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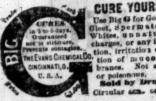
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The Face Behind the Mask.

A ROMANCE.

tering the room they found the bed

empty, and the lady gone:

A dead pause followed, during
which the three looked blankly at

the bed, and then at each other.
The scene, no doubt, would have

party; but neither of our trio could

see anything whatever to laugh at.

"What in heaven's name has hap-

pened?" he wonderingly exclaimed.

"Some one has been here," said

Sir Norman, turning very pale, "and

Acting on the hint, Sir Norman

of the beautiful plague pat-

silver shining vision was gone.

CHAPTER III.

in despair, and the doctor took his

and Ormiston stopped in the lower

hall, and looked at each other in

miston, appealing more to society at

large than to his bewildered com-

"I haven't the faintest idea," said

Sir Norman, distractedly; only I am pretty certain, if I don't find her, I

shall do something so desperate that the plague will be a trifle compared

"It seems almost impossible that

"And yet more impossible that she

can have gone off herself," pursued

Ormiston, with the air of one enter-

we left her dead, or in a dead swoon,

which is all the same in Greek, and

yet he talks of her getting up and

bottom of the mystery,"

sleep again until I find her."

of St. Paul's tolled nine.

Sir Norman shuddered.

thing I ever heard of!"

Well-and yet?"

there!

and vet-"

Ormiston, "is to go in search of her.

Sleeping, I suppose, is out of the

'Of course it is! I shall never

They passed out, and Sir Norman

this time took the precaution of

the steed was stolen.

night had grown darker and hotter;

and as they walked along the clock

quired Sir Norman, as they rapidly

hurried along.
"I shall recommend visiting the

not there, then we can try the pest-

"Heaven forbid she should be here! It is the most mysterious

"What do you think how of La

Masque's prediction-dare you doubt

"Ormiston, I don't know what to

think. It is the same face I saw,

"I can't tell you-I am fairly be

wildered. If we don't find the lady

at her own house, I have half a

mind to apply to your friend, La

Masque, again."
"The wisest thing you could do,

"That's settled, then; and

don't talk, for conversation at this smart pace I don't admire."

tent young man that he was, instant

ly held his tongue, and they strode along at a breathless pace. There

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was an unusual concourse of

Ormiston, like the amiable, obed-

house where we found her first;

"And now, where shall we go?" in-

"In fact, the only way to get at

said

she can be carried off-don't it?"

body two minutes after!"

going off herself!"

What can it all mean?" said Or-

and disappeared. Sir Norman

seized the lamp burning on the table,

said

carried her off while we were gone. "Let us search the house,"

not be too late yet."

est spot.

her not.

ient.

mute amaze.

friends followed him, and

Ormiston was the first to speak.

scene, no doubt, would have ludicrous enough to a third

 You had better have ner taken to the pest house at once, then; there are chirurgeons and nurses then ;

"To the pest-house? Why, man, I might as well have her thrown into the plague-pit there, at once! Not I! I shall have her taken to my own house, and there properly cared

for, and this good fellow will drive her there instantly." Sir Norman backed this insinuali m by putting a broad gold piece into the driver's hand, which instantly produced a magical effect on his rather surly countenance.

"Certainly, sir," he begon, spring-ing into his seat with alacrity. Where shall I drive the young lady to?"

"Follow me," said Sir Norman. "Come along, Ormiston," and scizing his friend by the arm, he harried along with a velocity rather uncom-fortable, considering they both wore cloaks, and the night was excessively sultry. The gloomy vehicle and its fainting burden followed close be-

What do you mean to do with her?" asked Ormiston, as soon as he found breath to speak. "Haven't I told you?" said Sir Norman impatiently. "Take her home,

of course "And after that?" "Go for a doctor."

"And after that?" "Take care of her till she gets "And after that?"

'After that! After that! How do know what after that?" exclaimed Sir Norman, rather fiercely. ton, what do you mean? Ormiston laughed.

And after that you'll marry her, suppose?' "Perhaps I/may, if she will have

ne. And what if I do?"
"Oh, nothing! Only it struck me you may be saving another man's wife.

"That's true," said Sir Norman, in a subdued tone, "and if such should unhappily be the case, nothing will remain but to live in hopes that he may be carried off by

"Pray heaven that we may not be carried off by it ourselves!" said Ormiston, with a slight shudder. "I shall dream of nothing but that horrible plague-pit for a week. If it were not for La Masque I would not stay another hour in this peststricken city."

"Here we are," was Sir Norman's rather inapposite answer, as they entered Piccadilly, and stopped before a large and handsome house, whose gloomy portal was faintly illuminated by a large lamp. 'Here, my man, just carry the lady in."
He unlocked the door as he spoke

led the way across a long hall sleeping chamber, fitted up. The man placed the body on the bed and departed, while Sir Norman, seizing a hand-bell, rang a peal that brought the staid-looking house-keeper to the scene directly. Seeing a lady, young and beautiful, in bridal robes, lying apparently dead on her young master's bed at that hour of the night, the discreet matron, over whose virtuous head fifty years and a snow-white cap had passed, started back with a slight

"Gracious me, Sir Norman! What on earth is the meaning of this?"
"My dear Mrs. Preston," began Sir Norman, blandly, "this young lady is ill of the plague, and-

But all further explanation was cut short by a horrified shriek from the old lady, and a perceptible rush from the room. Down stairs she flew, informing the other servants as she went, between her screams, and when Sir Norman, in a violent rage, went in search five minutes after, he found not only the kitchen, but

the whole house deserted. "Well." said Ormiston, as Sir Nor man strode back, looking fiery hot

and savagely angry. "Well, they have they have all fled, every man and woman of them, the—"
Sir Norman ground out semething not quite proper, behind his mus-tache. "I shall have to go for the doctor myself. Dr. Forbes is a friend of mine, and lives hear; and you," looking at him rather doubtfully, "would you mind staying here lest she should recover consciousness

before I return?" "To tell you the truth," said Ormiston, with charming frankness, "I should! The lady is extremely beautiful, I must own; but she looks uncomfortably corpse-like at this present moment. I do not wish to die of the plague, either, until I see La Masque once more; and so, if it is all the same to you, my dear friend, I will have the greatest pleasure in stepping around with you to

the doctor's."
Sir Norman, though he did not much approve of this, could not very well object, so the two sallied forth together. Walking a short distance up Piccadilly, they struck off into a by street, and soon reached the house they were in search of. Sir Norman knocked loudly at the door, which was opened by the doctor himself. Briefly and rapidly Sir Norman informed him how and where his serv-ices were required; and the doctor being always provided with everything necessary for such cases, set out with him immediately. Fifteen minutes after leaving his own house Sir Norman was back there again, and standing in his own chamber. But a simultaneous explanation of amazement and consternation broke from him and Ormiston, as on on-

omy face of the sky, and waiting hour of midnight, to kindle the myriad of fires; and as the two, tall dark figures went rapidly on, all supposed it to be a case of life or In the eyes of one of the perhaps it was; and neither

until they came once more in sight of the house, whence a short-time previously they had carried the death-cold bride. A row of lamps over the door portals shed a yellow, uncertain light around, while the lights of barges and wherries were sown like stars along the river.

"There is the house," cried Ormiston, and both paused to take breath; and I am about at the last gasp. I wonder if your pretty mistress would feel grateful is she knew what I have come through to-night for her sweet sake?"

"There are no lights," said Norman, glancing anxiously up the darkened front; of the house; 'even the link before the door is unlit. Surely she cannot be there." That remains to be seen, though m very doubtful about it myself.

who have we here?" The door of the house in question opened as he spoke, and a figure—a man's figure, wearing a slouched hat and long, dark cloak, came slowly out. He stopped before the house, the doctor; "you should have locked your door, Sir Norman; but it may and looked at it long and earnestly and, by the twinkling light of the lamps, the friends saw enough him to know he was young and disand started on the search. His two

tinguished-looking. "I should not wonder in the least if that were the bridegroom," whispered Ormiston, maliciously.

The highest, the lowest, the lonli-Sir Norman turned pale with jealousy, and laid his hand on his They searched for the lady and found word, with a quick and natural imoulse to make the bride a widow though there was not the forthwith. But he checked the desire No, though there was not the slightest trace of robbers, or intrudfor an instant as the brigandish-lookers, neither was there the slightest ing gentleman, after a prolonged stare at the premises stepped up to the watchman who had given them information an hour or two before, Everything in the house was precisely as it always was, but the and who was still at his post. friends could not be seen, but they could hear, and they did so very earnestly indeed. The search was given over at last

"Can you tell me, my friend," began the cloaked unknown, "what has pecome of the people residing in yonder house?"

The watchman held his lamp up the face of the interlocutor-a handsome face, by the way, what could be seen of it-and indulged himself in a prolonged survey.
"Well," said the gentleman, impa

"have you no tongue, fel-Where are they, I say?" tiently. "Blessed if I know," said the watchman. "I wasn't sent here to keep guard over them, was I? It

looks like it, though," said the man, in parenthesis; "for this makes twice to-night I've been asked questions "If she has," exclaimed Sir Nor-man, "and I find out the abductor, "Ah," said the gentleman, with a "Who asked you be he won't have a whole bone in his slight start.

fore, pray?" "Two young gentlemen; lords, expect, by their dress. Somebody ran screaming out of the house, and ing an abstruse subject and taking no heed whatever of his companion's wanted to know what was they narginal notes.
"Gone off herself! Is the man crazy?" inquired Sir Norman, with a stare. "Fifteen minutes before

'Well," said the stranger, breathless, "and then?"
"And then, as I couldn't tell them

they went in to see for themselves, and shortly after came out with a body wrapped in a sheet, which they put in a pest cart going by, and had it buried, I suppose, with the rest, in the plague pit.' The stranger fairly staggered back,

and caught at a pillar near for sup port. For nearly ten minutes stood perfectly motionless, and then, without a word, started up walked rapidly away. The friends looked at him curiously till he was out of sight. "So she is not there," said Ormis

this time took the predicting the turning the key, thereby fulfilling the adage of locking the stable door adage stolen. The "and our mysterious friend in the cloak is as much at a loss as we are ourselves. Where shall we go next—to La Masque or the pest-

"She may be there, nevertheless and under present circumstances it is the best place for her."
"Don't talk of it," said Sir Nor-man, impatiently. "I do not, and

man, impatiently. "I do not, and will not believe she is there! If the sorceress shows her to me in the caldron again, I verily believe I shall jump in headforemost."
"And I verily believe we will not

find La Masque at home. She wan-ders through the streets at all hours, but particularly affects the night.' "We shall try however. Come alone!"

The house of the sorceress was but a short distance from that of Sir Norman's plague-stricken lady-love's; and shod with a sort of seven-league boots, they soon reached it. Like the other, it was all dark and desert-

"This is the house," said Ormiston my dear fellow. If anyone knows your unfortunate beloved whereabouts, it is La Masque, depend upon it." looking at it doubtfully, "but where is La Masque?"

"Here," said a silvery voice at his elbow; and turning round, they saw a tall, slender figure, cloaked, hooded, and masked. "Surely you two do

not want me again to-night?" Both gentlemen doffed their plume hats, and simultaneously bowed. "Fortune favors us," said Sir Nor-"Yes, madam, it is even so once again to-night we would tax

your skill." Well, what do you wish "Madame, we are in the street." "Sir, I am aware of that. Pray

Will you not have the goodness to permit us to enter?" said Sir Nor-man, inclined to feel offended. "How can you tell us what we wish to

know here?" "That is my secret," said the weet voice. "Probably Sir Norman sweet voice. "Probably Sir Norman Kingsley wished to know something of the fair lady I showed him some

"Madam, you have guessed it. It is for that purpose I sought you now."

"Then you have seen her already?" "And love her?"

"With all my heart."
"A rapid flame," said the musica voice, in a tone that had just thought of sarcasm, "for one whose very existence you did a dream of two hours agg."

To be Continued

TEXAS RATTLESNAKE BITE

How It Felt to Frank Kent, Who

How does it feel to be bitten by a titlesnake? A vivid description of the

formance at a place of amusement called the Chutes. He had handled all his snakes save one—a huge Texas rat-tler with which he was unfamiliar, having received it by express only that

Some one in the crowd dared him to pick up the newcomer. Lying in a hospital next day, with his arm swathed in lint, the performer said:

"I was very foolish to heed that remark, but it made me mad, and I grabbed up the new rattler. In doing this I failed to handle him as carefully as I should, and in an instant he whirled his head about and sank his

as I should, and in an instant he whirled his head about and sank his fangs into my right hand.

"I felt a sharp sting, and instantly the hand grew unbearably hot. I dropped the smake as promptly as I could, and grasped my right wrist with the other hand, in order to shut off the circulation if possible. Then I sucked the wound as well as I could and made for the hospital.

for the hospital.
"In a few minutes it seemed to me that I would have to run a race with somebody, for a terrible desire over-took me to move about rapidly. I felt that some awful thing was just after me, and in this hysterical moment I could exercise neither judgment no will power. Soon afterward I felt drowsy and stupefied, yet afraid to go to sleep, for fear that I would never

"As the right arm began to swell it felt as though the skin had been stretched to the utmost, and was being fearfully strained. I endured all sorts of agony in this, and even now that continues, although, of course, I am not suffering as I was at one time. Kent's life was saved with permanganate of potash, administered hypodermically.

Last Wooden Kallroad Broken Up. Capital is about to reopen the Clifton iron mines in Northern New York and to destroy the famous wooden rail road which used to bring out the ore. There's hardly anything a Yanke

with an Irish name cannot invent. When the Clifton mine project was be ing discussed, the investors objected to the cost of building twenty-eight miles of spur railroad through a very rough country to bring out the ore.
"Steel rails cost money," said the

"Sure, an' why not make wooden rails then?" said Jim Sheridan, the "King of Clifton," "they's wood enough up thim hills to break a man's heart. "Can you build a wooden railroad fit o run a little dummy engine on and s train of tip-cars?"

And Sheridan did. The rails were spruce poles, squared in the little "one-man" saw mill of the place, while log ties, half buried in the earth and staked down at either end were notched to receive them. Into these notches the rails were wedged firmly by two oaken keys sawed out in the saw mill.

These keys had a way of shrinking during a dry spell, and working loose when it became the duty of the engineer to keep a sharp watch for them and of the brakemen to dismount upon hearing three short whistles and a long one, and with a supply of keys from a keg which was carried on the conduc tor's flat car at the rear to maul the rail tight again with a wooden

The engine used to run off the track into the bushes, when it was the pleasant duty of the trainmen to get off and pry it back into place again. Just as the railroad was becoming famous the iron works burned up. The railroad didn't hum. It's there wet much of it didn't burn. It's there yet, much of it, rotted into the ground, but it will have to come up to make way for a steel

successor not half so interesting.

How Foxes Get Rid of Fleas. By an old hunter and naturalist of local repute a story has been told here confirming as absolutely true and trustworthy the published account, which has had few believers until now, of how foxes rid themselves of fleas. The fox, according to the book narrative, simply backs slowly into a stream of water with a portion of the pelt of a rabbit in his mouth after the fox has made a meal of the rabbit. The water drives the fleas first up the fox's legs and then toward his head, and finally out on the piece of rabbit fur, and then the fox drops the fur and his pests are

done for.

The local hunter and naturalist referred to, strange to say, had never heard or read this story when he told of the actions of a fox which he observed the other day in the waters of the Patapsco River. The little animal, he stated, backed into the river slowly with so much deliberation that he wondered what it meant. It carried something he did not know what in its mouth and dropped the scruething when out in deep water. Then the fox hurried away. The object left floated near to the observer and he hauled it ashore with a stick. Fleas literally swarmed through the object, which was found to be a bit of raw rabbit fur. The observer had a puzzling mystery explained to him. He says his admiration for the shrewdness of the fox grows more and more as he grows older and learns his ways .- From the Balti-

Remarkable Old Age.

Dr. Edward Palmer of the Smithson-ian Institution states that there is a wo-man in California 140 years old, whom he has seen carry six great waterniel, ons on her shoulder, done up in a blan-ket, for over two miles. There are now living on the island of Sappho, in the Mediterranean, three men, aged re-spectively 115, 119 and 126, who are obliged to earn their bread by manual lator. Thus they have abundant means of prolonging their lives. Exercise only will insure a man an active healthy old age.

If, however, one is by feebleness or indoor occupation debarred from much exercise, he can greatly prolong his life by limiting severely the amount of healty food he eats, thus giving his stomach less to do.

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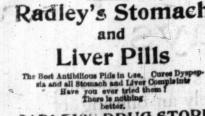
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sensation has been given by Frank Kent, an intelligent "snake charmer," whose untoward adventure has thrilled San Francisco with horror. Kent had come to the end of his per-