

in urging him to take part in the play. "Only a minor part, a few words to utter, nothing more," had been her plea. He knew now why she had flattered, insisted, threatened: her motive was to surprise and confuse him: to entrap him into a confession by suddenly producing the skull before his eyes.

And she had nearly succeeded. Sudden amazement had almost wrung the secret from him. He compressed his lips tightly: he must not speak, lest by some incautious word he should betray himself. Silence! Silence! there lay his safety. With such cunning had he overlaid all traces of the crime that it could not be proved except by his own confession.

The audience, after a glance at the play-book, looked at each other in bewilderment, wondering why the viscountess had departed from the written words of her drama. Instead of playing as finely as heretofore she had actually committed the gross blunder of addressing the bishop Paulinus as, "My lord of Ravenhall!"

Receiving no answer to her question, for the earl sat silent and motionless, Lorelie rested her hand upon the table, lightly shook the sleeve of her silken dress, and the next moment the runic altar-ring was sparkling on her wrist.

"By the sacred ring of Odin, stolen by you from Edith Breakspear, I adjure you, speak! Whose skull is this?"

Something like a groan issued from the earl's lips. So his theft of the ring was likewise known to this terrible woman!—a theft committed so long ago that it had almost faded from his memory: and, lo! here the deed was, starting up to confront him after a lapse of twenty-three years!

For a moment he forgot his present position: the stage, the lights, the audience, all were gone.