a gleam of light on such a mystery as

watched Sir Jaffray as he walked rap-

idly from one end of the room to the

other, grasping the letter in one hand,

know something that may help you-

Mrs. Villyers and that Frenchman, M.

Turrian. You had better see them

both," said Lady Walcote deliberately.

"If you can get a glimpse of her reason

for leaving here, it may help you to

guess where she would be likely to go.

and so to trace her. You mean to look

"I will never rest till I find her and

bring her back," he cried passionately,

"if I spend the rest of my life in the

search! But I am absolutely at a loss

even to guess where she would be like-

"There are people whose business it

"Yes, I shall have down the best

"Then you had better see Mrs. Vill-

man I can hear of, but I want to be

today and kicked him out of the place.

turning quickly to him in her astonish.

gar actually trying to hurt Lola. I be-

lieve he meant mischief, too, and I

"You frighten me, Jaffray," ex-

claimed his mother, turning pale and

grasping the arms of her chair. "Can

there be any connection between that

"I never thought of that," he an-

swered in a voice low and anxious.

"I'll find him and drag out of him

"Be cautious, Jaffray. He may be a

"He has more need to be afraid of me

Remembering that Mrs. De Witt was

in the drawing room alone, and that he

She was sitting by the fire and got up

as he entered. She looked very serious

and distressed and spoke without any

affectation, as though the consciousness

that he was in trouble had frightened

"You are in real trouble, I can see. If

me, and a woman's wit is sometimes

"I will tell you tomorrow, he said.

"There is no need to put off the news.

Lola has gone away. I can see that-

and you are blind. Where is that Tur-

earnestly at her for a moment.

I myself shall be away."

He started at her words and looked

"I will tell you tomorrow," he re-

me for this evening, and tomorrow-I

am sorry, but I must ask you to bring

your visit to a close. My wife will not

be well enough, I fear, to get back, and

a little warmly and with a suggestion

"It is not a case of trust or distrust,

"As you will," she retorted, shrug-

ging her shoulders. "Still you can have

my advice even if you won't give me

your confidence. Find the Frenchman."

left the room and went to the library.

Taking an old London directory, he

searched among the private inquiry

agents until he found a name which he

remembered-Gifford of Southampton

row, London. He wrote out a telegram

asking him to come down at once on

mounted messenger to be dispatched

from a town ten miles away where the

Then he had a saddle horse brought

As he went he took up the train of

thought which his mother's words had

suggested and Mrs. De Witt had en-

forced. Was there any connection be-

tween that scene of the morning and

Lola's flight? Had that villainous cow-

ard anything to do with forcing them

apart? By heaven, if he had-and un

der his breath Sir Jaffray swore a deep,

strong oath-he should pay dearly for

If the signs of a true and deep love

were ever shown for a man, Lola had

shown them for him that day both by

word and act. Not for a moment would

he distrust her-no, not if all the world

were against her to swear away her

He would find her and bring her

back. That he vowed to himself, and

the thought that he could do it com-

forted and cheered him and lifted him

in a measure above the choking flood of

misery and regret. He would hold to

that resolve-to that and to his un-

When he reached Mrs. Villvers'

house, all was in darkness. It was late.

and the household had gone to bed.

Till that moment he had had a faint,

flickering hope that he should find Lola

But the darkened house quenched the

hope. If she had been there, there

would have been some signs of an un-

usual stir in the place instead of the

He roused the household, and when

the servants came shivering and irrita-

ble to know who it was and what was

wanted he learned that Mrs. Villyers

was from home and had been away for

two or three weeks. Asked where she

was, they gave him an address in North

Devonshire, and that was all the in-

formation he gained by the long night

To be Continued.

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dimmed love for her.

unpromising darkness.

there.

faith and truth and love for him.

But how could it possibly be so?

round, and he rode off fast through the

office was open all night.

He made no answer, but turned and

of reproach and defiance in her looks.

but tonight there is nothing to tell."

"Why don't you trust me?" she asked

had promised to go back to her, he turned

than I of him," he answered, and soon

after he left his mother and went away

every syllable he knows."

to make his preparations.

in as he passed the door.

her into being natural.

worth having."

'Meanwhile"-

dangerous man.'

horsewhipped him and turned him out."

"Yes," answered Sir Jaffray after a

ment. "What was it about? Lola?"

ly to go, and it drives me mad."

is to make such a search."

doing something myself."

yers and M. Turrian."

I can't go to him.'

and this?"

"There are two people who may

his stern, gloomy face bent forward.

or I shall go mad.'

for her, of course?"

CHAPTER XVII.

It was useless to fight any longer. That was the burden of Lola's thoughts as she sat with Pierre's short, peremptory note lying on her lap. She had done her utmost in the fight for happiness. She had striven hard to retain it in her grasp, but the fates were

fighting against her, and there was nothing left but to own herself beaten and accept the defeat as best she could. It was hard to give it all up-hardest of all to lose Jaffray's love and to feel that he would know her for a cheat and a liar and worse.

She ran back in thought over the events of the time since her arrival in England and smiled in self contempt as rie saw one after another the line of false steps she had taken. How paltry and unworthy seemed now the little ambitions which she had cherished then, how utterly weak and poor the objects

for which she had striven! To be the wife of a rich man she had schemed and plotted and intrigued. And what had it proved to be? The one sacrifice that now caused her the least regret was that of her money and position. The one thing she dreaded to lose now was the one thing which she despised then-Jaffray's love. She had traded on his love to win wealth and honor for herself. The end was nothing but dishonor for him and a desolate. broken life for herself.

Yet he had loved her-loved her like the true, gallant man he was. The thought cheered her, though it brought scalding tears to her eyes, which she let gather and blur all her sight and then fall unchecked. In all the years to come and whatever might befall her or him he would never blot out from his memory the love he had once had for her, and she loved the thought of that. If only the truth could be kept from him for always! She would give her

life, she thought, if that could be. What would he think of her if she were to die? How would he feel if he were to come into the room and find her dead?

Now she recalled some words that Pierre had spoken about drugs that told no tale and left no sign. What were they? How could they be obtained?

How would it be to go to Pierre as he said in his letter, to seem to fall in with his plan to poison Jaffray, to get from him the drug for that purpose and then herself take it? That would be easier than to find some poison by herself. Yet stay-there was no difficulty. It did not need any such elaborate preparation as that.

She had but to feign a bad headache with sleeplessness and take a sleeping draft strong enough-for her to wake

No one would think of poison. Her life lay all before her, bright with a dazzling promise of happiness, thought the world. How little the world knew! Two people would understand, however, and know the truth—the man who held her in his merciless power and Beryl, who had guessed the secret. What would they think? Nay, what

would they do? Would Beryl tell? She thought of the girl's cold, firm, deliberate nature and for a moment wavered how to answer the question. No; Beryl would not carry any feeling, however keen, beyoud the grave. She felt that. If she had paid the penalty with her life, Beryl would be as silent as the grave in

which she herself was to bury the secret. But what of Pierre? As she thought of him she was cold and sick. She knew too well what he would do. He would seek at once to trade on the shameful knowledge. He would tell the whole story to Jaffray, threaten him with exposure if he were not paid hush money, and thus hold him in bondage by the knowledge of her shame till Jaffray should come to hate her very name and curse the day when he had grown to

The gates of death were thus shut against her, and she felt that she must work out some other means of escape. Not once in all her misery did she think of telling Jaffray. She knew him so thoroughly and knew how he would turn from her act and her shame that the mere thought of facing him at such a moment was more than she could en-

For this there was another reason, known only to herself, and the knowledge of it had set up in her mind hundreds of confusing thoughts, fears, impulses and emotions. There was the hope of a little life that was some day to be born, and, like a sword piercing the flesh and turning in the wound to prolong the agony, was the knowledge that the child—hers and Jaffray's would be the child of shame. She knew too well what Jaffray

would feel and think and say if once this knowledge were forced upon him, and the fear, and the shame, and the love, and the misery all blended to drive the wretched girl to distraction.

Gradually out of the blinding mist and sorrow an idea began to take shape. If she were to see Pierre and lure him on to delay any evil plans he might have formed by promising to work with him, something might happen to prevent his doing any harm.

Or, better still, if she were to fly from the manor house and let him know that she had done so, he might be driven from his purpose altogether.

She could see him that night at the time and place he had named, and then she fell to pondering all the points that occurred to her in this connection.

In the midst of this she was roused by a knock at the door. She made no respense, but folded up the letter from Pierre and put it in her pocket. The knock came again, firmer and

more impatient, and then a voice-Sir Jaffray's-called her. She rose, and, wiping the tears has-

tily from her eyes, opened the door. "Here is a letter for you, Lola, from Beryl," he said, giving to her a letter which Lola saw was fastened with a seal. Then, seeing by her face that she was trembled, he said very gently, "What is the matter, dearest?" And he fellowed her into the room. "You have

been sitting here alone," he added in a cheerier voice. am-not-not very well," she said, her lips trembling and half refusing to frame any words at all. "Well, read your letter. Perhaps Beryl has some good news for you about her father. Read it and then let

me see whether I can't cheer you up a bit. You are so strong usually that you startle me when you are like this."
She troke the seal at the letter and opened it and almost instantly shrank together, while a lock of intense pain

spread ever her strained face, which turned as white as salt. "What is the matter? Is he dead?" cried Sir Jaffray, alarmed and thinking of Mr. Leycester. "Beryl shouldn's send news like that so suddenly. The

shock's enough to make any one ill."

By an effort Lola fought down some "No, he is-not dead," she answered

of her distress. very slowly, as though the words pained her. "It was not-not that. I am not well, dear." She smiled faintly and weakly, as if to reassure him. "I had a-a pain in my heart; that's all. It's not dear Beryl's letter or-news. There's nothing—nothing about death

in it, only to say-she can't get here again for a day or two and-would like me-to go to-her; that's all." She folded the letter and put it away in her pocket, where it lay against that

which she had had from Pierre. It might well cause her pain, short though it was. It ran thus: DEAREST LOLA-Come to me. I know the dreadful load you are bearing, and my heart is wrung for you. I know you are strong and brave, but the trial ahead of you would test the strongest and bravest. It breaks me down

to think that it is to me that this has come to

be known. Come to me and help me to shape

the course ahead. When I think of you in that desperate man's power, I shrink with fear. Come to me. Your friend always, BERYL. The end was closer than ever. There was no mistaking either Beryl's meaning or the kindness with which she wished to temper the blow which

she knew her letter must strike. But the blow had to be struck. "Come to me and help me to shape the course ahead." Lola knew well enough the only meaning which those words could have. The truth had to be

made known and that at once. She turned cold and shivered at the thought, and, seeing her shiver Sir Jaffray, who had no clew to the mental suffering which she was enduring, set

it down to illness. "You are ill, Lola," he said very gently and soothingly. "I shall send for Dr. Braithwaite." And he turned to leave the room.

"Don't go," she pleaded. "Don't leave me for a minute. Take me to your arms once more, Jaffray." "'Once more?' What do you mean, sweetheart?" he asked in astonishment. "God forbid that my arms should ever be closed to you!"

'Now pet me and soothe me as you used to wish to do in the days when I wouldn't let von."

He took her in his arms, and then sitting down in the long, low easy chair where she had been he drew her on to his lap and held her there like a tired child, holding her head to his heart and smoothing her face and her hair, kissing her and murmuring soft, caressing words to her.

"You're not often like this to me," she murmured, opening her lovely eyes and glancing up into his and smiling faintly. "Your touch is like what the wave of a mesmerist's hand must be when he wafts away pain." For answer he kissed her again.

"Have I made you happy, Jaffray?" she asked after a long pause. By way of answer this time he hummed the snatch of a song, "If this be vanity, vanity let it be," an old, teasing trick of his when she had seemed to look for a compliment from him. "Yes, I am vanity today, but an-

swer," she urged.

"My darling wife, I have never known since I was a child and felt the presence of my mother's love such happiness as you have brought into my life. That from my soul," he said earnestly, She kissed him in response and lay

for a moment quite still in his arms. Then suddenly she asked: "If I were to die, Jaffray, would

break your heart?' "Don't, Lola-don't even think such

"But I mean it. Would it?" "It would close it against ever holding such a love in my life again," he answered, and his voice was like that of one in pain. "I am selfish, but I am glad of that.

I want no one ever to take my place, even to blot out the memory of this time, whatever happens." "You are talking very strangely, child. 'Whatever happens'-what can

"I am feeling very strange, Jaffray," she answered, taking his hand and rubbing her soft cheek against it and kissing it. "You laugh at my presentiments, but you do not laugh me out of them. I believe that if we could lift the veil that hides from us the next few days we should see a trouble that might make us both wish we were dead rather than have to face it. No; hear me." she said, putting her hand on his lips when he was going to break in and interrupt her. "It is this which is frightening me, and it makes me anxious to get a pledge from you of your love.

but, whatever happens, remember today | she had penned the words. and remember our love." "Are you fearing anything that can happen, child?" he asked earnestly. Her words seemed more than a mere

presentiment. For a moment the issue to tell or not to tell hung in the balance, and she almost nerved herself to dare all and open out her confession while he was in this

But he spoke and broke the spell. "I sometimes think, as I have told you, that there is something." And the tone in which he spoke drove back the impulse and made her silent. She seemed to read in it an unwillingness to forgive, a sternness that she knew was in his character, and it chilled the words even as they rose to her lips.

So the moment passed, and nothing was said save that she turned the question with an evasion. "I am fearing something," she said. "and if only I could guess what it was and what shape it would take and what it would do I should be better again. As it is you must not scold me, but love

me, Jaffray, always love me, always, and bear with me when I am like this, but always think of me with love." Then she was silent, and after a time, when he had soothed her and petted her, she fell asleep in his arms, her last thought of him being that which a kiss suggested. He held her while she slept-it was not long-and thought of all she had said and wondered whether it had any hidden mean-

ing, and, if so, what. And he looked at her as she slept and was pleased when a smile flickered over her face, and he kissed it before it was gone, and kissing her he woke her, and she smiled still more broadly and

"That is the sweetest sleep I have ever had in my life, Jaffray," she said -"in your strong, safe arms, kissed to



'When did this come and how?" he asked sleep and kissed to wakening. It makes me strong for whatever may come." With that she rose, and, with a laugh

and a last kiss that his recollection of her might be all of love and brightness, she sent him down stairs happy and loving.

In all the time of stress and pain that followed that last look of her haunted his memory always, and he learned to blame himself sorely for having been so dull and blind as not to have seen before him the stormcloud of trial and trouble and suffering that was about to burst.

As it was he thought chiefly of her love for him and only speculated in a vague and general way as to the cause of the moodiness in which he had found

At dinner time Lola did not appear,

out a message came from her that she had felt uneasy about Beryl and had determined to go over and see her. "How odd Lola is!" exclaimed Mrs. De Witt when she heard this. "Why, this afternoon she got me to go over to Beryl, and then when I got back I couldn't find her anywhere to give

Beryl's message.' "She is anxious about Beryl; that's all," said Sir Jaffray, and so the subject passed, but the dinner without Lola was very constrained, and Sir Jaffray was more disturbed than he cared to show.

As soon as it was finished and he was alone he told the butler to find out what time the carriage was ordered to bring Lola back. The reply was that the carriage had been sent back without any orders, and that Lola was to return in one of the Leycester Court carriages.

This surprised him very much, and he ordered out a saddle horse and rode to Leycester Court, saying nothing to any one of his intention. When he came back, his face was very stern and pale.

"Has Lady Walcote returned?" he asked instantly, and the servant told him she had not and handed him a letter. Glancing at it, he recognized Lola's handwriting, and he caught his breath as if in pain.

"When did this come and how?" he asked shortly. "A messenger brought it about an hour ago, Sir Jaffray," answered the

man. "He said he had been paid to bring it over on horseback." "From where? Do you know the "He did not say where he came from.

"You should have asked him." re plied the baronet angrily. He held the letter in his grasp, and it seemed to burn his hand. Holding himself in restraint, he went

sir, and he's a stranger to me."

quietly to the library, and, having shut the door carefully behind him, tore open the envelope with fingers that shook. The first words were enough. He went to the door hurriedly and ocked it to prevent any one surprising

him in his hour of agony and humiliation and disgrace. Lola's letter told him in plain words that she had fled from home, never to

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CLEW. The letter which Lola had sent back to her husband to explain her flight was to him quite unintelligible, and the more he read it the less could he understand her motives in writing it: My DEAREST-Would to God that I could still put "husband!" But, my dearest ever and always and everywhere, what will you say, what will you think, when you read this and know that we are never more to meet on this earth? As I write you have just left me. Your kisses are still burning on my lips, your love warming my desolate heart, your touch lingering on my face and my hair, your truth keeping me strong in resolve to right you, your words of love singing in my ears. But that was our last caress. Now our love is nothing but a memory, and this act of mine may even blot out yours. You will never see me again, Jaffray, and I pray you never to seek me. Between us there is a bar that nothing can break down, and, though I am not altogether guilty toward you, I am not altogether innocent. I would sooner have died than have done this. It would have been so easy just to die in your arms, but I could not take my shame away with me, and I think I have done what alone can cure some part of the evil that I have wrought. I cannot tell you what it is. I pray you may never know. Today when I lay in your arms I nearly told you all, nearly opened the flood gates of all the sorrow and the pain and the distracting trouble, and just let it all come out, but something happened, a word you said or a tone I thought I heard, and I stopped, and all was blackness and gloom again. There is no way but this and no end for me but death, though that may not be yet. One thing I ask-try not to think ill of me. Never believe I have not loved you with my whole heart. Never doubt that in any wild stories which may ever reach you either as to the past or the future. If I am driven to what may look like evil and wreng and crime, remember it is only for your sake and because there is no other way. And now goodby, goodby! I can hardly write for the tears which scald my eyes. Ah, me! The last word I shall ever say to you! Think, Jaffray, the last word! My heart is as broken as my life. But I must say it-

The writing of the last few lines of the letter was bleared and blotted and irregular where Lola had not been able to keep her tears from running on to Don't blame me and don't laugh at me; the paper or to hold her hand steady as it.

Sir Jaffray's eyes were dim enough as he read the letter and tried to find some reason for what had been done.

What could it mean? The letter was the plaint of a broken heart, and every word and syllable of it spoke to the love with which Lola loved

And yet she had left him. He sat alone battling with the problem-for a time and trying to think what was best to do, and when he could see no gleam of light he went out to go to his mother's room, carrying the letter

in his hand. As he was crossing the hall it occurred to him that he must give some reason to the servants for Lola's absence. and, ringing for her maid, he said that she had been detained at Leycester Court and would not be home.

Then Mrs. De Witt, hearing him, came out of the drawing room. "Do you know I'm all alone, Magog?" she said in a bantering voice, and then, changing her tone at sight of his face, she asked: "What is the matter? What

has happened? "Nothing is the matter in which you can help, thank you," he answered deliberately. "I am sorry you are alone, but Lola has been kept at Leycester Court and will not be home tonight. I am probably going over there myself. Will you wait for a few minutes in the drawing room and I will see you pres-

There was something in his manner which shook all the frivolity out of Mrs. De Witt, and without a word she went back into the room, feeling grave and troubled.

Then Sir Jaffray went on to his mother's room.

"Mother, there is trouble. Help me what to think and what to do. Lola seems to have been driven by some cause which I cannot in the least understand to take the desperate step of leaving the manor. Listen to this." And he read

the letter. She sat and listened in the deepest pain and not without some twinges of self reproach as she read between the words of the letter the evidence of a heart battling with an overwhelming sorrow and driven in upon itself for lack of the helping counsel of womanly

sympathy. The reading of the letter left her completely baffled and bewildered. "What can it mean, Jaffray? What can the poor girl mean? Have you no sort of clew, nothing of any kind to guide you? What does she mean?-'Would to God that I could still put "husband!" You don't-you've no cause to doubt her?"

"I would answer for her against the world. She has been driven to this last desperate act by something-heaven knows what-from which I could not shield her. Why did she not tell me?" "What could there be to tell?" "How can I even guess, mother?"

These lots are situated in the most desirable part of the town and will be sold cheap and on re ason-"Can we look to the past for a clew, able terms. do you think? Has she ever told you Chatham, 12th April, 1898.

the history of the years with her "Never a syllable that would throw

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this. Of course not. I tell you it is innow there is no time for mere talk. I must be doing something,

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night to Mrs. Villyers' honse to try to gather from her some clew to Lola's OPENING OF

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