## TO THE BITTER DREGS.

By the Author of "Cast up by the Sea," "The Fog Woman," "The Secre of White Towers," etc.

> CONTINUED. CHAPTER VII.

Dancing was kept up till the small hours of the morning, and dawn was breaking before the last carriage drove away.

Lady Metherell was exhausted after all her duties as hostess; yet, before attempting to rest, she sent a message, by her maid, to Sir Martin, that she wished to speak to him at once.

He found her seated in an arm-chair, her thin figure wrapped in a particularly ugly dressing-gown, her limp grey hair falling about her shoulders.

He never had loved this woman, but, in a way, had grown to respect and even like

She was ugly, cold and unsympathetic; but she was a good woman, though her ideas of righteousness were rather narrow.

'My dear Martin,' she began, as he closed the door, 'I felt that I must speak to you at once. You will have already seen that we have made a great mistake in asking Madame Rozier to the house. What ever she may have been when you first knew her, she is now not the sort of a person I can tolerate.

'She is an old friend, Clara,' he said, wearily, dreading the discussion he saw impending. 'I trust you will show her every kindness.'

Lady Metherell forgot her fatigue and

stood up. 'You cannot mean this! The woman is a mass of vulgarity. The manner in which she rolls her eyes-her questions, her remarks. 'I have never before been asked to associate with such a woman, and I refuse. I have invited her to remain the week. Were it not for your sake, I should get rid of her before that time. But she leaves to the day, and never enters the

'My dear Clara,' Sir Martin expostulated, 'yon have taken an absurd prejudice against Madame Rozier. You cannot expect a foreigner to behave in quite an English manner.'

'The French women I have hitherto met have been gentlewemen,' she replied tersely. 'There is no need to say more about it. 'I absolutely refuse to entertain Madame Rozier.

He knew she was right. Had he not seen it himself during the ghastly hours that had passed since she had entered his home. And yet he must insist upon her remaining.

His throat felt parched. He poured out a little water, and drank

'You are tired,' he said. 'We will talk this over to-morrow.

She looked at him in wonderment. 'Surely,' she said, 'you know that I never decide hastily; but that, once I have decided, nothing will alter that decision.' 'For this once you must alter it, he per-

sisted. 'I wish Madame Rozier to prolong her visit.'
'I have no idea,' she said, icily, 'why

you express such a preposterous wish. But if you desire to entertain such women, you must do so elsewhere.' He saw that it would be worst than use-

less to say more. The storm was gathering-it would not

be long now before it burst-and he was powerless to prevent it. While this conversation was taking place

Dola Rozier lay quietly sleeping. There was no sound in the room, save her regular breathing, and the ticking of a

clock. But, hark !- what was that?

The handle of the door was slowly turned, the door itself quietly opened-and the figure of a man crept in.

Crawling on hands and knees, he reached the bed

A board creaked loudly, and Dola Rozier stirred uneasily. The crouching figure remained motion-

less, till once again she sank into heavy slumber; then, silently rising, he bent over her, with one hand upraised, grasping something which, catching a ray of moonlight, glittered as it swiftly descended, driven with deadly aim, through Dola Rozier's heart!

There was a gurgling, gasping cry, a horrible contortion of the limbs beneath the bed-clothes, followed by a ghastly stillness, while the murderer stood contemplating his horrible deed.

Minutes were ticked away by the little clock in the room before he moved.

Then, with awful stealthy deliberation, he set to work to give an appearance of disorder to the spartment. Drawers were noiselessly opened, the

contents of a wardrobe rapidly disarranged the articles upon the dressing table tossed

all were sleeping, or, at all events, shut in their rooms.

It wanted another hour or so before the servants would be about.

Outside, the birds were twittering in the ivy, and presently up shot the first rays of

the rising sun. Lucy Brend who was lying awake, heard | should die of shame.' -or thought she heard-stealthly footsteps pass her door, and wondered, vaguely, who was moving about so early in the morning; but no other sound disturbed the peaceful quiet, and she turned her head on the pillow, not giving the matter another thing about it. What a miserable fool I thought.

Brighter and brighter grew the sunlight, the birds sang more gaily. Someone passed on the gravel beneath he window.

Lucy sat up, and looked to where Shirley lay, calmly sleeping, one white arm thrown above her head, her lips parted in

She was dreaming she was dancing with

He had forgiven her; they nnderstood one another.

Her feet felt light as air They went on dancing, dancing, dancing, till suddenly she caught sight of Gil-

bert Metherall, He was looking furious.

'Shirely!' he called, loudly. 'Shirley!' She started up-it was no dream-someone was calling her.

And as the sleep left her eyes, they rested on Lucy-Lucy pale and troubled, with her hair all disordered, and on her face such an expression of misery, that Shirley saw at once that something awful had hap-

'What is it?' she cried, in alarm. 'What is the matter ?'

'I scarcely know,' the girl answered, with a wretched little laugh. 'It all seems like some hideous nightmare, Yet I know it is true. It is cruel to disturb you,' she addrd, remorsefully; 'but I could endure my thoughts no longer. I felt that they were driving me mad. I pretended to be asleep when you eame up; but I have never closed my eyes since then.

'You poor dear !' Shirley exclaimed, pityingly. 'Tell me what has happened? In answer Lucy held out her leit hand, the third finger of which was adorned with

a thick gold signet-ring. Shirely stared at it, completely puzzled.

'What does it mean?' she asked. 'Mean!' Lucy repeated. 'Why, that I am the greatest idoit on the whole face of the earth 1 This is Captain Dorrien's ring. am engaged to him.

tress. 'You don't even like him. You of the gravel-path, he looked like an old remember what you said about him only | man. yesterday.'

Lucy brushed her hair from her forehead. 'Am I likely to forget ?' she said. 'Do you not see it is all a horrible mistake? Only, I don't know how I am ever to put it right. I have looked at it in every way. I think it will send me crazy.'

Shirley put her arms about her. 'Tell me,' she said, gently, 'how it has happened. I am sure between us we shall think of some way out of it. Of course, you cannot be engaged to him—it is too rediculous; but even if you are at the present moment, you shall not be for many hours longer. You need only say you have changed your mind, and give him back his odi us ring.'

Luck shook her head, 'That is just what I can't do,' she declared. 'When you hear everything, you will think so, too. Yesterday afternoon Harold Ridley gave me a rose. I—I pinned it to my dress last night, and he noticed

it. He asked me why I had done so, and I gave some silly answer. I telt suddenly afraid lest he should know how much I cared for him.

'We went on to the terrace, and then down to the lawn. You know the seat by the tountain—we sat there. After a short time he spoke again about my wearing his flower, when he knew Dorrien had sent me such beauties. He leant forward and put his hand over mine.

'I don't know what he was going to say, but the look in his eyes made me feel that my chance of happiness had come. Then someone called him-one of the men-Ridley! Ridley! you are wanted, for a moment-come at once,' 'Will you wait here?' he said.

'My heart was beating so, I could scarcely answer him. I managed to say 'Yes,' and he went away. I believe he loved me-the thought just dazed me. I felt almost frightened when I heard him coming back. I did not move, or look round. He leaned over the back of the seat. 'Darling!' he whispered, 'I love you! -do you care for me?

'I felt giddy with this unexpected happiness. I closed my eyes. He drew my head back till it rested against him 'Do you love me?' he said again. And thenoh, Snirley! - I just let all my feelings for him rush out, as I answered, 'Ah yes!-no words can tell how dearly.' He pressed his lips to mine-and I-oh, Heaven! shall I ever forget that moment—It was Captian Dorrien!

'No!' Shirley gasped, in awe-stricken tones. 'Don't say that!'

'It was,' the other replied, with despairing conviction. 'I felt turned to stoneparalyzed with the horror of it all. I don't know what I said. Harold Ridley never came back, and, as we were ruturning to the house, Captain Dorrien laughed and Finally, with one swift look at his own said. 'Good old Ridley! he knew I was In the house a complete silence reigned; chance.' I caught sight of Harold afterwards. He was sitting in a corner, fanning Eva Ware.

'But can't you tell Captain Dorrien it was all a mistake P'

'How can I ?' Lucy cried. 'If I did, he would guess at once who I took him forthe story might reach Harold's ears. 'I

'If Mr. Ridley cares for you--' 'If! Yes, that is it. After last night, I am certain he does not. My own vanity led me to imagine he did. I was a fool to have been!

She clenched her hands, rocking herself to and fro.

'I must bear it-carry it through with a right hand. Anything, so long as Harold Carter's Little Liver Pills.

Ridley never knows the truth. You will stand by me, won't you, Shirley? You the fresh green world, at the tender blue are the only one I would trust with such a

And then she just laid her head on her faiends shoulder, and burst into a storm of

Shirley waited in silent sympathy till she

grew calmer. 'What a coward I am !' she exclaimed. at last. 'Still a good cry does relieve your feelings, Only you had no business to keep me company. What a selfish wretch I am, to spoil your fun! We will ring for Rose, have some tea, dress, and go out. Just see what a glorious day it is!' She had touched the electric bell, and

sunshine and balmy summer air. 'It will all come right,' Shirley said, hopefully, as they leant from the open win-

drawn up the blind, letting in a flood of

dow. 'You never need marry him.' Lucy shuddered. 'I would rather die. I shall have to pre-

tend, for a little time, that I meant what I said, and then break it off. Of course the other is all over. Harold never cared, so I-won't.

She larghed, but her lips were quivering, and she bent her face over the flowers in the window-box, to hide it. Early as they were out that morning,

they were surprised to find Sir Martin was before them. They came upon him suddenly, walking

alone in a sequestered part ef the grounds, his hands clasped behind his back, his head bowed. He glanced up, with a start, as the two

girls appeared on the walk. 'You are early birds,' he said, forcing a smile. 'I did not expect any ladies to appear before lunch.'

He kissed Shirley, who was a pet of his. She regarded his haggard, pallid face

with concern. 'You look quite knocked up!' she exclaimed. 'Why don't you go in and rest?' 'You are looking fresh as a daisy,' he said, 'and so, also, is Miss Brend; but I

suppose old age is beginning to tell on me.' They made some laughing reply, and

They were going down to the beach, they said, to have a look at the sea. He had pulled himselt together while speaking to them; but, directly they had gone, his shoulders resumed their torlorn 'No-oh, no!' Shirley cried, in real dis- stoop, and, as he slowly paced the length

> The burden of his sin was pressing heavily upon him. But it was not only the remembrance of

that sin, or the new terrible dread of its exposure which had so unnerved him. He had dreamt a dream—one so awful and so strangely vivid, that it had left him

completely unstrung. After the discussion with Lady Metherell he had gone to the library, knowing full well that rest was impossible while his

mind was so racked. He sat there smoking and smoking, until, at last, anknowingly, his eyes grew

heavy and closed. He thought he was still sitting in the same room, plunged in gloomy reflections, vainly seeking some way to escape from the power of Dola Rozier, when suddenly there came to him again that fierce, mad impulse to kill, that he had experienced by the mill-stream.

The thought had no horror for him. He longed to commit the deed.

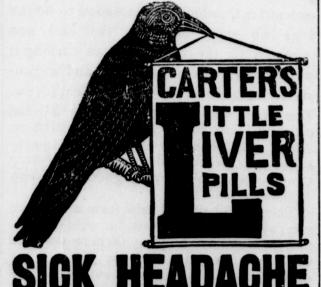
He felt only a passionate desire to be free from a woman he hated beyond all ex-He rose to his feet, and cautiously

opened the door. On the wall before him hung some weapons, each having some historical in-

terest attached to it. Amongs them was a small, sharp dagger -a deadly instrument. He crossed the hall and took it from its

Then, swiftly and silently, he hastened up the wide staircase to Madame Rozier's room, and, as she lay asleep, stabbed her

through the heart. It was all the work of a few moments, and he was standing in the hall again when the morning light was piercing the chinks of every drawn blind.



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He went to a window and looked out at sky, and, as he did so, there rushed upon him the awful knowledge of what he had

A remorse, which no words, or prayers, or tears could lessen, overwhelmed him. He shrank from the light of day.

The air seemed full of voices, shrieking. Murderer! murderer! He covered his ears with his hands, and,

staggering back to the library, sank upon And then he awoke, with the tears of

agony still on his cheek, with his hands still clasped over his ears. Awoke, not knowing, at first, whether

he had or had not done the horrible deed. He sat up, and his mind grew clearer. He wiped the drops of anguish from his

He thanked God it had been but a dream.

The sun was shining brightly. He flung wide the window, drawing in a great breath of pure, sweet air.

He telt like one who had narrowly escaped a terrible doom. He rang for his valet, and, going to his room, washed, and changed his things.

And, all the while, he thought over the terror of that dream. He was still thinking of it as he descended the stairs, and almost unwittingly glanced to where the weapons hung upon the wall. The steel blades of knife and sword gleamed in the sun, but the dagger was no longer there.

He stood stairing at the vacant spot, unable to believe the evidence of his eyes. Who could have moved it?

Or, had it been knocked down? He hastened across the hall, and scarced in every possible and impossible place, but in vain—the dagger had gone

A low moan broke from his lips, clammy moisture stood upon his forhead. Could he have taken the weapon in his sleep? Could he have-

But his thoughts refused to go further. A blackness came before his sight, and a sound as of rushing waters filled his ears as, for the first in his life he fainted.

He knew not how long he lay there, stretched, face downwards, across the great bearskin rug; but, when consciousness had fully returned, he felt thankful to to find he was still alone. He was filled now with an awful dread

that others might notice the absence of the dagger and, with trembling hands, he hastily altered the position of the weapons, so as to hide the empty space. When that was done, he turned, and fled

from the house and seeking the most unfrequented part of the garden tried to argue away the horror that oppressed him. 'It was merely a curious coincidence; it could be nothing more. He was unstrung with the worry of the last few days'-and so on, till the booming of the gong warned

him he must now appear before his friends in the character of the genial, jovial host. Before going to the breaktast-room, he poured out a glass of raw spirit, and drank

coming ordeal. The meal had commenced. One swift glance at the long table showed him that several ladies were absent,

amongst them Madame Rozier. Those who were present seemed in high spirits, discussing yesterday's fun, and the coming events of the day.

He joined in the conversation in a restless, excited manner. Someone remarked that he was looking

He laughed loudly, declaring that he never felt hetter in his life. Once or twice Lady Metherell glanced

at him in surprise. She had never before seen him in such high spirits, and wondered what had occasioned them.

'I did not expect to find so many ladies down this morning,' Dorrien remarked. 'I quite expected this to be a bachelors' breakfast.

'The conceit of man is unlimited,' Shirley declared. 'Why should you have imagined such a thing? I suppose you believe you men have all the energy.' 'Oh! come, Miss Loraine, you must own

we have the greater share,' he returned. 'We can prove that at once—five ladies are absent, and not one man.' At this particular moment the door opened to admit four girls, who were

rather surprised at the roar of laughter which greeted them. 'What is the joke?' Eva Ware, who was

one of them, demanded, 'Do let us laugh 'There is nothing much to laugh at,'

Shirley said. 'Captain Dorrien was just boasting that every man had turned up for breaktast, and that five ladies were missing. Madame Rozier is the only one who has not appeared. He will feel smaller still when she does.'

'That would be impossible,' Dorrien declared, with mock humility. 'I confess am completely crushed.'
'Cheer up,' Gilbert Metherell cried.

We will have a tennis match this afternoon 'Ladies versus gentlemen.' 'That will be splendid,' Lucy Brend said. 'Handicap of coure.'

Her cheeks were flushed.

bright. No one would have believed that, only a few hours earlier in the morning, they had been red and swollen with weeping; her bright, merry manner was so well asaumed that even Shirley was not quite

certain whether it was real or feigned.

The gay chatter and repartee were kept up to the end of the meal. As the guests sauntered from the room, Lucy found herself surrounded by her own particular friends, and congratulations

were showered upon her. 'We saw the ring—we knew the choice had been made they said. We even had bets as to which stood the greater chance Captain Dorrien or Mr. Ridley.'
'Mr Ridley!' Lucy echoed. 'Why, we are only friends.'

Then Dorrien came up to ask her to go out with him, and she ran away for her hat. 'I shall never be able to endure this for long,' rhe declared aloud, as she fixed on her hat with a torquoise-headed pin. 'It is awful—simply awful! I have half a mind to give him back his ring to-day. I can't go on with the affair. It was some time before she made np her mind to

eave her room. Nearly everyone had gone out. One person alone stood in the hall,

reading a letter. It was Harold Ridley. A pang seemed to go through her heart as she caught sight of him

her set teeth-hesitating whether to go or Then he looked up, and came forwad to

She drew her breath sharply through

meet her. 'May I offer you my most sincere congratulations? he said, quietly. 'Dorrein is a very good fellow. I hope you will be

Thanks—oh, yes; I am sure to be!

she answered, hurriedly. She felt her color coming and going. She could not meet his eyes.

'He is waiting on the lawn for you. Do not let me detain you.' 'Well, I am afraid I have kept him waiting rather a long time,' she replied, light-

ly. 'Are you not coming out this lovely morning P' 'Some correspondence to get through

first,' he answered. 'Oh! I hate letter-writing,' she declared. Such waste of time. Ta-ta! He watched her run out into the sun

shine, a sneering smile disfiguring his pleasant face. 'Yesterday, I would have sworn she was sincere and true,' he said, bitterly. 'But she is no better than any other of her sex. A flirt-a coquette. Winning the love of any man who is fool enough to believe in her. Just because it flatters her insatiable vanity. Well, Miss Lucy Brend, you shall never have the satisfaction of knowing that

your wiles have touched me.' His fingers clenched over the letter he held, and he broke into an angry laugh. 'I am a fool to trouble about her,' he

## said. 'She is not worthy a second thought.' CHAPTER VIII.

To Sir Martin that morning seemed interminable.

He haunted the house, feeling unable to leave it until he had seen Dola Rozier. He telt an irrepressible desire to mention her name, to ask it anyone had seen or spoken to her, yet. whenever he tried to do so, he seemed to lose all control over

his voice, and he dared not put the ques-As the time went on, the suspense became almost unendurable; and when at length the luncheon gong sounded, and her seat alone remained vacant at the

table, despair lent him courage. 'Madame Rozier", he said, looking up the long table at his wife, 'is she not well?' 'Madame Rozier gave orders that she

It gave him some courage to face the Lady Metherell replied. 'I suppose breakfast was taken to her?' Sir Martin continued, having once broken

was not to be disturbed until she rang,'

'I believe not.'

'But, my dear Clara---' 'My dear Martin,' she interrupted, 'Madame Rozier gave her orders. She was very tired. She desired a long rest.' 'Madame Rozier,' captain Dorrien said, intends to cut out all the younger ladies this evening. It is now two o'clock. She

has had a long sleep.' 'I think,' Sir Martin said, 'that one of the maids had better see if she is all right. Lady Metherell gave a disdainful little smile, as she ordered one of the footmen to send a maid to Madame Rozier's room. Sir Martin Metherell lived through a lifetime of agony during the minutes which elapsed before the servant returned.

It was beyond his power now to take part in the lively conversation which was going on all the time. He could not take his eyes from the

It seemed to him that he could hear the slow, heavy throbbing of his own heart. He saw the face before him through a blood-red mist. His lips were dry and parched.

and, as he did so, Sir Martin rose to his teet, unconscious of his surroundings, his gaze riveted to the footman's ashen face. ·What is it?' he demanded, hoarsely. Speak-what is it ?'

Continued on Fifteenth Page.

Then, at length, the servant reappeared,

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