

A PLOT WITHIN A PLOT;

OR,

THE MYSTERIES OF THE DOG'S NOSE.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WE will venture to intrude on another conference, shorter and more guarded than the one we have just detailed:—one that took place between Delaval and his sister, while the former was in progress.

We have noted Marie's abrupt departure from the room when the words were uttered,—“The child found still alive is Madeline, your true niece.” Words cannot describe the wrath, the concentrated passion that burned luridly in the blazing eye, and hissed through the set teeth of the baffled and detected adventuress.

She stood there in the dim light of the corridor with her beautiful but evil face all convulsed, and her lithe, superb figure thrown into an attitude, graceful always, but speaking in every line the rigidity of rage.

For her counterpart, picture to yourself Athaliah, the Israelitish queen, when confronted by the child Joash,—escaped alone of all the murdered seed-royal,—with the nation around him, shouting, “God save the King!”

Was not this too a dethroned queen? Were it not for very pride, she too would have rent to tatters her silken robes, and shrieked out into the startled night, “Treason! treason!”

Delaval came upon her in her rage. She turned raving upon him; even lifted her hand to smite him. The raised hand was caught firmly! Coldly, almost contemptuously, he looked down upon her.

“Ah! no need to ask if you have failed!” said he, dragging her after him to her own apartment, flinging her down, almost with violence, on a lounge, and then closing and double-locking the door in the face of the inquisitive house-keeper, who had just been in time to catch the latter part of this scene.

“No need to tell me you have failed!” he repeated savagely. “All your pretty little finessing trickery, what is it worth now? Paf! It is gone, like that cobweb.”

He was striding up and down the carpet now, gesticulating, foaming, furious.