

She counts the days, the hours, the minutes that must intervene between then and until the seventh of September at one o'clock in the afternoon, when His Holiness receives the French Pilgrimage. Soon, however, her glad serenity is clouded by the thought that she has no mantilla to wear at the reception. Before leaving home she had persuaded herself her old black shawl would serve the purpose, but now her pride rebels. She cannot wear it. If the Pope, who is so gracious and fatherly to all, should speak to her, or look at her !... No, the old black shawl will never do.

Like sunshine dispelling her anxiety come the consoling words :

" The Sisters of St. Charles are very kind : they will undoubtedly lend you a mantilla. Their Convent is only a step from here, where we shall remain for ten minutes. You have ample time. Go and ask them, my child."

The speaker was the spiritual head of the compartment. He had recognized Virginie and guessed the cause of her trouble.

She quickly returned, her head gracefully adorned with a lovely mantilla, and hastened after the Pilgrims who had already started. Unfortunately she did not overtake them before she reached the Vatican. The Swiss Guards let her pass through the big bronze door, and one of them divining her object points towards a wide staircase to the right which she mounts with the agility of a school girl. Her age, awkwardness, shyness, all is forgotten in her triumphant gladness. In the vestibule at the top of the stairs, one of the Guards unexpectedly bars her progress, saying :

" Madam, may I ask the object of your visit ? "

" National Pilgrimage," she breathlessly answered.

" They have already entered... You are too late ! "

" French Pilgrimage ! French Pilgrimage ! " repeated the dazed girl now imploring, now threatening — but neither her menaces nor her prayers could soften the stern Guard whose inexorable answer, " Too late ! Too late " seemed beyond her comprehension.

The minutes were like hours to poor Virginie, her eyes grew dim with tears, her heart seemed to stop beating ; she felt cold and faint with misery as the truth finally