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R. MACFARLANE, TOWN AGENT



The Lash of Circumstance

Harry Irving Greene Author of "Yosonde of the

chambers of the judges; they'd reach

until we fall for the prospect of wear-

Now a few words about the house

It was a rookery. Large and ram-

belonging to him save his money. And

adjacent thereto. That Uncle Abner

continued to live amidst this shame-

ful waste of handsomely designed

However, I could partially account

for it in two ways. In the first place

he had come into possession of the

premises through some sort of a

hocus-pocus swap; had secured them

for a song, won the resulting lawsuit,

whistle for the song; and in the

ing them!

we lived in.

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That was a rather peculiar crime, larly heartless and thoroughly unthe robbing of my Uncle Abner's safe. called for letter which he had written It was cleverly planned, opportunely me. I dreamed that I had seen him timed and successfully executed. It dissected at a clinic and that his veins was a good haul, too. Forty thousand were filled with liquid air instead of dollars in crisp coin of the realm is warm red corpuscles. And when it pretty high pay for almost any crimicame to the region of his heart they nal for a few hours' work and risk, found its place occupied by a toadand that is what the perpetrator got stool. He was long, lean, miserly, You will notice that I said "crimi- wealth, I had little knowledge except

nal." I did that to distinguish it from from a boast he once made to me and the operation of a gang of thieves; which I was inclined to believe at the for as it turned out, it was the work time. of a single individual and not the I happened incidentally to remark combination or effort of a coterie. that he must be a pretty wealthy man, That made it still more difficult to and he turned to me with that cunsolve. As a chain is no stronger than ning leer of his—a leer that had the its weakest link, so is the cunning cunning of a fox and the relentlessof a combination of men no keener ness of a wolf. "I suppose you know than the wits of its dullest member. how far it is from here to the heart That is why conspiracies generally of the city," he grinned. I told him come to grief—somebody turns out to that it was eight miles as the crow ANYONE ONE NEEDING am speaking there were as many baf- "And about 80 rods. Now you listen New Pumps, Pump Re- fling points as there are to a neage- to me, young gadabout. If I should equal, that whatever advantage the hog, and for a time it seemed impreg- turn all my money into American dol- one may have over the cloub hounds of the pairs, Cement Curbing or nable. As for the sleuth hounds of the lars and put them ber, they'd police, they came up to it with cautouching, remember, they'd tion, smelled about it discreetly and from here to the city hall." then drew away, looking wise, to pon- "Which is a long ways," I assented JNO. SCHULTZ or myself at the shop der over it, and, for all I know, are meekly. He grinned again. looking wise and pondering yet. But "And I'll tell you where else they George Whitmore looking wise and pondering yet. But "And I'll tell you where else they with William LeDuc the case was dif- would reach. They'd reach to the

LeDuc had been something of a to the private office of the assessor; schoolboys together, and he did real- public official I wanted them toly brilliant work on the case. Every- which is the reason I desire them. thing conjured up by the human mind Understand, now, young jackanapes?" is capable of human solution, if we "Yes," I returned wearily, disgusted go about it right, and LeDuc found by his contempt for a'l human honthe way. Just because a dog is help- esty. Then I went away and left him, less before a bristling porcupine, it is feeling more resentful than ever that no sign that all animals are. The wild I must toil day in and day out as the cat isn't. He is too quick for the cashier of a soulless corporation for bristler. He feints him out of his de- \$2,000 a year, and then out of it pay fensive posture by lightning play, and my uncle pretty near first-class hotel eventually gets him by the unprotect- rates for my board and lodgings. At ed nose-which is the beginning of times his browbeating and insults fairthe end of the problem. Just what lic up to this time for the reason that boy who takes quinine as a condition none but he or I is competent to give the inner particulars of the running down of the thief, and up to this time neither of us has cared to tell. But I feel that I must do so now.

That I happened to know more than anybody else about certain incidents connected with the affair and was able to supply LeDuc with the proofs of guilt was due to the fact that I lived with Uncle Abner at the time the crime took place. I, also, was the one who found him lying bound and unconscious. Also it was myself who reported matters to the police and introduced LeDuc to my uncle. As for place, I happened to be away from sat by and watched it run down as home, having stayed at a hotel in the steadily as a clock that is never rebusiness district quite a few miles wound; prideless of himself and of all from where I lived.

And now, at the outset, I am going whenever he did spend a few dollars to emphasize one fact. While it is an upon repairs his cheerfulness was as unpleasant thing for me to do so, I that of one who gives a surgeon his am going to tell everything I know fee for extracting his vermiform apregarding this crime. I am going to pendix. Necessity, so grinding and spare nobody's feelings, faults or repu- imperative that further neglect would tations. That I have not done so be- prove fatal, was the only condition fore was because of a reason which that could loosen the Gordian knot will be apparent when all the other which bound his money bags. facts are known. But now that a I never opened the heavy door that certain event has happened I feel free led from the group of magnificent,

to make everything known. In writing this account I have thought best to do so chronologically when possible. Therefore, I must go somewhat into matters which preceded and were more or less directly connected with the crime, in order that the motive may be shown and that there may be the proper perspective. To do this I must tell more are necessary to the narrative by company, and almost never leaving ever, they are simply the shadings of the house was also bare of furniand side lights that go to make up the ture save for my uncle's and my And while LeDuc may disap-, telling, the mistake should not be running the length of the front of the actual ferreting out of the case, and that is what misled the criminal. at the finish; it wore a glove of mail. rooms and broad natural grounds, was

Right at this point I find myself about the only piece of extravagance somewhat at a loss to decide just where to begin the recital. This is for the reason that I am not a writer trained in the art of building up a mystery with such skill that it stands intact until the time comes to demolkeystone is removed and the whole and then left the former owner to Therefore, all I can hope to do is to second he had a real and abiding fondsimply and plainly outline the charness for trees and grass. Trees and acters which seem to me to be per- grass, however, do not require retinent to a full understanding of con- pairs. ditions, and then go on and relate Now, as to his associates. There events as they happened. Perhaps I were only three people in the world had better begin with a brief descrip- whom he did not seem to have a tion of Uncle Abner, his peculiarities natural aversion for. These were

myself, whom he tolerated as a sort When you look at that last sen- of licensed and necessary evil; Bruce tence again you will begin to under Halliday, my second cousin, whose stand that I meant it when I said I happy-go-lucky exploits he would was going to spare nobody. Neither sometimes chuckle over, and Clare

Winton, another distant cousin of do I believe anyone will think as I mine from a different branch of the proceed that I am attempting to spare family. But it was practically imposmy own feelings. What an idiot I sible to know Clare and not love her, was! I think when the fates were a little at least; and it was his affecmaking the world's supply of fools, tion for her, combined with his fondafter they had constructed me they ness for nature, that made me realize broke the mold. Having turned out that he was a human being after all. a perfect specimen there was no use Bruce used to say to me privately that

of experimenting further. I have called Uncle Abner mean the family tree, Clare was certainly and peculiar, but that description is the peach, but I always prfeerred to insipid. It is about as adequate as regard her as the jewel. I would not describing Satan as not being a plea- liken her to a diamond as I would sant person. Of all the cold-blooded Mrs. Dace, who scintillates and dazmen I ever met, Abner Halliday had zles, but rather to a perfect pearl, the most frog-like temperature. I once whose beauty is so soft and emanates: had a dream which will illustrate my from deep within. life-long impression of him. It hap- While it was easy enough to account pened when I was spending a year in for his fondness for Clere, I never a technical school learning practical mechanics prior to entering college,

could quite understand what a man of his instincts saw about a prodigal like Bruce to pat on the back, goodlooking and agreeable though he is. And it puzzled me almost as much to notice that Clare, who is highminded and as sweet and wholesome as fresh milk, would so readily overlook things in my cousin of which I knew she instinctively disapproved. One day I spoke to her about it. good naturedly charged her with being very fond of him, and she admitted it with audacious sang froid.

"Of course I am. Everybody iseverything is. Children climb all over him and stray dogs follow him home. Why shouldn't they if he pets

I expostulated. "But he is so obvoous- I might even ay notoriousand it was brought about by a particuabout his-well, I will call them 'financial peculiarities.' He doesn't care who knows about them." She answered me as pertly as a sparrow. "That's just what I like about him. Bruce doesn't know there is such a

thing as underhandedness." So that's the way some immaculate women have of sticking up for tarnished men. It seems to be one of the mysteries of the female mental equipment which is incomprehensible to the male mind. But while I always liked Bruce, we are of somewhat different temperaments. I am not a purist in any sense of the word, but I believe in discretion. Personally I prefer a person who does the indiscreet thing discreetly to one who does the discreet thing indiscreetly. And that is one way in which he and I differ. Neither do I admit that it is hypocrisy on my part-merely discretion. It has always seemed to me that when two people's characters are

Also Bruce was usually up to his deep. ears in trouble of one of two kindsfinancial or feminine. But no matter which it was, he always managed to slip through it like an eel through oil. He is a broker by trade. Also he speculates on his own account, and part of the time in floating like a bubble on the top wave of prosperity, and the rest of the time swimming for dear life in the succeeding trough. It was a good deal, as he himself once put it, when he had planned to feed a few of us a week in advance:

"You had better put a sandwich in your pocket, boys, for life is uncertain. As you know, it is turkey with me one day and feathers the next, and you have got to take your chance as to which you will get when you dine with me. But come on just the same. If it is turkey it will be the biggest ly sikened me of life; yet I swallowed one in the market, and if it's the other them with the resignation of a schoolit will be feathers in our caps anyof his being allowed to go fishing. Oh, dead men's shoes! How we will dance

In spite of yourself, you can't cherish anything against a man like that. I never criticized him to any one save Clare, and only to her incidentally and openly the same as we criticized other things that were in common between us. She understood perbling, it had degenerated from a handfectly that there was no animus back some, well-groomed surburban home of my words, and I would not have to to a hulking, tatterdemalion outcared particularly if she had told him cast amidst respectability. It was all I said. As a general proposition bruised and battered. The spine of its she would agree with me, but not alroof already had a curvature; the ways. I remember once when she paint hung from it in ...hreds, and ragcrushed the rose which she had been weeds surrounded *it. Internally it caressing into a shapeless pulp with was nearly hollow. Year by year one convulsive squeeze at some care-Uncle Abner, clutching his dollars, less remark of mine concerning his improvidence.

"Did you ever happen to notice where Bruce's clothes show the first signs of wear?" she asked defiantly. I admitted that I had not.

"Then I will tell you. It is at the flap of his right-hand trouser's pocket where he carries the loose money that he loans and gives away." So you see her action signified nothing except another instinctive desire on her part to fly to his defence and cover his sins of extravagance by the mantle of his charities. And, of course, century-old oaks, the branch ends of against sentiment like that logic is which stroked the gray house like caressing hands, without a feeling of

Then, too, when it comes to his litdisgust and hot shame. The lawer tle love affairs Bruce is certainly a floors were unfurnished save for the pachyderm. You could shoot him as kitchen, the dining-room and the room full of Cupid's arrows as you could for the housekeeper. Barring those thrust a human pin cushion full of needles, and the result would be the portions it was as barren as a ship's same in each case. An unfortunate empty hold. For years Mrs. Tebbets affair of the heart affects some peohad been the housekeeper of the place, ple not unlike a mosquito. It annoys doing all the household work and connected with the burglary, but who never, to our knowledge, receiving them for a few moments, and then anone is forgotten. With others it gets under the skin like a "chigger"-festers and torments and will not be scratched out. And there is where Bruce and I differ again. He is of of a large, sparsely furnished room the first class, while I am of the chigger-bitten variety. my own sleeping-room and den being

Clare nearly always came to see us upon Sunday afternoons. We would usually hear her whistling as she came up the walk when she was still quite a ways distant. Clare can sing like an angel, but she much prefers to whistle like the devil. She squeaks and trebles and flats, with her lips in a pucker and her chin aslant, and the discord she creates is shocking. But she never gets discouraged, and would rather shrill a few false notes through her puckered lips than open her round throat and let notes pour forth that would drive a prima donna to glaring envy. Into the house she would come by means of her private key with a fife of her lips and a rat-a-tat-tat of her feet on the uncarpeted stairs, until a final hollow thump would announce her arrival at the portals of my uncle's inner sanctuary. Thereupon I would arise to a military "attention" and my uncle to a creaking semblance of uprightness as she threw open the door to reveal herself, sinking to the floor with skirts spread in an exaggerated curtsey of the olden days. Up to uncle she would go with a ridiculous kiss upon the bald spot of his head, and then settle light as a puff-ball in the window seat and commence to chatter. Five minutes of that would put her out of breath, after which she would be content to settle down to ordinary conversation as she sewed on the buttons missing from if Uncle Abner was the crab apple of his garments, or trimmed the edges of his ever-frayed collars. For while Mrs. Tebbets was employed to do all

this, Clare always reserved those

Perhaps an hour later, if the weather was fitting, I would manage to catch her eye with a significant glance and

would join me.

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We have decided to clear out balance on hand at fling points as there are to a neage to me, young gauabout.

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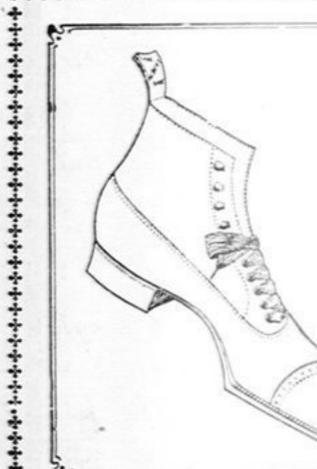
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