

# **A MOMENT'S MISTAKE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649051403

A Moment's Mistake by R. H. Holt-Lomax

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**R. H. HOLT-LOMAX**

**A MOMENT'S  
MISTAKE**



★R. R. Bowker

A  
**MOMENT'S  
MISTAKE**

BY  
**R. H. HOLT-LOMAX**

*\* \* \* In the meantime all are of one family, and love each other; so that the two lateral buds do not stoop aside because they like it, but to let their more favored brother grow in peace \* \* \**

"Modern Painters," RUSKIN.

THE  
**Abbey Press**

PUBLISHERS

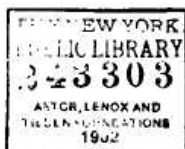
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FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

LONDON

MONTREAL



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## A MOMENT'S MISTAKE.

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### PROLOGUE.

A WINTER evening in London, and, in the dining-room of a house in Harley Street, two men had finished dinner. Everything—from the stocks round their necks and the straps of their trousers, together with each hideous and costly article of furniture—proclaimed the period in which they lived. Early Victorian was stamped upon the florid pattern of the carpet, and on the ornaments and gilding of the room. But though their dress bespoke a date, the ages of the men themselves were not so easy to determine, except that both were past their prime. Close by them, with the dessert and wine upon it, stood the table they had left to sit in their armchairs.

“Harry,” said one, who seemed to be the elder of the two, “you are not drinking. Help your-

self. And so," he continued, as the other filled his glass, "you have at last returned. A few weeks sailing on the seas and you are here in this old world again."

"Say, rather, the new world," and the speaker jerked his head. "They are very old out there."

"Well, have it your own way. In any case, you have come back, still in the vigour of life, a wiser and a richer man."

Harry Weatherston laughed.

"And," continued his friend, "wise enough to get a wife, and rich enough to keep her."

So saying, Edward Dane glanced at the tanned, weather-beaten face beside him. Weatherston was just the age to marry and to settle down, in his opinion, to give up this roaming, useless life he led, and stay at home and cultivate respectability. Something of this which was passing in the elder's mind the other may have noticed, for he changed the subject.

"About yourself, Ned!" he exclaimed; "your wish has been gratified, I understand, and I congratulate you. Tell me, when did the happy event take place?"

Edward Dane rubbed his hands together.

"Yes, yes, I have a boy at last—a boy at last;"

and he lingered on the words as he repeated them.

"But the day of his birth, man?" pursued his friend, "and the hour?"

"To be sure," replied the happy father. "Let me see, to-day is Wednesday. Monday last," he added, "in the morning, about five o'clock."

"Now, if we were in the East," said Harry Weatherston, reflectively, "do you know what we should do?"

"Can't say."

"Why, cast the boy's horoscope, of course, gaze into the future, and foretell the fate of Master Dane of Norbury."

A short silence followed, while across the father's face swept incredulity, then doubt, and finally uncertainty. These feelings found expression in his next remark:

"Harry, old friend, I have never liked to dabble in such things. Do not put them in my mind, I beg."

His companion shrugged his shoulders.

"As you like," he said. "I was afraid it would not meet with your approval."

All the same, thought Weatherston, give people fifty years, and they would take a different