


G E R T R U D.

CHAPTER I.

 HERE was sorrow in the noble house of Felsenburgh, for that morning Conrad, only child of Alarick and Alexia, Count and Countess von Felsenburgh, had breathed his last.

He had been his mother's idol from the time of his birth, and it was a dreadful blow to her, to know that she should see him no more in this world. It was a lovely day in early spring, and everything without the castle formed a striking contrast to the gloom within. Servants moved about softly, as if afraid of making the slightest sound; the Count was in his own room with the parish pastor, arranging for the morrow's funeral, and his wife was seated by a bed, whereon was laid all that now remained of the little Conrad. His mother gazed long and earnestly on the face she loved so well; beautiful in life, but oh! far more lovely in death. Seven summers could scarce have passed over his fair young head, and at first it seemed hard, that he for whom life promised so much, should have been called away so early. But his mother thought not so; much as she missed her darling, she liked to think of him as safe from all harm, and could not wish him back again in this world of trials and temptations. As she pressed a parting kiss on the cold white forehead, she murmured, "Thy will be done," and then went downstairs to do her best to comfort her husband.

CHAPTER II.

CONRAD slept in God's Acre on the green hill-side—how much nicer is that name, than what we English call it. The graveyard always suggests to me sad, gloomy thoughts, while, on the contrary, God's Acre seems as if we had delivered our loved ones into God's protecting care; it cannot be more beautifully described than in the words of Longfellow:—

"God's Acre! Yes, that blessed name imparts
Comfort to those who in the grave have sown
The seed, that they had garnered in their hearts;
The bread of Life, alas! no more their own.

"With thy rude ploughshare Death, turn up the
sod,
And spread the furrow for the seed we sow;
This is the field, the Acre of our God,
This is the place where human harvests
grow."

Day after day, as the shadows began to lengthen on the hills, the Countess wended her way to where her darling slept. She loved to go there in the evening best, for everything seems more solemn and peaceful at that time; and as the sun sank to rest, it always shed its last ray where her boy's head was laid. She never neglected to strew fresh flowers on his grave, and she loved to think that the time was drawing nearer, it could not be very long at the most, before she too should reach that distant shore, and clasp her much-loved child in her arms again. The Countess Alexia was still young; she had one of those strangely beautiful faces, so rarely seen; to see her was to love her. She was adored by the poor people of the neighbourhood, for she went about among them sympathizing with all their sorrows, and relieving their wants: she never passed a single one without a gentle word and a kindly smile; and now that her trouble had come, they felt for her as if it was their own; and she was touched by the marks of unobtrusive love and sympathy they shewed for her.

One evening, going as usual to Conrad's grave, what was her astonishment to discover a little child lying asleep on the flowers which were strewn around. It was a little girl, and could not have been more than two years old. The setting rays of the sun seemed to linger lovingly about the fair child's golden hair, and a beautiful smile played round her mouth. As the Countess stood watching her, the child opened her eyes and seeing the sweet face bending over her, smiled, and stretched out her little arms. The lady lifted her up, and kissing her, breathed a prayer of thankfulness to Him, who, she felt, had sent her this child to be her comfort. She then carried the little girl home to the castle, and shewing her