

"Peter, come here and say your prayers out loud and recite a little of your catechism before leading your sheep to pasture."

"If you wish, ma'am," replied the priest with an idiotic air throwing himself at her feet.

"Begin — your "Our Father," till I see if you know how to say it properly."

"If you wish, ma'am."

"Well go on."

The little Shepherd began the Lord's Prayer ; but, after pronouncing two or three words, he stopped, began again, then abruptly stopped and hung his head in confusion before the pitying eyes of his kind mistress so intently fixed upon him.

"Poor little fellow ! You do not even know your "Our Father. How old are you ? Sixteen, at least, I am sure."

"Yes ma'am, surely that..."

"Isn't it shameful ! Did you ever go to school ? Who taught you ?"

"Priests, ma'am."

"Then, you must be a simpleton."

"I suppose so ma'am."

The good woman then tried to teach him the "Our Father." She was wonderfully patient, making him repeat first word by word, then phrase by phrase ; the boy apparently did his best to profit by her lesson but without success. He had no sooner learned the last words than the first were completely forgotten.

Finally his teacher grew disheartened. "You will never be anything but a simpleton," cried she impatiently, giving him a ringing slap on the cheek.

"Go to your work ; your sheep would learn their "Our Father " quicker than you."

"I suppose so ma'am " calmly replied the boy rising to obey her command.

Shortly afterwards, Mistress Rochard was secretly informed by her husband that the holy sacrifice of the Mass would be offered the next night in the seclusion of the forest, at a certain spot, not far from the farm of Great Vernon, by a priest concealed in the district ; she, in her turn, spread the joyful tidings among her neighbours,