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NATHALIE;

A TALE.

BY

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A creature not too pure or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.
WORDSWORTH.

NATHALIE.

CHAPTER I.

ARTISTS have the privilege of forgetfulness, and Mademoiselle Amanda was, to use her own expression, "oblivious."

Thus, though she saw Nathalie on the following morning, and spoke for a full half-hour on various subjects connected with her art and the dulness of the château, she wholly forgot to deliver the message of the Canoness; through which piece of obliviousness the blossoms of the Azelia bloomed, withered, and fell unseen by Nathalie.

No sooner did the young girl come down to the drawing-room, than Madame Marceau declared she looked pale and unwell. "It was the dulness and seclusion of her existence was the cause of this. She wanted change. Why not go and spend the day, the whole day, with her sister?"

Nathalie declined; but the lady was importunate: she yielded. In another half-hour she was standing in the quiet court at the door of Madame Lavigne's dwelling. The place looked even more silent and lonely than usual in this soft April morning, — grey, humid, free from sunshine, but calm and mild, with the last lingering chillness of winter melting away before the genial breath of spring.

Rose was sitting alone. She greeted her sister quietly, but with a long earnest look she had often fastened on her of late. Nathalie shunned her glance, and took up the other end of the sheet Rose was hemming. But her portion of the task soon lay neglected on her lap; she reclined back in her chair, one hand supporting her cheek, her head slightly averted, her look fixed on the old tower opposite; she looked pale and thoughtful.

"What is the matter with you?" suddenly asked Rose.

"It is the weather," slowly replied Nathalie, bending once more over her work. "I feel dreamy. There is in this cloudy sky, in this humid atmosphere, in this fine rain that scarcely moistens the earth on which it softly falls, in the mildness of the air, telling us spring has returned, something which quite unnerves my southern nature. I feel subdued, passive, and like one in a dream, but without the wish to waken; everything looks vague and scarcely real; thoughts come and lead me on I know not whither, nor how. If I were walking in the garden now, I should go on without caring to stop; but sitting as I am here, looking at that old tower, and watching those cawing rooks, I feel as if I could remain thus all day long."

"You were not thus when you first went to Sainville!" ejaculated Rose.

"Perhaps not. I lived with children at Mademoiselle Dantin's; but it now seems as if I had passed the boundary of real life. I remember that time as something years ago, — far away in the past."

"Your life is too dull," returned Rose, anxiously.

"I do not find it so. I am getting a nun, like you,