

When they had entered the house, the door was softly closed, and the gentleman, whose name you may have mentioned was Harrenburn, conducted Conrad across the hall, and up stairs to an apartment on the second storey, having a southern aspect. The proportions of the house were noble. The wide entrance-hall was boldly tessellated with white and black marble; the stair-case was large enough for a procession of giants; the broad oaken stairs were partly covered with thick, rich carpet; fine pictures, in handsome frames, decorated the walls; and whenever they happened in their ascent to pass an open door, Conrad could see that the room within was superbly furnished. To the poor painter, these evidences of opulence and taste seemed to have something of the fabulous about them. The house was good enough for a monarch; and to find a private gentleman of neither rank nor title living in such splendour, was what he should never have expected. Mr. Harrenburn placed his finger on his lips, as he opened the door of the chamber already indicated; Conrad followed him in with stealthy steps and suppressed breath. The room was closely curtained, and a couple of night-lights shed their feeble and uncertain rays upon the objects within it. The bright of the apartment, and the absorbing complexion of the dark oaken wainscot, here and there concealed by fulls of tapestry, served to render such an illumination extremely inefficient. But Conrad knew that this must be the chamber of death, even before he was able to distinguish that an apparently light and youthful figure lay stretched upon the bed—still, motionless, impassive, as death alone can be. Two women, dressed in dark habiliments—lately nurses of the sick, now watchers over the dead—rose from their seats, and retired silently to a distant corner of the room as Mr. Harrenburn and Conrad entered. Where does the poor heart suffer as it does in the chamber of the dead, whose lies, as in this instance, the corpse of a beloved daughter? A hundred objects, little thought of heretofore, present themselves, and by association with the lost one, assume a power over the survivor. The casual objects of everyday life rise up and seize a place in the fancy and memory, and become invested with deep, passionate interest, as relics of the departed. There is the dress which lately so well became her; there the little shoes in which she stepped so lightly and gracefully; there the book which she was reading only yesterday, the satin ribbon still between the pages at which she had arrived when she laid it down for ever; there the cup from which she drank but a few hours back; there the toilet, with all its little knife-knacks, and the glass which so often mirrored her sweet face.

Thus Conrad instinctively interpreted the glances which Mr. Harrenburn directed at the objects around him. The bereaved father standing motionless, regarded one thing and then another, with a sort of absent attention, which, under other circumstances, would have appeared like imbecility or loss of self-command, but now was full of a deeply-touching significance, which roused the sympathies of the young painter more powerfully than the finest eloquence could have done. He seemed at first to shun the bed, as if the object lying there were too powerful a source of grief to bear—seemed to be anxious to discover some minor souvenirs of sorrow, a preparatory step, which should enable him to approach with seemly and rational composure the mute wreck of his beloved child—the cast-shell of the spirit which had been the pride and joy, the hope and comfort of his life. But presently he succeeded in mastering this sensibility and approaching the bed, motioned Conrad to follow him. He gently

drew aside the curtain which had concealed the face of the figure that was lying there. Conrad started. Could that be death? That hair, so freshly black and glossy; those slightly-parted lips, on which the light of fancy still seemed to play; the teeth within, so white and healthy-looking; the small, well-shaped hand and arm, so listlessly laid along the pillow; could these be ready for the grave? It seemed so much like sleep, and so little like death, that Conrad, who had never looked upon the dead before, was amazed. When he saw the eyes, however, visible betwixt the partly-opened lids, his scepticism vanished. The cold, glazed, fixed unmeaningness of them chilled and frightened him—they did really speak of the tomb.

'My daughter,' said Mr. Harrenburn, to whose tone the effort of self-command now communicated a grave and cold severity. 'She died at four this afternoon, after a very short illness—only in her twentieth year. I wish to have her represented exactly as she lies now. From the window there, in the daytime, a strong light is thrown upon this spot; so that I do not think it will be needful to make any new disposition either of the bed or its poor burden. Your easel and other matters shall be brought here during the night. I will rouse you at five in the morning, and you will then, if you please, use your utmost expedition.'

Conrad promised to do all he could to accomplish the desire of the afflicted parent, and after the latter had approached the bed, leaped over it, and kissed the cold lips of his child, they left the room to the dead and its silent watchers.

After a solemn and memorable evening, Conrad was shown to his bedroom, and there dreamed through the livelong night—now, that he was riding at frightful speed through woods and wilds with Mr. Harrenburn, hurrying with breathless haste to avert some catastrophe that was about to happen somewhere to some one; now, that he was intently painting a picture of the corpse of a beautiful young lady—terribly oppressed by nervousness, and a fearful sense of incapacity most injurious to the success of his labours—when suddenly, O horror! he beheld the body move, then rise, in a frightful and unnatural manner, stark upright, and with opened lips, but rigidly-clenched teeth, utter shriek upon shriek as it waved its white arms, and tore its streaming hair; then, that his landlady, Mrs. Farrell, came up to him, as he crouched weeping and trembling by, and bade him be comforted, for that they who were accustomed to watch by the dead often beheld such scenes; then that Mr. Harrenburn suddenly entered the room, and sternly reproached him for not proceeding with his work, when, on looking towards the bed, they perceived that the corpse was gone, and was nowhere to be seen, upon which Mr. Harrenburn, with a wild cry, laid hands upon him, as if to slay him on the spot.

'You do not sleep well.' A hand was gently laid upon his shoulder; a kind voice sounded in his ear; he opened his eyes; Mr. Harrenburn was standing at his bedside. 'You have not slept well, I regret to find. I have knocked at your door several times, but, receiving no reply, ventured to enter. I have believed you from an unpleasant dream, I think.'

Conrad, somewhat embarrassed by the combined influence of the nightmare, and being awakened suddenly by a stranger in a strange place, informed his host that he always dreamed unpleasantly when he had slept too long, and was sorry that he had given so much trouble.

'It is some minutes past five o'clock,' said Mr. Harrenburn. 'Tea and coffee will be waiting

for you by the time you are dressed; doubtless, breakfast will restore you, and put you in order for your work; for really you have been dreaming in a manner which appeared very painful, whatever the experience might have been.'

Conrad rose, dressed, breakfasted, and did not doubtfully feel much more comfortable and light-hearted than during the night. He was shortly conducted to the chamber in which he had received so many powerful impressions on the preceding evening, and forthwith commenced the task which he had engaged to perform. Conrad was by no means a young man of a romantic or sentimental turn, but it is not to be wondered at, that his present occupation should produce a deep effect upon his mind. The form and features he was now endeavouring to portray were certainly the most beautiful he had as yet exercised his art upon—indeed, without exception, the most beautiful he had ever beheld. The melancholy spectacle of youth cut off in the first glow of life's brightest season, and when surrounded by every thing that wealth and education can contribute towards rendering existence brilliant and delightful, can never fail to excite deep and solemn emotion. As the artist laboured to give a faithful representation of the sweetly-serene face, the raven hair, the marble forehead, the delicately-arched brow, the exquisitely-formed nose and mouth, and thought how well such noble beauty seemed to suit one who was fit to die—a pure, spotless, bright being—he had more than once to pause in his work while he wiped the tears from his eyes. Few experiences chasten the heart so powerfully as the sight of the early dead; those who live among us a short while, happy and good, loving and beloved, and then are suddenly taken away, ere the rough journey of life is well begun, leaving us to travel on through the perilous and difficult world by ourselves; no more sweet words for us, no more songs, no more companionship, no more loving counsel and assistance—nothing now, save the remembrance of beauty and purity departed. How potent is that remembrance against the assaults of evil thoughts! How impressive the thought of virtue in the shroud!

With one or two necessary intervals, Conrad worked throughout the day, and until the declining light warned him to desist. The next morning he resumed his pallet, and in about four or five hours brought his task to a conclusion, taking, in addition to the painting he was commissioned to make, a small crayon sketch for himself. It was his wish to preserve some memento of what he regarded as the most remarkable of his experiences, and likewise to possess a 'counterfeit presentment' of a face the beauty of which he had never seen equalled. Mr. Harrenburn expressed himself highly gratified by the manner in which Conrad had acquitted himself—he only saw the painting, of course—and taking him into his study, bade him persevere in his art, and paid him fifty guineas, a sum which almost burst the young man of his senses, it seemed so vast, and came so unexpectedly, after all his misgivings, especially in the presence of one who, to judge from the taste he had exhibited in his collection, must be no ordinary connoisseur.

It is difficult to describe the remarkable influence which this adventure exercised upon the young artist. His susceptible mind received an impression from this single association with a scene of death on the one hand, and an appreciating patron on the other, which affected the whole of his future life. He returned to C——, bade adieu to his landlady and friends, and, placing himself and his luggage upon the London coach, proceeded to the metropolis. Here, after looking