

BROOKE'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE END OF HER CHILDHOOD.

THE Convent of the Annonciades, situated in a secluded spot on the outskirts of Paris, has long been well reputed as an educational establishment for young ladies of good family. The sisters themselves are women of refinement and cultivation, and the antecedents of every pupil received by them are most carefully inquired into: so carefully, indeed, that admission to the Convent School is looked on almost as a certificate of noble birth and unimpeachable orthodoxy. The Ladies of the Annonciades have indeed lately relaxed their rules, so far as to receive as parlor-boarders some very rich American girls and the children of a Protestant English marquis; but wealth in the first instance, and birth in the second, counterbalance the objections that might be raised to their origin or their faith. These exceptions to the rule are, however, few and far between; and, in spite of the levelling tendencies of our democratic days, Annonciades Convent is still one of the most exclusive and aristocratic establishments of the kind in Europe.

Although we know too well that small-minded jealousy, strife, and bickering must exist in a community of women cut off so entirely from the outer world as in this Convent of the Annonciades, it must be confessed that the very name and air of the place possess a certain romantic charm. The house is old, turreted like a château, overgrown with clematis and passion-flower. The grounds, enclosed by high mossy walls, are of great extent, and beautifully laid