

"This is quite a Blue Beard affair Mary," I remarked to my languid friend. "Mr. Williams has always had something of a suspicious and ferocious aspect. I shall not be surprised if we come upon a closet of skeletons, or bodies of deceased wives preserved in large bottles of spirits of wine."

"Horrible," she interrupted; "you forget, too, that he has left us all his keys, and not forbidden us the use of any."

"There is something to be concealed, however," said her mother. "He has paid his addresses to you under an assumed name, and that has a suspicious look."

"Are you sure of it, mother?" exclaimed Mary, her face colouring with excitement. "How did you find it out?"

"Mrs. Wigley then recounted to us the discovery of the preceding day, which she had intended to keep secret till she heard from my husband; instead of the weeping and hysterics I expected, Mary displayed great energy of character.

"Nay then mother," she cried, "it is time for me to open my eyes; I will work with you now."

"So the search re-commenced with ardour, it was no longer in linen-chests and china-closets. We rifled desks and cabinets, and curiously constructed drawers, of their contents, and poured bundles upon bundles of letters and papers into Mary's lap; we found banking accounts and cheque-books, and indications of wealth; deeds and wills, and rolls of yellow parchment tied up with red tape; but still nothing to satisfy our curiosity. Our labour continued unintermitting, for the evening was drawing on, and we began to regret the wasted minutes of the morning. The mystery, like an ignis fatuus, appeared to fly before us.

"At last all seemed to have been passed under our scrutiny, and nothing was discovered. Then Mrs. Wigley and I left Mary to replace the documents strewn about the library, and proceeded once again on our explorations, with the housekeeper for a pioneer.

"In a few minutes we stood before a mysterious-looking door in Mr. Gordon's dressing-room:

"I never saw that open," said the

housekeeper; "it is two years since I was engaged by Mr. Gordon to officiate as the superintendent of his household, but no one has ever passed through that door except himself. I do not think you will find any key for it, ladies."

"We tried every key on the bunch, but the door yielded to none. I flew down stairs to Mary.

"We have found Blue Beard's closet," I cried, "and there is no key for it; — come, come, we must not waste a moment."

"Every nerve I had quivered with impatience while Mary slowly ascended the stairs. How slowly and sluggish all the movements were. But, in time, she stood with us before the low, narrow door, and with hands trembling from eagerness, she shook it till the handle rattled noisily, but yielded nothing to her grasp.

"Here then," she said, turning and facing us with a gasty smile; "here is the secret we seek."

"At this moment we heard the loud ringing of a bell, and the sound of a man's step and voice in the entrance-hall.

"Blue Beard is come back!" I cried with a vague feeling of apprehension, mingled with a keen sense of the absurdity of our position. I stole quietly into the gallery, and with jealous caution peered into the lobby below. There stood my husband. With an exclamation of relief, I again flew down the stairs and threw my arms around him, crying, "O, I am glad you are come!" His face was stern and grave, and he looked prepared for storms. I drew him into the library and hastily explained our position. As I spoke his eye rested upon a heap of papers on the sofa, and instantly detected a ring containing three keys. I seized them joyfully, and ran up-stairs, closely followed by my husband. Mary was leaning against the locked door in the quietness of sheer exhaustion, and large tears were falling slowly from her eyes upon the floor. With irrepressible eagerness she snatched the keys from me; and at once fitted the largest into the lock; but, before she could turn it, my hus-