

"Very well; on Thursday afternoon, then, will you and this friend go to Miss Stewart at Rossmore, and there declare that you never were married to me; that you assumed your dead sister's name for the sake of money; and your friend will bear you out in this?"

"It is settled, then; you agree to my terms, and I will keep my word."

"Good day, then, until Thursday;" and Biddulph bowed gravely, and slowly left the room.

"Good-by, my *brother-in-law*!" cried the woman in mocking tones as he left her; and somehow her words had a false ring to Biddulph's anxious ears.

CHAPTER LIII.

DOUBTFUL EVIDENCE.

Two days of suspense passed away; of suspense so cruel that Nora Stewart sometimes wished that this question had never been mooted; that she had remained Biddulph's friend, without the fond hopes and bitter doubts which now so constantly beset her heart. And Biddulph, too, looked pale and anxious. He had seen Jock Fraser on the matter, and honest Jock had declared he could not understand it. Dr. Alexander remained firm, he declined to have anything to do with it. And the two to whom it meant so much spoke of it with clasped hands and bated breath.

"It is more than life to me, I think," Biddulph said, and Nora could only answer with a sigh.

At last the hour came when the momentous declaration was to be made, and at Nora's earnest request Jock Fraser had consented to be present. Biddulph was standing near Nora when the house-bell rang, and Jock came in and silently shook Nora's hand, looking at her very kindly as he did so. Then again the door-bell rang, and this time two strangers were ushered into the drawing-room by Alfred; and as the eyes of the three already assembled there fell on the face of the man who had come to confirm the woman's story, they all felt at once that they were looking at a most dubious witness.

He was middle-aged, dark, and foreign-looking, with longish, greasy black hair, parted so as to endeavor to