

flights of stairs. It seemed to me he would never stop, when, at last, I heard him open a door, thrust me in, and retreat again, locking the door after him.

"My first care was to tear off the bandage and look around; but the room was so intensely black I could see nothing. The darkness could be almost felt as I thrust out my hand and essayed to walk. I had not advanced a dozen steps, when my foot slipped on some wet, slimy substance, and I fell, and struck violently against something lying on the floor. Trembling with horror, I put out my hand, and—merciful Heaven! I shudder even now to think of it—it fell on the cold, clammy face of a corpse."

"Laws-a-massy!" ejaculated the horror-struck Mrs. Tom, as the dying man paused, every feature convulsed at the recollection.

"I think I fainted," he went on, after a pause, "for when I next recollect anything, I was supported by my masked conductor, who was sprinkling, or, rather, dashing handfuls of water in my face, and there was a light burning in the room. I looked around. There, on the floor, lay the dead body of a man, weltering in blood, which flowed from a great, frightful gash in his side!"

"The sight nearly drove me mad, for I sprang with a wild cry to my feet. But my conductor laid his hand on my shoulder and said, in a tone so fierce and stern that I quailed before him:

"Hark ye, sirrah, have done with this cowardly foolery, or, by heaven, you shall share the same fate of him you see before you! No matter what you see to-night, speak not, nor ask any questions, under peril of instant death. If you perform your duty faithfully, this shall be your reward."