'Lord Roy said something about new harness for your ponies,' observed Miss Ross, pouring some chocolate into a priceless china cup.

'Ah,' smiled Lady Darrell, 'then I see what it is. Roy has made that an excuse for cementing the friendship afresh He thinks no one knows anything about horses but Eustace.'

'Are you not jealous of this great affection asked Valerie suddenly.

Lady Darrell's face grew grave. 'Roy is so precious to me, you know Valerie, I might be jealous, dear, if I did not love him so much; to see-to know he is happy is to me the height of

all earthly bliss. 'Oh, that I had had you for my mother! cried the girl; involuntarily her pale beautiful head was bent.

Lady Darrell rose softly and kissed the young face.

'Look on me as such, dear Valerie,' she whispered; who know, perhaps-' Her sentence was not finished. for the door was opened, and the butler advance

ed into the room. 'My, lady, there's a park-keeper in the servant's hall begging to see you. We've told him it is impossible; but he will not

Lady Darrell seated herself at the table again.

'A park-keeper, Chelmick!' she repeat ed. 'What can he want?'

'I don't know, your ladyship; but he'll tel none of us anything-only asks to see you, my lady.'

Miss Ross looked at her hostess, who smiled.

'Some begging petition, I suppose. Well, Chelmick; I will break through my rules for once, and see the man. Perhaps,' continued Lady Darrell as the butinto trouble of some sort.'

for consolation,' remarked Miss Ross. In a few seconds the butler returned,

and ushered in a man dressed in the ordinary fustian worn by keepers, a look of trouble on his honest comely face. 'Ah, Miles, so you want to see me?

Well, speak out, I am quite ready." The man hesitated. 'I beg pardon, my lady, but if I can

speak to you alone-Valerie rose.

'I will go into the next room' she said, and swept away.

'Now, Miles,' said Lady Darrell quiet- heart. ly, though a vague sense of coming ill seemed to have fallen on her.

'My lady, I have bad news to tell you. I came straight to you, for I thought it am innocent of this crime!'

'Go on, said the lady quickly, as he

'My lady, this morning on my way through the woods, I found-I found Captain Rivers lying on the ground; at first I thought him asleep, but on moving out of the house at daybreak, and why his body I found him dead!"

A broken sob came from the next room, it fell unheeded on Lady Darrell's ears; Brown, who was trying to spell through she had risen and was grasping her chair the newspaper, after eating a hearty midwith her slender white hands for support. day meal. 'Dead,' she repeated blankly; 'Eustace

Rivers dead!' was out of the ordinary path, on the way vantage of my being wanted at Mrs. form. to the Madman's Drift. Poor Captain Dixon's farm last night, she must needs Rivers must have been stabbed, for there go trolloping about till any hour. I don't is blood about; but though I searched believe she went nigh the castle. Answer everywhere, I found no weapon-only a me! What kept you so late, and what basket containing broken eggs, which took you to the town this morning, sneakmust have been dropped by some market | ing out when we were fast asleep?" man or woman in their freight, andand this.'

Lady Darrell looked up. Her eyes, firmly. distraught with anguish, fell on a silver cigar case with elaborate initials and crest engraved on it.

'That!' she murmured hoarsely. 'I brought it straight to you, my lady, the park-keeper said gently, laying it that eats us out of house and home?" down. 'I know it as belonging to-to his lordship; it must have fallen from Captain River's pocket as he sank down to the ground.'

There was a moment's silence. 'What have you-you done?' whispered

Lady Darrell, still standing motionless. 'I have carried the body to my hutyou know I live quite alone my ladyand I came to you to know what I had

better do next.' 'Saddle a horse and ride to Nestley You must fetch the police. We must find

the murderer.'

The words dropped like agony from the white lips.

'Shall I summon Lord Roy?' said Miles eagerly, seeing the agitation on the worn face opposite. 'I would not go to him first, for I know how much he loved Cap- 'A fine thingtain Rivers, and knew the blow would | A loud knocking at the door interruptfall so heavily. Forgive me, my lady; ed her words. She stared for an instant. you are always so brave ! I forgot you while Alice grew cold and still. She

his lordship.' herself with an effort, Lady Darrell pass- of the neighborhood, and three or four said. ed her handkerchief over her face.

'You were right, Miles, to come to me, and I thank you with all my heart. Iwill tell Lord Roy.'

She put out one of her slender hands, and the keeper took it within his own Brown, does that belong to you?" brown hard ones with reverence and

'We must act now, not think,' went on Lady Darrell hurriedly. 'Yes, the police aust come, nothing can be done till then. other courtesy. 'It is mine, but,' glancing quarrelled two days ago], when sudden-Go, miles, at once. Send Chelmick to around rather fearfully at the policemen, ly we seemed to struggle; and yet I have me. I must break the news to the house- may I askhold. What have you done with the basket you found.

'It is at my cottage, my lady.'

stant; I will write a note.' She moved to the bell and rang it, then stood with her hands locked together as at the proceedings in alarm. silent as a marble statue till the butler

came. Miles gazed at her in admiration. He knew what an agony of shame and pain ed. Now you'll find, miss,' in a low was in that breaking heart, yet no ery whisper to the girl, 'what it is to be rude came from the lips, no womanly weak. to me your punishment's come.'

ness was betrayed in face or limb.

As the butler entered, Lady Darrell in brief quiet words told of the discovery of Captain River's dead body, and the supposed murder; then as the old servant ways called Alice. withdrew in fear and horror, she wrote

"To the police-station, Nestley; go at to the Castle last night?"

Miles bowed and withdrew; as he went the door of the inner room opened, and pushed from her brows, her face ghastly white, a fixed look of anguish in her glorious eyes.

Lady Darrell advanced to meet her. 'Ah, my poor child,' she murmured, 'you have heard-you have heard all?' 'All'!' repeated Valerie blankly. 'Is it

true?' she asked after a moments's pause. 'Is it true?' Is he dead-murdered?' 'He is dead,' answered the older wo man almost mechanically. 'Yes.'

'And you can stand there so calm! Oh Eustace—Eustace; gone, my——' then she lay stretched prostrate on the ling.

With the same set face, Lady Darrell bent over the inanimate girl, and pressed her cold lips to the senseless ones; then ringing the bell again, she directed the

went through the door-'quite alone.' She stood silent as the small cortege disappeared, then her calmness went. that would float away in mist. Lady Darrell flung herself down on her

knees and gave way to her feelings. Eustace lies dead, and Roy, my angel, my prince, my son Roy! No. Oh, God, may be so! Roy, my darling, my pre- wife. cions Roy, can there be blood on your A strange sense of gladness was creep-

come? It is too much-too much!

A few seconds after the door was open- room off the servant's quarters. ed, a figure entered. In two strides Roy Darrell was beside his mother, had lifted her to her feet, and clasped her to his speak to her.

'Roy!' she gasped fearfully. 'Thank God! And yet, oh, my son, my son!' 'Mother,' said the young man, 'you

CHAPTER III. 'Answer me at once-at once, do you 'ear! Tell me what took you creeping you was home so late last night.'-

'Let her be, Martha! grumbled Farmer

'I shall not let her be,' retorted the angry woman. 'She shall know who's There had evidently been a scuffle; it mistress here, I can tell her. Taking ad-

> 'I cannot tell you, Aunt Martha,' the girl answered quietly-not sullenly, but

'Cannot tell me, indeed, you hussy Well, we'll see whether I can make you. Do you think me and your uncle have got nothing to do but keep you in shoeleather—a greatidle good-for-nothing girl Alice was silent while her uncle stirred

uneasily in his chair. 'There, Martha-that'ull do.'

'No, it won't. I mean to make her tell me all. Where were you last night and this morning, where is the basket, and what message did Mrs. Grey send? 'I cannot answer,' said Alice, again very quietly.'

'Then I'll make you!' cried Mrs. Brown furiously, taking up a farmer's whip that hung on a nail.

'Martha!' exclaimed her husband. with flashing eyes. 'If she does I will andappeal to the Castle for protection.'

Something in Alice's look checked the angry woman. She dropped her hand. 'The Castle?' she muttered sullenly.

were a woman. I ought to have gone to knew the summons was come for her. Mrs. Brown flung open the door, then 'The blow has fallen heavily indeed,' courtesied respectfully as she saw before

> 'Good-morning, Mrs. Brown,' said the ished. 'Now please sign this.' magistrate, Sir Robert Carlyle. 'I wish to ask you a few questions. Sergeant, ment, then wrote her name, 'Margaret hand Mrs. Brown the basket. Mrs. Darrell.'

at once as the one she had filled with der, 'cannot remember this man?'

eggs the night before.

enquired Sir Robert.

'Last night, your honor. I packed it 'Good, leave it there. Wait an in- with eggs for Mrs. Grey, at the Castle, and gave it to our Alice to carry.'

The farmer had risen, and was staring 'Where is Alice?' enquired the magis-

trate next.

'Just behind. Here, Alice, you're want-

Alice took no notice. She moved for-

word into the doorway. 'What is your name?' asked Sir Robert,

Then, Miss Dornton, please will you

Alice looked at him straight. 'Yes, sir, I was,' she answered.

without another word, while her aunt stared, silent through amazement; at last she found her tongue:

'What has Alice done? Tell me, your

There is an inquest up at the Castle, has confessed! They are bringing him Mrs. Brown. Captain Rivers was mur- here! dered in the woods last night, and Miss Dornton is chief witness against the suspected murderer, Lord Roy Darrell.'

'Mercy sakes!' ejaculated Mrs. Brown, Valerie threw her hands up to her as Alice walked quietly down the courtface, swayed to and fro for an instant, yard into the village fly that was wait-

longest route to the Castle. She was thinking, wondering if she

'Leave me alone,' she said as they of the morning, the knowledge that she men from Dixon's were passing along, She had had a great strain put on her

pered, a crimson wave of color dyeing ing that she had done all she could, that a crowd of people, and her eyes rested her gentle face—'together in anger; now a man's life had been in her hands, and as through a mist, on the face that had she had saved him. keep the thought from my mind, or I before her careworn, haggard, his it too, but not for long. He turned in-

ler withdrew, 'poor fellow, he has got They were angry; they may have parted could still see the look of gratitude that ed her swiftly. friends. Enstace may have met his lived in his eyes as they separated this Is it the man?' he asked almost in-'He evidently knows where to apply death alone. Oh, God, pray that it morning in the early sunshine, man and audibly from emotion.

hands, on your soul! Oh, what sin have ing into her heart amid all the horror hands, while a great cry of thankfulness we done that this awful curse should and fear that had nearly frozen it-a went up from his heart. He read the sense of happiness that she was linked to joy in his mother's eyes, and he went to-The agony of her thoughts overpowered this man, that she had served him well. | wards her, clasping her frail hands tenher. Lady Darrell sank forward on to The fly drove up to a side-door of the derly, as Sir Robert Carlyle bent over the the chair, and buried her face in her Castle, and Alice dismounting, was led death-like form that was carried in on a by the housekeeper to an empty sitting- mattress.

Robert Carlyle had forbidden anyone to vants.

The moments passed, and then she was summoned to leave the room. She walked down many passages,

know all. Hear me now, though I may of the walls, of the grandeur of the house, never prove it. I know, I feel, I swear l ignorant of all that the moment had come when she must act.

She was led into a large apartment; as the pallid lips. in a dream she saw Roy Darrell standing alone, one hand leaning on a chair, be- anxious countenances, and a smile seemhind him three or four policemen.

At the table was seated Sir Robert Car- away in a second. lyle, one or two other gentlemen; and Miles, the keeper, and had evidently just given his evidence.

'Margaret Dornton,' said Sir Robert Carlyle, speaking distinctly, 'approach. Do not be frightened. Have you ever seen that gentleman before?'

Alice turned her eyes toward the silent 'Yes,' she said, faintly, yet clearly,

'Lord Roy Darrell; and-and my hus-

The clear tones rang through the still room like a bell. The pen dropped from Sir Robert Car-

lyle's hand, he rose to his feet. 'Your husband!' he repeated blankly. 'Lord Roy, is this true?'

Roy met his glance full. 'It is quite true,' he said. taken place?'

'We were married this morning, at Nestley, by the registrar.' "Good Heavens!" Sir Robert took out his handkerchief

and wiped his brow, then he waved the policemen away. The other gentlemen had risen, and were whispeing together.' Sir Robert advanced to the young man. 'What made you do this?' he asked,

much agitated. 'Don't you see you con-'I did it for my mother's sake,' replied his side. But I was mistaken. That Lord Roy 'I was mad last night; I black break in the path-the awful fall-

'Let her strike me uncle,' said the girl if-if my innocence could not be proved, was complete-but-'But the disgrace now will be heavier,' murmured the other. 'Cannot you un-

derstand what the world will say?" 'I am innocent-I swear it !' cried Lord Roy. 'Oh, what a cruel fate is mine! Speak! he cried again; 'tell them of that terrible sin may be pardoned. It is not

Alice gave him one swift sad look, and then clearly and decisively told of the whisper went out on the stillness. man's face that had approached her just before she fainted.

She described it minutely, and Sir whispered the white lips; then rousing her, on horseback, the chief magistrate Robert hurriedly wrote down what she

'Thank you,' he murmured as she fin-Alice took the pen, hesitated a mo-

'And you, my poor friend,' went on Sir Mrs. Brown took it, and recognised it Robert, touching Lord Roy on the shoul-

'I can remember nothing clearly. Cap-'Yes, your honor,' she said with an- tain Rivers and I were arguing [we had seemed to walk mechanically. a sense of feeling it was not with him 'When did you use that basket last?' that I struggled; then I must have fainted. I only remember recovering and seeing that poor child standing before me nearly dead with fright.

> 'Then you cannot recollect striking the blow with this dagger?" asked Sir Robert. 'I can remember nothing. I never saw that dagger before. Where was it found?'

Sir Robert looked at him sadly.

what you mean'.

'But dishonor remains,' added Lord 'Margaret Dornton, sir, but I am al- Roy bitterly. 'Yes; I see. I know now

a few lines on a card, and handed it to answer me this question? Were you Lady Darrell appeared leaning on Va- forever from the woman he loved, Valerie carrying that basket through the woods lerie Ross's arm. Roy's mother looked Ross. Then the memory of what this suddenly wan and worn. Valerie seemed girl had done for him came back.

Then you must accompany me, please Darrell weakly; 'I should not intrude at You have yet to learn what she has done Valerie Ross came out; Her hair was at once to the Castle; you will be wanted.' such a moment, but the suspense was so when all was blackest. When my in Alice tied on her cotton sun-bonnet terrible it would have killed me had I

remained another-She was interrupted by the sudden en-

trance of Chelmick, the butler. servant. 'I have great good news! He my wife, Margaret Darrell.'

'He! Who? Speak man!' were the hurried cries, while above them all rose the mother voice!

'Oh, God, I thank thee!'

Alice stood rooted to the spot, while Lord Roy, who had grown deathly white at the sight of his mother, and the pale The girl sat back in her corner very beautiful face beside her, now grasped quiet and silent, as she was bowled along the chair he held as in a vice, all thoughts the wide country lane that led by the pushed aside but the one that said his burden was about to be lifted from him.

'They found him in Madman's Drift, servants to carry the still form to her still dreamt, whether the horrors of the sir,' continued the servant, wild with expast night, the strange hurried marriage citement, trembling all over. 'Some was no longer a free lonely maiden, but a and they heard his cries. They are wedded wife, were after all but visions bringing him here straight, my lady. He's almost dead. A thin dark man.'

'Dark!' whispered Alice to herself, bu young mind during the last few hours, she did not move, and in another mo-'They went away together,' she whis- but she was strong, firm to herself, know- ment it seemed the room was filled with glared at her so horribly before her She had Roy Darrell's image always senses faded away. Lord Roy gazed at shall go mad! Let me think clearly. handsome face lined with agony; she voluntarily to look at her. He approach-

'Yes, it is he,' answered Alice faintly. Lord Roy covered his face with his

'I must take a statement,' he said Here she was left without a word, Sir quickly. 'Clear the room of the ser-

The group of people passed away slowly, while Alice stood on alone, grasping a chair, and feeling suddenly weak Valerie Ross seemed turned to stone or ignorant of all she passed—of the beauty marble, no touch of life was there in her white set face.

> The mother and son stood together. All waited for the first faint words from

The dying man looked round on their ed to hover round his mouth. It died 'It would have answered well,' he mur-

Sir Robert listened eagerly. 'You killed Eustace Rivers?' he asked, as the man paused and breathed heavily. A lurid light beamed in the sunken

mured, 'but fate was too strong.'

'Yes; I killed Eustace Rivers-I stabbed him to death. My name is Bruce Gardyne. I--

'Why?' a voice clear and hard rang through the room-'why did you kill It was Valerie Ross who spoke, but all

were listening to the confession, and for-

got their surprise that she questioned

The man shot a glance on her. 'Another,' he whispered; 'poor soul! I killed him because I hated him-because he stole my wife. On her broken-heart-But since when has this marriage ed dead body-I swore to-be revenged. It came-last night-I have waited so long. Fate seemed to help me-they

were quarrelling;' his voice sank. Sir Robert was writing rapidly; one of est. the gentlemen lifted up the dying man's head and moistened his lips with brandy. N. HARRIS,

He struggled and went on: 'In the dark I listened-I stole after them-stabbed him in the back-then flung myself on-the other-and overcame him; I thought-to throw the murder-on him-and dragged the body-to thought only of her misery-her agony, the misery of the night. My revenge

> A gentle tender voice came to his ear. 'Now let revenge be forgotten,' murmured Lady Darrell as she knelt beside him. 'You have done good. You have given me back my son, restored his honor; turn now to God. Pray that this

too late-pray.' A sob broke from his throat, and a All were silent, till he motioned Sir

Robert to give him the pen. With cold nerveless fingers he grasped it, was raised up, and his hand guided; the next intsant the cold hue of death settled on his face, there was a momentary struggle, and Bruce Gardyne fell back, silent for evermore.

Sir Robert lifted Lady Darrell from her 'Let me conduct you away; this is no place for you, nor for Miss Ross. Come.

still as silent and set as a statue, She Lady Darrell was about to follow her, when her eyes fell on Alice.

Valerie moved out of the room alone.

'And this poor girl is the one who saw it all-was the chief witness. How terribly she must have suffered,' she murmured, grasping Roy's hand, and approaching Alice while the servants lifted the dead man and carried him away. Alice felt a sudden pang and a sense of

pain steal over her. She had given all

she could to help Roy Darrell, and yet it

had availed nothing. And now-'Away from the body, through the 'We must look after you, my child,' 'I know nothing of it. If only my brain said Lady Darrell gently, touched by the youthful pale face framed with its masses of dead-golden hair. 'Mrs. Grey must

'Your life is saved,' he said gently give you some refreshments. You are

tired too, and want rest.' Roy had grown deathly white; he realized now for the first time what he had done. He was tied forever to this vil-The door opened at this instant, and lage girl, while he had sundered himself

'Mother,' he said slowly, almost pain-'Forgive me, gentlemen,' began Lady fully, we must do more for this child. nocence could never have been cleared as we thought, when Heaven itself seemed to have deserted me, she consented to save my life. Her words must have con-'Oh, my lady-sirs-my lord-pardon demned me. Mother, take her handhonor. Is she going to be punished for me! gasped rather than spoke the old this is henceforth your daughter, and

### CHAPTER IV.

In a large solitary room, sitting by a window that took in the magnificent vista of park, grounds, and woods comprising Darrell Castle estate, was a young

She wore a dress of soft grey made

very simple, fitting her young body to

perfection with its clinging folds; her hair of pale gold was gathered in a large knot at the back of her small well-shaped head. Her skin was pure white, like the lilly or the sarcissus in its waxen purity; her

shone like great lustrous grey stars in their ivory setting. She had a book open on her knee, yet it did not seem to attract her much; her gaze was bent out of the window across the country scene, at the moving trees scattering their shrivelled brown leaves

eyes, framed with heavy long dark lashes,

at every soft gust. It was Margaret, Lady Darrell. A sigh escaped her lips as she sat silent, but she did not move. The room

seemed to strike the beholder as gloomy and lonely; even the firelight failed to light up its solitude. The furniture and hangings were rich, but their tone was sombre, and spoke of

a bygone fashion. The girl alone was young and fresh; she looked strangely beautiful in her dark setting. The door opened and a maid entered bearing a lamp.

'What is the time, Davis?' asked Lady

Darrell, waking from her thoughts. 'Nigh half-past five, my lady,' answered the maid.

'How dark; it is almost night.' The young figure left the window. 'Will you ring, my lady, when you

The maid went slow!y from the room, and her young mistress walked towards the fire; her face was subdued and her eyes gazed into the glowing coals quietly, almost sadly.

To be continued.

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