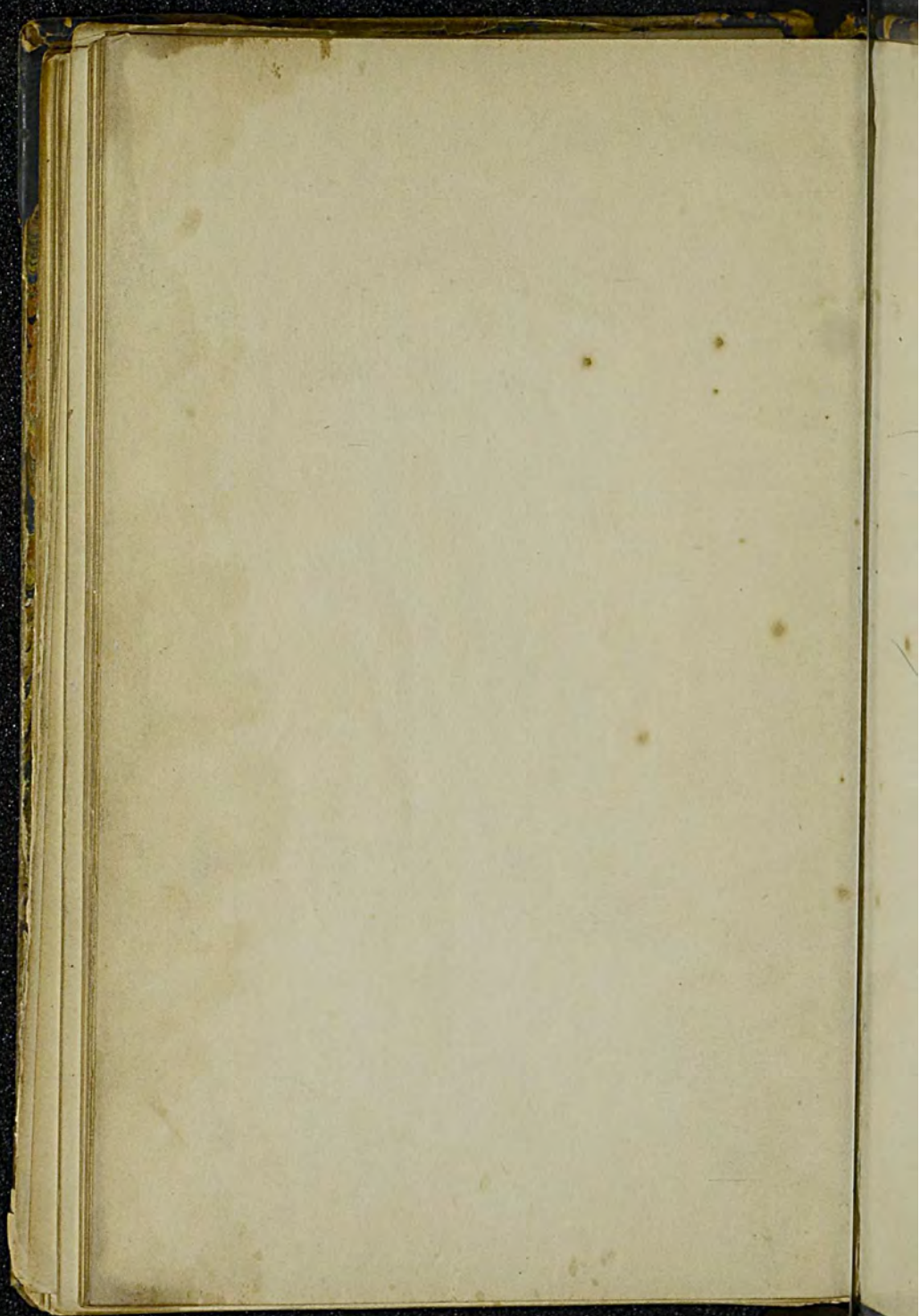
of the resurrection it shall be translated from the wild forest of this world to the garden of our Lord, where it will bloom with a celestial lustre, and enjoy a never fading verdure. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth : but the word of our God shall stand for ever : and blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.



Chiswick Press :

PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM.

om
of
ual
he
ord
sed



2000

2000

201





