

For some time Count Louis remained silent, his eyes fixed on the ground, his hand playing unconsciously with the fair locks of his daughter's hair. Then suddenly nerving himself to the effort,

"Do you know," said he, in a harsh voice, "that you and your order have been accused of heresy before the chapter at Basle?"

"That cannot be, my lord!" cried I, aghast.

"The matter is most serious, Father Ambrose; you are accused of not believing in the holy mother of God, and of not rendering to her due worship and adoration."

"Have you, my lord, ever discovered proofs of this in the lessons I have given you, or has Father Weridon opened your eyes?"

The noble Count began to toy again with his child's curls, even pulling them so hard as to make her scream. Then rising suddenly he advanced to the table, seized the Bishop's letter, and, handing it to me, said,

"Once more, Father Ambrose, I tell you it troubles me more than I can express; but the state in which things are, and for the honor and peace of our house, you must understand."

I had understood but too well; still, not wishing him to see my emotion, I calmly proceeded to ask, "What, then, is this message, and of what does it treat, Count Louis?"

"Well, Father Weridon must have told you that in consequence of this grave accusation, and by the express desire of the countesses, who will not suffer the least taint of heresy to rest upon our noble house, the Bishop of Basle has nominated Father Weridon, of the very reverend Order of Franciscans, chaplain to this castle of Ferette. He also discharges you from that office, though without any reflection on your personal character."

I read the message, and when I became convinced that all was as had been stated, I replaced the despatch on the table, and replied calmly,

"That, by desire of your noble ladies, my lord Count, I am relieved from my office, and Father Weridon appointed in my place, is a subject on which I offer no remark; but concerning the pretended heresy of our venerated Order of Benedic-

tines—an accusation of which, by the eye, I find no mention in the episcopal despatch,—permit me to say is a monstrous falsehood. You know perfectly well that the real cause of my dismissal is a blow I gave your son when I found him torturing a poor little swallow to death. All this has nothing whatever to do with the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin. That doctrine involves theological niceties and subtleties about which neither you, my lord Count, nor your noble ladies are competent to express an opinion."

The poor Count remained standing before me, his head hanging down, just as when in his childhood I had reprov'd him for a flagrant violation of the truth. He looked so humiliated, so boy-like, that the good Herzeland, climbing upon the table to throw her little arms round his neck, turned to ask me,

"Why have you made my father so sad, Father Ambrose?"

"Would to God, my child," I replied with deep emotion, "that I could succeed in putting into the heart of your noble father that blessed sorrow which awakens a soul into life!"

Clasping my hands I prayed aloud, "Almighty and eternal God, Thou who triest the hearts and reins, and will one day disclose before Thy dread tribunal our most secret thoughts, Thou seest the curse of sin resting heavily on this house, like a cloud bearing the tempest in its bosom. Of Thy great mercy, I humbly beseech Thee, avert this curse. Direct into the right path these wandering souls, make Thy face to shine upon them, and snatch them from the kingdom of Satan, that they may be converted and live!"

During this prayer, poor Count Louis, pale and trembling, had fallen on his knees, weeping like a child. Herzeland knelt beside him. Extending my hand over my old pupil and his beloved daughter, I blessed them both in the name of the Lord. I invoked upon them peace and strength from on high, and I besought our Heavenly Father to keep these two precious souls from the snares of the wicked one, or to recall them, rather, from this sinful world to their Father's house in the glorious Paradise above!