

Port's' Queen.

THE SISTER OF CHARITY.

The following exquisite lines are from the pen of the gifted Irish poet and writer, Gerald Griffin:—

She once was a lady of honour and wealth,
Bright glowed in her features the roses of health;
Her vesture was blended of silk and of gold,
And her motion shook perfume from every fold;
Joy revelled around her—love shone at her side,
And gay was her smile as the glance of a bride;
And light was her step in the mirth-sounding hall,
When she heard of the daughters of Vincent de Paul.

She felt in her spirit the summons of grace,
That told her to live for the suffering race;
And, heedless of pleasure, of comfort, of home,
Rose quickly, like Mary, and answered, "I come."
She put from her person the trappings of pride,
And passed from her home with the joy of a bride,
Nor wept at the threshold as onward she moved—
For her heart was on fire in the cause it approved.

Lost ever to fashion—to vanity lost,
That beauty that once was the libertine's toast—
No more in the ball-room that figure we meet,
But gliding at once to the wretch's retreat.
Forgot in the halls is that high-sounding name,
For the Sister of Charity blushes at fame:
Forgot are the claims of her riches and birth,
For she barters for heaven the glory of earth.

Those feet that to music could gracefully move,
Now bear her alone on the mission of love;
Those hands that once dangled the perfume and gem
Are tending the helpless or lifted for them;
That voice that once echoed the song of the vain,
Now whispers relief to the bosom of pain;
And the hair that was shining with diamond and pearl
Is wet with the tears of the penitent girl.

Her down-bed a pallet—her trinket a bead—
Her lustre, one taper that serves her to read—
Her sculpture, the crucifix nailed by her bed;
Her paintings, one print of the thorn-crown'd head;
Her cushion, the pavement that wearies her knees,
Her music, the psalm, or the sigh of disease;
The delicate lives mortified there,
And the feast is forsaken for fasting and prayer.

Yet not to the service of heart and of mind
Are the cares of that heaven-minded virgin confined:
Like him whom she loves, to the mansions of grief,
She hastes with the tidings of joy and relief.
She strengthens the weary—she comforts the weak,
And soft is her voice in the ear of the sick;
Where want and affliction on mortals attend,
The Sister of Charity there is a friend.

Unshrinking where pestilence scatters his breath,
Like an angel she moves 'mid the vapours of death;
Where rings the long musket and flashes the sword,
Unfearing she walks, for she follows her Lord,
How sweetly she bends o'er each plague-tainted face,
With looks that are lighted with holiest grace;
How kindly she dresses each suffering limb,
For she sees in the wounded the image of Him.

Behold her, ye worldly!—behold her, ye vain,
Who shrink from the pathway of virtue and pain;
Who yield up to pleasure your nights and your days,
Forgetful of service, forgetful of praise.
Ye lazy philosophers, self-seeking men—
Ye fireside philanthropists, great at the pen,
How stands in the balance your eloquence weigh'd
With the life and the deeds of that high-born maid?

S U E M A,

OR

THE LITTLE AFRICAN SLAVE WHO WAS BURIED ALIVE.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

THE first two or three days of our journey passed very pleasantly. The change of air and scene sharpened my appetite, and I found more means of satisfying it than I had lately done at home. I liked walking naturally; and happily, what I had to carry was not at all heavy. But it was otherwise with my poor mother. The first day, carrying the elephant's tusk, she marched at the head of the column; when the second day came, she was second; but on the third she could only follow at the tail of the caravan, and that with the utmost difficulty. At every pause she laid down her heavy burden; while her struggles for breath betrayed her intense fatigue, and each step showed the superhuman efforts she had to make to keep up at all. All these sufferings, which I saw, but could not relieve, were so many stabs in my poor childish heart. The following days the caravan, by some mistake, left the bed of the river, which we had followed until then, and in consequence we all suffered the torments of insupportable thirst. My poor mother, exhausted with fatigue, and sinking under the weight of her load, fell several times. At last, the head of the caravan, seeing that she was really incap-

able of carrying her heavy burden any longer, desired a slave to take the elephant's tusk in her place. I was consoled and even surprised at seeing an Arab showing such sentiments of humanity. But, O cruel deception! what was my agony when, on arriving in the evening at our camping-ground, I heard the following barbarous order given to the slave to whom the distribution of the meals of the prisoners was intrusted: 'Suema's mother is useless; she must have no farther rations!' What words were these to a child passionately devoted to her mother! I managed, however, by dissimulating as well as I could, to share my own portion of food with my poor mother. But, unhappily, the Arab monster, who was watching me, saw my little device, and had me flogged for it till the blood came. A fresh order was instantly issued that my ration was only to be given to me in presence of the master, and that I was to be put under strict surveillance. So the whole of the next day my good and patient mother had nothing to eat but a few grasshoppers, some leaves of the mtama, and a little red earth. Think what this was to me, her child! When night came, I could not eat. The food seemed to choke me, and I was ashamed to touch the good and wholesome meal put before me. How was it possible for a child with any kind of affection to see her mother dying of hunger, and yet have the courage to eat herself? However, this natural feeling of filial tenderness was so misunderstood by my cruel master, that he ordered me to be again severely beaten; and finally I was compelled to swallow the food wet with my tears, without having the consolation of being able to share a crumb of it with my poor mother. The next day, to make matters worse, the caravan came upon a vast tract of country which had been set on fire, and to such an extent that nothing was to be seen for miles but blackened sand; not a blade of grass, not an insect, not a bird remained on that vast plain; nothing but earth carbonised by the conflagration. It was, therefore, impossible for my poor mother to obtain any kind of food. There was not even the red earth with which she might cheat her hunger. Several times during that terrible day I saw her fall to the ground, entirely exhausted; and it was only by incredible efforts that she at last reached our evening encampment.

When the hour came for the distribution of the rations, the brutal voice of my master again fell on my ear, with these horrible words: 'Drive that old woman away from the camp, and see that no one gives her anything to eat. Whoever disobeys this order shall be most severely punished.' In a few minutes he added, 'To-morrow, if Allah pleases, we shall be quit of her. This is her last march, I hope, for she is quite done for.' A brutal laugh accompanied these words, and gave them a significance which I but too well understood.

How can I express to you the impotent fury which I felt at the monster who had thus signed the death-warrant of the only person I loved passionately on earth—my dear good mother, who loved me with such tenderness as to have sacrificed all rather than separate herself from me? I cannot describe what passed through my mind at that moment; rage, sorrow, torture, despair, are strong words, and yet they but feebly express what I suffered. Even the recollection of them at this hour makes me shudder.

That night we camped out in the open air. The fire in the savannah had destroyed all the bushes as well as all the fodder; but I took advantage of this lucky accident to try and rejoin my poor mother.

When I thought ever one was fast asleep, I crept like a snake out of the camp. The darkness of the night and of the plain, and the colour of my own skin, favoured my flight. I must own, however, that when I found myself about a hundred yards from the camp, I was seized with a nameless terror. I was not used to walking alone on a pitch-dark night, and my feet seemed rooted to the ground with fright. But my strong love for my mother overcame my fears, and I cried out, 'What cannot a child do for a much-loved parent? Would it not be better for me to die with her than to survive her?' These thoughts gave me courage, and I began walking back as fast as I could in the direction which the caravan had taken the day before. I held my breath, listening with all my ears, so that not a sound should escape me. Very soon I heard a low groan in my poor mother's voice, which pointed out to me the place where she lay. I began to run as fast as I could, and cried out from as far off as possible, 'Mamma, mamma, be comforted! Your child is coming to help you!'

She heard these words, and gave vent to sighs of love and tenderness. When at last I reached her, she threw her poor wasted arms round me, clasped me to her heart, and letting my head rest on her breast, I felt her hot tears raining down on my face and hair. She nursed me in this way for a long time, as she used to nurse my little brother, sobbing and singing in a low voice, as at a funeral, the following touching words:

'Suema, my darling, why did you not die with your little sisters? Then, at least, I should have had your grave—a consolation which no one could rob me of. Happy is the mother who can die weeping over the tombs of her children! The graves of your brothers and sisters are far away, and you are about to be separated from me for ever. While I, miserable woman that I am! I have neither the strength to follow you, nor that of being able to return to the dear remains of those I have loved and lost in our old home. And you, my poor unhappy child, where are you going to? Alas, death is less bitter than slavery! Who, henceforth, will comb and dress your beautiful hair? Who will wash and care for you? The cold dew of the morning and the rains of the bad season moisten the sad face of the orphan; but tears alone are the heritage of the slave. The damp earth is her mother, and her only home is the grave, the sole spot where her bruised and wounded body can find rest.'

Thus sang and sobbed my poor mother, according to the custom of our country at funerals. And I—you can fancy how full my heart was—I did not cry, because I felt, as it were, choked with sorrow. My head and my throat burned like coals of fire, and at