THE LADY OF THE RED MASK

Smithers Almost Gets His Hands on a Large Roll of Yellow Bank Notes.

It may be remimbered that Gentleman George Ringgold and mesilf, his fait'ful Smithers, kem into lawless possessun of the confidenshal ledger kept by old Guerin, the notor'us generalogist and wholesale dealer in fake fambly trees. To this depository of dingy secrets we now tunned in our desperashun, opening at haphazard and choosin' where the thumb fell.

The intry, which was marked with two red crosses, signifyin' I s'pose a double hope, read as follows:

Work Mrs. Grandfield for another payment on account when she gets ready to marry her only daughter. My continued concealment of the fact that she is in reality the widow of Andy Pelz, the policy king, should be worth much to her at such time. If not the betrayal of it might be worth even more to the scion of nobility she is sure to choose as a son-in-law.

"Was there iver such a blackmailing old fox, Smithers?" cried Jarge in high admirashun. "He wukked his victims to the third ginerashun of thim who feared him. Think of it, Mrs. Ithuriel Grandfeld, the swellest of the swell, who built that great house up on the boulevard in imitashun of her ancistral castile in England, the more or less authenticated relic of slick Andy Pelz! Listen, don't you hear opporchunity a-rappin' at the dure?"

"Yis, and a-handin' in this evening paper with the carner turned down at the latest flash from the soc'al cerulan"——

And I read:

Mrs. Ithuriel Grandfield will give a masque ball this evening at her palatial mansion in honor of Sir Egbert Rossboro of Eelsdale Chase, Hants, England, who has lately become affianced to her daughter Ethelinda. This most exclusive function of the season will be attended by the beauty and chivalry of what may be aptly termed our legitimist society. A temporary pavilion has been erected at the left wing to facilitate the festivities. Carriages will drive to the northwest portal, where it is expressly requested that the identification cards enclosed in invitations be delivered to those having the arrival of guests in charge.

"There's the rub, Smithers," mused Jarge, suiting the action to his nose. 'Wanst inside we may rove free and at large, letting our nateral cortesy do its puffict work; but how and whin?"

"Ask me somethin' harder," I retarted, 'since the proof of the timporary pavilyun p'ints the way whin darkness fust broods over the eart', and the watchers are beering up against the night."

And so, truly, it kem to pass that within a few hours Jarge and me were layin' clus on the pavilyun roof outside a convenient third story bedroom winder, awaiting until the note of the loud balloon shud summon us to jine the wedding jests below.

We were drissed in plain evening clothes and had with us even plainer masks and dominos. To these were added, be Jarge's insistence, the broad orders of the Bat' and the Fleas, though I p'inted out to him that the two didn't go well togedder.

At lengt' the dispiriting strains of "The Beautyus Blue Danoob" warned us that the hour had come. Deranging our disguises we hurret to the dure.

"It's locked," growled Jarge with a cuss.

"Pristo, change," I murmured back, and out with me jackknife and at the screws accarding.

We stepped out into the long narrow hall leading to the circular corridor around the well where we cud see the jests passing down from the drissing rooms. 'Wanst we had mingled with thim we were safe, but at this most unlucky instant a fine young woman in white, her neck and arms bare and her eyes flashing fire as if to warm thim, kem rushing toward us in so rare a rage that I hoped we might slip by unnoticed. But no; she looked up with a start, grabbing Jarge be the arm.

"Advinturers!" she cried with extreme bitterness. "Well, you have come to the right shop!"

"My dear leddy," pertisted Jarge in some way a hold of her hand, "you wudn't suspect us of all pussons. We misunderstood our direcshuns and intered that room——"

"The door of which I looked mesilf not five minutes since? I tell you flatly if you bot' don't reinter it and let me know frankly what you are about I'll alarm the house."

And with that, bowin' low on eeder side, we followed her into the room.

"Careless cracksmen, I shud say, to leave such marks behind," she flashed with a witherin' glanct at the lock on the chair. "Now tell me—no, don't tell me. The fact that you are here means shame and loss for her, for her.

"I will help you to stay in safety. Fools! Didn't you know that other precaushuns against impostors wud be tuk? Here, I'll fix you out; these checks show that you are properly registered. Your names now—they might be ast.

"Let me see! English orders? What colossal nerve! Yis, but the very t'ing. Riginald Blount and Richard De Bracy from the British Embassy were invited—of course they haven't came. I'll put their names on the list; if carnere I boldly assert that you are they. No wan here, oh, my Lord, will be able to say neigh to it.

"And so and so, good-by and do your wuss."

"But, leddy; but, leddy," cried Jarge, frantic, "you won't leave me thus, without a hope, a chanct. My heart is in a bile for you. Just wan sign, that I may know that again we may meet."

"I'll wear a red mask, with a di'mond butterfly in me hair," she said, with an anscrewtable smile. And off she dashed on Anger's white harse.

"Come, Reggie," says I.

"All right, De Bracy," rejined Jarge, and down we slipped unobsarved into the soc'al millstorm.

II.

We found Mrs. Grandfield, unmasked, a-receiving of the spur'us indignities in the cintre of the great hall. There was a worret look on her face, despite her plastered smile, which showed that she didn't have the sure t'ing you lose cinch in the game she played which had enabled Handy Andy to roll up his pile from the gutters and slums.

Having added a few area nathings to the prevailing imptiness, we med to pass by on eeder side.

"At wan be the clock we expicts to receive as old Guerin's lawless heirs the sum of tin t'ousand dollars," breathed Jarge in wan ear.

"Or ilse we tells Sir Egbert Rossboro how Andy Pelz med policy the best honesty," I titillated the odder.

In anodder instinct we were tripping the light fantasia, Jarge t'reading the mazes of the cotillon with a blond Jenny Dark and me a-prancin' the twostep with Zenobia, Empriss of the Yeast, and light enough on her tootsies to desarve the toitie.

An ideel pardner; there was a swing and a force to her that reminded me of the mysterus leddy who had helped us whin she shud have hurt us upstairs. They were not unlike in pusson eeder. So betune gasps I managed to ask whether she knew who the leddy was with a red mask and a diamond butterfly in her hair.

My fair unbeknownst gev' a queer little laugh before she answered. "That is Ethelinda Grandfield," at lengt' she said.

"Impossible!" I cried.

"Not half so impossible as that Sir Egbert Rossboro shud not know his beloved, howiver disguised," she retarted sadly. "The next time you wud be incog., Sir Egbert, don't wear your trumpery orders so conspicuously." And she slipped from me grasp and disappeared even as her great photograft had ofting escaped from the hands of the enemy.

I gev no thought to Zenobia's mistake of me—my nateral graces had often been pernounced rank whin I was in quod—but her idintificashun of the red masked leddy was too surprisingly important to be ignored. So I lost no time in drawing Jarge into the preservatory as soon as he was disengaged and telling him what I had learned.

He interpreted it, as he usually did any feminine mystery, be the light of his vanity.

"Don't you see, Smithers?" he said, "'tis an ill assorted match; the maid avuss, the man indifferent. What a chanct, what a chanct, for me to make love hot and suddint and cop Pelz's millyuns! You must watch out for the old girl alone, Smithers—tin t'ousand is not to be sneezed at. But as for me, my play is hearts and if I don't make off with the hairess before marn, thin Ophalia's occipashun is garn indeed."

Jarge was off before I cud expostelate and as I tunned away extracted I cart anudder dizzy biff in the kronk. It was Mrs. Ithuriel Grandfield hersilf who dealt the mintal swipe, by suddintly appearing and beckoning me to a seat under an umbrellacious pam, which we might hold sweet convuss unobsarved.

"You men, whoiver y'are, haven't kept fait' with me," she stormed.

"Madam, you wrong us," I pertisted. "Do we look as if we wud let go of anny-thin'?"

"Thin where is Lard Rossboro? I haven't seen a sign of him since you so basely intruded. You have sold your secrit to him, I know you have. He has beat a retreat in consekence, desarted his expictant bride, broken his trot'. Oh, the disgrace of it!"

"He may have broken his neck for all of us, madam. I tell you we know nawthing about him. How cud we in this little time? If he is here at all he must be in disguise."

She looked up suspiciously.

"There is somethin' in that," she admitted. "But yit—no, I'll not traffic with you until you show you're square, so do your wust. You are bot' evidently well primed for your infamous work. Why, you yoursilf have been dancing with my darter all the evening; how do I know that you haven't tried to blackmail her?"

"Your darter, madam; oh, I guess not. I was dancing with Zenobia, Queen of the Yeast, and——"

"That is Ethelinda."

"And she gev me the straight tip that your darter is the leddy with the red mask and a diamond butterfly in her hair."

"There is no such pusson here," cried Mrs. Grandfield, tunning a sickly green.

"Oh, yis, there is, very much here. By the same token we met her whin we fust kem in, storming t'roo the upper hall like Lady Macbet' before her hands got rid."

But just thin with a gasp Mrs. Grandfield fell back in her chair, in as dead a faint as I was in a funk.

III.

We bot' kem to about the same time, gazing at each odder with skeery eyes.

"It isn't speruts, is it?" I faltered. "What I to.d you was the s'help me trut'."

Bein' a woman she showed the greater pluck, swallerin' twict, and thin her gray face settling hard.

"I wisht it wore," she declared. "I wudn't give a snap for a hull science full of thim. But to t'ink that this shud have recurred to-night of all nights! Somethin' must have unjuly agitated the girl.

"I must have help to find out what has happened, and thin, oh, misery, oh, whoa, perhaps to hide it. Where better can I get it than from wan whose trade is silence, whom no wan wud believe if he to.d?

"You are a pitiful fellow, you man, whoiver you are, but you want money. Well, you shall have it, far beyond your pal's demands. There's a roll of yellow-backs in the library safe that you can peal to your heart's contint if you only serve me well. Say, now, will you do as I bid, ask no queschuns, and thin forget?"

I niver seen such an intense look on a human face. Her weary old eyes pierced me t'roo and t'roo with fire. Only some surpassing need, some matter of life and death, cud so concintrate a will into elictric t'rills. And all the while the orchestry kep' spieling Shoestore's "Limonade"—I vow it allus gives me the nightmare whin I hums that chune.

"I'm not so pitiful as you t'ink, s'long as I keeps this side of the Beyond," I replied; "and I'll give you good service for good money. But you might let out a tip to keep my hair from raising."

"You must come upstairs with me," she whispered. "I fear something dreadful has happened to Sir Egbert. If it has you must help me dispose of the—— Oh, you are not deceiving me, are you? She did say that? And there is such a woman?"

"Look," I answered, pointing to a fern draped nook where Jarge and the leddy with the red mask were exchanging saft nawthings, the worold well forgot.

"I hope your frind has as much luck as he has pluck. He may need it," she said with a shiver.

"But why—that is your darter, isn't it?"

"Yis and no." And I felt a bit of the same chill along me spine, most distressing.

The banquet was on in the pavilyun, so the jests were off, leaving the main rooms desarted. As we stole t'roo thim and up the stairs Mrs. Grandfield, as if for her own relief, told a strange tale of a little girl, sweet and affectionate for the most part, yit whin her ungovernable timper raged transmogrified into a dimmon.

A leary tale it wore, of a dooble pussonality and axe done in wan phase of being which were disremimbered in the odder and wud be repudiated with horror. As she perceeded I began to feel that I too wud prefer a hull science of speruts as less apt to do bodily harm.

"It is so long since Ethelinda had wan of these spells, or rather the two of thim," Mrs. Grandfield quivered on, "that I believed she had quite outgrown thim.

"She seemed so happy too in her love, so proud that an English skyon shud descend to smile on her. But yit you kin see yoursilf she has assumed two parts, which is the last t'ing she wud do if nummal.

"She was in a rage whin you fust met her upstairs, but whin you danced with her as Zenobia she had no ricoollecshun of you; indeed, she tuk you for her lover and showed a girlish pique that you had not recognized her to wanst. And Rossboro so strangely away on this night of all nights.

"No, there is no ignoring the fourbuddings of a mudder's brist; but she shall be protected at anny cost."

"That is to say, the library foll," I suggisted.

"Yis, yis, but not until your work is marked out, is done. Here is the dure to his apartmints this pass key will open. Hurry, hurry, befour annywan joins us inter."

We passed into the pretty sitting room, locking the dure behind us. Though the lights were dim, a glanct showed that it was not occypied. I passed t'roo into the darker bedroom and prissed the eliotric key.

There on the outside of the bed lay a likely looking young man in the costume of a coort jester. He seemed asleep; but a gashly joke it wore. For as I bint over him I saw the black blood oozin' from a wound t'roo the heart.

A crumpled letter lay beside the dead hand. I held it up fluttering to the light and read as follows:

DEAR YOUNG LADY: I deem it my duty to warn you not to marry the so-called Lard Rossboro. Not only is he a base villain but also a villain of the——

The letter was snatched from my hands. I turned to see Mrs. Grandfield standing in a glanct and thin as a ghost, eying me the while with a look like unto that of a Hoppy.

IV.

"Ding, dong, bell, pussy's in the well," I suggisted, "I think you've got an old desarted wan conven'ent." But she still stood intint, reflecting what bist for her, what wust for me, shud be done.

Thin kem sounds, the tunning of a key, the opening of the sitting room dure, the voice of Ethelinda.

"You see, my dear," she was saftly saying, "he is garn, niver to return. In the odder room you will find clothes suitable for our journey. By the time you are ready I will jine you at the dure, and thin, and thin, be the back stairs to the stables."

"Away, away, to the fairy land of bliss etunnal," chimed in rapterous Jarge. "Oh, my beloved, the devoshun of a lifetime will not suffice to repay your nobble fait'. Ah, how the moments lag, clogging the golding hours!"

"Haste, thin, haste," she murmured.

There were odder sounds even more significant of love's succiss, and thin Jarge stepped inside the bedroom. Even as he did so with amazin' agility Mrs. Grandfield slipped past him and jined her darter at the open hall dure.

"Help, mudder, help!" screamed the two women in a dreadful ain't it funny.

And thin the dure slammed hard and the key grated harsh.

"This is no time to do the Apollo Beltyerear," I cried to the pitrified Jarge. "Think quick or foriver arter soak your nut. That crazy girl done it. Ividently she recovered her senses sufficient to try to put it on you, jest as her desprit mother tried to put it on me. Cracked minds ofting think alike. What's to be did? That's the queschun, Gimlet."

"The girl done it?" mused Jarge dully. "Why, why, that accounts for the lump I felt whin I prissed her to me buzzim. She's got the gun with her, Smithers, don't you see, don't you see? If wanst we kin get down stairs before that silly, craving crew decide how to act we kin put it on her, we kin brazen it out; 'tis our unly chanct."

We rushed to the window and raised the shade t'roo which a strange light had been streaming. Ah! Ividently Mrs. Grandfield had forgotten. Ethelinda had niver heeded that the pavilyun was built right up and above the outer wall.

We were looking down on an excited, fantastic thong, with the two women in their very midst. Yis, and be the way of the posts and jists two active men, pricked on by the avenger of blood, might descend too quickly, too lightly, to be noticed, so concintrated was the common attenshun.

Like soupunnal visitants, thin, we suddintly appeared in the cintre of the pavilyun, our disguises discarded, distinguished of dress, almost wriggle with orders.

"Who dares link the names of Richard Blount and Reginald De Bracy with vile assassinashun?" demanded Jarge; he got our names mixed, but they wint just as well that way, being suited to the crowd, I s'pose. "By my hairy dome," and he slapped his brow with the wud, "I'll force the base calumny down his t'roat with me sword. The trut' is, gentles all, that poor distraught critter there is alone responsible for the bloody deed that has been done. The revolver which she used is at this very moment hid in her corseage, the letter which infuriated her still litters the floor."

Dooble pussonality or not, and I freely admits that it is hard enough to believe in wan pusson without straining the credulity on two—but at the accusashun you cud fairly see Ethelinda changing from the fierce and passunate leddy with the rid mask into the gintile and loving Queen of the Yeast. With a scream of utter despair she fell prone on the banquet boord, knocking over a large candleladendrum. In an instant the timporary structure of pine and jute was in a light flame.

Even as the flames shot up Jarge and me shot out, to pause breat'less on the brow of a neighboring hill and look down on a scene of divastatun. Out from the blazing manshun a weird and motley mob was pouring pellmell—nights, coort dames, angels and divvles, 'dorned in the trapperies of ages—as if the last trump had been played and the game was foriver up.

PROFITABLE SNAKE KILLING.

Rattlesnake Hunter Collects Bounty and Sells Oil and Skins.

La Crosse correspondence Minneapolis Journal.

H. T. Brawn of Newton, Wis., claims to be the only rattlesnake hunter in the Northwest and one of the few in the United States. Hunting diamond marked rattlers is his occupation and forms his sole mode of earning a living. Oftentimes his income for a single week is over $100.

Two modes of earning a living are open to Brown, one to hire himself to a farmer for a week as an expert rattlesnake killer on a salary basis, and the other as a free lance, in which he roams the country, collecting only the bounty on the snakes he kills. Brown's price for his services a week is $50, and he guarantees to rid a 160 acre farm, if not too rocky, of all the snakes in a week and destroy their homes.

For fifteen years Brown has been hunting snakes and making a living at it. In all that time he has not been bitten. He goes out much as the expert angler goes after fish. His secret of catching snakes is just as elusive as that of anglers getting fish. He will not divulge the snakeholes he has found, although he says finding them is an easy matter when one knows how. A dozen rattlers in a single nest is not an unusual record for Brown.

One day last fall while working in the hills south of La Crosse he killed thirty-one snakes. The next day he foraged in nearby townships and killed twenty-seven. The following day he killed forty-two. The State pays 50 cents for each rattler, while the skin and oil add to the profitable nature of snake hunting. Brown gets $3 an ounce for oil and a good skin will bring $1.50. The biggest snake captured last fall was in the town of Farmington. It bore twenty-two rattles.

A stout hickory club is Brown's only weapon in his hunting. He never allows a snake to get directly in front of him and moving away, for in that position a rattler can strike a deadly blow. Brown follows the snake from the side, without fear of a strike. He says one may place his hand within an inch of a rattlesnake's head on the side and be safe from danger. "The rattlesnake cannot strike from the side," he declares.

"When the snake turns, if you can get him to do so, strike your blow quickly and firmly. The occupation is not hazardous if you know what you are doing, but I won't vouch for a beginner. I have had a few snakes strike at me, but when the rattler's tail is away from you and you are at his side you are safe. Sometimes I take my dog with me, and he can smell rattlesnakes. All dogs can, and he serves as an alarm clock for the reptiles. Rattlesnakes like rocks but won't live where there is much noise. That is why they aren't found in quarries, but only in wild places.

"I once made $128 in a week, but I can't keep it up. I average between $50 and $100 a week during the summer, but in the winter I don't do anything. Huh! I'd rather hunt diamond marked snakes than work in a store."

COLORED SISTERHOODS.

Two Hundred Negro Nuns Now Working in This Country.

At the present day there are two Catholic orders, numbering almost 200 colored nuns, laboring on behalf of their own people in the United States. One of these two orders, the Oblate Sisters of Providence, has been in existence as a community since the year 1829.

It was founded by Father Joubert, a Frenchman who had emigrated to Hayti at the time of the reign of terror in France. The early part of the nineteenth century was marked by the arrival in the United States of a great many refugees from Hayti and Santo Domingo. Joubert was among these refugees. He landed at Baltimore, studied there for the priesthood and was finally ordained.

The chapel to which he was assigned, says the *Rosary Magazine*, was frequented principally by French speaking Catholics, both white and colored. There was in this church a lower chapel in which worshipped many colored people, mostly from Santo Domingo.

Father Joubert had two friends to whom he confided his dream of forming a religious community of colored women who would devote their lives to the education and service of their own people. Both friends gave him warm encouragement and spoke of four young women who were their penitents. These women, three of them from Santo Domingo and one a native of this country, kept a small private school and led a retired life with the hope of some day consecrating themselves to God in religion.

Without delay Father Joubert sought out these women, told them of his plans and after much prayer and searching of hearts they humbly offered themselves to him for the work. With the permission of his superior Father Joubert called on Archbishop Whitfield of Baltimore, who warmly approved his plans and authorized him to form such a community.

After the formal plan of a rule had been drawn up and the usual probation undergone, on July 2, 1829, the order was established. On that day the first four sisters made their vows as Oblate Sisters of Providence. They at once opened a small school, which soon became mere crowded.

Father Joubert governed the convent until his death in 1843, being attended in his fatal illness by Sister Mary Joseph, a most remarkable woman, and at her death, in 1904, the oldest nun in the world. She was known to have reached the great age of 113.

To-day the Oblate Sisters have about ninety members. They conduct orphanages and day schools in Baltimore, Normandy, Mo., St. Louis, Leavenworth, Kan., a parochial school in Washington, D. C., and a day school in Havana, Cuba. They have more than two hundred orphans under their care and five hundred pupils in their schools.

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family was the second order founded (in 1842) for colored women. The mother house of the order is in what was formerly a notorious dance hall in New Orleans, where now constant prayer to God and the practice of good works make it a hallowed place.

The sisters number about eighty. They have an academy for girls in New Orleans and teach in the schools of the cathedral parish, St. Maurice's, and St. Bernard's in the same city. They are also in charge of two asylums and teach in various parochial schools.

Chinese Coffins.

From the Westminster Gazette.

In China they bury at their leisure and the most elaborate coffins, thick and solid, as they had need be under the circumstances, are prepared by every Chinese during his lifetime.

They are carefully stored in readiness for the time of dissolution and exhibited as part of the household furniture. Imperial personages erect mausoleums in readiness to receive their dust. The Empress had more than one, but the special favorite, which she was constantly repairing and beautifying, is situated in "The Happy Region of a Myriad Years," upon the Western Hills, near Pekin.

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CHICAGO, PITTSBURG	7:50 am	8:00 am
CHICAGO, COLUMBUS	11:50 am	12:00 n'n
PITTSBURG, CLEVELAND	3:50 pm	4:00 pm
"PITTSBURG LIMITED"	6:50 pm	7:00 pm
CIN., ST. LOUIS, LOUISV	11:50 pm	1:30 am
CIN., ST. LOUIS, LOUISV	9:50 am	10:00 am
CIN., ST. LOUIS, LOUISV	5:50 pm	6:00 pm

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Buffalo-Chicago Express	*b9.40 AM	*d9.50 AM
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St. Louis.....Dec. 12 St. Paul.....Dec. 26
Philadelphia.....Dec. 19 New York.....Jan. 2
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New York—London Direct. Pier 39, N. R.
Minnehaha, Dec. 19, 3:30 PM Minnetonka.....Jan. 9
Minneapolis, Dec. 26, noon Minnehaha.....Jan. 23
RED STAR LINE From Pier 14, N. R., at 10 A. M.
New York—Antwerp—Paris.
Finland.....Dec. 16 Kroonland.....Dec. 30
Vaderland.....Dec. 23 Zeeland.....Jan. 6
WHITE STAR LINE From Pier 48, N. R.
New York—Queenstown—Liverpool.
Arabic...Dec. 12, noon Baltic.....Dec. 26, noon
Celtic...Dec. 19, 2 PM Celtic.....Jan. 16, 1 P.M.
Plymouth—Cherbourg—Southampton.
Majestic...Dec. 9, 10 AM Teutonic..Dec. 23, 10 AM
Oceanic...Dec. 16, 11 AM Adriatic..Dec. 30, 11 AM
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Kaiser Wm. d.Gr.Jan. 5 Cecilie.....Feb. 16
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†P. Fried'h Wm...Dec. 12 Gneisenau.....Dec. 31
Schamhorst.....Dec. 24 Brandenburg.....Jan. 14
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