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CONTAINS NO ALUM.

## THE Phantom Lover.

(By the Author of "A Bachelor Husband.")

### CHAPTER XXXVII.

Esther woke from a troubled sleep that night, to find June standing beside her. Pale moonlight shone into the room from half-drawn blinds, filling it with an eerie light, as Esther started up trembling and frightened.

"What is it? Is anything the matter?" Oh, I thought you were a ghost!" She clutched at June with both hands. "Oh, is anything the matter?" she asked again.

June laughed nervously; she found matches and lit a candle, then she came back to Esther and thrust something into her hands.

"You'll never forgive me," she said. "But I've had it in my coat pocket for two days. . . . She pushed her dark hair back from her forehead tragically. "Lydia gave it to me for you the day I went out in my best hat to meet George, and I was such a selfish, conceited pig that he put everything else out of my head, and I forgot all about it!—Just now, when I was lying awake thinking. . . and then. . . oh, Esther, it's from Micky!"

Esther looked down at the crumpled envelope—

"From—Micky? . . . she said. She was only half awake; she made a very queer picture there with her long hair tumbling about her shoulders, and her eyes a little flushed and startled.

June turned to the door.

"I'll go away—you don't want me. . . I'll go—," but Esther caught her hand.

"No—no. . . Wait! please wait!" "Very well—but I'm half frozen. . . June looked plaintively at Esther, but Esther had forgotten her, and she dragged the quilt from the bed, and wrapped it round her small figure till she looked like a mummy.

There was a long silence, then Esther raised her eyes to June's anxious face.

"Her own was quite colourless, and her grey eyes looked dazed.

"Will you—will you—read it?" she said faintly. "Please—I want you to. . . somehow I feel as if I'm dreaming."

But June at any rate was wide awake. It only took her two minutes to read Micky's passionate appeal; the next she was laughing and crying together, and hugging Esther boisterously.

"Oh, isn't he the most wonderful man? Don't you love him? Don't you just adore him? Oh, if you're going to break his heart after all this, I'll suffer for you!"

"Why, my George?" in it with Micky, poor darling!" she shook Esther in her excitement.

"What are you made of, that you

can't see what a king he is? I don't believe there's any blood in your veins at all," she declared indignantly. "You haven't got a heart. . . Oh, Esther darling! I didn't mean it—I'm oh, I'm such an idiot!"

And the two girls clasped each other and cried together.

"And now if this ridiculous midnight scene is ended," June said presently, sniffing her tears away. "Let's talk sense. I'll go and see Micky in the morning, and explain everything. He knows what I am—he won't be at all surprised—oh, I'm so glad—so more than glad. . . Oh, Esther, why do you hide your face?"

June was silent for a minute, then she said gently—

"But Micky will forget all that—Micky never remembered a mean thing against anybody in his life." She forced Esther to look at her. "Tell me one thing, and then I'll go and leave you in peace," she coaxed. "Do you—do you. . . you know?"

But in this instance, at least, a verbal answer was not necessary. June kissed her rapturously.

"Oh, you darling!" she said. She blew out the candle, and sped down to her own room again like a ghost in the moonlight.

"Was there anything else you was wanting, sir?" Driver inquired stolidly. He stood on the platform looking in at the first-class compartment where Micky sat alone in duress, waiting for the train to start.

He frowned, and pulled his soft hat further down over his eyes as he answered—

"No, nothing. . . I'll see you at Dover."

There were many people on the platform; in the next carriage a pretty girl was seeing a man off—looking up at him as he stood on the footboard with eyes that told their story eloquently.

Micky looked at her enviously. He would have given his right hand if there had been some one there to see him off with just that expression in her eyes—the right some one, of course. He turned away from the window with an uncomfortable lump in his throat.

He had nothing in the world but his confounded money, and a lot of good that was to him! It could not buy happiness.

The guard came down the platform—

"Take your seats—take your seats."

A girl and a man pushed past him. The girl was staring eagerly in at all the windows as she passed. When she saw Micky she gave a little cry of relief.

"Here he is—Micky! Micky!"

Micky started to his feet.

"June!" he said. For a moment he thought something must have happened—something was wrong—Esther!—her name was trembling on his

lips, but June rushed on impetuously before he had time to speak it.

"We thought we'd come and see you off—George told me you were going, and I guessed you'd be on this train. . . I'm so glad we found you—it's rotten seeing oneself off, isn't it?"

Rochester came up laughing and red in the face; he took off his hat and mopped his hot forehead.

"I can't keep pace with her, she's like a whirlwind," he said whimsically. "She raced me off here before I could say a word."

"It's kind of you to come," Micky said.

He was pleased to see them; he felt decidedly less ill-tempered than he had done a moment ago. He looked down at June's radiant face, and a little doubt went through his heart.

He was in that dangerous state through which so many men have to pass when the woman they love will have none of them. If Marie Deland had happened to turn up then, he would have asked for forgiveness and have married her offhand and regretted it the next day; and now, as he looked at June, he wondered if he had been a fool not to properly appreciate her. He felt a vague twinge of jealousy, realizing that the days were gone for ever when he had been the most wonderful man in all the world to her.

He had never loved her save in a brotherly way, and he did not love her now, but at heart men are all dogs in the manger, and it was some such feeling that filled Micky's heart as he leaned out of the window and looked at this girl.

(To be continued)

CHAPTER II. THE HERO.

Nora changed, and ran down to her supper. She had it in the kitchen; it was warm and bright there, and she wanted to talk to Martha. She had not only sold the steers, but had done other business in connection with butter and poultry; and she and Martha went in to Committee of Ways and Means; but Martha could only give the subject a divided attention, for her mind was taken up with the gay and grand doings at the Hall.

"They're saying that there old Sir Joseph is terrible rich, and that he's made another slight of money of late out of some mine or other—a gold mine, I reckon."

"How lucky for him!" said Nora. "But about the fowls, do you think you could manage as many, Martha?"

"Yes, I'm thinking as I could, Miss," said Martha; "especially if I could have more meat for 'em." The word "meat" in Devonshire covers every description of food. "Fowls eat a terrible deal of meat, especially when they're fattening." That Hall's regular blaze of light to-night, and Ned says that one of the grooms told him that there was four cocks at work, and two of 'em men. I don't hold with man in the kitchen, Miss Nora; leastways, interfering with the vittles. It's been women's work ever since Eve; for 'ow could Adam have attended to his garden if he'd had to do the cooking? It stands to reason."

"I wish you could forget the Hall for a minute, Martha, and attend to me," said Nora, laughing. "Next spring I'll get a setting of some of those new Minorca hens, and we must find some money to buy one of those movable runs."

"You've got high notions in your head, Miss Nora," said Martha admiringly. "If only you'd got the money in your purse; but it do fret me to see you worryin' about such things—you'm a Ryall, and one of the best born in the land. You ought to be sitting in the drawing-room and riding in your carriage."

"Both at once!" said Nora banteringly. "But, you see, I haven't a carriage, Martha; and I wonder what would happen to us all if I took to lolling in the drawing-room? Where's Ned; I wonder? I must take a look round."

She drew an old cloak about her, threw on her bonnet, and went out. The sky had cleared, and an almost full moon was shining brightly.

(To be continued)

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Many years And he put Us through school And got us Good jobs And he has Backed us up And cheered us up Ever since

On Columbia Records And a Columbia Grafonola To play them on So Dad can rest.

We went to work. He comes home. Pretty tired now. At night,

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