

itself with all its contents, pillows, bed-covering, and all, rushed down the opening. He sprang to the bedside and parted the curtains. Through the rising steam he could see distinctly below. There; just under the bed, was the great caldron he had heard them talking about. In its bubbling, seething waters plumped up and down the pillows and the sheets and coverlets. Had he been lying on that bed a moment before, he too would have been tumbling in that hissing hot caldron, as lifeless as the bedding. What a horrible death he had escaped!

But had he even yet escaped with his life? He gazed steadily down into the kitchen, trying to make out who were there. Who was that creature beside the caldron, with the huge ladle in her hand, about to thrust it into the great vessel? was that a woman? Never in his life had he seen a more hideous creature. The tusk-like teeth that made her mouth look so savage were not so abhorrent to him as the evil eyes with which the hag seemed to gloat upon her dreadful task. He gazed spell-bound.

The next moment a yell from that wretch aroused him to a sense of his danger and of the necessity of immediate action. "Pascal! Ahab!" she shouted, "He is not in here! He is alive! Quick! Kill him! Kill him!"

McAlpine dashed to the window. No, that would not do. Even if he leaped and was not hurt by the fall, he knew no way of exit from the inn-yard, no way of access to his horse. No, he must go the front way, meet them and fight them. His mind was made up in a moment. He drew the bolt and throwing open his door, rushed down the steps.

He had been too quick for Basmorne. He was down the steps before the innkeeper appeared on the scene. But at the foot of the stairs he was met by all three. Basmorne was in shirt and drawers and had a rapier in his hand. The negro Ahab was rushing from the far end of the piazza with a broadax in one hand and a butchers cleaver in the other. The terrible hag was in the doorway of the kitchen, and car-