

the day you took it to teach me to read ; since that it has never quitted me, and you can see how I have marked every lesson.'

At these words he took the old volume, and showed between almost all the leaves, sprigs of herbs and dried flowers.

Niette smiled. 'Let me see, then, if you have studied well, my poor Louis.' She made a sign to Marzou, who approached her footstool and placed himself at her feet in the modest and docile attitude of a child. The book resting upon the knees of the young girl, opened as if by chance, at the page marked by a colored image of the Virgin with the seven wounds in her heart. It happened to be the marriage service. Niette with the end of her spindle pointed to the line, and Marzou read with much hesitation : 'Oh God! look with a favourable eye on thy servant. About to be espoused, she implores thy protection. May her yoke be the yoke of peace and love. May she be lovely as Rachel ; wise as Rebecca ; faithful as Sarah. May she be to her husband what the vine is to the elm. Lord, you have shown mercy towards us ; you have had pity on two orphans, in order that they might bless thy holy name for evermore.'

Here the young man raised his eyes towards Niette. 'It is not I who speak, it is the book' said he with a smile ; 'but you see yourself, Niette, that Providence appears to favor us.'

'Hold your tongue Louis' interrupted the young girl, shaking her head sadly, '*Providence* does not trouble itself about such trifles ; *our destiny* depends on people who are not favourably inclined towards us.'

'I know it, I know it, Mon Dieu,' replied Marzou ; 'your father has always hated me, as if I had done him some wrong : but he cannot keep his anger for ever against one who has never injured him, and who asks for *nothing but your love*. Provided you give me a place in *your heart*, Niette, I shall not be without hope. God will bring everything about in his own time ; we must have patience ; the *birds* you know are obliged to wait till Spring to build *their nests*.'

'Yes,' said the peasant girl, sadly, breaking the flax from the distaff ; 'but *they* have no *Luberts* among them.' The Straggler of the Beach trembled, and the blood mounted to his face, usually so pale. 'Has Lubert, then, spoken ?' asked he in a low hurried tone.

'Not himself,' replied Niette, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. '*Lubert* does not know how to speak to a woman ; but somebody has spoken for him.' She then with much emotion, told him of the commands of her father with respect to their neighbour, whom he wished above all things to have for a son-in-law.

Though Marzou, like everybody else, suspected his intention, he appeared stunned by Niette's account ; and the young girl who only wished to moderate his ardour, soon perceived that she had gone too far. She then tried to inspire him with fresh courage ; but Louis seemed obstinate in his grief, and would