

cautioning them not to say a word about it to her little shepherd. "He is so simple," said she, "he might repeat the secret to every one indiscriminately, not through wickedness, — he is too innocent for that, — but his indiscretion would have the same fatal result ; so do not mention it to him at all." The following night, at the



appointed hour, a great number of peasants assembled from the farms and neighbouring villages at the pious meeting place, where an improvised altar had been hastily erected in the vast glade, while armed men guarded the entrances to the woods.

In the first row of the assistants knelt Mistress Richard deeply absorbed in prayer. As the celebrant on his way