

purpose, she held the light and walked towards the passage, leading to the outer door.

Our intention, however, was scarcely formed, when the sound of Bryan's feet coming down the stairs reminded me that there might be more hazard in ineffectually attempting to escape, than in abiding the dangers, whatever they might be, which awaited me within. So changing my resolution as quickly as it was adopted, I returned hastily to the kitchen and resumed my place.

Again we were seated, and again I was tormented by my own suspicions and the painful grimaces of the harriard, who sat in the chimney-corner in the same attitude in which I first beheld her. I seized a candle—it was in a fit of abstraction—and I rushed, without a guide, to my sleeping apartment, which stood at the head of a narrow and crazy flight of stairs, apart from the kitchen. I will not disguise the apprehension which led me to examine every crevice of the room: I felt the walls cautiously, expecting daggers and demons to burst from their concealment. The window—the floor—the furniture—every thing in the apartment underwent as rigid an examination as a bale of suspected goods under the hands of a revenue officer: yet I could discover nothing to justify suspicion or satisfy curiosity. A room so antiquated, and yet so mandlin, it had never been my fate to sleep in before. It was thinly wainscoted all round, a circumstance very unusual in such houses in Ireland, and divided into various recesses or niches, which seemed to have been originally appropriated to purposes that had long ceased to exist: the window was in a deep and massive framework of solid oak, rudely carved, upon which strange initials and sundry unaccountable devices had been scratched and cut by visitors: over the mantelpiece a solitary plate of glass, intended for a mirror, was fastened by two enormous nails, *sans* gilding, *sans* frama, *sans* every thing: and on the opposite side a few ragged engravings, after the peculiar school of the village artists, were hung in the admirable relief of the cream-coloured wainscot. Some of these engravings represented St. Patrick, the patron saint, performing miracles and dispensing gifts: others, the Last Supper, Crucifixion, Resurrection, &c.; but all, save one, were upon religious subjects, and that one was a caricature, then very popular, of a certain lady of quality, which was appropriately placed in the centre of the group on account of the freshness and gaiety of its colouring. The chairs were modern and shabby, with the exception of a dignified old arm chair that stood alone in a corner, as if its weightiness disdained to mingle with the attenuated forms that were falling to pieces around it. The bed was placed with its head in a recess, and was as

ill-devised a resting-place as a fatigued gentleman ever courted sleep upon.

Such was my room, and whatever my doubts of security might have been, I certainly anticipated very little comfort. However, I was resolved to go to bed, and sleep if I could, and depart early the next morning. I instantly fastened the door, which to my surprise, I found so amply provided with locks, bolts, and bars, that I laughed at the old woman's solemn charge, and flung myself on the bed in my clothes.

An hour passed away silently and sleeplessly: I was not conscious of any sounds but the moaning of the trees, and the sudden flap of a night-bird against the window. The occasional low ticking of a clock fell upon my ear, and lulled me into some dim notion of home and security; slowly the curtains became indistinct and vapoury, and the whole room gradually seemed darker and darker, as I sunk into an imperfect sleep, aware of all that I had seen and heard, yet yielding not so much of necessity as wilfully to fatigue. I might have been an hour, perhaps two, in this uninterrupted repose, when I fancied that a light flashed across my eyes, and I suddenly started up in bed. I had often read of phantoms and trap-doors, secret springs, lanterns, and white sheets, and I really expected nothing less than a realization of those horrors, when I saw one of the recesses move out of its place, as a sliding panel would in a romance, and the old woman, with a hood and handkerchief on her head, and a candle in her hand, glide as lightly as the most polite of spectres to my bedside. "Angels and ministers of grace!" thought I, and my heart beat tumultuously: "does the old lady make love?" a momentary reflection passed through my mind, and I inquired—"In God's name, my good woman, what's the matter?"

"Death, desolation, black guilt, is abroad to-night, and wo to you and yours if you do not instantly follow me!"

"You seem to take a singular interest in my affairs; but unless you promise to inform me of the real cause of all this mystery, I must decline your invitation."

"I make no promise: I must not be bound, for men's lives are in my hands, and if a woman's weakness stifles her justice, she will be pitied, not condemned. I will neither promise to tell nor to bribe—to lead nor to drive—to enter the court nor the chapel. If you would be safe, rise and follow me: if you would die, your fate be upon you."

"Give me some information," I replied, "as to your object, and what kind of knowledge you so very mysteriously conceal, and I will thankfully adopt your advice."