

"The reason, is because I must not allow to any man my help or my converse on too easy terms. Before ever my die was allowed to turn thy fate, I was compelled to give thee certain intimations from which thou knewest with whom it was that thou wert dealing."

"With whom, then, was it that I was dealing?" cried Schroll, staring with his eyes wide open, and his hair standing erect.

"Thou knowest comrade, at that time, thou knowest at this moment," said the pedlar laughing, and tapping him on the shoulder. "But what is it that thou desirest?"

Schroll struggle internally; but, overcome by his de-late condition, he said immediately, "Dice; I would have dice that shall win whenever I wish."

"Very well; but first of all stand out of the blaze of this golden writing on the wall; it is a writing that has nothing to do with thee. Here are dice; never allow them to go out of thy own possession; for that might bring thee into great trouble. When thou needest me, light a fire at the last stroke of the midnight hour; throw in my die with wine and loud laughter. They will crack once or twice, and then split. At that moment catch at them in thy flames; but let not the moment slip, or thou art lost. And let not thy courage be daunted at the sight that I cannot but send before me whenever I appear. Lastly, avoid choosing any holy day for this work; and beware of the priest's benediction. Here, take the dice."

Schroll caught at the dice with one hand, whilst with the other he covered his eyes. When the next looked up he was standing alone.

He now quitted the burying-ground to return as hastily as possible to the gaming-house, where the light of candles was still visible.

But it was with the greatest difficulty that he obtained money enough from a "friend" to enable him to make the lowest stake which the rules allowed. He found it a much easier task to persuade the company to use the dice which he had brought with him. They saw in this nothing but a very common superstition, and no possibility of any imposture, as they and he should naturally have benefited alike by the good luck supposed to accompany the dice. But the nature of the charm was, that only the possessor of the dice enjoyed their supernatural powers and hence it was, that, towards morning, Schroll reeled home intoxicated with wine and pleasure, and laden with the dice of all present, to the garret where his family were lying, half frozen and famished.

Their outward condition was immediately improved. The money which Schroll had won was sufficient not only for their immediate and most pressing wants; it was enough also to pay for a front apartment, and to leave a sum sufficient for a very considerable stake.

With this sum, and in better attire, Rudolph repaired to a gaming-house of more fashionable resort, and came home in the evening laden with gold.

He now opened an establishment himself and so much did his family improve in external appearances within a very few weeks, that the police began to keep a watchful eye over him.

This induced him to quit the city, and to change his residence continually. All the different parts of Germany he resorted to beyond other towns; but, though his dice perseveringly maintained their luck, he yet never accumulated any money. Everything was squandered upon the dissipated life which he and his family pursued.

At length, at the Baths of——, the matter began to take an unfortunate turn. A violent passion for a beautiful young lady whom Rudolph had attached himself to in vain at balls, concerts, and even at church, suddenly bereft him of all sense and discretion. One night when Schroll (who now styled himself Captain von Schrollshausen) was anticipating a master-stroke from his dice, probably for the purpose of winning the lady by the display of overflowing wealth and splendor, suddenly they lost their virtue, and failed him without warning. Hitherto they had lost only when he willed them to lose; but on this occasion, they failed at so critical a moment, as to lose him not only all his own money, but a good deal besides that he had borrowed.

Foaming with rage, he caught furiously after his wife; she was from home. He examined the dice attentively; and it appeared to him that they were not his own. A powerful suspicion seized upon him.

Madam von Schrollshausen had her own gaming-circles as well as himself. Without betraying its origin, he had occasionally given her a few specimens of the privilege attached to his dice; and she had pressed him earnestly to allow her the use of them for a single evening. It was true, he never parted with them even on going to bed; but it was possible that they might have been changed whilst he was sleeping. The more he brooded upon this suspicion, the more it strengthened from being barely possible, it became probable; from a probability it ripened into a certainty; and this certainty received the fullest confirmation at this moment when she returned home in the gayest temper, and announced to him that she had been this night overwhelmed with good luck in proof of which, she poured out upon the table a considerable sum in gold coins.

"And now," she added laughingly, "I care no longer for your dice; nay, to tell the truth, I would not exchange my own for them."

Rudolph, now confirmed in his suspicions, demanded the dice, as his property that had been purloined from him. She laughed and refused. He insisted with more vehemence; she retorted with warmth; both parties were irritated; and, at length, in the extremity of his wrath Rudolph snatched up a knife and stabbed her; the knife pierced her heart; she uttered a loud sob, was convulsed for a moment, and expired.

"Cursed accident!" he exclaimed, when it clearly appeared, on examination, that the dice which she had in her purse were not those which he possessed himself to have.

But Rudolph did not witness the murder: the child had slept disturbed; but circumstances betrayed it to the knowledge of the landlady, and in the morning he succeeded in purchasing the man's silence, to make over to the landlord a large sum of money, with whom he had long pursued a friendly arrangement; it was publicly known that Schrollshausen had destroyed herself under a passion, to which she had been long subject.

He was thus able to secure on this matter sufficiently deep in the murdered person to

Rudolph far more disturbance of mind

than the murder of his once beloved wife, was the full confirmation, upon repeated experience, that his dice had forfeited their power. For he had now been a loser for two days running to so great an extent, that he was obliged to abscond on a rainy night. His child, towards whom his affection increased daily, he was under the necessity of leaving with his host, as a pledge for his return and fulfilment of his promises. He would not have absconded, if it had been in his power to summons his dark counsellor forthwith; but on account of the great festival of Pentecost, which fell on the very next day, this summons was necessarily delayed for a short time. By staying, he would have reduced himself to the necessity of inventing various pretences for delay, in order to keep up his character with his creditors; whereas, when he returned with a sum of money sufficient to meet his debts, all suspicions would be silenced at once.

In the metropolis of an adjacent territory, to which he resorted so often repeated experience, that his dice had forfeited their power. For he had now been a loser for two days running to so great an extent, that he was obliged to abscond on a rainy night. His child, towards whom his affection increased daily, he was under the necessity of leaving with his host, as a pledge for his return and fulfilment of his promises. He would not have absconded, if it had been in his power to summons his dark counsellor forthwith; but on account of the great festival of Pentecost, which fell on the very next day, this summons was necessarily delayed for a short time. By staying, he would have reduced himself to the necessity of inventing various pretences for delay, in order to keep up his character with his creditors; whereas, when he returned with a sum of money sufficient to meet his debts, all suspicions would be silenced at once.

He was quite alone in his apartment, and had left his servant behind at the baths, yet long before midnight he fancied that he heard footsteps and whispering round about him. The purpose he was meditating that he had regarded till now as a matter of indifference, now displayed itself in its whole monstrous shape. Moreover, he remembered that his wicked counsellor had himself thought it necessary to exhort him to courage, which at present he felt greatly shaken. However, he had no choice. As he was enjoined, therefore with the last stroke of twelve, he set on fire the wood which lay ready split upon the hearth, and threw the flames, with loud laughter, upon the dice, that reeked frightfully from the empty hall and staircases. Confused and half stifled by the smoke which accompanied the roaring flames, he stood still for a few minutes, when suddenly all the surrounding object seemed changed, and he found himself transported to his father's house. His father was lying on his death-bed just as he had actually beheld him. He had upon his lips the very same expression of his supplication and anguish which he had at that time striven to address him. Once again he stretched out his arms in love and pity to his son; and again he seemed to expire in the act.

Schroll was agitated by the picture, which called up and reanimated in his memory, with the power of a mighty tormentor, all his honorable plans and prospects from that innocent period of his life. At this moment the dice cracked for the first time; and Schroll turned his face towards the flames. A second time the smoke stifled the light in order to reveal a second picture. He saw himself on the day before the scene of the sand-hill, setting in his dengeon. The clergyman was with him. From the expression of his countenance, he appeared to be just saying: Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Rudolph thought of the disposition in which he then was of the hopes which the clergyman had raised in him and of the feeling which he then had, that he was still worthy of being reunited to his father, or had become worthy by bitter penitence.

The next fracture of the dice disturbed the scene—but to substitute one that was not at all more consolatory. For now appeared a den of thieves, in which the unhappy widow of Weber was cursing her children who—left without, counsel, without protection—had taken to evil courses.

In the background stood the bleeding father of these ruined children one hand stretched out towards Schroll with a menacing posture, and the other lifted towards heaven with a record of impeachment against him.

At the third splitting of the dice, out of the bosom of the smoke arose the figure of his murdered wife, who seemed to chase him from one corner of the room to another, until at length she came and took a seat at the fire-place; by the side of which, Rudolph now observed with horror, his buried father and the unhappy Weber had stretched themselves; and they carried on together a low and noiseless whispering and moaning agitated him with a mysterious horror.

After long and hideous visions, Rudolph beheld the flames grow weaker and weaker. He approached. The figures that stood round about held up their hands in a threatening attitude. A moment later, and the time was gone for ever; and Rudolph, as his false friend had asserted, was a lost man. With the courage of despair he plunged through the midst of the threatening figures, and snatched the glowing dice, which were no sooner touched than they split asunder with a dreadful sound, before which the apparitions vanished in a body.

The evil counsellor appeared on this occasion in the dress of a grave-digger, and asked with a snorting sound. What wouldst thou from me?"

"I would remind you of your promise," answered Schroll, stepping back with awe; "your dice have lost their power."

"Through whose fault?"

Rudolph was silent, and covered his eyes from the withering glances of the fiendish being who was gazing upon him.

"Thy foolish desires led thee in chase of the beautiful maiden into the church; my words were forgotten; and the benediction, against which I warned thee, disarmed the dice of their power. In future observe my directions better."

So saying he vanished; and Schroll found three new dice upon the hearth.

After such scenes sleep was not to be thought of; and Rudolph resolved if possible, to make trial of his dice this very night. The fall at the hotel over the way, to which he had been invited, and from which the

(To be Continued).

THE PRIVATE OF THE BUFFS.

BY SIR F. H. DOYLE.

"Some Seiks, and a private of the Buffs, having remained behind with the grog-carts, fell into the hands of the Chinese. On the next morning, they were brought before the authorities, and commanded to perform the kotou. The Seiks obeyed; but Moyse, the English soldier, declaring that he would not prostrate himself before any Chinaman alive, was immediately