

With a look of anxious sympathy, just a trifle overdone, she surveyed the recumbent form of the sufferer, then with elaborate caution made her way towards the window, where the youth, embarrassed, had risen to greet her.

Motioning him to resume his seat, she stole behind him, and, gracefully bending, imprinted a light kiss on his brow.

"Poor child!" she murmured, "thou hast had trouble. The blue eyes are dimmed, the bright countenance is pale and altered. The good father hath been well nigh taken from thy head; and thou knowest not where lurks the foe. Thou wouldst give thy young life to protect, to avenge him. Thou hast thy suspicions; thy suspicions of a friend! But friendship has its dues as well as filial love. There is a sombre, there is a mysterious conflict between the claims of the one and of the other. For the moment thou art the arbiter of destiny. A life and a death hang upon the next cast of the die thou holdest in thy grasp."

And her sliding hand suddenly closed on the youth's wrist, the wrist of the hand hid in his bosom, that all this while had been unconsciously fingering the damning evidence of his humble friend's guilt.

"The die is in thy fingers," continued she. "The moment has come for the cast: which way shall it be thrown? Death to thy father, or death to thy friend?"

"Neither, traitress! I see it all!" exclaimed the youth, as with a sudden motion he disengaged himself, flung open the sash, and leaped out on the lawn. \* \* \* \* \*

Why this sudden rudeness? what had the youth seen?

We will explain. \* \* \* \* \*

Fortified by the Colonel's reluctantly accorded assent to his proceedings, Delaval had, as we have seen, started on his self-imposed task of discovery.

Hastily mustering three of the serving men, he communicated to them his orders; and the party of four were speedily under way at a smart trot.

As they were nearing the park gates, the sudden clear note of a thrush from a coppice on the right, arrested Delaval's attention. Stealing a glance searchingly around, he pulled up, signing to his men to go ahead, whilst he pretended to be engaged lengthening his stirrup leather.

No sooner had his companions swept round the turn and out of