

lean over me, and I knew her startled, terrible anguish, and choked sobs, as she said these words: "Is it thou?"

"It is!" I answered. Then she cried, clutching my hand as in a vice, "And thou didst all this? Thou didst all this?"

"Yea, my lady," I cried. "Would to God I had done it better!"

"Oh! my fool heart," she said, "I might have known! I might have known!" At this the lady countess broke in, saying, "What meaneth this?"

"This, my lady," cried the Lady Margaret. "It meaneth that it is we, thou and I, who have been blind!"

"Girl!" cried the countess in terrible rage, "wouldst thou play with me?"

"Know you not, proud woman," answered the girl, "who this is? Not thy son! Not the Earl Hugh! But one far nobler, far greater than we all! Thy stepson Ian, who hath saved thy son."

"'Tis a lie! By Heaven, 'tis a foul lie!" cried the countess. Then she came near me, and for all her hatred I could not but be stirred by the woman's terrible anguish, which, though all was darkness, seemed to fill the room.

"Hugh!" she said; "dread Heaven! my son Hugh, tell me, thy mother, that it is all a lie!"

"Madam," I began, for I was bewildered by it all, "madam——" But I never got any further, for whether it was the awful shock, or the sudden sense of