

## Chapter Two

But joy was soon turned into sorrow. After a few weeks, Therese became so ill that it seemed as if God were going to ask for her back again. No efforts were spared to restore her to health, but human remedies were useless, and even the fervent prayers of her heart-broken mother were for a long time unavailing. The doctor had given up all hope of saving her life, when suddenly, as if by a miracle, Therese began to grow better, and was soon well enough to be taken into the country, to the little village of Semalle, a few miles from Alencon.

The worthy peasant family to whose care she was confided consisted of the father, "Daddy Moses," the mother, and four children. The mother's name was Rose, but she was generally called "Little Rose," because she was so small.

The baby rapidly grew strong in the bracing country air. She spent the whole day out of doors. When her foster-mother was going to work in the fields, she would take Therese with her, snugly tucked into a wheelbarrow filled with hay. If it was time to milk the cow, she would set off with Therese in her apron, and then, as she needed both hands to work, she would tie her charge securely on the cow's back!

This cow was a splendid animal, white with reddish markings, and therefore called "Carrots." One of these marks was on the tip of her right ear, and made her look quite saucy, especially when she held her head erect, as she did when Therese went for a ride on her back.

These rides would seem to have brought good results to the cow, for later, when a disease broke out among the cattle, carrying off so many that the villagers were almost ruined, "Carrots" remained unharmed, to the great joy of Daddy Moses and his family.

Meanwhile Baby Therese was growing more and more attractive. She was always laughing, and her little face was framed in the prettiest golden curls. All the village children loved her, and they used often to dance round her in a ring, singing rhymes and kissing her in turns.

There was one boy of eleven who did not content himself with looking at her: he used to take her in his arms and lift her up to receive the homage of her little courtiers. That boy is now a priest.

Once when the children were playing in this way, the old curé of the village came up. He gazed long and earnestly at Therese, gave her his blessing, praying that she might one day be like her glorious patroness, the great St. Teresa.

Then he began to speak to the children about the family of little Therese, about her parents, and her grandfather Martin, an officer in the French army, who had been decorated by Charles X for distinguished services to his country.

He went on to tell them stories of Madame Martin's family, the Guérins, who had helped and sheltered priests during the persecution which followed the Revolution in France. The grandfather of Therese was then only a child of three or four, but he had taken part in the troubles of those sad times. On one occasion, the little fellow was actually sitting on a trough in which his uncle, a priest, was hiding from the Revolutionary soldiers; but her

spread out his toys so solemnly, and seemed so engrossed in them, that the searchers did not even think it worthwhile to get him down. He used also to accompany his uncle when the latter went round the countryside visiting the people, and the child's presence disarmed all suspicion as to the identity of the good priest, who was disguised as a peasant.

But to return to our story.

Monsieur and Madame Martin often went out to Semalle to see their baby daughter. The elder girls, who were at school at the Visitation convent of Le Mans, where their aunt was a nun, were not so fortunate. They were all the more delighted, therefore, when during the holidays they could make a visit to "Little Rose's" cottage, the object of their walks.

There was still greater rejoicing when, on March 11, 1874, Therese came home. She was then fourteen months old, and was beginning to toddle alone, and to prattle incessantly in baby language. The whole household welcomed the child, who was to gladden their lives by the charm of her sunny temper and affectionate heart.