

with all unconfessed still. I cannot die with this crime on my soul. I must reveal the miserable secret that has eaten away my very life."

Mrs. Tom listened to this unexpected outburst in wonder and amazement.

"Listen," said the man, turning to Mrs. Tom, and speaking rapidly in his excitement. "One night, about thirteen years ago, as I was returning home from my day's labor, I was overtaken by a violent storm. I was a considerable distance from home, and there was no house near where I could remain for the night. It was intensely dark, and I staggered blindly along in the drenching rain until, by a sudden flash of lightning, I chanced to espy the ruins of an old house, that had long been deserted. Thankful even for this refuge from the storm, I entered it, and, retreating into a corner, I sat on an empty box waiting for the tempest to abate.

"Suddenly I heard the sound of voices in an adjoining room, talking in low whispers. There were, at the time, certain suspicious characters prowling about, and the unexpected sound startled me. Still, I felt they might be only weather-bound wayfarers, like myself; but, before joining them, I thought it might be prudent to discover who they were, and I cautiously drew near the wall to listen.

"The partition dividing us was thin, and in the lull of the storm I could catch here and there a few words of their conversation.

"'I tell you he killed himself,' said one. 'I saw him. He stabbed him to the heart with his knife.'

"'What does he intend doing with—?' Here a sudden rush of wind and rain prevented me from hearing what followed.