

FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

There were six of us seated before a blazing fire, which cast a generous glare into the otherwise unlighted room. Outside a winter storm beloveted over the chimneys, and beat seriously at the window-panes. Aftar off we could hear the gust roaring among the naked hills, now plunging shrilly through the skeleton branches of the trees, and again whirling overhead with a weird shouting sound, that might well have proceeded from the throats of evil things riding upon the winds. The ghostly spirit of the storm seemed to have penetrated even into our comfortable circle, for we had got, I know not how, upon that most dismal of all subjects—death.

"The woman raised her eyes as we approached, but gave no further heed to us. Apparently her great sorrow had driven her distracted. She was a young creature hardly twenty, I should judge, and despite the signs of hardship and sorrow visible on her features, very beautiful. Her form was slight and even attenuated, but even in its shabby dress preserved traces of former refinement.

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"Gentlemen," said he gravely, "no man cares to gain for himself the reputation of liar or a maniac. Yet that is exactly what you are pressing both of us to do. I have no doubt that the experience which I am about to relate and in which my friend the doctor bore no unimportant part, will appear absolutely incredible to persons of your advanced views."

"Who are you?" said he, "and what has happened?" "He is dead—dead!" she muttered, hoarsely.

"Perhaps it is not so bad as that," he rejoined. "Tell us all about it. We are friends, my dear, and medical men, and may be able to assist you."

"He died this morning, before my very eyes," she moaned, "died, oh, my God! of starvation. And I never knew he was starving himself, or my sake. Oh, my husband, why did you not let me die with you? And she threw herself across the body, sobbing as if her poor heart would break.

"The doctor stooped down and felt at the heart of the prostrate man. 'Yes, dead,' he whispered, motioning me to imitate his example.

"How long I had slumbered I knew not, when I found myself sitting upright peering into the darkness around me. It seemed to me that some one had uttered a wild, appealing cry in the very portals of my ears. For some moments I sat so, wondering and anxious. Then I reflected that as there could be no human being in the neighborhood beside ourselves, the sound which had alarmed me must have been the shriek of some bird or animal.

"What can it be?" I asked, anxiously; "surely, nothing human; no one lives in this region for miles around. Perhaps it is a wild-cat."