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The Lash of Circumstance- BY -
Harry Irving Greene

Author of "Yosonde of the Wilderness"

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"I rather look to see him win myself. But you know I do not bet, and therefore cannot take advantage of the opportunity. But I thank you just the same for the information."

Bruce's countenance fell. "That's so. You bounded fellows have to be pretty careful of your sporting transactions." He brightened up again and whispered hoarsely in my ear in stage fashion: "However, in this instance you had better take a chance; let some friend put it up for you; say some wise relative, for instance. A hundred or two lost would not damage you much, and a few thousand gained would be ambrosia and nectar." He winked cautiously.

Once more I told him that I could not violate my traditions, and he shrugged his shoulders; and away he went at Eagle Boy speed himself, doubtless hot on the trail of some of his particular cronies to whom he could break the glad tidings. For when Bruce had a chance to do his friends what he thought was a favor, he did not let the grass grow under his feet until he had done it. It was one of the traits that lay back of his popularity. Of course I sincerely hoped he would win, but I was always afraid that his recklessness would some day get him into trouble.

The afternoon upon which the race was run will forever remain seared upon my memory. I had been wise enough to put in my order long in advance at a fashionable stable, and as a result my two-wheel outfit was about as neat as could be found anywhere. As I drove up to Mrs. Dace's with the silver-mounted harness glittering in the sun and the cob arching his neck and tapping the boulevard with his polished hoofs as daintily as a dancing girl, I experienced much the same sensations as does a school-boy on the first day of his long vacation, when life, as a well-nigh endless primrose way, stretches before him in a vista glorious to contemplate. I was at the full tide of youth and hope. Charged to the full with health and vitality, desperately in love with and half accepted by one whom I thoroughly believed to be the most beautiful woman in the world, I shook my fist defiantly in the teeth of the grinning spectre of my lack of money. And realizing my domination for the day, the spectre cringed and fled before me.

The great migration of the day was in full movement. Automobiles were whizzing past, honking like flights of wild geese. Victorias and traps, drags and tallyhosses streamed behind them in an endless procession. It was life, teeming and exultant. The world was on parade dressed in its best clothes and with its pockets lined with money, and right royally did it proclaim the fact, its headache of the morrow an unthought-of thing.

Mrs. Dace came down in a creation I had never seen before, but which fairly made me gasp with delight. I shall make no attempt to describe it, but the general impression it gave me was of fleecy clouds in which were blended delicate and changeable rainbow tints that came and flitted like summer shadows. She seemed rather to float than walk, and when I gave her my hand at the curb and she arose from it to the high seat with the lightness of a feather, I could scarcely believe that she was made of warm, firm flesh. The aggressiveness of her beauty challenged nearly every eye that we passed, the men craning their heads for a longer look, the women searching her enviously. In my pride of her and the enthusiasm of the moment I whispered in her ear that she was the most beautiful woman in all the world and that I loved her dearer than my own life. My reward was a smile and a flash of her wonderful eyes.

"I am glad you think so, Tom, even though of course you are wrong. And it is sweet of you to be so devoted to me. I am really very happy to be with you." My fingers tightened about the reins and my teeth clenched. In my heart I swore that she should become mine though the heavens fell.

We turned into the crush where the converging boulevards emptied their streams into the rolling sea of vehicles. Bugle calls vibrated in our ears; college yells shattered the air; the beat of hoofs sounded like the long roll of drums. Through the wide entrance to the club grounds we drove into an arena banked by 30,000 people. Already the racing was on and before us swept a cloud of preliminary racers with the jockeys humped over their necks like so many colored simians. Not far away I saw Clare, standing upright on her seat, her face aglow with excitement and her head nodding rapidly as she carried on a running fire of conversation with a cluster of friends. Her eyes fell upon me and she waved her hand with the airy grace of a plume; but as she noticed my companion her smile grew thin and vanished as for a moment she surveyed her with a face that was absolutely expressionless. Mrs. Dace, whose attention had been attracted to my cousin by my waved reply to her salutation, returned Clare's gaze, smiling faintly. Amusement lurked within her eyes like a reflection deep down in unruffled waters.

"My cousin, Miss Winston, of whom I have often spoken," I explained nonchalantly. The one at my side gave her attention to the flying racers.

"An exceedingly pretty girl. You are very fond of each other, I believe," she returned, with a slight rising inflection. I hastened to answer.

"In a way, yes. She is a very good and sweet girl, and we are the best of friends. But of course that is all." Through the press Bruce came jamming his way, his necktie awry from the scuffle and his face a grin with

enthusiasm. He bowed my companion a hurried bow, and then shouted something to me as a surge of the crowd bore him along.

"Last call for prosperity in the betting ring," was all that I could catch of it as, still gesticulating, he was swept away. Mrs. Dace looked after him.

"What did he mean by that?" she demanded. I enlightened her.

"Oh, Bruce has got a straight tip from a turf friend of his that Eagle Boy is going to win. So I suppose he is now going to back him to his limit. He would as soon sit down and watch the hands of a clock go around as to see a race unless he had a wager on it." The light of interest came into her eyes.

"And you think what?" she queried, searching my face. I meditated.

"To tell the truth I think his horse will win. I know something about the beasts, you know, having been raised on a Kentucky stock farm. The horse is a wonder, sure enough, and Bruce says he has been breaking records by moonlight. Then, too, Pettit, who rides him to-day, is a fiend in the saddle. He can lift a horse off his hoofs and carry him around the track between his knees as a witch rides a broom. If I was to bet on the race, Eagle Boy would carry my wealth to-day."

"And the odds?" she mused.

"They are ten to one against him at present, but they will go down like a falling rocket when the crowd has once had an opportunity of seeing him in motion. He is a Pegasus. He seems to soar rather than run. If they have a horse that can beat him, I at horse can catch birds." I was surprised at the warmth of my own enthusiasm.

(To Be Continued.)

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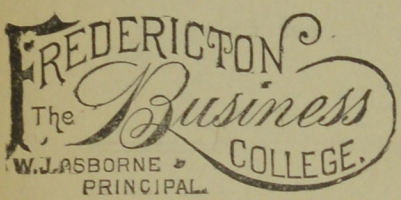
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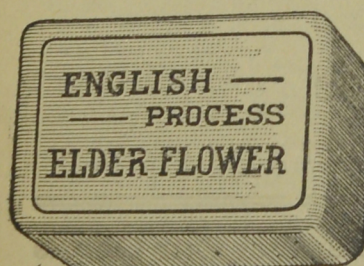
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