

"De Courcy had made all his arrangements on the preceding night, and immediately after his painful interview with your mother, he quitted Paris forever. A letter was left, addressed to her, which too plainly betrayed the disordered state of his mind, and touchingly revealed the strength of his affection, and the bitterness of his disappointment, robbed, as he believed, of her love; he forbore to reproach her, but the world had no longer anything to attach him, and he resolved to bury himself in some religious retirement, which the vain passions of life could never penetrate.

"I will pass over the agonizing scenes, the months of wretchedness which succeeded this separation, and the sudden dissolution of the most sacred and endearing ties. All attempts to discover De Courcy's retreat were unavailing, but it was long before your mother could resign the delusive hope that he would still return to her. She was persuaded to leave Paris, and return to her early home; but there every object reminded her of happier days, and only increased her melancholy. Your birth was the only event which reconciled her to life; but her health was so much impaired by mental suffering, that we scarcely dared hope, she would be long spared to you. Her medical attendant advised change of air and scene, and I accompanied her to a convent on the borders of the Pyrenees, where she had passed some happy years in early childhood; and she earnestly desired to spend her remaining days within its peaceful walls.

"The good nuns welcomed her to their humble retreat, which was in the midst of a wild and romantic solitude, and with unwearied kindness they sought to alleviate the sufferings of disease. For three months, I watched with them, unceasingly beside her; a heavenly resignation smoothed the bed of sickness, and the ministrations of religion soothed her wearied spirit, which was gently loosed from earth, and prepared for its upward flight. You were the last tie that bound her to a world, which she had found so bankrupt in its promises; but even you, she learned to resign, with sweet serenity, and truly christian submission, to her heavenly Father's will. As the moment of her departure approached, she desired to receive the last offices of religion, and a messenger was sent to a neighbouring monastery of Jesuits, to request the attendance of a priest. One of the brotherhood soon after entered the little cell, and the nuns who were chanting around her bed, retired at his approach. "I remained near her unobserved, for I feared she would not live through the last confession of her blameless life. A dim lamp, from which she

was carefully screened, shed a sickly gleam through the apartment, and even in the deep stillness of that solemn hour, the low and labored whispers of her voice, scarcely reached my ear. Presently I was startled by a suppressed but fervent exclamation, uttered by the monk, followed by a faint cry from your mother's lips. I flew to the bed—she had raised herself from the pillow, —her arms were extended as if in the act of supplication, and a celestial glow irradiated her dying features. The priest stood, as one transfixed;—his cowl was thrown back, and, judge of my sensations, when I recognized the countenance of De Courcy!"

"My father!" exclaimed Lucie, "that priest—" "Wait, and you shall know all," interrupted Madame la Tour; "that priest was indeed your father; he had taken the vows of a rigid order, and Providence guided him to the death-bed of your mother. I pass over the scene which followed—it is too hallowed for description. Suffice it is to say, the confession of her dying lips, convinced him of her entire innocence, and devoted affection to himself, and her last sufferings were soothed by mutual reconciliation and forgiveness. Your father, with an agonized heart, closed her eyes, and pressing her for a moment to his heart, rushed almost frantic from the convent.

On the following day, my father sought De Courcy at the monastery, hoping to draw him back to the world, by the touching claims of parental love. But he had already left the place, never to return, and the superior had sworn to conceal his new abode from every human being. Years passed on, and every effort to find him had proved unavailing, and by all who had felt an interest in him, he was supposed to be numbered with the dead.

"But your father still lived, Lucie, and the recollection of his injured wife, and the grievous wrong he had inflicted on her, forever haunted him; her young life, blighted by his unjust suspicions, and her untimely death, weighed heavily on his conscience, and he sought to expiate his crime by a life of austerity, and the most constant and painful acts of self-denial and devotion. Yet the severest penance which he inflicted on himself, was to renounce his child, to break the tide of natural affection, that no earthly care might interfere with those holy duties to which he consecrated his life."

"Just heaven!" exclaimed Lucie, with emotion "could such a sacrifice be exacted! Dearest aunt, tell me if he still lives,—if I am right—"

"He does still live," interrupted Madame la Tour; "he received permission to quit the mo-