

The Winterdyne Ghost

BY ALLENA AUDLEY.

CHAPTER II.

From New York Weekly:

"Hush!" said Lady Blanche. "Haven't I told you often, Frank, that I don't like to hear those old times talked of?"

Miss Gilroy's face flushed slightly.

"I know," she said, hesitatingly. "You fear that I shall be unhappy because Ralph loved you and expected to marry you before he ever saw me. But I am not jealous, darling."

"Don't think me uncivil, dear Frank, but it is for my own sake that I speak. Need I tell you again that Ralph and I never loved each other? We became engaged as dozens of others do, because there was no one else in the way, but I never loved any man until I met Sir Hugh, and Ralph, I am sure, never loved me as he loves you."

"I ought to be happy to hear that; I am glad," Miss Gilroy said, her hand closing suddenly over the delicate fan she held so that the ivory toy was broken. "But I told Ralph that he ought to return your picture now."

"Why?" said Lady Blanche, speaking just a little haughtily. "He is my cousin, and there can certainly be no objection to his keeping the picture if he desires to do so. When he doesn't care for it any longer he may give it to you."

"Thank you," Miss Gilroy said, softly, "and forgive me for keeping you up. I know you must be tired."

"Tired enough to sleep, I acknowledge. So good-night, dear, and pleasant dreams."

The door was shut between them, and then Miss Gilroy paused, while a triumphant light shone in her eyes.

"This is all I wanted to know," she whispered below her breath. "My Lord and lady have separated for the present, and it shall be my fault if they are not still farther apart in twelve months time."

There was a ghost at Winterdyne House. A veritable ghost, all in the traditional white robe, that flitted through the long corridors in the small hours of the night, that haunted the west wing where my lord's private rooms were situated, that came and went without audible sound of breath or footstep! If it wasn't a ghost, what was it?

Even Miss Gilroy, who professed to have no nerves, came down one morning with a very pale face and frightened eyes, and forgot to drink the cup of chocolate which steamed so fragrantly beside her plate.

"Miss Gilroy, you are not eating any breakfast," said Sir Hugh, from his end of the table. "I hope you have not lost your appetite?"

"I am not sure," she said. "I think I slept too late."

"Then you did not see our ghost, I suppose? It vanished somewhere in the neighborhood of your room, but so many doors open into the hall just there that I did not attempt to follow his ghostship. I did listen a moment at your door, however, fearing that you might have been frightened like the rest of us."

"No, I don't think I saw any ghost, dear Sis Hugh, but I was disturbed by unpleasant dreams to-

ward morning. But hasn't Lady Blanche returned? I don't see how she can endure to take such early walks?"

"Lady Blanche! Early walks! Are you dreaming still, Miss Gilroy? Lady Blanche, I am sure is still asleep."

"Oh!" Miss Gilroy replied, as if half to herself. "I thought I saw them cross the garden an hour ago."

Before Sis Hugh could ask the question that was uppermost in his mind Ralph Odell came into the room, flushed and out of breath, and sat down to breakfast.

Another door opened a moment later, and Lady Blanche came in and quietly took her seat. Her face was very grave, and she avoided meeting Miss Gilroy's eyes, which were fastened intently on her pale countenance.

Evidently some cloud had risen in their sky, and Lady Blanche and Miss Frank Gilroy were not such dear friends as they had once seemed to be.

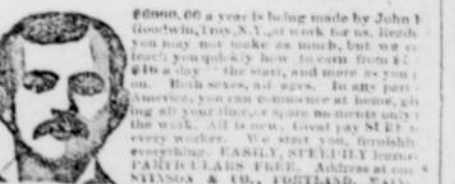
All that day by common consent they seemed to avoid each other. But Lady Blanche manifested an unusually tender feeling for her husband.

[To be Continued.]

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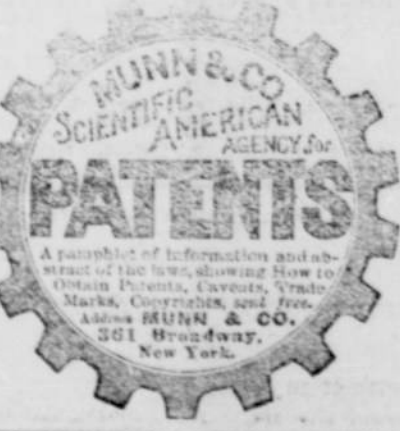
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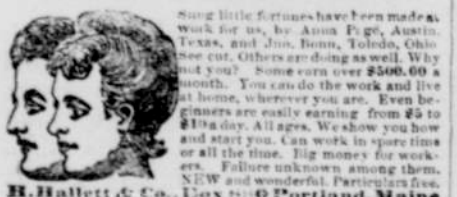
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