

Father Ambrose? I allowed myself to be sifted as wheat, and I have deeply sinned. Failing in charity, I forgot the example and precepts of our Saviour, and I struck right and left with hard words, as did St. Peter with his sword. In the pulpit I compared the Countess Stephania with the idolatrous Jezebel, and the Countess Richenza with the adulteress Herodias, and made such transparent allusions that no one could mistake the persons indicated. But chiefly to Count Louis did I complain of the scandalous doings at the castle; I reproached him bitterly for allowing those two women to spoil his son, giving him free scope for all his evil dispositions, and I added, that, by his culpable weakness, he would draw down upon himself and his descendants eternal perdition.

"Hasty words stir up anger," says the wise Solomon. Doubtless the Countess Stephania would not have lost an hour in expelling me from the castle, and dismissing me from my office, had she possessed the power to do so; but I had a champion whose words had more weight with the Count than those of my enemies. God, in His great goodness, had given to the Count, even in his falcon's nest, an innocent, pure white dove. She was there like a rose of Sharon, blooming in a desert, in the midst of thorns. Need I add that she was the cherished darling and guardian angel of her father against the evil spirits who were rampant in the castle. The souls of father and daughter were knit together like those of David and Jonathan, and the affection shown by the child was a guarantee for the friendship of the father towards me.

The Countess Stephania had invited Father Weridon, of the Franciscan Order, to the castle. The worthy father possessed the wisdom of a serpent, but not the harmlessness of a dove. Treading on new ground, he at first walked softly and carefully, offending no one, on good terms with all, and amiable to everyone except myself. He constantly endeavored to draw me into an argument on the subject which had always divided our respective orders—the old quarrel about the Immaculate Conception; but I always refused the challenge, retiring into myself, and keeping aloof

from him with wise reserve. Thus the days passed on; no one in the castle deigned to take notice of me, and even my existence seemed ignored. As the old Countess, with her falcon's eye and beak, looked upon the dear little dove, Herzeland, as an egg which had slipped into her nest, but did not belong to her brood, it naturally resulted that the precious child and I, both alike neglected, were thrown much together. I had to relate story after story to her, and it was pleasant to see her devouring every word which fell from my lips, especially when the Old Testament narratives were the theme of my discourse. We used to sit side by side on a stone bench near a well which the old Count had had dug in the rock to the depth of 1,500 fathoms, in order to furnish the castle perpetually with a supply of fresh water. And I thought sometimes that God had placed me here to water souls as hard as adamant, from the life-giving fountain of His Word. But, alas! like Moses, I mistrusted the grace and compassion of the Most High, and I was not permitted to conduct the souls under my charge to the celestial Canaan.

Above the stone seat a pair of swallows had built their nest, to Herzeland's great joy, and as the hen, sitting on her eggs, hatched them with untiring love, the child's sweet voice so tamed the bird that, without moving from her post, the mother would peck from the little girl's hand crumbs of bread or grains of corn. The dear child would remain for hours near the spot, her hands clasped, her eyes fixed, studying intently the marvellous instinct displayed by the birds—instinct affording a fresh proof of the power and goodness of the Creator. The old seneschal of the castle had told her that "these pretty swallows, with their black and white plumage, wear mourning for our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore no one dare eat them, and to kill them is a mortal sin." What joy was it when one fine day the nestlings emerged from their prison!—when the parent birds, taking the grains of corn from Herzeland's hand, dropped them again into the open beaks of the little ones, fluttering and clapping their wings for pleasure! As for me, I would willingly have renounced all the world for the sake