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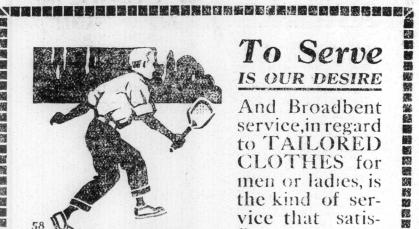
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HESTER, AND A LEGACY

'The servants-some one-I don't mured between her sobs. "Oh, Dud-

er to the three men who were standing by the table

er's death?" he asked, narrowly ob- which she herself was suffering. serving their faces with his penetrating dark eves. The lawyer turned aside as though

relieved that this was none of his business, and Doctor Turner left it to the London physician to speak their joint opinion

making the necessary arrangements. I am afraid there must be an inquest and probably a post-mortem examination. There is no apparent cause for Lady Lynmouth's death that we can

Lord Lynmouth's face was so ashy n its pallor that it looked almost

rible-horrible. other end of the room; the doctors to be a trying one. meanwhile remained silent in respect for the agitation of the bereaved son. more composed.

Surely you have arrived at a hasty Chase in mist. conclusion? My mother suffered with heart; she often had attacks. Surely was lighted at Hester Philip's sug-

"Her ladyship's heart was weak, but I believe there was no real disease," replied Dr. Turner. " Howof course, that could be ascer-"Of course," he replied hurriedly.

'Yes, I suppose it must be, but s most painful—most painful!" Dr. Morgan begged a few minutes private conversation with Lord Lyn-mouth before his return to town, and they withdrew into an ante-room together; the lawyer also left the din-

"I really must go, my lord," aid as Lord Lynmouth entered. "If of which he pulled aside. ou will see to Mrs Vavasour. She

and drifting clouds. Lord Lynmouth who rose at her approach. rose and stood in silence as she entered. They merely bowed to each ment?" she asked.

"Ah, there you are, Miss Phillips! We were just enquiring for you," Alone, I mean," she said, with a said Doctor Turner. "Would you be slight glance in the direction of the kind enough to take Mrs Vavasour window under your charge? I'm afraid she is very much upset."

when they were all gone. and I have learned to admire her. She the request, and now turned from the s so conscientious and trustworthy, window saying stiffly-Miss Philips' character," said Lord

ynmouth with sudden haughtiness. hould have thought!

Dr. Turner was slightly dismayed at the effect of his apparently harm-less remark, which he had forced to make, he answered, and he left the er ashamed of his uncomfortable sen- again sations regarding her in the morning, of the companion as it appeared to be eyes till he had disappeared and then such a distasteful one, and they sat turned back to the lawyer.

there Hester found him wnen she came down to get a glass of wine or two after the ceremony," replied

He rose of course when she entered the room, but neither spoke to the day?" other. She went over to the table and poured out the wine with an un- upon. steady hand. As she did so she raised regarding her intently. There was ing down, said in a low voicesomething so wild, so haggard, so utterly miserable in his handsome face a few days before her death. I supthat her heart was filled with a sucden flood of womanly pity.

meal which had been on the table all with legal caution. the evening. "Let me ring and get

cannot eat to-night She turned to leave the room, but "It is you who ought to have the

with her blue eyes full of horror. the decanter. He flung it rather than "That is impossible. The late Lady "They say that it is murder!" She put it down, and thrusting his hands Lynmouth's will, as it stands, must be shrank back as she uttered the word deep into his trouser pockets, strode proclaimed in a public manner. After and covered her face with her hands. over to the window and out on to the that other steps may be taken by the "Who says so?" he demanded al- terrace, where he disappeared in the heir or heirs, but till the will has been

it was half an hour or so before Mrs. into hysterical sobbing. ley, how dreadful- It can't be true, Vavasour received it, and then, had

darkness.

In spite of persuasion, Hester inhave done in another room it is im- been there before. possible to say. It is only certain clasped before her, and her eyes on mouth, was restlessly pacing the ter-

And when at last she went to bed it was not to sleep, but to lie "I had no idea—I did not know!" awake through all the long hours of to her in this hour of extreme wretch the night and rise in the morning edness—for wretched she undoubtedly. wan, weary and overstrung-a bad He turned away and walked to the beginning for a day that was certain

CHAPTER XXVIII. The next day broke cold and wet. When he returned his manner was A sleet came driving over the hills down her cheeks. into the valley and enveloped the

> gestion, not so much to give warmtin place, just because she was angry with as to cheer the chilled hearts of those over whom the depression of Lady to any one." Lynmouth's death was hanging.

> to lunch, and Mrs. Vavasour took up worldly possessions rather amused her abode there for the day, huddling he saw that she was perfectly genuine her about the liked her the over the fire and drawing largely on Hester's stock of patience with her tearful complaints.
>
> Mr. Breedbert in her distress, and he liked her the better for it.
>
> "What will every one think of me?

Lynmouth returned to the dining the bundles of papers and legal doc-room. Mrs Vavasour was still crying uments before him, interrupted now position and possessions that are hysterically, and Doctor Turner, who and then by Lord Lynmouth, who at others simply staring in moody he silence from the window, the blind

As he stood there staring out on maid. Where is Miss Phillips, I wonder?"

the wet terrace, and as Mr. Broadportable than you imagined."

He smiled again and not arranging in legal order the papers hand in a fatherly manner. At that instant Hester appeared at before him, the door softly opened "That I will never do!" she All three turned and looked at her. Lynmouth in the window and seem-She was very pale and her dark hair ed about to turn away, but on second was somewhat loosened by the soft thoughts entered with an air of dewind. Behind her lay the moonlit sky' cision and went up to the lawyer,

> 'Certainly," he replied bowing form-'Alone, I mean," she said, with

tated what to do. He was morally and Hester went over to her immedi- physically unable to turn a nobleman out of his own room at the request of ately, and took her hand.
"Come with me!" she said, and she a paid dependent, and yet he scarcely ied the sobbing Mrs Vavasour un- liked to refuse the request of this girl, who was most evidently a lady, "I like that girl," said the Doctor in spite of her anomalous position at "I have the Chase. But Lord Lynmoutin saved seen a great deal of her in one way him the trouble of deciding this deland another since she first came here, icate matter. He had apparently hear

There is a good deal of character beneath that quiet exterior, and—" • way on Miss Phillip's private inter-"It does not interest me to discuss views"-and he strode for the door. But Hester stopped him

"I would rather speak to Mr. Broad. There are many subjects of more bent another time," she said hurriedly aportance at the present time, I "I merely wish to know when he will be at liberty.' "At any rate, I will be no restraint

nimself to utter because he was rath- room without waiting for her to speak She did not attempt to detain him; out he hastened to drop the subject she merely followed him with her

"I wanted to know," she began, as When he left, Lord Lynmouth still scon as they were alone, "if the time sat at the table buried in thought, is fixed for the formal reading of Lady And Lynmouth's will?" 'On the day of the funeral, an hou

"That, I believe, is the day decided her eyes to his and found that he was ing one hand on the desk and look-Lady Lynmouth made a new will

'Why should you suppose that her "You have had nothing to eat," she ladyship made a new will just before said, looking at the remains of the her death?" inquired Mr. Broadbent

Hester raised her eyes to his 'Because she told me so.' "Humph!" ejaculated the lawyer. Then, after a moment's silence-"And,

supposing, my dear young lady. she did as you say, what then?"
"I believe that I play a very imwine,' he said; "you are as white as portant part in it," she continued, "and claim altogether and let the former will stand.'

> With a nervous movement she took up a paper-knife and threw it down without knowing what she was A. Sheard she went on, looking up

again, as he did not speak, "Please

entreaty, but immediately reassumed his legal gravity. 'it is not customary," he said, "to discuss a will before it has been officia ly read, a proceeding that is to take place on Friday, as you know. On

that occasion I shall be pleased to "My dear Isabel, there is nothing a sheet." He poured out another to frighten you," he said reassur- glass of port. "Drink this!" he said

At present I must ask you to wait." but there is! You haven't If her hand had been unsteady, his avoid. I wanted, if possible, to have then? You can't know!" she shook so that he spilt the wine on the former will read instead of the persisted, looking up into his tace the table and was forced to put down one that was made on Monday night.

> read nothing can be done." Hester took up the glass for the Hester's self-control gave way, and third time and left the room, but she seemed on the point of breaking

"I cannot and will not be brought that lady been a close observer, she into that wicked will!" she exclaimed.

He left her abruptly and strode over to the three men who were stand
was trying to soothe and cheer her where is it?"—hurriedly turning over the table. "I will have bore signs in her face of a deeper agi- the papers on the table. "I will burn What was the cause of my moth- tation and distress than any from it myself if I can find it. Is it here?

> The lawyer suddenly laid his hand sisted upon sleeping in her own room on hers and made it prisoner. Her as usual, though it opened into the agitation touched him, and, although his manner was still somewhat formal, slept there as calmly as she would there was a kindness in it that had not have done in another.

"No, no!" he said. "We do not burn that for more than an hour after mid-night she stood in the window of her crime for which there is a heavy room, fully dressed, with her hands penalty. It is a pity that her ladyshithe dark figure that, cigarette in ing heiress, but that you are her heirless and must remain so is a fact you cannot escape from.'

Hester let her hand remain in his. He was an elderly man, and the touch of a tellow-creature was comforting was at what some people would have considered the stroke of good fortune that had fallen at her feet. She sank down on a chair at the side of the desk, and the tears began to flow

"I am most unhappy!" she said brokenly. "To have lived here as In the morning room a wood fire Lady Lynmouth's companion and then e made mistress of the whole

Again the lawyer smiled. An unwilling heiress was a new experience a hurried breakfast, at which Hester presided. Mr. Broadbent dropped in to lunch, and Mrs. Vayacous to have a new experience in his professional career, and Hester's dislike to her suddenly-acquired worldly possessions. him, grave and precise as he was. But

In the afternoon Mr. Broadbent What will he think of me?" she contook possession of the darkened libtook possession of the darkened lib-Half an hour afterwards the physi-rary, and by the light of the two tall whole world I should have disliked so cian left for the nig't mail, and Lord silver candlesticks sat looking through much so chosen to avoid, as this be-

hysterically, and Doctor Turner, who had said "Good-bye" some time ago, wandered restlessly in and out, some "Well, weil," said Mr. Broadbent but did not like to leave her in her times aimlessly turning over the kindly, "don't make yourself ill by present condition, was administering letters in his mother's cabinet, and rying—there is nothing to be gained some way out of it, if we try hard enough to find one-or you may get He smiled again and patted her

> die than touch one penny of the money that is righly his.

> and showing by his manner that he considered there was no good in further discussing the matter, "we must wait until after the reading of the will. Till then neither you nor I are supposed—legally speaking—to know anything about the matter.

Hester rose too, and wiping eyes, hastily left the room. Mr Broadent went over to the fire and warmed his hands as a matter of habit.

(To be Continued)

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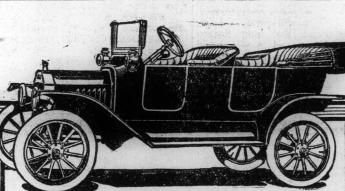
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