

surrounding him cast an unearthly light on the shrunk and attenuated form, partly concealed by a sheet. Sir Claude quailed not at the awful spectacle; yet no exultation for a moment was felt on beholding his fallen enemy. Oh no, he was far too noble.

"May God have mercy on his soul, and judge him leniently!" he murmured with solemnity. "I thank thee, Father of Mercies! that my hand has not sent him to his dreadful account. Tell me," he added, turning to his conductor, "tell me how this occurred?"

"Two days ago, my lord arrived with a lady, at this hotel," returned the man, perfectly unmoved by the distressing object before him. "She was young and *très jolie*, and they seemed very happy together, till a great tall Englishman, six feet high, followed them the same evening, and said she was his wife. Bah! the lady cried, and swooned away; and after some loud words the gentlemen went out to fight. My lord was carried back a dead man half an hour after: the stranger came no more; and the poor lady, in despair, threw herself into the Seine, and was drowned. Her body they discovered this morning, and have conveyed it to La Morgue, where you may see it if you have any curiosity."

All this was said rapidly in French and created great disgust in Sir Claude, from the light flippant manner which accompanied the recital. He retreated from the room in silence, and with noiseless steps. He would not remain at the hotel, but removed to another, where, after swallowing some coffee, he threw himself on a couch in a fearful state of agitation, images the most heart-rending haunting his imagination through the long midnight hours. He rapidly retraced the life of Lord Stepney, which had been a career of vice from his youth upward—a professed roué—loose and unprincipled, without one spark of religion. He scoffed at its pure and holy laws, boasting that he did so; yet withal, gentle, winning, and insinuating in his manners and deportment. He had carried ruin, dishonour, and misery into many a domestic hearth; one of his earliest victims being Fanny Belson, whose name has been mentioned before in these pages. As the foster sister of Sir Claude, he severely felt her untimely fate, and in his youthful indignation, challenged and met her destroyer. From that hour they became inveterate foes; yet now that retribution had so suddenly fallen upon the wretched man, and cut him off in his sins, they were cancelled at once by Sir Claude, who reflected with awe that at the tribunal of an offended Deity he had gone to answer for them all! unrepenting—unprepared!

On attempting to rise the following day, Sir Claude found himself so feverish and unwell that he was obliged to remain in bed. Antonio wished him to see a doctor, but he spurned at the suggestion.

The misery of his mind at this time it would be quite impossible to pourtray. Racked with every painful doubt of his wife's innocence—unknowing how far she had permitted the advances of Lord Stepney, or how the story of the ring could be explained so as to exculpate her—he tossed about, like a lion in the net, maddened and desperate. He thought also on all the provocations to anger she had heaped upon him—her suspicions of his faith—her jealousies—her wayward conduct—till his heart became steeled against her, and he exclaimed:

"No, I will not return to her, neither shall she know where I am gone—tears shall be her bitter portion for the grief she has inflicted upon me in return for all my affection." Then came the recollection of his children—his widowed mother; but he would not yield to any feelings of tenderness—his determination was fixed, and to be seen in his stern, inflexible countenance, that at once warned Antonio not to oppose or even to address him, except when absolutely necessary. In despite of all regard to his health, he rose in the afternoon, with the intention of visiting La Morgue, to satisfy his curiosity respecting the unhappy lady. On entering the appalling abode, where death appears in its most repulsive form, his heart sickened at the loathsome objects that met his eye. He passed several, all of them females, and approached the one pointed out to him by his sturdy and callous conductor, and in the disfigured and pale object he discovered one who he had seen amidst the gay and fashionable throng. Good God! how the contrast struck him; what painful reflections arose within his breast as he continued to gaze. He knew that she had been trained entirely for the world by a vain mother—that she had been forced into the union whose vows she had broken—a weak creature, devoted to pleasure—and a neglected wife—where was the wonder that she had fallen a prey to a designing bad man. Sir Claude had once or twice noticed the attention paid to her by Lord Stepney, with whom she used constantly to waltz, until very lately that he had appeared to shun her. Alas! what a close to her brief life on earth—what a prospect beyond it. And such might have been the fate of Beatrice! He shuddered at the horrible supposition; and as he slowly left the mournful spot, he remembered with remorse that to gratify his own pride he had plunged her into a life where reflection is swallowed up in a whirl of dissipation—a life full of snares and dangers—where the welfare of the soul is unheeded—where the laws of God are constantly broken—His altars forsaken, and Himself forgotten.

Sir Claude was thankful to leave Paris, which he did the same evening, with the full intention of passing into Switzerland, and to seek in perpetual motion a forgetfulness, if possible, of himself. Wise would it have been had he retraced his way homeward; but his wounded, outraged affection, would