

The Count wildly laughed. "Aye, well may you start and turn pale; now, say can there be hope for me? Oh! no, no, no! Lost forever!—lost forever!"

"This scene is too trying for you, sir," said Albert, much moved, as he approached to support his father, who appeared drooping from the intensity of his feelings.

"My son, I must endure it, if it kills me," replied the Baron. "Is there not a precious soul at stake? But let all these be dismissed," he continued; "it is not fit they should hear the ravings of this unhappy man."

The domestics were then ordered to retire, except Hoffman, the Count's servant, who from the moment he beheld Albert, had never ceased gazing upon him.

A draught was now administered to the sufferer; but it seemed to have no effect in tranquilizing him, for he still continued uttering groans mingled with fearful imprecations. The Baron vainly strove to draw him into a better frame of mind—he resisted his attempts, and scoffed at his prayers. "Away, away, and torment me not," he cried; "do you not see them waiting for me?" and he pointed to a distant part of the room. "They are grinning in mockery of my pangs—Oh! Gustavus!—Oh! Adelaide! bitterly are you now avenged!"

The Baron and his son both started. "What of Adelaide, speak?" enquired the latter, with a quivering lip. "Know you who she is? If so for Heaven's sake reveal it."

"Not to you, young savage, who are my destroyer," quickly rejoined the Count, with a menacing gesture. "Avaunt from my sight—your face brings recollections which madden me."

"His mind is gone," said the Baron, mournfully. "How dreadful to die in such an unprepared state! Albert! Albert! you have hurried a soul to perdition this night."

"I have saved Adelaide from the power of a villain," replied the young man, resolutely.

"You have saved her, have you—ha! ha! ha! Perhaps you think to wed her; but I fear the new home of your bride would be too cold and narrow for one like you."

There was something in these words, and the manner in which they were spoken by the dying man, that made them grate painfully on the ears of Albert. He would have addressed him again; but beheld him convulsed with agony. When the paroxysm again passed away, he was so exhausted that he fell back into the arms of his attendant, while the Baron sinking on his knees, impressively said—"Let us pray, my son, for his departing spirit."

The Count once more unclosed his eyes, and resting them upon the venerable man, feebly murmured—"Have your prayers any power to save me—hasten and tell me?"

"I dare not tell you so, or so cruelly deceive you," replied the agitated Baron. "Faith in Christ, the fruits of which are repentance, and a total renunciation of self—a broken and a contrite heart, which God will not despise. These are saving signs, my brother—can you tell me that you experience this utter self abasement—this contrition for the past—can you throw yourself at the foot of the Cross, and believe that he has the power to bestow on you eternal life! Oh, say so, my brother, and even in this eleventh hour, you may be plucked as a brand from the burning."

"Who talks of burning?" wildly screamed the Count. "It was not I who fired the castle—see, do you not behold my brother walking amidst the flames," and he pointed to Albert, who stood at the foot of the bed.

"This is my son—young Waldberg," said the Baron. "Endeavour to recall your wandering thoughts, unhappy man, and turn to your Saviour ere it is too late."

"You talk idly, old man. Can Christ be known in a few brief agonizing moments? I have never read my Bible—prayer is a stranger to me; nor can I comprehend your words. Oh! that form, that form, how it haunts me!" continued the Count, as he still, with straining eyes, glared on Albert, who drew back, unwilling to add to his distress. "It is gone now," he feebly added, "and I too am going; but alas! not where he is. Down, down, down—they are dragging me lower! The pit yawns to receive me! Hark! listen to the yells of the evil spirits! How horrible—the image of sin as she now appears to me, despoiled of all the false glitter with which she deludes her victims. How loathsome riches and rank, for which I have bartered my soul! What worthless dross! You are still praying for me, old man. I tell you it is in vain—I do you not see them coming nearer and nearer? They grasp me, and their touch—is—death!" And while looking with fixed despair on some fancied object, a livid hue suddenly overspread his face—he tried to speak again, but could not. After a few violent struggles the terrible conflict was over, and the Count was no more.

Midnight approached, when Albert having ascertained that Adelaide was still in a deep sleep, adjourned to the study of his father. All colour had fled his cheek, while the agitation and hurry of his looks and manner, told the troubled state of his thoughts. He found the Baron closeted with Count Ravensberg's servant, Hoffman, who appeared to be reciting some tale which powerfully affected him, for he was pacing the room, occasionally casting up his hands and eyes in amazement and horror, or pausing to make some anxious enquiry. He was too much engrossed to perceive the entrance of his son, who moved with noiseless steps across the room, and took his station in a large chair, by the wide