

evident that he had cause to fear recognition by the lonely figure in the unwholesome crowd.

"I'll do it!" he said, finally.

Then, with his hands in his pockets, after the manner of the creatures of the house, he pushed open the dining room door and slouched into the dim place. He went and stood about a yard away from Bayham.

Presently Bayham lifted his eyes from the floor; they came up to look at nothing in particular, but they rested upon Hankins' face.

"Hang! What's to be made of him?" the ruffian wondered, silently.

An uncomfortable feeling of mistrust crept over Hankins. He could not tell whether Bayham had recognized him or not!

Then he edged away, worming in and out, and coming to a stand now and then as he made his way round the length of the hot plate. Each time that he paused he spoke to some rough idler like himself.

"Split!" he said, in an undertone. "Over there by the chimney stack. I'm going to 'work it up' for him. I'll give yer the nod when it's ready."

Hankins was laying his plans well. The shock of coming into contact with the hot plate's surface would alone be enough to kill any man.

But so preoccupied had he been that he had not noticed the time. He was again near Bayham, and his tongue was just ready to come to words with the inoffensive man against the stack, and to shout "Split!" when another voice intervened.

"Come, now; time, please!" shouted the night porter of the house, as he came into the hall.

The hour had come for extinguishing the lights; the rough crew began to crawl unwillingly toward the stairs leading to the cubicles, and for the moment Charles Bayham was saved.

"It will keep till tomorrow night!" Hankins muttered to himself; and he went to his sevenpenny bed wondering.

The mystification of Hankins was that he could not satisfy himself on any doubt or question that arose in his mind. But he was not alone in his wonder that night. Not more than two miles away, in a drawing room in Curzon street, Mayfair, was a woman whom all around her acknowledged to be wondrous fair. She was Mildred Rashleigh—Miss no longer, but Lady Rashleigh; for the rector's elder brother had died, so that Sydney Rashleigh had become the Reverend and Right Hon. the Earl of Hildever.

Though her thoughts were far away, Mildred was not alone. While her thoughts wandered, wondering whether Dick Wellingham was living or dead, the Rev. Andrew Hylton kept her close company. And he was doing more; he had asked her before, and was asking her again, to be his wife. "Won't you, Mildred?" Hylton pleaded once more.

The question saddened Mildred, for she liked Andrew Hylton well enough, deeply enough to marry him happily, though she had not the wholesouled love for him that she had given to Richard Wellingham.

And it was that love that battled with her now. Yet, if Dick were dead, it seemed hard to deny herself all the sweetness of fulfilling a woman's destiny. But was it only that? Was her love for Dick not as great as if he were still alive? And perhaps he still lived. And to marry Andrew Hylton, when she had a stronger love for another man, would be doing him, she thought, a lifelong wrong.

"Let me think a little longer, Mr. Hylton," she begged. "You are too good—"

"Too good!" he interjected. "What makes you say that? That was my feeling with regard to you. It seemed almost too much to hope that you would change your life in the world to share mine. Yet who has taken so much interest in my work as you have?"

What Hylton said was true. She had taken a sincere interest in his work, in strange by-places, and she had helped him in it. But she did not tell him that when she had gone to sing at his services there had often been behind her a hope that she might come upon Richard Wellingham.

"It is you who are too good, Lady Mildred," Hylton went on, dropping into formality after the answer she had given him. "My only right is to respect your wish; I can only hope on. Tomorrow (Thursday) evening I am going to preach at St. Peter's in Tarring street, and I hoped that you would go with me as my promised wife. Lornfray house is close by, and I thought you might like to look over it, especially as we are going to hold a service there next Sunday evening."

"What is Lornfray house?" Mildred asked.

"A lodging house," Hylton explained; "one of the big places for men which have sprung up in the past few years."

"I will go with you," Mildred said quietly.

Neither she nor Hylton saw that a pair of eyes in a group only a yard away were fixed upon them. They were not pleasing eyes, though their owner, Kenneth Harlow, was the possessor of a handsome face of the hard kind.

And now, though Mildred little dreamed of it, there was danger. For Harlow knew of her early love for his cousin, Richard Wellingham. On her mother's side—she having been Judith Wellingham—he was next of kin in the inheritance of the Wellingham estates, which, as the son of a younger brother, Richard Wellingham had never hoped to possess. Although Harlow could never wear the title of Viscount Hindlesleigh, it was no interest of his that Richard should return to claim the title and estates. Still less had he cause to welcome the reappearance of his cousin now, when, seven years being nearly past, application was about to be made to the law courts to assume Richard Wellingham's death.

Presently the Dowager Lady Conhurst took possession of Hylton, and Harlow seized his opportunity, for the same moment left him free to secure Mildred alone.

"Good evening, Lady Mildred," he greeted her, in his pleasantest manner. "I have hoped for this moment. Am I too bold to claim you, all to myself for this once? I want to tell you something that I can say only to you . . ."

For a moment he paused, while he looked boldly into her face.

"It is something that means everything to a man," he went on. "Who knows how it is? We can't tell, but I love you. And tonight I could not hold back any longer. I wanted to ask you whether you would be my wife?"

Harlow had phrased himself well, but his skillful words had only had the effect of bearing down Mildred's gaze to the floor.

"Mr. Harlow," she said, "I think you must have heard that I laid all your cousin's misfortunes to my fault. I cannot forget him. Don't you think it would be kinder to let me be alone? I know you have tried to press me many times, but it pains me. I could not marry you. Please do not think me unkind—and I do not wish to hurt you—but that must be my answer." Although Harlow inclined his head in acquiescence, his face was dark.

"Very well, Lady Mildred," he said, submissively. "But while there's life there's hope," he added, in a curious, significant tone.

Then he left her; and the next moment, although he hardly recalled the object in it, a strange prompting came to him. He looked around the company for Hylton and then made his way toward the clergyman, as if to come face to face with him casually.

"Hallo, Hylton," he said, cordially, as they met; "still busy, I suppose? Where will you be preaching next Sunday—at your own church?"

"No," Hylton replied, "I am taking a party to conduct a mission at Lornfray house."

"That will be interesting," Harlow returned at once. "Lornfray house is one of the new lodging houses, isn't it? May I come?"

"We're always pleased to have helpers," assented the simple Hylton unsuspectingly.

And while all these things were passing in the rich warmth of Mayfair, the man whom Hankins had called Charles Bayham was walking the cheerless streets. Not once, but a number of times, Hankins had anathematized the porter who had shouted out: "Come, now; time, please!" For the next night had not seen Barbara an inmate of Lornfray house. Nor had several nights.

Yet the wheels of fate were moving fast. Thursday night came, bringing Bayham back to Lornfray house, with a forlorn nineness in his pocket.

Again the night was cold. And it was still young; for the first call at 7 o'clock for lodgers who wished to be committed to their beds at that hour, had not yet been given. No danger threatened Bayham for the moment, as Hankins had not arrived yet.

But presently he came. His eyes searched at once for his quarry among the nondescript figures loafing around the glowing plate, and once more the temptation of the hundred pounds' reward and the pressure of his own uneasy fear, was upon him. He was already contriving his evil design.

Passing at that moment through the recreation, the reading and the writing house, were a man and a woman.

They were the Rev. Andrew Hylton and Lady Mildred Rashleigh.

"I will familiarize you with the place for next Sunday evening," Hylton said to Mildred, as they passed from the reading room into the corridor opening into the dining hall.

At the same moment a tall, drooping figure stepped into the corridor from the lower door of the dining place.

The "seven-o'clock bed" had just been called.

For an instant the tall lodger faced toward the main entrance. With something like a smothered start, as it seemed, he turned quickly and disappeared round the corner of the corridor.

Of Mildred's shock there could be no doubt. Her face paled; a name was upon her lips, but they trembled pitifully. Her arms half stretched out after the destitute looking figure. By the time she reached the foot of the stairs the lodger had passed up to the dormitories, and that way she could not go.

Once more the Fates had watched over Charles Bayham. But there was still Sunday to come. What would it bring forth?

Friday and Saturday passed, and Bayham was again a stranger to Lornfray house. Once more he was penniless and a vagrant. But on Sunday he was fortunate; he found a dropped shilling.

At 6 o'clock, when the ticket office opened, he paid his sevenpence and passed into Lornfray house. The place was crowded, but he sat down to a meal of pea soup, bread and pudding, which he purchased at the refreshment bar. Then he went to the chimney stack to collect all the warmth he could until half past seven. At that hour he was going to bed, the only place in which his destitute cheerlessness could be blotted out in oblivion.

Some time later he glanced at the clock, and saw that the hour was five minutes to seven. But he did not see Joe Hankins glancing ominously at him through the corridor windows. Nor did Hankins see the well-dressed stranger who had come into the house almost at his heels, and who was now standing behind him, looking curiously through the window at the unfamiliar scene in the hall. Hankins had been drinking at a near tavern since 6 o'clock, and he was now in an evil mood. He did not hear a muffled exclamation as the glance of the stranger fell upon the tall lodger by the smokestack.

"You're 'ere then now, Mr. Bayham, are yer?" he snarled. "Now's my chance with you, I think."

"Do you know that man, then?" asked the newcomer behind him; and Hankins turned sullenly to face Kenneth Harlow.

"I ought to, seeing as how—" Then he stopped short, suspiciously.

"Well, I know him too," Harlow went on, speaking in a tone officially suggestive of a police agent. "You don't think him much good, eh? Well, he's a man I want to see cornered. Here's a sovereign," he added, slipping the coin into the ruffian's hand. "You can get him out of it, I dare say."

"All right; you leave it to me!" muttered Hankins, putting upon Harlow's "out" his own interpretation. "I rather reckon I can get him out!"

The scamp slipped into the dining hall, and Harlow watched him moving about among the rough crew around the plate. At that moment the sound of a hymn came from the reading room. It reached Bayham's ear, above the uncouth din around him, and he listened. Then he moved away toward the reading room. Nothing interrupted him, and he entered the reading room by its back door. In an instant he faced about, and retreated hurriedly. He did not know Andrew Hylton, nor the clergyman's party; but his first glance had fallen upon Mildred Rashleigh.

So quick had been his movement that he hoped he had not been seen. But he was mistaken. From the moment of her entry Mildred's eyes had been glancing everywhere. And now, quickly and unobtrusively, she slipped from her chair and passed through the near front door into the corridor. She was just in time to see Bayham hasten into the dining hall.

"Richard! Dick!" she cried out. But the wind in the draughty place slammed the door behind Bayham and drowned her voice.

Then she saw Kenneth Harlow between herself and the door by which Bayham had entered, and she started. Near her was the bay of the lower door of the hall and she stepped into it. She glanced through the door's glass panels, looking for Bayham; but for some moments she hesitated, trembling, fearing to enter among the

crowd of ruffian men. Of Bayham she could see no sign.

Suddenly there was a savage shout and an outbreak of commotion like that of wild beasts.

"Get out of it, then!" bellowed the voice of Hankins. "By ginger! he's a split! Down him!"

The next moment Mildred saw the figure of Bayham reel out from behind the smokestack. A shower of slaughterous blows was being aimed at him. Weak though he was, he fought like a lion; he seized a near man and hurled him to the floor.

Then Mildred hesitated no longer; she rushed into the wild den and reached Bayham just as a welling blow staggered him back once more against the smokestack. A voice was shouting above the uproar.

"That man is wanted for killing Col. Blackmore at Norborough, some years ago! You had better get him outside to the police."

Mildred saw and heard Kenneth Harlow, with his coat collar turned up and with his hat drawn low over his brows.

"'Tis false!" she cried as she sprang in front of Bayham, with a fire iron snatched up in her hands. "Stand back, you pack of cowards! This gentleman is Richard Wellingham, Viscount Hindlesleigh! Touch him if you dare!"

But the low brutes threatened again. For a moment they had paused, confounded by the sudden apparition there of a woman. But already the victory was with Mildred. There were a few clean, honest workmen in Lornfray house; and now a manly navvy, with a sledgehammer fist, sprang up from a near table. Hankins was the first man in his way.

"You viper!" he growled. "Get out of it!" With a shattering blow he lifted the ruffian from his feet and sent him reeling to a fall. He had had no intention except a knockdown blow, but Hankins fell bodily upon the hot plate; a pot of boiling water toppled over upon him and he shrieked out with the agony of despair. In the same moment Kenneth Harlow fled from the place with a dissolute's look of ruin in his face.

"I'm done," Hankins moaned, "and I may as well give in. It wasn't his fault," he went on, indicating Wellingham, now fallen and unconscious. "Bill Ackman's my right name. I owed the colonel one for giving me six days' cell for nothing, and I knocked him over the cliff for it. He saw it done," he concluded, indicating Wellingham again.

The porters had rushed into the tumult. Presently Wellingham was carried out from the unlovely place and Mildred took him in a cab to her father's town house in Mayfair. Weakened as he was by privation, a long time passed before he returned to consciousness.

"Milly," he murmured, when he opened his eyes at last, "I ought not to be here."

"Yes, Richard, you should," she rejoined gently. "This should be your proper place till you are well again. Forgive me, dear; I will never let you go again."

"No," he differed, faintly, shaking his head; "I have sunk too low. After I sent my paper to the war office I acted foolishly, no doubt. But I didn't seem to care what happened then. The blow meant dismissal from the service or court-martial. When I broke my parole, it was to follow Blackmore for some final words with him. I saw what happened on the cliff, but Ackman went over, too, and I thought that both bodies would be found. But it seemed the fellow escaped injury. That evening I received news that such invested capital as I had was lost, and I thought I had better go. I could not have paid my way in the service even if I had stayed to face it out. The next morning I saw that I was suspected of the murder. That ended it. I have never looked at a newspaper since, but have only lived to forget myself. . . I am very tired, Milly."

"Rest here, dear," she said. And she folded his head in her arms and kissed him.

HE WAS NO SLOUCH

The men in the Pullman smoker were arguing as to who was the greatest inventor, says Lippincott's. One said Stephenson, who invented the locomotive and made fast travel possible. Another declared it was the man who invented the compass, which enabled men to navigate the seas. Another contended for Edison. Still another for the Wrights.

Finally one of them turned to a little man who had remained silent.

"Whom do you think?"

"Vell," he said, with a hopeful smile, "the man who invented interest was no slouch."