

three years, and then if the flower is pure, you will both ever remain the same."

When she had thus spoken, Verdurina accosted the other young ladies, and presented them, likewise, with some flowers from her enchanted tree; to one, five; to another, four; according to her knowledge of their good dispositions to cultivate them. It is said, that the princess Malinetta received only one; and, moreover, that she could never make it blow. I know not, however, what to say on this head; for this young lady having the misfortune to lose her reputation, no person could be found to write her history.

The fairy (for it is pretty evident that Verdurina was one) after having distributed her presents, turned suddenly into the grove, and vanished. The young ladies remained in a state of astonishment at this apparition. They quitted their sport, and the flowers they had gathered, to think of those only which they had just received.

All were impatient to shew them to their parents; and Elmina had no sooner returned home, than she related all that happened to Lindorina, and put the inestimable flower into a beautiful china vase. The governess seemed much astonished at the adventure; it was known however, in the sequel, that Verdurina and Lindorina were the same.

Elmina went to sleep with great satisfaction; but full of the ideas that had engaged her attention in the day, she thought of nothing, the whole night, but meadows, dances, fairies, and enchanted flowers. Her first care, on waking, was to examine whether her flower had suffered any change. She hastened to the china vase; but, in going near the window, she heard a great disturbance in the street, and saw a number of little boys, who were pursuing an old woman. The oddity of the scene diverted the princess, and made her laugh; and it was not till they were out of sight, that she left the window, in order to inspect her flower. What was her surprise and grief, when she saw the Flower of Modesty losing its beautiful hue, and the Flower of Benevolence somewhat sullied! Lindorina entering, perceives the princess in consternation, and enquires the occasion of her terror. "Ah!" said Elmina, "look at the flowers; and yet I have done nothing to occasion this change!"

The princess, indeed, was innocent; for she had not an idea of any harm in what had excited her mirth; and yet it was no wonder that the Flower of Modesty had begun to wither, and the Flower of Benevolence to be somewhat sullied:

for a young lady ought never to shew an indiscreet curiosity, and still less to laugh when a fellow-creature is insulted.

This was the way in which Lindorina explained the extraordinary circumstance to the princess, who was instantly sensible of her fault, and behaved in such an amiable manner on the occasion, that, before the close of the day, the flowers appeared more beautiful than ever. This little lesson made Elmina more attentive and discreet, and gave her to understand what vigilance and assiduity were requisite, to cultivate the Flower that never fades.—However, from this time, she did not find it very difficult to preserve her Yellow Flower in all its beauty. Elmina was tender and humane: to do good, nothing more was requisite, than to obey the dictates of her own heart. But the sky blue Flower cost her more trouble, Elmina was passionate; and, at the least vexation, the least impatience, the Flower of Gentleness began to wither, and to reproach her with her faults. The princess repaired them as soon as possible; for she was persuaded, that there is much less shame in repairing our faults, than in committing them.

With respect to the White Flower, I am assured that it constantly preserved its purity. It is very true, that Elmina, one day, perceived a small spot upon it; but a tear, which she dropped, instantly effaced it. It cannot be known now, what was the little weakness in which Elmina had been guilty for every good person will easily forget a fault, when it has been expiated by the tears of ingenuous sorrow.

The bud of the Flower of Understanding grew every day. Whenever the princess had been attentive at some study, she never failed to consult this flower, and generally found that it had put forth some new leaves. This was the most wonderful flower, and it continued increasing in size during the whole life of Elmina. Nothing could be more varied than the shape and colour of its petals. On one, might be observed some beautiful landscapes, or rich designs of embroidery: on another, were representations of liberty and geography; and, on many, were seen a golden lyre, or an ivory harp. In a word, upon all the petals were observed the emblems of whatever was best calculated to adorn the mind of a young lady.

The Flower of the Graces, as Verdurina had said, grew imperceptibly. Elmina had even an opportunity of observing, that if ever she endeavoured to force its growth, by studying any graceful arts at the looking glass, or elsewhere, this singular flower would instantly close; nor would it open again, till she was once more