

FATHER DE LISLE.

By Miss Taylor

(A Tale of fact in fiction's garb).

CHAPTER XIV.

"Grazed not on worldly
wither'd wood
It fitteth not thy taste;
The flowers of everlasting
spring
Do grow for thy repast."

—Poems by Father Southwell.

"Rose, Rose," cried a baby voice, "please take me to the lady my mother."

"Willingly, darling one," said Rose cheerfully, as she lifted from the ground a lovely boy, scarcely two years old, and passed with him along the corridor to the apartment of her mistress.

She entered the room without ceremony. It was the dressing, or "tiring" chamber of the young Duchess of Bertram. A small looking-glass was affixed to the wall, and the apartment bore marks of a gay and varied fancy in its owner. Articles of dress were scattered about, various fashions had been tried on and were thrown aside; the perfume of flowers and scents mingled together, and before the glass was sitting the Duchess herself, her sunny hair all let down over her white neck, and half shading her fair face, while she was busy in examining the workmanship of a curiously carved ivory comb.

While Rose, with her child in her arms steals in unobserved, we will take a glance at Constance, and see what ten years have done for her. They have left but little trace. She is more perfectly beautiful than before, though, perhaps, a little less fresh. There is a wistfulness in the depth of her hazel eyes, but there are no lines on the smooth face, which tell of care, of disappointment, or heart-ache. That look of secret grief, which to a discerning eye, was visible under a bridal smile, is gone. Has the good Duke of Bertram, who in this space of time has grown stout and portly, more hospitable, more hearty, and more stupid than ever, succeeded, then, in winning his wife's depth of affection, and filling up the void in the yearning heart? Ah! no, but behold the secret is unravelled. Rose is close behind her now, and holding up the baby, its rosy face is reflected in the glass. With a cry of joy, the Duchess turns.

"My boy! My beauty!"
He is in her arms, and in that sudden glow, and in that flood of joy, you learn the secret—Constance is a mother! Old dreams, old sorrows, pass her by and are gone.

"Well, Rose," said Constance, after having fondly caressed her child, "were you successful this morning? You stayed so long I began to fear you had been disappointed."

"No, I was not disappointed, dear lady," said Rose; "I had all I wanted, and more; I had a strange joy—I suppose I may call it joy, though other feelings were mingled with it."

"What could it be?" exclaimed Constance.

"The priest today," said Rose, lowering her voice, "was my young lord, now Father de Lisle."

"Is it possible?" said the Duchess; "and yet after the first moment I am not surprised. A priest's life, especially in these days, and 'here,' is a life of such heroic self-sacrifice that would well engage such a soul. Why do you wonder at it Rose—'you' who admire all the things that the saints did, which make me shudder?"

"No; I wondered only in these days when every Catholic family is of importance, that the last of the line of such an ancient house should have been suffered to give up all hope of perpetuating his."

"But the act of attainder has been passed."

"Has it? I did not know it, but even yet—"

"I know what you would say, Rose—another monarch would restore it; but trust me, Elizabeth Tudor will outlive you and me, Rose, even though we may not die young."

Rose half smiled.

"You don't believe me? You will see; death and our most mighty sovereign will have a tough battle together, I prophesy. But tell me more Rose, I am hungry for news. Is Father de Lisle stationed in London?"

"Yes, till he is betrayed, I suppose," said Rose sadly.

"Oh, no fear of that; his alliance with our house is a most powerful protection. Let him but be cautious, and he may stay here for a long time together. What rejoicing for you, Rose! you will be able to get so much that makes your happiness."

"The sacraments?—yes," and Rose's hands were clasped and her eyes raised for a moment; then she perceived that Constance's eyes were full of tears. "Dearest lady," said Rose, kneeling down beside her, "would that they were joy to you also!"

The Duchess shook her head. "I was never meant to be a martyr or confessor, Rose. Your faith is not for me, but one cannot help envying, sometimes, the peace, the joy, the certainty you seem to possess. See Rose" she added, pointing to her boy, who had fallen asleep on her shoulder, "there is something to envy, to be a child like that, sleeping in its mother's arms in perfect peace."

"And so we may be, also, dearest lady—so may we sleep and rest in His arms, who remembereth better than a mother."

"Yes, yes," said Constance, wearily; "'tis a lovely vision, but a vision only, to such as me. Well, 'tis something to muse on—Walter de Lisle a priest! Rose I will lay down this boy on my bed, and wilt thou arrange my hair, for I have tarried too long at my toilet."

"Yes, truly, and it is my fault," said Rose, rising quickly; "now I will do my best with all possible despatch."

For ten years had Rose Ford been the waiting maid of Constance, and it may easily be conceived how the tie had ripened into friendship. In times of hollowness and deception, when spies were in almost every household, Constance knew how to value the fidelity and affection of her attendant. She prized Rose as one of her greatest treasures, and with the continual thoughtfulness for others which made so lovely a part of her character, she strove in every way to make Rose happy. There was but one thing she knew Rose valued—the exercises of her religion, and all Constance's wit and influence were exercised to procure this comfort for Rose. Very often did she gain for her admission into the chapels of the foreign embassies, which were closed against ordinary strangers with great vigilance; and whenever there was a secret meeting of the Catholics in some private house, which took place as often as a priest could be found, Rose generally was present, by her mistress's contrivance. It was from one of these gatherings that she had returned on the morning we have described. And by Rose's hands large alms were sent by Constance to many a hunted priest and many a starving Catholic. Many a perishing one had been revived by Constance's care; and yet Constance was not a Catholic. She was indeed, one in heart and belief. There was not a point of faith that yet remained a difficulty, first with Walter, afterward with Rose, she had become satisfied and convinced. But Constance counted the cost. The world, though sometimes it wearied her, was still too sweet to be relinquished. She put the thought from

her, and went on winning love from all, and scattering benefits round her on all sides. With assistance and help furnished by the Duchess, Rose crept into many a miserable hole, and fed the hungry and clothed the naked, and the prayer of the poor and the needy—that all powerful prayer of gratitude—went up for Constance to the throne of God. Not yet was the gift of faith granted—or rather of strength to profess the faith. But there was a shield around Constance—a shield of angel's wings. In early youth and of rare beauty, the wife of a man she loved not, and who was too indolent and simple to care for or watch over her, Constance found herself in the midst of the court of Elizabeth—a court which formed a strange contrast to the rigid purity of that of Mary Tudor—a court ruled by a queen endowed with a woman's weakness, without, apparently one instinct of her nature—a woman who had taken the hard and reasoning part of the masculine nature, without one spark of man's tenderness or the refinement so constantly found in the sternest characters. In the court of Elizabeth there were dangers without end or limit, and few were those who passed through it unscathed, at least in reputation. But one of these few was Constance: the fair name of the Duchess of Bertram was untouched. Fascinating and beloved, admired and sought after, she yet seemed to possess a clue which guided her through the maze. She did not know how it was herself, she often confessed to Rose her astonishment that her path was so smooth, but Rose, who knew with what might those secret prayers were rising up around her, wondered not; but she knew there must be an end—that the Duchess could not flutter through the world forever; sorrow must come at last, and death; and Rose prayed on.

(To be continued).

EARLY IMPRESSIONS.

We have Oliver Wendell Holmes as authority for the statement that a child's education should begin a hundred years before it is born, and Emerson backing him with the solemn assurance that when a child is born, the gate of gifts has forever closed upon him, that all that he can ever hope to be is then decided.

But just as the growth and color of a plant depend upon whether it spring up in a dark cellar or in the outer sunshine, and as its straightness may depend upon whether the seed sprout under some obstacle around which the plant must grow and thus inevitably be distorted, so many a child is morally weakened and twisted by its environment, by the thoughtlessness, perhaps, of the very grown-ups who love it best.

It is a common enough sight, if a small child fall against a chair, to see the grown-up who would comfort it slap the chair and say "naughty chair to hurt baby." This form of comfort is simply a nice little object lesson by which the small novice in the world's ways will gradually be taught, and all unconsciously, the old Mosaic doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, as well as a subtle lesson in injustice. For there is something almost uncanny about the acuteness of a child's mind, and you may depend upon it, that the little creature will learn at a surprisingly early age, that it isn't the chair which is at fault.

Then, having learned revenge upon inanimate things, the small creature will pass it on to animate ones, and will beat the dog or cat upon occasion, and, later, its little playmates will suffer from this evil tendency, and the child will earn a reputation for cruelty and spitefulness, which may cling to him for years. How much better, from the first, to explain to the little one why the chair hurt him, and to instruct him how to avoid a similar accident in the future.

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One of the pictures is called

"Heart Broken"

We will not let the reader into the secret of what has happened, but one of the merry little companions of the woeful little maid who has broken her heart is laughing already, and the other hardly knows what has happened. Cut flowers nod reassuringly at them, and a bright bit of verdure covered wall stands in the background. There is something piquantly Watteauesque about one of the petite figures, suggesting just a touch of French influence on the artist.

The other picture presents another of the tremendous perplexities of childhood. It is called

"Hard to Choose"

As in the other picture, we will not give away the point made by the artists before the recipients analyze it for themselves. Again there are three happy girls in the picture, caught in a moment of pause in the midst of limitless hours of play. One of the little maids still holds in her arms the toy horse with which she has been playing. Flowers and butterflies color the background of this, and an arbour and a quaint old table replace the wall.

The two pictures together will people any room with six happy little girls, so glad to be alive, so care-free, so content through the sunny hours amidst their flowers and butterflies, that they must brighten the house like the throwing open of shutters on a sunny morning.

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