

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

POOR ROSALIE.

CHAP. III.

At first Rosalie stood motionless and bewildered; but, the next moment, conviction of a most important truth flashed upon her mind. She well remembered when, elated by vanity, she had uttered these memorable words. It was when she believed herself alone and on the night of the murder! But they had been overheard! He, therefore, who had just repeated must have overheard them—must have been concealed in the room in which she had spoken them, and must consequently have seen her, himself unseen. Then, no doubt, she had beheld, in the man who had just quitted the garden, the murderer of her benefactress! Never was there a more clear and logical deduction; and, in Rosalie's mind, it amounted to positive conviction; but was it sufficient to convince others? There was the difficulty; but Rosalie saw it not. And, in a transport of devout thankfulness, she fell on her knees, exclaiming that the hand of the Lord had led her thither, that she might avenge her murdered friend, and clear herself. But how should she proceed? It was evident that the man was going to leave that spot. What could she do?—and Madelon was not at home to advise her. No time was to be lost; therefore, throwing a veil over her head, she hastened to the house of the chief of the municipality, which was on the road in the town mentioned before. Fearfully did she go, as she run the risk of meeting the ruffian by the way, and she thought he might suspect her errand. But she reached the house unseen by him, and requested an immediate audience. It was not till she had sent in her message, and was told the magistrate would see her in a few minutes, that she recollected in what a contemptible light, as the utterer of self-admiration, she was going to appear; but she owned it was a humiliation which she had well deserved, and which she must not shrink from.

When she was summoned into the presence of the magistrate, she was so overcome that she could not speak, but burst into tears.

‘What is the matter, my poor girl?’ said he; ‘and who are you? Come, come, I have no time to throw away on fine feelings; your business, your business!’

Rosalie crossed herself devoutly, struggled with her emotion, and then, though with great effort, asked him if he recollected to have heard of the murder of an old lady, in such a village, and at such a time.

‘To be sure I do,’ said he, ‘and a young girl who lived with her was tried for the murder.’

‘Yes—and acquitted!’

‘True; but I thought very wrongfully, for I believe that Rosalie, somehow or other, was guilty.’

Again the poor Rosalie crossed herself; then, raising her meek eyes to his, she said, in a firm voice, ‘She was innocent, sir; I am Rosalie Mirbel.’

‘Thou!—then looks are indeed deceitful,’ replied the magistrate, fixing his eyes intently and severely upon her.

‘Not so if I look innocent,’ she answered.

‘But what can be thy business with me, young woman?’

I am sure I have discovered the real murderer; and I come to require that you take him into custody on my charge.’

‘He! what! ho, he is thy accomplice, I suppose, and you have quarrelled—so thou art going to turn informer—is that the case?’

‘I am innocent, I tell you, sir, therefore can have no accomplice—and I never saw this man in my life till three days ago.’

‘Girl, girl! dost thou expect me to believe this? What is he?’

‘A carpenter.’

‘What is his name?’

‘I do not know.’

‘And where is he?’

‘In the neighbourhood.’

‘But where could I find him?’

‘I do not know.’