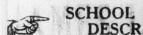
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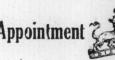
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## HESTER, AND A LEGACY

For several days after the Dover-court ball Lady Lynmouth was ill with one of the attacks of the heart from which she frequently suffered. Any agitation was wont to bring one on, and the manner in which her son had received her hints regarding Lady Muriel and his subsequent attention to Violet Langworthy at the ball had produced the symptoms which had ended in serious illness. Hester had been up with her the whole of two nights and constantly

in attendance on her through the day, for, although Doctor Turner had said there was no immediate danger, and her maid, Fanny, never left the dressing room, so as to be within call her ladyship was not satisfied if her was ill, no one so patient, so gentle, died away almost as soon as it was so full of resource and common felt. so full of resource and common sense, no one with a footstep so noiseless, a voice so modulated, a constitution that could do with

and her head ached on the third day showed no other sign of fatigue, and her apology. went through her duties with the regularity of a machine, only that, unlike a machine, she possessed the the pain more bearable.

It was Doctor Turner who on the hird day told her that she was not ooking well and must go out into the air for an hour or so and go to bed

early.
"She won't keep you awake tonight," he said, as he stood giving his final directions at the dressingroom door. "She will sleep as soundly as I hope you will. You are an invaluable nurse, Miss Phil-I am afraid, knowing that you are strong, I have availed myself of you too far. A doctor is apt to consider his patient first." "Naturally!" she replied. "And in this case there is no reason why you should do otherwise."

"Except that you look rather badly. Put on your hat and go out for a orisk walk at once. I told Lady Lynmouth I was sending you, so she won't expect you to do anything for her just yet Goodbye, and many thanks for all you have done!" With a kind shake of the hand he

was off, and Hester went into the inner room in answer to a feeble and rather querulous summons from the ather querulous summons from the "Doctor Turner says you had bet-

ter take a walk," Lady Lynmouth said as Hester came up to the bedside, but I hope you will not be gone as much as you will. I like it." long. I don't like Fanny shaking up my pillows, she is so clumsy. In my present state I can't bear anyone in he room but you. And please pour out my medicine before you go. It can stand on that little table ready."

Hester did all the little things rejuried of her before leaving her patient for the prescribed hour, but there were so many last directions see.' and so many messages to be given that it was nearly five before she got And even then Lady Lynmouth had a last direction to give.

"Be sure not to stay out long-half cept one." an hour, I should think, would be And don't go beyond the gardens. If an attack of pain should of Lady Muriel and of his reputed en-

ily around her shoulders and avoiding the flower garden, she went on to the terrace and down some steps into a side garden, where a lawn was you wouldn't dare!" placed amid winding paths and shrubberies, seldom visited by any nember

positive delight to use her limbs treely again after three days' confinement to difference."

ture and the grass soaking wet. In the pedestal, mutilated and moss-grown, rupted, breaking in impetuously. that warned her to keep her skirts herself.

was May, was chilly. But it was something-everything- isn't that a high motive-the unselo be out again and alone and free! fish love of a sister?" with determination, she roamed the tural feeling.' face, and the subdued feeling of lovable!" melancholy that hung over the place Hester's heart beat high with joy and the day. It was conducive to at his praise, and she walked beside the future seemed to open wide. It forced her to speak. it and it had an exhilarating and even vain sometimes.

she knew no adequate ground. ure before her on the path as she down-and I-I bought it! came round some bushes seemed to give the prophecy shape and form and tell her in fact, what she had been feeling in fancy. It was Lord Lynmouth, smoking a cigarette and strolling with his hands behind him in the direction in which she herself was

Her first instinct was to turn back and avoid him by making for the house, but before she could put this

more than three or four yards from where she stood. She was obliged therefore to go on towards him, aware that he was going to speak to her and that the moment she had been hoping for, yet dreading, had

She felt that he was looking at her steadily and that he had met her at a disadvantage. Her hair had become loosened and would have dropped had she not hastily stuck in the pins afresh, her shoes were wet and sodden and her face felt as colorless and wan as the dingy old shawl she wore. Altogether she was not in a condition in which she would have chosen to be seen by him or by any one in whose eyes she wished to stand well, to complete health. companion was absent half an hour. but her vanity was not very great, There was no one like her when she and this sense of self-consciousness

The remembrance of the last time a she had spoken to him alone was so vivid in her mind, for, although she had met him on several occasions in So Hester had been kept at it two his mother's room since the right of days and two nights without inter- the ball, they had never been alone, ission, and if her eyes were heavy and had done no more than merely acknowledge each other's presence. was not to be wondered at. But she She now felt the time had come for

"I have just been in to see my mother," he began as they met, "and cloak is useful, I suppose."

"Not to me. I never go to the still finer qualities of being kind to driven out by the Doctor to take the the sufferer and of knowing by symair. It was not before it was needed. pathetic intuition what to do to make I think"-looking at her with a close scrutiny that she resented.

"I am aware that I am a pale drab colour," she said, laughing nervously, and saying the first thing that came into her head, "but it is not exactly pleasant to be told so." "I did not say you were a pale drab

"No, but you implied it." He left off his scrutiny and, turn-

ing, walked beside her along the narrow path between the laurels. "I deny that I implied such a thing, or even thought it for a moment," he said, holding his cigarette between two fingers and raising his eyes to the sky; "but, even if it were true, do you think it would make the smallest dif-

"I suppose not,' she said, crestfallen at her presumption that it would and mistaking his meaning. Then, plunging hastily into her apology, she added, "Lord Lynmouth, I want to beg your pardon for what I said the other night-it was rude and disagreeable and quite unjust.' "You acknowledge that it was un-

had no right to express my ideas on the subject.'

"On the contrary, I give you leave to find fault with me and lecture me "I shouldn't dream of doing such a No, because you will persist in put

ting a barrier between us."
"I don't put it—it is there."

"I fail to see it. In what does it

placing the cigarette between "our relative positions must be altered. I will admit no barrier-ex-

She longed to ask what that one was, but did not dare. She thought come on again I should know where gagement to her, and her feelings rose in a tumult again. It was un-Promising not to venture beyond the limits indicated, Hester at last escaped, and wrapping a shawl hast impetuously-

You have no right to say these things! You cannot respect me or

"Respect you!" he exclaimed in surprise. Then after a pause, "How entirely you misjudge all my words Here she felt sure of being alone and actions! It is because I respect and unobserved. Bareheaded, she you so highly that I talk to you as I walked backwards and forwards along the paths between the dripping laurel-bushes; the fresh air soon drove away 'Good morning, Miss Phillips! A dull her headache and exercise refreshed day, is it not! it might be a sign of and raised her spirits, and it was a what you call respect, but on my part it would mean absolute and utter in-

She was silent, but still struggling In the aspect of the garden itself with her emotions and unconvinced there was nothing enlivening. It "How can I help respecting you," was a damp, somewhat neglected-look-ing place, and since there had been a storm of rain in the morning every votedly you attend on my mother. tree and shrub was heavy with mois- what high motives you bring to be ir

middle of the lawn a stone image on "It isn't high motives," she interlooked forlorn and dismal and the often feel dreadfully wicked inside." gravel of the paths as she walked on He smiled, either at her vehemence

them gave out a moist, oozing sound or at her childish mode of expressing lifted and to choose her steps. The sky in all directions was gray and —I don't make any mistake about heavy-looking, and the air, though it that! I know it's all for Nancy's sake -the sister you told me about. But

Banishing all disturbing thoughts "It seems to be an instinct, a na-

paths from end to end, enjoying the "So it is to you, but that is because reshness of the damp air against her you are what you are—loving and

thought-a curious prophetic train him for a few minutes in silence. But of thought in which the possibilities of after a short retrospect her honesty "I'm not really what you think," took no shape or form, this prophecy, and yet she was acutely conscious of she exclaimed. "I am both selfish and

exciting effect on her spirits for which other day at Belverton-it has weighed on my mind ever since- I saw Suddenly the scent of a cigarette in an opera cloak in a shop window—a the heavy air and almost simultan- lovely pink thing with a little hood eously the appearance of a man's fig- and trimmed all round with swans-"Well," observed Lord Lynmouth

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"That is not the point," said Hester. "It is the waste of money that is

opera. "That is a drawback, certainly," he added, smiling.

But Hester's face was very grave. "Such a horrid waste of money," she ejaculated. "Quite so!" he said. "But think of

what an unpleasant character you would be if you didn't waste money now and then." "I see you are determined to make excuses for me," she said, beginning to smile, "and it is very kind and polite of you, but I am afraid I don't

deserve them. As I was telling Mr. Penfold the other day-"Penfold!" he exclaimed quickly.
"The Curate? Do you know him?" "A little. I meet him in the village sometimes," she said, surprised at the sudden way in which he caught at the

He looked at her keenly.
"What sort of a fellow is he?" he asked. "Rather priggish, I should imagine, from the little I have seen of

She began to understand the situation, and a delightful suspicion that he was jealous entered her mind. She immediately succumbed to the coquettish instinct.

"He is very good," she said quietly.
"Oh, no doubt." Then with a sarcastic inflection, "Ladies always like clergymen, they are so angelic!" "Is that any argument against

"Oh, not the least in the world, except that it is apt to make them a trifle heavy! However, everything is a matter of taste, and heaviness is no doubt an attraction to some peo-

'Naturally. Women like solidity in man's character.

"Do they also like dullness?" They had reached a point where the path divided, one way leading to the house and the other back into the shrubbery. Here Hester paused; the stable clock was striking six.

"I must go back," she said. "Lady Lynmouth will be wanting me.' "But you have not yet told me whether you like dullness in a man." "Is it a matier of any importance?" -raising her chin, dimple and all, for

"I think so, naturally, being a man. "And if I admire it, what then?" 'I shall immediately become dull." That would be impossible, my lord," said Hester, making him a lit-

le mocking curtesy. In spite of the old shawl and the untidy hair, she looked almost pretty at that moment, or at any rate her

"You have not yet told me what you told Mr. Penfold. Is he to be more privileged than I?"

"Oh, it really wasn't anything-i isn't worth repeating!" "But, if I want to hear it, mayn't 1? She hesitated, then said, with a cerain amount of shame-

"It was only that-that I should love to have heaps of pretty clothes and dances and a dog-cart with red wheels She broke off-it sounded too

He had thrown away the end of his cigarette, and his eyes as they met hers were full of a kind and smiling

"So that is the secret desire of your heart, is it?" he observed. "Well, it is not a very elevated one certainly. And -would you like to know what

"Very much. "Mine," he repeated calmly and deliberately, looking straight into her eves. "is to have the right to give you all these things. Some day perhaps I shall. Now"-as a most uncomfor able blush rose to her face-"go back to the house—I see you are on the point of it—and do a little something more for Nancy. You have been neg lecting her interests this last halfhour. I fancy, talking to me with no

hovering image in the background. A flattering idea! I shall dwell upon it." Without waiting for her reply, he turned on his heel and took the path back into the shrubbery, leaving his words to work their effect in Hester's mind and prepare her for the some thing more he had fully made up his mind he would say to her some day.

(To be Continued)

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