

If the present mode of governing is continued much longer the people will certainly rebel, and then some change must be made. We hope that this change will be from private control to national control. Then undoubtedly, our beautiful land will be blessed with better prosperity, more honesty, more peace, and more goodwill.

M. C.

“PICCIOLA.”

Joseph Xavier Boniface, the author of this classic, was born in Paris, July 10, 1798, and died there January 21, 1865. While pursuing his studies, he often won academical prizes for his poetry, and in 1837 received a prize of three thousand francs for the delightful story of *Picciola*, which has been translated into many languages. He has written many other stories and novels, and one hundred dramas in conjunction with other dramatists.

“*Picciola*” is neither a novel nor a drama, but a record of facts. Its connection with the history of Napoleon I. adds to its charm, and increases the interest of the reader. The time of the story is the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the ambitious Bonaparte has ascended the throne of France. The scene is laid within the walls of a fortress situated among the mountains between Italy and Switzerland.

In the dedication, the author makes an apology for the simplicity of his story, “which,” he says, “is simple, so simple that perhaps never did pen broach so limited a subject.” This statement gives a good idea of the style of the book. The language is not figurative, and is smooth, pure, and clear. The writer excels in the description of scenery as well as in the portrayal of character. His description of the fortress, *Fenestrella*, is so vivid that were one to view it while traveling through these mountains, he would surely recognize it as the one described in “*Picciola*.”

The hero, Count Charney, is a man of superior mind and studious habits, surrounded by all that wealth can give, but still he does not enjoy life. He is unhappy, for as he advances in his studies, he becomes discouraged in his fruitless search for truth, and, thinking politics a surer basis of success, turns to that. Again becoming disheartened, he pursues the study of metaphysics. But “Truth, ever flying at his approach, vanished even under his step, and mockingly seemed to flicker before his eyes like a will-o'-the-wisp, which allures only to mislead.” The result is that he denies the existence of a Divine Being, and makes chance his only god. He again en-

ters the political arena, and finally joins a conspiracy against Napoleon I., for which he is cast into prison.

Our book is an exception to the general class of books, for its principal heroine is not an admirable woman, but a simple flower. One day as the Count is walking in the prison court-yard he perceives a tender little plant pushing its way up between the stones of the pavement. He follows closely its growth, and each day it shows him how Nature has provided for its wants. On returning to his cell one evening, he glances at the sentence, “Chance is blind, and is the sole author of creation,” which he has inscribed upon the wall a few months before, and writes under it, “Perhaps.”

“*Picciola*,” the little plant that has soothed his weariness, and “lent a charm to the existence it is destined to preserve,” has taught the skeptic to know men; it has reconciled him to them; it has led him to see that this world is one of intelligent creation, and that above all is a powerful God, our Creator.

The change commenced by “*Picciola*,” the flower, is completed by “*Picciola*,” the maiden. Often Count Charney sits by his plant, and dreams of his past life. During one of the reveries, he sees a young, modest, and graceful girl approach him, and as he is about to speak to her he awakens. Glancing up, he sees a form at the grating, and recognizes the *Picciola* of his dream. This young girl is the daughter of his fellow prisoner, Girhardi. It is through her effort that the Count's petition for the preservation of his flower is granted. After she obtains her father's release, her efforts in Charney's behalf do not cease until the prison doors are opened to him. As the Count leaves the fortress, we wonder how he will spend the remainder of his life. How delighted we are when we read that the one who brightened the hours of captivity is the brightest star in his home at La Colline, near Turin.

“*Picciola*” forces on us the thought, how little we appreciate the beautiful things God has placed about us. How true it is! We see the beauty in nature around us, and if we would only study it, how much better we should enjoy life. What good advice Charles Kingsley gives us in these few lines: “Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful,—welcome it in every fair face, every fair sky, every fair flower, and thank Him for it who is the fountain of all loveliness, and drink it simply and earnestly with all your eyes; it is a charmed draught, a cup of blessing.”

L. G. M.