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The Lash of Circumstance- BY -
Harry Irving Greene

Author of "Yosonde of the Wilderness"

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She picked it up, roided it carelessly and tossed it into a drawer of her secretary. "Very well, if you so wish it. But I shall not spend it, I shall keep it for luck. You once told me that I was an enchantress. We shall see. I am going to use all my black arts towards the conjuring of your fortune. With this magic cheque as a basis I shall work wonders." The smile she gave me as she closed the drawer was certainly that of an enchantress. She went on almost without pausing.

"You must have a few mouthfuls with me—nothing but coffee and sandwiches, you know. I was just about to order them when you spoke of going." I demurred perfunctorily, reiterating as the cause of my hesitation that it was becoming late. Her little jeweled clock was ticking somewhere back of me and I turned as if to note the hour. Quickly she slipped behind me and placed her fingers over my eyes, the delicious thrill of her touch electrified me. "Stay," she half-whispered from her tiptoes, her lips close to my ear and the soft hair of her temple brushing my cheek. I sought to clasp her wrists, but they evaded me magically, and with a low laugh she ran to the wall and pressed an electric button. Janet appeared as though conjured from the air.

It was after midnight before we had finished. Through the moonlight I hurried homeward with a heart that sang like an æolian. For the second time in my life I had kissed her up in the lips; not impassionedly as before, yet with enough warmth lurking beneath it to cause her to quickly break away from me. And most glorious of all, it had been done with her tacit consent. At least she must have known what was coming, for I had taken both her wrists with a deliberate air of proprietorship and quietly drawn her to me.

"You are beautiful—sweet and tempting beyond any queen. I salute you," I had said. She had made only a show of resistance in the beginning, yet when I displayed a disposition to prolong the embrace she ended it. Then, still retaining her clasp upon my finger ends, she had held herself at arms' length from me for a moment, the color of her cheeks blossoming into deeper richness, her eyes falling before mine.

"Oh, Tom! You must be a good boy and run home at once," she had pleaded, and I had obeyed, well satisfied with my achievement. Over and over in my recollection I fondled the delightful details of the occurrence until beneath my sheets my eyes closed in sleep. Even then my subconsciousness took it up, and all in all I passed the night in a dream reveal.

The few weeks which followed were lived in the most delightful mental exhilaration I had ever experienced. If paradise has joys beyond those of the young successful wooer and speculator, they are sensations inconceivably able to the mortal mind. Love and gold were mine. Up, steadily up, mounted that blessed stock as a skilled mountain-climber arises, with never a slip backwards and never a cause for worry on the part of the watchers. Usually my daily winnings ran into the hundreds. In a very little time my profits amounted to \$10,000, and fifty thousand, yes, even a hundred thousand more, seemed but the matter of a few months. And what a fool, given a hundred thousand, cannot achieve a million! I began to permit myself extravagances. More than ever I was with Mrs. Dace, and weekly my expenses in entertaining her soared. Automobiles took the place of carriages. For her birthday present I gave her a bracelet that cost \$500. I even ventured in an old-hand manner to speak to her about marriage and a dash around the world as a wedding trip. It was not a direct proposal, yet it was sufficiently unmasked to preclude her ignoring it. She caught me by the arm.

"You must not talk about such things, Tom, yet," she said quickly. "You are young, almost too young a man to marry, and are in the midst of piling up your fortune. Let that be your business, and your thoughts of love your recreation. I know of nothing so destructive to a man's financial interests as for him to desert them for a honeymoon. Wedding trips and business are unmixable. If you would not have the one disintegrated and the other destroyed, keep them far apart. Love can wait its hour, but when fortune knocks upon the door we must be there to throw it wide. Perhaps in a year from now—she paused and averted her cheeks. "Perhaps in a year from now—what?" I cried eagerly. Her voice became very low.

"Nothing in particular. I was only about to say that in a year from now you have not changed your mind and your business affairs are so grounded that you can leave them in safety for a period, it might then be proper for you to ask the fortunate lady."

"But a year seems a lifetime to one who loves her as I do. And she might become tired of waiting," I expostulated. "Then I would not imagine that she had your best interests at heart, or that she would be a particularly desirable person to choose as a life companion. This is, of course, supposing that she understood the reason for the delay. This is my sisterly advice to you, having no idea, of course, who the charmer may be whom you have in mind." The wisdom of her advice seemed unanswerable, and I remained mute before it. My hand falling upon hers and clasping it longingly was my only reply.

It was the day following this that I met Bruce in his despair over his

lost fortune, and it was the next night that Uncle Abner was robbed. I think everything of importance has now been told up to the time I drew LeDuc through the door after the departure of the police.

CHAPTER IX.

LeDuc was a medium-sized man, wiry of build and tough as whalebone. His eyes were restless and the faint smile which hung habitually about his lips was offset by a hawkish nose. I had known him ever since we had attended the same school as youths. Later on he had naturally gravitated into the service of one of the big detective agencies; had been successful on important cases with a uniformity that mere good luck could not account for, and having thus acquired a reputation had established an agency of his own. I had seen very little of him in the last ten years, but as boys we had been more or less chummy, the difference in our ages having been neutralized by the physical fact of my being considerably larger for my years than was he. I had admired him in those days for his remarkable agility and strength. As it is quality of brain matter which counts rather than quantity, so it is equally true of muscle. And while Billy was not especially powerfully made as far as appearances went, his muscles were like piano wire, and the bulk of his competitor in a physical contest was to him a matter of supreme disregard. Moreover, he was shrewd and pleasant to meet and a decent fellow withal, and our friendship had wended along smoothly until the inevitable separation of our life paths. As he had never called to see me before, it took no rare instinct on my part to divine that this visit was not a purely social one.

(To Be Continued.)

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The brickwork on the western side of the new hose-station has been completed above the door frames and window frames. The fine weather during the present month has given the contractor an excellent chance.

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PIPES AND PIPERS

There is hardly a country in the world where the pipe is not smoked in one form or another.

The Kafir loves his pipe, and, falling the genuine article, will use anything that will hold tobacco—from a piece of iron piping to a cow's horn. When not even these are available he will use the earth! He does this by making a small hole to hold the tobacco, from which he makes a passage for the smoke by pushing a curved piece of wire through the ground. He then lies face downwards, applies a light to the tobacco, and his lips to the ground, at the spot where he has withdrawn the wire, and smokes in peace.

In many villages of the north-west provinces of India are to be found public hookahs for the use and comfort of travellers.

Everyone has heard of the North American Indian's pipe of peace. General Blucher's pipe-smoking was of a very different character. He appointed a man to the post of "pipe-master," whose duty it was to fill a long clay pipe and hand it to the general before every engagement. Blucher would then enjoy a few whiffs, give back the pipe, and gallop into the fighting line.

World's Coldest City

The coldest city in the world is said to be Verkhoyansk in northern Siberia. The average annual temperature is eight degrees above zero, and the winter record is eighty-five degrees below zero. The rivers freeze solid to the bottom, small trees snap and split from the cold. Yet in summer the temperature averages fifty-nine degrees above zero and vegetation flourishes, though the ground a few feet below it never thaws out.

