

stone building to which, in our description of the death-valley of Nienberg, we have already made allusion. This solitary erection consists only of two rooms; that in which the body is deposited is called the hall of resurrection, and contains no other furniture than the bed itself and a bell-ropc, the end of which is placed in the hand of the corpse. This cord is attached to a bell which rings in the next room, and which is thence called the chamber of the bell. Thus, should it occur that the friends of an individual may have been deceived, and have mistaken lethargy for death, and that the patient should awake during the night (for the body must remain all night in this gloomy refuge), the slightest movement he may make necessarily rings the bell, and he obtains instant help. It is customary for the nearest relative to keep this dreary watch; and from a beautiful sentiment, which must always tend to reconcile the watcher to his ghostly task, he is fated to watch there alone, that it may be he who calls back the ebbing life, and that none may share in a joy so holy and so deep—a joy, moreover, so rare and so unhopcd for.

The long day, and the still longer night in which the Countess Stephanie lay dead beneath the roof she had so revered throughout her life, passed over; and all the pompous accessories which could be commanded in so obscure a neighbourhood were secured to do honour to her obsequies. The mournful train moved slowly onward to the cemetery, where a grave had already been prepared for her beside her mother; and, passing near the spot where she was finally to rest, entered the hall of resurrection, and gently and carefully stretched her upon the bed of gloom. The wildest of the mourners was the poor old nurse, who, with her gray hair streaming over her shoulders, and her dim eyes swollen with tears, knelt near the head of her mistress, and clasped her clay-cold hands. But it was the young count who was the centre of commiseration. The last four-and-twenty hours had done the work of years upon him; a sullen, leaden tinge had spread over his skin, his voice was deep and hollow, and his trembling hands could scarcely perform their offices. "No wonder," ejaculated

those who looked upon him; "for years they had been everything to each other."

At length the funeral train departed, for the sun was setting. Elric listened in horror to their retreating footsteps, for he felt that he was soon to be alone. Alone with what? With the dead, stretched there by his own hand—with his murdered sister! This was his companionship within; and without, graves, nothing but graves, sheeted corpses, and the yawning tomb which was awaiting his victim. The sweat rolled in large drops down the forehead of the young man. He had watched near the body of his mother in peace and prayer, for she had been taken from him and he was innocent then and full of hope; but now—now! He tottered to the window and looked out. The twilight was thickening, and the light came pale through the narrow leaded panes of the little casement. He glanced around the sepulchral chamber in which he was to pass the night. There was a small fire burning upon the open hearth at which he lighted his lamp, and a prayer-book lying upon the table, on which he vainly endeavoured to concentrate his thoughts. At that moment he was beyond the reach of prayer. The strong man was bowed, body and spirit, beneath the pressure of his crime! Again and again, he asked himself, with a pertinacity that bordered on delirium, what it was over which he watched! And again and again the question was answered in his own heart. Over his sister, his only surviving relative, murdered by his own hand. The murderer was watching beside his victim!

At intervals he strove against the horror by which he was oppressed: he endeavored to rally the pride of his sex and of his strength. What could he fear? The dead are powerless over the living; and yet, fiercer and sharper came the memory that his crime had been gratuitous, for had he not been told that the death which he had given must ere long have come? "A little sooner or a little later" had said the man of science. Oh, had he only waited, promised, temporized; but all was now too late! She lay there cold, pale, stark, within a few paces of him, and tears of blood could not recall the dead!