

I am waiting to know what you want. I have never doubted either your bullying cowardice or your cunning. "What I want is easily said. I want

to clear away from your path the difficulties that threaten to ruin you." "You are suddenly very solicitous on

my account," she retorted. "And I mean to show you the only way in which it can be done," he con-tinued, not heeding the interruption. "Sir Jaffray has settled on you a good many thousands of pounds, and, as I happen to know, he has in his will, like a loving husband should, left you everything that he could leave without her and spoke very deliberately-"if Sir Jaffray were to die, say, by any acoident or suddenly in any way you would as suddenly be freed from all

your embarrassments.' She met his look and returned it with

one which seemed to hold his eves fixed

"Well?" She uttered the single syllable question without 'allowing a sign or symptom of her feeling to be seen in

"I mean," and kis voice grow a triffe hoarse and unsteady—''I mean that Sir Jaffray is the one obstacle in your path, and it is necessary for your sake and for mime that the obstacle should be renoved.'

Lola elinched her hands till the nails nearly ran into her palms, and she bit her lip hard in her agitation, and it was fully a minute before she trusted herself

to speak. The Frenchman filled up the interval by lighting a fresh cigarette and walk-ing up and down the room. He was glad of the pause, for the strain of the moment told on him. He was very pale and the perspiration came out in a line beads on his forehead. "I think I understand you," said

Lola at length when she could trust herself to speak. "And what is to happen after-after what you mean?" He was by the door of the room when

she spoke, and he turned and answered, standing still. He tried to speak lightly. "What should happen?" he cried,

with a wave of the hands and a shrug of the shoulders. "You would be free, and I would claim you as my wife." "You would claim me!" she repeated.

"Certainly," he said masterfully. "You would be my wife"--He stopped suddenly without finish-

ing the sentence and turned toward the "What's that?" he oried. He rushed

to the door and tried to open it quick-ly, but in his haste fumbled with the handle and then threw it open and looked out.

There was no one there, though he thought he could hear the whisk of a dress, but he said nothing of this to Lola.

"I was mistaken," he said, returning to the room and closing the door behind

"It must be a devil's plot indeed," said Lola, "when it makes even you imagine that there are eavesdroppers."

He made no answer to this. "Well, you know my plan now," he said. "It is the only one possible to get us out of this mess. What do you

"You don't expect me to reply off-hand that I am ready to take part in a

plot to murder my husband?" "Why not? You have already rehearsed the part with me." The malice in his tone and face made

Lola clinch her teeth and flush with anger. But she did not let the hot words that rese to her lips escape them. In-stead of this she asked as calmly as she could force herself to speak:

'How do you propose to carry out the plan? "Oh, there are 50 ways. Any one "Oh, there are 50 ways. Any one of a hundred drugs that can be got without difficulty will do all that we meed, and any one of a hundred oppor-tunities which can be as easily found

was worth winning. or made will let us, either you or I, do soon as Sir Jaffray came toward him. "And when would you propose that

Est-s

habit hampered her, and she began to fear that he would overpower her. She strove hard to think how she could prestopped to think. When he had sated that desire and had lashed the man to his soul's delight and content and sat waiting for Lola to vent him from hurting her without call-ing for assistance from the servants.

speak, he grew uneasy as to what could possibly have happened between Lola and the man whom he had regarded as Not for a moment did she lose her presence of mind, though she knew well the desperate character of the man she had to deal with, and it was only end. in the last extremity, when she felt that she could not continue the struggle and that her life would be in danger if she "How did this happen, child?" he said when Lola's agitation seemed to be "I hardly know. I think he meant to did not have help, that she resolved to

ory for assistance. But there was no need. Just at that moment they both heard

tered the room.

defensive.

this

still.

shortly.

events.

try to kill me. He insulted me. You saw that mark on his face. I did it. I the sound of a horse's gallop and the stamping of its feet as the rider checked in short sentences, like a child recovering from a fright. "Did the man dare to make love to it, throwing it upon its haunches just ontside of the window

It was Sir Jaffray, and the sight you?" asked Sir Jaffray, the thought driving his eyebrows together in a heavy brought the Frenchman to his senses. In another minute Sir Jaffray, lookfrown and making him clinch his teeth. ing very white and stern and carrying "I was always afraid of his coming his heavy hunting crop in his hand, enhere." said Lola evasively. "You know I said at the time I did not want him asked. Ugh! He is loathsome and dan-Lola, exhausted and breathless with her efforts, had sunk upon a low chair,

while her late assailant stood upon the "Never mind, sweetheart. Pluck up courage. He won't trouble us any more," said Sir Jaffray in a much CHAPTER XVL lighter tone than he felt and wishing

HORSEWHIPPED. cheer her up. "And if he doesn't Sir Jaffray's first thought was natclear out from the neighborhood of his urally for Lola. own free will after today's business I'll find a way of making him; that's all."

"Are you hurt, my darling?" he asked, crossing to her and bending lov-His mood of demonstrative affection ingly over her. had passed, and Lola, with a sigh, let

"No, it is nothing. Oh, I am so glad you have come!" And now that danger for herself and the excitement were over she was far more unsteady and unhim go from her side.

He got up and then lit a cigarette. 'It'll be a lesson to me not to en-courage traveling fiddlers again. To think that he should turn out such a nerved than she had been before. She began now to fear the effect of brute! And I actually liked the fellow. By gad, but I'm glad I thrashed him, an encounter between the two men and felt that in a moment all that she had striven to gain might be lost. She clung and I'm only sorry I didn't lay it on a little longer and a good deal harder." He paused and looked at Lola and

to Sir Jaffray's arm and would not rethen said very kindly: "Do you feel better now, sweetheart?" "Let me go, dear one. And you-go to your room. Leave me to deal with

"Yes, Jaffray; I'm all right now. -gentleman.' I'll run up to my room and get my hab-But she would not and clung to him it off. It must be nearly lunchtime Has the exercise made you hungry?' "Come Lola." in a voice that she

And she smiled. knew must be obeyed. Her spirits had risen for the moment "I will stay," she said and then loosed his arm.

at having got out of the work of ex-planation so easily, and she thought it best to appear as if she had shaken off "I do not wish it," said the baronet the worst effects of the morning's But Lela would not yield.

"I would rather," she answered. "As you will, then," said Sir Jaffray But as soon as she was in her own room and had locked the door and shut out the chance of being observed she

Then he turned to Pierre Turrian, looked the truth full in the face. who had been watching the pair closely The end had come. and thinking rapidly what to do. With Beryl Leycester in possession of The minute's breathing space which the secret on the one hand and with Sir Jaffray's hurried questioning of Lola had afforded had given time for Pierre pressing her from the other there

reconsideration and had changed the current of the Frenchman's thoughts What to do she could not resolve yet. and the whole development of after At the moment she had to go on playing the part that she had chosen, but what-ever the result a few days must settle At the moment of Sir Jaffray's entry

Pierre Turrian's first instinct had been everything, perhaps a few hours. If she were to avoid utter shipwreck, she must to save himself from an exceedingly awkward complication by throwing the be prepared with some definite course of action, and the sooner she could de baronet's anger on to Lola and exposing the true character of the relations be tween her and himself. cide what that was to be the better.

But the minute's consideration caused him to change his intention completely. demanded this. She knew Pierre well enough to feel quite confident that he If he were to do anything of the kind, all chance of benefiting by Lola's conwould now have a double incentive to do Jaffray haim. She had listened to his devilish scheme in order to learn nection with the baronet would be gone. He would have lost his hold over her what it was, so that having learned it entirely, and the whole object which she might take measures to foil him. he had so long and so closely cherished would be sacrificed.

But she knew also that he was quite capable of acting by himself from the On the other hand, all that there was outside, and so long as there was a thought in his mind that not only to fear was an unpleasant experience with Sir Jaffray's riding crop, a fight in which he might or might not get the could he have revenge for the horse-whipping, but also be, as he hoped, a worst, followed, of course, by expulsion from the house, but he would still have gainer through Jaffray's death, the lat-ter was not safe for a day.

Lola in his power and still be able to She had reached this point in her reap the reward he was striving for. He measured up Sir Jaffray's strong, thoughts when the luncheon gong sounded and her maid knocked at the well knit frame and recognized the cer-tainty that he could not hope to escape door. Lola let her in and then changed her dress and hurried down stairs. without some hard blows, but the stake

At luncheon Mrs. De Witt's curiosity He had his tale ready, therefore, as After her passage at arms with Pierre

"No, possibly not," said Mrs. De

couple of days, and I have no end of things to see to. Yet I am anxious to hear what is doing at Leycester Court with Mr. Leycester. I wish you'd drive over there this afternoon and ask for me how he is and how Beryl is and when she can get back here."

"You haven't the knack as yet, Lola, of making your house very attractive to struck him with my fiding whip. It was then he attacked me." She spoke graciously. She was cross, as a gossip monger usually is at being robbed of what she deemed a toothsome morsel of scandal. "But I'll go over to the Court, and I'll drive through Walcote to see it I can catch a glimpse of your French man. I dare say he'll tell me the news." With no more than a smile at this

shot Lola rang the bell and ordered the carriage for her companion. As soon as the latter had gone Lola

went to her own sitting room to think out the rest of the problem. This had been her reason for wishing to get rid of Mrs. De Witt. She felt that she must be alone

She had not been long in her room before a knock at the door disturbed her. She had locked it to prevent interruption.

It was her maid, who brought a let ter on a salver.

"This has just come by hand, my lady, with a message for it to be deliv ered immediately to you. I thought it right to bring it."

Lola took it, and, going into her room opened it.

It was from Pierre Turrian, short, sharp and menacing:

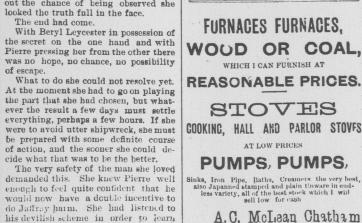
You must be by the cottage at Ash Tre wood at the north end of the park at 9 o'clock tonight. P. T.

Lola stood for a moment staring help-lessly at the open letter when the maid roused her.

"Is there any answer, mum?" "No, none," returned Lola hurriedly. The girl withdrew, and Lola locked the door again behind her, and, throw-

ing herself into a long, low easy chair, strove to fight her way through a mist of thought to a clear corrse of action.

To be Continued.



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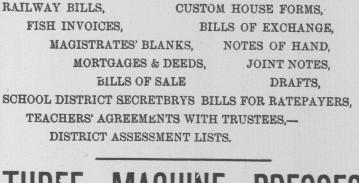
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