

much, for the sea will likely have swept it away before morning, as the tide was coming in ; and even if it hasn't, who can identify a common little spade ? ”

The young sister made no answer. She drew her lips tightly together, and forced back some words she knew would but add to her sister's anxiety. But long after Frances Forth had left her, she lay awake, pale and trembling, thinking of the forgotten spade.

“ How could I ? how could I ? ” she moaned, in bitter self-reproach, tossing uneasily on her bed. “ And it may be traced—poor Frances does not know ; if it is, it will kill me, I think. I could but die.”

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## CHAPTER II.

### COLONEL FORTH.

THE morning was fine after the storm ; one of those blue-skied, bright mornings when the air is fresh and exhilarating, and the still wet leaves glisten in the sun. And at eight o'clock precisely, Colonel Forth, the occupier of the little house in the garden in Headfort's High-street, and the father of Frances and Ruth Forth, descended to the dining-room, and frowned severely when he found that breakfast was not as ready for him as he was for breakfast.

He was a widower with two daughters, and his marriage had been a mistake. He married a handsome girl for her beauty, and the beauty had soon waned, and the poor woman had nothing left to fall back upon, for she had neither mental nor monetary attractions, and the Colonel felt that he had thrown himself away, and was not above broadly hinting this to his wife. Perhaps she took his insinuations to heart ; but she died early, and then Colonel Forth grumbled at her loss.

When he had to seek a settled home for them after he left the regiment, he fixed on Headfort, for one reason because he had an old acquaintance living in the neighborhood, for another the houses were cheap there, and for a third the place possessed a fort and a small garrison. He had been a soldier all his life, and he felt that neither he nor the girls could exist without the familiar sights and

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