

sound had passed, and then, gazing up into the sky, saw, or thought he saw, the same black cloud that had seemed to follow him home, and which now appeared to hover directly above the house.

"I know its meaning now," he muttered, "and the restless nights, the dreams, and why I have quailed of late. All pointed to this. Oh! if men by selling their own souls could ride rampant for a term, for how short a term would I barter mine to-night!"

The sound of a deep bell came along the wind. One.

"Lie on!" cried the usurer, "with your iron tongue! Ring merrily for births that make expectants writhe, and for marriages that are made in hell, and toll ruefully for the dead whose shoes are worn already! Call men to prayers who are godly because not found out, and ring chimes for the coming in of every year that brings this cursed world nearer to its end. No bell or book for me! Throw me on a dunghill, and let me rot there, to infect the air!"

With a wild look around, in which frenzy, hatred, and despair, were horribly mingled, he shook his clenched hand at the sky above him, which was still dark and threatening, and closed the window.

The rain and hail pattered against the glass; the chimneys quaked and rocked; the crazy casement rattled with the wind, as though an impatient hand inside were striving to burst it open. But no hand was there, and it opened no more.

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"How's this?" cried one. "The gentlemen say they can't make anybody hear, and have been trying these two hours."

"And yet he came home last night," said another; "for he spoke to somebody out of that window upstairs."

They were a little knot of men, and, the window being mentioned, went out in the road to look up at it. This occasioned their observing that the house was still close shut, as the housekeeper had said she had left it on the previous night, and led to a great many suggestions: which terminated in two or three of the boldest getting round to the back and so entering by a window, while the others remained outside, in impatient expectation.

They looked into all the rooms below: opening the shutters