

"I want you to understand my posi tion exactly, Sir Jaffray," he said quietly and deferentially. "I told you yesterday of an anonymous letter which had been sent to me saying that the dagger and bracelet had been put in the places where we four found them after the death of the Frenchman. I have now had another letter which says that when Miss Leycester called here on the day of the discovery she drove hurriedly home and back again, and that before she went she had had an interview with Mr. Gifford here, who had told you of the discovery of the dead body and had given to you part of the bracelet, the rest of which I myself brought here. I am not able to answer the questions involved either one way or another, but I am sure you, Sir Jaffray, and you, Miss Leycester, and you, too, Mr. Gifford, indeed, will see the gravity of the matter and of my position and will wish to give an explanation.' "Before any one answers such a charge we should know the person who

makes it," said Mr. Gifford. "I know no more than I tell you," replied the inspector, "and I am most



"Wait!" she said, stopping and drawing painfully placed. I do not see how I can act otherwise than as I am doing.' "Supposing it should turn out that there has been some mistake of the kind, what would you have to do, Mr.

Borderham?" asked Sir Jaffray. "In the absence of Lady Walcote I should have but one painful duty," he replied. "And that?" "To take means to find her and to

ask an explanation of this most compromising series of coincidences." A long and painfully embarrassing silence followed, in which all four sat thinking closely.

At the end Sir Jaffray rese and

broken with emotion he said: "You had better do so, inspector, let the consequences be what they may. The truth must come out. God help

pushed back his chair and in a voice

Then another silence as painful as the former followed.

In the midst of it a commotion was heard in the large hall outside, and the door of the room was hurriedly opened. "Her ladyship, Sir Jaffray!" said the servant, and Lola, looking very pale and worn, but very determined, came

Sir Jaffray sprang toward her with a ory of pleasure and gladness.
"Wait!" she said, stopping and drawing back from his outstretched arms. "First let the whole truth be told. I have come back new to tell it."

> CHAPTER XXIV. LOLA'S STORY.

At the moment of her first entering the room Lola had not seen the police inspector or Mr. Gifford, but when she noticed them and saw that the former wore police uniform she was startled. "Who are these gentlemen?" she asked of Sir Jaffray.

But he was too much moved by her coming to be able to answer. "Inspecter Borderham is charged with the inquiry into the death of

Pierre Turrian, and I am here looking into things for the family. I am Mr. Gifford, a private inquiry agent of Southampton rew, London, and weil mown." He could not regist the little self advertisement even at such a mo-"I cannot speak before these gentle-men, Jaffray," said Lola. "What I

have to say can be said to you-and to Beryl, for she already knows everything, or nearly everything." At this the police inspector pricked up his ears and looked acress sharply

at Beryl, who noticed the action and "Then we'd better go, inspector,'

said Mr. Gifford, seeing the difficulty and trying to get over it with a rush. But Inspector Borderham did not

"I really think it would be better for me to stay, Sir Jaffray," he said a little nervously, afraid to offend the baronet and yet very unwilling to go. "I see no necessity whatever for your

presence," returned the baronet shortly. "You must see that this matter has new taken a quite unexpected turn and that you can do nothing. You can go."

"You will accept the responsibility?" "What responsibility is that?" exclaimed Lois excitedly. "De you mean for my presence, sir? I tell you I have come back for the express purpose of facing anything that any one may dare to whisper against me, that I should not have come back had it not been for the fact of Pierre Turrian's death, and that I shall remain"-she was going to say "at the manor house" but checked herself and substituted-"where you shall know perfectly well where to find me whenever you wish. But now I have semething to say to my-to Sir Jaffray, which concerns no one but himself, and for the moment we must be left together.'

A flash of rapid thought convinced the inspector that he could not possibly do any harm by doing what was asked, as he could easily shadow her ladyship should she attempt to get away again. "I will do what you wish," he said, and with a bow he left the room with Mr. Gifford.

As soon as the three were alone there was a long silence. The warmth with which Lela had spoken to the inspector died out, the palfor which all had noticed on her first entry increased, and she leaned back on the sofa on which she sat as though weak and striving to collect her strength for a great effort.

Sir Jaffray sat apart, torn by infaitely painful emotions. Her first repuise of him had roused a multitude of distarting thoughts in which his fears on account of her madness, his doubts about the part she had played in the death of Pierre Turrian and his love, quickened into het passion by the sight of her, were all mingled with a new and worst fear that her action was the he knew not. He lenged to rush and take her in his arms and yet was held back in a conflict of doubts and fears. Beryl sat quietly waiting for Lole to tell in her own way the stery of which

e knew the main features. Lola freke she silence at length with a long, deep sigh. Then she said: "Ah, Jaffray, I have been mad!"

The words so fitted themselves to s worst fears on her account that he declard across at her with an expression which she seemed to read intuitively. "Do you think I am guilty of the death of Pierre Turrian, Jaffray?" she cried in a voice of pain and resentment. "And you, Borvl, do you?" And with out waiting for any answer in words, reading one in the momentary embarrassed silence of the two, she cried in a voice all sorrow and suffering: "Heaven help me! It is indeed time I came back! Oh, Jaffray, Jaffray!" And, bursting into sobs, she buried her face in her hands on the head of the sofa. Sir Jaffray could not bear the sight

of her distress, but went quickly to her. and, laying a hand on her shoulder, said: "Give me your word that you know nothing of this, Lola, and I will believe you against the world."

She shook his hand off as though his touch burned her, and, rising to her feet, looked him steadily in the face.

"Were the positions changed I should need no word of yours to make me feel your innocence, Jaffray," she said in a thing, knowing him-I told him that tone which stabbed him, "but you shall have my word. As God is my judge I know no more than yourself how this man met his death.'

A flood of relief burst over him at the words, and again he made as though he would clasp her in his arms, and again she prevented him.

Then Beryl, who had waited with suspense for the avowal of her innocence, and who was quite ready to accept it and to be convinced by it, feeling something of the agony which Lola must at that moment be enduring, went to her, and, making her sit down again on the sofa, insisted on sitting by her. She put her arms round her and held her in a close embrace and kissed her. "Forgive me, Lola, fer I, too, have wronged you in thought. I know what you must have suffered. Why did you not come to me?" At first Lola tried to prevent the girl,

but the touch of sympathy was toe sweet to be long repulsed, and she first suffered, then welcomed and at last reveled in the consolation thus offered. "You make my heavy task lighter." she said to Beryl presently, and then, after another pause, she began her confession, beginning, womanlike, with an implied attack upon Sir Jaffray himself. "No, Jaffray, the blood of that man does not lie on my hands," she said in a low, clear voice. "It was not for that

The baronet made a gesture of protest, but she checked him, and sitting up on the sofa, with her hand in one of Beryl's, she went on, speaking in low tones and with frequent pauses:

reason that I would not let you take me

in your arms just now. Heaven knows,

I am bad and mad enough, but I am

"I will not try to make my faults less than they are. Do you remember a story which that man told a few nights age at the dinner table here? Well, the husband and wife in that story were Pierre Turrian and myself. You have asked me often whether there was anything in the past that I had not told you. There was-that I was Pierre Turrian's wife. Now you can guess what I have suffered, and you know the reason why I fled.

"Pierre Turrian's wife!" exclaimed Sir Jaffray, repeating the words over and over again as though he could not understand them. "Pierre Turrian's wife! His wife!" Then after a long pause he asked, "Did you know this when''- He did not finish, but she understood.

"You heard the story as he told it." she answered.

"He said you tried to kill him then. "That is true, as true as light!" cried Lola vehemently, and Beryl felt her start and her muscles harden with temper. "It was an impulse, coming either from heaven to free myself from a devil, or from hell to bind myself closer than ever to him, I know not which, but I acted on it, and never from that moment till new, when I see you shrink and quiver at the thought of it, have I regretted it. I will not palliate my act or belittle it, but this I may say-I do not know that he could possibly have | the station at a few minutes before 2, saved himself had I not stamped on his angers, but I did not think of that then. He had made my life a hell, and when the chance seemed to come in my way I tried to free myself, and I would do

the same again. She stopped and looked eagerly across at Sir Jaffray, hoping to read on his face an expression less hard than that which by her words she seemed to expeet and not to fear.

But he made no sign of any kind, and

"The rest you know now or can guess nearly, except one thing. I will tell the truth now, the whole of it, and you shall know the worst of me that can be known. I thought he was dead, and when my father died I dropped the name of Turrian like a hated thing and came here to England merely as Miss Crawshay." Then her voice grew harder, and the note of defiance again was perceptible. "I meant to marry and to marry well, and I had no wish to be known as the widow of such a cheat and villain as Pierre Turrian. Then I met you and resolved that you should marry me, and I married you without loving

The last words came slowly, and when she had finished she hid her face again, as though now afraid to meet his look. "That is the hardest thing you have said, Lola," said Sir Jaffray. Then for the third time a long silence came upon

"I have been woefully punished," said Lola in a low, half mouning voice infinite sadness. "Out of both my faults have come the means to punish them. The man who was dead lived to stamp out the light of my life. The love I had never felt woke to make my punishment greater than I could bear. If I had never loved you, Jaffrey, I could have faced without flinching all that that man could do or threaten, but when he had the power to put out the lighted love which I had thought would never be kindled I was desolate. He came and forced himself upon me, and I dared not defy him utterly. I dared not tell you, because it meant—I must lose you, Jaffray. In a moment of madness and thinking I could play a desperate game with safety I tried to hold him at bay and yet to keep your love for myself, but it was useless. Some one else had learned the truth-Beryl here, and it came near costing her her life, for that evil, reckless man sought to take it even in this house. But, like a woman feeling for a woman's grief, Beryl tried to make the trouble as light for me as it could be. Heaven knows how I have

"But there was no hope of escape," she resumed. "Failing in his attempt result of a resolve not to let him go | to kill Beryl, the madman came to me near her until she had confessed-what | with a plan to kill you, Jaffray, andbut you remember the scene that morning which you interrupted. I knew then that every door of hope was shut against me, and when he had gone I went up to my room and tried to think out the best course. Do you know what determined | you and this Pierre Turriany' me? Can you guess?"

thanked you for that and for all, Beryl!"

kiss the girl at her side.

cried Lola, breaking off a moment to

She paused just an instant and looked at him as if hoping that he could read her thoughts, but before he had time to answer she continued:

"No, you will not guess after what I have said and what has happened. I wanted to find some way out of the trouble which would have left some of your love for me remaining. I thought to kill myself, but I knew that then the man who is dead would have told you all my guilt and have tried to trade on the knowledge till the thought of me would have been hateful to you. I tried to tell you that afternoon, but the words were chilled on my tongue, and I could not. Then I saw no hope but to go away and so prove to the man who was thus between us that he could no longer profit by his secret, and I planned it easily. He wrote to me that afternoon telling me to meet him at night at 9 o'clock near that cottage where he seems to have met his death. Then Beryl's letter came, and you know that it was to ask me to go to her, and it formed just the excuse I wanted. I left word that I was going to Leycester Court, and I drove over there, stopping just short of the house and telling Robbins that I was uncertain what time I should return, and that one of the Court carriages would take me back, and as soon as he was gone I walked back. You know the lonely path across the fields. I came that way and did not meet any one the

"Did you go to that cottage that night?" asked Jaffray when she paused. but Beryl sent a warning glance that he should let her tell the whole story in her own way.

"Yes, I met him there. It was before 9 o'clock, and we walked back along the path I had come, stopping every now and then. I lied to him in one

you knew everything, Jaffray; that I was a fugitive of my own free will. that never again should he or you set eyes on me, and that, though he had beaten me, the victory should be as grit and ashes between his teeth. I taunted him with the blows that you had showered on him in the morning and maddened him with jeers at the failure of his plans. What I did not let him even guess, however, was that my heart was sick and my spirit bruised to death. We parted, a blasphemous oath on his side and a curse on him from me, and I set my face to the darkness and plodded on through the night, alone with my grief and my knowledge that the sun could never rise again in all my life. One single, solitary ray of comfort in it all I had—that perhaps you would never learn how false I had been and so come to curse me for it.'

Her hearers had listened breathlessly to this part of the story, marking every syllable, and when she stopped they could not understand her. Sir Jaffray himself had seen her hours later than she said close to the cottage.

"Where did you go, Lola, and where and what time did you leave that man?" he asked hurriedly and in some excite-

"I was with him probably an hour, not more, and I left him to walk straight to Branzton, in order to catch the mail that stops there at 2 in the morning. I did that. We parted about two miles from the cottage, I should think, on the field path that runs from there to the main road to Brankton and close to the road."

"I am bewildered," he said again. "If I am under the impression that I saw you close to the cottage in Ash Tree wood at a time past midnight that night, is it not possible for me to be right?"

'What do you mean—that I was by that ruined cottage after the time I tell

"Let me make this clear," he ex-

claimed. "When I found you had gone, I rode first to Leycester Court. That was directly after dinner. I came back. hoping you might have returned, and then they gave me your letter. When I had pulled myself together, I started off as hard as I could gailop to Mrs. Villyers' house, hoping against hope that you might have gone there. Finding the place closed and hearing, of course, that you had not been there, I rode ageta to the Court, but did not rouse is, and then came on home. It was then a long way past midnight, and as I got to the corner of Ash Tree wood, by the path which leads from the cottage, some one came to the gap in the hedge whom I took to be you. I called to you by name, but there was no answer, and when I had quieted my horse, which had taken fright at your appearance, I tried in vain to follow. Is it impossible that you can have been there at

"Impossible? Absolutely! You know the distance from there to Branzson. I walked every step of the road. I reached



Her hearers listened breathlessly and at 10 minutes past I left there in the mail train for Derby, where I had planned to change carriages and get a fresh ticket on to London.

Sir Jaffray rose quickly from his chair and rang the bell loudly, and, going to the door, told the servant to sand Inspector Borderham and Mr. Gifford

into the room at once, "There is something that you must hear immediately, inspector." he said very excitedly. "There is a mystery here which must be probed at once. can give you a clew to the whole affair." And then he began to tell hurriedly that part of Lola's story which had excited him, while the inspector, calm and stolid and skeptical, took copieus notes of what he heard.

CHAPTER XXV.

WAITING FOR THE ARREST. Sir Jaffray was so excited at the possibility of clearing Lola from the terrible charge of which she had been suspected and so relieved at having his own distressing doubts removed and indeed so overjoyed to see her again that he lost sight of all the first part of her confession in thinking of the end, and he told the facts to the inspector with all the enthusiasm and confidence of pro-

But the two men to whom he spoke listened to it with thoughts very different from his.

"I have no doubt all that you say is quite correct," said the inspector at the close in the tone of a man who didn't believe a word of it, "but there are some few questions I should like to ask Lady Walcote, with your permission." "Of course. Ask what you like," SPECIAL

"First, I am bound to caution you. Lady Walcote, that you are not compelled to answer any question, and that, if you do answer, anything you say may be used in evidence against you." "Ask what you please, sir," replied

Lola readily. "What were the relations between "He was my duspaid." A STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR

ment," he said in enswer to her look.

admit, then, that you met the deceased

that night at 9 o'clock at the place

where he was found dead. That is a

"Why did you go armed? Why did

"I did not go armed. I know nothing

of the dagger beyond what I have read

-that he was stabbed with a dagger

which may have been taken from here.'

"I know nothing of that either. Purposely I left behind me every bit of

jewelsy which had not been mine be-

"Your theory is, then, that some one

"I have no theory," answered Lole

must have taken the dagger and the bracelet and have gone with them to do this murder in order to put the blame

"It is a very extraordinary tale."

tell it to you." And Lola told him.

said the inspector skeptically.

you take that dagger with you?"

What of the bracelet?"

fore my marriage."

on you?"

very strong admission."

"Yet it is the truth."

Lole glanced at Sir Jaffray. "There is no use in further conceal

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"It is a rather leng story, but I was Successors

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resolutely. "I tell you the truth. I had the letter from Plerre Turvian in the afternoon. I met him at the time named Dunlap, McKim & Downs, and at the place named. I walked with him for about an hour in the direction WALLACE, N. S. of the Branston road and left him at about 10 o'clock close to that road. I DUNLAP, COOKE & CO., then walked on as fast as my strongth would allow to Branston, which I AMHERST, N. S. reached just before 2 o'clock. That is

"How are you going to prove that?" asked the inspector. "We have nothing so far but your bare word. What proces have you?"

"I have come back to find them," replied Lole stontly. "If I had done this deed, I should not have come back; but, instead, I should have put an end to

"Yet you went away?"

"For the same motive that brought me back—regard for Sir Jaffray. I west because flight seemed to me the only way out of a terrible entanglement, the only way to avoid even greater troubles. I came back because, for the sake of his honor, it was necessary that my name "It is more to the point to ask Lady Walcote how she was dressed when she went away," put in Mr. Gifford. "and bow it come that Sir Jaffray was able to identify her by her dress that night." "I was dressed as I am now." She

were a plain black costume. "I thought I saw you in a cloak with a hood to it, such as I remembered to have seen you wear on our American trip on board the boat."

"Mo; I was dressed as I am." "The dress, in my view, is a secondary matter," said Mr. Borderham dogmatloadly. "The important part of the affair is not what she wore, but what she did. Much of that is quite clear from her own admissions—most damaging admissions, too-and painful and unpleasant though it is to me," and he turned deferentially to Sir Jaffray, "I am bound to say that Lady Walcote must consider herself under arrest."

"Certainly. I quite agree with you," said Mr. Gifford in so decided a tone that the others looked at him. "The story that we have listened to is obvi ously a very difficult one to accept, and a very little sifting will show its absordity. I would suggest, Sir Jaffray, that it be given out here that her ladyship is under surveillance, that her admissions amount to a virtual confession and that her actual arrest will be made as soon as the formalities can be completed. With your permission I will retire from the case, and I have only to express my profound regret that I have been waable to help you."

As he said this he rose, and all the others stared at him in the greatest surprise and indeed dismay. Sir Jaffray was full of indignation. "I must ask you for an explanation of this singular course, Mr. Gifford."

he said angrily. "The explanation lies on the surface, Sir Jaffray," returned Mr. Gifford bluntly. 'You instructed me to find Lady Walcote. She is found without my assistance. You then commissioned me to look into this other matter, and again I have been able to do nothing, though everything is as clear as mud in a wineglass. There is no use, therefore, in my cooling my heels here at your cost any longer when there's nothing to be done. I don't want to rob you. You must excuse my being blant but everybody is bound to take Inspector Borderham's view of what her ladyship has told us. The thing's as straight as this table edge."

"I don't take that view, for one!" exclaimed the baronet vehemently. "Nor I, for another!" exclaimed Beryl as firmly, and Lola pressed her hand fervently for her support.

"Do you mean, Mr. Gifford, that you believe I killed that man, Pierre Turrian?" asked Lola, her voice vibrating and her eyes shining with suppressed feeling. "Your ladyship, it is not for me to turn accuser," he said. "I only think

low a jury will view the case.' "Then I will stand my trial," cried Lola indignantly, "and I will prove to the world at large that what you think is all wrong! If you think it, where will think it, and I will clear myself of all suspicion or suffer say penalty the law may inflict. What have I to do, BOW? I saw Fondy."

to rose, looking firm and resolved. "Madame, I am placed in a very diffi-oult position. Sir daffray must feel well enough how difficult and how painful it is. Certainly I do not wish to do a thing which our interfere with your chance of proving the truth of your story, and if I have your assurance and that of Str Jagray that he will be responsible for your remaining here I shall be quite withing to give you any reasonable time."

"I want no time!" excisimed Lois eastlongtely. "I am ready to go with "I think there should be some delay." said Sir Jaffray. "I can then get some one to look into the matter who is not

blinded by seriace devails." And he glanced angrily at Mr. Gifford. 'It "I think so, too," said the inspector. "Mow long"-But Lola burst in:

"I will not have an hour's unnecessary delay. The sooner I meet the charge the better, if you dare to bring it against me!" she exclaimed angrily. To be Continued.

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