ROSE LEBLANC;

THE TRIUMPH OF SINCERITY.

CHAPTER VIII.

For several days running it rained in torrents. The roads into the mountains became almost impassable, and the excursion to Betharam had in consequence to be put off. At last the sun shone forth again in all its southern glory, and on a fine Sunday morning, at break of day, Rose was seated on Fanchette, Henri's handsome Spanish mule, herself dressed in her best clothes, and looking as pretty, though somewhat paler and thinner than she used to do. Henri, with his casionally having hold of her bridle, if there was a brook or a difficult bit of road to cross.

· O dear, how beautiful those mountains are; and those great tall fir-trees, that look as if they were lifting their heads up to the skies."

Henri shrugged his shoulders. He fancied that must be one of Andre's fine sentences.

'They are not half so pretty,' he answered, as the farm where we stopped just now to look at the cows. That's what I like to see, a lot of fine cows that must produce ever so much butter and cheese; nice well-cultivated fields. I don't know how many haystacks."

And such a number of trees in the orchard. I counted as many as thirty-two pear trees and eighteen plum-trees,' said Rose, quite ready to the church and pray, as that is what you have give up her admiration for wild scenery and mountain passes.

'I suppose you were counting them just now as you went along with your eyes half shut, and your bridle hanging on Fanchette's neck, answered Henri. 'No wonder the old gul stum-

'No, I was thinking of something quite different,' ejaculated Rose, in a sentimental man-

'Thinking! dreaming you mean. That's al ways the way women dream and donkeys stumble! Don't pull the bridle so bard, you will hurt

Fanchette. Gently, Henri, gently.'

'It is very well to say gently; but when a man is fooled to the top of his bent.... What do you mean, Henri? what have I said

to make you angry?" Oh, nothing; nothing. I am not angry; I

was only talking nonsense. No, there is only one thing I can't get over.'

What is it? asked Rose.

Why does that vex you?'

that it is too late ; and that thought drives me aimost wild.' Why you see you were so very cross.

Henri, striking his forehead. 'Oh, I don't say that.'

' No, but I feel it. Only, Rose, I did love you so dearig." 'Did you really? well I should never have

thought so.' · What, you did not believe I loved you ?

Well, you were always grumbling and scold-

ing.' But I loved you so much,' he again faintly

uttered. ' And now that you are grown so kind and so obliging, it is a proof, I suppose, that you have left off caring for me, which is very lucky, as I

am engaged to M. Andre. But it is really very funny about people who fall in love; they show it in such different ways. It made you cross and disagreeable; and Andre says it makes him like to go by himself into the fields and woods, and carre my name upon the trees.' 'And you call that love?' Henri exclaimed,

with a bitter sneer. 'Would that man give up friends, fortune, life for you? and bless God that he was allowed to do so?"

Well, I dare say he would, answered Rose; for he wrote some verses which ended in this war,--

'I saw thes, lovely Rose, the fairest in the glade; I watch'd thee, sweetest Rose, in sunshine and in

shade, I loved thee, brightest Rose, ere I could read or · I've loved thee, dearest Rose, far more than words

oan teil; I'll love thee, precious Rose, up to my dying hour, And loving thee, I'll die, O my beloved flower!

Henri bit his lip and muttered something very like an anathema against poetry and poets.

'Oh, do not spoil those pretty flowers,' Rose cried out, as he plucked and then tore to pieces the Spanish pinks and wild geraniums which studded the mossy banks on each side of the road .-Give them to me, she said, and as I go along | sings in her days of mingled mourning and exulta-I will make a nosegay for our Lady's altar at

Betharam.

often stepped aside to gather branches of sweetbriar, or of honeysuckle, or of the beautiful alpine rose; anemones also, and as they advanced into the mountains the bright blossoms of the red and blue gentium, and large handfuls of thyme. He tied up these treasures with the blades of lap was soon all full of flowers.

At nine o'clock they stopped at the pretty and afterwards breakfasted under the trees of the little inn, where they had put up the mule .-Then, as they proceeded toward Betharam, the road grew more and more picturesque and the scenery more imposing. They ascended the hills, from whose heights a torrent came foaming and dashing down like a steed let loose in 'its speed, its fury, and its joy.' The air was perfectly still, the azure of the sky unclouded and bright. Towards twelve o'clock they drew near to the fair valley of Betharam, and the timebenered sanctuary where so many generations have knelt and so many prayers been offered up. The church, with its beautiful portal and graceful facade, met their eyes and they entered the village of Estelle. It stands at the foot of a mountains, some of them majestically grand and foot of a solitary cross in a desert.' drearily barren, and others covered with Spanish chestnuts and alders.

' We are arrived,' said Henri; 'jump off, Rose, and take care of your nosegays. Go into come here for. I must first see to Franchette,

and then I will follow you.' Rose accordingly hastened to the church, where a great many pilgrims were kneeling be-fore the altar of our Lady of Sorrows, and praying with more or less fervor. She took her nosegays out of her apron and laid them at the feet of Mary's image. She also lighted two tapers which she had bought at the door. Then on her kneels with clasped hands and unlifted eyes she began to repeat the litary of the Blessed Virgin. When she came to the words, 'Comforter of the afflicted, pray for us, she perceived that some one was kneeling by her side and joining in the same prayer. Turning round to see who it was, she recognised the lovely face and graceful figure of the young stranger whom she had met on the market-place of Pau, on the eventful day of the and light muslin shawl. Her very fair hair, her times pleasunter than streets and houses? delicate features, the snow whiteness of her thin transparent hands, gave her a likeness to the angels that Perugino loved to paint, or the pictures That you were fond of me when you were of the royal saints of the middle ages. When the litany was ended she withdrew in silence .-Her noiseless tootsteps were not beard as she Why, because it must have been my own fault | glided away over the time-worn pavement which that you left off caring for me. I see it cow so many tears have watered, and on which so many pilgrims have knelt, since the day that a mother orought her dying children to the ruins of what was once a venerated sanctuary; and, 'I know it. I was a fool, a beast, creed like that glorious Canaanitish woman in the Gospel, found the reward of her great faith.'

Rose looked round and suddenly missed from her side the gentle Alice. 'I declare I think it is a vision,' she inwardly exclaimed, glancing at the same time round the church in the hopes of seeing her again. I always think of her when I pray for Andre, and to day I have actually seen her. Perhaps it is his guardian angel.'

These reflections occasioned her some distractions, and not being used to very long prayers, after having repeated the few she knew by heart. and added to them a short but fervent petition, for Andre's welfare and his speedy return, she

left the church. A mountain rises on the left side of the sanc tuary, and on the road that leads to its summit the stations of the cross are erected. A Cal vary with an immease crucifix stands in the centre of the platform of this hill, and the most in different traveller can hardly bely bending the knee as he arrives at the foot of that solitary rock. The view from the height is wild in the extreme. Mountain over mountain stretches in the distance, and not a trace of human habitations or human labor is to be seen in any direction, save the sign of man's redemption, and the rude stone well nigh worn out by the pilgrans? knees at its foot. Rose knelt down at the first chapel near the foot of the hill. A little higher. up Henri was slowly ascending the winding pathway, and stopping to pray at every station on his way. What was he so ferrently seeking to ob tain, that strong, true hearted man, whose rough visage and stalwart form seemed to set at defiance all human weakness? He was praying that God would give him strength to bear the heavy weight of sorrow at his heart; strength to for-, give, to love, and to endure; strength to hide his sufferings and the lears which anguish was wringing from his manly soul at the foot of the cross, our only hope'- spes unica,' as the Church tion. He was weeping for the first time since his childhood. He had fought a fierce battle During the remainder of the journey Henri with himself, and those burning tears were as the for having brought me to Betharam, said Rose, peasants perceived the signal, and two of them, of the little fruitseller, the grumblings of Babet.

the lightning has scathed it. The strong struggles of years found a vent in those tears."

And that fair girl whose angel face was haunting Rose as a celestial vision, what was she doing on the Way of Sorrows, on the road to Callight of a summer sky, and on whose lips hovered a smile bright as the opening dawn? She had church of the village of Choroaze to hear Mass, nearly reached the top of the mountain and was leaning against a rock, her rosary in her hand, her slight tall figure gilded by the rays of the noon-day sun; the mountain breeze waving the curls of her golden hair; faith, hope and charity guiding her steps; the Christian motto, 'Excelsior,' stamped on her virgin brow.

Alice first, then Henri, and lastly Rose, reached the platform where the Calvary stands. The three pilgrics knelt together at the foot of the crucifix. Henri kissed the foot of our Lord and went away. The two girls prayed for a few moments, and when they rose, Alice smiled and saluted Rose. They soon entered into conversation, and descended the bill together.

We made acquaintance,' Alice said, 'in a market-place, midst the noise and the confusion mountain which overlooks a whole world of of a busy town, and to-day we meet again at the

> 'It is very true,' Rose answered. 'Nothing can be more unlike than Pau and this mountain. Islid was taking place. The road gave way But shall we see you again in Pau, Mademoi | completely. The stones of the causeway and

see I learnt and have remembered your name;will carry me away from your beautiful Pyrennees.

'Oh, how sorry I should be to think that I should never see you again! But you are very lucky, Mademoiselle; to be allowed to travel. I Bordeaux, for instance.

'Ob, don't wish any such thing, exclaimed Alice. 'For those who are born and have lived amidst the hills and rocks, a city is a prison. It is like shutting up a bird in a cage.'

'Do you really think so?' Pose asked somewhat incredulously.

'Ob, yes; are not these great trees which God has made, these flowers with their delicious perfume,' and Alice stooped to gather a handful

'Well, you may be right,' Mademoisolle. Your home is in the country. Jules Bertland told us that you lived in a fine chateau, a great his path, God only knows, or what silent and in- moon on the waters of the torrent. Then Henri way off from Pau.'

And who may Jules Bertrand be ?'

'He is the nephew of Madame Bertrand, the milliner in the High street; the youth who showed you the way that day to the Convent of the Ursulines."

'True ; I remember him very well. He would not take the money which my grandfather offered him. Do you think you could prevail upon him to accept one of these resaries, Mdlle. Rose? -We have just had them blessed at the altar of the Blessed Virgin.'

' Won't he be proud, Jules,' cried Rose, taking the rosary which Alice was holding out.

'And you, Mdlle. Rose, might I venture to ask you to wear this medal in remembrance of the pilgrimage we have made to-day to our dear Lady's shrine ?'

'Ab,' said Rose, coloring with pleasure, 'if I only knew your name. I would always mention it in my prayers.'

'Alice,' said the young stranger, as she smiled and walked away.

'I am not quite sure yet that she is not an angel,' ejaculated Rose, as she followed her with her eyes along the road to the village. 'In any case, I am glad she gave me a medal. I am sure it will bring me a blessing, and she placed it in her bosom after kissing it several times.

An hour later she was dining with her cousin at a little table before the mn, under the shade of the acacia-trees, when a caleche went by. It was Alice and her grandfather who were driving away. 'Can you tell me the name of those perilous one, and Henri began debating in his travellers, sir?' she said to the waiter who had just set down the soup.

'I don't know anything about them,' he answered in a contemptuous manner; 'they put up at the Lion d'Or. A sorry idea they will have of the borels of Betharam.'

A commercial traveller, who was smoking at the next table, took his pipe of his mouth, and said in a consequential manner, It is the Baron de Vidal and his granddaughter, Mdile. de Mor-

'The Baron de Vidal!' exclaimed Rose with astonishment. 'Is it possible?' and she fell into a deep brown study.

'Come, it is time to be off,' said Henri, and he went to the stable to saddle the mule.

CHAPTER IX.

from the inn door.

along, as if to drown his own thoughts.

For an hour they proceeded on their way side of the road sheltered them from the artersee Hears wading through them in his thick boots | Gave. while she gathered up her little feet not to wet her ribboned shoes. But now, whether it was that the emotions of the day had reacted on her i spirits, or that the falling shades of evening cast I should consider that I had come off cheap with ing through, she felt auxious and depressed, and poor beast did not take you with him when he hept shutting her eyes in order not to look at the fell. The Blessed Virgin must here come to precipices.

As they were descending the hill from Irun to sake, jump off this moment? he cried, and Rose though.' felt herself lifted off the saddle, and placed on a bank on the side of the road. A dreadful landlarge beaps of earth were falling into the torrent | best." We are birds of passage, Mille. Rose. You with a horrible noise. The mule disappeared amidst the fragments of loose earth, and the two and to-morrow, alas! the odious railway train travellers stood transfixed for a few moments, but feeling as if the ground was giving way under their feet. In another instant it became evident that this was really the case. The bank on which they were standing began to rock. There miracle that the young man was able to climb was not a second to lose. 'Put your arms should like so much to see a large town; like round my neck,' Henri cried, 'say as many Hall Marys as you can, and take care not to look at it.' lose your hold.'

The laden with his precious burden, like a father who in sport carries his child on his back, he sprung forward and scaled the nearly perpendicular side of the mountain amidst rolling sight. The torrent, checked in its course by the beavy masses of rock which had fallen into its aching head, so she laid it on her cousin's shouldballot. She wore the same black gauze bonnet of the flagrant mountain thyme, 'a thousand bed, was roaring in his ears like a wild beast er, and ended by falling asleep. Every now and

struggling for freedom. be made his way up that steep acclivity, with terror when he saw that she was as pale as other, widen by degrees, and end by spreading a corpse, and that her face was covered with out into the plain of Pau. Henri could scarcely blood: having been torn by the brambles and endure the slow pace of the horse and the length the branches of the pine trees. He threw himself on his knees beside her, repeating her name in a loud voice, and using every means he could in sight, and further off the church steeple of think of to recall her to her senses, which were paralyzed by fear. Rose heard him, but had not strength to answer, nor even to make a sign.

'My God,' cried Henri, while tears fell from his eyes on the young girl's forehead, 'my God let her come back to life again. I promise not to torment her any more, and to make her happy whatever it may cost me. Yes, Lord, I will do whatever is Thy, boly will, and whatever she wishes, if Thou will only grant her life, and not let her die on the mountain without help and without sacraments.3

Rose here opened her eyes like a child awaking from sleep, and held out her hand to him .--I am not going to die,' she murmured.

'Ab, God bas heard me,' cried Henri, in a roice that was half joyful and half sad. 'He has taken me at my word; there can be no drawing back now.1

· Rose however, understood not a word that he was saying, and again lost all consciousness.-Meanwhile their present position was a very mind how they were to get out of it. Rose would have needed all her strength and agility at any time to make her way through the brushwood to the road, and Henri would not risk carrying her in her present week state among the shrubs and brambles where a single false step would have been fatal. He was, therefore, obliged to content himself with tying her red hand. in a low voice, and drawing away his hand he kerchief to a tree, by way of a signal, and rapping round her throat one which he took from his own neck : for a beavy dew was beginning

raindrops which fell on the scorched ground after as once more seated on the mule she rode off by means of a winding path, reached the platform, where Rose was shivering as she lent 'Nonsense,' answered Henri. 'Take care of against a tree for support. They placed her on the loose stones,' and he whistled as he went a litter which they constructed hastily, and one of the peasants helped Henri to carry it while the other acted as guide. After a long and the willow grass, and handed them to Rose, whose vary; she whose eyes beamed with the azure bome without speaking. The high rocks on each very laborious walk they regained the road and went into a house, where Henri left Rose while good sun. The tinkling of the donkey's bells be went to look for a carriage at Choroaze kept time with the rushing sound of the torrents, The kind offices of the woman of the house soon which in many places were so increased by the revived the girl a little, for she had only been recent rains that the road was covered with wa- overpowered by fear and agitation, but she still ter. In the morning, Rose had crossed these wept, and lamented the loss of the mule, which little brooks with a smile, and been amused to she said, must assuredly have perished in the

'You must not make yourself so merable, child,' said the peasant woman, for you have had a narrow escape you two, and if I were you a gloom on the narrow ravines they were pass- only the loss of a mule; it is very lucky that the your assistance.'

'It must have been because I begged of her Choroaze, Heuri made a sudden exclamation, so hard to help me this morning,' replied Rose, and turned as pale as death. 'For heaven's thoughtfully. 'It was about something else

'Ah, but you see Almighty God can make the Blessed Virgin understand all our wishes and our needs; we ask for one thing, and she gives us another; and whatever happens if always for the

But Henri was so fond of his mule.' It is all very well to be fond of animais; but we should not weep for them as if they were Christians,' said the good woman, seeing that Rose was beginning to sob again. 'My boy, who saw the catastrophe, said it was quite a

straight up the mountain side with a girl hanging to his neck; he says it made him quite giddy to 'My God,' exclaimed Rose, turning very pale; 'then we were indeed near death ; it makes one shudder to think of it!' She closed her eyes, and did not open them again till Henri retunred from Choroaze with a car and a boy to stones, uprooted trees, and showers of earth, drive. Having taken an affectionate leave of which impeded his steps and often obscured his their kind hostess, they started on their homeward journey. Rose could scarcely hold up her then she opened her eyes and cast a bewildered glance at the mountain tops, the forests of black how he broke through the manifold obstacles in pine trees, and the broken reflections of the tense prayers rose from his throbbing heart dur. would tell her to calm herself and go to sleep, ing that persious ascent. At last by a desperate just as if he had been husbing a frightened child. effort he reched a spot where the ground was se- It was a cold night, and a deep stillness, uncure, and quite overcome by this exertion he laid broken save by the noise of the torrent, reserved Rose down on the turf, and was almost stupified throughout those vallers which linked one to the

> Jurancon. 'We are almost there,' he said, and Rose tried to smile.

> of the road. At last the lights in the old tower

of Henri IV and the turrets of the castle came

'Here you are at last,' cried aunt Babet, coming out on the doorstep with a lantern in her band.

'Thank God!' answered Henri! 'we have been very near losing ber,' added he, lowering his voice as he helped Rose to alight. He thought no more of his own danger than of the loss of his

'Holy Virgin!' cried Babet; 'and where is Fanchette ?

'At the bottom of the Gave, poor beast! We had enough to do to save ourselves, and we two escaped almost by a miracle. Why, Rose, bow flushed you are, just now you were shaking with cold.

'Her hands are burning,' said Babet; 'the child is feverish.'

Yes, Rose was feverish; Rose was ill; Rose was delirious. All night long she muttered things which had no common sense in them, as Babet, who watched beside her, pronounced. Twice in ber sleep she called Henri, who was anxiously watching at the door of her room, so as to be ready to go for the doctor if necessary. She whispered in his ear and held his hand between

'She takes me for Andre,' he said to himself went and leant against the wall on the other aide of the bed.

Towards morning the fever increased and the to fall and poor Rose, though she was now doctor was summoned. For several days Rose gradually recovering her consciousness, was shak- was seriously ill. Babet hovered round her. M. ing with cold and extreme exhaustion. Henri Dumont went up to her room every five minutes. hoped that by waving his banner he might suc- Henri spoke to no one! worked harder than ceed in attracting the attention of some of the ever, and towards evening would go into the people who had gathered round the place of the church and kneel down in a dark corner. The accident, and accordingly after a few seconds, house seemed very dismal now that it was no 'How very much obliged I am to you, Henri, which seemed to him like hours, several of the longer enlivened by the songs and merry laugh