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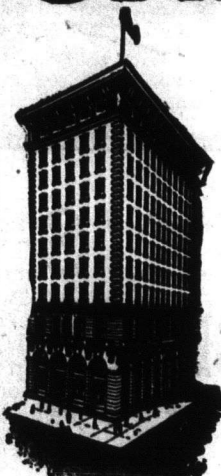
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swimming in the only patch of open water in all that drear lake scene. He had kept this open all the night by swift, hard swimming, and it was now or never for him, as the morning was intensely cold and the hole getting narrower and shorter. It was then only about two canoe-lengths by a bare yard wide. The wise old bird backed down into the lee end at the first faint breath of wind from the north; soon it blew harder and mimic waves formed on his tiny pond, now a mere ribbon of

blue water in all that icy scene. Now the wind rustled and bent the wild rice straw that stood above the newly formed ice—Splash! splash! splash!—along that narrow swimming strip the great bird fanned and kicked, rising on to the ice at the north end and gradually lifting into the air, soon disappearing in the southern sky, and leaving Laddie and I just that much lonelier on our ice-bound island in Rice Lake.

The Routing of a Ghost

By John J. A'Becket

WHY, nothing in the world could be better," exclaimed Miss Buchanan with decision. "If they'll only take us, Mina!"

The two young women who regarded with such approbation Farmer Paine's house, had just arrived in this glorious Virginia valley. Their artistic souls were enchanted with the countless pictures which caught their eyes on every side.

But their primary need now was to find a farm-house where they could board. Paine's had been mentioned as a very desirable one, if he would take them. He was a well-to-do farmer with a family.

The house was, in truth, an ambitious one. Built of brick, two and a half stories high, it had a white wooden porch in front, covered with royal masses of wisteria. In the rear, another porch ran the whole length, and a trellis, covered with honeysuckle, screening its occupants from the sun.

Standing high up on the mountain side, it overlooked the village, nestling a couple of miles away in the valley below. The view of the broad slopes of richly varied farm lands with the wide river sweeping majestically through them, was superb. "Just as Claude Lorraine-ish as can be," Miss Buchanan said. But it did not demand a highly artistic temperament to find delight and delicious repose in this widely stretching landscape.

The young women, opening the gate, made their way to where a woman was sitting on the back porch. The sunlight sifted through the honeysuckle screen and made patterns of light over her comely proportions, while the summer breeze was fragrant with perfume.

"Is this Mrs. Paine?" said Miss Buchanan ingratiatingly.

"We are artists from Boston," continued Miss Buchanan. Her companion had come to a halt a little behind her. "We expect to spend two or three months in the valley and are looking about for some place where we can stay. We thought that perhaps you might let us come here and board with you."

"I never do take boarders," returned Mrs. Paine sententiously.

"I don't think we would be much trouble," persisted Miss Buchanan. "We would fall right into the ways of the house. All we want is to be fed and have a room to sleep in."

The young woman had the air of waiving many of the points which boarders usually insist on. But barring heat in winter, the most self-denying boarder could hardly ask for less than she mentioned.

"I don't think I can," Mrs. Paine slowly replied, still calmly eyeing them, as if to see whether they revealed reason for any different view.

"In this great, big, beautiful house there must be some room you could let us have," returned Miss Buchanan persuasively. "Do take us in! We are in love with the place and the house."

The little Paines had successively grouped themselves about their mother. They took a keen interest in the parley; and presently it was developed that there was a vacant room, one of the largest and nicest in the house, but Mrs. Paine seemed loathe to let the women have it.

"Mar, tell her," burst out one of the children at last, as if weary of cross-purposes.

"Well, you see," said Mrs. Paine with a querulous touch of irritation, "we jass don't use that part of the house much. There's queer noises, and—and—goins on there. Naturally, people don't like that."

Miss Buchanan's eyes twinkled with delight. She exclaimed with great animation: "Oh, you mean that you have a ghost? Why, we'd like to come all

the more for that. We'll pay board for ourselves and the ghost, too. I've always wanted to live in a house with a ghost."

She was evidently perfectly sincere, and her companion, for the moment, betrayed no more emotion than a fly on the wall. Miss Buchanan didn't believe in ghosts one bit, and the thought of one in this homely, comfortable, modern farm-house, basking in a flood of sunlight, which the grass hoppers made resonant with their chirps, seemed ridiculously incongruous.

In the end they got the room, a large, bright, corner one, in the front of the house. Beds were located in the diagonal corners, and the women bestowed their belongings about in a home-like way. They were delighted with their success.

There was an outbuilding, too, which seemed specially designed for their need as a studio. It had once been a country store, but Mr. Paine took out the counters, and they were able to set up their easels there.

During their first evenings in this pleasant farm home there had been laughing conjectures about their ghostly cotenant—"Our Brother-Boarder," as Miss Buchanan gaily dubbed him. Would he come round? And how would he come round? There was no doubt the family believed in the ghost. There was a sullen disinclination on their part to discuss him. The Paines, one and all, shunned that end of the house after nightfall.

But nothing more ghostly befell the girls than the ripping, shrieking winds



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