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The Face Behind the Mask.

A ROMANCE.

With which, he seized one of the wax candles, and trotted, with rather ungraceful haste, after Sir Norman and his conductors. The young knight had been led down the same long passage he had walked through before; but instead of entering the chamber of horrors, they passed through the centre arch, and found themselves in another long, vaulted corridor, dimly lit by the glow of the outer one. It was as cold and dismal a place, Sir Norman thought, as he had ever seen; and it had an odor damp and earthy, and of the grave. It had two or three great ponderous doors on either side, vaulted over with huge iron bolts; and before one of these his conductors paused. Just as they did so, the glimmer of the dwarf's taper pierced the gloom, and the next moment, smiling from ear to ear, he was by their side.

"Down with the bars," he cried; "this is the one for him, the strongest and safest of them all. Now, my darling courtier, you will see how tenderly your little friend provides for his favorites." If Sir Norman made any reply, it was drowned in the rattle and clank of the massive doors, and is hopelessly lost to posterity. The huge door swung back, but nothing was visible but a sort of black velvety pall, and effluvia much stronger than sweet. Involuntarily he recoiled as one of the guards made a motion for him to enter.

"Shove him in! Shove him in!" yelled the dwarf, who was getting so excited with glee that he was dancing about in a sort of jig of delight. "In with him; in with him. If he won't go peacefully, kick him in head foremost."

"I would strongly advise him not to try it," said Sir Norman, as he stepped into the blackness. "If they have any regard for their health, it does not make much difference, after all, my little friend, whether I spend the next half hour in the inky blackness of this place, or the blood and grandeur of your royal court. My little friend, until we meet again, permit me to say au revoir." The dwarf laughed in his pleasant way and pushed the candle cautiously inside the door.

"Good-bye for a little while, my dear young sir, and while the headman is sharpening the axe, I will leave you to think about your little friend. Let you should lack amusement, I'll leave you a light to contemplate your apartment; and for fear you may get lonesome, these two gentlemen will stand outside your door with their swords drawn, till I come back. Good-bye, my dear young sir—good-bye!"

The dungeon door swung to with a tremendous bang. Sir Norman was barred in his prison to await his doom, and the dwarf was skipping along the passage with sprightliness, laughing as he went.

CHAPTER XIII.

Probably not one of you, my dear friends, who glance graciously over this, was ever shut up in a dungeon under expectation of bearing the unpleasant operation of decapitation within half an hour. It never happened to myself either, that I can recollect; so, of course, you or I personally can form no idea what the sensation may be like; but in this particular case, tradition saith Sir Norman Kingsley's state of mind was decidedly depressed. As the door shut violently, he leaned against it, and listened to his jailers place the great bars in their sockets, and felt he was shut in, in the dreariest, darkest, dimmest, disagreeablest place that ever had been his misfortune to enter. He thought of Leoline, and reflected that in all probability she was sleeping the sleep of the just—perhaps dreaming of him, and little knowing that his head was to be cut off in half an hour.

In the course of time, morning would come—it was not likely that ordinary course of nature would be cut off because he was; and Leoline would get up and dress herself, and

looking a thousand times prettier than ever, stand at the window and wait for him. Ah! she might wait—much good would it do her; about that time he would probably be where? It was a rather uncomfortable question, not easily answered, and depressed him to a very despondent degree indeed.

He thought of Ormiston and La Masque—no doubt they were billing and cooing in most approved fashion then, and never thinking of him; though, but for La Masque and his own folly, he might have been half-married by this time. He thought of Count L'Estrange and Master Hubert, and became firmly convinced, if one did not find Leoline, the other would; and, each being equally bad, it was a toss-up in agony which got her.

He thought of Queen Miranda, and of the adage, "Put no trust in princes," and sighed deeply as he reflected what a bad sign of human nature it was—more particularly such handsome human nature—that she could, figuratively speaking, put him on the back one moment, and kick him to the scaffold the next. He thought, dejectedly, what a fool he was to ever have come back; or even, having come back, not to have taken great pains to stay up aloft, instead of pitching abruptly head foremost into such a select company without an invitation. He thought, too, what a cold, damp chamber they had lodged him in, and how apt he would be to have a bad attack of ague and miasmatic fever, if they would only let him live long enough to enjoy those blessings. And this having brought him to the end of his melancholy meditation, he began to reflect how he really must amuse himself in the interim, before quitting his vale of tears. The candle was still blinking feebly on its feeble prostration, and it suddenly reminded him of the dwarf's advice to examine his bowler of repose. So he picked it up and sniffed it with his fingers and held it aloof, much as Robinson Crusoe held the brand in the dark cavern with the dead goat. In the velvet pall of blackness before alluded to, its small, wan ray pierced but a few inches, and only made the darkness visible. But Sir Norman grouped his way to the wall and he found he was all over green and noisome slime, and broken out into a cold, clammy perspiration, as though it were at its last gasp. By the aid of his friendly light, for which he was really much obliged to a fact which, had his little friend known, he would not have left it— he managed to make the circuit of his prison, which he found rather spacious, and by no means unhabitable for the walls and floors were covered with fat, black beetles, whose families of which interesting specimens of the insect world he crunched remorselessly under foot, and massacred at every step, and great, depraved-looking rats, with flashing eyes and sinister teeth, who made frantic dives and rushes at him, and bit at his jack-boots with fierce fury. These small quadrupeds reminded him very of the dwarf, especially in the region of the eyes and the general countenance; and he began to reflect that if the dwarf's soul—supposing him to possess such an article as that which he had already expired, and if it had, would he be the person to conduct him to death? The door opened; a puff of wind extinguished his candle, but not until he had caught the glimmer of jewels, the shining of gold, and the flutter of long black hair; then someone came in. The door was closed; the bolts shot back—and he was alone with Miranda the Queen.

There was no trouble about recognizing her for the candle in her hand a small lamp, which she held up between them, that its rays might fall directly on both faces. Each was rather white, perhaps, and one heart beat faster than it had ever gone before, and that one was decidedly not the queen's. She was dressed exactly as he had seen her, in purple and ermine, in jewels and gold, and strangely out of place she looked there, in her splendid beauty, among the black beetles and rats. Her face might have been a dead blank wall, or cut out of cold, white stone, for it expressed; and, as she lightly held up her rich robes in one hand, and in the other bore the light, the dark shining eyes were fixed on his face, and were as barren of interest, eagerness, compassion, tenderness, or any other feeling, as the shining of black glass ones of a wax doll. So they stood looking at each other some ten seconds or so, and then, still looking full at him, Miranda spoke, and her voice was as clear and emotionless as her eyes.

"Well, Sir Norman Kingsley, I have come to see you before you die." "Madame," he stammered, scarcely knowing what he said, "you are kind."

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"Am I? Perhaps you forget I signed your death-warrant."

"Probably it would have been at the risk of your own life to refuse."

"Nothing of the kind. Not one of them would hurt a hair on my head if I refused to sign fifty death-warrants. Now, am I kind?"

"Very likely it would have amounted to the same thing in the end—let you live until their next meeting, you signed it or not; so what does it matter?"

"You are mistaken. They would not kill you; at least, not to-night. If I had not signed it, they would have let you live until their next meeting, which will be this night week; and I would have incurred neither risk nor danger by refusing."

"I do not know that that prospect is much more inviting than the present one. Even death is preferable to a week's imprisonment in a place like this."

"But in the meantime you might have escaped."

"Madame, look at this stone floor, that stone roof, these solid walls, that barred and massive door; reflect then, that I am some forty feet underground—cannot perform impossibilities, and then ask yourself how?"

"In the velvet pall of blackness before alluded to, its small, wan ray pierced but a few inches, and only made the darkness visible. But Sir Norman grouped his way to the wall and he found he was all over green and noisome slime, and broken out into a cold, clammy perspiration, as though it were at its last gasp. By the aid of his friendly light, for which he was really much obliged to a fact which, had his little friend known, he would not have left it— he managed to make the circuit of his prison, which he found rather spacious, and by no means unhabitable for the walls and floors were covered with fat, black beetles, whose families of which interesting specimens of the insect world he crunched remorselessly under foot, and massacred at every step, and great, depraved-looking rats, with flashing eyes and sinister teeth, who made frantic dives and rushes at him, and bit at his jack-boots with fierce fury. These small quadrupeds reminded him very of the dwarf, especially in the region of the eyes and the general countenance; and he began to reflect that if the dwarf's soul—supposing him to possess such an article as that which he had already expired, and if it had, would he be the person to conduct him to death? The door opened; a puff of wind extinguished his candle, but not until he had caught the glimmer of jewels, the shining of gold, and the flutter of long black hair; then someone came in. The door was closed; the bolts shot back—and he was alone with Miranda the Queen."

"Your majesty, I have nothing to forgive."

"Bah!" she said, scornfully. "Do not mock me here. My justice, for snob! You have but fifteen minutes to live in this world, Sir Norman; and if you have no better way of spending them, I will tell you a strange story—my own, and all about this."

To be Continued.

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NERVY UNDER FIRE.

DRESS PARADES IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY.

Incidents of Great Coolness and Bravery on the Part of Soldiers That Were Observed During the War of the States.

"I never knew," said the colonel, "of but one case of dress parade under fire, and that was at the crossing of Swift creek in the Petersburg campaign. The Eighty-first New York, under command of Colonel John D. Raulston of Oswego, was under orders to cross to the Petersburg side of the creek. The enemy kept up a constant fire, and Colonel Raulston moved his companies in a way to attract the attention of General Butler, who sat on his horse some distance to the rear, watching the movements of his own men as well as those of the enemy."

"After the first company crossed it formed in line as a guard for the second company. When the second company was across, it took the place of the first, which moved forward half company distance, and so on, with the precision of parade drill until all were across. General Butler was so pleased with the bearing of the men, with their coolness and discipline, that he sent a message to Colonel Raulston, presenting his compliments and saying in effect that a regiment which could do so well under trying circumstances would find it easy to go through the evolutions of dress parade under fire. The colonel accepted this as an order and formed his men as if for dress parade. At least for the space of several minutes the Eighty-first New York stood in line, with guns at parade rest, and then moved forward as if passing in review before the colonel."

"I saw a case like that," said the captain, "but it was an accident. Our soldiers were given to a sort of mechanical use of the orders, 'Shoulder arms,' 'Order arms' and 'Parade rest.' The boys often thought he used these phrases absent-mindedly, but whether he did or did not the regiment was brought to a parade rest half a dozen times on every dress parade. On one occasion, when the regiment was formed as a part of a long line of battle, it was reported that the enemy was about to charge, and the men, who had been resting at will, formed quickly in line."

"The colonel's voice rang out the order: 'Attention! Shoulder arms!' Then, to the amazement of the men, came the order: 'Order arms! Parade rest!' The regiments to the right and left were standing at a ready. The men of our regiment were looking steadily to the front at a general rest. The colonel afterward admitted that he never meant to give the order, that it was in his mind to order the men to get ready to fire, but instead came out the phrase, 'Parade rest!' and he took advantage of the unexpected compliment to his men for their coolness in the face of the enemy."

"We came nearer to a dress parade than that at Shiloh," said the sergeant. "Our regiment and I think, the Sixth Ohio were the first of Buell's army to cross the Tennessee river on the evening of the first day's battle. General Nelson, our division commander, was so anxious to get the men across that he ordered that no horses be taken with the first boatloads. So it happened that our own regimental officers were not present when we formed in line. One of the senior captains took command and was forming a line on strict parade principles when a large officer, taking short breaths, said: 'That's right, captain; straight as a rule—straight as a rule, men!'"

"The officer was General William Nelson, who had crossed with the first boatload, leaving his horse behind. Not one man in the regiment had ever seen him on foot before, although all of them were familiar with his appearance on horseback. He seemed so different on what the boys called his sea legs and was so different in manner that at first he was not recognized. He took command of the regiment as soon as formed and moved along the line as if he were an inspecting officer. He was the hardest sweeper in the army, and yet that evening he swore not once. The men, used to his blistering manners, were surprised at the look of anxiety and appeal on his face. He said in low, soft tones as he moved along the line: 'Now, gentlemen, remember what you have come to do, and do it like soldiers. Make your line as straight as a rule, and when you go forward let the line of bayonets be as straight as if you were on dress parade. This will show the enemy that you are not afraid, and it will give confidence to our own men who have been fighting all day.' And that night and the next morning the men of Nelson's division went forward with lines as straight, with step as regular as though they were on dress parade."

"The greatest dress parade under fire that I ever saw," said the old ex-Confederate, "was when the army of the Cumberland formed to move forward against Missionary Ridge. Some of us who were watching that day saw the finest military display of our lives. Perched on the heights of Missionary Ridge, we looked down into a great amphitheater into which marched as if for parade and review nearly 100 regiments. We could not measure the strength of the divisions, but we counted the flags, and we knew that in the mass there were at least 85 regimental organizations. My count was 93, but the boys insisted that I saw double."

"We had no uneasiness at first, and we laughed at the idea of an army which we believed was at our mercy holding a grand review. We were interested all the same, and when the line so perfectly formed swept forward on our outposts, carrying everything with it, we were startled out of our boots. I verily believe that that orderly parade of the army of the Cumberland, within the range of our sharpshooters, and the visible testimony of 85 regimental flags carried toward us at double quick, did more to demoralize Bragg's army than any other incident of the campaign. When that same line swept up Missionary Ridge, Bragg's veterans scampered away, having in their minds visions of the precision and discipline which they had witnessed a day or two before."

Words Failed. A party of Midland wheelmen lately visited the churchyard of the village of Enville. On one of the tombstones they discovered the following epitaph:

He was—
But would he be wanting to say what
Think what a husband should be—
—he was that!
—London Express.



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