

He paused, alarmed and embarrassed. "It is, it must be Miss Weldon," he inwardly ejaculated; "but what can be the cause of this violent grief?"

"Her Mother, surely she is not worse. The girl would certainly have told me, had that been the case. Fain would I assuage that grief; but I dare not intrude; it is too sacred a thing for me to intermeddle with. I will return quickly to the house and leave my message with the servant."

Scarcely had the resolution been made, much less carried into execution, when the door suddenly opened, and Alice stood on the threshold.

It was a moment of mutual embarrassment, but the lady, woman-like, was the first to recover herself.

"Why, Mr. Sydney, how do you do? The soft grass deadened your footsteps, I suppose, for I had no idea any person was without."

"You must pardon my intrusion, Miss Alice, but the girl told me that you were in the garden, and so I came to search for you myself; but I am afraid that my visit is rather untimely."

"Oh, no, Mr. Sydney," and the pale cheek flushed slightly; "you know we are old friends, brother and sister almost. You wonder, I dare say, at my discomposed countenance, and, perhaps, you overheard me weeping; but I have felt dejected and desponding to-day; my mother's continued illness is a source of great sorrow to me, as you may well believe; and you know there are times when one is apt to view every thing in a gloomier light than at others; and so it has been with me to-day," and