

JEZEBEL'S FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

HIDDEN.

IT was a dull, dark night ; so dark that the tall cliffs round Headfort's sea-pent bay seemed but like dusky shadows in the murky air. Heedless of the gloom, a woman, carrying what to her appeared to be a heavy burden, was hurrying, about eleven o'clock, down the steep and narrow pathway which led from the rocks to the shore.

The tide was sweeping slowly in, but so deep was the gloom that she could only hear, not see, the waves break when she got to the shore. Keeping close to the foot of the cliffs, she now almost ran until she came near the centre of the wide circular bay, and then paused to breathe. Having satisfied herself that no one was near, she hastily laid down the burden which she had carried beneath her cloak—a strange burden—a long box, rolled and swathed in a woman's black gown.

To this box was tied a small spade, the string of which her trembling fingers now unfastened. With this spade she began digging vigorously in the sand.

Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning gleamed across the sky, and for an instant lit up the strange scene. Then a loud peal of thunder broke overhead, and the girl stopped in momentary terror and crouched down. The storm had begun in earnest, and heavy rain commenced to fall. Another flash, another peal, and with a sort of desperation the girl once more raised her head, and forced herself to begin her work anew. She had but one thought ; to bury her burden deep enough, that it might lie hidden until the sea gave up its dead, and the secrets of all hearts were bare.