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THE LAST WARNING.

CHAPTER I.

'And *must* you go to-night, Frederick?'

'Mother, I must I have staked my honor, and it must be redeemed.'

'O, Frederick, these companions of yours are leading you astray, be assured they are; and when ruin stares you in the face—when you have squandered wealth and health over the gaming table, you will own the truth of my words.'

'This is foolish, mother, they have no power to lead me; what I do is my own free will.'

'You are wrong, my son; they are as Ivies to the sapling—gradually twining themselves about you, and, inch by inch, destroying you with their poisonous influence. Would that my words!'

'This is the senseless snivelling of old age; I tell you mother: I *will* have the money!'

'I dare not let you have it Frederick.'

'I will take no denial; 'tis only a few dollars, and to-morrow I may be able to repay you.'

'It is not the parting with my money that I mind, Frederick, but your evil courses!'

'Am I to have what I want, or must I *force* it from you?'

'There—take my purse; you asked for ten dollars, it contains twice the sum. But promise me, my son that this shall be your last night from home.'

'I have already promised it.'

'See that the promise is kept. How little are we certain that this might not be my *last warning*.'

'The young man to whom these words were addressed paused a moment on the threshold—but evil thoughts had gained assendancy, and he departed.'

CHAPTER II.

The next scene to which we shall introduce the reader, is a magnificent structure, reared for the amusement of the depraved and dissipated, and for the emolument of the proprietor. Its exterior is not much to view; it is in the interior that the exquisite workmanship of the artisan has been lavished. On either side of the principle room—which is a long, lofty, and well ventilated hall—a row of polished mirrors, in massive frames of gilt wood, meet the eye.—A small oblong table, with a surface of variegated marble, is placed under each mirror, and above, the walls are decorated with naked figures, and exhibit scenes well suited to the lascivious propensities of the frequenters of the place. The ceiling is supported by marble pilasters with bronzed cornices, and is covered with a variety of devices; while, at the eastern end of the hall, a platform is fitted up, on which stand several musical instruments for the pleasure of the guests. Further on, in several roomy apartments, are stationed billiard tables, an alley for bowling and other objects of a similar nature. Liquors of every grade and quality, cigars, cards, dice and dominoes are furnished, and every thing that can please the eye, ear, and taste, is afforded you.

It was to this place that Frederick Thornton directed his steps. The moment he entered, several young men, on

whose face the results of dissipation was indelibly stamped, rose from a table and welcomed him.

'What has kept you so long, Fred? We were about giving you up,' said one of the party.

'Some little business at home detained me longer than I intended. I am here at last, however. How stands the rhino to night?'

'Fairly, fairly,' was the reply. 'I see you are eager to recover the ground you lost last night. You shall soon have a chance. What say you, boys—shall we game it?'

The answer was given by all in the affirmative—punches were called for—dice were already upon the table—and the game was commenced.

For some time the play was even—luck sided with neither of the players. Presently, however, Thornton, who had been anxiously waiting for a chance, began to win. Game after game was played—the heap of silver was accumulating every moment by his side, and success seemed to be his, when a chance throw by his opponent once more changed the tide, and stripped him of all he had won! Then Thornton's anxiety knew no bounds; stake after stake he made, and glass after glass he drained as he beheld the money given him by his mother dwindling to the end. At last he started up and plunging his hand into his pocket drew forth a five dollar bill—the last he had—threw it with an imprecation upon the table.

'There is the last I have—you must have that also, I suppose,' he exclaimed. Another throw, and Thornton was penniless!

'There is cheating somewhere,' exclaimed Thornton, 'those dice are loaded!'

'How?' exclaimed his adversary, as the whole rose from the table.

'The last throw was a dishonest one, I expect? You have loaded dice about you!'

'Sir?' was the reply of the winner.

Thornton sprang forward and with a blow felled his adversary to the ground. The friends of the fallen one then interfered but it was too late for further injury—he was dead! An unlucky blow near the temple had killed him.

Thornton did not attempt to escape; he was as one in a stupor, and might almost have been taken for the dead person, so pale was the hue of his countenance. He submitted to be secured and led away from the scene of his folly.

CHAPTER IV.

Two figures were in the cell of the city prison—the mother and the son. The effects of the liquor he had drank were intirely dispelled, and his mind was free to contemplate the dreadful doom that awaited him.

Oh! Frederick, my son, is it thus I find?—Had you but heeded my innumerable warnings you had not been here.'

'Do not hesitate mother; I *am* a murderer, but the deed was committed in a fit of frenzy, and I repented it as soon as committed.'

The bolt was removed from the socket to admit the en-