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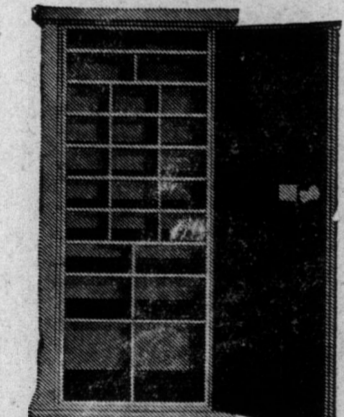
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## WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE.

CHAPTER IX.

(Concluded.)

"Your mother-in-law? You don't mean that she knew—connived at what you want me to believe really took place? You don't accuse her, Sir Richard, surely?"

For answer his eyes drooped, and an expression of pain clouded his honest, kindly face. After a pause, he went on quickly in a whisper:

"We must keep this to ourselves, Marie; we must not let this shameful thing get abroad. You will help me, will you not, my dear one, for the sake of her we both once loved?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" The servants are they safe?"

"All of them. Fortunately my cousin and her daughter have left, and, of course, the detectives—"

"The detectives?"

"Yes; I have had detectives about the place for the past fortnight. The new footman is one of the head men from Scotland Yard, and he has assistants employed in the stables and the garden."

"And it was they who found out the truth?"

"Yes; they carried it out admirably—followed the suspected person from the house last night, watched her phantom performance, and quietly seized her as she was flying through the wood attired in a dress—poor Jessie's wedding dress! Oh, can you fancy that, Marie?"

"Her wedding-dress!"

"And I shall have to let her go unpunished, unexposed, the infamous jade! I remember Jessie often told me her sister's pranks were the terror of her childhood, and the detectives declare she is the cleverest, most bewitching little actress and dare-devil they ever came across in the course of their professional experience."

"Then—then, I broke in eagerly, "perhaps her mother is not so much to blame; perhaps she had nothing to do with the plot?"

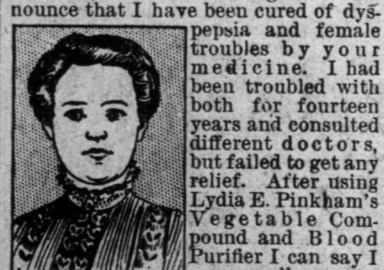
"Oh, it was Miss Lil who organized the whole thing—she admits that freely, even boasts of it, and declares she has enjoyed her adventures thoroughly! Marie, do you think you are sufficiently recovered now to look at her, only for a moment? Indeed I would not ask you, only I know of no more perfect means of steadying your nerves after that terrible shock—of making you realize the truth."

"I went with him to a room which communicated with poor Jessie's boudoir by a small back staircase, and which Mrs. Johnson, after Mrs. Seymour's arrival, had fitted up for herself as a private sitting-room; but the only occupant I saw was little Miss Boatice, dressed for a journey, eating a dish of cutlets at the fire. She looked up at Sir Richard with her old arch smirk, then, pointing to a corded trunk, put her handkerchief to her eyes."

Leaving me standing at the door, which he carefully closed and locked, Sir Richard advanced toward her, and said something to her in a low tone.

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which she answered with a shrill laugh:

"What, you tresome, tresome man, do you really mean to pose again? Oh, this is too much of an exhibition, you know! No less than three times this blessed day—"

"Not another word!" he interrupted sternly. "Do not keep this lady waiting in the room a moment longer than is necessary."

He came back and put his arm around me as she pushed her plate away and rose sullenly from her chair.

There was a basin on the side-table, containing a sort of greasy, bluish fluid. Standing with her back toward us, she moistened her face with the liquid, then, throwing aside her bearskin cloak, and snatching off her mass of straggling gray hair, she suddenly wheeled round and stood before us, a fair, shapely, attractive-looking woman of about seven-and-twenty. Before I could recover from my astonishment, she stepped back a few paces, raised her arms above her head, and, fixing her wild, beautiful eyes upon me, moaned, in a tone of thrilling anguish:

"You—oh, you! My friend!"

It was the face and the voice of the churchyard phantom! Instinctively I shuddered, and covered my eyes with my hands; but the harsh and strident laugh that followed at once recalled me to myself, and, looking at her eagerly, I saw that, when deprived of the delusive surroundings, there was little in her appearance beyond the mere outline of the features and the color and fashion of the hair to recall the lovely image of her dead sister. The face was that of a much older and coarser woman, and was marked with the ravages of a reckless life.

This reminded me only of Jessie as I had seen her look once—that terrible night in Paris, when she found her husband waiting for her on her return from the masquerade.

"Well, Miss Bernard—you are satisfied—reassured—eh? My features won't haunt your bridal pillow? I may resume my traveling costume?" she asked, tauntingly.

"Yes, yes; I am satisfied—reassured. But—but, Sir Richard, Sir Richard," I pleaded, for he was impatiently trying to draw me from the room—"one moment, please; I cannot realize it yet. Let me speak to her, for I am so bewildered still. Then it was you—you who did it all? You were the insane old lady from the beginning? She—she was never here at all?"

"Never. She has not stirred a mile from a pauper lunatic asylum in Surrey since the day she entered it, thirty—forty years ago. I spent three days with her there last month, making my study, and you have had the poor old scarecrow to the life, though I say it, that shouldn't perhaps."

"And it was you who originated—carried on—"

"I alone. All the supernatural manifestations—the guitar business, the Spanish song, the moans and groans on the stairs after dark, and through the key-holes of the servants' rooms, the apparitions about the house and grounds—were my work alone, for Pel gave me such a clumsy hand at the start

that I sent him about his business the first night, and the old mater was more in the way than anything else all along.

"And your motive was?"

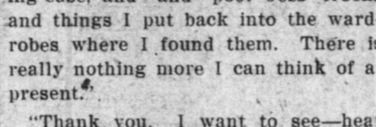
"My motive, Miss Bernard—was a flippant laugh—was not a very obscure one. It was to keep my beloved brother-in-law faithful to his wife's memory, to keep a firm footing for the family in these uncommonly comfortable quarters, and get a more satisfactory taste of the flesh-pots than Jess would ever let us have when she was in power. The position was worth a struggle—wasn't it?—even as spirited a one as you and I made for it, my lady. Well, you have come off with honors, and I must acknowledge my brother-in-law is not quite the nut that stupid Pel represented him to be. Anyhow, though I'm vanquished I'm not sorry I made the effort; it was at times all fun, and I led those Scotland Yard sharpers a pretty dance for a week or two. Ha, ha! Now, is there anything else you want to know or see before I carry off my stage properties? The duplicate guitar you will find in a false bottom to that yellow trunk over there, the electric apparatus in that tin case at the door, my cosmetics here in this dressing-case, and—poor Jess' frocks and things I put back into the wardrobe where I found them. There is really nothing more I can think of at present."

"Thank you. I want to see—hear no more," I said, passing out to join Sir Richard, who was waiting for me in the passage.

I had walked a few steps with him, when she called me back to the door, and said, with an awkward, half-shamefaced, half-defiant air, and a little catch here and there in her hurried breath, that brought the memory of her sister painfully before me:

"I say, Miss Bernard, you—you are not a bad sort of woman, you know! Don't—don't be too down on the poor old mater. She was a bit rough on you the other night, I admit; but bear in mind that up to that moment she thought you were her best friend—her bulwark here. Even I didn't see through you till just the day before."

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so it came on her like a thunder-clap, you know. And—and she's had more kicks than halfpence all her life. Her father and husband, both drunkards, ill-treated her, and her children were not much of a comfort either. Pel and I went to the dogs as soon as ever we learned the way. Jess cut her as soon as she became a fine lady, and now she has to hop out of the only soft place it's ever been her luck to fall in. Don't be too down on her; she—she's older and weaker than she looks."

"I won't, I won't," I answered, gently. "But you—you are a young woman still. Cannot I do anything for you?"

"For me? Oh—a—thanks awfully—no—nothing! Past all that, you know—long ago. Well, yes, just one thing—if you wouldn't mind giving me a grip of your hand before I go."

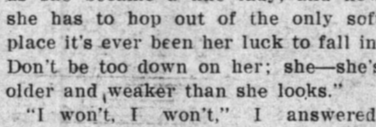
She held my fingers fast for a moment; then, before she closed the door sharply in my face, I think I saw something like a tear glistening in her fierce, handsome eyes.

"THE END."

I am a very happy woman; everything prospers round my beautiful home. My husband and I have scarcely a hope, wish, ambition, that we do not share in common. I have many true and worthy friends; my children are handsome, healthy, and good; but I think the sun will never shine very warmly for me again, when in the coming spring, they will lay my golden-haired, my best-beloved, beside his young mother under the daisies.

THE END.

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The Bread and Butter Miss.

PART I.

But the fascination reacted as an irritant on Mr. Norreys. He could not get rid of a mortifying sensation that he was being sounded, and his measure taken by this presumptuous little girl. Yet he glanced at her. No; 'presumptuous' was not the word to apply to her. He grew almost angry at last, to the extent of nearly losing his self-control.

"You are drawing me out, Miss Ford," he said, "in hopes of my displaying my ignorance. You know much more about the book in question, and the subject, than I do. If you will be so good as to tell me all about it, I—"

She glanced up quickly with, for the first time, a perfectly natural and unconstrained expression on her face.

"Indeed—indeed, no," she said. "I am very ignorant. In some ways I have had little opportunity of learning."

Despard's face cleared. There was no question of her sincerity.

"I thought you were playing me off," he said boyishly.

Miss Florde burst out laughing, but she instantly checked herself.

"What a pity," thought Mr. Norreys. "I never heard a prettier laugh." "I did, indeed," he repeated, exaggerating his tone in hopes of making her laugh again.

But it was no use. Her face had regained the calm, formal composure it had worn at the beginning of the dance.

"She is like three girls rolled into one," thought Despard. "The shy, country-bred miss she seemed at first, and a feeling of shame shot through him at the recollection of his stupid judgment, then this cold, impassive, princess-like demeanor, and by fitful glimpses yet another, with nothing in common with either. And, notwithstanding the role she has chosen to play, I—strongly suspect it is but a role," he decided hastily.

The riddle interested him.

"May I—will you not give me another dance?" he said deferentially. For the tenth waltz had come to an end.

"I am sorry I cannot," she replied. The words were simple and girlish, but the tone was regal. "Good-night, Mr. Norreys. I congratulate you on your self-sacrifice at the altar of friendship. You may now take your departure with a clear conscience."

He started. She was repeating some of his own words. Miss Florde bowed coldly, and turned away. And Despard, bewildered, mortified even, though he would not own it, yet strangely attracted, and disgusted with himself for being so, after a

passing word or two with his hostess, left the house.

An hour or two later Gertrude Englewood was bidding her young guest good-night.

"And oh, Maisie!" she exclaimed, "how did you get on with Despard? Is he not delightful?"

Miss Florde smiled quietly. They were standing in her room, for she was to spend a night or two with her friend.

"I—to tell you the truth, I would much rather not speak about him," she said. "He is very good looking, and—well, not stupid, I dare say. But I am not used to men, you know, Gertrude—not to men of the day, at least, of which I suppose he is a type. I cannot say that I care to see any more of them. I am happier at home with papa."

She turned away quickly. Gertrude did not see the tears that rose to the girl's eyes, or the rush of color that overspread her face at certain recollections of that evening. She was nineteen, but it was her first 'real' dance, and she felt as if years had passed since the afternoon only two days ago when she had arrived.

Mrs. Englewood looked and felt sadly disappointed. She had been so pleased with her own diplomacy.

"It will be different when you are a little more in the way of it," she said. "And—I really don't think your father should insist on your dressing quite so plainly. It will do the very thing he wants to avoid—it will make you remarkable."

"No, no," said Maisie, shaking her head. "Papa is quite right. You must allow it had not that effect this evening. No one asked to be introduced to me."

"There was such a crowd—"

Gertrude began, but this time Maisie's smile was quite a hearty one as she interrupted her.

"Never mind about that," he said. "But do tell me one thing. I saw Mr. Norreys speaking to you for a moment as he went out. You didn't say anything about me to him, I hope?"

"No," said Mrs. Englewood, "I did not. I would have liked to do so," she added honestly, "but somehow he looked queer—not exactly bored, but not encouraging. So I let him go."

"That's right," said Maisie; "thank you. I am so glad you didn't. I do hope I shall never see him again," she then added to herself.

(To be continued.)

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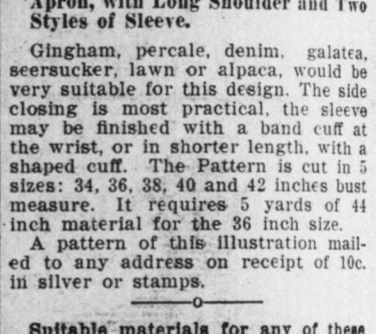


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