

The Sister of Charity.

—
 “OH MARY, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN,
 PRAY FOR ME, WHO HAVE RECOURSE TO
 THEE.”

(Concluded.)

“I will not, father. I will not. Oh! why did you not let me be a nun, like my sister? What had I done that you should use me thus?”

“Spouse of Christ,” said the sick man, turning solemnly towards Agnes, “the sins of this unhappy child are upon my soul as my own. By the mercy for which you have taught me to hope, save her from the guilt into which I alone have plunged her.”

The nun was weeping bitterly. A light had broken on her soul.

“Father,” she whispered, “do you not know your child?”

The man gazed earnestly upon her; sickness had dimmed his eyes; but at last he recognized his child, and fell back fainting on his pillow. With some difficulty he was restored, and then pressing gently the hand of Agnes, he pointed to his youngest daughter, who still remained kneeling with her face buried in her hands, and whispered,

“Be a mother to poor Isabel.”

Agnes bowed her head, and taking her sister's arm, she led her from the room. The priest closed the door after them, and then Agnes folded her sister in her arms. The poor girl neither returned nor rejected these caresses.—She did not sob or scream: but the tears fell in torrents from her eyes, and she looked the very picture of shame and sorrow. Then struck by another

impulse, she fell upon her knees, as if wholly unworthy to stand in the presence of one so pure as her sister.

“Oh, sister, sister!” cried Agnes, “treat me not thus. Look not as if you had forgotten me,—your own sister—your Agnes.”

The mighty affliction of the poor sinner's soul found voice at last, and falling on her sister's breast, she cried out aloud,—

“Sister, I am a sinner!”

“And so was Magdalen,—and so are we all!” cried Agnes, her tears falling abundantly on her sister's head. “Oh, sister! let us kneel together, and say once more the prayers that we said in the days of our childhood. We were children then!—we are children still! We will tell our Heavenly Father that we are sorry for our sins, and He will not refuse us his pardon and his love.”

Twined in each other's arms they knelt together, and Agnes prayed aloud. It was years since Isabel had heard that voice, the very tones of which were full of piety and love; it was years since a thought of grace, a hope of pardon had entered her soul; and now, with the prayer of her innocent childhood ringing in her ears, and the repentant love of a Magdalen burning in her bosom, full of fear for the future and remorse for the past, she clasped her sister more tightly in her arms and sobbed aloud.

“Leave me not, sister,—desert me not! Oh, save me from this life of sin, and the God of the sinner and the saint reward you for the deed!”

Agnes folded her sister in her arms.

“My sister, I will never forsake you until I see you restored to God and his holy Church! I leave you no more!”

The priest now recalled them to their father's chamber. He was about to