

LOLA CRAWSHAY.

By A. W. Marchmont, B. A.
Continued from 1st Page.

"Now we are two unconventional people, thinking of nothing but our three selves, and we, the mother and I, have made a great compact that the love we both bear you and the love you bear to both of us are to bind us together always in a love for each other. Kiss me both, Jaffray, in witness of it all, and then let us all three promise to do whatever lies in our power to make that compact the chief cornerstone of our lives. Is not that right, mother?" Sir Jaffray stooped and kissed them both.

"It's the best news you could give me, mother," he said when he kissed Lady Walcott. "You know that." And the earnestness of his tone proved to her what he felt.

"It is true, Jaffray," she said. "It shall be so with me." Then Lola, knowing that if she seemed a moment too long her sentiment would be spoiled, jumped up quickly and said lightly:

"Now we can be again the great people of Walcott manor, who ought not to be troubled with hearts and feelings and passions. Sir Jaffray," she cried, assuming a very grand air, "will you give me your arm? I will take the air in the park. We will leave the lady mother to her thoughts."

"Come on, Lola," cried the baronet, and they went out of the room together, laughing.

"And the chief thoughts of the 'lady mother' were that her son's wife was an exceedingly clever young woman, whose wit was as sharp as her face was beautiful.

"During the next few days she had ample evidence of this in Lola's treatment of Lady Walcott was tactful and clever to a degree, and the old lady, despite her sharpness and shrewdness and tendency to suspicion when she was alone, could not resist the girl's charm when they were together. Thus the intimacy between them ripened quickly enough to surprise and please Lola herself, who wished that it should be as close as possible by the time that the blow fell which she was daily expecting.

"It came all too quickly. She had been home less than a week and had ridden one morning with Sir Jaffray to a county meeting at a town a few miles away when on her return she was told that a gentleman was waiting to see her.

"She knew without glancing at the card who it was. She had served herself to be always ready for the meeting, however, and without staying to change her habit she went at once to the library, where her visitor was waiting.

"There was not a sign of embarrassment on her face or in her manner as she passed the servant and entered the room, and no one could have detected even a quiver in her voice as she went up to the man whom she faced with a deadly looking and said as quietly as a stranger:

"You wish to see me, I understand. What is it?"

"Pierre Turrian went in silence until the servant had closed the door, and they stood thus looking steadily into each other's eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

"PIERRE TURRIAN'S SCHEME.

The two stood looking straight at one another for some time after the servant had closed the door and left them alone, and Pierre Turrian was the first to break the silence.

the time of his death in Newfoundland, two years ago. Obviously you have made some surprising mistakes."

"You are mad!" he cried. "You can't set me at defiance. I have proofs—undoubtedly, complete—that you are my wife."

"Proofs of what?" she answered more quickly. "Proofs that you married some one else in my name, maybe. Bring the priest who ever made me your wife and then talk of proofs."

"You recall me to myself, I have been too indulgent to one who, I was led to believe, is mentally afflicted. I will listen no longer."

"If you repeat that I am mad, I will have you pitched neck and crop out of the house and kicked down the drive. Do you understand me? Now, what do you say?"

"You are my wife, and I have come to claim you," she replied, calmly and dogmatically.

"You make your own choice. In one minute after I ring that bell the servant will be here and if you have not retreated that slaver before he comes I will order him to turn you out of the house."

"You are my wife," he answered between his clenched teeth.

Lola crossed the room in silence and slammed the door behind her.

Then she turned toward her companion, with resolution in every line of her beautiful face. She said another word, but watched her closely.

"The color waned gradually from his face, and he moved restlessly once or twice. Then he hit his lip and his eyes and eyed the girl angrily.

"What terms do you offer?" he said. "I make no terms with slanders, and I answer steadily in the same deliberate, half-contemptuous tone in which he had spoken before, though a sudden pang of anger and indignation shot into her heart as she saw that she was beating him in her desperate mood.

"You are the devil!" he cried again in French.

At this moment the servant opened the door.

"Well!" said Lola, turning to her visitor with a look of triumph.

"I retract," he said, rolling out the words in French.

"Oh, of course," said Lola, as if he had mentioned the name of some wine. "Bring some claret, Dalling, and biscuits."

While the man was gone for the wine neither of them spoke, and Lola remained standing by the fireplace, flanked with a sense of triumph as having won the first move in the game, and thinking steadily what to do next.

She knew her antagonist through and through. Short, dark, fierce as a lion, and bold as a giant, he had a certain amount of cunning, but she had no doubt that she could outwit him.

weeks succeeded in making himself a welcome guest at Walcott manor.

Sir Jaffray, who had at first been led to think of him as a sort of musical crank and had tolerated him, as a comparatively harmless individual who could sing with exquisite taste and play brilliantly, discovered one by one his other qualities, just as the astute Frenchman thought it judicious to reveal them.

He could be an excellent companion, having a rare capacity of adapting himself to the surroundings of the country. He was a man, picked up in the course of his wanderings over all Europe. He possessed an endless fund of anecdotes, with a clever knack of inventing them to suit any occasion and time and company, and as he speedily and accurately gauged the baronet's character he was able to make himself welcome in half a hundred ways.

Gradually the "musical" became the "holiest brotherhood" as Sir Jaffray began to call it laughingly, was allowed to fall more and more out of sight until it was rarely mentioned, and Sir Jaffray came to the conclusion that, as the Frenchman seemed to have plenty of money, it had been taken up as a sort of hobby and was to be dropped as easily.

"The professor" seems to have developed under his influence, Lola, he will be glad to see you, and I shall be glad to see you."

"He seems a man of impulses," replied Lola, "and I wish an impulse would take him back to Switzerland." She was very restless at the growing intimacy between the two men and had driven against it, but the Frenchman had been her friend.

"I can't say that," replied Sir Jaffray, laughing. "I like him. He's one of the holiest brotherhood I ever knew of the few men I've ever known who can lose his coin without getting angry."

"When I came back from town, we must have him here. He'd be the life and soul of a house party, those dear old days of the olden time."

"We can hardly have him here, then, can we?"

"Why not? The women'll go mad after him. I'd give a lot to see the little De Witt setting those wicked little eyes of hers to catch him for her snuggly."

"The idea of that sharp little woman watching the incidents of the drama that was being played at the manor was the reverse of pleasant to Lola, but she said nothing, lest she should arouse some sort of suspicion.

"Here his voice sank and his countenance became slow and deliberate, and he rolled some of the words as if the mere utterance of them gave him some pleasure. "I could watch her, holding her by the knowledge that I could crush her at any moment with a single word."

"I could play that part," he said, with a look of triumph.

"But she could kill you first!" cried Lola, maddened by the cruelty of his words.

He stopped and looked at her and smiled coldly.

"I thought you took no interest in anything that concerns my wife," he said, with a shrug and a laugh.

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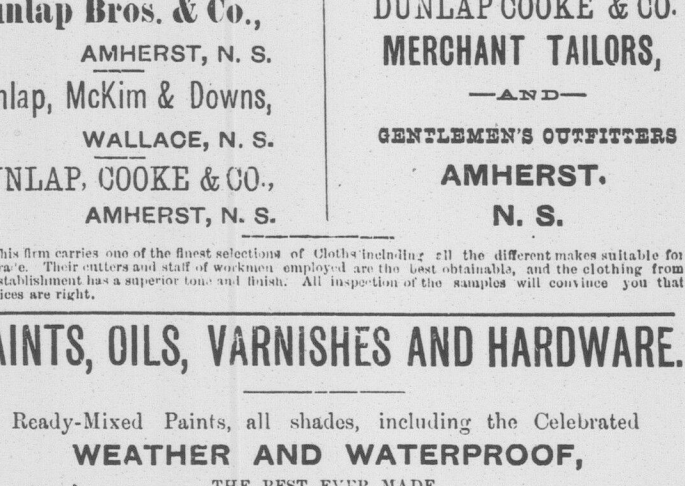
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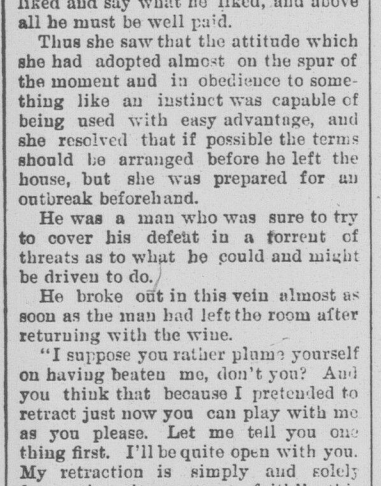
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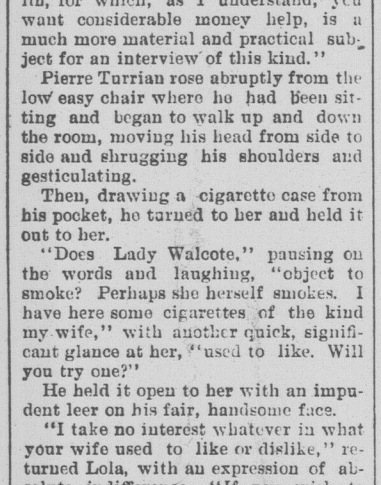
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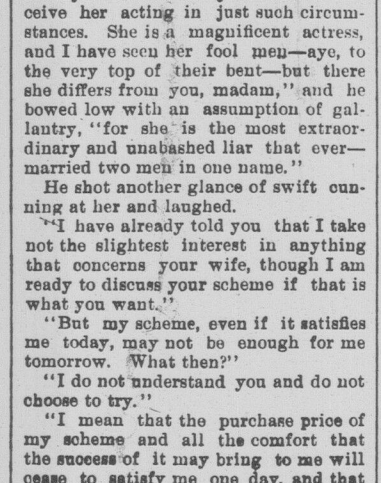
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