

which she accused Wilfred of the murder of his brother. He ordered one of the domestics to convey her in safety to a neighbouring peasant's cottage, until the morning, when he would remove her to a suitable residence. In the meantime the fire, by superhuman exertions, was subdued, and Wilfred stood in the stone hall of his brother's castle. His cheek was deadly pale, his lips trembled—his whole frame shaking—while ever and anon, he would scowl from beneath his large shaggy brows cautiously around him, in evident terror. The ruffians had dispersed, after reaping their earthly reward in rich plunder. Only two had as yet received the wages of their sin from on high, being found crushed to death under the burning timbers; a large iron chest, containing plate and jewels, standing by their blackened and disfigured remains. Every servant had departed except Hoffman, who now broke on the solitude of Wilfred, and pitying his apparent distress, addressed him in soothing accents. Wilfred started at the sound of a human voice."

"Ha, Hoffman, is it you?" he hoarsely murmured; "this has been a horrible night—have you the slightest suspicion on whom to rest the guilt?"

"I have, sir," replied Hoffman, hesitating. The countenance of Wilfred became even more ghastly, while his eyes rolled in their sockets.

"Who, who? Fear not to tell me."

"The mask fell from the face of one of the ruffians," said Hoffman; "and I discovered in him Hartz Wolfstein. He recovered it instantly, and perceived not my gaze fixed upon him."

"You are sure of it—you could swear to it?" cried Wilfred hastily, and laying his trembling hand on the arm of Hoffman.

"I could."

"Heaven be praised—then we can bring him to justice. My heart is relieved of a heavy load. Now let us search and carefully collect all that is valuable, and rest assured you shall not go unrewarded for the fidelity you have shown this night."

The remains of the unfortunate Count were first sought for by Hoffman. These were in a few subsequent days consigned, with due pomp and magnificence, to the mausoleum of his fathers. In the interval Wilfred inquired, with much solicitude, for the Countess Adelaide. What was his consternation, on learning that she had fled from the cottage, attended by the domestic who had brought her thither, leaving a bracelet of value to remunerate the people for their kindness during the few hours she had passed beneath their roof. Wilfred was furious—he sent in all directions—expressing deep anxiety for her safety—but in vain. The Countess Adelaide was seen by him no more. At his instigation, Hartz Wolfstein was taken prisoner, and identified by Hoffman. When tried for the murder of the Count, he detailed the conversation that had passed

between him and Wilfred—but the tale was too monstrous to gain belief—nor were there any proofs or witnesses to bring forward—added to which the subsequent conduct of Wilfred entirely contradicted his statement. Thus was the villain caught in the net of his more wily companion, and he was condemned and executed. A few whispers, indeed, were in circulation—a few suspicions excited, but none breathed them aloud. The disappearance of the Countess was strange and unaccountable; but after awhile even this ceased to be a subject of wonder. The castle remained a disfigured mass of ruins—nor would Wilfred ever permit it to be repaired. On becoming the acknowledged heir to his brother's title and estates, he removed to the most distant situated in the Black Forest, on the confines of Switzerland. A settled melancholy appeared to have taken possession of him, which nothing had the power to divert. At times he would even exhibit symptoms of insanity which alarmed his attendants, but they were accounted for by the unfortunate circumstances attending his brother's death, which evidently weighed on his mind, and the increasing habits of intemperance, in which he indulged, as if to drown thought.

Many years passed, during which nothing worthy of note occurred, until Count Ravensberg's introduction at Hohenstein, while on a visit at his new friend's, Count Wolstein, when he was much struck by the coincidence attached to the mystery of Adelaide's birth and her name, and he desired Hoffman to glean all the intelligence he could concerning her, from the domestics in the castle—at the same time to be silent on the subject of the Countess. Hoffman obeyed him, and when he repeated to him the story of the strange lady, he felt convinced that she could have been no other than the unfortunate Countess Adelaide, though how she could have reached so far as Hohenstein, or what had become of her guide, remained a mystery. He recognised the ring on the finger of young Adelaide, but he was surprised that she bore no resemblance to either of her parents, and he expressed his disbelief to Hoffman of her being in reality their child. This opinion was confirmed by his proposing for her hand soon afterwards, and his evading all conversation with Hoffman respecting her from that period. For what intention the Count had come in such secrecy to the castle, on this evening, Hoffman knew not. He was ordered to await his lord with the boat, which he did accordingly, until summoned to attend him in his dying moments.

"I have now repeated to you all that I know respecting my lord's history," continued the man rising; "it remains with you to judge whether he was guilty of being accessory to his brother's murder or no. I confess I never thought so until I heard his ravings tonight, which I fear corroborate the statement made by Hartz Wolfstein; but if ever I behold my