

and then prostrated himself on the slimy ground beside her.

Nanon ran out, clapping along on her wooden shoes, and helped the pair to get on their legs, and then led the blind man across to his faithless little guide.

"You are badly hurt, child!" she said, as the little one wiped away the mud from her face, and showed the blood streaming from a cut in her forehead. "Bring her in and wash it well," said Paul as he led the blind man after them.

"Is the little one much hurt?" inquired the grandfather as he entered the sitting room, tapping the ground with his staff at every step. "Only a scratch, good man," said Paul, placing him in a chair, "it will be nothing. Nanon will wash it nicely for her and bind it up." But the cut proved more than a scratch. The black sand of the road had penetrated into the child's flesh and irritated it, and it kept on bleeding for a long time. "She will bear the marks of it to the end of her days," said Nanon. "The skin will close over the sand, and leave a black mark on her forehead. See, it is like a cross with one arm lopped off."

Paul Ovenbeck looked closer and saw, as Nanon said, the black mark through the red—a sad disfigurement for a maiden to carry on her brow, even over such sweet blue eyes as those that looked up timidly at him from under the wet bandage which Nanon was fastening tightly round the curly head. With all her rough speech she had a kind heart, Old Nanon, and she took the little one in to the old grandfather, who was waiting patiently with that pathetic look on his sightless face that is so touching in the blind, and then she went to prepare a meal for them, as Paul Ovenbeck suggested. The child looked wistfully at the fire, and then drew near and spread out her tiny hands to the old man, and took one of his cold hands between her small palms and pressed them on it.

"It is good, bon papa?" she whispered as the old man turned his blind eyes lovingly on her.

"Very good, my little one; but warm thyself now." Nanon came in with the sauerkraut, and set the beer and the bread and cheese on the table, and helped

the old man and watched the child feeding him.

"We are having a merry Christmas in spite of thy tumble, little one, eh?" said the grandfather, as he swallowed a draught of the beer and drew his sleeve across his mouth.

"You live far from this, good man?" inquired Paul, who had been watching the weather-beaten face of his guest with a growing sense of curiosity.

"Not more than half an hour's walk, monsieur," said the old man; "in the Cour Blanche."

The Cour Blanche was the poorest quarter in St. Louis.

"How do you live?"

"The little one earns for both of us, monsieur."

"What! that child? What work can she do?"

"She is nimble at her needle, monsieur, she embroiders well, and folks buy her work readily."

"She is a handy little body and she keeps my place tidy, and manages better than many a woman twice her age, though she is only ten years old. The Sisters kept her for a couple of years, and taught her a deal of things. I had to take her home when my old woman died. It was a pity, she was an apt scholar; they would have made her as learned as a bishop if I could have left her with them altogether."

Here the man called Babette. They must be going he said. It was getting late, and they had a good step to walk, and, moreover, they had abused the kindness of monsieur by staying so long.

"Come and see me soon, and bring me some of your embroidery to look at, Babette," said Paul, putting a small silver piece in the child's hand as he said good-by.

"You are too good, monsieur. May the good God repay you for your kindness on this Christmas Day," said the old man; but the smile in Babette's eyes was the sweetest thanks of all.

Paul Ovenbeck and Nanon stood at the door of the cottage and watched them down the road, Babette leading the blind old man, and looking back now and then with a wistful glance at the two figures standing in the open doorway of what had