"A Sorrow's Crown of Sorrows.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

For an instant Aubrey remained motionless. Then a strange look flashed into his eyes, and muttering something, he threw himself upon Bruce Laidlaw, and clutched him murderously by the throat. Then, with a groan, he suddenly relaxed his hold, and swaying round, fell face downwards upon the moor.

And so the train which was to have taken Mr. and Mrs. Laidlaw on the first stage of their wedding trip went off without them, leaving the bridegroom on his knees, by the prostrated body of his rival, and the poor bride staring anxious-ly at the hands of the clock in her lodgings off Oxford Street, and rushing ever again to the window to watch for the coming of her newly-made husband. She was far too happy to disguise her feelings.
Yet more than once during the day a

passing thought of her Oldford lover shadowed her mind with regret and uneasiness. He had been so toud of her, and must be so unhappy. Yet, what could she do? Dr. Marsden had forbidden the marriage; she had returned the engagement-ring; and Madame de Vaux had implored her to give up all thoughts of Aubrey and to leave Oldford. Yet her woman's heart ached a little for him; she tried to speak of him to Bruce, but a slight coldness in his manner as she approached the subject warned her to avoid it for the present.

"I liked young de Vaux very much." Bruce said, "though I believe he was mortally jealous of me. He seemed a very courteous, pleasant-tempered gen-tleman. But why should you think about him now, when you are with me? Are you already regretting the step you have taken? Remember, I must reign alone or abdicate," he added, half laughing, but more than half in earnest.

"You are the first and the only man I

have loved or can love," she answered; and he made her swear it, being far more jealous than tender in his regard for her.

It never once occurred to Lola to exact a similar vow from him. From the moment when, in knight-errant fashion. he had carried her off from the den of Andrew Marsden, Bruce had regained his old place in the temple Lola had once raised to him, and she simply declined to either believe or remember anything she had ever heard against him. Now that Andrew was unmasked, so she argued to heiself, it was folly to attach cre lence to his seandalous culumnies; and as to the Doctor, his prejudice against Bruce was so unreasonably strong that even his word could not be trusted on the

Dearly as she loved her guardian, Lola could not yet forgive him for the deception he had practised upon her, by which he had worked upon her wounded pride to induce her to marry Aubrey. That he should have refused Bruce Laidiaw's offer for her hand, and dismissed him and so misrepresent some of Bence's words as to construe them into an insult. this was indeed a legitimate source of grievance against him. As to Bruce, he would hardly bear to hear Dr. Marsden's name mentioned before him, and when, as he left Lola at her door on the evening when they returned from the theatre she falteringly suggested that she had better write home, he had perempterily told her she must not do so until the fol-

"I am going to take yea out," he said,

her next day made Lola half guess his attention, but the first absolute informaing the short drive they presently took in the direction of Bloomsbury.

"You will have no bridesmaids, my incr. the amiable handmaiden went down poor little Lola." he said, "and no on her knees on the mat, and applied her wedding-cake, or favours, or rice, or old car to the keyhole. satin slippers; and I am very much afraid you will be given away by the pew-opener. A pairry wedding for the most beautiful gir! in Eugland! And am My name is Elia Granville. you are marrying a strugging anthor. and your guardian will most certainly disinherit you. But we have youth, hope, and love, and energy, and there is a bit of white heather in your bonnet. Laid aw stood face to face at last, which I privately instructed the milliner

mured Lola, growing rapidly red and dinary tail woman, whose actual height white by turns. "And oughtn't I to have was considerably accentuated by the said yes, and named the day?"

your eyes said yes more than a month leaper the long sue le gloves, and the brown | and if he said it was true, I should break | ago, and they say so still. I have the ring bound and yet certain subtle touches in my pocket, and a special license, too," woman; and yet certain subtle touches "Then you took my consent for in M.s. Granville's toilet instantly apgranted?" she said. "It is all very irspecies to be that her visitor was socially

down.
"London is in white for the wedding.

does on such occasions. When the was wed ling over, and she no at him with a certain hushed solemaity free election of whose she had seen that in her whole bearing, and shadowing her broan hecomely face, pleasing foolish, but radiant eyes, Bruce told her, as he led just in the less wicked in expression, her to the door, that as their train left before, and she realised that the original Charing Cross for Dover at a quarter-past of the "Diana" on Andrew Marsden's ments, twelve, and his packing was not yet done. mantlepiece stood before her. he would ask her to wait in his old rooms until he returned for her from Bloomsbury. Then, in silence and a'one, as the had entered, so they left the courch, man and wife now, bound together for good orill; and Lola, half dazed still by the suddenness of the whole proceeding, waited for her husband at Mrs. Manvers house. The wedding trip was to be spent

could hardly think clearly at all. She was utterly happy at the thought of being married to Bruce; she kept on repeating softly to herself the words: "I and take the bread trom us honest am his wife-Bruce Laidlaw's wife!" women's mouths. I couldn't have and turning her wedding ring round and thought it of a well-brought-up girl like round on her finger to assure herself of the joyful fact.

in this moment when she should have been most content, a speech of her guardian's rose in her mind and seemed to overshadow the life she was that day begin

Every trace of colour faded out of ning: "Whoever marries Bruce Laidlaw will be a miserable woman."

packing it on her return from the church; a particularly neat portmanteau rived that morning, stood beside it. she rang the bell, and Mary outside rose reductantly from her place at the keyhole to answer the summons. the hat and coat she had worn to come up from Oldford. She did not like to wear them for the journey lest Bruce should be displeased, although she was privately of the opinion that in her present costume she was far too finely my little girl. And you say you don't dressed to walk about.

For Bruce's notions were princely, and, the very day of L da's arrival in town, he had received a cheque for three hundred my wicked husband ran away to America. pounds from his publisher; consequently, it had pleased him to dress his bride-elect in sumptuous raiment, and Lola stood be dying; and but for him I should have

ing a very impressive reflection. The cloak was of pearl-grey cloth; it temper. And he's as fond as can be of my little Mary, and of me, too, until last feet, and was trimmed with deep grey fur at the edge, and with elaborate steel embroidery about the neck and should ers. The close-fiting bonnet was entirely of steel, with a pale grey turf of feathers, and nestling under the brim was a tiny spray of white heather. Long pearl-grey gloves and a white veil completed a costume in which Lola hardly knew herself. She had never before worn either a bonnet, or a veil, or a long cloak, or any garmenes approaching the total of twentyfive guineas -a whole quarter's moneywhich she had with her own eyes seen Bruce pay for his parchases. From a bonny, rosy-cheeked country girl they seemed to transform her into a graceful London lady.

Lola's nature, as well as her training. rendered her as devoid of vanity as any one of Eve's daughters can be. She wa always wishing she were clever, but never thankful she was beautiful. Her ideal of beauty was intellectual pallor, a spiritual expression, and somewhat emaciated proportions; consequently her own fairness in no way impressed her.

Yet even another woman, and that an enemy, was forced into recognising the unusual love iness of Bruce's choice. Absorbed in counting the minutes until Bruce's return, and in watching for his without consulting her, was sufficiently humiliating; but that he should, in addition, have kept silence on the subject.

Bruce's return, and in watering for instance in the form her elevation on the second floor, did not hear an alternation which took place in the hall below at which took place in the hall below at just about the time when Aubrey de Vaux was receiving the news of her

marriage.
It was Mary the large, and dirty, and jubilant, who epened the door some five minutes after the bell had been rang, and admitted a hely visitor, who asked for Bruce Landlaw.

something in his magnetas he greetel the laty, for suchashed passed Maryano into her and, her next one hard half guess his tention, but the first absolute information, but the first absolute information by many larger than the laty, for suchashed passed Maryano into her and, her next one, her next day made Loba half guess his tention, but the first absolute information has been and lating some proportions. Mary creature induging in noisy grief in the the laly, for she dashed passed Mary and that her ided, her peerless Bruce, her tion he gave her on the subject was due rattled up after her, and as soon as the next room. stranger and burst open the door of The situation was ridiculous as well as Lo'a's sitting-room and closed it behind painful. The newly-married husband

First there was a cause, and there size "I supp se you want to know who i m.—My name is Ella Granville"

CHAPTER XVIII.

So the two women who love! Brace

Lola did not at first connect her visitor to put there. And that means happiness in any way with her husband: yet both in married life, you know." But-but you never told me, mur- to her. She saw before her an extraor French heels to her boots. Her clothes him about what she said, or ask if it is Well, you can name it now, 'he said, were good, if somewhat showy; the gown true," she thought, "If he said it was "Thursday, the 20th of December. And lot brown checked cioth, the deep fur false, I should not be able to believe him;

regular, and extravagant, and romanue, and I think I ought to be angry. But, as it's all out of the usual order of things. I mentation about the restume, which of will tell you. Mr. Laidlaw, that I love you itself indicated the degree of reimement possessed by the wearer. The dress was a possessed by the wearer. The dress was a possessed by the wearer. begin with: then Mrs. Granville's handsome arms, and large, though shapely which is thoughtful and sympathetic on twists, were profusely decorated by sill-stood just within it, whilst Mrs. Granville the part of nature, he said gaily; and, indeed, neither of them felt the cold, with young hearts beating fast, and turquise and gold enrings decorated her typoung blood leaping high, as it usually does a such approximate. net, adapted to winter by velvet bows, aterally revelled in chero little red birds.

"I think you are making a mistake. she said, courteously but very coldly. I don't know you at all, and I don't think you can have any business with me." But here Mrs. Granville, who had been

a letter this morning from a relation of yours, telling me of your goings-on with Bruce, and I came here to find him, not you; and to ask him how he could throw you; or of Bruce, for he's never been fast all the years I've known him."

Yet the suddenness of the thing almost shocked her; and against her will, with tears, which she carefully dried with with deep imitation lace, which she took

Every trace of colour faded out of Lola's face as she stood on listening to this woman; she knew her now; she was Her travelling bag lay upon the sofa, where she had placed it after hurrically the "pretty actress with whom Bruce packing it on her return from the has been affiched so many years' of Anchurch; a particularly neat portmanteau — a present from Bruce—which had arrived that morning, stood beside it. she rang the bell, and Mary outside rose

"You think you are going to have me turned out," said Mrs. Granville in a higher key; "but you're mistaken. They my little girl. And you say you don't know me. Well, everybody in London can tell you who I am. Long ago Bruce swore to befriend my child and me when and left me to starve, all because of his jealously of Bruce. He's ill now; he may before the glass in her bedrooms, beholding a very impressive reflection.

married Bruce years ago. There's no-body loves him as I do, for all his October, when he went off into the country in a huff after a tiff with me because he was jealous; and then you angled for him, and got hold of him, as Mr. Marsden tells me, and disgraced yourself by running away to London after him. And he's never written to me since, and I've been miserable thinking it was his temper. But now I know the reason; I shall just go down and wait for him, and I don't leave this house until I have seen him, as no one like me has a right to

Mrs. Granville's foolishness was dashed with considerable cunning. She was quite well aware that by her words she had given a totally incorrect impression of her relations with Bruce, and this was entirely her intention. She had come up prepared to fight for him, but Lola's silence had reduced her to monologue. As she was leaving the room Lola rang the belt again, and Mary at length responded to it.
"Please show this person downstairs.

said Lola.

Her manner was hard and cold, and the girlish ring had died of t of her voice. When my husband comes, he can see

her there," she added. Your husband! Who do you mean?"

asked Mrs. Granville excitedly. Lola did not notice her, but answered

Mary's look of enquiry.
"I was married to Mr. Brace Luidlaw this morning," she said; and without a word more she walked into the adjoining bedroom and shut the door.

From the sanctuary of this apartment she could near Mrs. Granville's hysterical weeping and Mary's giggling sympathy. Her ewn heart was aching; her eyes Bruce Laddaw.

"So it's quite true what I heard; and she's benefit exclaimed the lady, growing very red." Is she on the second no longer shut hir ears to the stories.

Bruce Laddaw.

burning with a storm of unshed tell me the truth, we should have been she's here!" exclaimed the lady, growing very red. "Is she on the second no longer shut hir ears to the stories. Be could no longer shut hir ears to the stories care afterdaine what I could for him. lowing day.

Then he had kissed her very levingly, and had told her to be ready for him "in the new cleak and bonnet" at half-past ten.

"I am going to take year out," he said.

"I am going to take year out," he said.

"I am going to take year out," he said.

"I as so be on the second flower out the stories against him. The woman herself had cortified the new cleak and bonnet" at half-past titlers; what she so quite the lady, sistency, Lola hated Mrs. Granville, and was so great that I believe he will go was so great that I believe he was so great that I believe he was so great that This intelligence appeared to decide closeks burned with sname at the thought made a movement towards the door. In

> coming to claim his bride, and finding two ladies ready and waiting for him. suggested grotesque and tarcical compli-

"I wish I had never married him" wish I had nover seen him?" Lola said, her dignity and quietude all gone now. as she paced up and down the diegy bedroom like a caged wild animal. Wild ideas of running home again, and

anying Bruce free to go back to "that detestable woman," crossed her mind.

Perhaps he is fond of that creature ail the time, and only asked me to marry him out of a chivalrous impulse," poor Lola reflected; and the horrible likelihead of this idea seemed to increase as she dwelt upon it. "I can never talk to my heart. If he care I for me, anylow, he would never leave me waiting all these hours. I cannot and will not let him return and find that woman and me in the same house."

rushing to the door that opened into the as she was opening it. passage, she was about to descend the stairs, when she heard the front door time. lose and her husband's voice in the hall. Retreating into the bedroom again, she

stood just within it, whilst Mrs. Granville in his eyes spoke less of love than of made a tunuituous exit from the ad-joining apartment, and burried down as she stopped short and gazed questionjoining apartment, and hurried down the stairs, followed closely by Mary. and surprise, caught Lola's ears:
"Ella : What are you doing here?

longer Lola Marsden, but Lola Luidiaw, brown feathers, and steel buckles.

Stood by her husband's side, and classes Before Lola's eyes had taken in these his question, for only the sound of consing her hands over his arm, looked up details there desired into her mind the timed sobbing reached Lola; then a load banging of the street door proclaimed Mrs. Granville's departure, and, after pausing on the stairs to question Mary.

> and wait there a few minutes. Then he tapped at her bedroom-door, and said, in those sharp, metallic tones which she was afterwards to know so well:

"Lola, are you there? I want to speak

in Paris, from which city, so Lola decided, she could write to Dr. Marsden. But her brain was in a whirl, and she lithink; no, nor fine words either. I had she who might rightfully demand an extension of the first great grief of her life.

planation from him; yet the voice which spoke these words placed her and not im in the wrong.

Without answering, she entered the room, and bride and bride-groom faced one another; each pale, each preoccupied, separated by only a few hours, but by whole years of angry brooding on his part, of pained revulsion of feeling on hers.

"You have been a long time," she said timidly. "Yes. Something happened to detain

His voice was colder and harder than ever.

"Bruce," said Lola suddenly, "why do you speak to me like this? Surely, if either of us have a right to be angry and ask for explanations, it is I. And you see, dear, I love you so that I wait for you to speak first, although I could have died with shame and humiliation at what I have heard!

" I deny your right to be angry, or to ask for any explanation from me," he said, ignoring her caress.

The blood rushed to Lola's face : she withdrew her hand from his arm.

'What!" she said in a low voice When a creature like that bursts into my room, and dares to tell me she loves you, and that you love her, I have no

right to ask you to explain?"
"None whatever. Ella Granville is ignorant and silly. But she has some heart and some conscience; she does not lie to those she loves. She is no deceitful coquette, and is therefore a far better woman than you."

Into Lola's great blue eyes, as she watched him, as she listened to him, came a look of horror and anguish which seemed suddenly to age her.

"If you think this," she said, almost in a whisper-" if you thought this, why have you married me? If you only wish to wound me, if you have no love for me, why have you made me your wife?"

'And, since you do not love me, why have you become my wife?" he asked, staring at her with every line of his handsome face looking as if it were carved in stone.

"Since I do not love you!" she repeated slowly. "What do you mean?"
"What does this mean?" he asked. and laid up in the table a ring, bearing a

true-lovers's-knot in diamonds. Lola started violently and grew pale again as she recognised her engagement-

Where did you get it from ?" she faltered.

" From the man you had promised to marry; the man you professed to love as you profess to love me; the man you were bound to when you took me out of pique and to get yourself out of a difficulty your own folly had thrown you into."

His tone was barsh, almost brutal. He would not look at her, would not see the pain and fear clouding her sweet face. She could not reply to his taunts, could not explain her own inconsistencies as a stronger-natured or a less sincere woman might have done. She could only stare at him with wide-open dry eyes, while each word he spoke seemed to stab her like a knife. But to Brace her silence was a confirmation of his charges, and her next question made this certainty more certain still.

· Have you seen Aubrey? " she asked. "Yes: he came to London to fetch you. And if I had known yesterday what he told me to-day, if you could have so far forgotten your nature as to

an instant Bruce's jealousy damed out again, and he intercepted her progress.

"De Vaux may die or go mad." said: "but, nowever much you love him, you are my wife, and I forbid you to go te him.

She turned on him with unexpected

' My father was right," she said "and cour wife will be a miserable woman. I have never fied to you: I have only been atraid. I could explain to you, if yeo would listen like a man and not like a stone. I am very, very serry for Aubrey"--her voice broke when signifitered his name, as Brace's jealous cars noted "but however much he may suffer. I am suffering as much as he. I ara net going to him, though I should like to ask him to torgive me. You could not treat me like this unless you hated me, and I cannot stay to let you break my heart and to be insulted by that woman who you say is better than I have been very wrong, and disobedient, and foolish; and I am going benne

The tears were rolling down her face as she felt blindly for the familie of the door. For the first time during this interview Bruce remembered something else besides his own wounded pride and jeatousy, and his indignation at Lola's And with that she started up from the seat in which she had flung herself, and, to the door, and laid his hand upon her's

"Lo'a," he said, gently enough this

She half turned, hoping to see his arms stretched out towards her; but the look

ingly into his face.

"When you go to Oldford again you will find great changes there," he said. She staggered back against the closed door. His tones, suddenly softened by his question, for only the sound of con- deep core passion, had told her more than he intended they should.

"It is bad news," she said very low and about my father. I can see it in your face. And you have let me talk of other things all this time! He is illvery ill. Ah, for Heaven's sake don't tell me he is dead!"

She thrust out her hands to stop the dreaded words she had read in his face. Bruce took her hands in his and drew them gently round his neck. But he was powerless to comfort her now. She no longer believed in his love; and his tongue and audacity.

"Oh, don't you?" she said scornfully.

"But I know you, Miss Lola, and fine stood towards bits over the sound of the stood towards bits over the stood towards between the stoo

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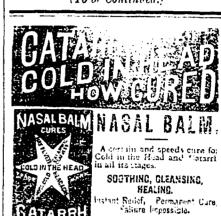
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a grey, snow-laden sky, bride and bride groom took their first journey together; she absorbed in remorseful grief that separated them still further; he jealous even of her sorrow, too proud to break through the coldness his own example had created, too arrogant to seek for a love his words had chilled.

And so, in tears, in constraint and silence, on her way back to her old home made desolate by death, Lola's bridal day closed in

(To be Continued.)



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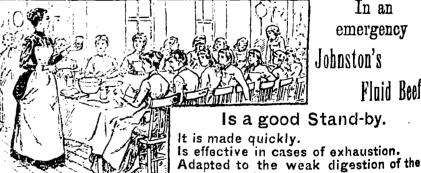
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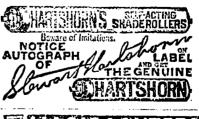
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