

time the countenance of their ancient benefactress. Her praise was in every mouth, and her funeral was like a triumph. A multitude of persons of every rank followed the body to the place of interment, and all her relatives were present at the last mournful rites.

When the funeral service was over, the lady's family opened her will. There was a legacy of two thousand crowns for Sophy. This sum was to serve her as a dowry, and she was to receive the interest of it from the death of Madam de Linden.

Sophy was also left the liberty of choosing any thing she liked best amongst the precious articles of her mistress.

These kindly dispositions of the deceased in favour of a poor girl whom she had taken into her house was not entirely agreeable to her relatives, who were anxious to get rid of Sophy with a few pieces of money.

There were, in consequence, loud murmurs, but the will of the testatrix was sacred, and should be executed. But what particularly vexed the young girls who were relatives of the lady, was Sophy's choice of any thing that she pleased amongst the valuable articles of their cousin.

Well, my good girl, said one of them the morning after the funeral, if I were in your place, I would take this handsome dress which my cousin so seldom wore. See how well made it is. It would fit you to a nicety. It was her wedding dress. The Lord knows all it cost her, for it is made of a very valuable material, and see this beautiful wreath of flowers that goes all round it. Try it on you. It will serve for your wedding day. There never was a young girl of your condition so well arrayed as you will be.

The Chevalier de Hagen, a retired officer, a worthy honest man, and a member of the family also, was present when they attempted to circumvent poor Sophy in this manner, and he said dryly to his young cousins, Stop ladies, don't be laying snares for this poor girl. This dress which you want her to take is not at all suitable for a person of her condition; give her time to reflect on her choice.

Yes, said the notary; I am of Mr. de Hagen's opinion, Sophy ought to be free in her choice. Besides, it was the wish of the deceased, whose intentions are very formally expressed. Madam de Linden has left valuable articles behind her, and I do not suppose she ever dreamed of bequeathing such a trifle as this to this good girl. If she did she would certainly have mentioned it herself. Sophy has served her for a long time with rare attention, and I have often heard her mistress speak in the highest terms of her probity.

Let her decide then at once, and put an end to these disputes, cried out the young ladies.

Sophy, however, was for a long time undecided. One spoke to her of one thing, another of another. The cook recommended her to take a magnificent ring enriched with diamonds; the gardener advised her to take a medallion, on which was inscribed the portrait of Madam de Linden; the servant praised a neck-lace of fine pearls, as being a valuable article, and one that would be of service in time of need.

On the following day the heirs met together again, and pressed Sophy to come to some decision. Consulting only the dictates of her heart, the good girl replied,

My beloved mistress shewed me so many marks of favour, that I should never presume to require any other remembrance of her than her past bounty, if she had not been pleased to mention it in her will. The article which I beg you to give me has no exterior value, but I prize it very highly on account of the recollections which it brings to my mind. Have the goodness then to give me the wooden cross which she pressed to her lips at her last moments, and which she watered with her tears when she was passing to a better life. This article will crown all my desires. I will look upon it as a pledge of happiness. It will recall to my mind the virtues of her who was a second mother to me, and whose example and advice I will never forget. This cross will teach me to live like the charitable lady to whom it belonged, and oh! that I could one day die like her! Saying these words, Sophy was greatly moved, and lifted up her fervent countenance to heaven, as if to invoke the testimony of her whom she believed to be already in possession of eternal bliss.

The relatives of Madam de Linden could not conceal their astonishment on hearing this request of Sophy. They were in the greatest hurry to put the little cross into her hand, lest she should change her mind, and asked her several times whether she was not satisfied. They complimented her on her piety, and praised her attachment to her late mistress, whilst at the same time they were laughing in secret at her simplicity.

When they heard at the Chateau of the choice Sophy had made, they blamed her greatly for her disinterestedness. The cook said, "What folly to have asked this little cross! couldn't you choose something valuable? and besides you might have got this in another way if you wished. You might have taken it without telling any one. You have acted like a fool in this affair, and you'll be sorry for it before you die."

No, my good Sophy, said the old gardener, you have acted like a Christian, and your choice reflects credit on you. I am certain this cross will