

He reckoned, moreover, that as she had not left the immediate neighbor-

hood of the manor it would not be diffi-

ive to whom he had telegraphed. He wanted to feel that the matter was in

When the reply to his telegram

rived, it was to the effect that Mr. Gifford would start for Walcote at the

earliest moment and would arrive about

Feeling his anxiety in some degree

lessened by this fact, Sir Jagray went out to make inquiries about the move-ments of Pierre Turrian and to find him

and drag from him the truth as to whether he had any connection with

Lola's flight.
But there was not a soul anywhere

who could give the remotest or faintest help in tracing the Frenchman. He might have vanished completely off the face of the earth at the moment of his leaving the manor lodge gates so ut-

terly had all trace of him disappeared.

The servants who, in obedience to Sir Jaffray's order, had turned him out of

the place said that he walked away in the direction of the village, and that they had watched him till a bend in

no trace behind him, nor was there

seemingly any one who had set eyes on him after he had left the manor.

way absorbed the circumstances as Sir Jaffray told them.

The latter, half unconsciously, made

the story as favorable as possible to-ward Lola, and his listener soon saw

can't for my life understand."

When he had gone, Sir Jaffray went up to his mother and told her the prog-

ity until in the afternoon, to his im-mense relief, Beryl Leycester came.

been shut up close in the sickroom, and

about Lola had imposed on her.
Sir Jaffray welcomed her cordially.

were ill news."
"It is the worst it could be." She

"Tell me, is Lola with you at the

starting in surprise.
"There is no need to answer," said

us all to understand."

"At the Court?" exclaimed Beryl,

skilled hands.

Then he turned his horse's head homeward, choosing the road which would take him past Leycester Court on his way. He was half minded to go and rouse Beryl and find out whether Lola cult to find her whenever it should be considered to find her whenever it should had, after all, gone there or whether she could help him in deciding in what direction to begin his search.

When he reached the Court, however, plete as that at Mrs. Villyers', save only for a light from the windows of the sick man's room, and, feeling that he could do no good by rousing Beryl merely to put a question to her and to receive an answer which he knew only too well would be that Lola had not been near the place, Sir Jaffray turned his horse's head again and rode straight

for the manor.

As he neared home an incident oc-

He had ridden very hard and fast during the greater part of the distance, finding relief in the violent exercise, and quite unlike his usual habit, without a thought for the horse that carried home he noticed that his horse was very much distressed, and he drew rein to ease it, allowing it to walk. Then he found it had gene lame, and, dis-mounting, he felt in the hoofs and found a stone.

road to let the laboring, panting beast get its breath. Then, himself feeling stiff, he walked along a short distance on the turf, glad of the change from

the saddle.

He reached in this way the outskirts of the Ash Tree wood, the boundary line of his estates in that direction, and there was surprised to hear what sounded like the rustling of light footsteps in the wood. It was late, near midnight or past, and no one had right to be abroad at such an hour.

Probably some rascal was out poaching, he thought, and at another time he would have welcomed the idea of a tus-sle, but now he was too full of real trouble to be worried by any such trifling incident as the theft of a head

or two of game. ·He stopped, however, and listened intently, and as the moon was shining interposing at one point, "but it is absolutely necessary that you should tell me everything. I want from you every brightly at the moment he drew cau-tiously under the branches of a dark fact you have observed and every cir-cumstance that is connected with the vew tree whose shade was wide enough case, whether you think it does or does not affect it. Speak quite unreservedly, please, or call in some other help.'' conceal both himself and his herse. He was on the opposite side of the road from the wood, and he did not like to cross it lest the sound of the horse's hoefs on the hard ground or the glare of the moonlight should reveal his presence.

"You can question me as you please," Sir Jaffray answered, "and consciously I will not keep back a word."

As he listened he distinguished that did, but the fullest story of the facts the footsteps were short and quick, did not seem to help them far. while it seemed to him that the rastling of the leaves as the person walked was continuous, as though caused by a wo-man's dress, but it was very difficult to detect any little signs of the kind.

It was clear, however, that the person was walking in his direction, and then he remembered that just at the spot there was a very rarely used footpath, leading to the road from an untenanted

The slight gap in the hedge where the path emerged was nearly filled up by the rank luxuriance of the hedge your wife who came out of the place

and stood in that hedge gap?"
"As certain as that I was on the and branches thrust cautiously aside and a woman's hooded figure fill the other side of the road.' and a woman's hooded figure fill the gap. She paused an instant, as though in doubt.

The face was hidden completely in the shade of the hood which covered the head, but the figure was perfectly well

I'd rather be alone, please," he added when Sir Jaffray rose to go with him,

known to the man who was now watch- and he went. ing with breathless interest.

It was his wife! At that instant his horse, a very high spirited and nervous animal, took fright at the woman's figure and with a snort of fear commenced to plunge and stampede, and, the baronet's hands being entangled with the bridle, his efforts to only the animal impeded him comquiet the animal impeded him completely, and, to his infinite annoyance, he could not free himself from the plunging, excited horse for some considerable time.

"Lola! Lola! It is I, Jaffray! Wait!" he called, fearful lest she should take alarm and rush away in ignorance of who he was.

She was looking worn and anxious with her nursing, but was in higher spirits, because her father had rallied and was

As soon as he could possibly extricate much better.

She had heard nothing of what had happened at the manor house, having himself from the reins he let the horse But Lola had disappeared.

He ran across the gap in the hedge, and, standing on the threshold of the wood, called her name loudly and waited till the edho of it came back from 20 for the sound of a word or a footstep.

But the place might have been the abode of the dead and the figure he had seen a ghost for all the sound or sign of life he could find.

Presently he returned along the path,



He walked along a short distance on the turf. house and then come back and have the place searched, and as he reached the gap in the hedge again he saw a small white object on the ground.

He picked it up, and it confirmed his opinion and deepened the mystery which baffled him so utterly. It was a handkerchief belonging to his wife, and as he held it up in the bright moonlight he could see the name embroidered in black in large old English letters across one corner, "Lola."

CHAPTER XIX. "HEAVEN HELP ME! I BELIEVE SHE'S

MAD! Nothing came of Sir Jaffray's discovery in Ash Tree wood to help in unrav-

eling the puzzle.

He had not had the wood searched and had contented himself with searching it alone for some hours. He was unwilling that the discovery of Lola's strange conduct should be made in the nee of a number of the servants. paths in her nature. It had, moreover, strengthened a resolve she had already made—to hold her peace absolutely as to all she knew, Lola's pitcous prayer

that Jaffray might never know the truth should be held in absolute regard by her. Not a word should pass her lips. Lola had solved the difficulty in her own way, and if only she and the Frenchman could disappear altogether it might be the best way out of a maze which had offered to Beryl no key.

It seemed to her that Lola, finding herself in the midst of difficulties from which there was no escape, and which were closing fast round her, had accepted the inevitable and had chosen flight as the only alternative. "Can you help me with a suggestion, Beryl?" asked Sir Jaffray after a long

silence in which he had seen the girl "There is evidently some influence driving her to this deed. Have you no idea what that can be?" she asked in

to think that there may be some connection with the fact that the Frenchman, prove necessary to search systematically.
When the morning came and he had Turrian, and I had a quarrel yesterday, been home about a couple of hours, he began to expect with feverish impaand he left." And he described briefly the facts. tience the arrival of the private detect-

Bervl listened closely. It helped to make the problem much clearer to her. The Frenchman had evidently told Lola what Beryl had told



Burying his face in his hands, he yielded to the rush of mental pain. him, had probably tried to force her to join him in some wild and reckless scheme, and when she had refused had

the road had hidden him, and after that they had seen nothing whatever of him. As to the clothes which he had left at the manor, he had said that he would in his exasperation attacked her with "Where is M. Turrian?" she asked. send for them either the same day or the next, but no sort of message had "No one knows. He has disappeared absolutely." It seemed impossible for Beryl, knowing all she did, to resist the open infer-The man had thus vanished, leaving ence which these two facts prompted. It appeared as certain as anything could be now that the two had gone away to-gether, the man having probably forced Lola to do what he wished, possibly as A little before noon Mr. Gifford arrived, and in a very businesslike, shrewd

a revenge for the horsewhipping.
"Well?" asked the baronet after another long pause, as though expecting from Beryl the result of her thoughts. "I have no suggestion to offer, Jaf-fray," she answered quietly, grieved as she saw the half kindled light of expectancy die out of his face, as though extinguished by the deep sigh he vented. "I am so helpless. I don't know where to begin to look or what to do. I know she is close at hand all the time. Oh, I didn't tell you that," he broke off, noticing the start she gave at the words. "I saw her last night." And he described his meeting with her at the Ash

Tree wood. It was now Beryl's turn to be utterly perplexed.

"It cannot have been Lola," she said. 'It is impossible." "Yesterday I should have said it was impossible that she would ever leave "It is a strange case, Sir Jaffray, a very strange one," was all the verdict Mr. Gifford would give at the end of the shelter of my roof, but I have a new and horrible fear, Beryl, which I the interview. "You don't anticipate any foul play anywhere?" have not breathed to a soul, not even "Here is my wife's letter," he answered, pointing to it. "But for that I should certainly have dreaded it. This, to the detective who is down here. It would explain everything, and it makes even the letter intelligible. She has not been like herself for some time now. however, points clearly to the fact that she left me voluntarily, though why I pression, in which she was haunted by dread of some terrible catastrophe which 'You say the wood has not been searched except by you, and in the dark would overwhelm us all. I have tried more than once to rally her from these when I have found her so, and generally I could do it with a word or a caress. Yesterday she was like this when I was with her in the afternoon, the time she speaks of in her letter here, and I have somehow come to fear that in some way the scene with that French villain may have unstrung her nerves till—till she has lost her mental

balance and been driven to this rash and fearful act. Heaven help me! I believe she is mad, Beryl." He broke down then at the free utterance of the thought that had been forcing itself on him, and burying his face in his hands he yielded himself up helpless to the rush of mental pain that everwhelmed him. Beryl sat watching him infinitely moved at the sight of his laboring trou-

ble, but thinking that perhaps even that belief, which she did not for a moment share, was more merciful than a knowledge of the truth would be.
She herself could read without difficulty the meaning of Lola's fits of de-pression and fear of impending trouble, and she sighed as she recognized in it all the evidence of the struggle through which she had passed and the gathering clouds of doubt and misery which had "If you read the letter. Bervl. in the

light of that suggestion, you will see,"
said Sir Jagray after a long silence,
"how everything seems to fit in with it.
All that the poor girl says is so vague
as to be in reality incoherent. Then it
is plain that it is no interference with
her love for me which drives her away she had come over to carry a stage fur-ther the task which her knowledge different points, seeming to mock him.

Then he ran at the utmost speed he could use in such a place along the path into the wood, passing now and then unch to help him in unraveling this to call te Leia by name and to listen

She was just the cool headed, resource- as to be in reality incoherent. Then it is plain that it is no interference with woman's wit would probably do as the wood, passing now and then unraveling this problem of a woman's acts as any one ever for her act, while the little, trembling prayer that I may never know the cause is just what one might look fer. "You are more welcome today, Beryl, than any woman I could possibly see save one," he said, "and who that is would know that I must find them out, you'll guess readily enough if you know the news."

but this—this trouble might be hidden.
Then her conduct last night—all is The girl flushed very slightly at the words, for old time's sake.

"What news? You look as though it I am like a madman myself!" he exclaimed, and them he began to stride from one end of the room to the other saw on looking closer into his face as he spoke that he was haggard and ill. in impetuous haste.

Soen after this Mr. Gifford was shown

> He was going to speak to Sir Jaffray when he caught sight of Beryl and stopped abruptly.
>
> "Maye you any news, Mr. Gifford?"
> asked Sir Jaffray. "You may speak unreservedly before this lady, Miss Leyces-

Sir Jaffray despondingly. "I had a last faint, flickering, wild hope that, after all, she might be with you or that you might know something of her. Would to God you did! She has gone from here, run away—been driven away, rather, by some means which it baffles "Yes, I have news and some of it strange and startling enough. In the first place, let me ask you what were the relations between your wife and the Frenchman, M. Turrian?"
Beryl started at the question and He paused a moment, and the sur-

looked eagerly at the man.
"They were only those of acquaintprise, mingled with the whirl of confusion which her own knowledge of the inner facts produced in her thoughts, shocked and frightened Beryl till she could not trust herself to speak. anceship. Years ago she had been a music pupil of his, and when he came to this neighborhood some time since I Sir Jaffray did not notice anything asked him to come to the manor house and subsequently invited him to stay more than that she was much affected by the news, and after a moment's break he centinued: here. That is all, save for the scene I told you of yesterday. You mustn't mind my questions Sir Jaffray, please; but, tell me, would he be likely to write to her?" "She did not come to dinner yesterday, leaving word that she had gone

to you at Leycester Court—you wrote to her in the afternoon, you know, asking "Do you know the handwriting on her—and I was acting on a sort of impulse when I rode to the Court last that envelope addressed to her?"
"Yes. It is that of—Pierre Turrian." night to see if she was there. When I The words came slowly, as if by force.
"That scoundrel has dared to write to got back, this letter was waiting for me. Read it." He gave Beryl the letter, and the girl read it carefully and slowly through

ing, and this letter may have been the inclosure. It was found in another twice, and knowing what she did the misery and suffering in which it had been written seemed to strike right to

It ran as follows:
You must be by the cottage by Ash Tree
wood at the north end of the park at 9 o'clock
P. T. her own heart.
"It is the saddest letter I have ever read. Poor Lola!" she said as she returned it to him and noticed how he There was a dead silence in the room as the man read out the words of the letter, and each of the hearers seemed seemed to be eagerly expecting some opinion.

The letter had touched her keenly and to hear the other's heart beats.
"There is more behind. You must roused to vibration every chord of symplease to prepare yourself for a shock, Sir Jagrey, and you, miss, too. That

letter was picked up within 20 yards of

the cettage mentioned in it, and close

CHAPTER XX. PIERRE TURRIAN'S MURDER. Sir Jaffray was for the moment so shocked by Mr. Gifford's terrible news that he could not trust himself

news was told.

"Wait, please!" he exclaimed impatiently, with a wave of the hand, when the detective was about to continue. The recollection of his adventure on the previous evening, when he had seen Lola close to the scene of the murder, flooded upon him, together with the fear he had mentioned to Beryl that Lela was mad, and, though he fought hard not to draw the inference which the facts suggested, he could not resist the conclusion which was forcing itself upon him—that Lola was mad and perhaps in some frenzy had been driven to

do this desperate thing.
"Tell me, please," he said after a
long pause, "when was the bedy of this man found?"
"I found it myself, Sir Jaffray, less than an hour ago."
"How long do you think the man had

been dead-today?" "I can't say exactly. That's a matter for the doctors. But I should think 18 to 34 hours about or something of that murder might very well he about 10 or 11 o'clock last night, might be before or might be after, but I expect that's

or might be after, but I expect time's what the doctor will say."

"It is terrible!" exclaimed the barenet and relapsed again into stigace.

Mr. Offord began to get ffigety, and he glanced now and again at fix Jaffey and tapped with his fingers on the table and on the cover of the notebook he held in his hand. held in his hand.

"There's a great deal to de, Sir Jaffray," he said at length, "and time is short if I'm to be hot on the trail. And I've more to tell you, if you please, which I think you ought to hear."
"Go on," replied the baronet prempt

and with regard to two of them I'to done a very unprefessional thing—very unprofessional—but I—well, I was acting for you, and—well, I did it."
"Well?"

"I was the first to find the body, Sir Jaffray, and I thought I ought to make the most of the time. There doesn't seem

the most of the time. There doesn't seem to have been much of a struggle at the place, and I gather that whoever did this was standing taking to this man quietly, when, without a word probably, she ups with the dagger."

"And just drives it hapse between his riss," continued Mr. Gifford without heading the interruption. "The must have been a yeller tell woman, of great strangth, because the dagger was driven right hope to the hist transes the man's difference and I judge she was tall happens the dagger the the blow was a title dewn, whereas if she'd beam short the utmest she could have dage. was a trans sewn, whereas it me a season short the utmest she could have dense would have been to drive it streight. You'll see my point, sir, if you'll just take this paper lande and watch the difference in fits direction if you try to strike first at your level and then at some matth above you."

As he speice he acted in illustration of his words. "I see what you mean," said Sir Jaffray without attempting to make the experiment. "But why do you think it was a woman?"

"For this reason: In the dead man's elutch I found this piece of black lace, torn, I have not the slightest doubt, from the dress of the woman who struck him the deathblow, and the unprofessional thing I have done is to take that out of the dead man's hard and surface. out of the dead man's hand and bring it away with me. Another reason is this: Mere is a little, curiously shaped aligree gold keepsake that was never made for any puprose on this earth save to please the eyes of a woman. It looks like an Indian thing or Japanese, and it's one of those balls that those easta bit of a wrench here where the thing a bit of a wrench here where the thing seems to have been pulled off with a jerk. That I found lying close to the body, and that also I took leave to bring away with me. Those are my reasons, Sir Jaffray, for saying this is the work of a woman, and I venture to think that any 18 men in the country would find them convincing.'

Sir Jaffray took up the little trinket and held it close, as if to scrutinise it. But there was no need for any cless

Both he and Beryl knew it well enough.

It was the pendant of a gold filigree bracelet, one of a pair which had been bought in Mexico when he and Lola were on their honormon. The com-panion to it had been given, with sev-eral other things, to Beryl.

Before either of them said a word

Mr. Gifford continued in just the same businesslike way and tone:
"There is one other thing I should

like to have done, mere unprefessional still, but I dared not go so far. I wanted to bring away the dagger. This murder's been done with a dagger that has emough character in it to hang a regiment of soldiers. I don't suppose that there's another like it in all the blessed country. But I couldn't touch it, you see, because the doctor would see in a trige that some one had been tampering with the body after death, for the reason that any boy student could tell when a dagger had been taken out of the wound heurs after death. Then there's have been provided the second transfer death. there'd have been no end of awisward questions for me to answer as to what I'd been up to? So I had to leave it."
"What was it like?" asked Sir Jagray, who new had come to expect that every answer the man gave would only incriminate Lola more and more. He

was right in this case.

'It's a smallish affair, but very deadly, I should say. The haft is a singular reddish kind of perpoise or alligator hide, with three rings of horn running round it to give the holder a firm grip, and these rings are of different colors, while the steel which shows up the back of it is studded with tiny bronze knobs, and the extreme end of it is of bronze and made for all the world like one of those slouch hats which the cowboys in the wild west are generally pictured as wearing, only, of course, very, very small. I never saw such a thing before, and I should know it again out of 59,-

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