

dered what was the meaning of the words the sobbing mother was uttering as he entered:

"Oh, my child, my child!" she said, "it is hard to part with thee; but, if it must be so, His will be done."

He had entered timidly, and was not encouraged by these words. Subdued, but dignified, he looked handsomer than ever in this mood. Ernestine's heart wavered for a moment; and she grasped the crucifix hung round her neck to give her courage.

"Ernestine," he said, and his voice trembled, "will you pardon me, and grant me the kiss of forgiveness?"

"Gustave, you must ask forgiveness of Him whom we both have offended. I am a sinner, and have nothing to forgive," she replied.

"What have I done?" he exclaimed, impetuously. "Oh! embrace me, Ernestine, my heart's treasure."

Tears fell from Ernestine's eyes, and she said, "Gustave, my beloved, I will embrace you, and for the last time. Gustave, I must quit this world, and dedicate myself, in prayer for you and for myself, to Him whom we have both offended;" and, flinging her arms round his neck, she kissed him repeatedly and fervently, and at length tore herself away, and quitted the room, saying as she left it:

"This is the last time you will see me, beloved Gustave; and when you would blaspheme, think of me, alone, and in prayer for you." She was gone, and Gustave, pale and trembling, sank at Madame d'Harville's feet, and hid his face in her lap.

"Oh, Madame, Madame, what has happened?" he cried. "Oh! explain."

"Gustave," replied the weeping mother, "you whom I love as my own son, you have forsaken and denied your Maker, and my child will not, neither can I desire that she should, wed with the unbeliever; therefore does she dedicate herself unto Him in prayer for your soul and her own. After the obsequies of my sainted mother, she retires to a cloister."

"Oh, my mother! can you permit it?" cried Gustave.

"It rests not with me: if she is called, I must submit."

"Called! called by Him whom you worship? Does he thus tear asunder the mother and the child, and the hearts bound as mine and Ernestine's are in the strongest ties of love? Is he not gracious whom you worship? He is cruel! he is cruel! and you called it blasphemy to mock at him;" and Gustave rushed from the house, the victim of a church that teaches for "doctrines the commandments of men," whose dogmas he rejected, but would not investigate; if he had, he would have known how far different they are from the teaching and example of Him whose active and perfect fulfilment of every duty, public and private, social and domestic, contradicted the evil, and too often cruel, system of monachism.

Ernestine resolutely refused to meet Gustave again. Painfully he watched, in hopes of intercepting her ere she quitted her mother's roof; but she passed away from her mother's home early one morning, between the hours of three and four, when her lover lay in a deep and heavy slumber, wearied with grief and watching.

Late hours were not the fashion in those days, and, before the laborer would be astir in our time, Gustave entered Madame d'Harville's parlor on that day. It was all over, he saw at once, and threw himself, almost fainting, on the large, square, soft, chintz-covered sofa, where he had so often sat with his arm encircling Ernestine's slender waist, and listening to her merry remarks. Madame d'Harville, weeping bitterly, rocked herself to and fro in an agony of grief. A kind relative, who had undertaken to perform for Ernestine the precious duties she had forsaken, was attempting to comfort the afflicted mother.

"Look, dear Madame," she said, "it is the Spirit that calls your Ernestine to this avocation: you should rejoice she is chosen to so much honor."

She was a worthy and amiable woman that spoke, and firmly believed what she