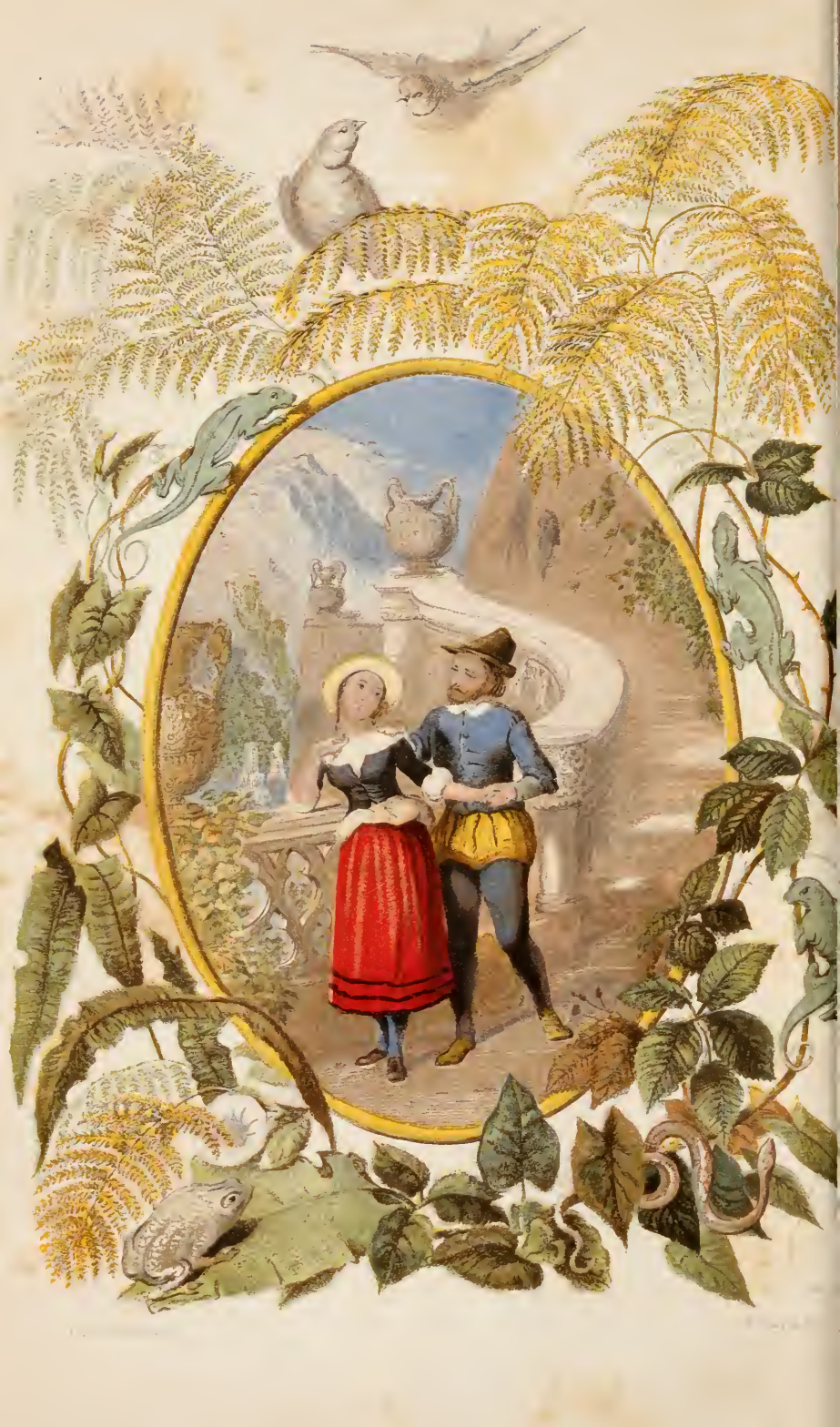

[MANNING, ANNE]

THE

PROVOCATIONS

OF

MADAME PALISSY.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

FOURTH  EDITION.

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The PROVOCATIONS *of* MADAME PALISSY.

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CHAPTER I.

"MY dear Victorine!" said Bernard Palissy to his wife, who was sleeping soundly beside him, with her infant on her arm.

"What is it you say, Bernard Palissy?" returned his wife, sleepily.

"You told me, my love, you were very much in want of a new gown."

"Certainly I did," cried Madame Palissy, waking up at once; "and I mentioned to you that a grass-green camlet——"

"My dear Victorine," interrupted Bernard, "I don't want to hear anything about grass-green

camlets. What I was going to observe was, that I don't believe there is a gown of any imaginable colour or fabric in all France in which you will look half so pretty, in my eyes, as in your old one."

"Oh, you tiresome fellow!" cried she, immediately shutting her eyes again; "did you wake me up to hear *that?*"

"And the reason," pursued Palissy, giving her a little pinch, to prevent her falling fast asleep before he had said what he wanted to say,—"the reason, my beloved Victorine, that you will appear more lovely and charming to me in that old crimson serge, with the three rows of black worsted lace round the skirt, than you ever did when it was bran-new,—which was on your wedding-day, if you remember——"

"To be sure I remember," said Madame Palissy, peevishly. "But why, in the name of all the saints, need I remember it just now?"

"With regard to the saints," observed Palissy, without losing sight of his original subject, "you

know, my dear Victorine, that expletive of yours with me goes for nothing, because I regard the whole calendar of them in a very different light from what you do . . . but this by the way. To return to the red petticoat." . . . . .

"I'm sure it *wants* re-turning," cries poor Victorine, "if I am to wear it any longer, though it has been turned once already, inside out, top side t'other way, hind part before, re-bound, darned, and scoured—I suppose I must turn the sides to the front and back now: and all for what?"

"All for this, my sweet angel," returned Bernard, in his most coaxing tone, which was a very coaxing one indeed—"that I may have the money which we talked of laying out on your new gown, to spend in something else which I most particularly want."

"Particularly want, indeed!" cries Madame Palissy, beginning to feel considerably exacerbated. "If I were to tell you, you tiresome fellow, of all the things I and your two sweet children particularly want, I should keep talking till daybreak."

"It is precisely that you and our dear infants may have all those things, my beloved Victorine, and a great many besides, even everything that can attract your eye and please your heart,—that I want this small sum of money for an immediate purpose."

"What's the immediate purpose?" returned she, very tersely.

"Why," said he, colouring all over while he spoke, though it was in the dark, and he got no credit for the sign of grace—"it is,—just to buy —a little borax and palladium."

Madame Palissy here thought it worth while to raise herself from her reclining posture for the sake of giving her husband a box on the ear; not in play, mind you, but a good hard cuff, in downright desperate earnest: the exertion of which, commoving her whole frame, not unnaturally set the baby crying. And she who bestowed this cuff was not a masculine, middle-aged virago, but a handsome, high-spirited young woman of about four-and-twenty years old.

Bernard rubbed his ear and burst out laughing. "Come," said he, "that did not hurt much—not half so much as you meant it should. Now we're quits; you forgive me, and I'll forgive you."

"Forgive *me*, indeed!" cried Victorine, in the tone of a highly injured woman, as she rocked the crying infant in her arms, "I should like to know what *you* have to forgive! It is I—I, poor, unfortunate creature that I am, who am put upon as never was woman put upon before. . . . Was it for this I married you, Bernard Palissy, and left my peaceful home?"

"Your peaceful fiddlestick," replied Bernard, somewhat irreverently; "just quiet that wailing little animal, my dear Victorine, that I may hear myself speak, and I'll tell you all about it——"

"But I don't want to hear all about it," responds Victorine, beginning to whimper; "I'd rather go to sleep."

"Sleep, sleep! nothing but sleep!" sighed Bernard. "Oh my goodness! when I have so

much to say that ought to keep us both waking!"

"Well, what *is* it then, you provoking man?" says Victorine, who was not without her feminine characteristic of curiosity, and began to think that he might have some important secret to reveal, after all.

"Calm yourself, and hear me quietly," returned he, "or I will go to sleep immediately, and you shall never more hear a syllable about it."

"Well, dear Bernard, I *am* calm, I *am* quiet: do begin—I am all attention."

"I see my way to fortune!" said he, in a determined voice, doubling his fist and giving a thump on the coverlet.

"Do you?" says Victorine—"I wish I did. Well, what is it?"

"I see my way to fame!" continued Bernard, in the same tone.

"I hardly know what fame is," said Madame Palissy, doubtfully; "is it anything that brings in money?"

"Eventually, almost always," said Bernard; "but it's better than money."

"Ah! I doubt that," said Victorine.

"Yes, my dear wife, I knew you would—you are, for so excellent a creature, a little, a very little narrow-minded: but there are some things you must take on my authority, because you believe me to be a man of truth and of sense—and this is one of them."

"Well, we'll let it alone, at any rate," responded Victorine; "because you know, you said you saw your way to *fortune*—you remember saying that?"

"Yes, I remember saying that. Well, now listen to me. Some time ago, you may recollect, I went up to the Château, to put a new cheek into the face of St. Martin."

"The face of St. Martin!"

"Yes—the little Sire Henri had shot an arrow through the painted glass in the great hall: there was only a small lozenge-shaped pane broken, which I was to replace. Well, in the hall was

my Lady Countess, looking on while some of her attendants unpacked a case containing presents that had been sent to her from her kindred at some Tuscan court . . . rich silks, bracelets, chasings in gold and silver, more rarities than I can particularise; but, above all, my dear Victorine, oh, such a cup!"

"Well?"

"Well, the excellent beauty of this rare cup, of the ware they call Majolica, exquisitely painted with fruit, flowers, and figures, and turned and enamelled with such perfection, filled me with admiration and amazement. I remained gazing at it where I stood, and entered into controversy with my own thoughts, considering that if I could find out how to make enamels, which is an art unknown in France, I might make earthen vessels and other things very prettily, because God has gifted me with some knowledge of drawing. While thus I stood in a trance, my tool fell from my hand. The Countess turned round, and, beholding me in some con-

fusion stoop to recover it, spoke to me kindly, and asked me what had startled me so. I replied that I had been transfixed and carried out of myself at sight of the cup. Thereupon she bade me draw nearer and behold it more attentively; and, said she, 'This painted ware, good Palissy, is not to be had anywhere, save from Italy. We call it Majolica, because it originally came to us from Majorca, where pilgrims touched on their way from the Holy Land, and brought home plates, which we embedded in our church walls as ornaments.' Then said I, 'It is a pity, Madame, that we have not the secret of making it.' 'Ah, that you never will have,' returns she, 'for they are wondrous jealous of it; and no marvel, for when works of art become common, they lose half, or nearly all, their value.' 'I am not so sure of that,' said I. She looked at me in surprise, as though apprehending somewhat of impertinence in the remark; and coolly set down the cup and cast a kerchief over it, remarking that the cherubim painted on it were designed on purpose by

Raffaelle of Urbino. So I came away; and soon afterwards my Lady Countess went to Paris, and very likely took the cup with her; I have never seen her or it since. But, my dear Victorine, the remembrance is ever with me! I see the cup in my dreams. . ."

"How stupid!" exclaimed his wife.

"Not stupid at all," said Bernard; "I only wish I could find out in my dreams the secret of its manufacture—"

"Aye, that indeed would be dreaming to some purpose," said Victorine.

"—Which I am constantly pondering over when I am awake," pursued Palissy; "though I am such a stupid blockhead, and so ignorant of the commonest applications of science to the art of pottery, that I make little progress."

"You will never find it out, then," said Victorine, impatiently.

"Why not?" said Bernard. "Somebody must have found it out, you know; and why should not I repeat the discovery? There's the

thing; here's the man; and every unsuccessful attempt I make brings me so much nearer to it; for there's an attempt, you know, which I need not try again. I register all my failures."

"So this is what keeps you all day in the wood!" cried Victorine.

"What else should it be?" returned her husband. "Don't I always come home begrimed with smoke, and scorched, and dirty, and thirsty? Ah! if I can but find it out at last, all my pains, all my labour, will be repaid! And we shall grow so rich, my Victorine! so rich! You shall have your pocketful of money!"

"But meanwhile, I have not a single liard, no, not enough to buy a yellow taper for St. Anne; and I owe for flour, and firewood,—and you carry off all my faggots."

"Yes, my dearest, to be repaid in gold some day. There are certain things which I *must* have for my experiments, and, among others, certain drugs from the chemist's, where I can get no credit; and it is for that, my sweet Victorine,

that I need the small sum which you proposed spending on a new gown."

"And when do you suppose your discovery will be made?" said she, reluctantly.

"Any day. It is impossible to say. Perhaps to-morrow. Very likely, *indeed,* in the course of six weeks, or six months."

"And how will you reward me," continued she, relenting more and more, "if I give up my gown?"

"I will call you my darling dear," said Palissy.

Now, though to the general reader this will not appear a reward commensurate with the sacrifice poor Victorine was meditating, yet the phrase being one of endearment which he never used except upon very rare occasions, when he and his wife were on supremely good terms with one another, its association with certain passages in the little story of her heart went so far with Madame Palissy on the present occasion, that it completed the victory her husband had already nearly won; wherefore, in a voice as pleasant as his own, she said—

"Oh, very well! I suppose you must have your own way,"—and fell asleep with a smile on her lips.

The next morning, while Victorine was preparing the breakfast, which consisted of milk porridge and a thin sort of lard cake, mightily relished by the peasants of the South of France, and called by them *galette*, her spouse was sitting in the open air, on a stone before the door, which was, in fact, the fragment of a noble Roman column. He was about thirty-two years of age, but had, up to this time, such a young look with him, that he did not appear above twenty-eight. He was of middle height, well and compactly made, athletic and yet slender, with rather small hands and feet. His complexion was clear brown, with a healthy colour; his teeth, small, even, and white as pearls; the expression of his mouth and eyes peculiarly sweet; his nose well cut, with small nostrils; his face pear-shaped; his hair crisp, curly, and of a dark ripe-chestnut colour approaching to black.

This handsome fellow sat on the stone, nursing his leg across his knee, and plunged in a profound muse, utterly regardless of his wife's continual entreaties that he would come in and eat his breakfast. In a pet, she at last began to eat hers by herself, swallowing it in large gulps, which were very unlikely to let it do her any good, but, on the contrary, would produce indigestion, which, again, would re-act on her temper. Over against her, on a little mite of a stool, sat a little mite of a boy, her eldest-born, about eighteen months old, who was getting through *his* portion of porridge, which was in a little ill-baked pipkin: making himself in a very terrible mess during the process, and keeping up a running fire of small talk which, in his baby dialect, it would have been very difficult to comprehend at any time, and which his mother was not at all in the humour to take the trouble of translating just now.

She had smiled, that morning, at the reflection of her own visage in a little cracked looking-glass, as she stowed away her abundant glossy black

hair under a stiff-starched cap with long pendant *barbes* or fillets, which, in spite of frequent repairs, was as white as snow; and remembering, as women *will* remember, the complimentary things said to her over night, about looking as charming in an old gown as any other woman could in a new one, *et cetera*, it had occurred to her to let the lappets fall becomingly on each side of her sun-burnt rosy face, instead of economically pinning them together at the top of her head; and she thought within herself, "Well, I *am* in tolerable looks this morning; I should not be surprised if Bernard, dear fellow, tells me this cap becomes me." But not a syllable of the sort had Bernard said, nor even as yet paid her the smallest attention; the effect of which was to make her feel rather surly, and consider herself aggrieved, after the sacrifice of the new gown. And she began to turn in her mind with great dissatisfaction, how she could once more do up the old one; and with a sigh akin to despair, felt that, do what she would, she could not this time

make it look as good as new. Then, glancing towards Bernard as he sat on the stone, she noticed, with a little bitterness, how spruce and comely he had made himself, with the little bit of the white shirt *she* had ironed peeping above his bright brown suit, that was so tightly compressed about the waist with his red sash of Chollet cotton: and she thought within herself, "Ah, he values appearances as much as anybody, though he pretends not to do so when it suits his purpose. *I* may go shabby, poor married woman that I am, while *he* spruces himself up as smart as a bridegroom!"

Now, though Bernard's conduct was indefensible enough in some respects, yet in this particular poor Victorine did him injustice, for he really did not care how he looked, nor even think about the matter: a certain cleanliness and neatness had been born with him, which made him become whatever he had on, even though, as in the present instance, it was an old suit he had picked up in the Pyrenees, of the coarsest home-

spun. He, little guessing the invidious remarks that were being made on his personal appearance, was immersed in his self-satisfying cogitations, when he was suddenly startled by Madame Palissy's accosting him in a shrill tone, very different from the bland accents she had used in the night, with—

"*Will* you have your breakfast, or no, I say?"

"Certainly I will," replied he, cheerfully accepting the porringer which she thrust in his hand.

"Then you may as well eat it here, since you have sat here so long," returned she, roughly, "and then I can clean up the place a bit, and wash Paul, who has daubed himself all over. I have eaten *my* breakfast an hour ago."

Then, flouncing back into the kitchen, she commenced her operations in no very agreeable humour, leaving Bernard to eat his galette in whatever way he liked; till all at once she was suddenly recalled to his side by the sound of a horrid crash of broken pottery.

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT *are* you about now?" cried Victorine, very tempestuously.

"No harm done," said he, picking up the fragments, and storing them up in his handkerchief.

"No harm done? when you have broken the porringer!"

"My dear, I wanted to break it."

"What for?"

"To try some experiments with the pieces. All right."

"Well, it seems to me all wrong," said she, more quietly; "I can't understand it."

"No, dear Victorine, that's the very thing; you *can't* understand it; you must not expect to understand it; there is no need for you to understand it; but, believe me, dear, all's right, nevertheless. . . Go, wash Paul's face, love; that's your province; to break potsherds is mine."

And he kissed her with such an air of good-natured superiority, and walked off with his potsherds in such state, that she knew not what to make of him, nor whether to be mollified or vexed. Just at this moment, little Paul, having smeared his face, *ad nauseam*, and swallowed all he wanted of his milk porridge, toddled out to the door with his little pipkin, and, with as much of his father's gesture as he could imitate, dashed it to the ground; the vehement action bringing him immediately down in a sitting position, from which he took no pains to recover himself, but set up a fit of baby laughing and crowing, as if he were conscious of having hit it off exactly.

Victorine, amused and provoked, snatched the little rogue up in her arms, shook him, and then

smothered him with kisses, as she carried him into the house.

Meantime, Bernard, walking briskly away from his cottage, which was in the suburbs, and had a great chestnut-tree before it, entered the old Roman town of Saintes; and directing his steps to a certain narrow street in the Faubourg Ste. Eutrope, having a high convent-wall on one side and a row of mean houses on the other, he stopped at a chemist's shop, which was very unlike what chemist's shops are now; having, in place of a glass window full of gay bottles, a paltry canvas screen over what was little better than a modern cobbler's stall. Underneath the bulkhead of this establishment, dozed an inferior satellite, who, upon Palissy's arousing him, went in quest of his master, a little dull-eyed old man, who presently appeared from an inner chamber, looking dazed at the bright daylight.

"And what may you want, Master Bernard?" said he, somewhat superciliously.

Bernard named the names of sundry drugs,

which made the old man rub his eyes hard, as if to stare at him the better.

"What art after?" said he. "The great secret?"

"Aye, aye," said Palissy, "but not the great secret you mean;—never mind what it is."

"Some of these drugs I have not," said the chemist, doubtfully; "others, though I have, I know not that I am minded to part withal. . . . Come, tell us your matter. You need not be afraid of me. . . . Is it anything about gold?"

"I hope it may prove so in the end," said Bernard, "but I am a great way from it yet."

"So are most, so are most," said the old man, rapidly. "Hast got a crucible?"

"Oh no! but I mean to have a furnace."

"Many a potter has that, who makes pipkins," said the chemist, contemptuously; "you will want great heat—"

"Indeed I shall, my master; and what is worse, I know not how to get it—firewood is dear in Saintes."

"Firewood? *bah!*" exclaimed the chemist. "Come in here, and I'll show you a proper heat."

Palissy stepped after him into a little chamber at the back of the premises, where the old man's laboratory was. Here there were retorts, crucibles, and a vast apparatus, the names and uses of which were alike unknown to Palissy, together with a little furnace glowing with intense heat.

"Ah, I should like such a furnace as that!" cried he, with admiration; "but a poor man like me cannot meet the expense."

"A poor man? Verily no," rejoined the chemist, disdainfully; "many a rich man's gold, I can tell you, has flown up the chimney, playing this game . . . all for want of being on the right scent."

"And are *you* on the right scent?" inquired Palissy.

"What know I?" said the chemist, spreading forth his hands deprecatingly; "I know a thing or so . . . I have the Schahmajm, as the Rabbis call it—the general creation; but all, all is

mystery. I may be on the eve of some notable discovery."

"So may I," said Palissy; "and I pray you, Maître Joseph, let me have those same drugs."

"You know not what you ask, you silly fellow," returned Maître Joseph. "See here, here is one of them;" and unlocking a casket, he took therefrom a small square bottle containing a black powder; "this is sold for its weight in gold."

"However, let me have as much of it as will lie on my little finger nail," persisted Bernard; "the rarer it is, the less I must have, and the more care I must take of it; but, at all events, I will have a little."

"You are an extravagant fellow, to be a glazier and land-surveyor," said Maître Joseph; "you must drive a better trade than we wot of, I'm thinking, to be able to amuse your leisure with such toys as this."

And scrupulously delivering him, from the palm of his hand, no more than he had asked for,

he shook the remainder carelessly back into the bottle, scattering on the table more in waste than he had sold at an exorbitant rate.

"Hold, hold!" cried Bernard, brushing together what was spilt, and putting it into the chemist's hand.

"Thou'rt a worthy fellow," said Maître Joseph, smiling; "we will e'en add this to what thou hast already — and I don't believe you have enough altogether for any satisfactory experiment."

"None of my experiments are satisfactory," said Bernard.

"Then why do you persist?" said Maître Joseph.

"Why do *you?*" said Palissy: on which they both laughed.

"I think," said Bernard, waxing bolder, "you might teach me a few things if you would . . . just to put a poor fellow in the right way."

But the chemist immediately began to withdraw from the subject, and from the laboratory

also; and seemed repenting of having been too confidential already.

"I have no secrets to communicate," replied he; "I know but my trade—you have merely seen my apparatus for distilling simples and preparing medical drugs. As for any great arcanum, I doubt if there be any: at all events, I'm too poor to try."

And weighing out with jealous exactness the few things Bernard wanted, which he confessed to possessing, he took the full price for them, and seemed glad to see him depart.

In about half-an-hour, Madame Palissy heard a tremendous noise going on in her back kitchen, which was a lean-to built against the house, and was little more than a scullery with a chimney in it.

"Why, Bernard," cried she, looking in on him, "I thought you were off to your surveying, or else to your furnace in the wood. What are you about?"

"My surveying is finished, more's the pity,"

said Bernard, "and my furnace in the wood is so far off that I spend half my time going and coming; so I am trying to make a furnace here."

"Why, goodness gracious me!" cried Madame Palissy, "was there ever on earth such a mess as you have been making! And with all my washing and starching about!"

"My dear, I had just been thinking what a mess *you* had been making, and wishing all these little cobwebs of things at Jericho, or behind the kitchen fire, but did not like to mention it. As you have done so, however, just take them away, will you? for they are terribly in my way."

"Was there ever anything like it!" cried she, sweeping up her fine linen in dudgeon, and carrying it away with her. "What is this I have upset now? Some of your rubbish, I'm afraid."

"Plague take you!" cried Palissy, kindling into sudden rage, and turning as red as fire. "You wretched girl, what *have* you done?"

"Why, what have I done?" said Madame Palissy, looking frightened.

He said not a word, but covered his eyes with his hands, and actually shed tears.

There was a row of little potsherds on a bench, on every one of which was sprinkled a little powder, black, white, brown, or grey. One of these had been caught by the fine things Madame Palissy had been carrying away, and the potsherd had been upset, and the powder spilt.

"Well, I am truly very sorry," said she, in a softened tone, setting down her washing on a dusty chair, and going up to him; "it was entirely accidental."

"I know it, my best love; I know it."

"What was it, Palissy?"

"A drug, dearest, worth its weight in gold, and I can get no more. I have no money. Oh me, oh me!"

"Well, but, Palissy, let us see if we cannot scrape it up."

And down upon their knees they both were in a moment, and knocked their heads together so smartly that the fire flashed from their eyes.

This set them both laughing; and then, with perfect unanimity, they began scraping the dust off the earthen floor with their nails, till they obtained a very composite kind of mixture, which Palissy, though in despair, replaced on the tile, and said he would bake.

"And now, my dear good Victorine," said he, "to whom I am truly obliged for the trouble you have just taken for me, and sincerely sorry I spoke to you so roughly just now,—only, you see, I had very great provocation,—all I now ask is undisturbed possession of this little kitchen while my experiments are going on; and, if you have it to spare, a little, a very little more firewood."

And Madame Palissy felt his case to be such a hard one, and herself to have been such a desperate domestic sinner, that she was only too glad to accept of a pacification on these terms, and cleared away her female litter with amiable alacrity; after which she returned with both her arms clasped round an enormous bundle of firewood, though she had reserved herself hardly enough to boil the

chestnuts for dinner, and, what was worse, had no money to buy more.

Owing to the badness of the fire, the chestnuts were not sufficiently boiled till the workmen in the neighbouring fields were making the *tinta-marre*, which recalled them to labour, by hammering on their implements with a stone. Too late for dinner is often a married man's misdemeanour; on this occasion the dinner was too late for the master of the house, but he did not seem to mind it: on the contrary, his head was evidently in the furnace all the while. He had scorched his eyes almost out of his head, and there was a smut on one side of his nose which made him look comical; yet he had washed his hands, as every respectable man will do before he says grace, though it be but over an egg and butter. On this occasion there was an egg, a new-laid one too, for Bernard, to atone for the tardy cooking of the chestnuts. He observed it was not boiled enough: Victorine said it *must* be boiled enough, for it had boiled all the while she

said a Paternoster, and everybody knew that was the right time. Bernard doubted whether it were not an irreverent application of a Paternoster, to make it decide the boiling of an egg: his wife said she had never heard anybody object to it before; he was more nice than wise. And then she said, "Do let me wipe that smut off your nose, Bernard; I can't bear to look at you," and applied the corner of her carnation-coloured apron to it; and then said, "There, now you look like a respectable man;" and he replied that he was afraid her apron was none the better for it; and she said, "Oh! this will wash;" and he said he hoped it would wash and wear for ever, like the famous apron of the pretty wool-spinner, Sainte Luçence, he liked the colour so much; and she said, "Why, I thought you did not believe in the saints. I do believe you like old things better than new;" and he said, not everybody's old things, but her old things perhaps he might, for they always looked new; and he had so many pleasant associations with them: and as

for believing in the saints, he believed most or all of them had lived, though not that they had performed all the miracles ascribed to them; as, for example, that Luçence could carry red-hot coals in her apron without burning it. Victorine said, "Oh, you know she only did so once; and that was by way of ordeal. She could not do so always." He said, "No, I believe not." Then she poured out a very small cup of wine, and drank half of it, and he drank the other half; and so their frugal meal ended, and he went back to his furnace, and she proceeded to clear the table. Then she took out her old crimson petticoat (it was a coffee-coloured one she had on), and, with many sighs, began to consider how she could make a *rifacciamento* of it. There were thin places darned down that would burst out again, and every one of the plaits had a threadbare line down it nearly to the hem, and the hem was frayed, and had been turned in so often that if it were renewed again, the petticoat would be too short. The busk of her boddice had worn an

absolute hole in the front; she must darn it down on a piece of the same stuff: she had a little scrap of the original, quite new, that she had put away, intending always to treasure it up. However, that must be used now; so she rummaged it out of a bundle of fragments that usually was hidden in an old highly polished cherry-wood *armoire,* well stored with homespun linen: and when the new piece was laid upon the old, oh! how miserable, how horrible the shocking old petticoat looked! She was ready to cry; but then Bernard's golden promises came into her head, and she remembered that she was to have her pocket full of money "some of these days," and she thought, "Oh, I can rub on anyhow, meantime." So she sat to her patching with right good will, and was so earnest over it that she was surprised to hear vesper ringing; and turning about, perceived to her dismay that the fire was out.

Now, Bernard and Victorine generally supped on rye-bread, black and a little moist, with a cup

of the thin, sour beverage made of the last squeezing of the grapes when the real wine has been already extracted from them; but this night, as the weather was cold, she had intended to warm up a little soup chiefly made of lentiles. It occurred to her that since she had no sticks left to rekindle the fire, her little brass saucepan might simmer on Bernard's furnace; so she went with it in her hand to the door, and was just going in, when he bawled out—

"Oh, don't open the door and let in the draught, for patience' sake!"

So she closed it again, vexed to the heart, and thought if any one needed patience, it was she rather than he. Then she rather crossly washed the children in cold water, and rubbed them roughly, which made them cry, and the rest of the evening was spent in quieting them. She had just got them to sleep, and was thinking she would go to bed herself, since she had thrice summoned Bernard to supper, without his attending to her, when some one tapped at the

house door and lifted the latch; and in came her nearest neighbour, Marguerite Pierrot, the thrifty, industrious, economical wife of a small farmer, who held the same farm his forefathers had held before him for several generations.

"Good evening, Victorine," said she; "here am I, at this untimely hour, come begging for a pinch of salt: for though we live so near the salt marshes, yet it will happen that careless housekeepers sometimes run short, and this is my case just now."

"I am glad to be able to accommodate you," said Victorine, with alacrity. "What a cold night it is!"

"And you have let your fire out!" cried Marguerite, laughing; "one would have supposed you were too warm."

"Because I happen to be out of faggots, just as you are out of salt. Bernard, extravagant man, has been burning the last, for some megrim of his."

"Then my little Antoine shall run down to

you with another, the minute I get home," said Marguerite. "No thanks! Don't say a word. What! should not neighbours help one another? A lonely hearth with no fire is cold comfort; but I remember when I and my six sisters were girls, we loved winter better than any season of the year; because, look you, we kept a rousing fire at the end of our great stable, and shut ourselves in, and kept one another warm, spinning tow and flax, and telling stories without end, of weir-wolves, witches, goblins, and fairies. The young men thought none the worse of us for having a little money among us; and used to sit over against us, carving cherry-wood, and mending their harness; and woe to her who dropped her distaff, for a kiss was the forfeit to whoever picked it up. My father had a dairy-farm, and we and the cows were all under the same roof, nor were we nice enough to mind it, for their breath was sweet and wholesome."

"I have often thought you owed your fresh colour to that," said Victorine.

"Who can tell?" said Marguerite. "This I know, that we were sorry when spring came and the cows went up the hills, for our lovers went with them. Some of them were cupboard-lovers, I think, and liked us for our soft cheeses, and curds, and cream. However, we all married well, and had a white hen carried before us, except Annette, who was lame. Poor Annette was much afflicted as a child. At three months old she turned black in the face, and grew rigid, with her mouth and eyes wide open. My mother, naturally thinking the fairies had changed her (for they swarm in those parts), went to the curate, who, being a mild man, was not for proceeding to any extremity, but bade her just strip the child and lay it before the market cross, and whip it as long as she could stand over it. The fairies, getting an inkling of this (for I believe they can hear the grass grow), changed the babies back again in her absence; so when she returned, she found Annette laid straight in her cradle, asleep like an angel. However, to make all safe

for the future, she dedicated her to the Virgin. But here I keep chattering, while you are shivering with cold! Good night, good night! I shall not return along the river, for fear of the fairy-laundress. I know those that have known them that have helped her to wring pearls and sapphires from her linen, but they all turned to dewdrops at day-dawn; and if you show the least distrust or reluctance, she twists your arm the wrong way, and breaks it before you can say '*Conserva me.*'"

And, laughing, she ran off through the dark, leaving Victorine quite restored and enlivened by this little exchange of cheerful words and good offices. Tapping at her husband's door without opening it, Madame Palissy cried in her pleasantest voice, "Bernard, dear Bernard! won't you come to supper?"

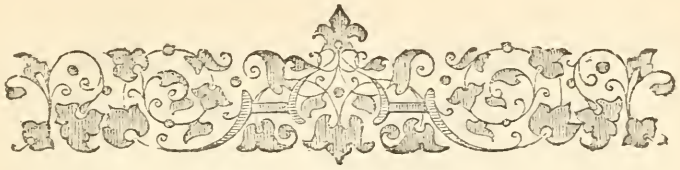
"Directly, my life!" responded he. And out he came, as dirty as a charcoal-burner.

"Why, how dark it is!" said he.

"Because it is so late," said Victorine.

"Vesper rang an hour ago. It is very cold too—at least, I am very cold."

"Are you?" cried he, raising his scorched face to look at her with surprise—"Why, *I* am as warm as a toast!"



CHAPTER III.

NEXT morning, Bernard brushed and put away his Pyrenean suit of coffee-brown, and descended to breakfast in an old and exceedingly shabby red woollen blouse, which entirely concealed his neat figure. He observed that his head had made a very black mark on the white pillow during the night, from whence he conjectured his hair to be very smoky; wherefore, he gave it a complete cold bath in the tub generally used for washing the children, and then, having rubbed it till it curled all over like a negro's, he finished by tying his head up in a large yellow handkerchief, which indeed was an excellent preservative of his hair, but by no means

made his beauty too alluring. Having thus comfortably established himself, he took possession of the larger half of Marguerite's faggot, and shut himself up in the back kitchen, supremely happy, to study the grand arcanum.

"I have now," said he to himself, "pounded together all the substances I can suppose likely to make anything, and have taken notes of the various compounds I have placed upon each potsherd; and surely there is at least a fair chance that, among so many, one or two mixtures may run over the pottery when melted, in a form that may give me some hint of the composition of white enamel, which, they say, is the basis of all others. Ah, if I had but ever so little knowledge to guide me, instead of being wholly at the mercy of blind chance! But, patience, Bernard Palissy; every one must have a beginning. Rome was not built in a day."

Thereupon this great man, for a great man he was, even then, though he knew it not, sat down to feed the furnace with all the fuel he had, and

to wonder where, when that was burnt, he should get more. This wonder, towards the latter end of the day, he expressed with some anxiety to his wife.

"Indeed I cannot tell you, Bernard Palissy," replied she, very shortly, "for I have scarcely sticks enough left to keep the pot boiling as it is, and no money to buy more."

"So you said yesterday, my love," replied he; "but where did you get these?"

"Marguerite Pierrot was kind enough to give them to me."

"Perhaps Marguerite Pierrot will be kind enough to give you a few more."

"Forsooth, I cannot ask her. I wonder at you, Bernard! They are poor people like ourselves."

"That is true," replied he, sighing; "and yet what can I do? If my furnace-fire gets low, all my labour will have been in vain. Just at the time, too, when I am expecting a result. . . . I would run down to Marguerite myself, and

request a faggot of her as a particular favour, only I cannot well leave my pottery, you see, and I fear you would hardly like to take charge of it."

"No, indeed!" cried Victorine, hastily, "anything rather than that. For then, if any mischief happened, you would be sure to lay it to me." Then, seeing his mortified air, "Come," said she, after a moment's irresolution, "just this once I will go and ask for a faggot."

"You are an angel!" cried he, rapturously.

"Oh no, I'm not, and I know you don't think me one."

"Yes, I do."

"No, you don't."

And off she set in high good humour: the children being luckily asleep.

At supper-time it was to be expected that Bernard would come in quite lively and pleasant, to reward his wife for her obliging conduct; but alas! he was scorched, tired, dirty, and in very low spirits. His experiments had all failed.

"Never mind, Bernard," said Victorine, kindly, "better luck next time. Eat this nice omelette."

But he could not touch a morsel, and the tears came into his eyes. Victorine now sincerely pitied him: to be unable to eat a nice supper did indeed seem something worth crying about.

"Your stomach must be disordered," said she; "the heat of that nasty furnace has made you bilious."

"Oh no, my stomach has nothing to reproach itself with," said he, dejectedly; "it's this stupid head of mine." And he gave it a violent blow.

"That won't cure it," said his wife. "You will only give yourself a headache."

"*I have it!*" cried he, springing up, and cutting a caper.

"Have what?—a headache?" said Madame Palissy. "That's the oddest way of treating it!"

"I've thought of a new combination!" cried Bernard. "To-morrow I will try it; for there is nothing to be done to-night. . . . Oh yes,

there is, though: I can break another pipkin!" And smash went another piece of pottery.

"Now," said he, gathering up the fragments with great glee, "I shall be able to begin anew to-morrow."

"You certainly must be cracked!" ejaculated Victorine, holding up both her hands.

"No, my dear, the pipkin is, but I am not. All will come straight, you will see."

After a night of sound sleep, Palissy set to work with renewed energy, humming a ballad to himself as he lit the fire. His experiments failed again; he was at his wits' end—where could the blunder be? Perhaps some of the compounds might be right enough all this time, but the wrong degree of heat might have been applied . . . they might have been baked too much or too little; he must try each compound over again, with various degrees of heat, before he decided that his chemical preparations were in fault.

"Besides, I arranged my trial pieces without

any method or consideration," thought he, "which, of itself, was a blunder great enough to secure failure. I will be more methodical this time."

So he pounded and ground new materials, and mixed them in various proportions, and labelled them, and arranged them, and applied to each of them various degrees of heat. But still the result was—*nil.*

Never mind! Who's tired? His courage is not exhausted—but his wood is, and that is nearly as bad. Again he has recourse to Victorine—tries coaxing and reasoning; but she won't go any more.

In despair he goes, just as he is, to Marguerite. He is such a funny figure in his old blouse and yellow handkerchief, that the people he meets stare and laugh at him as he goes along; but he is too much preoccupied to attend to them. By-and-by, he returns home with an enormous faggot on his back, twice or thrice as large as the last—enough for several days.

"See what I've got!" cries he, laughing.

"Ah, you've been coaxing Marguerite as you sometimes coax me," said Victorine, disdainfully: "*you've* an oily tongue, I've good reason to know. She does not know you as well as I do."

"Is it likely she should?" returned he, in high glee. "But I took no advantage of her—used no coaxing at all; only just asked her, in the simplest, pleasantest way, if she knew of any dear, good woman that would lend a poor fellow a faggot and not require it of him again!"

"Ah! . . . you won't find that trick answer a second time."

"Certainly not: even if it were a trick, which it wasn't. Spinach isn't good, boiled twice. She's a dear good soul, that she is; and I'll do as much for her, when I can."

"But, Bernard, stop one moment before you shut yourself up again . . . What *am* I to do? Just tell me! I've no money to buy bread!"

"My love, no more have I," said he, shaking his head. "It's a very great pity."

"Pity! but we can't do without it!"

"Why, then we must *have* it."

"But how? That's the very thing I want to know."

"Can you borrow it?"

"Certainly not. I won't be beholden to Marguerite for anything more."

"But at the shop? or the mill?"

"No; they won't give credit."

"Well then . . Hum!—*can* we do without it?"

"Without bread! Now, Bernard!"

"I'm perfectly serious, Victorine. I am ready to try, if you will. I can live on galette as well, or much better, than on cream-cakes and tarts. Certainly, however, I have no right to expect you should."

"Besides, is not galette made with flour? Don't talk like a goose."

"Geese don't talk: they cackle."

"Well, all I have to say to you, Bernard Palissy, is, that I and your children can't live on broken pipkins; and that if you had not meant

to keep us in daily bread, like an honest man, you ought never to have married. That's my honest opinion—it may be somewhat roughly expressed, but it's *the truth*, nevertheless, and you know it is. A man that goes running, or flying, after a castle in the air, may do so and welcome, if a bachelor; but not if he's a married man, and leaves his family to starve."

Bernard coloured very deeply; cast the faggot off his shoulders into the back-kitchen; tore the yellow handkerchief off his head, and a handful of curly hair with it, so greatly was he moved: then plucked off his blouse over his head, settled his shirt, washed his hands, took his paint-box and drawing-book off the shelf, and sat down in this very suitable and propitious mood, to design and complete an original composition. But his eyes were so bleared with continual staring into the furnace, that motes of all shapes and colours appeared to dance between him and the paper; his hand also trembled so that he could not trace a steady line; his temples were throbbing

violently. After one or two ineffectual attempts, "There's no use in it," said he, despairingly: "I must go and take a walk in the fields."

"That won't pay the baker," said Victorine, crossly.

"It may bring me into a state of body and mind that will enable me to do something that will pay the baker," said he.

"Then, since you *are* going to ramble about, at an hour when other men are working, you may as well take little Paul with you."

"No, Victorine, not just now."

And, leaving her to ejaculate within herself, "What a temper!" he, with a full heart, hurried from his home towards the fields.

It was opening spring: choirs of sweet birds were heard from every little thicket; the apple and cherry-trees were in full blossom, and acacias just in bloom shook their clusters over his head. Light, fleecy clouds, stirred by a soft air, were casting their fleeting shadows over fields of rye, gracefully waving in the gentle wind, and

deepening the hue of the bright rose-coloured vetches.

> "Vernal delight and joy, able to chase
> All sadness but despair,"

wooed the young artist's perturbed spirit on every hand. At first, they only seemed to enhance his grief, and aggravate the swelling of his throat and the tempestuous throbbings of his heart; but a few warm tears presently gave him relief; the choking ceased, the pulse became regular; nature regained and retained her strong, sweet influence over him. He turned down a delicious lane, shaded by the fresh green leaves of the walnut, the snowy alder, the vagrant bramble, and the twining branches of the wild rose: the banks were enamelled with violets and with strawberry-blossoms: he sat down and listened with delicious emotions to the distant cry of the cuckoo, and the nearer song of the thrush.

"How beautiful is this world!" thought he, "O Lord God, our Governor, how excellent is thy name throughout all the earth!"

Then he thought what a silly fellow he had been to fret so, because his wife had scolded him, and how natural it was that she should be cross when she wanted bread. He would go home presently, and kiss and be friends. But she would not be friends unless he found work; and where was it to be had? People were tired of having their likenesses taken, and there was no surveying wanted just now.

He ruminated upon this very calmly, and pulled up a weed at his side, and examined it. "Ah," said he, "this is nothing but the spotted persicaria; as common a thing as grows, with little beauty to boast, even when in flower, which as yet it is not: yet God never forgets to set a black irregular blot somewhere or other upon every one of its lance-shaped leaves. . . . You remind us, little flower, of the stain of original sin, *somewhere or other*, upon every human soul! and, shall I not also say, of the blood which taketh away all sin, upon the soul of every true believer?"

Just then a lizard crept out of a matted collection of herbage at the root of the tree beneath which he was sitting, and was running off with great alertness, when he caught it in his hand and examined it.

"Not so fast, master lizard," said he, "let you and I have a little colloquy together. What a handsome fellow you are! How fleet in motion! How superb in your armour! Where is the human artist that could perfectly imitate these imbricated scales over your body? these plates over your head and temples? this collar round your throat? Oh, Creator of all things! how excellent art thou even in thy lowest works!"

While thus extracting recreation and restoration from the simplest things around him, Bernard saw the shadow of a man approaching; and presently, the man himself, who was no other than Maître Grégoire, major-domo of the castle.

"Good day, Maître Grégoire," said Bernard.

"Aha, Bernard Palissy, is it you?" said the major-domo; "you are the very man I want."

"Most happy to hear it," said Bernard. "What's the matter? Any painted glass broken?"

"That's the very thing. Lolotte, absurd creature, who always goes about snuffing the air as if a dead rat were behind the arras, pretended that the great hall contained a whole winter's accumulation of pent-up odours of smoke, dust, onions, garlic, fried fish, rancid oil, and everything that is offensive; and, to please her dainty ladyship's nose, must needs set ajar the only division of the great window that will open, without fastening it. Consequence was, as might have been expected, the brisk south wind banged it to with violence, and shattered eleven lozenge-panes, one of which contained the nose of St. Ursula."

"'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good," cried Bernard, gaily; "this wind has blown me the very thing I wanted . . . a good job of work. Rest you easy, Maître Grégoire, I will be up at the Château in three-quarters of an hour, with plenty of glass."

And he hurried home as blithe as a lark; packed his glass and his paints, strapped his burthen on his back, and started off on his errand just as Victorine came in with a basket full of wet linen from the river.

"Off again?" cried she, still sharply; "you will be too late for dinner."

"Very likely," said he, without telling her of his commission, which would have relieved her mind, and sweetened her temper at once. Thus we add to each other's burthens. He felt he had done amiss, and was in pain about it all the rest of the day. The job took some hours; and all that time Victorine was fretting at home, and wondering what had become of him. But then he was handsomely paid for his day's work, and he had money to carry home to his wife, besides two large rye loaves which he bought as he passed the baker's. And he met the miller's man, and bespoke a sack of flour; and he went to the wood-cutter's and ordered as much wood as his furnace would consume in ten days;

and still he had a handful or two of small coin to pour into the pouting Victorine's rose-coloured apron, as he bent over her and received her half-unwilling kiss.

"I wonder," thought he, just before he dropped asleep at night, "whether God sent the major-domo to me just when I wanted the commission, as a reward to me for having been raising my thoughts to Him in my poor, untutored fashion, just before? . . . He's a good God to us all, that's a fact; and I wonder we don't apply to Him in our little troubles a great deal oftener than we do." And with this thought in his head, Bernard fell into profound and peaceful repose, with his wife and children round about him, and the full moon shining through the green baize curtain of the little cracked lattice.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR weeks,—nay, for months,—Bernard thus went on, living from hand to mouth, now borrowing, now promising, now hungering, now getting casual employment, and spending as much as his wife would let him in new drugs, new pipkins, and more firewood. Wood was then the only fuel used: it was dear, though forests covered the land. He constructed and reconstructed his furnaces, ground and pounded new materials, and all to no good result.

Still he had faith in himself; but his wife had lost hers in him; and she upbraided him so continually and so crossly, that he became exaspe-

rated, and was now and then almost driven to despair. Domestic politeness, that stronghold of domestic happiness, had given way: the fine, invisible cobweb which is spun between according minds was rudely broken; discord and poverty raised the latch, and Love flew out of the window, and thought he would go and dwell somewhere else awhile till the storm were overblown.

Bernard had not the ingenuity of Casti, the Italian poet, who, being unable to pay a debt of three *giuli*, wrote two hundred sonnets on the subject, which so mollified his creditor, that at length he forgave him. Unable to buy fuel enough to raise the temperature of his furnaces to a proper heat, he resolved to commit his compounds to the care of some potter. There were several of them in the forest; to one of them, named Matthieu, he went and explained what he required. Matthieu heard him wonderingly; he was good at making brown earthen pots and pans, but knew nothing of white enamels: it might be all very right,—it was above his comprehension,

—he was very willing to do all he could do, viz.—to bake the potsherds Bernard brought him for a trifling compensation.

Palissy broke more pipkins, and covered three or four hundred of their fragments with his different powders, taking notes of the number and materials of each. O you poor Palissy! you deserve success this time, my man, but you won't get it. Fame and Success sit on yonder mountain-top afar off, with their hands behind them, and their eagle eyes fixed on you, and they laugh!——

Never mind! keep on, great and good man; you will succeed eventually: but not yet,—not yet.

The pottery was a league and a half from Bernard's cottage—he was unable to carry his potsherds there himself; he was obliged to commit them, precious as they were, to another hand, with an earnest request to the potters that they would be very careful in the baking. Ah! when our hearts are set on some invention, some disco-

very, it is pain and grief to us to be obliged to entrust anything connected with it to another hand! So much may be lost, just at the critical moment, by ignorance, or carelessness, or indifference!

The potters made merry when they saw the three hundred potsherds. "What a singular whim has this fellow taken into his head!" said they.

"Singular or no," observed one of them, "I should not be surprised at some result."

"*What* result, Pierre Bourçicault?" inquired his companions.

"Nay," said he, scratching his head, "I'm not the fairy Melusina; I didn't say, not I, *what* result, for, you see, there may be a deal more in these powders than you or I wot of,—enough, for aught that we know, to blow us all up."

"The saints forbid!" cried the man who was putting them into the furnace. However, the vague surmises of Bourçicault went a little way with his companions, who, when Bernard joined

them, in time to see his compounds taken from the furnace, were sensible of a kind of contemptuous curiosity, which made them glance somewhat eagerly at the potsherds when they came forth.

A dead failure!—and the hut rang with the rude foresters' laughter.

"Peace, I pray you," said Bernard, appealingly; "is not my disappointment enough, of itself?"

But they knew no delicacy; and the subject was one that their uncultivated wit could handle with readiness. He silently paid the sum agreed on, to the master-potter; and on being asked what he meant to do next, simply replied, "Try again."

The hut rang anew with peals of laughter.

"Yes, *try again*," repeated he, energetically; "and again and again while life lasts, *till I succeed!* Believe me, my masters, one of those pipkins of yours was not made, in the first instance, without failures. I will send you some

more to-morrow," added he, as he went off. And the potters laughed, and muttered, "Try again, quoth he!—try again!"

And several times the indomitable fellow tried again; always with great cost, confusion, and sorrow. Meanwhile, time wore on—his wife was expecting another confinement; he was more than ever in want of money. He sighed, mused within himself, wandered into the open fields to talk with his own heart, and ask Heaven what he should do: for Palissy was very religious. He thought of his duties, his responsibilities, his necessities; he thought of Victorine's approaching trial, and of little Paul, whose health was waning under some unascertained infantine disease; he thought of his hopes, his convictions, his failures.

"Yes, O God!" was his exclamation at last; "the sacrifice must be made: the circumstances in which thou hast placed me demand it. Here is a thing to be done,—a thing which thou knowest how I might do, but which thou dost not see fit,

at present, to afford me the means absolutely necessary for finding out. 'Tis as much in thy hands as the breath I now expire, without knowing in the least whether thou wilt choose me to inhale another. So be it, O Lord! I submit!"

As true an instance of greatness, Bernard, as you have given yet. The angels are watching you, good man; God is watching you, and caring for you, this very moment. He is very good, but He is very firm, and is testing the strength of perseverance and submission in the son in whom he delighteth. For a little while He appears forgetful of you; for a long while He will be glorified in you. Where there is no warfare there is no victory; but you will be victor at last.

So he resolved to close, for the present, this his first continuous struggle for the discovery of white enamel; not that there was no more strength of perseverance in him, but that he might earn bread for his family. He diverted his mind to other subjects for a time; sought and found employment in painting and glass-working; and

comported himself as if he were not zealous to dive any more into the secret of enamels.

The first and immediate result of this self-victory was inward peace. He had a mind at rest within itself, a blessed, permeating consciousness of rectitude, and of the blessing of God, with whom he held more intercourse than ever during his daily work, continually darting up his spirit to him in little inward apostrophes. His health and good looks, which had begun to decline, speedily recovered; his food was wholesome to him, his sleep dreamless, the prattle and caresses of his children, rapture—

> "The common earth, the air, the skies,
> To him were opening Paradise."

For he was a great naturalist, profoundly versed in the mysteries of insect architecture, and animal and vegetable life: could find "sermons in stones, and good in everything." And when a man has those tastes, he carries his happiness and independence about with him: you may shut him up

in a prison,—he will interest himself in a spider on the wall.

The second good result was Victorine's restoration to good temper and cheerfulness. She was not in her best looks, but she became so obliging and agreeable that he hardly perceived it; and the commonest thing they said to one another was spoken in a pleasant tone. He could now keep the family in bread, though in little more. Still, his wife saw he was doing all he could, and was content: if he earned money, all the better; and if he was out of work, she made the diminished meal go as far as she could without a murmur. When he had spare time, he dug in the garden, or taught his little boy hymns and baby rhymes: he never was idle.

Had he then been wrong in seeking the arcanum? No, he had been as much in the right then as he was now in abandoning it. To everything there is a time and season.

Suddenly a Godsend visited him. It was truly such, and as such he with humility and gratitude

accepted it. He was made surveyor of the extensive salt-marshes in Saintonge. The king's decree had been issued that the gabelle, or salt-tax, should be established in the district, and certain commissioners arrived, who found upon inquiry that there was no man more competent to map the country than Bernard Palissy.

Oh what bliss!—to be constantly employed and well paid!—to come home to a joyous fireside and a smiling wife! One of his first cares was to requite Marguerite Pierrot for her kindness, by carrying her as much fire-wood as his shoulders would bear. He paid various small debts, and regained his lost credit.

This state of things lasted about a year. Then his mapping was finished; he found himself with a little money in hand, and his old desire to discover the secret of enamelling returned.

It struck him that the heat of the potter's furnace might not have been intense enough; he therefore resolved that his next trial should be made in a glass-house. The first note that

Victorine had of his intentions, was the crash of three dozen earthen pots, which he had bought on purpose. To her ear it was like the report of an invader's first discharge of artillery.

He carried off his three or four hundred trial-pieces to the glass-house, and returned to dinner in cheerful spirits; but, to whatever remark he made, he only received a short answer. No reason was assigned,—no cause of umbrage mentioned; but there *was* one, and she made him feel it.

Like a sensible fellow, he pretended to take no notice. The few observations he continued to make were unexceptionable, and cheerfully spoken: he chirruped to the baby; soothed little Paul in his arms; and, when the sickly little fellow dropped asleep, deposited him tenderly in his little crib, and then sat down to paint.

Bernard never went far a-field for subjects. He copied accurately from nature whatever came in his way, whether a purple plum, or a bunch of

crimson cherries, a snail on a wall, a bird on a tree, a caterpillar on a leaf, or a lizard coming out of a hole. Sometimes he painted shepherdesses in cherry-coloured petticoats, with three rows of black binding, till Victorine accused him of having but one idea. Then he dressed them in orange colour, sky-blue, and pea-green, and she wished he could supply her with new gowns as easily. There was something charmingly graceful and natural in his treatment of his subjects. The very facility they displayed rather depreciated their value in the eyes of uncultivated people; they did not think them very clever, *because* they were so like nature and yet so little laboured; but they were sensible of something that attracted and pleased them; and, therefore, as Bernard fixed a very low price on his original productions, he commonly obtained a ready sale for them. And the modest fellow actually thought himself liberally paid: to the end of his days, he said "people thought him a better painter than he was."

Well, now, Bernard Palissy, your trial-pieces have been in the glass-house furnace four or five hours—it is time to go and look after them. Now then! Who knows? The grand arcanum may be discovered this time—you may come home shouting "Eureka!" or whatever be the French *patois* for "I have found it."

Another failure? Alas, it is even so! and you return grave and sad, though not overcome. But Victorine is standing on the threshold awaiting you, and her brow looks black as night. There is something in store for you worse than your disappointment at the glass-house.

"Here you are at last," said she, in a deep, harsh tone. "I thought you would never come back. Paul has been very ill: he is better now, and there is nothing you can do for him; but you *might* have gone for the doctor. But you are never in the way now, whenever you are wanted! No, never! Always pre-occupied, always wasting your time, money, and affections over that detestable furnace! Yes, it *is* a detest-

able furnace! I hate it, I wish it were destroyed. I wish there were no such things in the world as tin, copper, lead, mercury, black manganese, or any minerals whatever! I wish there was no pottery. I wish there had never been a pipkin! I wish we did not eat our victuals off any kind of ware at all, but out of a trough, like pigs, or a manger, like horses, that I do! For pottery has ruined you, Bernard Palissy! It has made you as worthless and useless a fellow as any breathing. I don't consider you a bit better, as a family-man, than the idle sots that sit guzzling at the Golden Fleece."

"My dear Victorine, what a tirade!" exclaimed he, the moment she paused to take breath.

"Don't answer me!" retorted she, fiercely, and lashing herself up into a state of more and more fury; "I'm the wretchedest woman alive! I, that was once so young, and gay, and healthy, and everybody thought so lucky to have married Bernard Palissy!—that once was attended to by

him, and loved by him, and that did not care how hard I fared, nor how shabby I went, as long as he was pleased with me! All that's gone and past now; I know you for what you are—a complete visionary! a man that would feed his oven with his wife and children if he could, so long as he might bake a set of rubbishing tiles to his mind. And you *are* killing us, just as surely as if you put us at once into the furnace. Ours is a slow death instead of a quick one, that's the only difference. But I'll tell you what the end will be, Bernard Palissy! *You'll fail!* Yes, as sure as I stand here alive, you'll fail; and for this reason, because you deserve it! God won't bless a man that deserts his wife and family."

"Hush, Victorine, don't take His holy name in vain."

"I'm not taking it in vain! I'm as religious as you! More so, I hope! I go to mass, which you don't; I go to confession, which you don't; I cross myself with holy water, which you don't. And if all a man's religion consists in his poring

over an old Bible, and singing a lot of Huguenot hymns to very ugly tunes, and forsaking his wife and family on Sundays to go ever so far off to hear a heretical monk preach, that ought to be unfrocked—all I can say is, I don't think much of such a religion as that! A religion that won't enforce on a man the common duties of domestic life, is little better than the paganism of the Colliberts, that live in the salt-marshes and worship the rain! It's worth nothing! If that's what the Bible teaches him, the Bible is worth nothing at all."

She paused, exhausted by her incoherent rapidity of utterance; and darting at him a passionate look, rushed into the house, and into her own chamber, slamming the door after her.

Bernard stood where he was. This time he did not turn red; he turned white as death; and cold drops stood on his brow. He was petrified. This unexpected storm of wrath completely overwhelmed him; he knew not what to do or what to think. Had she been buoying herself up secretly with the hope he would succeed this

time, and had the disappointment been insupportable to her, when she read failure in his dejected mien and face? Was this an unaccountable outburst of frenzied fury, or was it indeed her real conviction that he would fail, because he deserved it? *Did* he deserve it? Was he not toiling for her, as well as for himself? and might he not expect a little more faith in her?—a little more kindliness?

He was almost heart-broken. Tears, bitter tears, forced themselves into his eyes,—yet he was too proud to brush them away, in the sight, possibly, of a human eye. He must seek his old consoler in the woods. The voice of God always seemed to whisper to him there. He would go seek him, listen for him, call to him. Pneuma! sweet breath of God! He would go, sad at heart as he was, to his Wood of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER V.

THE air was close and suffocating; and, ere Bernard had well reached his leafy covert, a bright flash seemed to plough up the ground before him, and a thunder-peal rattled over his head. He soon found refuge from the rain that poured down in torrents, and keenly enjoyed the war of elements. The operations of Nature always took Palissy out of himself; hence he could, for the time, lull "all sadness but despair," by contemplating the stars and planets on a clear night. Sunset always calmed and elevated him; sunrise always gladdened him. When he saw the lightning flash, and heard the thunder roll,

he felt his soul lifted up to Him "who walketh upon the wings of the wind, who uttered his voice, and the earth melted."

"'His lightnings shine over the world,'" repeated Bernard to himself;—"'the hills melt like wax in the presence of the Lord; in the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. . . . He hath vexed me with all his storms . . . he hath taken me up and cast me down like a potter's vessel.'"

Then he thought what a strong and admirable metaphor that was, and mechanically raised his own arm, as if more thoroughly to dash an earthen vessel to pieces. He thought how many allusions to potters and pottery there were in the Scriptures.

"Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall you be as a dove whose wings are as silver, and whose feathers as gold."

"That may be my case yet," thought he.

Again, Jeremiah was sent out to the potter's field, for divine instruction; and he saw the

potter mar one piece of pottery, and instead of casting it aside, *he tried again.* Then the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" . . . . And that was what the Lord *had* done: instead of casting them away and dashing them to pieces, he had patience with them again and again. "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel!"

Bernard's attention was recalled to the outward world by the lightning striking a fine tree over against him. "How dreadful is this place!" thought he, still finding a form for his thoughts in Scriptural language. "Surely this is none other than the house of God! He walketh in his garden; the earth trembles and is afraid."

He moved off, feeling his locality to be rather a dangerous one; and, going a little further, came upon a potter's hut. The potters were within, laughing and talking; but he did not feel disposed for their companionship just then; and, the storm beginning to blow over, he pursued

a glade which suddenly brought him out of the wood, and in sight of the old Roman aqueduct crossing the valley.

A man was passing, who looked round at him, and Palissy uttered a joyful exclamation of recognition, for it was Master Philibert, the Huguenot preacher, whom Bernard walked many miles every Sabbath to hear. He was a man of sweet and venerable aspect; much beloved by those who thought as he did on the doctrines about which the Christian world was disputing. Even the little children loved him, and called him *le cher papa.*

"Chance meetings are sometimes the pleasantest, my friend," said the good priest. "How fare thy wife and infants? Indifferently, I fear. Much as usual? Nay, that's well; then why not wear a smoother brow, and thank the good God in your heart?"

"I do thank him," said Bernard, sighing; "but there are some things I find it very difficult to thank him for."

"Who of us does not?" said Master Philibert. "He chasteneth even the son in whom he delighteth—did not even spare his *own* Son; and, if we consider, Bernard, that Father and Son are one, that is tantamount to saying he did not spare *himself,* for our unworthy sakes.—But what is the present grief of your own heart," resumed he, presently, "which you find you cannot be thankful for?"

"Ah, Master Philibert! don't ask me, or I may say more than I would. If you knew all, you would only join the rest of them, I fear me, and call me a visionary."

"A visionary! Many practical men have borne that reproach," said Master Philibert, "before they attained success."

"Now you have hit the right nail on the head!" exclaimed Bernard: "that's the very thing I want, and the very thing my wife and friends tell me I shall never have."

"Success in what?" said Master Philibert.

"In finding the secret of white enamel."

"Humph!"—and the good priest smiled,—"Now you have posed me, Bernard Palissy. I know nothing of white enamel, nor have I the smallest means of judging whether you are likely to find it out or not."

"Nor have I, that's the worst of it," cried Bernard. And he told his little tale, from the very beginning, with such artlessness and earnestness, that Master Philibert became quite interested, for the moment, in him and his experiments.

"I dare not say you will ever succeed," said he; "I wish with all my heart you may: but there is a paramount, sacred duty before you—of providing for your wife and children, before which everything else must give way. 'He that provideth not for his own house is worse than an infidel.' Let that be your care, the other your amusement—when you can afford it. And as for the want of belief in you, which seems to hurt you so much, credit me, friend Bernard, an original genius has rarely been appreciated in his own family; and, what is more, it would not be

good for him to be so. It might be very pleasant, very delightful to him for them all to be making a little hero of him, but it would be his destruction; it is safer, better for him, while to them the very name of genius is as great a bugbear as the *Loup garou.* His fame, if he be successful, will, in time, come round to them through the voice of the world; they will recognise it in its *effects:* and, if he be unsuccessful, can you wonder, my good friend, that his wife asserts that Genius has led him a dance, just as the ghost or fairy they call the Dame d'Aprigny at Bayeux, who haunts one particular street at midnight, inveigles poor, unsuspecting mortals into a *hey-de-Guise,* and trips it here and there with them till she dances her partners into the moat! But tell me, Bernard, you who have occasionally shown me very pretty specimens of original painting, do you ever feel cut to the soul in this way, because *they* are undervalued?"

"Oh no, Master Philibert," returned Bernard, laughing, "the things themselves are too trifling;

besides, they bring their own reward with them."

"Aye, there are indeed characteristic and peculiar rewards, Bernard, inseparable from the productions of genius; and the reason that you men of genius are so often discontented with your lot is, that you are not *satisfied* with these, which ought to be your payment in full, but crave for something beyond them, not belonging to them—admiration and appreciation, in short,—and fancy you should be supremely happy, beyond the reach of fretting, if these secondary rewards were accorded. Whereas the fact is, we *never* are happy, as long as these things are our objects; nor so happy, striving for what we have not, as we may be in what we have. And as for appreciation,—we must *never* look for it, my friend, till we get to Heaven, where each one will be exactly in his right place, and will recognise and love all the good that is in his companions."

"I know not how it is, Master Philibert," said Bernard, gratefully, "but you somehow have the

gift of always saying the right thing! But the fact is, I paint because it brings me a little money, and because I love painting for its own sake; for I feel I am a very poor painter; whereas, touching the white enamel, I feel that I may do something great, if people would only have patience and forbearance."

"Master-minds generally feel their own call and destiny," said Philibert, doubtfully; "and yet a great many inferior minds run after mere bubbles. . . You *may* have a true call and a happy destiny, and yet, my friend, I should say you mistook your call in this instance, and that it rather lay towards painting, which your modesty hinders your perceiving to be your true vocation. However, these are matters completely beyond my province. You may pray for direction . . ."

"To the white enamel?" asked Bernard, eagerly.

"Well . . to the white enamel, if you will, always with the saving clause of 'if it be thy will.' Prayers offered up with that proviso, in faith and humbleness of spirit, can hardly be made amiss.

There is a time drawing near, however, my friend, when all these matters will seem to you as worthless as your unsuccessful trial-pieces."

"You mean the day of judgment?" said Bernard.

"I mean a day when every man in France, including the little town of Saintes, with its ten thousand souls or thereabouts, shall be called to give an account of the faith that is in him, and to make his choice between God and vain idols. At present, the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint; but the Lord will assuredly visit the land, and purge away its dross, and take away all its tin; and his people shall be redeemed with judgment, and his converts with righteousness. Howbeit, if he trieth even his own like as silver is tried, which, I need not tell you, is *by fire,* where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Will they not consume like tow? Doubt not, many shall be offended, and shall hate one another, and shall betray one another; and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that endureth unto the end shall be saved!"

"I hope I may endure to the end," said Bernard, losing all his care for white enamel, in the kindling prospect of martyrdom; "there are some God-fearing men lying in our prison for their faith even now."

"And yet others, undeterred by their fate, are holding prayer-meetings and exhorting one another from house to house," said Master Philibert. "Do you do anything in that way, Bernard?"

"Yes, Master Philibert, what little I can .... There is a poor fellow named André, who works in a field hard by my little dwelling . . he knows scarcely more of God's dealings than those pigs that are digging under the trees for truffles; at least, he knew scarcely more before he came in my way. I have said a word or two; just shown him how he must be saved by Christ alone; taught him to pray for the Holy Spirit in his own tongue; in his own humble fashion, instead of merely repeating prayers in a tongue he does not understand; hammered a few texts and parables into

his head, to chew the cud upon while at his work. . . . Would you believe it? the poor dear fellow has found out a few others still more ignorant than himself, and taught them the little I have taught him, with such simple enlargements and improvements as his own plain sense supplies. And I really think he has a natural gift for exhortation . . . you never heard anything so simple, so winning!"

"Thus a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," said Master Philibert. "Whensoever, says Christ, two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst. . . . Keep on, Bernard! read your Bible, pray over it, and make others prize it. You will not have lived in vain, e'en though you should never discover the white enamel! And now, God speed thee; for here our roads part. Take this word of exhortation with thee . . . . 'If thou hast run with the foot-runners and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace thou hast wearied,

then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?'"

Palissy had not gone far when he heard Master Philibert calling after him.

"By the way, Bernard, now you have set me thinking on pottery,—what a fine thing that was of the prophet of old, haranguing the king and people of Judah, and telling them, under immediate inspiration, 'If you return not to the Lord, you shall be broken in pieces like this!' and then dashing an earthen vessel to the ground! What an impression it must have made! We dare use no such homely appeals now. And yet it was done by the command of God. Farewell, farewell! that was all I had to say. May God give you peace, even under those circumstances which seem foreign to its nature, if not fatal to its very existence."

Palissy went on his way with a lightened heart, but sorrow was running before him to meet him at his door. His second child was a sweet little girl, named Fleurette, the darling of his heart!

This dear little soul was never so happy as in his sight, in his arms, and had the unquestioning faith in him which every one else wanted. It illustrated forcibly to him the emphatic meaning of that text, "Except ye have *faith as little children.*"

She knew he was hunting for something he could not find—she knew not for what: but in her artless little way she sympathised with him, and would run up to him when he came home with, "Have you found it, papa?—have you found it?"

On the present occasion she ran forth to meet him, indeed, but there was no gladness in her large, soft, black eyes. She grasped the skirt of his blouse, and mournfully said, "Papa, little Paul is so ill! we think he will soon be dead!"

A pang shot through Palissy's heart. . . Victorine had mentioned the child's illness when she met him on the threshold, but the storm of invective which followed had driven it out of his mind. Lifting his little girl up in his

arms, he said, "How long has dear little Paul been so ill, my precious?"

"Only about half-an-hour—only since the men beat their tintamarre," said Fleurette.

Then Bernard ejaculated a thanksgiving in his heart, for it was more than an hour since he left the house.

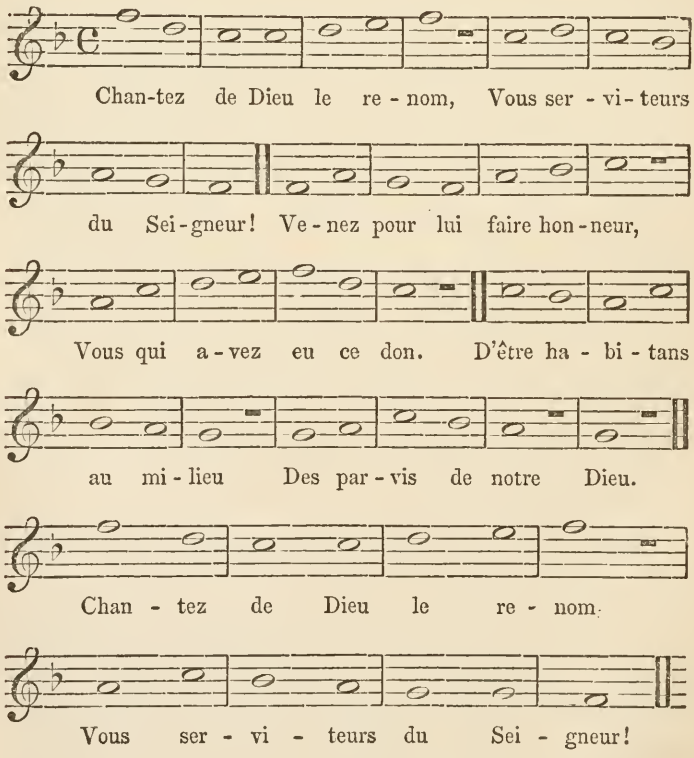
He entered with the hushed, reverential step with which we enter the chamber of the dying. Victorine was leaning over the sick child. The last time he had seen her, her face had been so distorted by passion that she had looked absolutely repulsive; now, every trace of wrath was gone, and he only beheld a thin, care-worn woman, in whose anxious features he still recognised beauty, though to a stranger's eye it would have been invisible.

She turned her dark eyes silently to him with a look of woe.

Little Paul looked up at his father and faintly smiled. "Sing to me, papa, sing," said he.

What a request! Bernard's throat was swelling

with *hysterica passio :* he set down Fleurette, raised the little white-lipped boy in his arms, pressed him tenderly to his bosom, gently rocked him to and fro, and presently, mastering his emotion by a strong effort, he began, in a low, sweet, balmy voice, to chant one of the simple Huguenot hymns of which the child was fond. Here it is :—



Directly Bernard paused in his singing, the little faint voice whispered, "Again! again!" and, thus lulling him, he gradually sang him to sleep. Poor Victorine, seeing the child sinking into rest, and having no time for sentiment, took the opportunity of bestirring herself about some needful household avocations, grateful in her heart to Palissy for relieving her awhile from her post. Thereafter, he relieved her of it almost altogether—constantly having the child in his arms and singing his Huguenot hymn. The poor little fellow's sickness was a distressing as well as mysterious one to those whose strong love made them partakers in his sufferings. Palissy racked his brain to think where the evil lay—what could be the remedy. At length the worn little spirit fled from its wasted tabernacle; he died in his father's arms, and the faithful, tearful Bernard, tenderly replacing him in his little crib, murmured, "Yes, dear child, though worms may destroy that body, yet in thy flesh shalt thou see God!"—and then silently

held out his arms to his wife, who threw herself weeping on his bosom.

The neighbours were very kind to them in their distress. When the funeral was over, Bernard's spirits gave way terribly. He sat listlessly in the house, in fruitless, purposeless reverie. Victorine's own heart was ready to burst, but she could not bear to see him thus. She laid her hand kindly on his shoulder and said, "Now go to thy pounding and grinding—it will do thee good."

And he smiled at her through his tears, and went.

For her part, feeling her sins called to mind more than usual by the death of her first-born, she took her rosary in her hand, and went to a "Via Crucis" in the old cathedral—beating her poor aching breast at every station, and watering the cold marble with her tears.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Master Philibert heard of Bernard's loss, he resolved to pay him a visit of consolation.

This worthy man had already brought himself into some trouble for preaching the reformed doctrine. Not being endowed with the courage of a St. Paul, he had, when the suspicions of Collardeau, the fiscal attorney, were aroused, temporised a little, and dissembled his faith; which long afterwards afflicted him with much remorse of conscience. However, he had escaped that time, and prudently retired to Geneva, the head-

quarters of the French reformers, where he acquired a great increase of earnestness, we are told, and enlarged both his faith and doctrine. Wishing to repair his fault on the spot where it had been committed, he returned to the neighbourhood of Saintes, preaching as he journeyed, and distributing, by his agents, Bibles and reformed tracts which he had himself printed at Geneva. And though a man incapable of supporting much pedestrian exercise, he would on no pretence accept the loan of a horse, which was frequently offered him, but preferred walking through the country with no other equipage than a simple staff in his hand.

This was the good man who now raised the latch of the door of the back kitchen, where Bernard was pounding away at his minerals.

"So you have lost your little child, my poor fellow," said he, when their first greeting was over. "I heard of it at Allevert, where I have been preaching to many people. Well! you will meet him again in a world where all tears

are wiped away: where every good and innocent affection, and even *taste* shall have its appropriate exercise. There we shall be filled with such a sense of God's presence and perfections as shall, of itself, be supreme bliss! There we shall know and love many of our dear ones again,—*all* of them whom we have loved in Christ,—and form new and profitable friendships, and renew old ones. There we shall doubtless have ways and means of exercising benevolence, and intelligence, and taste, and genius, and fancy, and ingenuity. Our glorious mansions may still be susceptible of additional embellishments, our heavenly gardens may still receive cultivation; only, there will be no blights, no mildews, no bad seasons. Who knows but we may be permitted to exercise hospitality to newly-arrived visitants from remote planets? and to show them all the marvels of our portion of heaven? Music there will certainly be cultivated to the glory of God; and why not poetry and painting? Why should any pursuit be shut out that is capable of

showing forth his praise? There will be time for everything according to the characteristic tastes implanted in each. Books, perhaps, there may be, books written by angels! and unlocking mysteries we have panted to penetrate—including the white enamel! Philosophy and science will then and there reveal more and more of the divine economy. Society and solitude will have their several seasons; and the Lamb will be glorified in all! Oh, if this life were but one entire pang, heaven would be cheaply bought by it!"

"I sometimes think this life *is* little more than a succession of pangs, of one sort or another," said Bernard.

"Pray to God, my friend! Pray."

"I do, Master Philibert; at my grinding, on my bed, on the road. Only so little seems to come of it. The earth is iron to me, the heaven brass."

"Out of this dark cloud, however," said Master Philibert, "may issue a voice saying,

'Thou art my beloved son!' No bereavement is so calamitous but that some sweetness or savour may be drawn out of it; and he who makes every trial of his life a reason of presenting a suitable and believing appeal to God, will soon find he has taken the very best means not only of praying with success, but of living as he prays. God seems just now to say to you, 'I have taken away the sweetest flower of your home, but yet I still leave you the means of being useful, of being beloved, of drawing nearer to others and to me, and of learning each day some new mystery of your own heart and of my wondrous providence.' Why, you are a lucky fellow, after all, Bernard, to be able to occupy yourself at this very time with all this pounding and grinding, which *I* should call very hard work! It has been said that a man should always have some particular pursuit which may be ever in his own power, and to which he can gladly turn in his hours of recreation. How much more so in his hours of sadness! You are a fortunate fellow, to

have something mechanical to do that fills and calms the mind."

Then Master Philibert changed the subject, and told Bernard how religious persecution was waxing hotter and hotter in various parts of France; and he counted over to him the names of a great many who had already been burned alive for their opinions by the Roman Catholics: and he told him how a poor peasant of the forest of Lyori, seeing some prisoners in a cart on their way to execution, had questioned them on the cause of their sentence, and learning it was for such and such opinions, had said, "Let me also enter the cart and go along with you, for I hold precisely the same faith that you do."

"And although," pursued Master Philibert, "we have, through the mercy of God, a grand vicar who is secretly favourable to the reformed opinions, and though our bishop is lukewarm and non-resident, yet Collardeau is a man of perverse and evil life, who halts at nothing

that may win him money and notoriety, and he has notified to the bishop that Saintes is swarming with heretics; and the bishop, unable to wink at the fact any longer, has given this malicious fiscal attorney full charge and commission to extirpate them. Therefore look to it, my friend, for the trial by fire is coming! And he that endureth unto the end shall be saved—not from the stake and the faggot, but from everlasting burnings. Brother Robin has been already arrested in Oleron, and brother Nicole in Allevert; and now they are hunting for the good brother who keeps a school and preaches at Gimosac. My turn may come next. Meanwhile I preach and baptize, to-day and to-morrow."

After Master Philibert had left him, Palissy's busy mind remained occupied with the stirring subject he had opened upon, and carried quite out of itself by cogitations on the faith and fate of the faithful brethren who had been apprehended. He was aroused from his reverie

by Victorine opening the door, and eagerly saying—

"They are coming, Bernard! They are bringing them this way, on their road to the prison! Each heretic bridled like a horse or an ass, with a great iron apple inside his mouth for a gag! Collardeau on his white horse, riding alongside of them. Ah, wretched men! they have gone astray from the only true faith; but yet Collardeau need not carry it towards them so cruelly. Sure, is not burning alive sufficient?"

The next day, André, the poor day-labourer whom Bernard had converted into a missionary, hastily looked in on him.

"They are out after Master Philibert," cried he, hastily. "They are hunting him down, with horses, gendarmes, cooks, and sutlers! He, the poor unarmed man, with only his staff in his hand! I fear he will not escape them, the bloodhounds!"

Nor did he. The next day Palissy saw him brought into the town, ironed like a common

malefactor, to be cast into the criminals' prison. They exchanged a look: Palissy's was full of encouragement; Philibert's was full of joy. The stain of his temporising was wiped off.

Palissy hurried home, threw off his dirty blouse, washed, and dressed himself in his hair-brown Sunday suit; and took down his large, round, flapped felt hat, with its blue ribbon.

"Where can you be going, Bernard, so smart?" said his wife.

"To every magistrate in Saintes," replied he, "to remonstrate against Collardeau's treatment of Master Philibert."

"Ah, my dear husband, you will only get yourself into trouble, and do Master Philibert no good. Think what is to become of me and the babes, if you are cast into prison."

"I dare not think of that," said Bernard, and went forth.

"Could you bear to be burnt?" cried Victorine, after him.

"None of us can tell that till we are tried,"

replied he; "I can bear to testify against what I consider injustice, at the risk of whatever punishment God may permit them to inflict upon me." And he pursued his way.

Bernard visited six of the chief magistrates of Saintes, and all in vain, save to show his own fearlessness in the cause of a friend and of truth.

"I am full of wonder," said he to the last of them, "that men should dare to sit in judgment on one whom they ought rather to regard as a prophet or an angel of God. For many years have I known this Master Philibert; and so holy has been his life, that it seems to me as if other men were devils in comparison with him."

"Hush, hush, my good man!" said the magistrate, smiling, "you must not say these things to me, nor in my hearing, or, you know, I must take notice of them. Go your ways, Bernard, go your ways, to your pottery, ha, ha! to your tiles and your potsherds—ha, ha, ha! the best joke I have heard for a long time! I pity you,

my poor fellow; you're a harmless visionary, and have lost a nice little boy lately, I understand. I don't want to hurt you: but stick to your own affairs, man; to your potsherds—ha, ha, ha! For your old friend, be content; we are dealing as gently with him as we may; and have allowed him to table with the gaoler while he is in prison."

With this, Bernard was obliged to content himself for the present. So he went home, and literally fulfilled the magistrate's ironical recommendation, by busying himself with his potsherds. He had now nearly prepared a new batch for the baking. When they were ready he sent them to the glass-house by poor André, who was glad to sacrifice a little of the time allowed him for his noontide meal, by performing this trifling service for him who had made him partaker of the bread of life.

When Palissy went to see his potsherds drawn, he perceived, oh joy! that some of his compounds had yielded to the intense heat, and had

begun to melt. This was his first glimmer of success: to such a sanguine, persevering being it was enough.

He went home all smiles. "What makes you look so blithe, Palissy?" said Victorine, who was knitting a scarlet stocking at the door.

"My dearest Victorine! some of my compounds have melted at last!"

"Oh, what joy!" exclaimed she, clasping her hands. "Then you have found the white enamel!"

"Hush, dear Victorine, not so fast! Found the white enamel? Alas, no! but I hope I am in the way to find it at last."

"That is what you have said all along," said she, pouting. "Hope! hope! I am tired of the word. Your children cannot live on hope."—For there were two little children yet spared, who called him father. He had lost an unbaptized infant already, besides little Paul.

"Nor do I ask you, my dearest," replied he, pouring into her lap a handful of small coin he

had obtained for some of his drawings,—"there is something for the *pot-au-feu,* Victorine, and now let me pursue my glimmer of hope in peace."

From that time, his experiments became everything to him; his wife and family, for the nonce, only of secondary consideration. His whole time, day and evening, was consumed in preparing new compounds, or going and coming between his cottage and the glass-house. People began to think him mad.

How Victorine lived meanwhile, let many a woman tell whose husband brings home no wages. Of course, miserably. Of course, her health, spirits, and temper suffered. Nothing can compensate to an affectionate wife for the loss of her husband's company in the evening,—not even the discovery of white enamel. It is, generally speaking, the only pleasure she is looking forward to, during the toil of the day; and, if she be accustomed to welcome him home with smiling looks to a neat supper and clean-

swept hearth, he generally looks forward to it too.

In the early days of this new grievance (for it lasted two years), Madame Palissy was sitting by her solitary fire, busied, with pinched looks and frowning brow, in repairing some of her old habiliments, when a tap at the door again announced the entrance of her neighbour, Marguerite Pierrot.

"Have you heard the news, Victorine?" exclaimed she. "Brother Robin has escaped!"

"I hear nothing," returned Victorine. "How should he escape, pray, from the prison of the bishop's own palace, with all those fierce mastiffs in the courtyard? So heavily ironed, too, as he was!"

"Aye! but a friend gave him a file, to file away his irons," said Marguerite, "and he saved his crusts of bread for the mastiffs; and the gaoler fell asleep, and so . . ."

"Hold!" cries Madame Palissy, "we don't hear such a stirring tale as this every day. Wait a minute, and I'll call Bernard to hear it too;

'twill be an excuse for getting him out of his den, where he's shut up, I lament to say, by night as well as by day, now . . ."

"Shouldn't be, if he were *my* husband, though," says Marguerite, shortly.

"Why, how would you prevent it?" said Victorine.

"Oh, if one way wouldn't do, I'd try another . . I'd blow up the whole concern, like a wasp's nest."

"With him in it?" said Victorine; "ah no, Marguerite! I love him too well for that, after all, tiresome fellow that he is! However, he must and shall come out to hear about Brother Robin, seeing that it is an affair of his more than mine, belonging as he does to those heretics. 'Tis a shame and a sorrow; and yet the priests may say what they like, I'll never denounce him."

"Denounce him? No, to be sure not!" said Marguerite; "not though he were an unbelieving Challonais. Jean Pierrot may sing

his Huguenot hymns till doomsday before I'll denounce *him*. Things are come to a pretty pass, indeed, when a wife is expected to give up her own husband to the stake! They may cry, 'Au renard!' and find for themselves which way the fox went. But, Victorine, where *is* Bernard? Is he within, do you think? I cannot stay long."

"Oh, he's within, safe enough," said Victorine, commencing an assault and battery on his door. "You see, the provoking fellow has fixed a bolt inside, to prevent *intrusion*, as he calls it; because, he says, the least breath of air blows his powders about; and sometimes when I call he won't answer."

"Intrusion, quotha! *I'd* intrude him!" exclaimed Marguerite; "I should like to hear Jean Pierrot talk of intrusion! He doesn't hear you, you must call louder than that. Why, the man may be in a fit! Did you ever try to laugh him out of this nonsense?"

"Laugh!" repeated Victorine. "It's no laughing matter, I can tell you."

"Well, I'd try," said Marguerite. "Let us both raise our voices at once. Now then! Bernard! here's something you'll like very much to hear."

"What is it?" said he, unbolting the door, and thrusting his head out.

Marguerite burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT is the matter?" said Bernard, looking annoyed.

"Excuse me, Master Palissy," said Marguerite, still laughing violently, "but you do look so very droll, and took me so by surprise,—with that comical *toque* on your head, and with your sleeves tucked up above your elbow!"

"I thought you had something to say to me," said Bernard, retreating, and about to close the door.

"Stay, stay, Bernard!" said his wife. "She

has something to say. Only think! Brother Robin has escaped!"

"Ha! that is indeed good news," exclaimed he, instantly changing his look and tone. "Stay a minute, I'll be with you directly."

And pulling down his shirt sleeves, throwing off his *toque*, running his fingers through his hair, and slipping on his coat, in three minutes he came forth fit to be seen.

"Ah, people can make themselves smart enough sometimes, though not for their own wives!" muttered Victorine.

"Well, and so—" said Bernard, eagerly, addressing himself to Marguerite.

"Well, and so," resumed Marguerite. "Dear me, where did I leave off? Why, I never began!"

"Come, let's be neighbourly," said Victorine, filling the little wine-cup; "taste this, Marguerite."

"Yours is better wine than ours," said Marguerite, as she returned the cup.

"Come Palissy, you and I will drink one another's healths," said his wife, handing the replenished cup to him.

"You first," said he. "Now then!—here's to Brother Robin's health and freedom,—and success to my white enamel!"

"Hang the white enamel!" said Victorine.

"How?" said Palissy: "that would be a curious process. But come, Marguerite."

"Well, the story is this," recommenced Marguerite. "Brother Robin was the most pestilent heretic of them all. . . ."

"The most eminent confessor, you mean," interjected Palissy.

"Therefore, for him was reserved the hottest corner of the oven," continued Marguerite. "He lay, heavily ironed, among his companions, in the bishop's prison——"

"Bishops ought not to have prisons," said Palissy.

"Peace, Bernard! how can you be so rude?" said Victorine; "you put her out."

"A sentry outside the cell," pursued Marguerite, "half-a-dozen fierce mastiffs loose in the courtyard,—you might have thought the man safe enough."

"Safe, and too safe," said Palissy.

"However," continued Marguerite, "a friend, it appears, had privately given him a file, on his way to prison. So he filed, and filed, and filed through his chains—his companions bawling their ugly hymns all the while, to deaden the sound. Well, Brother Robin next scrapes a hole in the wall big enough to get through."

"He must have been miserably watched," interrupted Palissy.

"So *I* say," returned Marguerite. "But just hear me. The sentry being asleep—"

"What a sentry!" cried Bernard.

"Do be quiet, now!" said Victorine.

—"Gave the opportunity," continued Marguerite, "which the cunning Huguenot availed himself of—"

"Why, would not *you?*" said Bernard.

—"Of getting a good number of stones out of the prison wall; but unfortunately, on the outside were a heap of empty hogsheads, piled one above another, which Brother Robin could not see; so, in pushing his way through, down came all these hogsheads with a tremendous noise."

"That would waken the sentry," said Victorine.

"Not it," said Bernard. "He was off as sound as a top, I can tell you beforehand."

"It *did* waken the sentry," said Marguerite, emphatically, "and he came forth and looked about."

"Oh, then he had regularly turned in," said Palissy.

"But there was nothing to see,—except, indeed, the scattered hogsheads; nor anything to hear, for Brother Robin lay behind the wall as quiet as a mouse, I promise you; so he concluded the hogsheads had tumbled down of themselves."

"That was a *non sequitur*, though, as Master

Philibert would say," observed Palissy. "I begin to like this sentry; he's a deep one, rely upon it, —a thorough good Huguenot."

"So he went in, and the other came out," said Marguerite. "Well, you will naturally say, how did he quiet the dogs? Why, with crusts of bread he had been saving a long time. So, having stopped their mouths, he passed through a door which happened to be open, into the garden—"

"Odd! that door being ajar," muttered Palissy.

"And finding himself again shut up between high walls, he descried, by the light of the moon, a pear-tree close to the wall, up which he climbed, and then perceived on the other side of the wall, a chimney, to which he could leap easily."

"Charming!" said Victorine. "Then now he's safe."

"Not so fast," returned Marguerite, nodding her head with the satisfaction of one who has yet

the best part of her story to tell. "He now went back to the prison to advise his companions, with whom he had left the file, that they might all escape together."

"Capital fellow!" exclaimed Palissy, throwing up his hands.

"But no, they would not," pursued Marguerite, "they preferred awaiting the horrors and glories of martyrdom."

"Glorious, glorious!" said Bernard. "And can you, my dear Marguerite, call such people as these heretics?"

"What else can I call them?" said Marguerite. "They are very constant to their faith, but their faith may be wrong."

"Don't believe it," said Palissy, earnestly. "Well, but Brother Robin?"

"Brother Robin returned and scaled the wall, and slipped down into the street by means of the chimney; but never having been in Saintes till he was apprehended, he knew not how to get out of the town; so what do you think he did? His

only friend in Saintes was a physician who had attended him while he was attacked, in prison, with a pleurisy. He knew his name, but not his abode. So, tucking up his garments about his shoulders, till, in the uncertain light, he looked something like a footman, and fastening his fetters so that they should not clank, he boldly commenced knocking up the townspeople, and asking them to direct him to the physician, as though he were a countryman sent from a distance, in some pressing emergency, to fetch a doctor. Many nightcapped heads were thrust out; some cursed him, some bade him go his ways, and one of these was the very counsellor who the next morning hunted high and low for him, and offered fifty dollars reward for his apprehension. At last some one opened his door to him and took him in."

"Who was that?" cried Palissy, eagerly.

"Ah, that's telling," said Marguerite, mysteriously.

"God will bless him for it," said Palissy; "he

shall in no wise lose his reward. 'I was a stranger, and you took me in; sick, and in prison, and you visited me.'"

"So, by his help, the poor brother escaped," said Marguerite; "and really one cannot be sorry for it."

"Sorry? no! I'm very glad," said Bernard, "and very much indebted to you, Marguerite, for stepping in to tell me of it. Take a little more wine? No more in the house?"

"How should there be?" said Victorine. "You had better always let *me* invite people, who am more likely than you to know what we have and what we have not."

"I succumb," said he, laughing; for whenever his head was not full of white enamel, he could be just as merry and pleasant as ever.

"Well, I must be off," said Marguerite.

"Shall I see you home?" said Bernard.

"Oh dear no, I'm not afraid either of robbers or wolves; and not *much* afraid of the Letiche," added she softly, with a little shudder, and

glancing at Victorine. Letiche is the ghost of an unbaptized infant.

"I am sure you need be afraid of no Letiche of ours," said Victorine, shortly; rather hurt that any dead child of hers should be thought to *walk*.

"Oh no, surely not," said Marguerite, raising the latch.

"However, I will go with you readily," said Palissy.

"No, no, you'll be glad to be back to your potsherds, ha! ha!—your pounding and grinding, ha! ha! What a funny freak that is of yours, Bernard Palissy!"

And laughing at him, she nodded her farewell and went forth.

"Come, she is off at last," said Bernard, displeased at her merriment. "I began to think she meant to stay all night."

And Victorine, who had thought he needed not to be so polite in his offer of seeing Marguerite home, and was wounded at her

allusion to the Letiche, shrugged her shoulders, and bolted the door, as if it were no loss to her to be reduced to her own company again.

Bernard had another word to say to her, however, before he shut himself in for the evening.

"That dear little soul of ours," said he, pausing at the back-kitchen door, "has as certainly fled up to its native skies, I believe, as any chrisom of them all. 'Twas no fault of thine or mine that its eyes scarcely opened on this world. Howbeit, had Master Philibert been in the house, he should certainly have baptized it."

"*His* baptism would be worth nothing," said Victorine.

"How can you say so, Victorine? He believes as firmly as any churchman of them all, in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose name our Lord commanded that all men should be baptized."

"Remember, Bernard Palissy," cried his wife,

"your promise before our first child saw the light, that every infant of mine should receive church baptism. You were less of a heretic then."

"God forbid I should go from my word," said Bernard; "and if I thought that little fondling of ours were in suffering for my sin, I might well be afraid enough of the Letiche. Howbeit, you know no time was given us; and as concerning Master Philibert, he is an ordained priest, call him what names you will."

And with these words he shut himself in—"to force a path to the unknown."

It now became the fashion of that small neighbourhood to laugh at Palissy. He did not hear much of it, indeed, leading so recluse a life; but, whenever he came forth, he found himself regarded as a poor moonstruck man—answered ironically, and insulted with jeering questions. His temper, though sweet, was not proof against impertinence and injustice. Still and stagnant water is not the purest, nor is the

sweetest water always unruffled. Sometimes he let these attacks pass unnoticed; sometimes he retorted playfully, and said, "You will sing another song when my wife rides in her coach;" sometimes he answered a fool according to his folly, and grew angry with him for not understanding what he could not possibly understand. What stung him most was his being pretty sure that these cavillers and carpers were set on him by his wife. And then her midnight tears!—her sighs for bread—her complaints that it was hard *she* should have to work to death to pay the bills. It *was* hard, O Victorine! and yours was not the Faith that could follow Genius blindfold! Your murmurs were the bitter seasoning of his daily food, and you gave him plenteousness of tears to drink. For why?—you had other mouths to fill besides his and yours; always a baby new-born or a baby dying. Poor, sad mother! and you were growing haggard and gaunt, and your voice was acquiring a stern tone.

Often they had nothing all day but black rye bread to eat, and not enough of that. . . She would leave his share on the table, to eat at what irregular hour it pleased him; but she sometimes stinted herself that he might have the more. Or she would send it in to him by Fleurette, saying, in a deep harsh tone, "There, tell your papa, that is all there is in the house: we must starve unless he works for more." Was the chance of finding the white enamel worth all this?

At length absolute want stared him in the face. He not only had no money to buy bread, but, what he considered still worse, no money to buy the materials for more than one experiment in the glass-house. This batch of trial-pieces, then, must be his last. He resolved to close with an unusual effort. Having prepared three hundred different mixtures, and placed each on its own little potsherd, and numbered and registered the materials and proportions of each, he, with a prayer in his heart,

helped André to carry them to the furnace, and resolved to watch them through all the stages of baking himself

He was now thirty-seven years old; a good deal worn since he first embarked in this pursuit, with wasted limbs and a slight furrow on his open brow; altogether a strong contrast to the Herculean frames of the glass-workers employed about the furnace, with whom he chatted from time to time as they stood about. But though he spoke lightly of divers matters, his anxious eye was ever on the furnace mouth.

Four hours he thus waited. Then one of the workmen opened the furnace; Bernard bent towards the fiery glow; hastily ran his eye over the potsherds, and beheld, oh joy! that the compound in one of them had melted. The piece was withdrawn and set aside to cool, and the furnace was re-closed. Bernard now set himself to watch the cooling potsherd with intense anxiety. The compound suffused over it did not look very promising; but as it gradually hardened,

it gradually grew whiter. It became cold—it was *white* . . . white and polished! Singularly beautiful!

"Aha!" cried he, "I have it at last!" He clasped his hands and could not say another word. The men wished him joy. "I must tell my wife," said he. "Poor Victorine! how she will rejoice!"

And, with the enamelled potsherd in his hand, he ran rather than walked towards home. "I have it!" cried he, bursting into the house,—"I have the white enamel!"

"Hush!" said his wife, putting her finger on her lips, "poor little Fleurette is ill." Palissy was subdued in a moment.

"Is she going to die, like Paul?" whispered he, horror-struck.

"Nay, I hope not," said Victorine, "she is not yet so ill as that, thank God, and is now asleep. But I feared your tumultuous entrance might waken her."

"But, dearest Victorine, are you not glad, very

glad, that I have found the white enamel?" resumed he, in an energetic whisper.

"Very," said she, with a preoccupied air, "that is, if it brings you in any money. Otherwise I don't care for it a pin."

"You said a hundred times, I should never find it."

"Well, and what an immense time you have been finding it!—leaving us to starve all the while! The time might seem short to you, because you were having your own way; but that was not the case with us."

"It did not seem short to me, I can tell you. Well, I thought you would have been a little more pleased—have shown a little more sympathy."

"And where is this wonderful enamel? How can I admire what I have never seen? Is *this* it?—This, all?—Bah! I think absolutely nothing of it!"

"It is *the* thing, however."

"It's a very poor thing, whatever it is;

not worth looking at. Gracious goodness! to think of a man, a family man, having wasted so much good time and money, only to produce that!"

"Dear Victorine, you know, as well I do, your *only* is not just. This specimen in itself, as far as its intrinsic beauty goes, is of no worth; but the principle being discovered, can be applied, I hope to find, to the production of works of exquisite beauty."

"Oh, goodness me! don't let me hear any more about it," cried she, stopping her ears,— "I'm sick to death of the very name of enamel. Principle, indeed! If you had been a man of any principle, you would have given up your wildgoose chase long ago. I should then have respected you more, unsuccessful, than I can do now, in all the elation of victory."

His heart sank: he went and shut himself up in his little sanctum, and hid his face in his hands.

"This may be very fine discipline," thought

he, at last changing his attitude :—"a wondrous fine moral tonic, Master Philibert would tell me; and yet, sometimes, I hardly know how to bear it patiently. Oh, Victorine! how one kind word, one sympathising smile, would send me on my way rejoicing!"

Just then, she opened the door about two inches, for he had neglected to bolt it; and looked in upon him without entering.

"Do you think," said she, "you can raise a little ready money on this white enamel?"

"No, Victorine!" replied he, sighing.—Clap went the door.

"Doubtless, doubtless," thought he, "her heart is wrung about Fleurette—she fears she is dying like little Paul, though she will not own it."

But, just then, he heard Fleurette's pretty voice prattling in the kitchen, and Victorine answering her quite cheerfully.

"Ah, then," thought he, "it cannot be that." And he sank into a fit of deep depression, with

the enamelled potsherd in his hand. This is no single case. Bruce, immediately on discovering the source of the Blue Nile, was overwhelmed by an access of profound melancholy. Davy, when he discovered the metallic basis of potash, actually bounded with joy; but his exultation was the prelude to immediate and severe illness, which was very near proving fatal; and his apprehension was that he should die before he published his discoveries. Newton, when he found all his deep calculations tending to the desired result, turned faint, and was obliged to yield the pen to another hand. Miss Mitford has left on record that on the day after the brilliant success of "Rienzi," she felt so completely humbled, that never in her life had she so oppressive a sense of her own demerits as on that day of imputed triumph. And yet, fame had come close to her, close enough to be clutched; which was not the case with Bernard Palissy.

His spirit was deeply, profoundly exercised; and it was all for his good. His sadness gradually subsided into solemn thought; he arose, sought

his carefully kept Bible, and sat down with it and opened it on his knees. The more he read, the calmer he grew. For where is such a voice that addresses itself to the saddest heart, the highest intellect, with such irresistible force? "Wherewithal shall a *young* man cleanse his way, but according to that word?" Wherewithal shall an *old* man whose soul cleaveth to the dust, be quickened, but by that same word? "I opened my mouth and drew in my breath," says David, simply and forcibly, "because of thy word;" and Bernard felt it penetrate every faculty of his soul like a subtle and generous medicine. The famous Alexandrine library was inscribed "Animi Pabulum;" or, according to Diodorus, "Animi Medicina." Bernard's library comprised but one book; but he might have inscribed it with both titles; for to him it was both food for the soul and medicine for the mind.

When he had read some time, he put away his Bible, and sought out and played with Fleurette.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEXT morning, Palissy, who always woke wide awake, sprang out of bed cheerful as a lark, busy as a bee. His elastic mind had recovered its tone; God's blessing had been on his dreamless sleep; he was all alive and ready for work. Victorine's spirits were depressed in proportion to his cheerfulness: she knew he had risked his last handful of coin on the preceding day's experiment; it had been conceded to her by him that if it failed, he would abandon the pursuit of the enamel; it had succeeded, so far as to release him from his covenant, but not so far as to bring in one penny of ready money. Hence she was low-spirited and cross.

Bernard, who knew pretty well what made her so, and felt he could not take a single step without either money or credit, ate his galette meditatively, and then started off for Saintes with his enamelled potsherd in his hand.

"Where are you going?" said Victorine, in passing.

"To the public-house," said he, with a roguish air.

She raised her hands and eyes, and said nothing;—but with a look that expressed everything. He turned about, put his hands on her shoulders, and gave *her* a look, that was quite as expressive: full of covert drollery, and good-humoured upbraiding. It said, "You who know me so well, can you doubt me for a moment?" She could not help smiling at last, but shook him off and turned away.

On he went, with a light step, to the Golden Fleece. There, on the bench under the tree sat Master Gaspar, the publican, in all his glory. It was too early for any business in his line to

be stirring yet. Bernard knew it, and with full self-assurance, stepped up to him and sat down beside him.

"Well, how goes it with you, Bernard?" said the publican, patronisingly; "'tis seldom you are to be caught sight of, now, save between your own door and the glass-house; you that used to be the smartest young fellow in Saintes. That's all changed now . . . . you are growing as yellow as a lemon, and as thin as a wolf; and as to Victorine, of whom the saying used to be, 'She'll get a husband without going to Niort,' and whom I remember as the prettiest girl in Allevert, with her tight-laced boddice, white chemisette, green sleeves, and a little black collar round her neck, with a gold cross hanging to it, watching for you at the cottage door, and mad enough when she only saw me,—my faith! she now looks as old as my wife!"

"Hunger makes people look old, Master Gaspar," said Bernard.

"Why, haven't you four bones to work with,

like other people?" said Gaspar. "Time was, you were the handiest fellow in Saintes . . . could paint a picture, mend a broken window, survey a district—no one was equal to you. Now you're getting a bad name."

"Very undeservedly, though!" said Bernard.

"How can you dare to say so?" returned Gaspar. "Here are you, you idle Trojan, leaving your wife and children to starve, that you may waste your time over this absurd pottery."

"It is the hope of crowning them with wealth," said Bernard, "that helps to make me persevere. You can't suppose, can you, that there is any particular pleasure *in itself*, in pounding and grinding hard substances till my arms are ready to drop off, or in staring into a red-hot furnace?"

"Bah!" said Gaspar; "don't pretend to me 'tis for your wife and family. That may be one of your remote ends; but your immediate one is, as you very well know, to make a grand discovery."

"And suppose I *did* make it?"

"That would be another thing."

"Well, but *what* thing? Would you say 'well done!' then?"

"That's a hypothesis," said Gaspar.

"Hypothetical or not, *would* you sympathise with me and congratulate me if I found the white enamel?"

"Perhaps I would," said Gaspar.

"Then, *there it is!*" said Bernard, pulling it out. This time he had a real, genuine triumph, and could not help grinning a little when he saw the expression of the publican's countenance.

"Well, this is funny," said Gaspar, after turning it about, and examining it in various points of view. "White it certainly is. And hard. And shiny. Well, my lad, you've hit it, I suppose."

"Is that the way you congratulate me?" said Bernard.

The tavern-keeper raised his eye-brows,

shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and held out his hand. Bernard shook it heartily.

"Come, that is neighbourly," said he.

"And what is to be your next step, now?" said Gaspar, with dawning interest.

"Ah, Master Gaspar, that's the very thing I have come to ask your advice about, knowing you to have a sensible head."

"You compliment me," said Gaspar, scratching the member in question. "My advice won't be worth anything to you, for I haven't the smallest knowledge of pottery.—If it were casting up a tally——"

"That's the very thing," said Bernard; "our tally's too long."

"Not here," said Gaspar, shortly.

"Oh no, Master Gaspar, my wife and I have drank nothing but spring water, this long time."

"No wonder you are both looking so out of condition," said Gaspar; "it must be very bad for your stomachs."

"Why, as to that," said Bernard, "I should have said so too, if I had not tried it; but, on the word of an honest man, my stomach never was better; only, you see, cold water *alone* isn't quite enough for it."

"I should think not!" said Gaspar. "Why, now, look at me,"—extending his arms, and displaying his portly person,—"I'm twice your weight, am as fresh as a rose, and haven't an unsound tooth in my head. Now I'll tell you what *I* take—"

"For common charity's sake, forbear!" cried Bernard; "it makes one hungry to hear you talk. I suppose I should like a full meal of butcher's meat as well as anybody, if I could only get it!"

Gaspar burst out laughing. "Well," said he, "'twas unfair, I own. To make up for it, we'll pick a bone together, for I've not had a hearty breakfast, to call breakfast, yet. Here! Toinette! —spread a cloth for us here, under the tree, and bring out the ham, a couple of sausages, and the freshest loaf, not forgetting the tankard. Well,

Bernard, so you want my advice. Now, then for the case."

"Fancy yourself in my place," began Bernard.

"I can't, for the life o' me," said Gaspar, laughing.

"Oh, but you must, for the sake of what you call hypothesis!" insisted Bernard. "You are a poor, well-meaning fellow, just close on seven and thirty—"

"I wish I were no more," muttered Gaspar.

"Loving your wife and children," pursued Bernard; "very anxious to do well by them, but convinced by unlucky experience that, though a Jack of all trades, yet all your trades together won't raise you and them above pinching poverty."

"I don't like to fancy myself in such a case at all," said the publican.—"Take the whole sausage, man; don't make two bites of a cherry."

"In this state of things," pursued Bernard, too pre-occupied to eat, "you fancy you see your way to a notable discovery that will make your

fortune—you pursue it day and night, under all possible disadvantages; your wife weeping in your ears, your children hungering, your neighbours laughing—At length, you discover it . . ."

"Then the laugh is on my side!" cried Gaspar.

"Stay a moment," said Bernard; "you find yourself checked from pursuing your advantage by want of the means; and though you know you have won the day, the laugh is still against you; nay, louder than ever. And your wife's tears more plentifully shed.—Always the same tune, like the cathedral chimes."

"Hum! Disagreeable," said Gaspar. "I don't like my case at all."

"Now, in that case, what should you do?" said Bernard.

His companion eyed him, took a draught of wine, looked up at the sky, cogitated, took another draught, and eyed him again—"Tell you what I should do!" said he, at length, while a beaming smile overspread his jolly face: "I should go,

like a poor simple fellow as I was, and lay my plain case, just as it stood, before somebody still simpler than myself, but a little beforehand with the world . . . say the master of a thriving tavern, for instance, who had known my father before me; and who knows but he, unasked, might do the very thing I'm going to do now, like a goose as I am—put his hand into his bag and advance something on the spot, to be repaid when this precious discovery is perfected!—Ha, ha, ha!—Do you think that would do?"

"Master Gaspar! it is—no more than I might have expected of your generous soul—"

"Pish!" said Master Gaspar. "I was sponsor to your little Paul, and never did anything very handsome by him. I'm afraid we've a little chap going the same way. His mother talks of making a pilgrimage with him to the tomb of St. Beatrice of Fontenelle, but I am against it myself—I can't see why a woman that was fond of eating little children while she was alive should have the power of curing them now she's dead . . . Well

now! how much, or how little, on the faith of an honest man, will serve your present turn?"

"Why, my generous friend, I mean to go to work as economically as possible. You see, it is essential, of course, that my discoveries must be prosecuted in secrecy, or every common potter may have the advantage of me—therefore I must no more go near the glass-house, or the potteries in the forest. I must construct a real good furnace on my own premises, and to that end must in the first place build an out-house; for Victorine grudges me our lean-to, and it is, besides, ill-adapted for my purpose. I must get bricks on credit; but I can carry them myself—"

"Better cart them," suggested Gaspar.

"That would cost money," said Bernard. "No, what I *can* do, I will do. I can carry my own bricks, I can make my own mortar, and fetch water from the well, and lime from the quarry. I can be my own bricklayer's boy and mason—so that, thus far, Master Gaspar, you see I shall need little beyond the staff of life—"

"Which you shall not want, my industrious fellow," said Gaspar.

"Then," pursued Bernard, "when I have constructed my out-house and my furnace, I shall pursue the manufacture of the white enamel till I bring it to perfection; I shall pound, I shall grind, I shall ascertain the due proportions of my compounds, and the proper degree of heat; and while my specimen-pieces are baking, I shall mould pretty ornaments, such as I mean to bake when I have conquered the mystery—of which you shall have the very first."

"Success attend you," said Gaspar. "And now, put this trifle in your pouch, and look on me henceforth as your banker, as far as the absolute necessaries of life go—"

"Including tin, lead, iron, steel, antimony, sapphire, and so forth," put in Palissy.

"Hey, man! Some of those are things I know not the price of—you must not impose on my ignorance. Are they absolutely necessary?"

"Absolutely."

"And very expensive?"

"Oh no, not in such quantities as I need."

"I've an old iron hoop or two," said Gaspar, "and a broken leaden pipe, and may be some small matters of tin—but as for sapphires—I never e'en saw any, except in my lady Countess's bracelets at church—"

"Trust in me; I will not be heavily chargeable to you," said Bernard; and some other persons approaching, he said no more, but concluded his meal, while Gaspar parleyed with the new comers. Bernard heard them talking about the bishop's intention of cutting down the forest. "Ha! that will be bad for me!" thought he. "Wood will be dearer than ever. Besides, how the country will be spoilt! Its forests are its glory. Woe to the man that needlessly cutteth down a tree! 'The tree of the field is a man's life!' And all for the sake of a few bags of gold to waste in riotous living! However, my advice won't be asked; but my opinion shall never be concealed."

Having taken a grateful leave of his friend, he went to the brickmaker's, and carried home his first load of bricks. Victorine, hearing them clatter down, looked forth: with a smile, he gave her some money. This made her smile too; she took it, and asked no questions. While it lasted they had a cheerful fireside. She looked upon the new undertaking as an inevitable evil, and was too sick of the subject to care much whence the supplies came. Thus she enjoyed her money while she had it, without knowing when it would stop.

As for Bernard, the click, click of his trowel was soon heard after the importation of his bricks. He was now as dirty as need be, but very light-hearted, and sang or whistled over his work. And Victorine might sometimes be heard singing her baby to sleep, in its little wooden rocker on the dresser, and Fleurette singing and chattering to herself, as she played with sundry little bits of broken coloured glass, with which she cut her fingers seldomer than might have been expected.

The blackbird sang in its cage, the thrush in the tree, the cuckoo in the wood; there was sunshine out of doors and within. The swallows built under their eaves, the spiders spun webs among the rafters; which they were accustomed to consider signs of good luck.

Now, thus seven or eight months have passed: the summer is over and gone; the family are not starving, but living penuriously: Victorine is again working for a ready penny, and growing careworn and captious; but the furnace is finished, and Bernard is preparing for great things. For some time he has been occupied in experiments on clay, and in the elaborate shaping of tastefully designed vessels, which are in due time to be elegantly painted, and baked and enamelled. They are nothing in comparison of what he means to do eventually, but they are very pretty, nevertheless. Victorine allows them to be so; and even condescends to suggest one or two improvements, which, though not thinking quite so highly of them as she does, he adopts.

This was his play-work, his *délice*, after so much irksome, dirty, downright hard manual labour. He was in perfect happiness while forming these vessels; gently animated by his good hopes of the future; but intensely enjoying the present; and feeling in the deep of his heart, that the exercise of the creative power in high art is its own reward.

His fancy, so long denied a fitting outlet, ran riot on these pretty vessels; he wreathed them with imitations of flowers, wild plants, and insects, minutely exact; shells, snails, lizards, eels; all kinds of amusing and picturesque groups. Sometimes he suspended his very breath over them; then again unconsciously relieved his labouring chest by breathing hard and irregularly; then, having turned some difficult corner and arrived at some mechanical part, he hummed a gay ballad, or chanted a Huguenot hymn. Little Fleurette never tested his love for her more than in upsetting one of these carefully finished vessels, and then tumbling down on it so as to crush it

completely. He caught her up in his arms, saying, "Oh, you little rogue! you know not you have ruined a week's work!" and smothered her with kisses; then resumed his happy labour.

The baking of this first batch succeeded completely. His joy was deep and unmixed: he carried a piece to show Master Gaspar, who was so well pleased with it that he drank to Palissy's continued success, and sent him home with a jug of good wine. Victorine was pleased; and they filled the little cup twice between them, after their chestnut dinner.

His successful mixture for the white enamel had now to be tried on a large scale. The materials took him an entire month to grind, and when reduced to the finest powder, they had to be weighed and put together in just proportions, and then undergo a fresh course of pounding and grinding. The weather was cold, but hard work kept him warm; for he could not afford himself a fire while he had nothing to bake.

Then he lighted his furnace: he did not spare

his wood; he did not spare himself; he fed his fire all day, all night. He put his vessels in, that the enamel might melt over them. It did not. The experiment was a gigantic failure. He was in trouble, but not in despair. Victorine, angry with him, would not go near him—she sent him his galette by Fleurette. The little girl would gladly have stayed to chatter with him, but he sent her away. All day he kept heaping on more and more wood; the setting sun streamed in on him at his labour; darkness fell; the owls began to hoot, the farm-house dogs to bark. Still the enamel did not melt.

A second night, and all night long, he never forsook his post. He was bathed in perspiration; he threw off the greater part of his clothing; he heaped on yet more wood. The enamel did not melt.

A third day the child brought him his meals. Victorine passed a third day and night alone. She began to be outrageous. The enamel did not melt.

A fourth day. She battered at his door, and screamed, "*Will* you then come out?" He had fastened the bolt. The day and night passed. The enamel did not melt.

On the fifth day she became terrified. She called to him, pleaded, prayed. All in vain. He heard her; was dying to come forth, but dared not. The enamel would not melt.

On the sixth day he was almost spent; almost maddened. It struck him the compounds might have been wrongly mixed. Exhausted as he was, he resumed his pounding and grinding; keeping up the furnace all the while, lest the heat should decrease. The labour of years might now be repaid, if he could but keep on a little longer! If he could not keep on a little longer, he would lose the labour of years!

CHAPTER IX.

MARGUERITE PIERROT, the comfortable mother of a thriving family, was preparing for them their principal meal of the day, and pouring out a steaming compound of pork and vegetables into beechen bowls, half filled with slices of rye bread. Her husband, Jean Pierrot, a heavy, hard-featured, good-natured-looking labourer, sat mending a basket in the corner of a huge, square, funnel-shaped chimney, that let down a great current of air, and carried up very little smoke. Antoine, the eldest boy, who looked after a flock of black-faced sheep, was leaning against a thick wooden pillar that supported the

blackened rafters, producing some wild notes from an elder-wood pipe, to the silent delectation of a younger brother and sister, and of a shepherd's dog who crouched opposite to him, blinking, and looking very profound. Fortunèe, the eldest girl, sat spinning tow off a distaff, and at the same time rocking a poplar-wood cradle, in which slept the infant, wrapped in swaddling-clothes. A pig and some poultry completed the party.

The latch was hastily raised, and into the midst of the peaceful family-circle burst Victorine, with her youngest infant on her arm, and Fleurette crying and clinging to her skirt,—her black hair falling over her face, her eyes almost starting from their sockets, her face colourless as ashes.

"He's gone mad! raving mad!" cried she, in a hoarse voice. "Oh, neighbours! tell me, tell me what I shall do!"

The shepherd-boy ceased trilling his pipe; the girl stayed her foot on the cradle-rocker; the father dropped the basket, and stood up; and

Marguerite paused in the midst of pouring out the pottage.

"But—what then is it?" said she, dropping the words one by one from her mouth, and gazing amazedly at her friend.

"For six days and nights," replied Victorine, rapidly and wildly, "he has been shut up in his out-house, scarce eating, never sleeping, stripped of half his clothing, and incessantly increasing the insupportable glow of his furnace; not to be approached—not to be spoken with; and now, the heat and the exhaustion have bereft him of his wits, I think; for, his fuel having run short, and I having refused to go begging for any more, he has burst forth with the mien and gestures of a madman, and is tearing up the stakes round the garden, with the strength of a giant!"

Marguerite stood at pause. Jean softly whistled, and said, "Mad! mad as a March hare! An absolute were-wolf! This must not be allowed."

"How prevent it?" cried Victorine.

"Get up a charivari," suggested Antoine.

"Pour water on his furnace fire," said Marguerite, "and end the farce at once."

"He would kill me," cried Victorine.

"Nay, nay, I think not that," said Jean Pierott; "Bernard used to be a reasonable fellow enough, till he got this crotchet into his head. I've not tried my hand on him yet—I've a notion *I* can say a thing or two that may bring him back to common sense. Come, neighbour, I'll try!"

And striding forth from his door, he made his way towards Palissy's cottage, followed at a little distance by Victorine, who thought he should stand the brunt of the first onslaught.

When they came in sight of the house, they could descry the figure of a man, half-dressed, tearing up the garden palings with great energy, and hastily carrying them off to the out-house.

"Hold, neighbour! hold!" shouted Pierrot from afar. "He does not hear me—"

"He *won't* hear you," said Victorine, "and so you'll find."

"Nay, nay, you speak too hastily of him," returned Pierrot; "I think not so hardly of him, neighbour."

"You know him better, I suppose," said Victorine, bitterly.

"You're crossed, and that makes you a little savage," pursued the phlegmatic peasant. "All very natural. It's amazing how savage women *can* be, when they're crossed. But this is an affair that has been clearly carried on too long, and must be put a stop to. Hilloa! hoy!"

"He hears you well enough now," said Victorine.

"What now?" called out Bernard, in return, looking up for a moment.

"Stay your hand," cried Pierrot; "you are clean mad! You'll be sorry, hereafter, for what you are doing. You are a fool, man! making way for the wolves and foxes to come up to your very door, for the sake of what will in another hour be a heap of white ashes. A jest's a jest; but you're carrying it too far, considering you're

the father of the family: and it's high time we should end the joke by coming to pour a little water on your furnace."

"Keep aloof! Pause for your life!" cried Bernard, wielding a huge stake like a straw, and looking grand in his *furor*. "Advance a step, and you're a crippled man! Look to your own wife and family! I am noble!—and this house and the half-acre on which it stands are my own. I may do what I like with them. If my furnace cool, the labour of six days and nights—aye, of as many weeks—is lost: a billet at this instant is of more importance to me than a stack of fire-wood would be to-morrow!"

And shouldering the last stake, he hurried off with it, leaving the burly labourer impressed with the notion, that, though he had hitherto always looked upon him as rather a little man, there was in reality something Titanic about him. He stood agape, looking rather silly, as Bernard, entering his out-house, closed the door, and drew the heavy bolt.

"Well," said he, turning about to Victorine, somewhat sheepishly, "there's no arguing with a man possessed. For a maniac, look you, will never hear reason. And besides, it was a true word he spake about the house and ground being his own; and if he be so minded to burn all the premises, the law will bear him out. So, as for *right*, he's got it on his side; and as for *might*, he has that too, I'm thinking; and as for reason, he even has that in a certain sort of a way; for what he said about a billet being of more worth to him to-day than a stack of wood to-morrow, carried a show of sense with it. . . . So, i' faith, neighbour, I see not anything to be done . . . as you have brewed, so you must bake. A wife must cover her husband's infirmities, and be always thankful they're no worse. That's what I continually tell my good woman:—'If you, Marguerite,' I say, 'and your friend Victorine, were married to men who carried all their earnings to the Golden Fleece, you'd have something to complain of! Whereas, thou well knowest, I bring

home every liard; and as to Bernard, poor chap, why, he's moral, though he's cracked!"

And, with this sage consolation, Pierrot grinned and went home, leaving Victorine, woful woman, to exclaim, with the most patient man of all the earth, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" She stalked into her desolate kitchen, with its cold hearth, and sat down with her children, who caught the cheerless expression of her face; and seemed to have nothing left but, like Niobe, to forget herself to stone.

However, the sound of Bernard's grinding with immense vehemence at his grind-stone, which, properly, required the labour of two men, recalled her to the memory that there was such a thing as work in the world. She must go seek it; if he would not find it, she must, for her infants should not starve. Besides, two of them, promising little boys, were put out to nurse in a neighbouring village, in the hope that change of air, or of treatment, might rescue them from the mysterious disease which had robbed her of so many of her

children : and the foster-nurses must be paid, or they would increase her troubles by bringing their charges home, or by starving and neglecting them, which would be worse.

Therefore, with her neglected dress, just as it was, her suckling on her arm, and Fleurette hanging at her skirt, Madame Palissy went forth into the town of Saintes, making no effort to look otherwise than exceedingly deplorable. Her voice was pitched in the key of woe; her face had the expression of settled care ; her tale, told at every house where she applied for work, seemed bad enough ; her sighs and broken sentences made her hearers guess it to be still worse than she made it appear. She was pitied, relieved, supplied with employment ; in some cases paid in advance; her husband was pronounced a disgrace to his kind; a wilful, worthless, infatuated fellow.

"Not one liard shall he have of this money," thought Victorine to herself, as she put the few coins into her pocket that were left after she had

bought some rye loaves—"It would all go in faggots; we might eat garden mould for what he cares; the least he can do is to keep himself; and perhaps hunger will bring him to common sense. I'll be as immoveable as the amphitheatre."

Therefore, hardening her heart as a flint, she fed Fleurette and herself, locked up the remainder of her provisions, and sat down to her task-work.

It was long before Bernard needed or sought any supply. Fever had hitherto self-supported him at a ruinous expense of strength; the heat of the furnace had taken away his appetite; and, though parched with thirst, there was no danger of his drinking the spring dry. Now, however, his somewhat slight frame was beginning to yield to the enormous demand that had been exacted of it. His labour was two-fold; he had to keep up the heat of the furnace, in the hope that the enamel might yet melt, and to prepare his new compounds; he fell asleep a few minutes at a time over his work; it was the first rest he had

had, and it kept him alive and sane. The mechanical process was rather in favour of his overwrought brain than otherwise; it was a relief from extreme tension at one point. The continued exercise of volition and desire always occasions a determination of blood to the brain. For *the will* demands a large supply of blood, we are told, in order to evolve nervous power for the energising of the muscles; and the strongest brain will fail under the unremitting exercise of intense thought, especially if accompanied by anxious suspense.

It was well for Bernard's sanity, therefore, that he was obliged to pound and to grind, and to yield involuntarily to the occasional power of sleep; for he was on the brink of a brain fever. Manual labour, however, brought its usual accompaniment, appetite: after some time, Victorine heard him hammering at his door.

"What is it you want?" said she, harshly.

"Bread, my love!" cried he.

"I gave you the last crust there was in the

house overnight, and went to bed supperless myself," said she, doggedly. This was strictly true; but she was concealing from him her fresh supply.

Bernard, who had implicit trust in her word, felt his heart smite him, and said no more. He resumed his work.

By-and-by his pounding was finished, he must now go forth to buy earthen vessels to supply him with potsherds; there was no help for it. So he made up his fire with the last stake, carefully fastened the door after him with a padlock, and came out into the open air. Its first breath revived him; but speedily his exhausted frame, accustomed to incessant heat, and in want of food, chilled in the wintry air, and he was ready to faint. He went to the well for a draught of water. Little Fleurette, dismayed at his haggard looks, gazed at him with her earnest eyes, as he drank.

"How are you, my little starving girl?" said he, sadly.

"I'm not starving," said Fleurette, softly.

"Are you not? I feared you had nothing to eat."

"There is plenty of bread in the closet, but"—still lowering her voice—"mamma keeps the key in her pocket."

"Oh! does she?" returned Bernard, with suddenly heightened colour. "Ungenerous! unkind!" murmured he to himself; but he said nothing to the child, and went on his way.

Short beards were then commonly, though not universally worn; but Bernard's, after a week's neglect, was neither short nor well-trimmed. His eyes were sunken and lustreless; the burning scarlet of fever had departed and left his skin as yellow and dry as parchment; his face was deeply lined, his mouth close set, his garments unbrushed, his hose falling in loose wrinkles about his ankles. In this condition he entered Saintes.

"I say, Raoul," remarked one man to another in no very subdued voice, "that's the fellow that starves his wife."

"And feeds his oven with his little children," said the other. "I went by there this morning, and oh! such a smell of burnt bones! Faugh!"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" cried the other, who was now a little in advance, "I thought he'd been only burning his garden palings. My faith! I wouldn't be his landlord—"

"Oh, he's *noble*," cried the other. "He's descended from the Lady of Talmont, who used to dine on broiled babies. Don't you see how aristocratic he looks? His wife, who is bourgeoise, may go starve!"

"*He* deserves to starve," grumbled a third, coming up to the second; "it is just that a wretch should die of hunger, who neglects his family, and has left off following a trade."

"Only to pursue another," said the second. "Don't you know what that is? He's a *coiner*."

This was uttered with such an air of simple truth, that Bernard, who had been pretending not to hear a word that was said, turned round and glared on his malicious accuser.

"Oh, then he'll never starve," said the third, carelessly; "and I wonder, since he can make money so easily, he does not give some of it to his wife instead of letting her go about from house to house like a beggar, with her hair all hanging about her ears."

"My masters!" cried Bernard, suddenly facing about upon his followers, who as suddenly fell back a step or two,—"you know that you are one and all liars!"

"Liars, quotha!" repeated the foremost, giving him look for look.

"Yes," said Bernard, firmly; "and if there's one among you dare requite a word with a blow, come on: I'm your man!"

Jean Pierrot had spread such a formidable report of Palissy's ferocity and strength, that they shrunk away from him, as if he had been Hercules or Atlas. He eyed them with supreme contempt, and pursued his way to the pottery-shop, wounded to the heart.

A troop of smaller fry now assailed him, like

a swarm of gnats, in the persons of sundry boys of the town, who whooped and whistled to summon one another to look at "crack-brained Palissy," and who, forming themselves into a guard, not of honour, accompanied him to the shop, superintended his purchases, and then attended him homewards to the skirts of the town, as far as the Golden Fleece.

The friendly Master Gaspar, sitting beneath his tree, was somewhat surprised and scandalised at the *cortège* with which his client presented himself.

"Hilloa! you young scum of the town!" cried he, loudly; "what are you about? Go off to your playground or your horn-books, or I'll put you all somewhere where you won't like to be!"

This vague and terrific threat, enforced by a stentorian voice and brow of thunder, had such an effect on the young flower of Saintes, that they immediately retreated whence they came.

"Why, man! what ails thee?" said Master Gaspar, kindly.

"Faith, Master Gaspar, I have been six days and six nights shut up with my furnace, unable to get the enamel to melt: at length my fuel fell short, my compounds were spent, and I'm now obliged to *try again*."

"You're a persevering fellow, I will and must say," observed Gaspar, admiringly. "Six days and nights? Well now, that's a stretch I couldn't make! Take a pull at the tankard, man—you look quite worn and weary."

"Thanks, Master Gaspar; and if you would add a crust of dry bread—"

"What! a bare larder at home, Bernard? hey?" and the good-humoured landlord laughed.

"Why, Fleurette tells me no," replied Bernard; "but at all events it holds nothing for *me*."

"That's too bad, though!" said Master Gaspar, with whom Victorine, since she had grown plain, had been no great favourite. "Now, Bernard, I'll tell you what I'll do," resumed he, after signing to Toinette to bring out some refresh-

ment: "*you* may be mistaken, and *I* may be mistaken about this white enamel—in fact, I know nothing more about it than that your *faith in yourself,* and your self-denial and perseverance, persuade me that you must have something to go upon. Be that as it may, as long as you hold out in your pursuit of it, so long shall you table here at my cost, and sleep here too, if your wife, who, it seems, can find victuals for herself, won't let you in o' nights. So now fall to, without more ceremony; and I don't mind if I have a morsel myself."

CHAPTER X.

BERNARD gratefully accepted the hospitable fare set before him, and ate heartily and hastily, recruiting his mind at the same time by talking over his troubles with his friend. Also he, though a water-drinker, took a deep draught of wine, which, at the time, seemed to infuse new life and energy into his exhausted frame; though, whether it gave him any real accession of strength, and did not rather add fuel to the fire consuming him already, others must determine. I am inclined to think it was not for his good.

All at once he started and changed colour. "My furnace will cool!" exclaimed he. And

heartily grasping Master Gaspar's hand, he took up his load of pottery, and hastened homeward; the generous refreshment he had taken quickening his step, and kindling his cheek and his eye.

Beneath the hedge, and just out of sight of the house, little Fleurette was wistfully watching for him. The moment she saw him, she darted forward to meet him; and clasping his unoccupied hand with both her own, put into it a piece of bread, and closed his fingers on it with all her little strength.

"Papa!" whispered she, eagerly, "this is part of my own supper. Bed-time has come; but I could not sleep till I had given this to you. Eat it, papa, and please don't be hungry."

"You little angel!" cried he, catching her up to his heart, and kissing her passionately: "I am not hungry now, my sweet life! a kind friend has given me something to eat. Good night, my little soul! Thank you, thank you!"

She kissed him eagerly, then slipped down and

ran in-doors. Victorine was standing on the threshold.

"So!" said she, as he approached near enough to hear her, "you are hungry enough by this time, I suppose."

"No, Victorine; I have been feasting like a prince!" and he went into his out-house, and shut himself in.

This answer was made, I am sorry to say, with the desire of paining her; for he felt excessively angry. Resources of some kind, it appeared, she had; she had concealed them from him; had hardened herself against him; had told him a falsehood; and spread an ill report of him throughout the town; and made him the object of public derision and reprobation. They had no longer one interest. She fed apart, and he would feed apart; she had said she would lock him out if he did not come in early, and he would go and sleep in Master Gaspar's loft. He bolted his door, in a storm of silent passion, threw down his potsherds, went to his furnace,

to see if the enamel had yet melted . . . the fire was nearly out!

Victorine, meanwhile, who, with all her ill-temper, loved him dearly, was shedding tears. She had repented her deceit about the bread, had resolved he should have some when he came home, and had set out the little supper with some attempt at neatness. Yet she could not curb her tongue, nor modulate her voice sufficiently to give him a good-humoured greeting; the consequence was, he had again shut himself up, and all her pains were wasted. She cleared away the supper in a pet, and went up-stairs to put the children to bed. She had just given her parting kiss to Fleurette, when a tremendous noise below assailed her ears. She hastily ran down, and saw Bernard, axe in hand, splitting up the table. Two chairs already lay in pieces.

"Bernard! husband! what *are* you doing?"

"My furnace-fire is all but out," cried he, frantically.

"You *shall* not destroy these things—"

"Keep back, Victorine!" and he threw her roughly off. She staggered, and sank upon the only remaining seat.

With his axe in his hand, and his eyes flashing with unnatural fire, Bernard was truly a terrific object, just then, for a woman to approach. Victorine's strong spirit was quelled by a stronger than her own. She sat looking on silently, passively, while he hewed the furniture to pieces, and carried it away. Then he began upon the floor.

"You want this chair now, perhaps," said she, rising and leaving it.

"No, Victorine—I will stay my hand now—'

"Thank heaven! You are not coming in to-night, I suppose—"

"I *cannot*."

"Then I may bolt the door."

And she bolted and barred him out, and then sat down on her chair, alone with her misery. There is a certain majesty in grief, even under the meanest roof. In grief for lost

chairs and tables? No; but for a husband's lost heart.

As for Bernard, he was literally and metaphorically sitting among the ashes. The fire of his rage had become extinct, like the crackling of thorns beneath a pot; he was bowed down to the earth with self-reproach and wounded feeling. His garden-stakes being damp, would not kindle readily; but the seasoned wood of his household goods burned steadily: the furnace-door was shut, and there was nothing to do but to sit by and wait

In this position, such fragments of inspired mourning and appeal occurred to him as these—"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble! Consider and hear me, lest mine enemies say, We have prevailed against him; for if I be cast down, they that trouble me will rejoice at it. They gaped on me with their mouths, and said, Fie on thee! fie on thee! Neither was it only mine adversary, for then, peradventure, I might have hidden myself from

him; but it was even the wife of my bosom, my own familiar friend! I am become strange unto mine own flesh; they that are without convey themselves away from me. But be not thou far from me, O Lord! My God, make haste to help me! For I will be sorry for my sin, and my unrighteousness will I not hide. Oh! then be merciful to thy servant, who putteth his trust in thee!"

Bowed to the dust before the God whom he felt he had offended, Palissy was suddenly aware of a low sweet strain of music stealing on him amid the silence and darkness of the night. Were they angels' voices? was he dreaming? or losing his reason? No, he was sane, he was awake, the voices were not of angels; only of some Huguenot girls returning from their midnight prayer-meeting to a lone farm-house in the fields. And thus they sang:—

"God builds on liquid air, and forms
His palace chambers in the skies,
The clouds his chariot are, and storms
The swift-wing'd steeds with which he

"Earth on her centre fix'd he set,
Her face with waters overspread,
Nor proudest mountains dared as yet
To lift above the waves their head.

"But when thy awful face appear'd
The insulting waves dispersed and fled;
When once thy thunder's voice they heard,
And by their haste confess'd their dread.

"Thence up by secret tracks they creep,
And, gushing from the mountain's side,
Through valleys travel to the deep,
Appointed to receive their tide."

The last dying notes of the hymn fell unheeded on the ears of a man profoundly asleep. He had a dream, a wondrous dream; he has left his own mysterious record of it; and here, pieced out in its imperfect parts, it is.

He thought he was in the forest, in chase of Fleurette, who went tripping before him, now hidden, now in sight, but ever eluding his grasp. At length he found himself among craggy rocks and high mountains, which all at once dipped down precipitously to a champaign or plateau far beneath, exquisitely fertile and beautiful. He

paused at the very verge of the dangerous descent, and beheld immediately beneath him a garden enclosed and laid out with the utmost regularity, bounded on three sides by the rocks, which were stained of every variety of hue—lilac, purple, pea-green, orange, silver-grey, and umber; and on the fourth side by hawthorn-hedged meadows and orchards, planted with filberts, chestnuts, apples, and cherries, and intersected by charming paths.

The garden itself he could make out at a glance to be four-square, with two paths dividing it into four equal quadrangles. At each corner of the garden and at each end of the paths appeared to be a bower or grotto, the distinctive beauties of which he could not, at that distance, make out; but there appeared a garden-house or banqueting-room in the centre where the two paths crossed, and there was much water in the enclosure, meandering hither and thither, and enclosing numerous delectable little islets. Looking round somewhat anxiously for the means

whereby to descend into this Paradise, Bernard perceived a romantic flight of steps close at hand, cut in the rock, which at irregular intervals was shapen and scooped into caves, grottoes, alcoves, and niches, with here and there a stone vase containing some wonderful flower.

These steps brought him to a terrace bordered by a balustrade, on which were damask roses, violets, and the most fragrant flowers, in pots of *painted enamel*, and on the other side, in the perpendicular face of the rock, various little rock-chambers, some containing gardeners' tools, some aviaries, and others having prunes and cherries spread out in them to dry. Against the balustrade overlooking the garden, though a considerable height above it, leant a female figure in a peasant's dress, whom Bernard at once recognised for Victorine . . . *not* the careworn Victorine of later days, but young, fresh, blooming, charming, as when first he wooed her, and in precisely the same dress, even to the laced boddice, cherry-coloured petticoat, and milk-white apron, with

the little gold cross and black ribbon round her neck. He did not feel surprised either at seeing her there or seeing her thus; but approaching her with an exquisite feeling of tenderness, spoke to her, and when she answered not, gently touched her, and when she turned not, narrowly looked at her, and perceived . . . only a beautiful image of pottery! Even this neither surprised nor grieved him—he was in too transcendental a state for any human passion. Encompassed by sweet sights, sweet scents, and sweet sounds, including the rippling of cascades and the plash of innumerable fountains, he strayed to the end of the terrace, and proceeded to descend to the garden down the rough face of the rock, which had here and there a hollow filled with such herbs and mosses as grow in moist places. And on the brink of such of these little basins as were filled with water, Palissy noticed, with the pleasure of a naturalist, many serpents of the harmless sort, vipers, aspics, and lizards, disposed in many pleasant positions and agreeable

contortions; and when he came to examine them more narrowly, he found they were all of . . . . *potter's work, enamelled.*

Then Palissy found that he was, in effect, on the roof of the first garden-grotto, which was a mixture of real rock-work and pottery, interspersed with beautiful creeping rock-plants. A little cascade trickled down into a natural basin, in which were some real frogs and other harmless reptiles, with enamelled imitations of them so artfully interspersed, that it were difficult to tell the one from the other save for the absence of motion in the counterfeits, which, indeed, the movement of the running water around them in many instances concealed.

Bernard was intently absorbed in contemplating these wonders of nature and art, when he heard Fleurette's voice calling, "Papa, papa!" and, looking up, he saw the little maiden tripping on before him to the second grotto, and still keeping out of his reach! But, ere he left the first, he remarked these words engraved in rustic

letters on the walls—"O Thou that dwellest in the garden! cause me to hear Thy voice."

Then he strayed along delightful alleys to the next grotto, which seemed intended for *champêtre* repasts, for there were little recesses in the walls for drinking-cups and plates, and little bins for cooling wine, and a little runnel of fresh water to enable the guests to add water to their wine without so much as leaving the table. And the table itself was oval, beautifully painted with groups of figures feasting and dancing, and it shone like a mirror, being highly enamelled. The front and roof of this little chamber were of rustic woodwork formed by the careful training of living trees; and the little Doric portico was surmounted in rustic letters of woodwork with the inscription, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

Palissy now proceeded to the third grotto, which contained recesses hollowed for seats, and

a fountain in the centre which emitted musical sounds by turning little wheels which caused the blowing of little bellows into flageolets. Over the entrance was inscribed, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."

He found the fourth grotto was a marine cavern, studded with shells and rare sea-pebbles, intermixed with corals and sea-weed, artificial turquoises, lizards, crabs, lobsters, mussels, sea-urchins and cray-fish, all of enamel. A cascade gushed from the rock, and over it was engraven, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the living waters."

He now visited the alcoves at the end of the walks. One of them was inlaid with rare stones, chalcedony, jasper, porphyry, and crystals, and inscribed, "Wisdom giveth light to them that have it." Another was encrusted with stalactites and stalagmites, "Oh how amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord God of Hosts!" Another entirely inlaid with the most admirable enamelling, "I Wisdom dwell with Prudence, and find out

knowledge of witty inventions." The fourth externally resembled the rock out of which it was hollowed, and within was decorated with grotesque figures, quaintly painted in enamel. One of these figures held a vase full of water, which, on Palissy's nearer approach, it emptied on his head.

While Palissy was contemplating these wonders lost in thought, his little girl's voice again called to him, "Papa! papa! come this way." He followed her among winding paths and tangled thickets of flowering shrubs, to the pavilion in the centre, which stood on a little islet, and was formed of living poplars, bent into a roof and interwoven with climbing plants. A vane at the summit emitted soft music. Also an aviary of gilded wire contained a choir of the most charming singing birds. This little banqueting-hall was approached by rustic bridges, and contained seats round a circular table. The inscription was, "Eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared."

Again Fleurette tempted him away, crying, "You can't catch me!" He darted after her, and cried, "Now I have you!" but she sprang behind a statue of potter's ware that bore a ring suspended from its hand, and the moment Palissy, in stretching out his hand for Fleurette, touched this ring, the statue struck him a great blow on the head with its other hand, which held a large sponge saturated with water. And lo, it was a dream! He awoke!—a sobered man.

The furnace-fire was out, the air was close, all around was mean, dreary, and dark, but he seemed still in fairy-land, or in heaven. He rose, shook himself to be quite certain he was awake, sat down again to think it all over; wondered what made him feel so refreshed and so strong; thought it must be God's free grace, the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit accorded him for the sake of his dear Saviour. And he kneeled down and prayed.

Then he looked very calmly at his ruined pottery; thought it a deserved punishment for his

unkindness to Victorine; went forth to the well, and gave himself a good shock of cold water.

Little Fleurette, watching for him, darted into his arms. "Have some of my bread now!" she whispered, softly.

"No, my little soul," returned he; "I am engaged to breakfast somewhere else." And holding her hand, he went into the house.

Victorine was absent. The morning sun shone sadly on the broken floor and bare walls. "What a pity!" whispered Fleurette; "how dismal everything looks!" He kissed her, but said nothing.

Just then Victorine entered with a pitcher of new milk from Pierrot's cow-house.

"This is meat and drink too, and requires no cooking," said she. "Drink, Bernard;" and held it to his lips.

He was just going to refuse, but something in her eye and in his heart made him accept it. As he finished his draught, a tear fell into the jug. He hoped she did not perceive it.

"'Twill be none the more bitter," said she, softly.

The same instant his arm was round her waist. Neither of them spoke for a minute or two; but she was silently in tears.

"Victorine," said he at length, "I *must* go on . . . whether to failure or success. You, it appears, have some resources independent of me —I thank God for it! Be my literal help-meet at this pinch, dear, much-tried wife! and I trust hereafter to make up to you for it."

"Ah, Bernard, I am afraid of trusting to that! But I will try to keep myself and the children a little longer, if you will but keep yourself."

"I will, I can!—for Master Gaspar has invited me to take my meals with him, while this season of trial lasts."

"That is well; he is kind-hearted, and you will fare more generously with him than you could do at home."

"Nay, Victorine, I mean to allow myself no extra indulgences; enough to support my strength

is all I want. And he has offered me a bed in the loft."

"Ah, Bernard, do not get into the way of sleeping away from home."

"Not when I *can* come in, dear, without disturbing you; but often I must work and watch far into the night. The rain drips in on me through the wretched roof, whenever there is any falling; you would not like to receive me, cold, wet, and in the middle of the night, would you? When you have put off your gown, will you put it on again? When you have gone to rest, will you rise up to let me in? You will not like it."

"Certainly, I shall not; but I shall prefer it to your going to the Golden Fleece. . . ."

"I often disturb you in your first sleep as it is."

She smiled, shed a tear, and said,—"I sleep, but my heart waketh."

"Very well," replied he, "then the compact is made."

CHAPTER XI.

"FAMILY and friends may call out upon me that I am mad," thought Bernard to himself as he sat down to deliberate on his future proceedings; "but *I know* that I have got hold of the clue that is to lead me out of the maze! I have found the white enamel. My dream taught me, sleeping, what I felt sure of, waking, that it may lead me on to great things the world as yet knows not of. The present difficulty is, how to make use of the knowledge I have already attained."

Then, with an inward, "God bless me!" very different from the common, irreverent ejacula-

tion, this spirited persevering fellow set about drawing designs for new vessels to bake; and he did this in the midst of his own family, from whom he never *needlessly* secluded himself. He could imperturbably bear Fleurette's shaking the table, Victorine's bustle about her domestic duties, anything but the crying of the baby, whom he generally found it the best way to take in hand himself, for he was as clever at nursing as everything else, and had had plenty of practice!

To save time, he took his drawings to a common potter, that he might make vessels of the patterns designed, while Palissy proceeded with some medallions. Victorine, meanwhile, went on with her slop-work, her foot on the cradle-rocker, and Fleurette conning her primer at her knee. Again the hard lines were beginning to disappear from her face, as they always did when she was not soured by provocations it was not in her nature to bear. There was something about her that reminded one

(a classic smattering pre-supposed) of Juno or Minerva. A bony Juno, a yellow Minerva, it may be: but these were accidents of pinching want, and even at her worst and unhappiest, there was always a little of the goddess in rags.

Thus they went on for six months. All that while Bernard dined with Master Gaspar, but slept at home, and breakfasted on galette. When the potter had made the vessels to order, he paid him with some of his clothes, including that brown Pyrenean suit in which he was wont to look so trim. Victorine was angry about it, she had been so fond of it, and said it was too good for such a shambling fellow as the potter—could he not have given him an old suit? To which Bernard simply enough replied, "My dear, he *had* an *old* one already." She said, "I do believe, if you had been St. Wouël, you would have given the beggar not only your dinner, but the silver dish." He said, "If I had been St. Wouël,

I suppose I should have done whatever he did."

His next care was to make an improved furnace. So he pulled his old one to pieces, for the sake of the materials, which during those memorable six days and nights had become liquefied and vitrified in such a manner, that in loosening the masonry, he cut his fingers terribly, and was obliged to get Victorine to tie them up in soft rags, an operation watched by Fleurette with intense interest.

"They must hurt you very much, papa," said she, wincing.

"Oh, not so very much," said he; "only there are some wounds, even trifling ones, that we cannot well bind up ourselves."

And with his fingers thus in swaddling-clothes he was forced to eat his dinner, till Fleurette volunteered to feed him with her own little soft fat hands: for, as yet, spoons and forks were not —not for the lower orders.

All this while, the poor Huguenots lay in

prison. One morning, Victorine burst in on him at his bricklaying, with—

"The poor brother of Gimosac is going to be burned alive to-morrow!"

"Ah! God be his aid!" exclaimed Bernard, dropping his trowel and clasping his hands in fervent prayer.

"Shall you go and see him, Palissy?"

"Oh no, Victorine! I could not endure to look on the good man's pain! I will pray for him here."

"And yet you are continually exposing yourself to the imputation of heresy by your careless walk. . . ."

"Fearless walk!"

—"And shrink from looking on the fate you brave."

"God promises to support us in the extreme case; there is no reason why he should in the other."

"Well, I think it rather hard the poor lost man's own sect should not countenance

him," said Victorine; "besides, this is the first martyr, or heretic, whichever he is, that has been burned in Saintes. I rather think I shall go."

Palissy shrugged his shoulders and was silent.

And she went; and he did not. She came back looking very much scared, and was going, with great haste, to tell him all about it.

"Oh! do not let me hear a word," cried he, changing colour and stopping his ears.

"Why, Palissy! you a man, and so soon dismayed?"

"At *another* man's pain, Victorine. The dear blessed fellow is now in Heaven."

"Well, I really think he must be," said she, deeply sighing. "I never beheld such constancy. So prolonged his sufferings were, too!"

"Now, Victorine!"

"Well, Bernard, I was only going to say, that I think his faith must have been very strong in him to bear him through as it did, when the

monks were tempting him to recant, with offers of free pardon, up to the very last."

"May my last end be like his!" ejaculated Palissy, softly.

"God forbid!" said Victorine. "And there was Father John in a pulpit, set up right over-against him, preaching at him all the while, and telling the people that the burning man's torments were nothing to what they would be directly the life was out of him, for he would go straight to hell."

"That priest would tell you he loved his neighbour as himself, I suppose," said Palissy. "A persecuting church can never be the right one."

"And such a smell of roast—"

"Oh, Victorine! Victorine!"

"Well, I won't say another word—I'll go and give Fleurette her dinner, for truly I can eat none to-day, myself."

And she went away, with her apron at her eyes.

Bernard wondered at her; but, alas! it was no

wonder in those days for even the high-born ladies of the land, Catherine de Medicis, Anne of Guise, and Mary Queen of Scots, to look on at sights of torturing death as spectacles.

Victorine, however, had been more shocked than Bernard gave her credit for. In the night she screamed and sobbed in her sleep; and when he woke her, which was not without difficulty, the terrible impression remained, and she kept stifling her sobs under the bed-clothes. Even after he had talked with her and prayed with her, she lay awake, the large tears silently coursing her cheeks.

With daylight, however, the impression went off. The martyr's ashes were dispersed to the winds of Heaven; men and women met in the market-place where he had testified; and haggled about hay, straw, and beans, bit apples, weighed cherries, cracked plum-stones between their teeth, and now and then gave a little shudder or shrug to the memory of "the poor brother of Gimosac." An itinerant vendor of rosaries and chaplets had

set up his stall just over-against where the stake had stood, and was driving a brisk trade. And it was the day of Victorine's grand wash, and she was trampling linen with her bare feet in the running waters of the Charente, and beating it on the bank with a flat piece of wood.

Meanwhile, Bernard's creative powers were exercising themselves in a hundred charming fancies. Potter's clay is scripturally proverbial for taking whatever form the artist will; and he meant to test the merits of his new furnace (which had cost him, or rather Master Gaspar, twenty-six gold dollars) by a grand experimental baking of vases, cups, urns, and medallions, by which, if successful, he was sanguine of realising three or four hundred livres!

However, he made a little experiment first, which perfectly succeeded. Victorine, returning from market, met him sallying forth, all smiles, with a pretty enamelled cup in hand.

"Isn't that lovely?" said he, showing it all round to her.

"It really is!" said she, with unaffected admiration. "Come, you are a good boy this time. How naturally you have done the sea-weed and shells! Are you going to sell it?"

"No, dear, I am going to give it to Master Gaspar who well deserves it. I always promised he should have the first piece."

"Won't you sup at home to-night?" cried she after him.

"No, dearest."

"Marguerite is coming."

"I know it. I wish you good appetites for your good cheer."

"Good appetites are more rife in this house than good cheer," thought Victorine, as she turned in-doors and prepared to spread the frugal contents of her little basket on the board. But, oh! what a pleasant surprise! On the table was a very fine lobster.

"That good-natured fellow!" thought she. "Really no one has a better heart when he gives it fair play. He knew my old friend was coming

to spend the evening with me, and, pinched as he is, yet he has spent money and trouble too in procuring me this little delicacy. I do like a pleasant surprise! And Marguerite knows what's good, and relishes it too, the more for not having it often. I must boil this lobster at once, or it won't cool in time."

So the lobster was boiled, and in due time eaten. It would have done you good, reader, to see these two hard-faring housewives at their little feast—how Victorine set out the table, with vinegar, salt, pepper, and fresh bread, on a snow-white napkin that had not seen the light since her marriage; how daintily she dressed the lobster, and gaily pressed and smiled; and how Marguerite supplied appetite and praise and gossipry conforming; and how they talked over their husbands, and their housewifery, and everything else!

"My having the upper hand of Jean Pierrot is quite simple," said Marguerite triumphantly; "for on our wedding-day, we each lighted a

taper, and whoever had the taper that burned longest was to rule the roast. That's the way in my place. So I managed he should stand in the current of air from the church-porch, and his wasted and mine did not; so he knew, upon that, there was no use in striving for mastery."

"Well, Bernard is welcome to his own way, for me," said Victorine, "always excepting his insanity about pottery."

"Very likely it is real insanity, just on that one matter," said Marguerite; "a fairy may have breathed on him."

"You believe in fairies, then?" said Victorine.

"To be sure I do!" said Marguerite. "Who should, if I did not? My great-grandfather by the mother's side was engaged to be married to a girl named Theresa. Unfortunately, a fairy had fallen in love with him, who spared no pains to gain his good graces. Thus, when he cried out one summer afternoon at his reaping, 'I wish I had a flask of wine this hot day!' he turned his head, and lo! there it was. Another time,

a rock having rolled down upon his meadow, he exclaimed, 'I wish you were at Jericho!'—during the night it disappeared. However, the fairy, being both old and ugly, made no way with him; and when she found he was courting Theresa, she haunted that poor girl continually in the form of an owl, and hooted at her window every night. On the day that he asked her in marriage, all the trees in his cherry orchard cast their fruit, and a wolf fell upon his flock. However, that made no difference, the wedding-day was fixed, and Theresa went to gather wood-strawberries. From that hour she disappeared. Her lover, her brothers sought her in vain. At length, my ancestor, in despair, applied to a hermit of great sanctity who dwelt in the forest. 'Go,' said he, 'to the east side of the mountain, where a beautiful young peasant will ask you to help her to find her pet goat. Follow her, but as you cross the running water, throw her down and bind her hand and foot. Don't regard her prayers—when she finds them fruitless, she will

summon a terrible storm. Say a Pater and an Ave, and the storm will cease. Then threaten to drown the fairy unless she restores Theresa safe and sound. She will accede, and you will find your mistress stretched in a neighbouring cavern, apparently without life. Sprinkle this holy water on her, and she will revive, and you will see the fairy no more.' "

"That was a great deal for holy water to effect," observed Victorine.

"What will it not effect?" rejoined Marguerite. "I suppose you know how it bested an old abbot of Saintes, ages ago, in the matter of the dragon?"

"No, indeed," said Victorine; "or if I have heard it, I have forgotten it."

"At the summit of the height which overhangs our city," said Marguerite, "where our Carmelite convent now stands, there was, in the old days of the Romans, what they called their Capitol, or citadel. Perhaps it was they who honeycombed the hill with certain subterranean passages, or

perhaps the enormous caverns which undermine the hill are natural; but those who are learned say that they penetrate even under the river, and have certain issues where you would least look for them, as in the amphitheatre, and on this side the Charente. Well, in olden times, when Christianity first appeared amongst us, these caverns were inhabited by a dreadful beast, five times larger and fiercer than a wolf, who used to prey on all the country round, and devour women and children. Men did not care to trace him to his den, and pretended they could not find it. Meantime, an old abbot of the then newly-erected monastery was one midnight at his devotions, when he was aware of a strain of sweet music, seemingly proceeding from young girls, in the vaults immediately under his cell. Resolving to know what was going on, he took a vessel of holy water in his hand, and descended into the cellars, where he beheld figures moving amid lights at a distance, who receded as he advanced, with sweet laughter and singing.

Nothing daunted, he went further and further, descending into the very heart of the earth, till at length he came to an enormous cave, in a blaze of red light, with a table spread with every viand possible to imagine, and beings feasting around it, who had all something bestial in their form to distinguish them from human, as the head of a fox, the paws of a bear, and so forth. At the head of the table sat the master of the revels, no other than the dragon himself, whose eyes, ears, and nostrils emitted flames of fire, and who was in the act of pledging his guests in a bowl of blood. 'I only wish,' said he, setting down the cup, 'it were flavoured with the abbot, to give it a more generous relish.' 'Here he is, my lord,' cried a voice immediately behind the good father, who, the instant the dragon was making a spring at him, gave him a frantic shower of holy water; whereon the whole company immediately dispersed, with yells and cries, through a trap-door, into a yet lower deep; and the abbot, clapping the door down upon them,

locked it, and put the key in his pocket. Since which, their stifled groans can only be heard in very bad weather."

With these and such stories did Marguerite requite her hostess for her repast. Bernard returned soon after her departure, and as soon as he came in, glanced round the kitchen, as if in search of something. He stopped short, with an air of comic surprise.

"Hallo!" said he, "what has become of my lobster?"

"Why, now, Bernard, didn't you say you would not come home to supper? If you had not spoken so positively, we would so gladly have waited for you!"

"What has supper to do with the lobster?" said he, quickly.

"Why, was not the lobster meant for supper? I thought it very kind of you to provide such a surprise, and we liked it much."

"You liked it very much?" cried he, with flashing eyes,—and then, bursting out laughing,

"Why, you abominable Victorine, you really are enough to try the patience of Job!"

"Why, what's the matter?" said she, colouring like a culprit.

"Oh, Victorine! Victorine! Why, that lobster wasn't bought to *eat!* I intended it for a model. It was the most perfect lobster I ever saw; there may never be such another in Saintes!"

"Well, I am really very sorry," said she, confused, and pouting a little. "I'm not indebted to you at all, then, it seems, after giving you credit for such kindness."

"Now, don't give yourself the airs of an injured woman about *this*," said he, laughing, and looking her full in the face, "for it's I am the injured man! You can't make me any amends for that lobster; so all I can do is to forgive you like a Christian—and to hope it mayn't disagree with you. As for Marguerite, I don't care whether it disagrees with her or not!"

Of course it is not to be supposed that the floor had continued unlaid all these six months.

Bernard came in one day, and found Victorine trying to nail down some bits of plank, and said to her, "Come, give me the hammer: you will only hammer your own fingers." She said, "No, I shall not." He said, "Yes, you will," —and took her nails away, and pocketed them. So then she said she knew where there were more, and went away; and while she was gone, he finished the carpentering very creditably, as far as the materials went. Afterwards he completed it entirely; and then, thinking he would make handsome reparation at once, he walked into Saintes, bought a couple of second-hand chairs, returned with one in each hand, and, when he came in sight of Fleurette, put one of them on his head like a bonnet, and ran after her, growling, and pretending to be the Loup-garou.

Now, then, for the great experiment, on the rustic figulines which had cost him six months to mould. They were properly enamelled, the fire was of the right heat . . . they were all spoilt! And why?

The mortar of which he had built his furnace had been full of flints; and these, exposed to the action of intense heat, had exploded, and scattered themselves in minute fragments all over his ware. When he passed his hand over them, they cut like razors.

Victorine, anxious to know how this grand trial would turn out, which, if successful, was to enable them to pay all their debts, took advantage of a little spy-hole to peep in and judge by his looks how matters were going. She saw him transfixed in an attitude of despair. Then she went to the door, and tapping at it, cried—"Bernard! dear Bernard!"

No answer.

"Bernard, how are you getting on? Have you opened the furnace?"

No answer.

"Here's Merimèe the miller coming along the road; you said you would pay him this morning."

"No, I didn't! I said I *hoped* I should."

"Well, of course he would hope so too, upon

that. At any rate he's coming. And behind him are two others, who are, I think, Jules Marot, and Denis Lefevre—"

"Oh, Victorine! don't drive me mad!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Everything!—"

"Well, let me in, then, if I can't make matters worse."

No answer.

"Here come the men—what shall I say?"

"Anything you like."

"That's nonsense, Bernard. Come! open the door, there's a good fellow."

He opened the door, just as his creditors came up.

"Well, Bernard," said the first, cheerfully, "you bade me look in this morning. All right, I hope? You look as if you'd had a bad night."

"That's nothing," said Bernard, "it's the morning that has upset me."

"Why? what now? anything amiss with the crockery?"

"All spoilt!" and taking up one piece after another, he rapidly dashed them on the ground.

"Hold, hold, you're mad!" cried one and all. "Some of the things look pretty enough—perhaps all are not spoilt."

"Yes they are, I have looked at every one—" and the crash continued.

"Stay, stay, silly, stupid Bernard," cried the provoked Victorine, clinging to his arm, "they may yet sell for something . . eight or ten francs—"

"Eight or ten francs! when I had meant them to be worth four hundred livres!" And he hurled them to the ground more impetuously than ever.

"Well, that's what I call downright recklessness and foolery!" said the stolid miller.

"Why! would eight francs pay *you?* or *you?* or *you?*"

"No, certainly—but they would be better to you than nothing."

"Not at the price of making all my original designs mere common trash!" And he crushed the last vase, all wreathed and incrusted with

grotesques; and going into the house, went upstairs, shut himself into his chamber, and flung himself on the bed.

There was a good deal of talking below. The creditors were disappointed and angry, and called him a mere fool. Victorine was so much of their opinion, that she could not do good battle for him —her "well, but—" soon became "that's what *I* say—what I have said to him ever so many times!"

"It's no good wasting our time here any longer," at length said the miller, abruptly,— "There's nothing on the premises, that I can see, that would pay me for my flour."

And he walked off, followed by his two companions. Victorine then went to look for Bernard. He was still on the bed, and when she spoke, he did not answer, but pretended to be sound asleep. She noted, however, rather a spasmodic movement of his chest; and looking at him quite close, saw a tear that in spite of all his might would squeeze itself through his eyelashes.

"Come," said she, "you know it isn't the first time."

He gave a great sigh, but only turned his face down on the pillow.

"The men are gone now, Bernard."

Another sigh, still longer and deeper.

"What shall you do next, Palissy?"

"Eat my breakfast, dear—is it ready?"

"It only wants pouring out."

"Go, and pour it out then—I'm a little . . . tired, you see. I'll come down directly."

The moment she was gone, he was up and on his knees, with his face hidden in his hands. Then he followed her.

"Well," said he, cheerily, as he sat down to his galette, "when a man tumbles into a wolf-pit, the best thing he can do is to scramble out again!"

"And how are you going to scramble out, Bernard?"

"Return to my painting little pictures, dear, and try to sell them and get a little money."

CHAPTER XII.

ACCORDING to his wont when he had been upset a little, Bernard thought he would take a turn in the open air, and look Nature in the face, and hear what the Holy Spirit might say to him.

Just as he was going through his garden (which he had already re-fenced), his attention was caught by a jolly yellow gourd basking in the sun, and by some young green peas which were stretching their tendrils towards the nearest support.

"They seem to have some sense of their weak nature," thought he, "and feeling their inability to sustain themselves, they stretch their little

thread-like arms into the air till they feel out some branch or twig, to which they thenceforth attach themselves never again to part, till torn away by a rude hand. And shall I, feeling my own human weakness, lack sense to seek the support of a superior strength ?"

And thus he went on, moralising in his own simple, desultory fashion, on the sweet-smelling vine, and scarlet poppy, the knobby cucumber, and perfumed melon, extracting wisdom from all, and amusing himself with the antics of young calves, colts, and lambs, and with the untuneable flageolet-playing of a young peasant who was watching them, till his peace and cheerfulness were quite regained. And then he returned home and painted little kids standing on their hind legs and tumbling head over heels, and old, demure she-goats couched under the hedge, watching them. Of course his sketches sold as fast as they were painted.

Meanwhile, the word of God mightily grew and prevailed. The blood of the martyrs is the

seed of the church; and though Master Philibert had sealed his testimony with his life—not at the stake, but the gibbet—the little church of reformed Christians in Saintes, continued to increase and prosper. Master de la Boissiere had the spiritual cure of it; and under the auspices of this good man, who was found occasionally dining on apples, with a shirt for his table-cloth, superfluities of all kinds had almost ceased to exist. The young Huguenot girls were more secure of their lovers' hearts while they dressed with Puritanical simplicity, and were keepers at home, than if they had shone at feast or revel in the gayest attire: the country lads found plain homespun more esteemed in the eyes of their mistresses, than silken coats cut into surprising patterns. Flageolets and violins were now attuned to plaintive hymns, in place of sprightly chansonettes; gaming had become bad taste; lawsuits were almost unknown; persons at variance blushed to let Easter approach while they were unreconciled; subjects of practical and controversial religion

were the topics discussed with most unction; and, on Sundays, parties of tradespeople might be met rambling through the pleasant fields and under hedgerows, singing psalms and spiritual songs in sweet harmony, and exhorting and instructing one another. Blooming girls, seated in groups on banks and garden-seats, occupied themselves in similar innocent and devout recreations. In short, Saintes was for the time a little Paradise—but a Paradise in which the devil was soon to find plenty to do.

Victorine discovered herself to be in the minority. She could hardly be said to halt between two opinions, since she had scarcely ever troubled herself to form one. She had habitually and blindly put herself under the guidance of her spiritual teachers, remunerating herself for the bondage in which they kept her mind, by the large counterpoise they permitted of secular gratification, and the assurance of eternal safety. The natural mind is at enmity with God; and as hers had certainly never been savingly converted, she

felt the utmost repugnance to what appeared to her the cold and arid creed of her husband, as well as to the total surrender of self to God and to holiness, which it exacted. Still, she was so far under his influence, and that of his party, as to find it impossible to believe that all Huguenots must go to hell. She had nothing to say why they should not; for she could not give a reason for the faith that was in her; but she felt sure that Bernard was safe, for all that.

Of course, reader, you know that Bernard Palissy died in prison, a martyr for his religion? Did not you? Oh, well, he did though; so you had better prepare yourself for it. You have seen enough of him already to know that though he was an excessively sensitive fellow, whom the least word of unkindness could cut to the heart, and the least remorse of conscience humble to the dust, he had that indomitable resolution within him which nothing could shake; nay, could even kindle into such a fury as to flourish his wood-axe over his head as if he had been a Turk

at the taking of Cyprus. Do not distress yourself needlessly, however: he lived to extreme old age, and died in his prison-cell as sweetly as if he had been going to sleep in his own cottage-bed; though under sentence of burning, which the wicked, weak king had not resolution either to repeal or to enforce.

> "Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage;
> Minds innocent and quiet take,
> That for an hermitage."

And his captivity was shared and sweetened by two very lovely Huguenot girls, sisters, who were sentenced to be burned alive for their faith, and whom the dastardly, corrupt king offered to save at the price of their honour—thereby showing how little their lives were really the necessary forfeits of heresy. But they would not listen to the voice of the tempter—no, not for a moment. Those two young, resolute, pure girls (there are many, many, as good and as brave) could sleep in each other's arms, undisturbed by the certainty of the fiery stake on the morrow: and Palissy

bore them out in it. And when the king (Henry the Third! he deserves to have his name remembered) came to look at those he would not save, and said to Bernard, "My good man, you have now been forty-four years in the service of the queen my mother or in mine, and we have suffered you to live in your own religion, amidst all the executions and massacres. . . . Now, however, I am so pressed by the Guise party and by my people, that I have been compelled to imprison these poor girls and you, and you are all to be burnt to-morrow, if you will not recant—"

"Sire," said our Palissy, "you have several times said that you feel pity for me; but it is I who feel pity for you, who say, '*I am compelled.*' That is not speaking like a king. These girls and I, who have part in the kingdom of heaven, will teach you to talk royally. The Guisarts, all your people, and yourself at the head of them, *cannot compel a potter to bow down to an image of clay.*"

The girls were taken, but Palissy was left. I have forestalled the sequel of his life, advisedly;

it was too noble to be omitted; but I would not close my story with a tear.

He is still at his pottery—still meeting with new reverses; now baking it too much, now too little; sometimes laying on the enamel too thick, sometimes too thin: sometimes finding that one colour requires more baking than another which he has used in the manufacture of the same piece. Thus, in his grotesque, composite groups, the green of the lizards was burnt before the colour of the serpents was melted; and the colours of the lobsters and tortoises were melted before the white ground had attained any beauty. Still he kept on, producing all sorts of charming and singular combinations, and continually dreaming, whether in his sleep or wide awake, of his delectable garden. It *was* a delectable garden to him! He took his pleasure therein, and imagined himself gathering its fruits, tending its flowers, and basking in eternal spring, with Victorine in her renewed and perpetual youth; while, in

fact, the winds and rains were assailing him through the crevices of his wretched out-house, which he was fain to stop up with sticks and green boughs till he had leisure to go in quest of laths and nails, lest the rain-droppings should fall upon and injure his work.

Meanwhile, the rebellion about the salt-tax broke out in Saintonge. This was in the year 1548. While Palissy was quietly working at his pottery, the country-people, who could not endure the *gabelle* which taxed one of the most absolute necessaries of life, were rising to arms, and expelling the public officers. The people of Saintonge massacred eight of them, and all the adjoining districts were joining in the revolt. Pillage, fire, and bloodshed abounded; at length the rebellion extended to Bourdeaux, which became the rebels' head-quarters. Tristan de Maurienne, the king's lieutenant of Navarre, was seized by them, slain, and his remains sprinkled with salt, in allusion to the origin of the rising.

The king sent letters-patent, promising the people that justice should be done; on which they laid down their arms. The justice without mercy they received was administered in the form of wholesale executions of the most dreadful kind: those who were not sent to the galleys were hanged or broken on the wheel. The veteran Constable de Montmorenci marched upon Bourdeaux to take vengeance on the slayers of Tristan de Maurienne.

A hundred citizens were put to death in the market-place—the chief men of the town were sent to dig up with their nails the corpse of De Maurienne, where it had been roughly buried; then made to carry it beneath Montmorenci's window, and fall on their knees, beseeching pardon, after which they buried it in the cathedral. They were fined two hundred thousand livres for the expense incurred in their punishment. Then the Constable proceeded to Saintonge, where many persons were put to death, and two hundred thousand gold dollars were

exacted in lieu of the salt-tax. This was a political, not a religious warfare; the Huguenots were waxing stronger, and many of Montmorenci's soldiers were ready to fall to blows with each other, because some of them were Reformers and some were Roman Catholics. Two of the most powerful opponents of the Huguenots in Saintes were summoned to Toulouse; whence, the church in their absence had rest; and the townsmen openly met to celebrate the reformed worship in the market-hall.

"Faint, but pursuing," was still Palissy's motto. He was still advancing; still finding there was something new to learn. But he had now conquered his difficulties so far as to be able to keep his family in tolerable comfort, and had opened a regular workshop, over the door of which he set up a board, inscribed in large letters—

"Bernard Palissy, Worker in Earth, and Inventor of Rustic Figulines."

It was a great triumph to him when he erected

this board, and took his self-conferred degree. Victorine was impressed by it; *his fame was beginning to reach her through the voice of the world without:* the Constable Montmorenci had seen, praised, and purchased some of his grotesques, and given him a large order for more: "my lady Countess," that is to say, the wife of the Sire de Pons, had done the same: his hands were full; his bills were paid; he had money in advance.

The cottage was repaired and replenished, the children well clothed and fed; the grass-green gown bought of a finer fabric than Victorine had in her early days ever aspired to; her neighbours looked on her with respect, and on her husband with admiration. Not unfrequently a nobleman's page, slashed and fringed, and mounted on a fine horse, would ride up to the door and inquire for *Master* Bernard. Yes! "cracked-brained Palissy" was now called *Master* not only by pages but by the noblemen they served. And his sorrows and anxieties having ceased, his

furrows had disappeared; he was cheerful as a bird.

"Papa is making such a funny thing!" said Fleurette to her mother—"a great watch-dog of potter's ware, as large as life, to crouch at the door of his workshop; and he says he shall not think he has succeeded, unless the dogs of the town mistake it for a real one."

They did mistake it; or at any rate they often stood at pause, growled a little, and only by scent, not sight, detected it to be a mere thing of clay. This ingenious toy, seen and understood by all men, brought Bernard more fame among the vulgar than his most delicate and beautiful groupings. But these were duly appreciated by the high-born and cultivated; among whom, he, though a provincial, began to be talked of in populous cities.

It was pleasant to him to have the suffrages of those of his native place, whom he had found so capable of inflicting pain by their reviling and contempt: it was pleasanter to be appreciated

by the cultivated and the gifted, who were familiar with high art: it was far pleasanter to pursue his art yet higher and higher in ease and quiet, only in peaceable warfare with self-suggested difficulties: it was pleasantest of all to know that a dear face once more shone with smiles for him at home.

"How hard you were upon me!" he said one day, with gentle reproach, when something had recalled those old times to mind.

"Well, perhaps I was. But you were such a tiresome fellow, Palissy!—How could I guess you would succeed at last?"

"I all along *felt* I should, though I did not know it."

"And what do you mean little Nicholas and Mathurin to be, when they grow older?"

"Potters, to be sure!" said Palissy.

"Do you think there will be enough for all?"

"Yes, enough and enough; I only wish some grandee would give me a commission for a delect-

able garden! Ah, you should then see what I could do!"

"Here comes a courier in the Constable's livery!" cried Fleurette.

The courier brought a letter. It was from the mighty Constable himself, appointing Palissy to undertake the decorations of his new country-seat, the Château d'Ecouen. The galleries and chapel were to be paved with enamelled tiles, painted with Scriptural and classical designs. Some of these designs had been made by the great Albert Durer; the others were left by the Constable to Palissy's own taste: "I am sure," he said, "you will select gems, and set them in pure gold."

Bernard clasped his hands, and raised his eyes to heaven.

"Your fortune is made!" exclaimed Victorine.

"My fame is made," said Palissy.

She gave him a hearty kiss.

"It never rains but it pours," said he. "How

doubly precious that kiss would have been to me, when, like Job, I sat among the ashes!"

"With a potsherd in your hand," said Victorine, laughing. "Do you mean, you wretch, to compare me to Job's wife?"

"Job's wife cleared up in the end," said he, —"when 'each man gave him a piece of money!'"

"You have nothing now left to wish," said Fleurette.

"Oh yes, I have," returned he, gravely smiling.

"What is it? what can it be, papa?"

"I wish, Fleurette, that those wicked men had not returned to Saintes, who are undoing as fast as they can all the good that holy and pious ministers have been labouring for years to effect. I shut myself up in my workshop as much as possible, and stop my ears against the oaths, curses, profane language, quarrellings, and wicked songs that are taking the place of psalms, canticles, and words of edification; but in spite of all I

can do, I cannot but see that hell is breaking loose upon us; and how far the ungodly will be permitted to triumph, only God knows!"

And he sighed, still holding the Constable's letter in his hand.

"They won't come near *you*, if you will keep a prudent tongue in your head," said Victorine —"though, by the way, that is about as wise a speech of mine as if I were to say to your earthenware mastiff, 'The birds won't hop on your back, if you will only bark.'—It will soon be known that you are under the Duke de Montpensier's protection, however."

Alas, poor Victorine! That very night her wakeful ear caught the sound of many feet approaching the door. Some one roughly knocked—she sat up—listened—the knocking continued.

"Bernard! Bernard!" cried she, in a low, energetic voice, "wake up, dear husband—the foe is at hand!"

"What is the matter?" cried he, hardly awake.

"There are men beneath the window, knocking at the door and calling on you to come forth. Rise, and fly for your life!"

"They may be friends," said he, hastily rising.

"Oh no, they curse and blaspheme."

"Nay, then, they cannot be," said Palissy—"I have no friends who curse and blaspheme."

A stone was flung against the window.

"Who's there?" cried Victorine, fearfully looking from the casement. "What do you want?"

"Let us in, and you will soon know! We want Bernard Palissy."

"My poor husband is sleeping, tired with his hard day's work."

"Don't tell lies, Victorine, even to save me," said Bernard.

"Hist! they are waiting—They think I am waking you—Slip down from Fleurette's window—I will let you down with a sheet—Stay! I will go and see if the coast is clear."

"Alas, no!" said she, returning in bitter

distress to Bernard, who was hurriedly taking a farewell kiss of his two little boys, clasped in each other's arms like the little Princes in the Tower, "there are men behind the house!—We are surrounded!"

"God's will be done, my wife! I have always looked for this hour. Let us pray. Then I will go down and meet them."

They knelt, and he composedly and energetically offered up a short extemporaneous prayer, his arm still round his wife. Then rising, and affectionately kissing her, he went noiselessly into the little chamber where Fleurette lay in profound sleep, with her head pillowed on her arm; softly kissed and blessed her, and then went down.

"Don't let them in," said she, weeping; "the door may resist them yet."

A violent assault on it from without nearly put it to the proof. The clumsy wooden bar, which had been carelessly laid across, fell, and left it only latched. Victorine put her arm through the staple.

"For the love of God, do not!" said Bernard, "they will break your arm in a moment!"

"They shall only take you away by force."

"Remember our Lord bidding Peter put up his sword," said Palissy; and tenderly, but firmly removing the loving barrier, he raised the latch and stood before his enemies.

"We arrest you in the king's name!" said the head of the party, collaring him.

"He has the Duke's safeguard!" shrieked Victorine.

"That is no safeguard from us. We are commissioned to carry him to Bourdeaux."

And the unresisting potter was hurried away through the dark night, with torches and lanterns, while his distracted wife vainly strained her eyes after him.

She did not care to bar the door when she at length closed it; but flung herself down and vented her strong, stormy grief in sobs and tears.

"Oh, Palissy! Palissy!" cried she, in her bitterness of heart, "I never knew what you were

till I lost you! Oh, good and noble husband, is not the God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee, even from these lions?"

In the morning, Marguerite Pierrot came to her in dismay, to tell her that Palissy's workshop in the town had been broken into, and all his pottery destroyed. Fleurette was clasping her mother's knees in speechless woe, like the youngest daughter of Niobe. She just raised her face, and hid it again in her mother's lap.

"Evil befall them!" cried Victorine, passionately. "Evil *will* befall them, soon or late, though we may not live to see it. Well might Bernard say a persecuting church could never be the right one!"

"Why, neighbour! are you going over to the Huguenots?"

"Maybe I am . . . this is not the way to make me adhere to the Catholics. Will they keep me and my orphans, think you? I know their tender mercies! I thought the Reformers made Saintes dull with their perpetual preaching and psalmody,

but see what a purgatory it has become since their old oppressors have regained the upper hand! Murder committed in the open streets! The very children playing at Catholic and Huguenot, calling, 'a fox, a fox!' and cursing one another in their games! Oh, Bernard, Bernard! best and dearest man that ever was! and you must feed with your living flesh the fire kindled by these demons!"

CHAPTER XIII.

MARGUERITE, who sincerely felt for her desolate neighbour, remained with her as long as she could, and looked in on her during the next three or four days; but during the greater part of that time the unhappy wife and children were completely left to themselves. No gaily feathered pages on curvetting steeds now drew their rein at the cottage door . . . the "worker in earth" seemed forgotten by high and low, except, indeed, by Master Gaspar, who sought out Victorine, and endeavoured to speak a few homely words of comfort to her. But the case was beyond him; he feared it was a bad one; he had

no good news to bring; and after bidding her hope where no hope was, he withdrew with a heavy heart.

Her spirit was deeply exercised: she looked on Bernard as already condemned and bound to the stake; she wept, prayed, for herself and for him. The expressions of lamentation and woe in the penitential Psalms were not too strong for her strong nature: she watered her bed with her tears; her beauty was consumed for very trouble because of her enemies; she groaned for the very disquietness of her heart; she gat unto the Lord right humbly, and acknowledged her sins; her bones were smitten asunder as with a sword.

One day, she was sitting in this forlorn case, her face buried in her hands, her lips moving, but uttering no sound, when a hand was laid on her shoulder. She started, and looked up: it was Bernard! She threw herself into his arms.

"Oh husband! dearest husband! you are free?"

"Yes, dear, free and safe. There are plenty

of other heretics to feed the fires, — only one potter who can undertake to decorate the Château d'Ecouen with enamel. I have the Constable's safeguard."

"Blessings, then, on the white enamel, after all!" cried she, smiling through her streaming tears.

"Say, rather, Blessings on the Lord God, who delivered me out of the fires."

She looked at him with a feeling of awe. There he stood, pale, composed, grave, majestic. The smell of the fire was not on him, but the martyr's halo might almost be seen about his head.

"Bernard, you are changed!"

"Am I, dear? I had hoped so short a captivity had made no difference."

"I don't mean that you are thinned or wasted. There is something grand about you—I feel—"

She paused.

"I have looked on death and heaven very closely," said he.

"There was a light shining on Moses's face

when he came down from talking with God," said Victorine.

"Ah, dearest, don't humble me by placing the poor potter beside the prophet!"

Just then a young girl came in from the well, beautiful, slender, colourless, drooping as the lily of the valley. She mechanically set down her pitcher; heaved a bursting sigh, slowly raised her large, languid eyes, shrieked, and the next moment was in her father's arms.

"Come," said he, unable any longer to keep dry eyes, "this is a wet welcome. What though they won't ring the bells for me, and let off fire-works, and send a deputation headed by the mayor, nor even an address to be read by the town-clerk,—shall we not make merry, for all that? Put on your green gown, Victorine, and your gold ear-rings, and go triumphantly into the town, and buy manchet-bread, crabs, lobsters, everything that's good, and bid all our neighbours to the feast!"

She smiled, but shook her head.

"I am too greedy of my happiness," she said; "let us share it all among ourselves. They shunned me in my sorrow; why should they intermeddle with our joy!"

"Well, but at least good Master Gaspar, and Marguerite Pierrot. Where are Nicholas and Mathurin? I long to see the chubby little rogues. And I am hungry, as hungry as a wolf,—for I have ridden far and fast. I shall swallow Fleurette at a snap, unless you get me something to eat. So, bestir yourselves, dear women; throw billets on the fire, and provide good cheer. See, here is a purse of gold! I had forgotten it. Now, I will just run down to Master Gaspar, exchange a cordial word with him, and bring back a jug of his best wine; and then we will eat, drink, and be merry; for he whom you gave over for lost is found."

"Ah, Bernard, there is something you will be sorry to hear—your workshop is destroyed, and all your pottery broken."

"The rogues! Had not the Count de la

Rochefoucault issued a mandate that no one was to injure or approach my premises? Never mind—I am off to Ecouen. The Sire de Pons stood my friend in face of the dean and chapter of Saintes, and sent word of my danger in hot haste to the Constable, who immediatnly petitioned the queen mother, who instantly procured an edict in the king's name, removing me from the jurisdiction of Bourdeaux, and appointing me inventor of rustic figures to the King and Constable."

"Why, Palissy, what a great man you have become, for all these royal and noble personages thus to bestir themselves for you!"

"It was well they made haste," replied he, "or all would have been over with me. My doom was to have been hot and quick, but they arrested it."

"Thank God!" said Fleurette, drawing a deep breath.

"*Let us,*" said her father—"we asked His help in time of trouble—let us return thanks

that it has been accorded." And they did; and their little feast was none the less merry afterwards. The boys were summoned from school: Jean Pierrot and his wife were bidden to the supper, which Master Gaspar insisted on providing. Of course, therefore, the cheer was good; and they glorified God in their hearts and were thankful.

In the night, however, Bernard was awakened by his wife's choking sobs.

"Victorine! my life! what ails you?"

"Oh, Bernard! my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? I fear I have hitherto been all wrong —and that you, all along, have been right. . . ."

"*Fear* that I have been in the right, Victorine?"

"Nay, Bernard, I did not mean that—I hardly know what to say, I am so tossed and bewildered. All that you have ever said to me, and that I have heard with an inattentive, indifferent, and mocking heart, seems to come back to my mind in a flash: and oh, how grand,

how convincing, how touching it is! It must be truth. Oh! what shall I do?"

"Believe in thine heart unto righteousness, and thou shalt be saved," returned he, deeply moved. "My dearest, sweetest success has, then, come last! I would have died to secure it. And yet I live,—live surrounded by accumulated blessings; and henceforth there is one heart, one soul, one faith between us! . . . . The king may wear his weary crown, Victorine! He would be glad to be as happy as poor Palissy, the potter!"

FINIS.

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