

"Do you love your mother?"

"More than my own life."

"And does she love you?"

"Does not a mother always love her child?"

"And what if you would never go home to her again?"

"Poor mother," said Arnold, "it would break her heart."

"The dance has begun again," cried Gertrude hastily, "come, we haven't a minute to lose."

The dance was far more lively than before. The young men, many of them intoxicated by strong wine, were so noisy that the sound of the music was almost drowned. Arnold was about to begin the last dance with Gertrude when she suddenly grasped his arm and whispered:

"Come!"

Arnold did not take time to ask whither but followed her towards the door.

"Where are you going?" asked several of the dancers.

"I will be back in a minute," she answered, and a moment later they stood in the open air.

"But where are we going, Gertrude?"

"Come!" was her only answer, as she led him through the town to a slight mound from which he could see the inn lights. Here she remained standing, and grasping Arnold's hand, she said affectionately:

"Give my regards to your mother — good-bye."

"Gertrude!" cried he in astonishment, "you certainly do not intend to send me from you thus in the middle of the night. Have I offended you?"

"No, Arnold," said she, calling him by his Christian name for the first time; "even though I love you I must send you away."

"But do not leave me in this manner; you do not realize how much I love you, Gertrude."

"Say nothing more," interrupted Gertrude, "when the bell has struck twelve — hardly ten minutes will elapse until then — come to the door of the inn and I will meet you there."

"And until then?"

"Stand exactly where you are. Promise me that you will not stir either to the right or to the left."

"I promise it, Gertrude."

She extended her hand towards him and was about to depart.