

**HALF AN HOUR;
OR, TRUTH IN A
MASK. A FANTASIA**

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Half an Hour; Or, Truth in a Mask. A Fantasia by Solon N. Sapp

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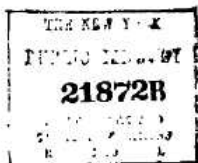
By SOLON N. SAPP,
(Of the St. Louis Bar.)

"I HAD A DREAM THAT WAS NOT ALL A DREAM."

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HALF AN HOUR.

CHAPTER I.

The gayest moonshine of a gay June night
To Myron's chamber impudently came.
She kissed his lips, and shook her shining hair
In fragrant showers about her blushing face;
She waltzed and laughed and frolicked round his chair
In sweet fantastic ecstasy of love;
A princess in her attitude and eyes—
A princess thinly clad in fleecy robes,
That slipt low down and floated on the air.
Seductive Moonshine! Chastity can melt
A poet's passion with a swifter touch
Than warmer kisses of the Venus mouth!
Her gauzy skirts, that touched him as she passed,
Brushed out a sigh of pleasure from his lips.
The unsophisticated poet warmed
Beneath caresses that would freeze a nun.
The verdant rhymster (like his brother bards,
Too evidently modest) wore his heart

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N Y P L

Suffused in fire upon his blushing cheeks.
So modest was he, that he turned away
From modern fancy millinery goods
In windows airing; turned his back upon
All clothes lines, populous of linen things
With feminine cognomens and strange cuts.
But here he sat, with neither power nor will
To break the spell. The wicked princess talked,
And he replied, bewitched beyond the power
Of modest silence, 'til the dialogue
Grew fast and dangerous. He forward reached
To clasp the saucy princess in his arms;
But, saints and angels! what a sudden change!
Beyond his reach the laughing princess stood,
Her dexter finger on her fairy nose,
Gyrating with provoking wickedness.
All round the room, where e'er his 'wildered eyes
In question wandered, linen wonderments
Assailed them with reproaches. Hisses fell
In showers upon his ears. A perfect storm
Of silver laughs, unquestionable coughs,
And rapid running gossip of sweet lips
Assailed, affrighted and confounded him.
"A lady's chamber! By the chastity
Of all the Greek Dianas! How is this?
How came I here? What deviltry has wrought
This rascal joke to play upon my wits?
But let those laugh who win—I'm going West
Without much preparation or delay.

I'll take an inventory of these ghouls :
First, here's a dozen ghosts in petticoats ;
Ten ghosts in hoops with nothing else to wear ;
Five saucy ghosts in night-gowns, long and short ;
Five ghosts in corsets, fairly cut in twain—
Their busts and bodies floating on the air,
Linked as a whole by nothing visible ;
Ten gutta-percha probabilities,
Or sample bosoms of the 'coming girl ;'
Ten ghosts of 'Grecian bends,' legitimate,
With nicely twisted, sweetly crooked spines."
All these he noted in his rapid glance,
Then called a hack and hurried to the cars.

* * * * *

The screaming whistle and the rattling rails
In chorus joined, to cheer him on the road ;
To brush his courage up, and drive away
The mem'ry of the ghosts he'd left behind,
The silvery sound of voices came to him,
Like bird-notes, floating through the hazy light
That dimly veiled the manner of the car—
The merry talk of ladies, who rehearsed
Some tender gossip in their merry moods ;
But in the dimness of the doubtful light
They seemed the echoes of those ghostly lips
From which he vainly tried to run away.
Confusedly the voices touched his ears,
And mingled with the visions of his brain.
To make confusion worse, the coming day

Dashed spectral lights and shadows in his eyes.
Against the windows, weird and grinning ghosts
Their noses flattened, pressed their wizard lips,
And made themselves unpleasantly at home.
Like emerald ribbons, all along the road
The grasses streamed and fluttered brilliantly;
The morning-glories, blue and snowy white,
The golden lilies and the crimson phlox,
In lines of beauty ran along the ground,
Ingrained upon the sober field of sand,
An endless carpet. Here his visions danced,
And all his ghosts fantastic skinned along
To keep the cars. They winked and grinned at him;
They laughed and shouted in a hundred keys,
That rose above the rattling of the rails.
Up rose the sun, and with a sudden breath,
Blew out the twilight—all the fairies fled,
And Myron turned to common life again.
The climax of the wonderful was reached!
For right before him in her proper form,
The moonshine princess of his last night's dream
Stood smiling on him, rosy as the morn.
No misty grace to flutter round his chair,
And yet avoid the touch of finger ends.
Her cheeks were roses of the Juno tint,
Suffused on alabaster, and her lips
Red cups of wine o'erspilling at the brims.
Her breasts are pearly white, which signifies
Sweet chastity, the light and joy of life.

The ruby rose that burns upon her lips
So modestly, is fire compelling fire.
The sapphire of her heavenly tinted eyes
Denotes the fullness of perpetual blue
That globes the distance to a floating sphere,
Thus giving fullness, purity and fire,
The trinity of love.
Unhappy Myron, drowned in too much sweet,
A fly in amber slain for beauty's sake.
The whisperings in musical, sweet notes
Stirred all the air; but Myron held his ear
Against the cushion, strove to shut them out,
But strove in vain—the air was full of them.
The cushion had a hundred tongues for one,
And every tongue was tipped with silvery notes.
How busy all the women were in speech;
How all their methods gathered toward themselves;
They talked of "woman," "woman"—nothing else,
As if the destinies of all the earth
Were in the hollow of her little hand.
The substance of their egotistic talk
Condensed would be in sentences like these :

"A woman is the highest art of God,
His perfect work of wisdom and design."
The feminine is but th' incarnate form
Of Beauty, personate for men to love,
Who have no faith in any higher force
Than human senses—those who worship facts—