

Considerations on the Passion of Our Lord.

CHAPTER I.

A man from the lowest dregs of the people was once accused of the crime of treason. Being declared guilty of having conspired against the state, and against the person of his sovereign, he was condemned to the severest punishment of the law, and the king swore not to grant him his pardon. It was necessary that his blood should flow, in order to wipe away the outrage that was offered to the majesty of the crown.

This monarch had an only son, the object of his tenderest affections, and the heir of his kingdom. The young prince, hearing of the fate of this unfortunate subject on the very day that he was to be led forth to execution, was moved with so ardent a desire to save his life, that he formed the heroic resolution of suffering in his place, in order to deliver him from death. He hastened to his father, and after having obtained from him a promise, under his oath, to grant his request, he informed him of his design, and conjured him to allow him to be put to death instead of his guilty subject. The king was stricken with astonishment at this unexpected demand. His heart was rent asunder with grief, and he shed an abundance of tears. But he had sworn a double oath. He could not suffer the crime to escape with impunity, nor refuse the life of the traitor to his son; and he was thus forced to give a consent, which plunged his paternal heart in the most profound sorrow. This innocent victim asked another favour,

which, as a dying request, his father, notwithstanding his great reluctance, could not refuse; and this was, to adopt the guilty traitor in his place, and to leave him the inheritance of his kingdom.

The young prince set out for the place of punishment full of joy, and went to announce to the real culprit that he was going to die in his place, and thereby obtain, not only his pardon, but the right of succession to the kingdom. The only return which he asked was, that he should sometimes think of his benefactor, and repay him by a just and grateful affection for such prodigious love.

This unhappy wretch, careless of the fate which awaited him, was engaged at the time in playing with his fellow-prisoners. He did not even condescend to listen with any attention to the happy news; nay, at the very name of the king's son, he vomited forth a torrent of reproaches against the young prince. Being delivered from his chains, he ran with the multitude to the public square. He there beheld, with the utmost indifference, the generous prince, who was going to his execution, in order to save him. All on a sudden, being seized with an infernal rage, he joined those who were insulting his deliverer. He exceeded them all in the outrages which he heaped upon him. Nay, like a demon, he begged that he might be permitted to take the place of the public executioner, and he actually had the barbarity to put to death him to whom he owed his life.

O Christian souls, whose bosoms are filled with tenderness and compassion, methinks I hear you exclaim, that this is but a romance or a dream; that the