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WINDS OF CHANCE Rex Beach

Published by Arrangement with First National Pictures, Inc., and Frank Lloyd Productions, Inc.

CHAPTER XXIV (Continued) Hilda laid down her book. She turned to face her accuser. "Why should I make a scene?" she asked. "I've had nothing to do with Phillips since we parted company at White Horse. I've scarcely spoken to him, and you know it."



THE SMILE OF HEALTH

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one thing, that his effort to reach her had failed and that she remained completely the mistress of herself. She reclined at ease in her comfortable chair, quite unmoved by his derision, his jubilation. He became aware, also, of the fact that she presented an extremely attractive picture, for the soft white fur of the loose robe she wore exposed an alluring glimpse of snowy throat and bosom; one wide sleeve had fallen back, showing a smoothly rounded arm; her svelte ankles, lithe to the cozy warmth of the stove, were small and trim; her feet were shod in neat high-heeled slippers.

Hilda nodded. "You've said it. Too old and too wise. If I'd been as young and as silly as when I met you—who knows? He's a handsome boy."

"How did you get a thousand dollars, Henri?" the wife inquired, curiously. "Courteaus' mize shifted. 'What difference? I won it on a turn at the North Star; it was given to me; I found it. Anyhow, I had it. It was a good night for me; yes, a very good night. I had my revenge and I showed my friends that I'm a man to be reckoned with."

more. "Pierce Phillips! A common thief, a despicable creature who robs the very man he had most deeply injured. I've exposed him to the law and to public scorn. Sleep on that, my dear. Dream on it!" With a chuckle he traced an uncertain course to the stairs, mounted to his room, and slammed his door behind him.

Rock had spoken truly in assuring "Toleon that Pierce Phillips' lot would be made as easy for him as possible. That is what happened. Not at the barracks appeared to take much stock in Courteaus' charge, and even Colonel Cavendish, the commandant, took the trouble to send for him early the next morning and to ask for the whole story in detail.

"It wasn't exactly an 'affair,' sir," Pierce colored slightly as he went on to explain. "You see, I was perfectly honest. I didn't know the count and when I learned there was I'm struck and ended it. She was the first woman who ever—Well, sir, I admired her tremendously. She impressed me wonderfully."

"Not in the same way?" "What about this girl Laurie?" This time Pierce flushed uncomfortably. "I've no excuses to offer there, sir—no explanations. We—just drifted together. It was a long trip and the Yukon does that sort of thing. Force of circumstance, as much as anything, I presume. I've been trying to break away, but—" he struggled.

done around Dyea and Skagway. Then gospel-bringers never touched it. We met the suckers on the edge of the Frozen North and we turned 'em back by the score. Then three walnut husks done more good than the Ten Commandments. Yes, sir, a set of cheating tools will save more stray-lamb lambs than a ship-load of Testaments."

"Impossible," Pierce declared. "I got an idea." It was Broad speaking again. "The mere contemplation of physical violence unmans that frog. He'd about as soon have a beatin' as have a leg cut off with a case-knife. Spese me and the Kid lure him to some lonely spot—some good yelling-place—and set upon him with a couple pick-handles. We'll make him confess or we'll maim and mangle him till he backs out through his bootlegs. What d'you say?"

"A mere matter of choice," the former speaker lightly declared. "We got boys around the Hilda that has tried 'em all. They don't notice no particular difference."

"I don't know how far my parole extends," Pierce ventured, doubtfully. "Nonsense! There's only one authority around here. Father thinks he's it, but he isn't. I am. You're my prisoner now. Give me your word you won't try to escape."

He was staring morosely at the ground between his feet when he heard a voice that caused him to start. There, facing him with a light of pleasure in her blue eyes, was the girl of the skees. "Hello!" said she. She extended her hand, and her mitten closed over Pierce's fingers with a firm clasp. "I'm awfully glad to see you again, sir. She hesitated, then with a smile confessed. "Do you know, you're my only pupil and yet I've never heard your name."

"You don't deserve to be remembered at all, for you didn't come to the dance. And after you had promised, too."

"I'm not dancing," he stammered. "Not at the barracks, anyhow."

"The girl was puzzled; therefore Pierce summoned his courage and explained, with as brave an attempt at lightness as he could afford. "You see before you a victim of happy circumstance, a person to be pitied. I'm worse than a case of smallpox. I don't think you should be seen talking to me."

"What are you driving at?" "I'm getting up the spiritual momentum necessary to tell you that I'm a thief! Truly, Anyhow, these choice gentlemen are so sure of it that they want to level the trouble of poring themselves and having me arrested."

"Arrested? You?" "Exactly. And the evidence is very strong. I almost think I must be guilty."

"Thank you for reminding me of the one cheerful feature connected with the entire affair. Yes, I raised my hand to him in anger—and let it fall, but Lieutenant Rock spoiled the whole party."

listened with that peculiar open-eyed meditative gravity he had noted upon their former meeting. When he had finished she cried, breathlessly: "Why, it's as exciting as a book!"

"Do you feel that way, too?" Pierce inquired, curiously. "As if everything is an adventure? I used to. I used to stand outside of myself and look on, but now—I'm on the inside looking out. I suppose it's the effect of the gray beard. Experience comes fast in this country. To one thing I've made up my mind, however; when I get out of this scrape, if I ever do, I'm going away up into the hills where the wind can blow me clean, and stay there."

"It's a perfect shame!" the girl said, indignantly. "I shall tell father to fix it. He's wonderful as you probably know."

"Inasmuch as I haven't the faintest idea who he is—" "Why, he's Colonel Cavendish; I'm Josephine Cavendish. I thought everybody knew me."

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"Thank you for reminding me of the one cheerful feature connected with the entire affair. Yes, I raised my hand to him in anger—and let it fall, but Lieutenant Rock spoiled the whole party."

"Tell me everything, please."

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Illiterate Mayors Found. PARIS (AP).—At government offices in Paris which have to deal with local administrative affairs, it is not unusual to find a large portion of his long colonial career. He has been colonial secretary for Ceylon since 1922.

Hongkong Changes Governors

HONGKONG (AP).—Announcement has been made that Sir Reginald Edward Stubbs, retiring governor of Hongkong, will sail for England today. The new governor, Cecil Clementi, C. M. G., will arrive tomorrow.

These illiterate mayors belong mostly to small and remote villages where it is difficult to find anyone to assume the duties of local government at small pay.

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"You'd of done better if you'd turned on the hollow of your foot that day and rumped right back to the old farm," Broad asserted. "You'd never of doubted up with the McCaskays and you'd still be the blushing yokel you was."

"I understand. I put in a wakeful night thinking about it. It's the first time in a long while that I've done any serious thinking."

"Well, don't be discouraged. A little thinking will benefit you. Now then, I'm going to put Rock at work on your case, and meanwhile you may have the liberty of the barracks. You're a gentleman, and I trust you to get as one."

Pierce was only too grateful for this courtesy, and to realize that he retained the respect of this middle-aged, suddenly officer, whom he had long admired, filled him with deep relief. He gave his promise readily enough.

Later in the day Broad and Bridges came in to see him and their indignation at the outrage, their positive assertion that it was nothing less than a deliberate conspiracy, and so considered among the Front Street resorts, immensely cheered him.

"You remember the holler I let up when them Sheep-Campers wanted to hang McCaskey?" Broad inquired. "It was my mistake. His ear and a bump rock would go together like rheumatism and liniment."

"Yes, you're a different kid now." Both gamblers, it seemed, were in the melancholy mood for moralizing. "Why, we was talkin' to Roubetta about you this mornin'."

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