



Neither Sir Jeffrey nor Beryl dared to look at each other during this description, and at the close neither said a word.

Both knew the dagger only too well. Like the bracelet, it had been bought when on the wedding tour in America, and the fellow to it had been given by Sir Jeffrey to Beryl's father, and it was at the present moment in the collection of arms at Lester Court.

Mr. Gifford himself seemed to feel that there was some strong reason for the silence, and he made haste to break it. "I must go. There's a lot to do. I thought I'd better bring those two things here," he said, pointing to the bit of lace and the little gold trinket.

"I'm not at all sure that you're right," said Sir Jeffrey, "but you must find out at any cost. Of course," he added, with some hesitation, "you understand that you are acting privately for me, and you have no need to tell anything of what you find out to any one else. Your face will be in a constant with a sort of restrained aversion.

"I have done my best, Sir Jeffrey. I know the extreme pain and trouble which may often be saved by a little science. If you will excuse me now, I will go. You know all so far. I had better be out and get on with my work. I make such mistakes at times."

He took his hat and went away, and Sir Jeffrey and Beryl remained seated at the table to which they had listened and all that threatened.

Sir Jeffrey was standing by the window leaning against the side table and pressing his head heavily against his hand, while Beryl sat quite still in her chair for the first time since she had been together feverishly in her lap and feelings so chilled that she trembled visibly.

"She must be mad! It is the only possible cause," burst from Sir Jeffrey like a man of pain.

"What a knock was heard at the door, and Mr. Gifford came back into the room again, shut the door carefully behind him and advanced right into the middle of the room before he spoke.

"understand, dear," answered Beryl soothingly. "Do you know Jeffrey's thoughts? He fears that Lola has for the use gone out of her mind."

"No; it is not that," said the old lady decisively. "You don't think that I am sure. She has deceived him. She is had, Beryl—bad to the core, she comes of a bad stock and is had herself. That Frenchman is mixed up in this in some way. I never liked him—always suspected him, with his handsome face and his fine tongue."

"She loved Jeffrey," began Beryl, when Lady Walcott burst in bitterly: "Yes, as DeLila's loved Sennon or Jacl Sierra and as Cleve used to love the fools she turned to swine. Women don't drop from those they love and with those they love, do they? You sense, child! When you've lived as long in the world as I have, you'll learn to know falsehood when you see it and lies when you hear them. She never loved Jeffrey, never."

"No, you are quite wrong," answered Beryl in a firm, clear tone, "and some day you'll be the first to own it."

"I don't see why you should take her part."

"The day will come when you will do the same, dear," answered Beryl sweetly, smiling and stroking the woman's hand, "for I have never known a heart in trouble to turn to you for sympathy in vain."

"I have no sympathy for the woman who wrongs and shame's me," was the angry reply.

Lady Walcott shook her head and made as if to reply again sternly, but meeting Beryl's eyes, said nothing and contented herself with the unspoken assertion of her sternness and pride.

"You must banish all that hardness," said Beryl after a pause, "and collect all your strength of endurance. There is more trouble than even this slight of Sir Jeffrey's wife. This Frenchman who left yesterday is dead—died suddenly and circumstances which suggest that he was killed by violence."

"Is there no end to the scandal which that man brings upon all?" cried Lady Walcott, wringing her hands.

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