

THE NECROMANCER ;

OR,

GHOST *versus* GRAMARYE.

BY ISABELLA F. ROMER, AUTHOR OF "STURMER."

"Is not this something more than phantasy?"—HAMLET.

"THEN I am to infer, from all that you have just advanced, that you really believe in ghosts?"

"Stop, my dear friend! I did not go quite so far, although I will admit that a belief in supernatural visitations does not appear to me to be incompatible with the exercise of reason; nor ought it to be advanced as a proof of ignorant credulity or vulgar superstition in those persons who own their credence in them. Everything is possible with the Allwise Being, whose ways are inscrutable to our limited comprehensions. The traditions of all nations and all religions contain accounts of apparitions, ghostly warnings, and revelations, mysteriously connected with the world of spirits; and I myself have seen—"

"My dear Baron, if *you* assure me that in your sober senses, and in a waking mood, you have seen a spirit, my incredulity will certainly be greatly staggered, and I shall almost be prepared to admit that such things may be; for I know you to be the soul of truth."

"Softly, softly! Had you not interrupted me, you would already be aware that I meant only to tell you that I had seen, and been well acquainted with, a person who had witnessed a supernatural appearance of so awful a nature, that he would have discarded it from his mind as the coinage of an over-excited imagination, had not other persons been present at the time, to whose senses the shadowy visitant was equally apparent, and had not circumstances borne out the strange and fearful mystery developed by it."

The preceding conversation took place one winter's evening, in the dark oak-panelled hall of an antique castle, on the German border of the Boden See (Lake of Constance), not far from the little peninsula which is occupied by the fortified town of Lindau, and commanding a view across the broad expanse of waters of the opposite shores of Thurgau, and of the snow-covered Alps of St. Gall and Appenzell, which form its magnificent back-ground. The interlocutors were an old Bavarian nobleman, proprietor of the mansion, and a Tyrolese gentleman, who was his guest.

"For Heaven's sake," resumed the latter, "let me hear your story: I have a passion for these sort of horrors; and the time, the season, and the place we are in, are all admirably suited for a narrative of the supernatural school. I think, however, it will go hard with me if I do not account for your marvels by natural causes."

"You shall judge," rejoined the noble *châtelain*. "All I ask is, that you do not interrupt me in my recital. The story was related to me very many years ago; and I have not alluded to it for such a length of time, that it will be necessary for me to concentrate my recollections of its various details in order to render them intelligible to you."

Then passing his hand over his forehead, and silently collecting his thoughts for a few moments, he thus proceeded:—

“The person from whose lips I received the details I am now about to relate to you was a countryman of my own, named Waldkirch, and a disciple of the famous Cagliostro. He had passed part of his youth in Paris at the period when that extraordinary empiric was the lion of the day, and had become deeply imbued with the mystical arts with which he intrallied the imaginations of the lovers of the wild and marvellous. Every one who has heard of Cagliostro has heard of the startling revelations which he made to various persons respecting future events of their lives, through the medium of magic mirrors. My friend Waldkirch had applied himself so successfully to this peculiar branch of the *black art*, that he had become nearly as great an adept in phantasmagoria as his celebrated master, or even as that prince of necromancers, Cornelius Agrippa.”

“Pardon me for this once interrupting you,” said the Tyrolian. “I thought it was of real *bonâ fide* phantoms you were to discourse, and not of optical delusions such as come under the denomination of phantasmagoria, and the shadowy deceptions conjured up by such a charlatan as Cagliostro.”

“And so it is,” returned the old Bavarian; “and my phantom will appear in the proper place, if you will allow me to proceed uninterruptedly in a narrative, the interest of which I should be unwilling to mar by confused or broken details. Waldkirch travelled for some time through the southern states of Europe, after his departure from Paris, and during his stay in Sicily became acquainted with the Conte Felice Sammartino, a young nobleman of the greatest promise, the only surviving child of the Duke Sammartino, who was himself the representative of one of the wealthiest and most ancient families in the island. This young man became so interested in the occult sciences, which formed the favourite pursuit of Waldkirch, that he passed much of his time in his society, and finally induced him to visit his father, the Duke, at a magnificent villa which he possessed on the sea coast, about five leagues from Palermo, where he had lived in almost monastic seclusion, since the loss of his eldest son, who had been torn from the bosom of his family in the most afflicting and inexplicable manner.

“The Duke Sammartino’s family had consisted of two sons, the youngest of whom (the Conte Felice) had originally been destined for the ecclesiastical state, in order that the undivided wealth and estates of that noble house might be settled upon his elder brother, the Marchese Gaetano Sammartino; that being one of the conditions upon which depended his marriage with the Marchesina Lucrezia Parisio, an orphan heiress, to whom he had been betrothed while they were both children. Although their projected union had originated in family conventions, which had decided that the riches of the Sammartini and the Parisii should form one *apanage*,—and although, as is generally the case in such arrangements, the inclinations of the young people had been the last thing taken into consideration by the directing elders,—yet, by a happy chance, so strong a sympathy sprung up between Lucrezia and Gaetano, that they were lovers while they were yet children, and would mutually have chosen each other as the partner of their future existence, even if their parents had not already decided upon their union. Three years’ absence from Sicily made by Gaetano,

during which period he visited the principal courts of Europe, instead of diminishing the ardent affection they had so early evinced for each other, appeared to impart to it increased intensity ; and no sooner had the young Marchese returned to Palermo than preparations for the solemnization of their nuptials were forthwith commenced with extraordinary magnificence. All that was noblest in Palermo had been invited to assist at the ceremony, and a succession of fêtes to be given by the different connexions of the youthful bride and bridegroom were to follow it ; when, the day but one before that appointed for the marriage, Gaetano suddenly disappeared, and was seen no more !

“ Since his return to Palermo, he had been in the habit of going almost every evening to the villa I have already alluded to, (the one inhabited by the Duke Sammartino when Walldkirch first became acquainted with the family,) that he might superintend the preparations that were in progress for the reception of his bride, who was to pass the first days of their marriage in that beautiful retreat with him. On the evening of his disappearance, he had proceeded thither as usual ; but the night passed away, and he did not return to Palermo, — the morning came, and still he was absent. Expresses were sent in all directions in search of him, but in vain. None of his attendants had accompanied him to the villa ; those of the Duke who remained in permanence there had beheld him depart as usual ; and this is all that was ever known on the subject.

“ To describe the consternation and despair into which the fair young bride and the whole of the Sammartino family were plunged, when hour after hour passed away, and no trace could be discovered of the lost Gaetano, would be impossible. On the day following his disappearance, it became known that an Algerine corsair had been seen off the coast on the fatal evening, and that some of the crew had landed in a boat, and carried off several of the inhabitants of those shores. The Duke immediately ordered two of the fast-sailing vessels called *speronari* to be equipped and sent in pursuit of the pirates, and Felice insisted upon embarking in one of them. But a violent gale of wind dispersed the little squadron off Trapani ; one of the *speronari* became disabled, and was obliged to return to Palermo ; the other one, containing Felice, with difficulty entered the port of Trapani, where they heard that a Barbary corsair had been seen to founder the preceding day, and all on board perished. This intelligence was but too well calculated to extinguish all rational hopes of Gaetano’s still surviving, which had been connected with the supposition of his capture by the Algerines ; yet so unwilling were the bereaved family to give themselves up to despair, that they still clung to the possibility that the vessel which had been seen to go down at sea might not have been the one in which the unfortunate youth had been carried off ; and the Duke, accordingly, instituted inquiries all along the Barbary coast, tending to ascertain whether Gaetano had been carried into slavery thither, and in that case offering an immense ransom for his liberation.

“ Nearly three years were thus spent in unavailing researches, and they were at length forced to resign themselves to the belief, that if the ocean had not buried in its unfathomable depths the object of their painful solicitude, he must have fallen a victim to the barbarous treatment of the pirates, and perished at their hands. And could anything have embittered the utter despair which succeeded to the clinging tenacity of their long-cherished hopes, it must have been the cruel un-

certainly in which they remained concerning the catastrophe which had deprived them of one so amiable and so beloved.

“The destinies of Felice, however, were materially altered by the death of his brother; for, as he by that event became sole heir of the Sammartino family, he was emancipated from the life of celibacy to which the ecclesiastical profession would have doomed him, and it became the absorbing wish of the Duke that the hand of Lucrezia should be transferred to his surviving son, and that the union of the two families, which had been decided upon for so many years, should be thus ratified. One person alone obstinately objected to this substitution; and that person was the fair young mourner, whose widowed heart recoiled with horror from the idea of breaking its faith to the lost Gaetano.

“Felice, although captivated by the beauty and virtues of the young heiress, and sensitively alive to all the advantages of such an alliance, refused, with a noble generosity which did honour to his feelings, to press his suit with her as soon as he became aware of her strong objections to another marriage; he even carried his disinterestedness so far as to advocate her cause *against himself* with his family, and with her guardians (of whom his father was one), and generously protected her against the solicitations with which they persecuted her. ‘Lucrezia is right!’ he would often say; ‘who knows but that my brother still lives? and would it not be dreadful to take advantage of the uncertainty that involves that question, in order to deprive him for ever of that which was dearest to him in the world! Could I, after co-operating in so culpable an action, dare to raise my voice to Heaven, and supplicate for his restoration to us? And, *if*, indeed, he no longer exists, how can we better honour his memory than by abstaining from filling up the void which his death has left amongst us—by sacrificing all our hopes upon his tomb,—by respecting as sacred all that ever belonged to him?’

“This exaltation of sentiment, however, did not coincide with the Duke’s feelings and wishes, and all that Felice could obtain from him was, that he should refrain from molesting Lucrezia for another year, during which time he continued his researches for his lost brother with unabated ardour, but with no happy result. As for Lucrezia, touched by the delicacy of Felice’s conduct towards her, she felt herself constrained to respect and admire the man she could not love, and insensibly a tender pity succeeded in her bosom to the profound indifference she had previously evinced for him. She could not remain blind to the extent of his passion for her, nor insensible to the magnanimity with which he protected her from the importunities of his family; every new victory that he obtained over himself rendered him more estimable in her eyes; every fresh sacrifice of his dearest wishes to her peace of mind was eagerly advanced by the Duke as a motive for softening the inflexibility of her resolves.

“It was at this particular stage of the affair that Waldkirch appeared at Palermo, and was invited by Felice to visit the Duke at his villa. The presence of the German stranger there formed an interesting epoch in the existence of the melancholy circle; his acquirements were varied and captivating; the exaltation of his ideas; the mysticism with which his conversation was tinged, and vague hints, darkly thrown out, of supernatural powers exercised by him—powers that could bring him into communion with beings of another world,—

invested him with a sort of solemn interest in their eyes. He soon divined their characters, — entered into their individual feelings, — became the confidant of each, — and gradually acquired a dominion over the minds of all, for which it would have been difficult for them to account. The Duke especially, whose mental powers had become weakened by grief, succumbed to the influence exercised by this extraordinary man, and unresistingly admitted the mysterious inferences thrown out by him of an intercourse with supernatural agencies ; Waldkirch became his oracle, — and the heart of the bereaved father thrilled with an awful hope that, through his ministry, the fate of his lost son might be revealed to him.

“At last he ventured to give utterance to those hopes, and one day throwing himself into the arms of his new friend, besought him to exert his powers in order to throw some light upon the inexplicable disappearance of Gaetano.

“‘My friend,’ he said, ‘although the Church of Rome brands with the epithets of *sorcery* and *malefice* the science you have mastered, and threatens with excommunication not only those who practise it, but those who have recourse to it, yet I cannot resist the impulse which drives me to brave that contingent penalty, that, through your exertions, I may obtain some certain insight into a mystery which has desolated my domestic happiness. You see the wretched state of mind into which we are all plunged : Lucrezia’s grief for the loss of my poor Gaetano has so far yielded to the influence of time, that it has softened into a calm and tender regret, which would ultimately leave her willing to favour the addresses of Felice, could her conscience be satisfied as to the certainty of his brother’s death. Felice, on his part, is consuming away, — his health and courage sinking under the perpetual struggle to which his feelings are exposed by the intensity of his passion for Lucrezia, and his respect for her scruples. As for myself, you behold an unfortunate father, the representative of a noble and time-honoured race, who sees his name about to be extinguished, — his hopes of living in the children of his children sacrificed to the dreadful doubt that hangs like a cloud over the fate of one of them ! Could that doubt be but dispelled, all would be well. Waldkirch, you understand me ! have you the power of raising the veil which conceals the secrets of the world of spirits from the uninitiated ? does your science embrace the possibility of ascertaining whether Gaetano be alive or dead ? and, if so, can you bring conviction home to the minds of those so deeply interested in knowing the truth ?’

“Waldkirch fearlessly assured him that he could.

“Scarcely was this interview over, when Felice, unconscious of the conversation that had just passed, sought his friend, and flinging himself into an arm-chair with every demonstration of despair, exclaimed,

“‘Waldkirch, I can bear this no longer ! I must quit this spot, — I must leave my country.’

“‘Gracious Heaven !’ exclaimed Waldkirch, ‘what has happened ?’

“‘My friend — my dear friend !’ replied the young man, ‘in vain have I struggled against my love for Lucrezia ! it has overcome my firmest resolution to smother it within my own bosom ; every day increases the intensity of my feelings ; and if I remain longer here, I shall not be able to resist persecuting her with the expression of them.’

“‘Be assured,’ said Waldkirch, ‘that the heart of the Marchesina

will at last pronounce itself in your favour ; and that she will yield to the wishes of her friends, and bestow her hand upon you.’

“ ‘Never !’ cried Felice, — ‘never, as long as she retains a vestige of hope that Gaetano still lives !’

“ ‘You believe, then, that an awful certainty would decide her ?’ inquired Waldkirch ; ‘and, what if I tell you that it would be possible for me to bring that certainty home to her conviction ?’

“ ‘What do you mean ?’ exclaimed Felice hastily, and fixing his eyes with terrified surprise upon the countenance of his friend.

“ ‘I mean,’ was the answer, ‘that it is possible to compel the disembodied spirit to appear once more upon earth ; and, if ever terrestrial interests could warrant the peace of the tomb being thus invaded, it would be in a case like the present, where the tranquillity of so many persons depends upon the truth being incontrovertibly established.’

“ ‘No, no !’ exclaimed Felice, shuddering, and turning to a death-like paleness, ‘I cannot countenance so impious a measure ! In the name of Heaven, say no more of it, Waldkirch ! Let me still be the victim. Destined from my earliest infancy to be sacrificed to my brother’s aggrandisement and happiness, let me to the last fulfil my melancholy doom !’ And, hiding his face in his hands, he wept bitterly.

“Waldkirch reasoned long and eloquently with Felice upon his scruples ; and, giving him at last to understand that the experiment which he proposed would be merely a pious fraud, intended to bring certainty to the minds of the Duke and Lucrezia, (by convincing them through an optical delusion, of the reality of that melancholy termination to Gaetano’s existence, which had long since ceased to be a doubt to all but to those two persons,) he succeeded in obtaining his adhesion to the plan he meditated. But it was necessary also to obtain that of Lucrezia ; and Waldkirch found that to be the most difficult part of his undertaking. At last, upon receiving from him a solemn assurance that, if her betrothed lover still lived, the conjuration would produce no result, a reluctant assent was wrung from her, and only granted in the lingering hope that the failure of Waldkirch’s experiment would give weight to her fond expectation of once more beholding the living Gaetano, and authorise her to persist in preserving inviolate the faith she had plighted to her first and only love.

“As soon as the unanimous consent of the family had been obtained, Waldkirch required that a delay of several days should be granted to him, in order to prepare, by reference to his books of gramarye, for the great undertaking. During his *séjour* at the Duke’s, he had had ample opportunity of making himself master of every detail relative to the appearance and manner of the unfortunate Gaetano ; a full-length portrait of him, which had been terminated but a few days previous to his disappearance, enabled the adept to impart to the shadowy vision which he was preparing the closest resemblance to the ill-fated youth ; and the supposed manner of his death decided him as to the way in which he should represent that catastrophe to have happened.

“At the expiration of ten days Waldkirch’s preparations were terminated, and he announced that in the evening the mysterious question was to be resolved. Fasting, prayers, and vigils, added to the mystical communications of the German necromancer, had produced the desired effect upon the minds of his friends ; wound up to a state

of fanatical credulity in his powers, the emotions they evinced ended by inflaming his own imagination ; and the state of nervous excitement to which he was raised contributed powerfully to the illusion which he wished to produce. In the dimly-lighted chamber of their guest, the lower end of which was buried in shadow, the Sammartino family were assembled : Waldkirch had neglected nothing that was likely to add to the mysterious horror of the scene that was to be enacted ; an Æolian harp (an invention then unknown in that part of the world, and specially reserved by him for his exhibitions of magic,) had been placed outside of one of the windows, and the wild, unearthly tones it gave forth as the night-wind swept across its strings, seemed to the trembling listeners to be the wailings of a spirit in purgatory. They drew more closely together, and Waldkirch, stepping forth from the group, in a solemn voice adjured the spirit of the departed Gaetano to appear to them, and reveal the manner in which death had overtaken him.

“ Scarcely had the words been pronounced when a blue and ghastly light partially illuminated the obscure end of the chamber, and discovered a large mirror, from the surface of which a dense mist slowly rolled away, and revealed to the astonished gazers the form of Gaetano Sammartino, clothed in the identical dress which he had worn on the night of his disappearance, his hands heavily fettered, and water streaming from his hair and garments, as he lay stretched in utter lifelessness upon the sea shore ! While their eyes, as though fascinated with horror, remained fixed upon the apparition, the surge appeared to roll slowly over it, and bear it away to its ocean grave. The mist again spread over the surface of the mirror, and all was shrouded in darkness. Not a word had been uttered during this strange scene ; breathless silence had attested to the awe with which it had pervaded the minds of the excited family ; but at the termination of it, a cry of anguish burst from the lips of the heart-stricken Lucrezia, and she fell fainting into the arms of the venerable Duke.

“ A dangerous illness was the consequence of the painful emotions she had endured on the evening of Waldkirch’s exhibition of his supposed unearthly powers ; but from that date no further doubt remained upon her mind as to the fate of her lover ; and to the fluctuating hopes which had so long tortured her, succeeded a calm resignation which betokened, at no very distant period, a still happier and brighter state of feeling—so true it is that the worst certainty is less intolerable than a state of suspense.

“ Meanwhile the Sammartino family publicly attested to their belief in the death of Gaetano by going into mourning for him ; masses were said for the repose of his soul ; a monument erected to his memory in the chapel belonging to the family in the church of La Martorana, in Palermo ; and finally, Felice assumed his brother’s title, and from thenceforth became the Marchese Sammartino. Waldkirch had quitted Sicily shortly after his successful stratagem, and, after having passed some months at Naples was preparing to leave it for Rome, when he received a letter from Felice, announcing to him that his fondest hopes were about to be realized, and inviting him to return immediately to Palermo, that he might be present at his marriage with Lucrezia, and witness an event which he had been so instrumental in bringing to pass.

“ Waldkirch lost no time in obeying the summons ; he embarked for Sicily, but, the wind being contrary, the vessel did not reach Pa-

lermo until the eve of the day on which the nuptials were to take place; and, as Lucrezia had expressed a desire that the ceremony should be solemnized in the chapel of the Duke's villa, in the presence only of the nearest relations of the two families,—and that it should be followed by no rejoicings save a *fête champêtre* given to the tenantry, in order to distinguish it from the courtly splendours that had been prepared for her first bridal,—Waldkirch proceeded direct to the villa, and arrived there just in time to accompany his friend to the altar.

“The noble pleasure-grounds and gardens had been thrown open to the numerous peasantry belonging to the Duke's estates; and the lovely young bride, leaning upon the arm of the happy Felice, whose countenance was radiant with an expression of triumphant love, mingled with the gay throng, receiving their respectful felicitations, and acknowledging them with graceful affability. After the *bal champêtre* (which commenced on the smooth lawn at sunset) had terminated, a plentiful repast was served in the great hall of the villa, to which all the rustic guests were indiscriminately admitted, as well as the various strangers who had gathered together from the neighbouring *paesi* to witness the rejoicings. Among these latter, the noble hosts had remarked a person whose presence seemed ill suited to the joyful occasion; for he wore a dress peculiar to one of those confraternities which abound in the southern states of Italy, and whose members, in observance of a vow, devote themselves to attending condemned malefactors to the place of execution;—a dress which not only effectually conceals the countenance of the individual wearing it, but imposes a solemn prohibition against his being spoken to,—I mean the habit of a Grey Penitent. The ghastly fashion of the garb, the long shapeless robe of livid grey loosely shrouding a form of almost shadowy thinness,—the close capuchon covering the head and face, with two holes cut for the eyes, which invested it with the character of a death's head,—contrasted strangely with the gay holiday dresses of the Sicilian peasants, and the more costly elegance of the bridal party, and forcing upon the imagination images of suffering and death, caused the hearts of all who had remarked the unseasonable guest to sink with undefined apprehension. This vague terror was more particularly experienced by Lucrezia and Felice, whose glances were, in despite of themselves, strangely fascinated towards the unwelcome visitant; and each time that they gazed upon him they beheld his lack-lustre eyes intently fixed upon them.

“At last, towards midnight, the crowd dispersed, the orchestra became silent, the tables in the banqueting-hall were abandoned by their late noisy occupants, and nobody remained there but the immediate family of the bride and bridegroom, Waldkirch, and the Grey Penitent (who had remained immoveably fixed in the recess of a window, having by signs declined sharing in the banquet).

“‘My children,’ said the Duke, looking at the young couple with glistening eyes, ‘the fondest wish of my heart is realized by your union, and my grey hairs will now descend with satisfaction to the grave. May my blessing rest upon your heads, and prosper you! My friends,’ he continued, turning to his few remaining guests, ‘before we retire, let us drink to the happiness of Felice and Lucrezia!’

“At these words the Grey Penitent emerged from the recess where he had remained half concealed by the draperies of the window-curtain, and advancing with measured, noiseless steps towards the table, seized

upon one of the flowing goblets that had just been filled out, and raised it to a level with his lips.

“‘Have you no other name to pledge?’ said he, in hollow accents. ‘And *Gaetano*, where is he?’

“The Duke started at this abrupt allusion to his dead son, and an expression of sadness overclouded his countenance as he replied, ‘Alas! my beloved *Gaetano* is lost to us for ever on earth. You do not seem to be aware, reverend stranger, that he has been taken from us to that world from whence there is no return.’

“‘And yet,’ continued the stranger, in the same accents, ‘if the last voice that vibrated on his ear could *now* be heard, he would not remain deaf to the call! Old man!’ he continued, turning to the Duke, ‘bid thy son, *Felice*, call upon his brother’s name!’

“‘What does he mean?’ murmured the affrighted group; while *Felice*, pale as death, grasped the arm of *Waldkirch* for support, and *Lucrezia* leaned half fainting upon the shoulder of her father-in-law.

“‘Who pledges me?’ resumed the terrible stranger, looking around, ‘To the memory of *Gaetano*! and let all those who loved him follow my example.’ And he raised the goblet to his lips.

“‘Whoever you may be, reverend penitent,’ said the Duke in a tremulous voice, ‘you have pronounced a name which has insured you a welcome here. Approach, my friends! let us not be outdone by a stranger; let us all drink to the memory of our beloved *Gaetano*!’ And at this appeal, the glasses were raised with trembling hands to the lips of all present, with *one* exception, and replaced empty upon the table.

“‘There still remains one full goblet,’ said the penitent; ‘’tis that of *Felice*! wherefore does he not drink to the memory of his brother?’

“He held the wine-cup towards him; *Felice* shrunk back from the invitation, pale and trembling, his forehead covered with cold drops of agony, his eyes wildly distended; but a gesture of entreaty from his father seemed to overcome his repugnance, and seizing the goblet from the hand of the Grey Penitent, he stammered forth, ‘To the memory of my dear *Gaetano*!’ and replaced it upon the table untouched.

“‘*Tis the voice of my assassin!*’ exclaimed the Grey Penitent, in an accent which thrilled all present with horror; and, tearing open his garments, the cowl fell back from his head, and revealed the well-remembered lineaments of the unfortunate *Gaetano*, stamped with the ghastly characteristics of death, the breast and throat perforated with gaping wounds!

“At this horrid spectacle, all those whom terror had not transfixed to the spot, fled shrieking from the hall; and *Waldkirch*, who for the first time beheld the realisation of that which his arts had so often simulated, fell to the ground in a swoon.

“When he recovered his senses, the phantom had disappeared, the guests had dispersed, and he found himself stretched upon a couch in his own room, with his servant watching beside him.”

Here the Tyrolian, who had during the preceding recital been smoking very assiduously, laid down his *meerschaum*, and interrupted his friend.

“Do you not think it possible,” he inquired, “that your necromancer, Monsieur de *Waldkirch*, might have exceeded the bounds of temperance at the wedding-supper, and that the apparition of the Grey

Penitent was conjured up by the fumes of the libations he had poured out to the black-eyed Sicilian girls?"

"He would fain have believed so," replied the Bavarian, "and have contemplated the whole occurrence as nothing more than a distempered dream; but the state into which the unfortunate Felice had been thrown, deprived him of the possibility of a doubt. A prey to the most horrible convulsions, the unhappy bridegroom only recovered his consciousness to ask for a confessor, with whom he remained shut up for several hours. What passed between them never transpired, for the seal of confession is sacred; and Felice, who never arose from the bed to which he had been carried from the banqueting-hall on that fatal night, expired without proffering a word to any other human being. The Duke did not long survive him, and bequeathed the whole of his possessions to the virgin bride of his two sons."

"And, what became of her?" interrupted the Tyrolian.

"She founded a convent on the site of the villa where the strange events I have just related had occurred, and, taking the veil, ended her days there. In laying the foundations of a magnificent chapel, which she caused to be built in expiation of the horrible crime which had involved the extinction of the Sammartino family, an old dry well, the entrance of which had apparently been bricked up for several years, and covered over with brushwood, was discovered, and from its depths was drawn forth the skeleton of a man, bearing upon the third finger of his left hand the gold *alliance* with which Gaetano Sammartino had been betrothed to Lucrezia Parisio!"

"Umph!" ejaculated the Tyrolian, with a most provoking expression of incredulity. "Take notice, my dear Baron, that I do not attempt to dispute the fact of the murder, but I take up my position against the genuineness of the ghost; and now I will tell you what my actual impressions are. That Felice murdered his brother, I look upon as an undisputed fact; two strong motives impelled him to that horrid deed,—first, to save himself from becoming a priest, and lastly, that he might marry a beautiful young heiress, with whom he had fallen in love. It is natural to suppose that he confessed his crime to his spiritual director; and my opinion is that that reverend personage, disapproving of the marriage, and not daring to prevent it by betraying the secrets of confession to the family of the delinquent, enacted the part of the ghost, that he might terrify the conscience of the murderer into an avowal of his crime. Did this supposition never present itself to the mind of your friend, Waldkirch, who himself was such an adept in practising upon the credulity of his dupes by presenting to them ghosts and goblins of his own manufacture?"

"I fancy not," replied the old Bavarian gravely, "for I know it to be a truth that so *serious* an impression did it produce upon his mind, that from that day Waldkirch abjured the black art, and everything connected with the delusions of necromancy, and that, like Prospero, he broke his wand, and buried his book in the sea, 'deeper than did plummet ever sound!'"