

An Accepted Sacrifice.

It was a lovely day in the month of June, 1556. The sun shone brightly, gilding with its rays the leaves of the orange and citron trees in the garden of a quaint old house belonging to the Count de Buendia. Flower beds of varied shapes, gorgeous with plants of brilliant hue, of every shade and color, dotted the place; winding paths intersecting each other were lost in the intricacies of dark foliage, and long and shady alleys formed a refreshing shade from the heat and glare of the sun. In the center was a large fountain sending up its jet of water high in the air and falling back again in a shower of sparkling drops, which gleamed in the light like diamonds. Birds flying from tree to tree warbled their sweetest melody, and bright and gaudy butterflies flitted from flower to flower. Magdalen Peroz de Arguello was walking in one of the alleys, leading little Anna, her only daughter, by the hand. She was the wife of John of Pedruja, Steward of the Count de Buendia, one of the richest and most powerful noblemen of Spain. She was a tall and stately lady robed in stiff brocade silk, with ruff round the neck and fan in hand. The little girl was arrayed somewhat like her mother, according to the custom of the times. Anna was a grave and earnest child, with large dark eyes, and features denoting strength of character. Suddenly she broke the silence and said: "Mother, I should like to pick one of those lovely roses yonder and give it to little Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. You would take me to the chapel, and lift me up, while I place it on the altar close to the Tabernacle door."

"But, my child," her mother answered. "what has made thee think of this?"

"Well, mother dear, you told me yesterday, when I began to cry because I had no little brother to play with, that the Child Jesus is my brother, and that He loves me and watches all I do the day long, and that if I was very good I should one day see Him in heaven. So last night I lay awake a long time, and thought and thought whether I might not perhaps see Him here. Oh, if I only knew how to make him come!"

"Truly thou art a strange child, Anna," her mother answered gently; "and what hast thou decided on?"