

# The LASH of CIRCUMSTANCE

by HARRY IRVING GREENE  
Author of "Yosonde of the Wilderness"  
Illustrations by Magnus G. Kettner

## SYNOPSIS.

Abner Halliday, a miserly millionaire, is found gagged, bound and senseless in his room, his safe rifled and \$40,000 missing. The thread of the story is taken up by his nephew Tom. Living in the same house are other relatives: reckless Bruce Halliday and pretty Clare Winton. Bruce, who is a bond broker, has been trying to raise \$10,000 to put through a deal and save himself from financial ruin. He has applied to his miserly uncle and to others for the loan but has been refused. Tom sends for William LeDuc, an old-time friend connected with a detective agency. In relating the story Tom reverts to his acquaintance with a Mrs. Dace, a wealthy widow, whose business agent is Richard Mackay, a bolder and political boss. Tom is jealous of Mackay and is deeply in love with Mrs. Dace. Bruce Halliday warns him to shun her as an adventuress. Tom sees Mrs. Dace and Mackay together. He afterwards meets the woman at a horse race, and, happening to mention that Bruce had a tip on the winner, she gives him \$500 to place on the race. The tip goes wrong and she loses her money. Later Tom invests in stocks. He makes some money, and returns the lost \$500 to Mrs. Dace. It is at this juncture that the theft of the \$40,000 from Abner Halliday occurs. LeDuc meets Clare and Bruce. He learns that the key which Clare had to the house is missing. Mackay's dealings with Mrs. Dace make Tom more jealous. The detective intimates a suspicion against Bruce Halliday as the thief. This Clare Winton indignantly repudiates.

## CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

"And the door at the head of the stairs which leads from here into the kitchen, was that disturbed?" I asked her as my first sensations faded. She was panting from excitement and the haste of her movements.

"No, the door was locked and just as I left it last night with the key still on the inside. He could not have gone up higher than the head of the basement stair. I just happened to remember that I had left a broom down here yesterday, and when I came down after it I noticed this door right away. Who on earth do you suppose could have done it?" She was wringing her hands weakly, the perspiration of nervousness popping from her forehead.

"Being in total darkness myself, I made no attempt to enlighten her as I carefully examined the place. Outside of the scanty supply of coal that remained from last winter's supply the basement contained little save an accumulation of odds and ends and an old chest of mine that contained articles that I had stored away years before. However, I still retained the key to it, and I now opened it and made a careful inspection of its interior. So far as I could discover by a minute scrutiny the articles within it had remained untouched since I had fast placed them there, and satisfied on that point I shut and locked it again without having as yet received the faintest ray of light to assist my search. I must have spent at least half an hour in my examination of the place and my questions of the housekeeper, but at the end of that time was compelled to give up with absolutely nothing learned that I had not known to start with. Another thing that perplexed me somewhat was as to whether or not I should inform my uncle of this new crime. I did not see that anything would be gained by telling him, while it would most certainly agitate him and lead to further outbursts; therefore I decided to leave him in ignorance of it and requested Mrs. Tebbets to do the same. I also decided to see LeDuc and get his opinion on the matter, and repairing the outraged doors as best I could with hammer, boards and nails, and soothing the housekeeper by my assurances that the incident was a triviality to which she need pay no further attention, I went upstairs and sat down to my breakfast with Uncle Abner as usual. But an hour later when I had reached my office I telephoned the detective with the request that he meet me at the noon hour. He readily assented and I then went about my daily work.

"He met me at luncheon and I explained the matter to him without prelude. He looked serious minded as I finished. 'What do you think of it?' I asked. In his abstraction he delayed his reply for perhaps 30 seconds.

"It seems peculiar. But I am more inclined to consider it as a separate and distinct offence rather than as an aftermath of the original happening. Further than that I don't believe I have any theory to advance as yet. However, it may all come out in the final solution, provided there is one, and in the meantime I would dismiss it from my mind if I were you. If you find that difficult, you may look upon it in this light. If I remember, we had a sharp shower last night—the thunder awoke me. It is not unreasonable to assume that some back-yard prowler caught in the storm may have forced his way in merely to secure a dry nest in which to sleep." While I did not take much stock in that explanation and so informed him, I added that being in a receptive mood I would file it in my mind for future reference, and then began interrogating him as to his own movements since we had last foregathered. But when it came to that he had little to say and at first seemed disinclined to part with even that. Later on as we ate, however, he became a trifle more communicative. Under the warming influence of tobacco and coffee he began to make more satisfactory replies to my quizzings, but if he had learned anything of importance he did not betray it. Since the day upon which he had

taken an active interest in the case and I had heard his low whistle at the mention of Mackay's name, curiosity had filled my mind as to what his researches would be in that direction. I had gone to Mrs. Dace's with the mention of LeDuc's name that she might understand why I had repeated to him conversations which had occurred between herself and myself, that she might not feel that I had tattle-taled our private talks without explaining the reason to her. But though I had paved the way by which he might have had a confidential business chat with her, if he had availed himself of the opportunity it had not come to my knowledge. That LeDuc might now have full information of what I had done and feel at liberty to interview her should he desire, I now told him of my talk upon the subject with her; telling him that she had denied absolutely having repeated my half confidences to any one, and had seemed to be amused at the idea that Janet was anything more or less than an automaton. This information he received without comment beyond the paradoxical remark that he could not remember that he had forgotten anything. "What else have you got to tell me?" I urged in flashing. He closed his lips so tightly around his cigar that it resembled a nail driven into a crack and appeared to be filling himself to his toes with smoke as he reflected. Presently he expelled the smoke from his mouth after the manner of a nursery dragon.

"I don't know whether I am acting wisely or not, but under your promise to divulge nothing you may learn from me without my consent I am going to risk it. I know that you believe in your cousin Bruce's honesty."

"Implicitly."

"But do you happen to know that he has somehow or other managed to come into active control of enough money to resume his operations on 'change on a rather liberal scale'?" he queried with a thin smile. I was astonished and told him so.

"Well, he has," he pursued assertively. "Furthermore, he is carrying on his operations under some name which does not sound at all like his own. You look surprised. That's the way I felt when I first found this out."

"I ruminated. 'But certainly he would not be fool enough to openly and notoriously and under our very noses begin the use of money dishonestly obtained almost the day after the commission of a crime which he knows he has not absolved himself of?'" I cried. LeDuc looked at me queerly.

"That is what almost any one would think under first impulse. But when you are dealing with criminals you must remember that they do not reason and act just as do honest men. When a sane man takes his life and liberty in his hand and commits a desperate crime, he is of necessity more or less regardless of consequences, as well as being driven by strong pressure. And in nearly all cases it is because of this recklessness that we catch him. He may commit the crime itself with a skill and caution that is almost more than human, yet the next day is apt to go out and do something so foolish that it instantly attracts attention to him. For instance, having had no money before, he now begins to spend it lavishly; or becoming under the influence of liquor boast or let things drop that sound queer. If it were not for these peculiarities of the criminal make up, and the fact that he generally makes a confident of some woman who betrays him, the road of the criminal would be comparatively safe and that of the detective an unhappy one."

"But I cannot believe that there is anything crooked about Bruce. Deceit is foreign to his whole nature." My friend thrust one hand in his pocket.

"Does he ever smoke cigarettes?" he smiled.

"Frequently."

"Any particular brand?"

I paused to reflect. "I think so. As I remember, those that I have seen were invariably a Turkish abomination with a serrated gilt band for a mouthpiece. What is your reason for asking me that?" He withdrew his hand from beneath the table and tossed a half-smoked specimen of the species which I had been describing on the table before me. I looked at him inquiringly.

"I found that in the hallway of your house near the closet where your uncle had been confined. Perhaps you noticed at the time that I picked up something which I did not show you."

## CHAPTER XIII.

Directly after this seizure with LeDuc the stock which I had margined began that series of kangaroo leaps upward which will never be forgotten by those, who by reason of their interest, watched the marvel. I probably called my broker up not less than half a dozen times a day during this

period, and it was seldom indeed that his last quotation was not higher than the one of say half an hour before. It went darting skyward in the eccentric zig-zags with which a kite mounts in a gale, and within a fortnight I found myself richer by thousands added to thousands. The glittering heights of fortune seemingly hung close over me; the end of the rainbow with its great bag of gold was within mathematical striking distance; and taking greater chances than ever for the sake of greater gains, I plunged wildly as I restaked my winnings on every throw. And day by day the Midas touch was mine and I won, won, won. Then grown money reckless by my constant success, I permitted myself another piece of extravagance for the allurement of the woman I loved and the greater opportunities it would give me to be with her. I bought a handsome motor car upon which I had had my eyes for some time, housing it in a public garage and telling nobody but her that I had purchased it.

I took Mrs. Dace out on the first evening after I had mastered my new acquisition for a long ride countryward. The weather was ideal, the roads in splendid condition and we sped along to the low whirr of the machine with the soft night air fanning our faces. It had long been understood between us that she was to carefully guard all my confidences, and I kept few things from her. Exultantly I spoke of my increasing wealth and magnificent prospects. Her arm slipped under mine.

"Good, good," she cried with a schoolgirl's enthusiasm. "I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. It makes me happy to know about it. I told you that I should exercise my scorn to command your success. When you win I feel that I have won also."

Her tact confession that she considered herself as a close partner of mine, and that she was backing me to the winning of a prize which we should share together in the long time to come, combined with the delicious sense of comradeship awakened by her arm pressure, became as an intoxicant. In that moment I would have pawned my soul to have possessed her. I threw my arms about her and held her to my breast almost fiercely. "My God, how I love you, Matie. Tell me that you will marry me—you must," I cried, as I found her lips and drained them as a drunkard drains his cup. Her arm hung upon my shoulder; her upturned lips seemed to be clinging to mine; I could feel the ebb and swell of her bosom so closely was she drawn to me, and in that position I held her until a slight warning swerve of the machine temporarily restored my sanity. I quickly removed my right arm and clutched the wheel, but still kept the other around her waist as I begged her in the name of my great passion to make me the happiest man on earth by her answer. Impassionedly I recalled to her my long nights and days of torture when I was half sick with despair of ever possessing her. For the first time since our ac-

quaintedness began she was visibly agitated by my pleadings.

"You say that you love me with all this great love and tell me that I must answer your question, Tom, dear," she said very softly. "Very well, I will answer you. I will marry you upon one condition."

"And that?" I cried wildly, feeling myself grow weak in the suspense.

"That you will not importune me now to fix the date. You must leave that entirely to my discretion. When I think the right time has come I will manage in some way to let you know that I am ready. Until then you must be patient with me like the dear boy that you have always been."

"Then we are really—engaged?" I

gasped it out with the unbelief of one who by a seeming miracle sees the dead restored to life. She patted my cheek.

"You may so consider us if you wish—under that condition. But it must for the time being remain strictly our secret."

Half doubting that I was still of this earth I steered onward as in a trance. Then, unless my senses were tricking me, this most glorious of women was to become my close companion through all the days to come; the one whose head should rest upon my shoulder through the long nights; whose bosom should pillow my face in hours of weariness; who should be my wife, the mother of my children. My eyes filled with the moisture of happiness and through the mist the chalky roadway blurred before me. A feeling almost of awe filled my soul. Never again will such a great thankfulness possess me, and silently I blessed God that in his infinite goodness he had permitted me to be born.

In front of an out-of-doors garden frequented by the better class we stopped and dismounted. Long lines of motor cars and carriages extended away on either side, and the music of an European orchestra floated over the walls of the enclosure. We passed through the palm-lined entrance and took our seats at a table beneath a tree whose low hanging limbs almost brushed it. A thousand well-dressed people were eating and drinking around us as they idly chatted or listened to the music. It was the soul of Beethoven throbbing in our ears out of his grave. I ordered champagne in honor of our betrothal.

I seemed to be floating in the air. All weight, all consciousness of the physical left me, and the music was ethereal vibrations wafted to me from infinite distance. I could only liken my sensations to those of one occasion long before when feeling badly I had by mistake taken a slight overdose of a drug, and for some hours thereafter had soared amongst the clouds in an ecstasy which the earthly born are incapable of experiencing except through the wizardry of the chemist. Her hand lay idly upon the table close beside mine, and with a quick glance around to make sure that no one was observing us I covered it with my own. "The ring, sweetheart, you shall have tomorrow. During my day dreams I have sometimes amused myself by looking at them in the diamond shops as in my imagination I selected one for you. And only the other day I found the one you shall have. It is flawless; as perfect in its beauty as a gem as you are as a woman. In the uncountable centuries of the past when the world was being molded this stone was created for you, and yours it shall be. But you must loan me one of yours for a few days that I may have it fitted to you."

She laughed in her low, delicious way as I slipped a diamond from her finger. "Of course, I shall be proud to wear it—proud and happy. But please don't be too extravagant, Tom. Remember I do not want you to go



"And of Course the Car Is Yours." I Went on With the Recklessness of a Croesus.

platmate. She looked up at me with a start.

"Do you really mean to give it to me, dearest?" she inquired with a quick intake of her breath.

"Dearest!" The word ran through me like wine. My scalp tightened around the warm hand I held and my reason ran riot. "I most certainly do. I bought it merely to please you. Perhaps you had better keep it at the Arcadia where it will be handy for us on pleasant evenings." She leaned forward and looked at me, her magnificent eyes glowing softly.

"You are very good to me—better than I deserve," she murmured in a momentary lull of the music. "I shall not tell you how much I appreciate your generosity; I shall show you instead." Nothing but the presence of the crowd restrained me from repeating my physical demonstration of the hour before.

"And I will always be good to you, and you will be happy with me, won't you?" I breathed, full of anxiety. Her long lashes fell until they swept her cheeks and screened the royal blue eyes from mine.

"I think so—given certain conditions."

"And those?"

She looked at me again, smiling now. "If we should be married, Tom, dear, I should demand nearly all your time as my own. I should want you nearly always where I could reach out my hand and touch you. That privilege you could not grant me if you were engaged in some occupation which demanded much of your physical attention. Also, in order to make me contented, you would have to be able to take me where I wanted to go and at such times as I cared to be there. I don't care for Italy in the summer and I despise St. Petersburg in winter. Furthermore, we both love the beautiful things of this world, its flowers, its music and its luxuries, and could we enjoy them together I believe that I would be a happy woman. But I don't believe that we would ever be content were we tied down to a flat in a narrow street. Therefore, I want you to understand me, dear. If you wish our lives to be rich and filled with the joys of living you must succeed. And in this age success means money. Having made your fortune the world will cheerfully admit that you have brains, and a man who at your age has achieved wealth and the consequent respect of the world has few other difficulties to overcome. These are the reasons why I so earnestly beseech you to make the most of your opportunities now that you are well on the road which leads to all that both of us crave. Whip your talents and courage to the uttermost; ride them mercilessly, but wisely and with patience."

I followed her quickly and anxiously. "But suppose, dearest, that I should be unfortunate; suppose through some financial cataclysm which man is as unable to foresee as he is to prevent I should become ruined and left dependent upon what I could earn by work. Would you then love me any the less?" She smoothed the rose upon her bosom, her eyes falling.

"I have not meant to intimate that life in a cottage would make me love you the less. Neither would I expect you to believe me if I said that it would have a tendency to make me love you the more. Anyway, I do not feel that such an existence is essential to my happiness, which you say is of the utmost solicitude to you. Therefore, I mention these things not as a condition to govern our future relations, but as incentives for you to strain yourself to your best efforts as though you were fighting for your life; to overlook nothing which you may turn to your advantage; to think; to act; to succeed—succeed. I am fonder of you than of any other man

for many reasons. You have been devoted to me and believe in me; you are strong and handsome and have an alert mind. But to make our life-long happiness assured you must lift us above the sordid vexations of the world. We are both hopeful and ambitious, and I doubt if we could be content should we have to give up our ideals for commonplaces. I do not say that I should not love you in adversity, but I abhor it and I know that our lives would be greatly marred if you had to slave for me and I had to cook for you. I am speaking frankly to you as my prospective husband. For our mutual happiness you must win."

The realization of all this had ridden me like an old man of the sea from almost the beginning of my acquaintance with her, and it was because of its realization that I had played so desperately. And now confronted so vividly by the consciousness that she also realized it I fell from the clouds like a plummet to solid earth again. Once more I sat before her a normal human being, conscious that I had weight and much of it, and that instead of floating idealistically I must tread the earth like any other man. The dream faded and grim actuality took its place. Instead of soaring to the glittering mountain peak in eagle-like flight I must climb there. Yet by abandoning the winding and beaten roads I could short cut it over the cliffs and the journey would not be long. I would offset the added danger of the bel-line by courage and skill. I would leave the plodders to the longer, safer road as I mounted steadily up the precipices while they wandered through the canyons in their gradual ascent.

I set my teeth as I swore to myself that I should not fail. I do not believe that any man was more coldly determined to win, no matter the danger or difficulty, than I was that moment. I emptied the remainder of the contents of my wine glass upon the gravel at my feet and saw faint wonder come creeping into her face as she watched. I stiffened my shoulders and sat erect in my chair.

"I am glad that you spoke to me as you did. You have awakened me to a fuller realization that I have no right to ask you to entrust yourself to my keeping until I have proven that with my arms around you, you will be protected from the vulgarities and petty troubles of life as a woman of your kind should be protected. Therefore until I have proven this my wine glass shall remain turned down." She clapped her hands softly and picked up her own glass by its reed-like stem.

"Bravo. I give you my moral support by following your good example." She pushed it, half filled, to one side as I expostulated.

"But it is not necessary that you should deny yourself simply because I do. Yours is not the struggle, it is but the waiting." Her hand slid over mine in a fleeting caress.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## An Eskimo's Dwelling.

We do not look for any great amount of inventive genius among the Eskimos, but for years they have employed a rather complete respirator, used in the preparation and taking of a vapor bath, as a means of protection from the dense smoke. This Esquimaux respirator is a little basket woven of twisted strands of fine grass. It is placed with its shallow side against the mouth, and a wooden peg, which arises from the center of the basket, is held between the teeth. For this purpose water is evaporated over a big fire in a very low hut, which is tightly closed to keep in the heat. In this stifling atmosphere the employment of a respirator is absolutely necessary.



"Furthermore, He Is Carrying on His Operations Under Some Name Which Does Not Sound at All Like His Own."

quaintedness began she was visibly agitated by my pleadings.

"You say that you love me with all this great love and tell me that I must answer your question, Tom, dear," she said very softly. "Very well, I will answer you. I will marry you upon one condition."

"And that?" I cried wildly, feeling myself grow weak in the suspense.

"That you will not importune me now to fix the date. You must leave that entirely to my discretion. When I think the right time has come I will manage in some way to let you know that I am ready. Until then you must be patient with me like the dear boy that you have always been."

"Then we are really—engaged?" I

gasped it out with the unbelief of one who by a seeming miracle sees the dead restored to life. She patted my cheek.

Half doubting that I was still of this earth I steered onward as in a trance. Then, unless my senses were tricking me, this most glorious of women was to become my close companion through all the days to come; the one whose head should rest upon my shoulder through the long nights; whose bosom should pillow my face in hours of weariness; who should be my wife, the mother of my children. My eyes filled with the moisture of happiness and through the mist the chalky roadway blurred before me. A feeling almost of awe filled my soul. Never again will such a great thankfulness possess me, and silently I blessed God that in his infinite goodness he had permitted me to be born.