

A Golden Heart

BY BERTHA M. CLAY

Author of "The Gypsy's Daughter," "Another Woman's Husband," "A Heart's Betrayal," "A Mad Love," "A Heart's Mal," "Gladys George," Etc.

(Continued from last week)

Gertrude glancing toward the window, by the purest accident, caught the gleam of the dark, miserable eyes and the white hair, on which the light shone. She started with a cry—a cry of fear quite unusual with her, for she was naturally brave.

"Harsh," she exclaimed, "there is a face at the window—a woman's face!"

"A woman's face?" he said. "Are you quite sure, Gertrude? It must have been the shadows that startled you."

She had quite recovered from her fright now, and walked at once to the window.

"It was no shadow," she said. "It was a woman's face, with wild, dark eyes and white hair; she was looking through this pane of glass."

Lady Fielden came to her.

"I think," she said, "you must have been mistaken; no woman could get in here without the servants' knowledge, and they would not admit a stranger." She drew the lace hangings back. "I have no doubt," she said, "that it was one of the pale passion-flowers that blew against the glass."

Gertrude smiled.

"You know, Lady Fielden," she said, "that I do not suffer from nervousness. I was startled for a moment, but by no means nervous, and I am perfectly convinced that it was a woman's face I saw. I noticed the dark, wild eyes and white hair; there could be no mistake. You will wonder more, perhaps, when I tell you that I am sure those eyes are familiar to me, that I have seen them before."

"My dear child, I am convinced it is fancy," said Lady Fielden, smiling—"quite convinced."

Gertrude raised her hands with a pretty, graceful gesture to her temples.

"Let me think," she said; "where have I seen that face before?"

"They looked at her in astonishment."

"Now I remember," she said, "and I can verify my words. I called in at Grey's, the fruiterer's, to purchase some grapes, and that woman was in the shop. I thought she was going to faint; but when I spoke, she answered coldly—almost rudely, poor creature! I noticed her eyes then, how dark and wild they were, and what a weird contrast they presented to her white hair."

Lord Fielden was listening intently.

"Did she speak to you, Gertrude?" he asked.

"No—only a few words. I think she said, 'I am quite well.'"

"Did you notice her voice any peculiarity in it?" he asked.

"No. I cannot say that I did. But you see, Harry, it was no fancy. Was it, Lady Fielden?"

"No, my dear, I begin to think not. Harry, you had better take a couple of men out with you and search the grounds. I feel uneasy."

"I will go first myself," he said; and he did.

But he found no one. Close to the window, however, there was a broken spray of passion-flower and some rose-leaves, as though some one had pulled inside the branches in order to look in. That was the only suspicious circumstance. Then the butler and two footmen accompanied Lord Fielden through the grounds. Mmes. St. Ange, from her hiding-place amongst the ferns, saw the reflection of the light that they carried, but they failed to discover her.

Harry was grave and thoughtful that evening. Lady Fielden said that there was no cause for any anxiety; evidently it was a woman who had some idea of begging from them, and who was curious to see the inmates.

"Good-night, Gertrude," he said, "forget all about the woman peeping through the window, and sleep well."

"I do not think I shall ever forget

her," was the answer, "but I am not in the least nervous, if that is what you mean, Harry."

He watched her as she went up the broad staircase. She stopped half way, and looking down at him, kissed her hand to him. He thought how like that fairest creature, Juliet, she looked.

How little they dreamed of what would pass before they would meet again! Gertrude went to her room, and soon forgot her troubles in sweet slumber; while Harry, with the new idea growing in his brain, felt more and more sure that there was "something" in it, and determined to go out once more and see if he could discover anything before he retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Lord Fielden was in no way daunted by the darkness of the night. If the moon of the stars had been shining, the woman, let her be whom she might, would never have ventured through the park. The darkness had favored her; it would also favor him in finding her. He thought that the best thing to do first was to go down to the lodge and see if any person had been noticed there.

The people at the lodge had seen no one; they were quite certain that no strange woman had passed through the gates—in fact, no person could pass through them without their knowledge; nor did they believe that it was likely any person could get into the park by the other entrances.

Lord Fielden's suspicions increased. The woman had evidently gained access to the park in some secret manner; therefore her purpose could not have been legitimate or honest. It was idle to suppose that robbery had been the motive; consequently Harry was more convinced than ever that the stranger was some person who had read the advertisement about Lola de Ferras, and wanted to discover the reason for it. As the woman had not passed through the gates, it seemed probable that she might still be in the park. If he could but find her! He knew the grounds well himself, but he could not decide at what point to begin a search. He vowed to himself that he would hunt all night in the park rather than she should escape him.

More than an hour passed, and he was no nearer the object of his search. Oh! surely there was a sound at last—that slow, creeping, stealthy footstep on the other side of the beeches. The footstep came nearer. He must see who it was without alarming her, and so he began to noiselessly retrace his footsteps, only pausing now and then to see if the other stealthy footstep faltered.

He reached the end of the grove and stood waiting. He was brave and fearless as a lion, but there was a queer sensation at his heart as the stranger drew nearer and nearer.

The footstep grew more distinct now that the grove was past, and presently they sounded quite close to him. He put out his hands, and they grasped a woman's garments. The woman stopped with a faint low cry.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed; but there was no answer. It was too dark to see. He only knew that he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear. There was silence for a minute, and then the woman struggled violently to free herself, and he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear. There was silence for a minute, and then the woman struggled violently to free herself, and he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear. There was silence for a minute, and then the woman struggled violently to free herself, and he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear.

"You shall not go," cried Lord Fielden, "until you have told me who you are. You need not struggle; you are a strong woman, but I am a stronger man. Such efforts to escape are useless. Tell me who you are and what is your business here, and then I will let you go."

She struggled with such violence to free herself from his grasp that the black cloak she wore was torn, her bonnet fell off, and with it something white and soft. She knew it was the wig which had so effectually disguised her, and with the knowledge came an access of despair; it made her so strong that this time she almost tore herself from his captor's grasp.

"No," he said, "I will not hurt you. I could bind you fast this moment if I liked; but I will not. If it pleases you, though we will stand here until morning—until daylight dawns—so that I may see, if you will not tell me, who you are."

It was as much as he could do to hold the strange woman, but he kept her hands tightly grasped in his. How long a time passed in the terrible struggle he could not tell. He found presently that she was panting for breath, and that her strength was failing her, and that in a short time she must be still from sheer exhaustion. So it happened. After a few more efforts to free herself, she gave up struggling, and stood panting and trembling. Then came a long-drawn sigh, a low, piteous cry.

"For Heaven's sake, let me go—let me go!" she murmured.

"Tell me who you are and what you want," he said, "and you shall go the next moment."

"I am no one whom you know. I have been looking for work. I am a poor woman, and I have been to all the big houses to try to get some sewing. I came here to-day, but there was nothing for me to do. I was tired and hungry, and I fell asleep among the ferns in the park. I am only trying to find my way out of the park. I have done no harm. Let me go, for Heaven's sake!"

The woman's story might be true. He relaxed his hold.

"I will let myself if you try to look at me," she cried.

She was a woman, you not the sense, woman, to know when you are conquered?"

She made a wild dash at him. It was her last hope. It was as though an ocean wave had flung itself against a rock—useless, vain, indeed, injurious to herself. The last shroud of disguise fell from her, and she stood revealed in the moonlight—which she cursed in her heart—a tall, stately woman, with a mass of black hair and dark, wild eyes, contrasting vividly with her white face; the false hair had been trampled under foot in the struggle. The moon shone out more fully and clearly, so clearly that Lord Fielden could see every line of the stranger's face and figure.

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"I know you," he said. "You are the woman for whom I have been searching morning, noon and night, for whom I have sought all over Europe—you are Lola de Ferras!"

A low cry came from her lips, and Lord Fielden releasing his hold, she fell upon the ground, shuddering, trembling.

"You are Lola de Ferras," he repeated. "The woman who alone knows the secret of Sir Karl Albaner's fate. You must come with me."

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"You will not want this again," he said. "You will have no more need for disguise. Come with me."

As he took her hands for the second time, his eyes fell upon her wedding-ring, and it startled him. Was she married, and to whom?

"Whither are you taking me?" she asked. "I will not go to the Manor House. Where are we going?"

"To the keeper's cottage," he replied.

"I shall keep you there until you solve the mystery of Sir Karl's absence for us."

"Then I shall die there!" she replied, with a triumphant laugh. "There are many clever inventions in this world, but I have not yet heard of one which can make a woman speak when she chooses to be silent."

"Nor have I," he agreed, gravely.

"I shall leave it to your sense of honor to speak. I am quite aware that I cannot compel you."

"You can lock me up, shut me in prison—you can do anything and everything you will; but I am queen of the position, and I shall remain so."

They reached the keeper's cottage at last; and she stood in silence while the door was unfastened. Lord Fielden kept a keen watch upon her, knowing well that she would shake and weep, and after many weeks of suffering it resulted in a complication of throat and lung troubles. During this illness he was under the care of one of the best physicians in this city, who pronounced it a very serious case and advised him to stop work, which he was finally compelled to do.

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"Walk in, madam," said Lord Fielden. "Mrs. Turnbull will find you all the needful accommodation. You will like tea, or coffee, or some refreshment, perhaps?"

He tossed the door behind him as he spoke, and then turned with a stern face to the keeper and his wife.

"I have brought this lady here," he said; "and here she is to remain in close custody until to-morrow. Let her have every care, every attention—all that she requires; but she must not be left alone, so that she can escape."

Lola looked at him defiantly.

"You may do all that, yet you cannot make me speak," she replied. "I tell you frankly that, if I can get a chance to kill myself, I will do it, if I can find the least opportunity to escape, I shall take it."

"Will you excuse me, my lord?" said the keeper, after a steady look at the flashing black eyes. "I am afraid to undertake the charge of this lady, I am not used to such a task. Foxes, pheasants, and partridges, and such like I understand, but not ladies. I should not be able to detain her, my lord, if she made up her mind to go."

"Then I will stay myself," said Lord Fielden. "You have a room upstairs, Mrs. Turnbull; the lady will prefer it to this, and you can take her some tea there. I shall sit up here. Madam," he continued, turning to where Lola stood with a white, ashen look on her face, "I shall be on the alert. I can hear the steadiest of footsteps, the slightest creak of a board or uprissing of a window. Remember, if you make any desperate attempt to escape, I will give you in custody for a crime you would not like to hear me name."

"Merci, monsieur," she said, with a mocking smile—"merci, you will have to prove every charge you bring against me."

She went up the narrow staircase more with the air of an injured queen than of a prisoner. It was a plain, pretty room, into which she was shown. For a few moments she stood like some caged tigress in the middle of it, and then hastily closed the door.

"Are you open to a bribe?" she asked, turning to the keeper's wife. "I will make you a rich woman for life if you will do one of two things. Either bring to me poison that I may destroy myself, or give me the chance of escape through the window here. I swear to you that I will make you rich for life."

"I cannot," said the woman, "I dare not; we have always served my lord faithfully."

"If he and you but knew what was best for the whole family, you would beg of me on your knees to go," she said.

But the woman shook her head; she could never, come what may, betray her trust.

The night passed in pleading and useless prayers. Once or twice the keeper's wife nodded, and awfully, to find the dark, beautiful face bent over her with murderous gaze.

"I warn you," said Lola; "I am a desperate woman. I should set little value on your life. If you wish well to yourself, do not expose me to temptation."

This so effectually scared the keeper's wife that she checked all further inclination to slumber, and watched every movement of her companion. It was pitiful to see the way in which Lola de Ferras paced up and down the room, at times wringing her hands and crying out that she was trapped and lost, at others that she should never make her speak—never; no one could do that.

When morning came, and the watch was ended, when the dark head, tired and wearied, was laid to rest, Lord Fielden wrote a little note to his mother to say that she was to come to the cottage at once, and bring Gertrude with her—that there was immediate need for their presence. He cautioned the keeper to be silent as to what had happened—indeed, he had little to reveal—Lord Fielden had told him nothing.

In less than an hour the two ladies were on their way, Lady Fielden deeply anxious and agitated, Ger-

trude full of wonder.

"I am sure," said she, "as they drove along, that it is something about the advertisements; Lady Fielden, I feel quite certain of it. Lady Fielden's first words to her son were of reproach that he had been out all night, and that she had been greatly alarmed about him. He went up to the side of the low pony-carriage, and in a few words told them what had happened. Gertrude's face flushed and her eyes flashed.

"Lola de Ferras!" she cried. "Is it possible? Has Heaven granted my prayer at last?"

But Lady Fielden grew dourly pale.

"Lola de Ferras! Oh, Harry, I cannot see that woman—that wicked woman!"

"You must see her for my sake!" cried Gertrude. "Oh, Lady Fielden, my dearest and truest friend, you must forget everything else except that you have to help me, and that my father's name must be cleared!"

They spent some few minutes discussing what had happened.

"She will never speak," said Lady Fielden. "She is still, as she says, 'queen of the position.'"

"She will speak," declared Gertrude, "for I shall implore her to do so in my father's name."

Then Lord Fielden asked if they could go upstairs, and Mrs. Turnbull answered, "Yes."

They found Lola sitting in a chair by the window, and in her eye was the look of a hunted animal driven to bay. She never glanced at the ladies, but spoke to Lord Fielden at once.

"Have you any further indignities to offer me?" she demanded. "Am I to be kept here in prison, a slave for you and your friends?"

"Lola de Ferras!" said Lady Fielden, in a solemn voice, "do not use such words to my son. Wicked and weak as you have been, make the best atonement you can."

"I have no atonement to make," she answered. "I shall die as I have lived—mute; you may be sure of that."

"Tell us one thing," said Lord Fielden—"you and you alone can tell it. Is Sir Karl here or dead?"

A curious smile curled her lips.

"I shall tell you nothing," she replied.

"Do not be obstinate, madam. Think of the lives that you have ruined already."

"Have I?" she cried. "I am right well pleased; that is just what I intended to do. I tell you candidly that you are all right in your supposition. I, and I only, so far as I know, can solve the mystery of Sir Karl's fate. You want to know, of course, if he went away with me or not—if he asked me or I asked him—if he thought the world was lost."

(Continued on Page 3.)

who looked in at the dining-room window at the Manor and terrified a young lady?"

She was silent. He repeated the question.

"Yes," she said. "It was. I did not mean to frighten any one. I was cold and hungry. The bright lights attracted me, and I looked in. I meant no harm—I did no harm: Let me go!"

That one word "attracted" proved fatal. She had spoken in a low, murmuring, hoarse voice, almost impossible to distinguish; but in that word he had recognized the never-to-be-mistaken roll of the French "r," which the people of no other nation can imitate.

He grasped her more closely.

"You are a Frenchwoman!" he cried. "You have perhaps come from that wicked woman herself!"

She struggled afresh with the strength of a man, uttering low, piteous cries; but in his strong grasp she was helpless as a child.

"You cannot escape," he said. "Your struggles are more vain than those of a bird in the fowler's net."

Just then a few rays of light broke through the clouds; they parted in majestic grandeur, rolling away in heavy masses of black and white vapor, leaving the moon sailing peacefully in the sky.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried. "Now I can see you!"

"Let me go," she wailed, piteously "let me go!"

Resolutely she turned and bent her head, lest the moonlight should fall upon her face.

"I will kill myself if you try to look at me," she cried.

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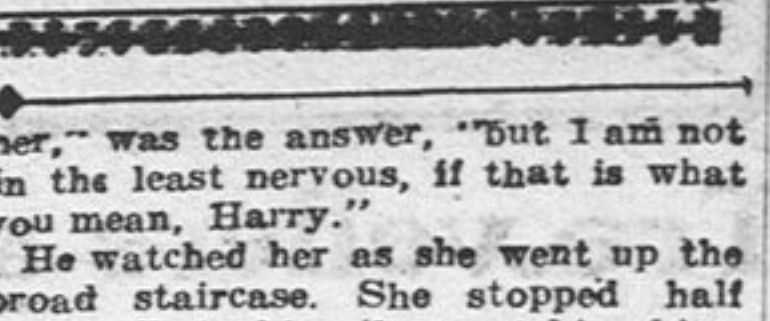
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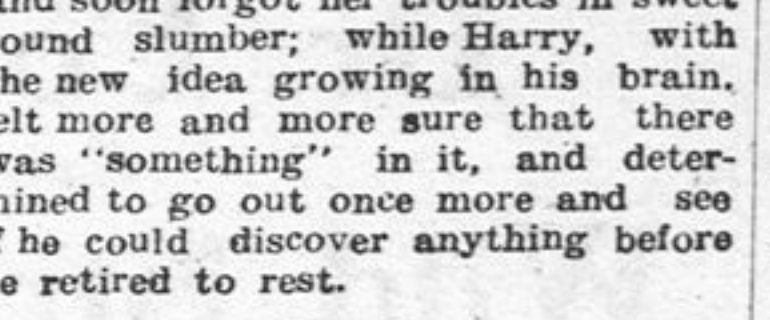
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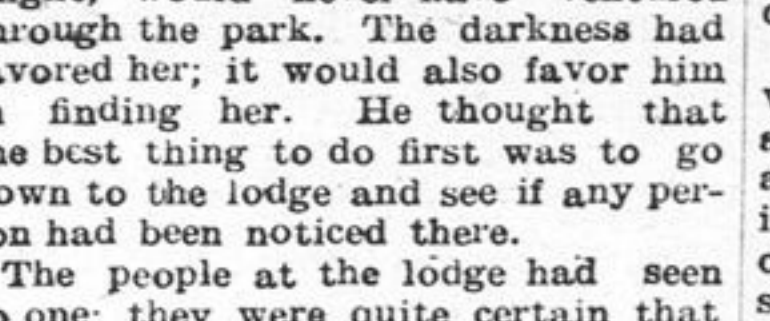
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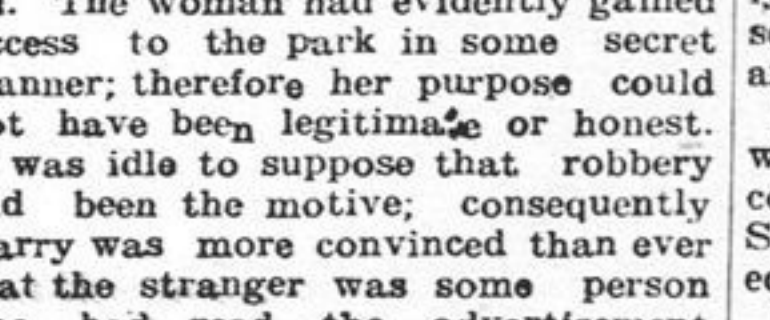
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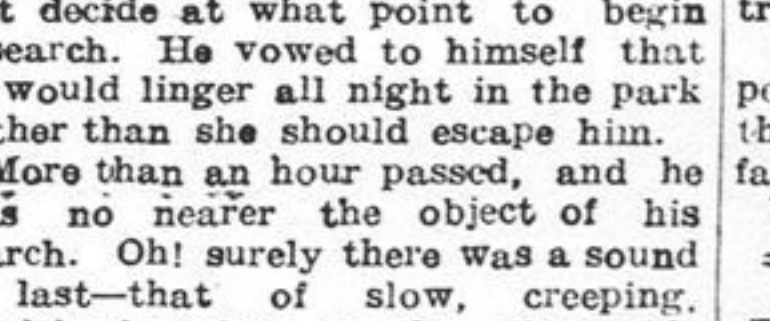
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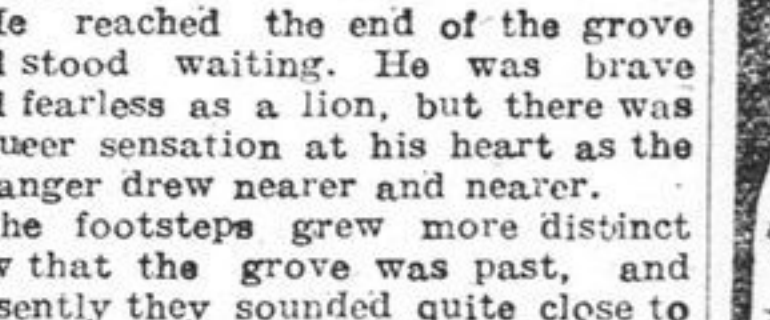
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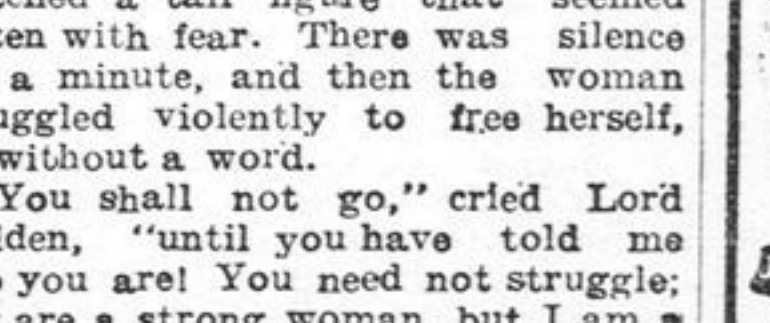
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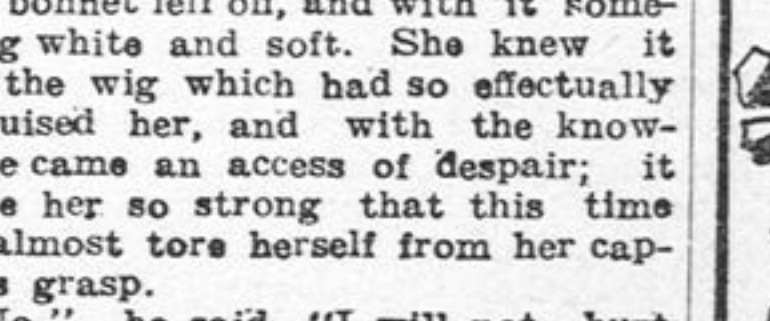
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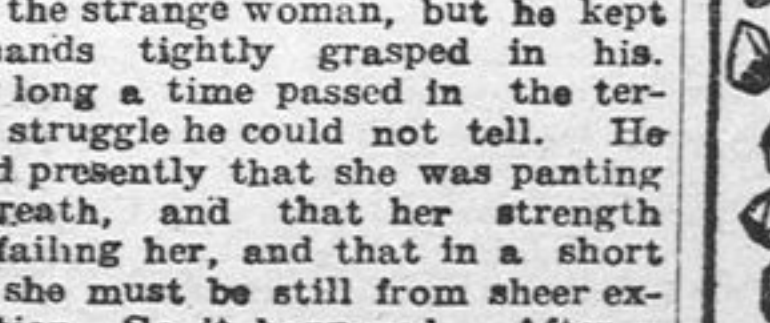
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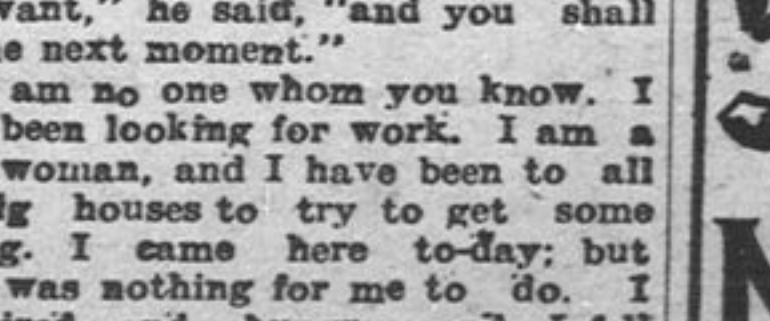
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In less than an hour the two ladies were on their way, Lady Fielden deeply anxious and agitated, Ger-

trude full of wonder.

"I am sure," said she, "as they drove along, that it is something about the advertisements; Lady Fielden, I feel quite certain of it. Lady Fielden's first words to her son were of reproach that he had been out all night, and that she had been greatly alarmed about him. He went up to the side of the low pony-carriage, and in a few words told them what had happened. Gertrude's face flushed and her eyes flashed.

"Lola de Ferras!" she cried. "Is it possible? Has Heaven granted my prayer at last?"

But Lady Fielden grew dourly pale.

"Lola de Ferras! Oh, Harry, I cannot see that woman—that wicked woman!"

"You must see her for my sake!" cried Gertrude. "Oh, Lady Fielden, my dearest and truest friend, you must forget everything else except that you have to help me, and that my father's name must be cleared!"

They spent some few minutes discussing what had happened.

"She will never speak," said Lady Fielden. "She is still, as she says, 'queen of the position.'"

"She will speak," declared Gertrude, "for I shall implore her to do so in my father's name."

Then Lord Fielden asked if they could go upstairs, and Mrs. Turnbull answered, "Yes."

They found Lola sitting in a chair by the window, and in her eye was the look of a hunted animal driven to bay. She never glanced at the ladies, but spoke to Lord Fielden at once.

"Have you any further indignities to offer me?" she demanded. "Am I to be kept here in prison, a slave for you and your friends?"

"Lola de Ferras!" said Lady Fielden, in a solemn voice, "do not use such words to my son. Wicked and weak as you have been, make the best atonement you can."

"I have no atonement to make," she answered. "I shall die as I have lived—mute; you may be sure of that."

"Tell us one thing," said Lord Fielden—"you and you alone can tell it. Is Sir Karl here or dead?"

A curious smile curled her lips.

"I shall tell you nothing," she replied.

"Do not be obstinate, madam. Think of the lives that you have ruined already."

"Have I?" she cried. "I am right well pleased; that is just what I intended to do. I tell you candidly that you are all right in your supposition. I, and I only, so far as I know, can solve the mystery of Sir Karl's fate. You want to know, of course, if he went away with me or not—if he asked me or I asked him—if he thought the world was lost."

(Continued on Page 3.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Lord Fielden was in no way daunted by the darkness of the night. If the moon of the stars had been shining, the woman, let her be whom she might, would never have ventured through the park. The darkness had favored her; it would also favor him in finding her. He thought that the best thing to do first was to go down to the lodge and see if any person had been noticed there.

The people at the lodge had seen no one; they were quite certain that no strange woman had passed through the gates—in fact, no person could pass through them without their knowledge; nor did they believe that it was likely any person could get into the park by the other entrances.

Lord Fielden's suspicions increased. The woman had evidently gained access to the park in some secret manner; therefore her purpose could not have been legitimate or honest. It was idle to suppose that robbery had been the motive; consequently Harry was more convinced than ever that the stranger was some person who had read the advertisement about Lola de Ferras, and wanted to discover the reason for it. As the woman had not passed through the gates, it seemed probable that she might still be in the park. If he could but find her! He knew the grounds well himself, but he could not decide at what point to begin a search. He vowed to himself that he would hunt all night in the park rather than she should escape him.

More than an hour passed, and he was no nearer the object of his search. Oh! surely there was a sound at last—that slow, creeping, stealthy footstep on the other side of the beeches. The footstep came nearer. He must see who it was without alarming her, and so he began to noiselessly retrace his footsteps, only pausing now and then to see if the other stealthy footstep faltered.

He reached the end of the grove and stood waiting. He was brave and fearless as a lion, but there was a queer sensation at his heart as the stranger drew nearer and nearer.

The footstep grew more distinct now that the grove was past, and presently they sounded quite close to him. He put out his hands, and they grasped a woman's garments. The woman stopped with a faint low cry.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed; but there was no answer. It was too dark to see. He only knew that he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear. There was silence for a minute, and then the woman struggled violently to free herself, and he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear. There was silence for a minute, and then the woman struggled violently to free herself, and he clutched a tall figure that seemed frozen with fear.

"You shall not go," cried Lord Fielden, "until you have told me who you are. You need not struggle; you are a strong woman, but I am a stronger man. Such efforts to escape are useless. Tell me who you are and what is your business here, and then I will let you go."

She struggled with such violence to free herself from his grasp that the black cloak she wore was torn, her bonnet fell off, and with it something white and soft. She knew it was the wig which had so effectually disguised her, and with the knowledge came an access of despair; it made her so strong that this time she almost tore herself from his captor's grasp.

"No," he said, "I will not hurt you. I could bind you fast this moment if I liked; but I will not. If it pleases you, though we will stand here until morning—until daylight dawns—so that I may see, if you will not tell me, who you are."

It was as much as he could do to hold the strange woman, but he kept her hands tightly grasped in his. How long a time passed in the terrible struggle he could not tell. He found presently that she was panting for breath, and that her strength was failing her, and that in a short time she must be still from sheer exhaustion. So it happened. After a few more efforts to free herself, she gave up struggling, and stood panting and trembling. Then came a long-drawn sigh, a low, piteous cry.

"For Heaven's sake, let me go—let me go!" she murmured.

"Tell me who you are and what you want," he said, "and you shall go the next moment."

"I am no one whom you know. I have been looking for work. I am a poor woman, and I have been to all the big houses to try to get some sewing. I came here to-day, but there was nothing for me to do. I was tired and hungry, and I fell asleep among the ferns in the park. I am only trying to find my way out of the park. I have done no harm. Let me go, for Heaven's sake!"

The woman's story might be true. He relaxed his hold.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

The keeper looked bewildered when he opened the door. There stood Lord Fielden, and by his side, held fast by him, was a lady, with a face very beautiful and proud, her white and black eyes, and her dress was of plainer black; yet, in some vague way, the man felt that she was a lady.

"Walk in, madam," said Lord Fielden. "Mrs. Turnbull will find you all the needful accommodation. You will like tea, or coffee, or some refreshment, perhaps?"

He tossed the door behind him as he spoke, and then turned with a stern face to the keeper and his wife.

"I have brought this lady here," he said; "and here she is to remain in close custody