

is a little room, quite out of the way, where they come to her every morning ; but I know where it is, and she lets me help her. She does not speak much, but the few words she says are full of love and sweetness."

"Then you would be glad to live some day with Madame Armand?"

"I would give the world to be like her."

"Then I think you will be glad to hear, my daughter, that she would like to call you her child?"

"Would she?" answered Mina, innocently ;  
"Then I wish she would."

"What I mean is that she and the Baron want you some time hence to marry Raoul, and be at once affianced to him."

Madame d'Auban's heart beat fast as he said this. Mina drew her arm from her neck and her hand from her father's, and sat up between them with her eyes fixed on the ground and the colour deepening in her cheeks. She did not speak. They remained silent also for a few minutes, and then her mother said :

"What is my Mina thinking of? Tell us, dearest, will you promise to marry Raoul?"

"No—no. I cannot promise to marry him. Oh, dearest papa, dearest mamma, do not ask me."

"And why not, Mina?" said d'Auban, looking vexed and disappointed.

"Because, papa, it would make me miserable : because" . . . a flood of tears stopped her utterance. She wept with what seemed passionate sorrow.

"My child," said her mother, anxiously, "speak, explain to us what you feel."

"Mamma, do you remember my telling you long ago that I would never marry a white man?"

"Oh, Mina, that old childish story!" exclaimed her mother ; and her father said with impetuosity :

"You are no longer a child, my daughter ; and I cannot brook this infatuation about Indians. You do not suppose that we should ever consent to give our daughter in marriage to a red man?"

"I know you would not, papa, and I will never ask you to do so. But I wish to keep my promise."

"A child's promise! which does not bind you in the least, Mina."

"Then, mamma, if I am too young to be bound by one promise, do not tell me to make another. I told Ontara I could not marry him, when we were at Natches; and after he was baptized in Paris I said so again : but when he was unhappy I promised never to marry at all, and to be always his sister ; and it comforted him a little. Mamma don't you remember that one day in Paris, when Julie d'Orgeville had been talking to me about her cousin Jeanne being forced to marry the old Count d'Hervilliers, and I asked you if you would make me marry against my will, you said, *never*? And, mamma, when you said it, I don't know why, but there was tears in your eyes, and you added, 'No, my own, you will never know what it is to wear gilded chains.'"

"But Mina, darling, you like Raoul, and you would be very happy with him."

A troubled look came into little Mina's face ;

some large tears gathered in her eyes. She heaved two or three deep sighs, and then hiding her face in her mother's bosom, she murmured :

"I could not be happy if I broke my promise."

Madame d'Auban fondly pressed her lips on her head, and, looking at her husband, smiled. Her womanly instinct was not at fault. She guessed what was passing in the child's heart.

"Mina," said her father, gravely, "if it is that foolish promise that weighs on your mind, Ontara would, I am sure, relieve you from it."

Madame d'Auban shook her head.

Mina started up. "Oh, papa, that would not be really keeping it. If you order me to break it in that way I must, but my heart will break too. Mamma, you remember the day you took his hand and put it on my head, when Osseo was going to force me away from you? We were friendless then ; we were prisoners ; and he had parents and friends, and brothers and sisters. We were condemned to death, and he saved me. He saved papa, who saved us all. And now he has only me—only me to love him, I must keep my promise."

"Mina," said her father, sitting down again by her, you are too young to understand what you give up when you say you will never marry.

The heavenly expression they sometimes noticed in their child's face shone in it, as she looked up and said :

"I would give up any thing to keep that promise."

"And if, which I never shall, I was to say you might marry Ontara, would you marry him?"

Mina closed her eyes, thought a moment, and then said "Yes," but in a tone that made her mother thrill all over, there was something so peculiar in the child's way of saying it.

She made a sign to her husband not to press the matter further ; and they talked to her gently and soothingly, and said she should not be asked to make any promise to Raoul or any one else ; that she might remain a child for some years to come, and plant flowers and sow seeds in a cottage garden at St. Denys.

She kissed them and went straight out on the steps which led to the church. At that moment Madame Armand's poor people were passing through the gate on their way to the room where she received them. A woman was staggering under the weight of a sick child, and seemed ready to drop.

Raoul, who was passing through the court with his dogs, whistling a merry tune, caught sight of the beggar, and taking her baby in his arms, carried it to his mother. It was one of those deliberate impulses which show the tone of a man's feelings. He was off again in a moment, not, however, before he had slipped an alms into the woman's hand. He seemed to tread on air, his handsome face was beaming with animation, and snatches of an old French song burst from his lips as he passed the foot of the stairs. He did not see Mina, who had been watching the little scene. She went into the church and prayed a long time. It is said that St. Catharine of Sienna, in one of her mysterious visions, was offered her choice of a crown of roses and a crown of thorns. She chose the