The Winterdyne Ghost

BY ALLENA AUDLEY.

CHAPTER IV

From New York Weekly:

There was a cheerful fire in the library, a soft light beamed through the violet-tinted globes, and the curtains of heavy saton were looped back, to show what bright welcome awaited the master of the house.

There was a sudden sound of wheels on the graveled drive, and, springing from the carriage, Sir Hugh ran quickly up the steps.

Before he could touch the bell the two walnut leaves which formed the door swung open, and Miss Gilroy stood smiling in his face.

If he had expected some one else to meet him there he did not allow the disappointment to be visible in his face.

He would have been unlike most men if a thrill of pleasure had not shot through his veins at sight of his wife's friend, who had become his own friend as well.

"I am so glad you have come!" she exclaimed, in a clear, ringing voice. "I told Lady Blanche you would surely be here to supper, but she would not believe me. But come in to the fire—you are cold!"

And, with her two white hands lying like lily leaves on the sleve of his great rough coat, she drew him into the library, and shut the door.

I do not pretend to say whose fault it was; but when Miss Gilruy stood before him by the fire, the color coming and going in her beautiful face, her lovely eyes raised timidly to meet his own, he read the secret she no longer cared to hide; and, bending toward her, he put one arm around her slender waist, and kissed her full on her red lips.

A thrill of delight ran through her veins, but she did not forget her part. She knew he loved his wife yet—a thousand times better than any other woman.

"How good in you, Sir Hugh," she said, with a quiver of the lips that had tempted him. "If, instead of being alone in the world, you were my—brother—how happy I could be!"

She had said just enough. That one little sentence had stilled his conscience.

He drew her nearer to him, folded his arms around her, and, while he felt her heart beat faster and faster against his own, he kissed her again and again, until he began to feel as if he could never let her go out of his arms again.

"Ah!" and she drew a long, long breath of delicious pain, "if you would let me be your sister, Sir Hugh!"

"I will let you be anything you wish," he said.

And then he put her away, and began to remove his coat.

"Then I will usurp Lady Blanche's place for once, and order supprr," she said, merrily enough, though underneath the careless words her heart was in a tumult. "I am sure you are hungry after your long ride."

She had reached the door when he called her back.

"Where is Lady Blanche?" he asked, quietly.

"She went out for a walk this afternoon. Her cousin was with her, and I think she intended to call on her friend, Lady Russell. But she said we should not wait if she was not here. Can I not pour tea this once?" she asked, with a bewitching blush.

"You may if you will take the trouble," he said, a little coldly. He was already sorry for what he had done in an impulsive moment, and heartily wished his wife was at home.

Tea was over—bed time approached—and then Miss Gilroy, who had been absent from the room a few minutes, came back with a note in her hand, directed to Sir Hugh.

He broke it open, and read it aloud.

"Dear Sir Hugh:—Lady Mary is ill, and I shall stay with her to-night. Ralph has gone on to D—— and will not be home for a day or two. Let Frank wait on you until I return. Your affectionate wife,

BLANCHE W."

"You hear what she says, Miss Frank, but I do not mean to impose on your good nature to-night."

She thought, perhaps, he might kiss her good-night, but he only laid his hand lightly on her shoulder as he wished her pleasant dreams, and then went away.

She heard him go up stairs, through the hall to his own dressing-room, and shut the door; and having nothing better to do she followed his example.

That was the last night the ghost ever walked at Winterdyne House.

[To be Continued.]

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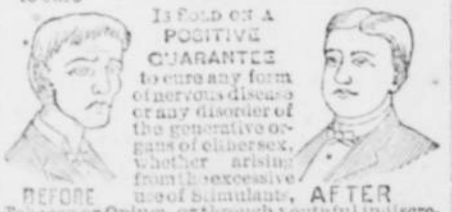

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