

# The LASH of CIRCUMSTANCE

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## SYNOPSIS.

Abner Halliday, a miserly millionaire, is found gagged, bound and insensible 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 Clara Winton. Bruce, who is a bond broker, has been trying to raise \$50,000 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 hoodler 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 old Abner Halliday occurs. LeDuc meets Clara and Bruce. He learns that the key which Clara 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 Clara Winton indignantly repudiates. Mrs. Dace accepts Tom as her fiance, and encourages him to invest in a certain stock. Tom has a row with Mackay and the latter threatens a revenge. The detective announces that he has discovered important clues as to the thief.

## CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"Also, for the easment of your mind, I will tell you that you need not worry about the criminality of the thing. I give you my word as a detective, and therefore necessarily as a gentleman, that what I am after has no intrinsic value. It is nothing but evidence, without value to the one who is to furnish it, but is of great value to me in proving my case. Moreover, the one from whom I will get it will know nothing about it until the time comes for me to denounce him. There is this slight risk about the transaction, however. If we should be detected in our act by some officer we would be arrested, and that would probably involve the disagreeable necessity of our going to headquarters and making an explanation. But you need have no fear of its going any further than that. The police officials know me, and I could readily satisfy them of our guiltlessness of anything more than a necessary technical offense committed in the unearthing of a serious crime. But it will be a forcible entry, and will have all the outside earmarks of a malicious offense, and I need your help to put it through successfully. Are you prepared for it now?"

I told him that while such things were not exactly in my line, that relying upon his assurances I would put myself in his hands, and he led me down a street that branched from the brightly lighted main thoroughfare which we had been pursuing into a less lighted section. For several blocks we continued our way under the scattering street lights of a section of the wholesale district which was practically abandoned at night. In front of a darkness-haunted alley we came to a standstill. On each side of it towered great buildings with darkened windows, and with a quick glance around to make sure that no one observed us, he motioned for me to follow him. "Keep your eyes open for private watchmen—they are the fellows we have got to look out for," he whispered as we hastened through the gloom. Absolutely ignorant of what he was about to drag me into, I felt my heart beat faster as I trod softly at his heels. Half way through the block he stopped and I saw dimly before us an iron fire escape that zigzagged its way upward and disappeared in the blackness above. "It is a case of climb from now on. Just follow me," he instructed. Although not at all in love with the proposition, I grasped the rounds of the structure and mounted upward close under him. At the fourth story he stepped aside upon a narrow platform that branched out from the ladder in front of a window. The exertion had been quite severe, and we were both breathing rather heavily as I took my place by his side.

"Best kind of exercise for the appetite. Ought to get up every morning and do it for a couple of hours before breakfast," he panted. "This is the place I want to get into—this window here." He tapped on the glass before him with his finger. "And now comes the thing that I want you to assist me in doing. I have got to cut a circle out of that glass in order to raise the catch, and in doing it I am going to show you a trick of the cracksmen's trade. Take this piece of soft putty and press it firmly against the glass with your right thumb while I cut out a piece of the pane around it. The putty will adhere to the glass and to your thumb, and you can thus keep it from dropping and making a racket when it is loosened. See the point? Now keep on pressing as I tell you." Placing my thumb tightly against the soft ball, I pushed steadily as with some instrument he scratched and grated harshly as he circled my hand. In perhaps five minutes there was a slight crack and he struck the circle a quick blow. The next instant I found a circular disk dangling from my thumb.

"Good work. But easy now," he whispered as he gently removed the glass and putty from my hand and slipped them into his pocket.

"Your real work is over, and all you have to do from now on is play lookout while I take a smell around inside. Just remain here and keep your eyes and ears open for trouble below. I will not be gone long." He thrust his arm through the opening and slid the catch, raised the sash, and swung himself into the blackness of the interior. I saw the flash of his electric pocket searchlight as he threw it over the room in a quick survey, then all within became as inscrutable as ever.

Alert of muscles, I stood nervously peering into the gulf below, with my ears set to catch the slightest sound. As to what LeDuc sought in the cave-like interior where he now rummaged I had not the vestige of a notion. He had not seen fit to enlighten me of his own volition, and I had not felt like going further in an attempt to raise the screen that he had drawn between us. So far as I could analyze his sayings, he had been weaving his net about Bruce; and should that prove to be the case, I knew that when the final denouement came, I should, no matter the evidence he might be able to produce, array myself with Clara in a desperate rally to the defense of the accused one. Together she and I would fight for him to the last.

Perched as I was 50 feet above the stones of an alley the bottom of which was shrouded in blackness impenetrable to the eye, and actively participating in a deed the significance of which I was in ignorance beyond the fact of being aware that despite its object its perpetration was a severe violation of the law, I began to grow both uneasy and angry as I awaited my partner's reappearance. To make my position still more unpleasant I knew that we must descend by the same means by which we had arisen; and no one perched aloft as I was could know into whose arms we might drop as we retreated down the ladder. How long LeDuc was gone I had but little idea because of the difficulty of judging the lapse of time when one is situated as I was. While it seemed a considerable period, it was possibly not more than four or five minutes before he reappeared. I



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hailed his coming with a breath of relief.

We went down in reverse order from which we had ascended. LeDuc below me now and my feet closely following his hands. So far as we were able to judge, no one had entered the alley since we had gone upward, and I felt much more at ease as upon the flagging once more I adjusted my disarranged clothes. As I did so I saw my companion stoop and apparently pick up something as we turned and hurried silently from the scene of our efforts. Once more upon the street, I ventured to ask what success he had met with. His reply was pregnant with satisfaction. "I think I have secured what I was looking for, but cannot be certain until tomorrow. I will let you know about it then."

"And have you it with you?" I persisted, thinking it high time he confessed a little more in me, in view of what I had done for him. He patted his pocket.

"Yes—right here. If upon an investigation made under the proper conditions by an expert it turns out as I think it will, I will name your man for you tomorrow. And when I do I am going to have you present as an interested party. By the way, here is your match box." He held out the mentioned receptacle to me and I took

it with a look of surprise as I demanded that he tell me when and where he had gotten it. I was very certain that I had not handed it to him.

"Something dropped upon my shoulder as we were coming down the ladder and I picked this up at the foot of it when we struck earth again. It must have worked out of your pocket as we came down while you were using your arms for climbing. Great way to lose anything smooth like that, especially from a vest pocket. Well, I guess that is about all for tonight. If you will just excuse me for the rest of the night I would like to do a little more experimenting all by my own self. Much obliged for your assistance. If I land my party it will be because of the tips and clues you have furnished me, and I won't forget you." To tell the truth I was not at all sorry to have him make his request to be excused. I had had enough experience with him for one evening, and I bade him good night with a sense of relief at the next corner. He waved his hand and turned into the straggling line of passers-by.

Pondering deeply over the events of the night and with the idea suddenly popping into my head that I would do a little experimenting upon my own account, I continued upon my way for several blocks. An alley something similar to the one which the detective and I had explored lay before me, and I turned into it with the intention of traversing it and catching my street car homeward bound in the street beyond. Near the further end of the way I paused, struck a match against the wall and lighting a cigar, stood for a moment with the flame in my hands as I made the investigation that I had in mind. Then casting the blaze away I passed into the fan of light that was projected into the narrow way from the street just beyond. As I turned once more into the regular course of travel I almost ran into the arms of my friend whom I had left but a few moments previously. With a mutual start we stepped backward.

"I had not expected this pleasure again tonight," I said as I surveyed him up and down. He fingered his cigar apparently a trifle annoyed that I had intercepted him; nevertheless answering me with a grin.

"I just made the second experiment which I mentioned to you, and it turned out quite successfully. Our man is downtown tonight and is moving about considerably himself. I am just a little afraid that he is becoming uneasy, and I don't know as I can blame him under the circumstances. Still, should he confess his guilt by flight, the life of a hunted fox is the best he can look forward to, and I

I believed that he had centered his efforts upon Bruce and had built a wall of circumstantial evidence around him, there was also the sickening possibility that he had learned things in other directions that were beyond my ken. However, I refused absolutely to allow such a possibility to occupy any real place in my mind. Still, there was a mystery about some of his actions that utterly baffled me and caused me profound wonder; while as to my own experiment of the evening it had failed absolutely. I went to sleep along in the gray of the morning no wiser than I had been when I had awakened from my last sleep.

## CHAPTER XV.

The next morning I found a note awaiting me which had arrived over night in the mail. It was from Mrs. Dace and said that she would be very happy to have me accompany her on a little shopping tour that forenoon, provided I could arrange without inconvenience to be away from my place of business. I at once phoned her that I would go with her. I had never felt a greater aversion for my daily, half-mechanical work at the office than I did this bright morning, and the invitation to spend a day with the woman I loved so madly was an opportunity not to be ignored. Moreover, as my wealth had rapidly increased, the fact that I was still the daily employe of a soulless corporation at a nominal salary and must still give my attention to the petty details of journal and ledger had galled me until several times I had been upon the point of resigning. This I now decided to do at once, and sitting down at my secretary forthwith notified them to that effect by means of a letter, giving more important business as my reason and enclosing them a check for my overdrawn salary. This radical step having been taken, and with my bridges now being burned behind me, I experienced some of the joyous sensations of an onward marching invader of a new continent. With nothing to hamper me now except the keeping of an eye upon my investments, I could give myself over to the attractions that lay by the way without the ever-present and pleasure marring thought of early rising and ungenial work upon the morrow. What my uncle would say regarding this latest move of mine I did not know nor did I greatly concern myself. I was making my own fortune, and reveled in the thought of being able in the not far distant future to silence his taunts by proof that a man of brains could make money in ways other than those of a miser. Nevertheless I decided to say nothing to him about it at this time. Any way, I was so deeply involved in my speculations that the matter of my salary was practically inconsequential to me. If I continued to win I would soon be in a position where I would be independent of everyone, financially; and if I lost, the fact of still having a job would be a matter of small consolation. I felt that I had risen above the office of cashier and that a broader field of endeavor beckoned me to its bosom. In the short time that had elapsed since I had struck out boldly for myself I had accumulated more than I would have saved in a lifetime at my salary, and my prospects had never been brighter than they were on this day of warmth and summer sunshine. The high play of the stock exchange had unfitted me for the drudgery of the pen.

The automobile was at the entrance of the Arcadia; Mrs. Dace awaited me in her apartments, and together we descended and entered the machine. I gave it plenty of speed and we went whirring down the wide artery that led to the heart of the city. I told her of my resignation from drudgery, and after a moment's reflection she voiced her approval of it.

"The position was but a stepping stone, and it is hardly possible that it would have ever brought you more than a hard-earned living. And that is the very thing that I am anxious that you should escape. You are rapidly becoming a man of affairs and your future depends a great deal more on what you do with your head than with your hands. I have confidence in you and believe that you are able to hold your own among men who do big things. Your office position bound you to a desk and hampered you. Now that you are freed from it, you can get out among those who have had the opportunities that go with personal liberty, mingle with them and avail yourself of the knowledge that is bound to come from such associations. I congratulate you upon your determination to devote yourself wholly to the large things of the world rather than to the small. You are too big a man to look graceful upon a stool. You were built for a large chair. Your self confidence strengthens my faith in you, and we shall win out yet."

"Not now. But I hope tomorrow I may be able to tell you everything that I know. Meanwhile you might bear in mind the old adage that when ignorance is bliss it is folly, and so forth." I turned abruptly away.

"Very well, I will exercise my patience. Good night again." Stepping into the street, I boarded a passing car and watched him from the back platform for a moment as he disappeared in an opposite direction. Then I found myself a seat.

I went directly home and to bed. Although somewhat tired, my experiences of the evening had rendered me thoroughly wide awake, and I slept very little in the hours that intervened between my retiring and day-break. LeDuc had told me that he was positive that he knew his man; had assured me of his confidence that he had secured the necessary proof, and I had too much respect for his ability to hold him lightly. And while

don't believe he is going to run. Hope I have not got you fascinated with the alley habit by our experience tonight." I surveyed him in distinct disapproval of his everlasting secrecy.

"No danger of its becoming chronic. Are you going to tell me anything yet?" I addressed him rather shyly, and as usual his head waved its negative.

"If you were my wife, sweetheart, I would be the happiest man in the world today," I said, tenderly. "There is an old and wise adage which says we should live to our fullest today for tomorrow we die. And it sometimes seems to me that we are partially wasting the most precious days of



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our lives; camping, as it were, upon the border of the promised land and fearing to enter it. I already have enough money to last us for years, and surely with the start I now have the rest will not be long in coming. I want you to tell me: Is there any reason why you desire the postponement of our marriage except that I am in the midst of accumulating more resources?"

"None in the world. I am interested heart and soul in your success and shrink at the thought of diverting your efforts. For once married, I know that I should claim your time jealously."

"And you could marry me one time as well as another?"

"Tomorrow as well as any other day."

Within arm's length of the prize which I coveted more than all else in the world combined, the woman for whom I would have waived my claims upon immortality to have possessed at the point of yielding herself to my embrace, my tongue burst forth in an impassioned appeal. "Then come with me tomorrow, sweetheart—dearest! We will be quietly married and start at once for Europe. I can leave my interests in the hands of my broker, who will protect me fully. We will want for nothing. We will go to Paris, to Spain, to Algiers. We will cruise through the Mediterranean. We will summer in the Alps. We will winter on the Nile. The world shall be ours. The papers and cable will keep me in daily touch with affairs here. If all goes well for a few months, as it surely must, we will not need to return, but will go on and on as you wish. None will be as happy as we, and our lives will be one long honeymoon. Nothing shall be denied you. Come." Carried away as I was by the impetuosity of my passion, I firmly believed that I had forecasted our destiny as infallibly as fate itself as I turned my glance from the flying roadway to her face. She must have caught some of my enthusiasm, for her eyes were glowing and the fingers which I held entwined themselves amongst mine.

"It is what I have dreamed also. It is what my life must be, and of late I have grown to picture you in my mind as the one who is to share all those things with me. But it would be terrible to awake some morning in the midst of our happiness and find it ruined. Therefore I wish you to be fully insured before embarking—not that I would love you any the more if you had a million, but because the life you have just portrayed is what we both crave. And I believe that all you have said will come true. But while I might wish very much to marry you tomorrow, I think it is better to wait."

I slipped my free arm beneath hers and drew her to me. "Make it tomorrow, dearest," I pleaded, feeling that she swayed upon the brink of surrender and that could I have taken her in my arms she would have yielded completely. "When I think how happy we would be, it seems a shameful waste of time to deny ourselves." Her bosom was rising and falling rapidly and I knew that the battle within her was raging sharply. Her reply was both distressed and beseeching:

"You must not press me any more, Tom. No woman is more human than I. You are making it very difficult for me to resist, and it hurts me to say 'no' to you. Please—please don't drive me so hard."

"Tomorrow," I insisted mercilessly, holding her still tighter and pushing my advantage to the utmost. She averted her face, a troubled look haunting it.

"Then I will compromise in this way. I will give you your answer tomorrow. I must have one day in which to think it over. Mind you, I

do not promise; I do not refuse; I simply demand a day of grace. You must let go of me now."

The finality of her tones told me that further pleading at this time would be more likely to jeopardize my chances than help them, but feeling confident, nevertheless, that I had won, I released her. And that she had practically made up her mind to yield I became more and more convinced during every moment of the next two hours as I attended her in her purchases of dainty handkerchiefs and other bits of lingerie as we wandered through the great stores. Never before had she smiled upon me so often or so sweetly, and her little detaining clasps upon my arm from time to time as she drew me aside for the inspection of something that attracted her attention were almost caresslike in their lingering warmth. And when she finally made the excuse of wishing to shop alone for an hour among forbidden things, promising to meet me for lunch at the end of that time, I left her in an ecstasy that mortal man seldom attains, and even then for but a fleeting moment.

It was 12 o'clock, noon, and I decided to run over to my broker's for a little talk with him while I was killing the interval of her absence. My stock had closed strong the night before after a substantial rise during the day, and there was absolutely no cause in sight for uneasiness on my part. That it would go at least 20 points higher nobody seemed to doubt, for at last the public was fairly apprised of its value and the daily heavy purchases were sending it upward by leaps and bounds. The prospect back of it was a tremendous undertaking; the value of the franchise already practically inestimable, and that the enterprise would be one of the greatest money-makers of the world seemed as certain as that the inhabitants of the city would increase and multiply. I knew that a ring of politicians had fathered the enterprise in the shadow of a star chamber with curtains drawn, yet they had been granted official sanction by the city council and that seemed to settle the matter. Whether the scheme had been carried through by bribery or not was a mooted question. Richard Mackay had been arrested upon such a charge, but had escaped through a technicality of the law. But whether there had been chicanery back of it or not was a matter which did not concern me, and I saw no reason why I should not be swept along to opulence upon a tidal wave of some one else's creation as well as any other man. It would have been a super-sensitive conscience that would not have taken advantage of such an opportunity. Certainly it was a beautiful world, a glorious world, and I one of its greatest fortunates.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Origin of "Boodle."

Some of the authorities on slang words and expressions say that the word "boodle" is derived from the Dutch, and there is reason to suppose that they are in the right. It first came into common use in New York at the time of the exposure of the Tweed ring, and has ever since kept its place in the language as expressing something that no other word in the English language could bring out so well. It was also highly popular in the days of Jake Sharp and his henchmen.

## Expert Opinion.

"You women bear pain more heroically than men."

"Who told you that—a doctor?"

"No; a shoemaker."—Argonaut.

## Described.

"What sort of chap is Wiggins?"

"He means well!"

"Buy no more!"