

A Chamber of Horrors

From an account in an English magazine, of a trip to a Swiss village called St. Gingo, we extract the following description of "A Chamber of Horrors:"

"Not long after I took the chateau, an old servant who had lived there with its former tenant, a German count, directed my attention to a wall of great thickness, extending from the end of a small bedroom, about forty from the ground. According to him, the German nobleman had always slept in that chamber, which he allowed no one to enter, save in his presence. On himself it appeared to produce a strange effect, since, according to the servants, he always shuddered on passing the doorway, while his countenance assumed a sadder expression than ordinary. Whether, had the opportunity been offered him, he would, before his death, have lifted the veil from the chamber's mystery, the old domestic could not say, for he died suddenly of apoplexy, without leaving behind him, in writing, any clue to what had so long perplexed his dependents. When viewed from the court below, the ancient wall in a level with the chamber seemed to be built of large, loose stones, between the interstices of which swallows passed in and out. My curiosity being strongly excited, I went for a couple of workmen, and ordered them to make a perforation in the wall from the bed-chamber; but on taking down the painted canvas with which it was covered, this proved to be altogether unnecessary, since behind it there was a small door, which, on being pushed, swung back on its hinges.

Before proceeding any further, I dismissed the workmen, and ordering a candle to be brought, for the chamber was pitch dark, entered alone. The air, close and heavy, was impregnated, as I thought, with the odor of deceased animal substances, which immediately proved to be the case. Before me, on an antiquated bed, lay the body of a woman, shriveled to a mummy, dressed in the forgotten fashion of a former age, with rings on its fingers, a necklace about the neck, and long pins of gold thrust through the hair. All around the body, the bed-clothes exhibited stains of blood. On one side of the bed I observed a dark coffer, worm-eaten, covered with dust, on lifting the lid of which, I saw the body of a man, with a poignard, which had probably passed through the heart, still sticking in it. The clenched hands lay one by the side, the other across the breast. A slouching hat, with a feather, covered part of the face; the dress was gorgeous, and the boots, apparently not at all decayed, intimated that the corpse was that of a military man. I called in the butler, showed him the contents of the chamber, and then inquired the age of the German count. 'He must,' the man replied, 'have been something over eighty.' 'Is there no tradition among the peasants,' I asked, 'about the doings of the inmates of the chateau before your time?' 'It is only said,' he replied, 'that for some years there was a great feasting and merriment, with a perpetual succession of guests, who hunted in the neighborhood, sailed in pleasure barges on the lake, made excursions among the Alps, and kept all the adjacent towns alive with their mirth and extravagance. On a sudden this ceased; the count dismissed nearly all his domestics, retaining only my father and two other men, while, thenceforward, no woman was ever permitted to enter the chateau. There were no children, and the lady was reported to have returned to her relatives in Germany.' 'To these facts,' I observed, 'we have the key now before us. There lies the count's lady, and here the paramour for whose sake she was slain.'"

Flag of Our Union, April 1, 1865