

# Hollow Ash... Hall

BY MARGARET BLOUNT.

CHAPTER I.

It was a wild, raw November afternoon. The sky was dark and lowering; the wind swept down from the hills with a mournful, wailing sound, and beneath the tall trees, that bent before the gale, lay heaps of faded yellow leaves, trodden out of all shape and beauty by the feet that were continually traversing the narrow village paths.

Upon the hills, and out on the broad highway, the scene was dreary enough. But the little village of Banley, with its red-tiled roofs and latticed windows, all aglow with the blaze of fire-light, wore a look of cheerful comfort, which the wintry aspect of the day rather heightened than diminished.

Banley, lying far inland, was one of those primitive little places where the sound of the railway whistle had never come. There was a branch line, it is true, some twelve miles away, but few of its passengers ever found their way across the hills, and few of the inhabitants of Banley had seen the station, or tested the capabilities of the wondrous iron horse. Those who had done so, having returned in safety, became oracles among their neighbors, as people of deep experience, and one word of theirs outweighed a score from others, who had not seen the world.

The village, like most of the kind, consisted of a straggling street of cottages, with gay flower gardens in front and an enclosure or athen, vegetables and a few fruit trees, at the back. There was a church and a parsonage. It is true, but the vicar was non-resident, being more deeply interested in the conversion of Irish Catholics than in the religious state of English Protestants, albeit they were of his own flock. Consequently the vicarage was shut up, and a consumptive curate with a sickly wife and a family of seven children, living in a cottage at the upper end of the village, keeping up appearances—by means known only to curates and their wives on the pitiful salary of one hundred pounds a year.

Anxious and careworn enough the pair often looked, but they loved each other dearly, and were beloved by every one around, so it may be that their fate was not a hard one, after all. The curate and his wife, poor though they might be, were the only people in the village who could properly be designated "gentlefolks." The Lord of the Manor was non-resident, the Manor House itself being anything but a desirable home. If all was true that was told of the sights and sounds that had been seen and heard there at different times by different people the poor man was very wise in not coming to look after his property in person.

Hollow Ash Hall was a haunted house. It stood at some distance from the village, upon a green and fertile eminence, shut out from the common approach, though not from common view, by a high stone wall and a lofty pair of iron gates. There were a porter's lodge, untenanted, of course, and a small cottage within the grounds, which had once been occupied by some humble dependent of the family, in the day when that family was numerous and happy, and strongly united by the thousand sweet ties that bind a loving heart to home.

Seen from the public road, the Hall was simply a square, brick-fronted English mansion, of the ordinary type, comfortable and conveniently built, with stables, green houses, gardens and conservatories, enough to satisfy all the requirements of modern polite society. The yew trees at the back, and the long, bare lawn in front, gave it a melancholy appearance; but no one would have dreamed of calling it a haunted house had they not been told that it had an undoubted right to the name. There was not even a hollow ash tree in view, to account for its unusable title. But the villagers, when questioned upon the subject, would look wise, and lead you to the top of a narrow, damp lane, where grew a solitary tree, that had been touched by the scathing finger of the lightning on its mission of destruction and death. That was "Hollow Ash," and that was the "Burnt Ash Lane," down which lane, as a sort of "short cut" to the scene of their uncanny revels, it may be, strange figures were said to flit as soon as the clock from the neighboring church had tolled the hour of twelve.

Not only one ghost haunted the place—there were at least three or four; and their names were more familiar to the persons who owned the manor than to any curious stranger who sought to pry into its secrets. But it must have been a bold man or woman who would have dared to ask a Vernon a question. They were a silent, haughty, reserved race, by no means addicted to the foolish practice of "wearing their hearts upon their sleeves." And if there was one subject upon which they were more silent and reserved than another, it was that of the haunted manor. They left it; they could not bear to talk of it; and so the mystery grew by feeding upon itself, till stories were told of the place that would have made the hair of the bravest and wisest listeners stand upon end with horror.

It may easily be imagined what a commotion Banley was in, one day, when the tidings spread abroad that a gentleman direct from London was about to rent the Hall. People stared

at their neighbors and shook their heads. It could not be; unless the newcomers hailed from Colney Hatch or Hanwell, he could not, for a moment, be thinking of such a thing.

But the news was confirmed in the afternoon by no less a person than the landlord of the "Vernon Arms," who recited to a group of eager and thirsty listeners his wondrous tale. The family from London were, at that moment, beneath his roof. So far from being denizens of a lunatic asylum, they were most respectable people a city banker, his wife and two daughters, who came down for a change of air, and seeing a fine house standing empty, naturally enough concluded that it was to let. So, at the "Vernon Arms," in an after-dinner chat with their host, they managed to ask numerous questions about the mansion on the hill. He answered them truthfully; but he added, with a shake of the head, as expressive as Lord Burleigh's, "He wished no harm might come of it," for they laughed at the idea of ghosts, and one of the young ladies begged so hard to live in a real haunted house that her papa had actually sent for the agent.

The landlord laughed, drew a long breath, and solaced himself with a great draught of his own ale.

At that moment the agent himself was seen descending the stairs; the landlord, hurrying from behind the bar, threw the door wide open, with a low bow. But Mr. Grant declined the polite invitation, beckoned him out into the passage, and closed the door upon the gaping and disappointed rustic.

"I want to speak to you a moment, Grimes," he said, impatiently. "Is there no private place in this house?"

"To be sure—to be sure, sir," replied the host. "Step this way, if you please. Becky, my love, pray go and mind the bar a little while. We want the parlor to ourselves just now."

Becky, who was the meek-faced mistress of the establishment, being thus addressed, took up the stocking she was mending and went out without a murmur. The landlord closed the door behind her, and the agent nodded approvingly.

"Capital training you have her in, Mr. Grimes."

"Well, sir, one's obliged to keep the whiphand or there's no end of kicking over traces, you know. Now Becky, there, is the best woman in England, though I say it as shouldn't. But I should never dream of telling her so. The house would not hold the two of us together ten minutes afterwards."

"Quite right, Grimes. The less you praise a woman the better she behaves, as a general rule, I think. But now let us go to business. I'm very much bothered in my own mind, Grimes, and I want some advice."

Grimes, who had been busy over the fire with some mysterious preparation, which the agent affected not to see, now returned to the table, bearing two steaming tumblers of rum-punch, which he put down with an air of triumphant self-satisfaction.

"I do believe, the very best I ever made yet, Mr. Grant," he observed, as he placed one cosy arm-chair before the fire for his visitor, and ensconced his own plump person comfortably within the depths of another.

"Good it must be, then, to a dead certainty," replied the agent, taking a long, delicious draught. "Enough to make a man forget one-half his troubles and snap his finger at the rest."

"I hope it will make you forget yours, then, sir," replied the landlord, who was dying with curiosity to know why he had been summoned to this particular conference.

"Ah, no such luck as that! The trouble tonight is not exactly a trouble, after all. I am bewildered and yet I cannot tell if I ought, Grimes, you know the old Hall?"

The host nodded his head.

"I should think I did, sir!"

"And you know what stories people tell about the place?"

"That I do. Old John Jones, the gardener, has made my flesh creep waddy a time with his tales of the turret-chamber, and the butler's pantry, and the secret room where the priests used to hide away many, many years ago."

"John Jones is an idiot!" said the agent, impatiently. "Upon my word, I believe the house is as quiet and peaceable as this old inn of yours."

Mr. Grimes took a sip of rum-punch, and said nothing.

"I have been through the place a hundred times—I dare say more—and I never saw anything there, nor heard anything either, for the matter of that."

"Did you ever go there at night, sir?" asked Mr. Grimes, with a significant smile.

"No, I can't say that I ever did." And the agent smiled, too. "But you don't mean to say that you—a sensible, clear-headed man—really believe the rubbish they tell about the place—now, do you?"

"Do you, sir?"

"Of course not."

# Current Topics

**Daniel Coit Gilman.**  
Daniel Coit Gilman, who has just publicly resigned the presidency of Johns Hopkins University, has been the head of that great school since its foundation in 1875. He has seen the university grow from its first beginnings into the great institution it now is, and his work as its director has won for him a reputation in Europe as well as in his own country. Dr. Gilman has never been idle a day in the forty-seven years he has devoted himself to the profession of education. He has written important papers on the subject of education and has given much of his time to work connected with offices he has had at the head of literary and scientific associations of many kinds. Among other activities



DANIEL C. GILMAN. Of his has been his devotion to the reform of the civil service. Dr. Gilman is now 79 years old.

## To Do and to Overdo.

One thing at least is made clear by recent discussions about sleep production. It is that insomnia and nervousness, words so familiar to the lips of our ancestors, are physical facts that in this age must be reckoned with. Though gymnastics are happily becoming more numerous, it cannot be said that sanatoriums are less so, and though the building up of the body is a factor in modern education, the breaking down of the nerves is quite as much of a commonplace. "Don't overdo" is the bit of advice that everybody gives and nobody takes, and the individual who knows and respects his strength limits is a rarity.

"You can't think," writes Huxley in one of his recently published letters, "how well I am so long as I walk eight or ten miles a day and don't work too much." But his biographer relates how the great scientist would lecture to the point of nervous exhaustion and how he would be compelled afterwards to lie wearily on a sofa while his wife "matched him on another." If sofas were gifted with speech they could relate many tragic tales and reveal many seemingly healthy individuals occupied in burning the candle at both ends. Only those who are used to this double illumination know how difficult it is to extinguish either light, and perhaps only these know how near the two flames are to meeting. As long as spirit is stronger than flesh and mind more potent than matter man will continue to pay the penalties that nature exacts from the lawbreaker, but it is well to remind him frequently that his overdoing is his undoing.

## Ricciotti Garibaldi to Come.

Ricciotti Garibaldi, who will attend the unveiling of the Garibaldi monument in Chicago on Sept. 20, is a lieutenant in the Italian navy and a modern hero who shows by his conduct that he has the blood of his father in his veins. When he went to help the Greeks in their struggle against Islam, he announced himself in these words: "Wherever the cause of human liberty needs a leader, there is the place for



RICCIOTTI GARIBALDI. In 1866, when his father was conducting the Roman campaign, Ricciotti had a minor commission. He marched against Rome with the soldiers who won the battle of Monterotondo, and was captured. He fought with France against Germany in 1870, and after that war made his home in Rome, where he has been a member of the Italian parliament. The hero is comparatively poor.—Chicago Record.

## The Matinee Habit.

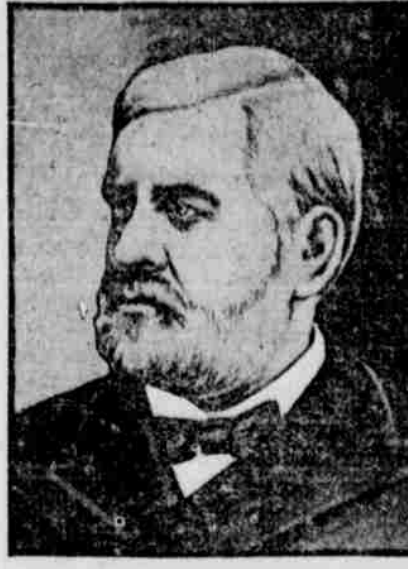
Dr. Dewey of Milwaukee asserts that the matinee habit is exceedingly injurious to most young women. In his opinion the nervous strain which a young woman endures while witnessing the ordinary dramatic performance is so severe that if often repeated it is likely to do great and lasting injury. Some other physicians agree with him.

# AS THE WORLD REVOLVES

**Sir Robert Hart's Warning.**  
When Sir Robert Hart speaks on the Chinese question the world does well to listen. In the Fortnightly Review for last November he directed attention to the fact that China in Arms would be a great power some day. In a second article, which appeared in the January number, he urged care in settling the present question so that the China of the future might have something to thank us for and not to avenge. In his article in the February number, on "China and Non-China," he gives a most serious warning to the powers.

Many white men say that it is impossible to understand the Chinese or the motives most likely to control them. Sir Robert believes that a little earnest effort to put ourselves in their place would show us the error of this view. They are not so inhuman, after all. The Boxers and the special advisers of the empress were plainly enough unreasonable in presuming to settle their troubles with the foreigners with gun and sword. But how much more reasonable is it for the powers to go on overriding, robbing, insulting, trifling with the four hundred million Chinese, discriminating against them in all international ways, regarding with contempt the historic Chinese aversion to war, presuming upon their everlasting meekness, sowing the seeds of vengeance and treasuring up wrath against some day of wrath when the Celestials may be forced to learn as much about fighting as the white men know.—Ex.

**Chauncey Filley Bobs Up.**  
Chauncey I. Filley, who has been nominated by the independent republicans for world's fair mayor of St. Louis, has been for many years one of the conspicuous national characters in republican politics. Twenty years ago he was known as "Boss Filley," and he earned the bitter enmity of republicans of wealth in this city, whom his followers dubbed "silk stockings." In return the silk stockings called Mr. Filley's friends the "hoodlums." But the native wit of the leader turned this title of opprobrium into profit by making it appear that his opponents regarded all who were not in the smart set as "hoodlums." The result was a large increase of his power. He is a political leader of rare ability and several times outgeneraled that very capable politician, Richard



CHAUNCEY I. FILLEY. C. Kerens. The independent candidate was mayor of St. Louis in 1864 and was afterward postmaster.

**Abduction of Child Actress.**  
Because of the abduction of a pretty Italian actress, Miss Colomba Quintana, 16 years old, one of the stars of the Companie Infantile, a riot was started in Chichihuahua, Mexico, the other night. When the time came for her to go on the stage her absence was announced to the audience. Police searched the city for the missing actress. She was found in a house where she had been kept prisoner by the proprietress, Juana Tapia.

The woman refused to release the girl, and a mob smashed the house, rescued the young actress and beat Senora Tapia severely. The actress says she was invited into a restaurant

**Mr. Ross' Indiscretion.**  
In the interest of Anglo-Saxon solidarity it is greatly to be regretted that Mr. Ross, the English cashier of the Hongkong branch bank at Manila, should have written to a friend in Australia giving his opinion of the American officials in the Philippines. Still more is it to be regretted that Mr. Ross' friend should have given the letter to the South Australian Register for publication. In what he imagined to be the confidence of a private letter Mr. Ross gave his opinion of General MacArthur, Judge Taft, Admiral Remey and other Americans of high official position in Manila. Mr. Ross intimates that all the Englishmen in Manila are in a constant state of anguish at being forced to associate with the American functionaries, civil and military, of the islands. He declares that the Americans are "impossible" socially. He feels very keenly the disagreeable necessity which compels refined and intellectual subjects of the British crown to associate with vulgar "Yankees."—Chicago Chronicle.

**Old Fashioned Scholar.**  
The Rev. William Sampson, who retired as superintendent of the Cleveland Industrial Home and School last fall after serving for twenty-five years, celebrated his eighty-seventh birthday on the 20th. A reception was held at the school in honor of the venerable guest, and about 125 friends called to congratulate him. Regrets were received from Secretary of State John Hay, Myron T. Herrick, and other prominent friends of Mr. Sampson.

**Gen. Atherton's Wife.**  
Mrs. Mabel Louise Atherton, the English beauty who has been sued by her husband, is the sister of Sir Aubrey Paul of Gloucester, and was married to the petitioner, Major T. J. Atherton, in 1892. She is a very pretty and fashionable woman of 35, and has been long a favorite in the smart set of London. Her name has been associated with that of the Duke of Westminster for a long time. The duke is

**Public-School Extension.**  
The general idea of the university-extension scheme has met with general approbation. In more ways than is commonly supposed our colleges and universities reach out in special lines of popular education beyond their own cloistered walls. The popularizing of the best educational advantages is a growing feature of the times. There is nothing within reach that is too good for all the people.

**Was at Chepultepec.**  
Dr. Thomas W. Forshee of Madison, Ind., one of General Winfield Scott's bodyguards in his triumphant entrance into the City of Mexico, attended the Mexican veterans' reunion at Indianapolis recently. Dr. Forshee also served as a surgeon in the war of the rebellion, being attached to the Eighty-eighth Illinois Infantry.

**A Unique Character Dies.**  
Anthony Berdau of Frackville, Pa., who served as wreckmaster of the Philadelphia and Reading railroad for thirty-nine years, died on last Tuesday, aged 73 years. It is stated that as a wreckmaster Mr. Berdau had replaced on the track after accidents about 2,000 locomotives and 15,000 cars.

**The Age of Irrigation.**  
Professor Elwood Mead, the irrigation expert who is now in charge of irrigation investigations being made by the United States Department of Agriculture, has been called to the faculty of the University of California to take charge of the newly established department of irrigation. Professor Mead will take up his new work about March 1.

**Opportunity in the Army.**  
Citizens usually assume that in the regular army West Point graduates virtually monopolize the commissions. The common belief is that the private or non-commissioned officer has no opportunity to rise to the rank of lieutenant, captain, or colonel. The truth is that the majority of our army officers of the higher ranks are not West Pointers and that many of them have been promoted from the ranks of the regular army.



MRS. ATHERTON.