

THE COUNTRY PARSON

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VÉRONIQUE

AT the lower end of Limoges, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Poste and the Rue de la Cité, there stood, some thirty years back, an old-fashioned shop of the kind that seems to have changed in nothing since the Middle Ages. The great stone paving-slabs, riven with countless cracks, were laid upon the earth; the damp oozed up through them here and there; while the heights and hollows of this primitive flooring would have tripped up those who were not careful to observe them. Through the dust on the walls it was possible to discern a sort of mosaic of timber and bricks, iron and stone, a heterogeneous mass which owed its compact solidity to time, and perhaps to chance. For more than two centuries the huge rafters of the ceiling had bent without breaking beneath the weight of the upper stories, which were constructed of wooden framework, protected from the weather by slates arranged in a geometrical pattern: altogether, it was a quaint example of a burgess' house in olden times. Once there had been carved figures on the wooden window-frames, but sun and rain had destroyed the ornaments, and the windows themselves stood all awry; some bent outwards, some bent in, yet others were minded to part company, and one and all carried a little soil deposited (it would be hard to say how) in crannies hollowed by the rain, where a few shy creeping plants and thin weeds grew to break into meagre blossom in