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HESTER, AND A LEGACY

Hester hesitated. She longed with all her heart to refuse the offer. But there were strong reasons for her accepting it. There were others dependent upon her, to whom a few pounds more or less made all the difference in the world; this was a really good offer of Mrs. Vavasour's and she would not be likely to receive such a good one again. The struggle was a hard one, but she could not bring herself to accept it. "May I think it over?" she said slowly. "I am going to London, and will write to you from there."

"Why not decide at once?" Say "Yes"—it will relieve me—and I can make my plans without delay. You mean to accept it, I am sure—and she rose with a little mocking smile on her lips. Hester's eyes flashed, and had she followed her instinct she would have rejected the offer on the spot out of indignant pride. But during the years of her companionship to Lady Lynmouth she had learned self-control, and a mental picture of those she worked for came before her eyes. For their sakes she drove the flash out of her eyes and the scornful refusal from her lips.

"I will think it over and write to you from London," she said again, and with this answer Mrs. Vavasour had to be contented for the time being. The next morning Hester was up and dressed as soon as it was light. It was a miserable day for travelling, pouring with rain and rather windy. Everything looked as dreary and disconsolate as she felt in her heart, but she gave herself no time for melancholy thoughts. She sent her trunk by the gardener, who was going down to the village with an empty barrow, and then went into the morning-room to take an apology for her absence. There all was comfortable as usual; the fire burned brightly, the urn was hissing, and an omelet, freshly cooked, awaited her. But she could eat nothing. She sat down at the table, poured out a cup of coffee, and opened her time-table, which she studied intently, jotting down trains on a slip of paper. While so engaged the door opened and a maid entered the room. She thought it was a servant till Lord Lynmouth spoke.

"Is it true you are leaving the Chase to-day, Miss Philips?" he asked in a calm and steady voice. "Yes," she said very coldly and without looking up. "May I ask where you are going?" "Certainly! I am going to London. I will leave my address with you if you wish it. You may need it," and her lip curled sarcastically.

"She wrote the address on a piece of paper, which she laid on the table. He walked over to the window. "A miserable day for travelling," he said. "You are going to drive to the station of course?" "No, I shall walk."

"Ridiculous! In this weather, too! You must have the dog-cart or the brougham. Which do you prefer?" "I cannot accept either, thank you!" she said, and bent again over the time-table. "But I insist! I cannot allow you to leave the house alone and on foot. Pray consider my wishes in the matter!"—and he rang the bell as he spoke.

She offered no further resistance, and there was silence between them till the man answered the bell. "Tell James to have the brougham ready for Miss Philips to catch the train," said Lord Lynmouth. "What time is your train Miss Philips?" "Ten-twenty-five," she replied briefly, underlining a certain place in the time-table at which she was looking. "Ten-twenty-five, then," said Lord Lynmouth, "and tell Thomas to go too and see that everything is comfortable for Miss Philips and that she has a foot-warmer."

The man went away, and Lord Lynmouth walked over to the fire. Hester looked up at him. She was very pale and bore evident traces of having passed a sleepless night, but there was no longer that look of pain in her eyes—her were cold, proud, scornful. Her manner too was expressive of extreme hauteur. "You are exceedingly considerate," she said; "but you are aware that I would gladly dispense with such consideration. It is unpleasant to feel oneself loaded with obligations, you know," she ended ironically.

"You altogether misunderstood me yesterday. You took my words to mean far more than they did. I never meant—never dreamed—"

"It was impossible to misunderstand you," she interrupted. "You told me that my conduct was suspicious, facts were against me, that you did not know what to think. You might just as well have made the deliberate accusation in so many plain words; they could not have meant more. No doubt you accuse me also of getting that will made in my favour—that I had the intention."

"I do not accuse you of anything," he exclaimed. "I spoke in a moment of miserable doubt—"

"That is enough for me." She had risen in the excitement of her speech and faced him with passionate defiance. "You can never expect me to forget the words once said; they have burnt in too deeply ever to be effaced. You have believed me guilty of a crime—perhaps even of intention to murder."

"Good heavens, what a horrible idea. I never for one instant thought such a thing; it would be impossible. There were other suspicions, but not that—never that."

THE FAMILY PHYSICIAN

"Fruit-a-lives" is the Standby in This Ontario Home

Scotland, Ont., Aug. 25th, 1913. "My wife was a martyr to Constipation. We tried everything on the calendar without satisfaction, and spent large sums of money, until we happened on 'Fruit-a-lives'. We have used it in the family for about two years, and we would not use anything else as long as we can get 'Fruit-a-lives'."

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to engulf her. It was her one little spark of heroism, and she summoned all her resolution to carry it through. At last she drew up before a lodging house in a dull street, and gathering her things together, she got out and saw her trunk taken into the smutty little maid-servant's upstairs. How shabby the stair carpets were! How grimy everything looked after the freshness and elegance of Lynmouth Chase! Her heart smote her for noticing these things, but they seemed to start out and catch her eye and—Oh, there was her mother—her dear mother at the head of the stairs, waiting to welcome her, and she by stair-carpet and dingy wall-papers faded into oblivion as she felt herself folded in those loving arms! The next moment she was led into the sitting-room, where Nancy lay on the sofa awaiting her with flushed cheeks. She was down on the floor beside her in an instant, and the sisters were hugging one another after the foolish affectionate manner of girls who have each other dearly. Hester's hat fell off and her hair came down, and her appearance was a mere wreck during the warmth of these embraces, but there was no interesting hero to startle her in her dishevelment, and there were no more critical eyes than her mother's and sister's to notice whether it were becoming otherwise. As for them, they were sure to think it becoming—she was their Hester, the Hester who worked for them and saved for them and spent her all upon them, and it was no wonder if she was always beautiful in their eyes.

(Continued on Page 2)

Mrs. D. Zimmerman of Blandburg, Pa., wants a divorce because her husband hit her with a keg of nails.



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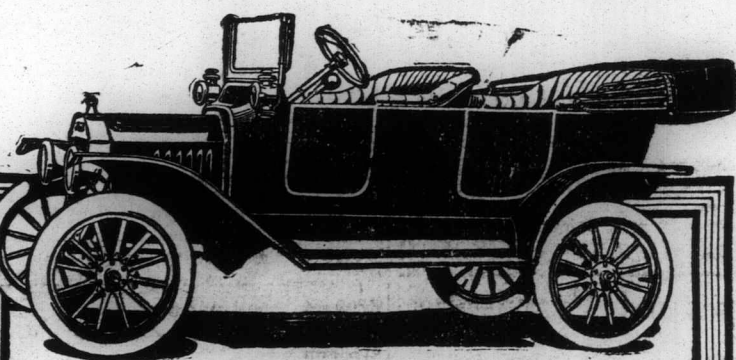
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