The MARDI GRAS MYSTERY

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TAKES NO CHANCES ON MASQUER.

Property Owner Has Ideas of the New Orleans Carnival Which Differ From Those of Many Others. Says Masquers Are Discourteous in Action of Not Removing Masks When Entering Private Houses—Has Never Yet Accepted an Invitation but Has Been Invited Many Times—Tells of Ball That Ended at Which the Mask Was Not Removed—Has Been Invited on Four Occasions to Attend, and Each Time Refused.

CHAPTER I—Continued.

"And Maitland would do the paying," Felix dry chuckle shook a bow of his heroism. "Let him. Who cares? Look at his house, there, blazing with lights! Why pays for those lights? The people his financial benefactor has cheated? Not rather like gyp him. No wife's jewels, she has been pawning them to pay the debts of oppression and injustice. He's sent a life to one of fingers; and his daughter's wilfulness—"

"Sam, are you mad?" Ainsley indicated the Columbine between them. "We're not alone now—you've said and talk that way—"

Jacklin Fell only chuckled again. Columbine's tongue broke in with renewed vehemence.

"You're not, you dear rascal. We masquers may admit among ourselves that Bob Maitland is a—"

"Is not the man we would have our daughters nearly wrecked our half daughters," said Felix.

"Then I must bow to a file of flower ashes and ruin, and approached the gateway of the Maitland home. He turned into the gate. Jacklin Fell touched the arm of Ainsley and indicated an inconspicuous figure to one side of the entrance steps.

"An order guardian," he murmured. "Our host, it seems, is taking no chances. I feel sorry for the Masquer, if he appears here."

They came to the doorway. Columbine produced an invitation, did mine bored, and the three entered the house together.

CHAPTER II.

Masquers.

Joseph Maitland might be hope fully considered the most unpopular in the night Masquer to be a host perpetrated by some of his friends for the night for whatever. Two detectives were posted at the grounds outside. Inside, two others, masked and costumed, were keeping a sharp watch eye on all that transpired.

Each guest upon entering was conducted directly to the presence of Joseph Maitland himself, of his wife, who was hidden to almost in this private audience, and was then presented with a favor and sent forth hooded once to the festivities. Of course, there was no unmasking, in the case of the ladies, in enough banquets, in the ballroom or the Mardi Gulfe cigars. There was to be a midnight supper, at which the masks might be removed