THE IRON CLAW

By ARTHUR STRINGER

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(The Marvelous Story, Hitherto Unpublished From Which the Pathe Photoplay of the Same Name Was Made)

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FIFTEENTH EPISODE.

The Veiled Woman.

(THE DOUBLE RESURRECTION.)

I.

AS LEGAR leaned back in the dim seclusion of his smoothly running limousine he permitted his scar-ravaged features the rare luxury of a twisted smile.

The limousine purred steadily southward through the deepening shadows of the almost deserted avenue. It turned into a mean side street and drew up beside the curb, well beyond the range of the sputtering arc light.

Two skulking figures sidled out of a gloomy areaway and approached the limousine as Legar got out. These worthies, answering to the appellations of Red Eagan and One-Lamp Louie, were of that primordial type which recognizes only the law of brute force. So it was that Red Eagan, mistaking Legar's twisted smile for something approaching good humor, attempted an unusual degree of familiarity.

"Say, gov'nor, I don't want t' raise a boiler, but that swell buzz wagon must eat up a pile of swag."

Legar replied curtly, with darkening face.

"You'll get your share of the stuff, Eagan, no more and no less. But there are times when that kind of talk might prove unhealthy, and the sooner the fact penetrates your thick skull the better."

The precious trio cautiously approached a ruinous old Washington Square mansion, and slipping into this dubious rabbit warren, crossed the hall, dimly lit by one sickly gas jet. As they started up the complaining stairs, a slender, heavily veiled young woman came hastily out of one of the rooms on the top floor. She leaned for a moment over the rickety balustrade, striving to pierce the half gloom enshrouding the identity of the oncoming visitors. As the trio filed past the gas jet on the second floor, their sinister faces were brought into sudden relief. Wheeling about the young woman darted swiftly through one of the half dozen doors off the hallway. Her refuge proved to be a windowless walled room, cluttered with dilapidated trunks and useless relics of bygone lodgers.

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Aided by the straggling rays of the moon, which filtered through the dingy skylight, she quickly picked her way to a battered three-legged cabinet leaning against the wall. Even as she pushed aside the curtain of faded green burlap she heard the shuffle of feet come to a stop at one of the doors down the corridor. From the depths of that ancient cabinet, the veiled stranger drew forth a telephonic helmet, from which trailed a slender thread of silk-insulated copper wire. As she quickly adjusted the microphones over her ears, the sound of voices, thin but distinct, came over that filament of copper. The voices, restrained and low-toned at first, rapidly became loud and quarrelsome.

The angry tones were those of Jules Legar and the unregenerate Red Eagan. The storm of heated words centered about the heavy iron safe standing in one corner of the room. Up to a comparatively short time ago this safe had been the receptacle of certain valuables looted by Red Eagan and One-Lamp Louie, under Legar's directions, from a palatial upper Fifth avenue residence. The safe door now stood yawningly open—its contents scattered promiscuously about the floor, but of the Van Horn family plate there was no trace.

"The guy what cracked this crib had the inside dope for sure," was Red Eagan's muttered comment.

"Are you trying to insinuate this is a plan to double-cross you and Louie?" queried Legar, a dangerous light creeping into his eyes.

"I ain't insinuatin' nothin'," was the other's surly response, "but who else was hep to where the stuff was salted—who else knew the combin' of the strong box?"

The answer Red Eagan received to his querulous riddle was both prompt and effective. A heavy iron projectile whirred through the air with unerring accuracy and caught him neatly on the point of the jaw. He gyrated limply to the floor, where he lay for a moment in dazed uncertainty. Then with a vindictive oath he tugged loose his automatic and fired point-blank at the sardonic face bending over him. A purple mist clouded the gunman's aim and the bullet spent itself with a soft plunk in the plastered ceiling. Before Eagan could fire a second time, that terrible iron projectile attached to the stump of Legar's arm descended again with lightning speed and sent the revolver spinning to the other side of the room.

At the staccato bark of the pistol the statuesque eavesdropper in the storeroom had stiffened with rigid expectation, but when Legar's incisive tones again broke in on her ears she displayed a sudden and startling activity. Throwing off her metallic headgear, she quickly up-ended an oblong packing case and, balancing on this shaky pedestal, worked loose the rusty hasp securing the heavy skylight. Forcing the yielding framework gradually upward with her head and shoulders, she wormed and undulated her way to the flat tin roof. Catlike she took the ten-foot drop to the roof of the adjoining house, landing lightly on her feet, and, scudding through a door opening upon a stairway, made her way down to the street.

A few moments later the meditative Red Eagan, walking slowly across the narrow strip of shadowy park, felt a light tap on his shoulder. He wheeled sharply in his tracks, his hand reaching instinctively toward his empty gun pocket. He quickly realized he had nothing to fear from this veiled woman who stood quietly confronting him, and who in no way resembled an emissary from that domed building known as headquarters. She silently motioned him toward a secluded bench near by. Prompted by a vague curiosity, Eagan warily followed her. It was not until they were seated that the woman of mystery spoke.

"Never mind how I know, but you have a heavy score to settle with a one-armed man calling himself Jules Legar—I can help you in this—that is—if you are not afraid."

"There ain't no livin' man has got my number," retorted Red.

At that moment this strange conference was augmented by a third person, who, slipping noiselessly across the intervening grass plot, took up his stand behind a thick-boled maple, where he could hear every word spoken. Legar, surmising the mutinous gunman was in a mood to stir up trouble, had promptly dispatched the adroit One-Lamp Louie to shadow his former pal.

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"The plan is a simple one—your Master has made it appear that a number of terrible crimes were perpetrated by his enemy, the Laughing Mask. Even the police have been persuaded to take that view. But you know, and I know, the real guilt lies with Legar. This man must be brought to justice and the name of the Laughing Mask cleared, even though he be dead. This can be done only by showing in detail how these crimes were committed—if you will write out those details tonight and place them in my hands tomorrow I will see that your score with Jules Legar is paid in full." The woman paused, and then continued—evidently trying a different tact. "If you do what I ask faithfully I will also make good your share of the loot which so mysteriously took wings and vanished from Legar's safe. But remember—I have the power to punish as well as to reward."

"I ain't much on the pen pushin' stuff, lady, but I guess I kin sling enuff ink to send that Iron Claw hound o' hell to the stool. But say, how d' I know yuh're on the level—yer line o' chatter sounds like one of them spirrit mediums what does the vanishin' act right under yer lamps. Where'll I meet yer to turn over the dockyment yuh're lookin' fer and collec' the mazuma I git fer the job?"

"It will be safer to meet me outside the city," she replied decisively, as she rose from the bench; "take the Lackawanna to a place in Jersey called Rosedale—when you get off the train turn to the left and follow the highway until you see a big white house standing on a hill—a little way down the road you will see an old barn on the edge of a deep gully—at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning I will meet you just outside that old barn. I will have your money and shall expect you to have the written statement disclosing Legar's crimes." Again she hesitated, and then, hoping to play on Eagan's apparent credulity, added, "The spirit of the dead Laughing Mask is working with me. He will watch your every move, until that paper is in my hands!"

"For Gawd's sake, call off the spirrit, lady. I give yer me dyin' oath an' affydavit t' do what yer axed me, but I don't want t' go up against no spooks."

"Obey my commands and you have nothing to fear—otherwise—beware!"

One-Lamp Louie, who had been drinking in this artfully staged flummery with avid ears, his one good optic almost starting from its socket, now precipitately rushed to his chief. As he reported in detail his filched version of the conversation between Red Eagan and the veiled guardian of departed spirits, it was apparent he shared in no light measure the superstitious fear of his traitorous confrere. But these vaporish fancies were quickly dispelled by the crafty-minded master schemer.

"You're as bad as some half-witted old woman, falling for that spirit bunk," snapped Legar. "I suppose you'll want some one to hold your hand in the dark after this."

"If there ain't no spirrits mixed up in this deal, gov'nor, who tipped off that bunch o' crape to all this inside gossip she handed Red?" solemnly queried the wide-eyed thug.

"Unless I miss my guess, there's a dictaphone planted in this room and I'm going to find it if it takes a week," said Legar.

He lost no time in making good this declaration, fishing under the furniture, along the moldings and in the dark corners of the room with that prehensile iron hook which seemed almost endowed with human intelligence. Suddenly he gave a guttural bark of triumph—under the heavy iron safe backed against the wall he found the object of his search and a few moments' work sufficed to trace the tell-tale thread of wire back to the storeroom, where the up-ended packing case and unlocked skylight told their own story.

"That ought to answer your ravings," was Legar's quiet-toned comment to his bewildered lieutenant, and then he added maliciously, "there will be some uninvited guests at the next seance of your high priestess friend, and somehow I have a feeling that she and Red are going to join those departed spirits inside of the next twenty-four hours."

The unsuspecting object of Legar's levity, with her features still heavily shrouded as on the preceding night, stepped out of the sagging doorway of a weather-stained old barn which clung dizzily to the brink of a precipitous and rock-toothed ravine. As she approached the formal Italian garden centered about a musically cascading fountain she perceived a golden-haired girl seated on one of the rustic benches.

Presently an elderly, white-haired man, whose deep-lined face and troubled eyes bore mute witness of past mental strife, came slowly down the graveled walk and stopped beside the disconsolate figure on the rustic bench. Laying his hand on the girl's tremulous shoulder, the newcomer spoke in comforting tones.

"You mustn't take this so to heart, Margory—if Davy could speak from the grave he would tell you to be brave for his sake—and as for the Laughing Mask—that unmitigated scoundrel and hypocrite isn't worth one of your tears."

The reply trembling on Margory's lips remained unspoken, for at that moment a young woman whose features were hidden by heavy folds of black veiling stepped out from behind a vine-covered trellis.

"You are doing the Laughing Mask a grave injustice, Enoch Golden," she cried in a clear and ringing voice, "and even now if you and your daughter will accompany me but a short distance I will place in your hands indisputable proof of what I say."

A suddenly reanimated Margory sprang to her feet. She turned to the unknown intruder and cried impetuously: "Can you really show that the Laughing Mask was innocent of all those terrible charges? If you can, please, please take us quickly to where you have the proof."

"Wait, Margory," cautioned the experience-saddened banker. "First let this veiled person tell us who she is and where she wants to take us. This may be one of Legar's tricks, for all we know."

Still questioning the outcome of this dubious venture, the stern-faced millionaire finally yielded to Margory's earnest importuning, and, following the black-garbed figure of their swiftly moving guide, they presently stood before the dilapidated old building tottering on the brink of the ravine. At that moment a thick-set, flat-footed individual shuffled into view along the dusty road, the visor of his cap pulled low over his malevolent blue-jowled face and his beefy fists jerking uneasily as he walked. The woman in black turned to her companions, and, indicating this ungainly figure, spoke rapidly.

"I have every reason to believe that man has kept faith with me, and if I am right I shall be able in a few minutes to place in your hands the proof of which I spoke. But if there should be treachery, I wish to face it alone. You will find that the harness-room in the loft of the barn has a strong door with heavy bolts. Please wait for me there, and at the first sound of trouble, barricade yourselves until help comes from the house."

"This sounds like a trap," he said with emphatic disapproval. "Come, Margory, come back to the house at once."

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So far everything had gone in accordance with the carefully laid plans of the muffled strategist, and with a feeling that victory was within her reach, she quickly approached Red Eagan, who was waiting near by with undisguised impatience.

"Sure, I got what yer lookin' fer, lady," he answered in reply to her look of interrogation, "but between them spirrits an' a cramp in me mitt I've had one 'ell of a night."

Reaching into an inner pocket he drew out a grimy ink-splashed paper.

"This 'ere dockyment will put th' bug on that Iron Claw gorilla all right. Now, if yer ready t' come across wid——"

The gunman's words were suddenly clipped short by the sharp crack of a pistol. A look of surprised consternation came into Red Eagan's face—for a moment he swayed unsteadily on his feet—then slowly crumpled into a heap of inanimate clay. Into the startled vision of his companion came a black limousine furiously racing along the highway, the evil face of Legar plainly discernible as he leaned far out from the swaying vehicle, emptying his automatic in their direction. There was not a moment to lose. Snatching the crimson-stained paper from under the limp body of the slain gunman, the woman ran swiftly toward the old barn, reaching that sanctuary just as Legar and his confederates swarmed out of the limousine in hot pursuit. Through the sagging portals and up the rickety stairs she darted, the wolfish pack close at her heels. For a brief instant she surveyed her surroundings. Behind the heavy oaken door of the harness-room she knew Margery and her father had taken refuge in accordance with her instructions, and she must in no way jeopardize their safety.

Close by a broken window, overlooking the depths of the rocky gorge, stood a shabby old-fashioned trunk, once the property of some forgotten coachman. It took but a moment for the harried fugitive to scramble into that ancient receptacle, but even as she lowered the cover over her crouching figure, Legar and his cursing henchmen stormed up the narrow stairs. The quick eye of the master crook caught the movement of that closing trunk cover. Grinning with unholy exultation, he turned to his unsavory crew of followers.

"Take that trunk and throw it out the window," snarled Legar. "We've caged our bird all right, and when she hits those rocks she won't feel like meddling with my business for some time to come."

As he led his murderous band out of the old building toward the abruptly sloping wall of the ravine, the door of the harness-room slowly opened and Enoch Golden stepped out, closely followed by his horror-stricken daughter.

"I could see plainly through that crack in the door," murmured the white-faced girl, "the poor woman tried to hide in a trunk and Legar had his men drop her from the window.

The distressed look in her eyes changed to one of sudden bewilderment. From out of the cobwebbed mouth of a grain chute, over which the trunk had been resting, appeared the head and shoulders of the veiled stranger. As she regained her footing on the rough boarded floor she drew from the inside of her black gown a crumpled and blood-stained paper. This she quietly handed to the startled girl.

"Here is the proof I promised you," were her low-toned words.

"But how did you escape from the trunk?" interrogated the still bewildered Margery. "Who are you? And why did you risk your life to clear the name of the Laughing Mask?"

The woman replied calmly.

"Half the bottom of the trunk was broken away and it was easy for me to slide through the opening into that grain chute. As to who I am, the time has come when I am ready to reveal my identity." The woman of mystery, with a quick movement, tore off her heavy veil and with it a wig of dark hair, disclosing a clean-cut and boyishly handsome face. An incredulous grasp of surprise burst from Margory's lips—"Davy!" she shrilled joyfully. "Oh, Davy, you have come back to us from the dead."

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II.

The Race With Death.

A little later Manley sat on the white pillared veranda relating his strange story to a group of listeners.

One of the listeners was a bull-necked individual with a reddish-brown complexion, wearing the uniform of a captain of police. He now shuffled his feet uneasily.

"That's all very interestin', young man," he broke in with an air of impatience, "but I've come all the way to this jumpin' off place from headquarters to get that Van Horn loot you say you lifted out of Legar's safe. I've got a couple of shoo fly cops from Jersey City workin' with me on this job and it's time we got down to business."

They found the apprehensive and peace-loving Negus gingerly handling a repeating rifle, and extremely willing to be relieved from his onerous guard mount over a decaying and rat-infested grain bin. Fishing in the depths of that moldy bin, Davy drew out a heavily weighted gunny sack, which clanked musically to the ears of the russet-faced police captain. With visions of speedy promotion that ebullient arm of the law immediately took to himself all the credit for the danger-fraught reclamation of the Van Horn heirlooms.

"This is goin' to make some stir at headquarters," he gloated, tenderly replacing the yellow metalled dinner set, "an' I've got a hunch that one-armed crook ain't so far off. We'll send the swag up to the house an' then beat every inch of the gully for his bunch of rattlesnakes."

This plan met with Golden's approval, and he turned to the old gardener who was standing with mouth agape.

"Here, Tim," he ordered, "take Peter and Negus and get this bag up to the house. Tell Miss Margory I want it locked in the gun-room safe, and keep that safe guarded carefully until we get back."

"Be sorry!" he ejaculated, "th' masther clane forgot he kapes that safe locked up entirely, nary a soul but himself knowin' th' combination—Negus, be a good lad and run back an' ask him what'll we be doin' with th' sack."

As the somewhat reluctant Negus departed on this errand, Tim and his companion entered the house and made their way along highly polished floors to the gun-room at the further end of the imposing hall. Here they found Margory Golden, who was often drawn to this room by its fascinating collection of death-dealing weapons.

"There was no necessity for sending Negus back," she exclaimed. "I know the combination of the safe quite as well as father."

As Peter, the under gardener, curiously watched the fair-haired girl spinning the safe dial th her slender fingers a startling transformation suddenly took place in the person of old Tim, the trusted servant of many years. The stoop vanished from his back and his eyes blazed with the savage lust of battle, as with a quick movement he freed his left arm, carried in a sling by his side. The next moment that left arm, bearing a heavy hook of wrought iron, crashed down upon the skull of the unsuspecting Peter and sent him thudding to the floor like a felled ox.

With a panther-like spring the metamorphosed gardener was upon the bewildered girl bending over the safe, and again that cruel iron claw shot out, clutching her arm as in a vise. With a derisive laugh of triumph Legar tore off his false trappings, revealing the scar-twisted face hideous with evil passion. For a full moment he stood gloating over his pinioned captive, then, as the unsubdued girl started to call for help, he roughly pressed a contaminating hand over her half open mouth, and pursing his thin lips gave a shrill, penetrating whistle. In response to this signal a faint shuffling noise came from the direction of the fireplace, which was of such huge dimensions as to occupy almost an entire side of the room.

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The shuffling sounds became more distinct, and two of Legar's followers, with faces blackened like imps of darkness, sprawled out of the rectangular opening of the chimney amid a powdery cloud of falling soot. At a curt command from their grim-faced leader they quickly bound the shrinking girl, and, tying a handkerchief over her mouth, dragged her across the floor into the fireplace. Muttering violent imprecations as they laboriously gained a foothold, they disappeared with their helpless burden up the cavernous maw of the chimney. Legar strode to the door and, rapidly turning the key in the heavy lock, caught up the sack of disputed plunder, and, clawing his way up the ragged lining of the murky chimney flue, vanished as completely as though the earth had swallowed him.

Even as the quaint personality of old Tim merged into that viciously depraved character, Jules Legar, the baffled group of searchers returning to the old barn, after vainly combing the ravine for some trace of that arch criminal, saw approaching them the rheumatic-stooped figure of the old gardner who carried his left hand in a red bandana sling.

"What does this mean, Tim?" Enoch Golden interrogated sternly. "I thought I told you to guard the safe until we returned."

"Faith an' I don' know phwat ye might be talkin' about, Misther Golden," rejoined the old man querulously, "th' new docthure ye're was afther sendin' to look at me hand gave me a shlapin' powdher to relave th' pain an' said 'twas ye'er orders to stay in me bed th' whole."

Into the faces of his startled listeners flashed bewildered amazement, then came a babble of incoherent questioning, then, as the full significance of this astounding chicanery beat in upon their senses, they rushed with one accord toward the distant manor house. As Davy raced up the steps and into the hall he encountered Mrs. Golden coming out of the library door.

"Where is Margory?" he gasped. "We haven't a second to lose. She may be in terrible danger."

"She went to the gunroom about an hour ago and I haven't seen her since. What is it? What has happened?" came the startled response.

But the apprehensive Davy was already throwing his slender weight against the bolted door of the gunroom and calling out words of encouragement to the gentle girl he believed was in that room. But his frenzied efforts to force that heavy barrier proved impotently futile, and the others now came crowding about him, panting like tired hounds. The strong-armed police captain, skilled in the raiding of fortified poolrooms, proved himself a man of action. Quickly seizing a medieval battle-ax which ornamented the wall, he smashed in the locked door with a couple of well directed blows. The men stormed across the threshold of the gunroom, then stopped short in blank surprise. The windows were shut and fastened from the inside, the limp and sprawling Peter lay where he had been dropped in his tracks, but of Margory Golden and the burlap sack there was no trace.

Cautiously peering about for some sign of his unseen foe, Davy caught a brief glance of a swaying, shadowy figure perched high above him. Then with a muffled oath, that tottering figure came avalanching down the chimney, and landing on the narrow ledge, gripped at Davy as a drowning man clutches a floating bit of wreckage.

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Vainly the young secretary strove to free himself from that deadly embrace, but the added weight gradually loosened his own uncertain hold. Lurching out into space, the interlocked antagonists hurtled headlong down that dim shaft into the fireplace of the gunroom. To the horrified group which heard the impact of those falling bodies against the solid foundation of brick and mortar it seemed hopeless that either Manley or his murderous opponent could escape death. It was due to the fact that Legar's picked assassin had landed underneath, and broken the force of Davy's fall, that the badly shaken secretary owed his life. Assisted by Golden and Captain Brackett, he struggled unsteadily to his feet, his face grotesquely smeared and his hands torn and bleeding.

"They have gone down the chimney in the north wing," he cried out; "it runs to the ground on the outside of the house. By knocking out the bricks at the base they can make their escape and take Margory with them."

He had hardly finished his words when there was a wild stampede out of the room—a stampede led by the battered Davy himself. At that instant a volley of staccato reports, like those of a gattling gun going into action, smote the ears of the baffled pursuers.

"They've stolen the Mercury, cried the frantic millionaire, "and if they've stopped to put the Arrow out of commission they can show a clean pair of heels to anything on the lake."

To Enoch Golden's intense relief, the machinery of the high-powered Arrow had not been tampered with. With the awakening throb of her engine that slender craft quivered from stem to stern, and then, like a true prototype of her name, shot out into the lake, and the chase was on.

From the scar-marked man who stood with his field glasses focused on the pursuing Arrow came a low laugh of derision.

"They can never cut down our lead," he announced with evident satisfaction, as he lowered his glasses. He leered evilly at the listening girl lying bound and gagged on the shell-like flooring of the narrow craft. But the next instant his look changed to one of savage concern. The delicate mechanism of the Mercury had revolted at the unskilled handling of her clumsy-fingered engineer. She began to miss badly, while her speed perceptibly diminished. Legar caught up his glasses and for a moment intently studied the on-coming Arrow, which was evidently gaining.

Then, with a quick twist of the steering wheel, he sent the racing power boat heading directly for the nearest shore. Even as her sharp prow grated over the shelving beach Legar and his villainous crew swarmed over the side, carrying the fettered girl and the burlap sack with them. They scrambled hastily up the embankment of the railroad track skirting the lake, just as the stern-faced father of the abducted girl beached the pulsating Arrow and sprang hastily ashore.

Hampered by his captive and the heavy sack of loot, the master schemer realized he could not hope to outstrip his opponents by ordinary methods of flight. But the evil genius of the man was equal to the occasion. At a little distance down the track a dozen Italian laborers were busy repairing the roadbed, under the supervision of a burly Irish foreman. The handcar on which these men went to and from their work had been set off to one side of the track near where Legar was standing.

"Get that handcar back on the rails and be quick about it," came his sharp command.

An automobile of ancient vintage, driven by a stupid rustic, came wheezing up the highway, which paralleled the railroad. Almost before he knew what had happened the surprised driver of that decrepid jitney had a double load of clamorous passengers. In the general confusion of voices, Enoch Golden managed to make himself heard by putting his mouth close to the ear of the deaf countryman.

"We want to catch a handcar that just went up the track!" he shouted. "I will pay you $100 to help us."

Legar had congratulated himself too soon on the ease of his escape. As the handcar started toiling up a long, gradual grade, he looked back and saw the automobile loaded with armed men in hot pursuit. But he checked his muttered oath as the sputtering car struck the hill, slowed down and finally came to a dead stop. The heavy load had proved too much for the time-worn engine. Legar could see his opponents getting out of the balky automobile, which, relieved of its burden, started crawling up the hill, with its passengers hurrying behind it.

At that moment there beat in upon his ears the long-drawn screech of a locomotive whistling for a crossing. With a look of fiendish hate, Legar stooped and lifted Margory Golden from the rough flooring of the jolting handcar.

For a moment Legar balanced the fettered girl in his arms, then with a parting malediction, he dropped that helpless figure squarely between the glistening rails.

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At some distance beyond the foot of the incline the rails, sweeping in a wide curve around a bend in the road, were lost to sight. It so happened that just around this bend the switching apparatus used to throw freight trains onto a siding was undergoing certain repairs at the hands of a blue-jeaned track-walker. This man, all unconscious of threatening tragedy, had finished his labors and was wiping his grimy hands on a piece of cotton waste. Suddenly he became conscious of a motionless figure standing beside him.

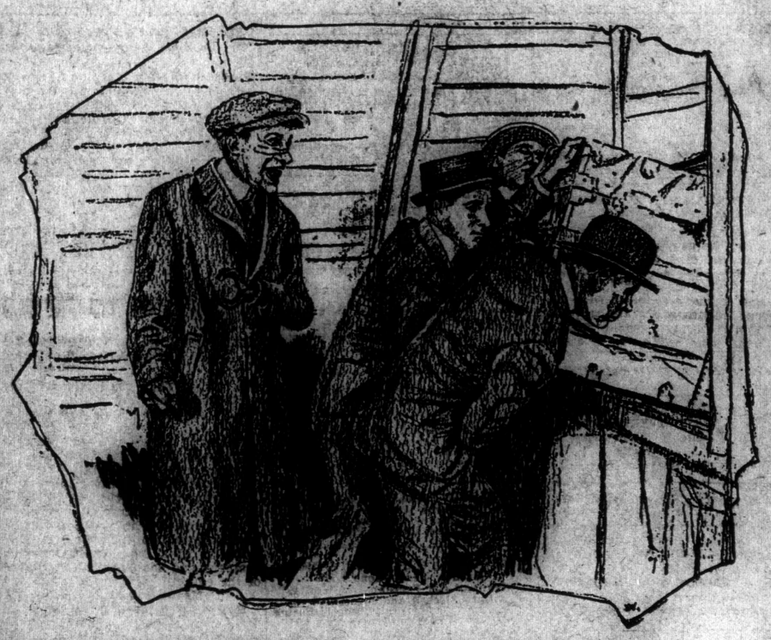
As he glanced up he saw the stranger's face was covered by a mask, slit by a grotesquely laughing mouth. Without a word this strange figure bent and grasped the long lever controlling the switch. The railroad employe, resenting this unwarranted intrusion, attempted to shove the masked intruder aside, but a heavy blow on the jaw sent him staggering down the embankment, while his opponent frantically threw over the switch lever. So it was that when that fire-breathing avalanche of metal had thundered down within a few feet of the huddled white figure it suddenly swerved, with its wheel-flanges screaming against the switch curve, onto the long siding paralleling the main line.

The half-conscious girl felt herself lifted by tender arms and laid on a soft bed of grass. A hazy figure bent over her, cutting away the cruelly biting thongs and gently chafing her wrists. Then she felt a kiss imprinted on her aching hand, but when she opened her eyes the stranger was gone. In his place came the figures of her tortured father, the anxious Davy and the solemn-faced police captain.

"What you say is impossible," Enoch Golden said soothingly. "The man is dead."

"But it was the Laughing Mask, I tell you," Margory wearily answered. "I saw him plainly, and besides, he kissed my hand before he went away.

(To be continued next week.)



"Take that trunk and throw it out the window," snarled Legar.

Read It Here --- See It At The Pantages Theatre