

dress; 'the charge of five centimes is for the glass pot that contained the confitures.'

" 'A thousand pardons! forgive my stupidity!' I replied; and I bethought me of the story of the king of France and the dish of partridges."

"What is the story?" asked the curé.

"A king of France," I answered, "having much relished some stewed partridges, said to one of his people in attendance, 'Give that dish to Pierron, the fool.' Joyfully did the fool stretch to receive it, and, examining the gold dish with glee, exclaimed, 'What a beautiful platter! It is all gold! Thanks, Monseigneur, for your royal gift! But the stewed partridges—may I have the stewed partridges also?'"

"The anecdote is apposite," said the curé laughing; "though it is to be hoped that the circumstances are reversed in this instance, and that the preserve was worth more than the pot."

A majestic old lady, in truth, was the Reverend Mother. Barely five feet high, she

must have been nearly as much in diameter ; and she engulfed immense quantities of snuff as she told us how heaven had favoured her since she had run away from the house of her father, who objected to her taking the veil (this I thought a questionable piece of morality) ; and how, from the slim girl she was then, she had grown and grown while residing in Gascony and drinking Bordeaux wine. She expressed admiration of our large family ; said that such were always blessed of heaven ; and was most anxious to induce some of our daughters to remain with her.

“ But, Madame ! ” I exclaimed, “ if heaven approves large families, surely you would not counteract its possible designs by putting my daughters out of the way of fulfilling them—

“ What’s killing offspring, whether few or many,  
To cutting off one’s chance of having any ? ”

“ You think me silenced by your argument ! ” she cried triumphantly. “ Know that I have many more children than you. This order of *religieuses*, it is I who founded it ; and it already numbers more than four hundred and fifty members in France.”

This was true: and the institution itself appeared to be an useful one. Although the Reverend Mother boasted herself to be of a gentleman's family, most of the sisters appeared to have been taken from the lower orders. In peace and piety, they devoted themselves to the instruction of poor children, while they cultivated little farms around the several houses they had established in many neighbourhoods of poverty and ignorance. Thus the vineyard around the convent was dug and cultivated by the sisters; the cows were watched and tended by them as they industriously knitted or turned the spindle; and the acacia poles (cut down to serve as props to support the vines) were peeled by them of their rind for no other reason that they were aware of, they told me, than that the Reverend Mother had ordered them to do so. I learned, however, from their labourer that, when thus peeled, they lasted much longer in the ground.

I am afraid that we all rejoiced to leave the convent; and to take possession of an entire villa in what was considered a beautiful garden in this same commune of Talence. The

proprietor had been secretary to the Horticultural Society of Bordeaux ; and the garden showed ample evidence to his love of flowers. It had greenhouses stocked with plants and with orange-trees in pots, that were carried out into the open air in summer. Straight rows of beech trees diverged from the front of the house, and these, being intersected by high hedges clipped and trimmed, gave us walks sheltered and shaded as much as the winter sun or the winds of that mild climate made requisite.

The climate of Bordeaux seems, in truth, to be a very mild one. Of winter, we had none. No high mountains are near to chill the air with their snowy mantles or intercept the salt breezes of the Bay of Biscay. The whole country about us was a dead flat:—beautiful to the eyes of the landowners, because it produced some of the best wines of the province; but the scenery of which was uninteresting to any but an agriculturalist—or a musician. I say a musician, because such an one only could enjoy the hoarse concert which made the whole air vocal from sunset till dark. The

Talence nightingales, as I somewhat annoyed the natives by calling them, then opened their mouths ; and the croaking that arose from pools and ditches, invisible by day, was so widespread, that it really sounded like muffled drums or the tramp of distant cavalry.

The cultivation of the vineyards is a most laborious and scientific work. The vines are not swung from tree to tree as in some parts of Italy ; nor are they left to trail on the earth, like weak gooseberry bushes, as in Provence : they are planted in rows and tied to poles, such as we had seen the good nuns peel “ because reverend mother ordered them to do so”. The earth between the rows is carefully dug with pronged forks two or three times during the summer, and mould is drawn round the roots : at the first digging, young plants are set in to replace those that have died, and manure is carefully laid at the foot of each. Twice are they pruned : and in such a manner as not to anticipate that of future years while preparing for the crop of the ensuing summer. The facility of doing this, in fact, prevents prudent proprietors of vine-