

wondered much, but Ruth—confound it, what can she have been after? But I'll be at the bottom of this escapade—she came up by the steps from the bay—I'll go down and try to see who she has been meeting there, for I suppose there must be someone. Ah! what trust can you have in them?" And he gave a bitter smile, shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

In the meanwhile the girl had stolen noiselessly in at the back door of the little house in the garden, which she found unlocked. Then she crept through the kitchen, and cautiously ascended the staircase, at the head of which stood a beautiful woman in a white wrapper.

They looked at each other, these two, but neither spoke. There was intense excitement depicted on the face of the beautiful woman at the head of the stairs, and she eagerly scanned the slender, cloaked form of the girl. Then she breathed a sort of a sigh of relief, and turned back, still without a word, into the bedroom, from which she had only emerged when she heard the light footstep she had watched and waited for.

The girl followed her, and then sank down on the side of the bed like one whose strength is utterly spent. The woman saw this, and hastily shut the room door, and took off the drenched cloak and poured out some brandy, which she had standing in readiness, in a glass, and held it to the girl's white lips, who looked into the other's face with eyes still full of fear.

"But—it is safe, is it not?" whispered the woman, seeing this expression with a sudden pang of dread.

"Yes," faltered the girl; "no one saw me—but oh! Frances, Frances, I would rather have died than have done what I did to-night!"

"Hush, hush," said the woman she had called Frances; "it is done and over now. Don't give way, Ruth, for Heaven's sake; don't give way now after all we have gone through!"

Suddenly Ruth gave a half cry, and sprang to her feet, while a look of absolute consternation passed over her expressive face.

"The spade, Frances!" she whispered; "I've left it behind—in my terror I forgot it. Oh! what shall we do?"

"How could you be so mad? But it can't be helped. You can't go back now, and, after all, it does not matter