

THE  
ROSE-BUD.

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BY CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

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1829.

I don't know how many years  
 since I planted the first tree  
 which I was told to do  
 honest work, which is the  
 right and so important to the world  
 that we scarcely know what it is  
 into it learn for his sake  
 a for his sake. It is then a  
 God's work. It is the work  
 that the world needs. The world  
 teach us. But the best of all  
 and now to hear, is that of a  
 and his. A teacher is the  
 I don't know how many years  
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SIT down, Louisa, under this pleasant shade; and listen to the story which I am about to tell you. The honeysuckle, while it defends us from the sun's rays, is so beautiful to the sight, and so fragrant to the smell, that we scarcely know whether to admire it more for its loveliness or prize it for its use. It is thus with most of God's works, if we would but lay to heart the sweet lessons that they can teach us. But the history which you are now to hear, is not of a honeysuckle. A rosebud is the theme.

I don't know how many years it is since I planted the slip from a very

fine tree, growing in a friend's garden. It was a rich deep red, or rather crimson, damask rose. The petals were soft as velvet, with a most delicate gloss: in short, the flower was so exceedingly beautiful, that I could not rest until I had, as I thought, secured such a tree to myself. I took off the slip in autumn, and placed it under shelter during the winter. Early in spring, I found that it had become strongly rooted, and then I transplanted it to the most favourite spot in my garden, taking up several valuable shrubs to make room for my rose, my precious rose-bush!

Many and frequent were my visits to the spot; and the little plant flourished to my satisfaction. Leaf after leaf came peeping forth and unfolding its soft green upon the slender shoots. At last, to my very great joy I was able to distinguish amongst them a little hard knot, which I knew

would produce a bud—there was but one: and if there had been no other rose-bud in the kingdom, I could scarcely have treasured it more proudly, or set a higher value upon it.

I know what makes my little girl smile: my lecture yesterday on the folly and danger of giving our hearts to earthly objects, seems to have been rather different from my practice in this instance. But I told you it was many years ago; and experience has since, taught me what I shall be very glad to see you learning in earlier life, my Louisa.

Well—the bud grew: and what with fine weather and my tender care of it, there seemed to be every prospect of its becoming as grand a rose as any in my friend's garden. My impatience to see it unfold its beautiful leaves was very great; and I well remember the joy with which I first discovered a little blush of red in

the centre of its soft green covering. If I had watched as anxiously for the budding of divine grace in my own soul, what happiness I might have enjoyed! but my heart was then set upon earthly things; and I grasped at the gifts of God, in creation and providence, without ever asking myself what fruit He expected in me. Had my rose-bush put forth neither leaves nor blossoms, I should have flung it away, and made choice of another: but though I was myself as a dead plant in the garden of the visible church, I never reflected how justly the same sentence might have passed upon me.

It was now the beginning of June: on every side the sweetest flowers were opening, and their charming colours invited my eye. Delicate pinks and bright carnations; rich double wall-flowers, and purple stocks; tall fair lillies, and superb convolvulus,

with the star-like jasmine, and honeysuckle as bright as that over our heads, all put forth their sweets in vain. The humble mignonette threw its delightful breath around my path, and the cheerful-looking little hearts-ease spread out a bordering carpet of blue and gold. Nay, even a moss blush rose was in full beauty, close beside; but all were disregarded; while I waited with fretful anxiety to see my expected damask flower expand, and reign king over the garden.

Alas, poor foolish, thankless mortals! How heedlessly we pass by a thousand blessings which our God scatters about us, on the right hand and on the left, while our eyes and our hearts, our longings and our hopes are fixed on some one perishing toy which His wisdom sees good to withhold from us!

Still, all eager for the welfare of my damask rose, I took up, and threw a-

way whatever root grew too near it. Some which I had planted the year before, and which would not flower till this their second summer, I now regarded as quite worthless, compared with the important rose; and I tore up their tender fibres, either tossing them quite out of the garden, or carelessly putting them in some distant bed. Some magnificent tiger lillies, in particular, were thus destroyed, lest their lofty heads should come between the sun-beams and my rose—my precious damask rose-bud!

You smile, Louisa; and at this moment so do I at the recollection of my childish folly: but if we considered it rightly, we should find in it rather a matter for lamentation. The time so lost upon one trivial object, never can be recalled: the diligence bestowed upon it was robbery of Him whose we are, and whom we ought to serve. I do not mean that we may



not, even with profit to ourselves, enjoy the sweets of His creative bounty, in the lovely works that surround us here, in a garden: but in all cases we must use the world as not abusing it: and inordinate affection is always a sort of idolatry, highly displeasing in the sight of God. Besides, in thus extravagantly prizing one possession, we are guilty of despising others: and the destruction of my tiger lillies was but a type of that unjust love of novelty, which discards old friends for new; and neglects a present privilege while looking forward to one still distant and uncertain.

But listen to the end of my story. The bud swelled to its full size; and for several evenings I expected that the following morning would shew it expanded into a bright round flower. It still remained the same, excepting that a sickly yellowish cast stole over the green leaves that enfolded it; and

it became contracted a little on one side. The rich crimson of its head grew pale; it was soft to the touch, and all my unwillingness to believe it could not hide the truth that my hopes would be blighted. At last it hung down, so shrivelled and dried up, that I could no longer doubt its fate. I plucked it from the stem, and broke it open. The canker was within; and my damask rose-bud was scattered to the winds in fragments.

This lesson, Louisa, was not much heeded at the time: I thought but of the loss, not of the gain that it might be to me: but I have since very often thought of my damask rose-bud, and found much to meditate upon.

The canker is a disease which takes hold of the flower at a very early period, but does not shew itself until it has eaten away the principle of life in the bud. How often does secret discontent, a bad temper, or an evil in-

clination, prey upon the beauty of the Christian character, destroy its promise in this life, and perhaps devour its hope for the life to come! I watch you closely, my dear child, with feelings of far deeper interest than those with which I watched my rosebud; for I desire to present you to the Lord, without spot or blemish, and there are many dangers both without and within, to keep my anxiety awake. Satan, as a raging lion, would break in and trample you down, if not fenced around by Him who is able to keep all that we commit unto Him. When I see you surrounded by prosperity, smiling in thoughtless joy, and with no trouble to cloud your mind, I sometimes tremble lest such summer rays should scorch my bud. For in seasons of great ease, the heart is often lifted up, and forgets its God. When sickness, or the little disappointments that even childhood must

know, make you fretful, I fear that you should be blown from the safe shelter, where I would have you always lying still, at the Saviour's feet. The friendship of the world, and its pleasures, are like insects that creep over the leaf, secretly devouring, and defiling where they pass. Ingratitude is a blight, and pride is a canker that lies deep—so deep as often not to be seen by the eye of man—and works at the very life of the soul.

There was once a perfect flower on earth; an undefiled one, which, exposed to every enemy that could possibly rise up against us, conquered them all by suffering their rage, and then went to bloom for ever in a most glorious place. "The Rose of Sharon" was the name of this bright flower; "a plant of renown." He grew up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." Isaiah liii. 2. For His mortal birth was ob-

scure, and His dwelling was in the habitations of poverty. The world smiled not upon Him—it said, “He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him,” for in the beauty of holiness, the world sees nothing desirable; and though “praise is comely for the upright,” a crooked and perverse generation call it weariness. This Rose of Sharon drooped under many a storm, and was wounded and torn by those whom He came to enlighten and to bless. The thorns were about His head, and their points were turned in to pierce Him, that we might escape torment. Such little helpless buds as my Louisa, cannot study too often the history of the Rose, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they must be like upon earth, if they would blossom in the heavenly garden, where all His glories and beauties are now expanded. We cannot

love *Him* too much : we cannot rise too early to seek after *Him*, nor visit *Him* too often in prayer and praise. We cannot be too anxious to root up every thing that would prevent *His* spreading in our hearts ; nor ought we to rest till *He* reigns there in every affection, pleasure, and hope. Many beautiful things surround us, for which we are bound to return continual thanks to *God* ; but *He* is “ a chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” More welcome than the snow-drop, *He* appears in the wintry season of sorrow, to tell us that there is yet life in the world, and brighter days will come. More sweet than the violet, *He* invites us to search for *Him* in retirement, and overpays us a thousand fold by *His* beauty and fragrance. More pure than the lily of the valley, *He* is found among lowly shrubs ; and if the rich and great receive *Him* *He* shews the loveliness of

humility, and puts pride to shame. More fruitful than the vine, He overspreads the land that owns Him with rich clusters; and says to His branches, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Nay, He is more precious than the tree of life in paradise, for to Him no flaming sword forbids the approach: but in the voice of tenderest invitation, He bids us draw nigh, and proclaims, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Childhood, like a budding rose,  
 In the world's wide garden grows;  
 But how often hateful sin,  
 Like a canker dwells within;  
 All unseen by mortal eyes,  
 While the Rose-bud droops and dies.

Men behold the outward deed,  
 God the inward thought can read:

From our God we cannot hide,  
Envy, anger, secret pride,  
Clear as in the noon-day sun,  
God can read them every one.

To the Saviour let us pray—  
Lord, these cankers take away!  
Let thy Spirit dwell within,  
Guarding us from every sin,  
'Till, gathered by thy tender hand,  
All thy buds in heaven expand.

THE END