Saint Mary's Beacon.

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Saint Mary's Beacon.

VOL. 59. LEONARDTOWN, MD., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1897. 865

Saint Mary's Beacon

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY
AT LEONARDTOWN, MARYLAND,
By T. F. [illegible] and F. V. KING.

A Dollar a Year in Advance.

RATES for TRANSIENT ADVERTISING

One square, one insertion.....$1.00
Each subsequent insertion.....50
Eight lines or less constitute a square.

A liberal deduction made for yearly advertisements. Correspondence solicited.

Washington City and Potomac Railroad Company.

Time Table—In Effect Tuesday, June 1. 1897, 5.30 P. M.

STATIONS—SOUTH.		P. M.	A. M.
Washington (P. W. & B. R. R.) le.		4.30	7.20
Baltimore (P., W. & B. R. R.) (Union Station) leave.		4 24	7 31
Brandywine (P. W. & B. R. R.) arr.		6 24	9 31
" " (W. & P. R. R.) leave		6 30	9 39
*Cedarville	"	6 40	9 40
*Woodville	"	6 50	9 50
Gallant Green	"	6 45	9 55
Hughesville	"	7 55	10 15
*Oaks	"	7 05	10 32
Charlotte Hall	"	7 10	10 32
New Market	"	7 18	10 35
Mechanicsville, arrive		7 30	10 45

STATIONS—NORTH.		A. M.	P. M.
Mechanicsville	leave	5 25	1 20
New Market	"	5 35	1 30
Charlotte Hall	"	5 38	1 25
*Oaks	"	5 43	1 40
Hughesville	"	5 50	1 55
Gallant Green	"	6 00	2 20
*Woodville	"	6 05	2 30
*Cedarville	"	6 15	2 45
Brandywine	3 arrive	6 25	3 00
	(W. & P. R. R.) leav	6 55	3 45
Baltimore	(P. W. & B. R. R. (Union Station) arr	5 42	9 24
Washington (P. W. & B. R. R.) arr		8 31	8 31

*Flag Stations. †Every Week Day.

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A. A. LAWRENCE

THE GILFORTH GHOST.

BY EMMA A. OPPER.

It was a ghost that nobody knew anything about; and it was perhaps for that very reason that it was so universally and so firmly believed in. Nobody had seen it; but almost everybody was convinced of its existence.

Old John Gilforth had bequeathed it. He had lived a solitary life in his rambling old house, and died quite alone. He had not had an over-abundance of worldly goods, despite his wide extent of shingles, and the ghost was probably the most substantial of his legacies. If it were indeed the ghost of poor old Gilforth, there was nothing to be feared from it; he had been noted for his unsocial habits, but for nothing more alarming.

But who ever heard of a ghost's being regarded with pitying leniency and friendly forbearance and an entire absence of prejudice? The Gilforth ghost was held in a deep and fearful awe, of which the most sanguinary of shades might have been proud.

There were those who professed a scornful disbelief in the ghost, and in whom any mention of it stirred no profounder emotion than a contemptuous amusement.

The disbelievers were, of course, among the younger generation of of the townspeople—disbelievers, as a rule, are of the younger generations.

Kitty Clark was perhaps the boldest of these, and that was not at all surprising. She was the gayest of the clique of bright young girls who enlivened in town with their frolics; she was the prime mover in their escapades, the founder of many a daring scheme; and she always did things boldly, and nothing by halves.

She had gotten up and successfully carried through a festival for the benefit of the town poor; she had taken care of old Mrs. Jackson through a long illness, the poor woman being friendless and had had her for a sort of a pensioner ever since.

On the other hand, she had presented herself at Squire Barr's, one evening recently, in a tattered dress and dilapidated bonnet—the squire being a noted miser—and had returned to the group of giggling girls around the corner of the house waving a two-dollar bill exultantly; her unworthy object was to outwit the squire; and she had lately refused Addison Marsh, with his bald head and his snug property, in the most hard-hearted and uncompromising manner, though to be sure, none of the girls had wondered much at that.

To Tracy Matson she was particularly and entirely charming. Her brown eyes and her fresh lips, and her pretty airs and graces, had probably done their part for her; but Tracy was certain that it was not her prettiness alone that infatuated him.

Kitty's kindness of heart was known to everybody, and to Tracy among the rest. To be sure, when the subjects were brought up she rather laughed at her country-house festival and the pensioning of old Mrs. Jackson, but this smiling self-disparagement was an added charm in Tracy's eyes. And the half-amused admiration with which he regarded her independence and her daring was quite enough to complete his captivation.

Of course everybody knew it! What else was to be gathered from the fact that Tracy's gray colt was beginning to stop of its own accord at John Clark's front gate.

But everbody was not quite sure of Kitty's views, nor was Tracy himself. She had chatted and walked and driven with him; but in quite the same way, as far as he knew, had she chatted and walked and driven with Addison Marsh, to the final undoing of that ill-fated person.

The mere fact of Addison's refusal might have been regarded as encouraging, and so Tracy sometimes thought. But that, after all, was rather a negative comfort.

The gray colt was standing at the familiar gate on a certain warm September evening, with his head dropped lazily and an air of feeling very much at home, and his master was sitting on a step of the front veranda, with Kitty Clark smiling up at him from the top step.

They had been discussing the latest event—an event which had all but paralyzed the easy-going little town—the robbery of Squire Barr's. It had taken place two days ago, and had been a puzzling in every particular.

The Squire had always been distrustful of banks, and all his money—and everybody knew that there was no small amount of it—had been hoarded, in the form of bonds and greenbacks, in a wooden box, which he kept in a closet in his room; and this it was that had been taken—nothing else.

There were not many who had not known about it; the squire on on rare occasions when his self-congratulation at getting ahead of the banks had gotten the better of his usual prudence, having disclosed the fact of its existence to a few confidential friends, and the confidentials friends, in a like spirit, having passed the information along so that Squire Barr's box had come to be a well known article.

The squire was plunged to the depths of misery and despair. There was not the slightest clew. His fortune was lost to him forever, apparently.

He had dragged himself to the Post Office and tacked an offer of reward, scrawled in a trembling hand, upon the door, and had taken to his bed immediately after in a prostration of misery.

But, in the minds of people generally, pity for the squire was distracted by a horrified admiration for the great cleverness of the burglar. For the possibility of his being in their midst had suggested itself to nobody, and his knowledge of the squire's box and its hiding-place was regarded as nothing less than supernatural.

'Poor old thing!' said Kitty, with more compassion than politeness; 'I'm dreadfully sorry for him!'

A recollection of her recent raid upon the unfortunate man floated through her careless little head, and gave her a slight twinge of compunction.

'Dreadful thing for him!' said Tracy, oracularly.

He was thinking more of the novel charm of Kitty's passing seriousness than of the squire's misfortune.

'Leary says,' continued Kitty, 'that there is no hope of his ever finding it. Leary's real good-hearted. He went down to see the squire last night, and expressed his sympathy.'

The subject of her remarks came round the corner of the house at that moment, and paused with a smile and nod.

He was a thick-set young fellow, with a wide-brimmed straw hat pushed back from rather of a good-looking face. He had presented himself at John Clark's back door some six months ago, with a small bundle in the conventional red handkerchief, and asked for work.

Kitty's mothor had taken an immediately fancy to him, and her father being equally well impressed with his pleasant face and his quiet ways, he had been chopping and sawing in the woods beyond the house ever since with perfect satisfaction to everybody, and had become very popular in the neighborhood.

'Kitty says you've been down to see the squire,' Tracy called out, with his eyes fixed admiringly on the top of Kitty's head.

'Yes,' responded Leary, with an immediate clouding of his good-humored face, and withdrawing his hand from his pocket to stroke his chin with sober regret; 'he seems to take it pretty hard. I'm powerful sorry for him!'

'No clew yet, I suppose?' said Tracy.

Leary shook his head hopelessly.

'I'm afraid there *won't* be. I spent an hour there studying things over and trying to see the light, and all to no good. It's the provokingest thing I ever came across, nothing to get hold of, and it riles me all up.'

His expression was so queer a mixture of concern and honest indignation and baffled anxiety, that Kitty laughed softly as he walked slowly away, shaking his head.

'We ought to be quite happy now,' she said, smiling up at Tracy brightly. 'We have two mysteries—the Gilforth ghost and the Barr burglary. Could we desire anything more?'

The Gilforth ghost was a favorite joke between them, and Tracy laughed.

'Do you know,' pursued Kitty, looking up at him, with a sudden assumption of seriousness, 'that I always had an idea—a horrible lurking suspicion—that you are not quite so skeptical about the Gilforth ghost as you pretend to be?—that you half believe in it!'

She threw out her chin in pretty defiance as she said it.

Tracy laughed again. These sudden assaults of hers always delighted him. But Kitty was quite unsmiling.

'I don't believe, for instance,' she went on, with a well-assumed air of believing what she said, 'that you would care to go to the old house alone after dark. Would you, now?'

'Alone after dark!' repeated Tracy, in a hoarse whisper, and forcing a tremble. 'I am about to faint.'

Kitty looked a little discomfited.

'But, seriously,' she said, in an injured tone, 'you would not quite enjoy it? Just think; with the old house a long black mass before you; with the poplars hemming you in, and the wind moaning through the boughs of that big mountain ash. Confess! Wouldn't you half expect to see the ghost?'

'What shall I do,' said Tracy, in a tone of tragic despair, 'to dispel those vile suspicions—to convince you that, so far from fearing the Gilforth ghost, I love him as a brother?'

Kitty laughed, rather shamefacedly.

'I don't know,' she said, meekly.

'Shall I bring you a shingle from the house?—a bunch of berries from the mountain ash? That would be a case of the glove and the lion's den, and you know how disastrously that turned out for the lady; but I should be vindicated.'

'Very well, then,' said Kitty, skeptically. 'You may do it if you dare. I shall be proud to wear it.'

'What—the shingle?' said Tracy, with an accession of interest.

'The berries,' responded Kitty, severely.

'Oh, to be sure, madam!' he continued, jumping off the rail and striking a tragic prose. 'You have said the word—I go! This night shall see the dark deed—yea, by me halidom! Dark enough now.'

'Oh, yes,' said Kitty, glancing around at the gathering shades, and trying not to laugh. 'But I don't believe you'll do it.'

But he was down the steps already, waving his hat and uttering a sepulchral 'Adieu!'

'You won't go!' Kitty called after him, defiantly.

He jumped into the buggy, and the gray colt trotted off. He smiled to himself as he drove along the quiet road. It was so very much like her!

Of course it was all nonsense, and perhaps he would be making a fool of himself to pay serious attention to it.

But it would cost him nothing, and if there had been any slight foundation of the truth in her words—if she really knew him so little as to credit him with a lurking belief in the Gilforth ghost—he would be raised considerably in her estimation. And could there be a greater inducement? Tracy felt that any opportunity for gaining her favor was not to be lost.

He pictured to himself the presentation of the bunch of berries. Kitty would probably take it coolly. She would smile and thank him with all imaginable calmness, but she would be defeated and apologetic; and in that reduced state she might be disposed to listen favorably if he were to say anything especial. Tracy was beginning to think it time that something special should be said.

The gray colt turned and pricked his ears inquiringly, as Tracy turned him in the unfamiliar direction of the old Gilforth House.

It stood in one of the less frequented streets, some six rods back from its broken-down fence. A thinly wooded pasture lay upon one side of it, and a neglected cornfield upon the other.

The old house itself, with its strange, rambling length and its awkard angles, was almost hidden by the trees standing thickly around it.

A belated cow looked up from the straggling pasture and lowed a mild surprise, as Tracy hitched the colt to the fallen fence.

The moon came out for a moment and spotted the ground with bulky shadows, and left them in darkness again; a crow in the tree-tops, roused at the sudden brightness, gave forth a drowsy caw; the gray colt turned his head from side to side, and moved uneasily.

'It's ghostly enough, to be sure,' said Tracy to himself, as he moved the old gate on its rusted hinges, and made his way through the tangled grass of the overgrown path.

But he was thinking more of the possible beauty of the place after a course of improvements, than of its present ghostliness.

The mountain ash, a tall tree with a profusion of the thickly bunched scarlet berries, stood close to the house, with its branches rustling against the broken lights of a window. Its lower boughs were not far above his head, and Tracy leaped up and pulled them down.

He could feel the cool clusters among the leaves, and he filled his pockets with them—she should have ample proof.

He paused when he had finished, and stood looking around him contemplatively. If the trees were to be thinned out and the ground graded, it might really be made a respectable place.

The house, of course, would have to be torn down——

He stopped short in his meditations, with his eyes riveted to the window before him, and a strange chill creeping over him. A white form, tall and straight, was standing within, its pale draperies sharply defined against the dark inner walls of the room. He clutched the sill with a hand that trembled in spite of himself, passed his hand across his eyes with a vague idea of sweeping the sight away, and looked again; and as he looked, the figure threw its white arms upward, and a stifled shriek fell upon his ears.

* * * * *

Kitty had sat in rather uneasy reflection after the gray colt had trotted away. She could scarcely congratulate herself upon the success of her little challenge; it had been *too* successful.

Of course he would carry it through. She knew him well enough to be certain of that. Perhaps she was conscious of a little feminine gratification that he should be led into doing anything so absurd merely to satisfy a supposed whim of her own.

She wondered whether he were there yet, and whether he would not feel a little timid, and then she started up with a sudden inspiration.

Of course, what fun it would be! It was queer she had not thought of it before.

She flew up to her room eagerly, and opened her closet door and pulled over its contents with nervous haste. There was no time to lose. Her hands flew swiftly for a moment, and then she stood before her glass and gazed at herself with delighted eyes.

She was clad in a trailing white dress that swept away behind her, a white shawl lay over her head and shadowed her face, and her dark eyes looked eargerly out from beneath it. She caught the trail in one hand, and ran lightly down the stairs.

She felt a guilty exhilaration as she ran down the walk, closed the gate behind her softly, and flitted swiftly down the road. The prospect of a fresh escapade delighted her. She wondered what the girls would say when she told them about it; but she would not tell them if it were not entirely successful.

She paused a moment for breath as she turned into the lonely street of the old Gilforth house, and ran on with a rising enjoyment of her frolic.

The place was before her at last, and she stopped with a timidly beating heart. How dark and ghostly it was with its shadowy, straggling form and the thick blackness of the trees around it!

She peered into the darkness. Yes, there was a black bulk by the fence, and she could hear a restless whinny. She was in time. She paused a moment, and then stepped over the broken bars of the fence, and tiptoed softly through the shadowy line of the trees to the back of the house.

She groped for the latch of the door, and pulled it open easily. She felt a thrill of pride as she stepped inside; not many of the girls would have dared to do it.

A board creaked under her foot; a window rattled, and a rat scuttled down the wall. Something struck her like a sound of heavy breathing, but she smiled the notion away. She stepped into the little front room; that was the room where poor John Gilforth had died, alone; and looked about curiously.

There was one chair standing before the broken window, and she went toward it; and then, in a moment, she found herself standing motionless—cold and faint and trembling. A shadow in a corner of the room moved with a muttered sound, and was coming toward her.

The moon struggled out from behind its cloud, and shone full upon it—upon a short, bulky form, with a wooden box held tight in its trembling hands; upon the white, terror-stricken face of—Leary!

He gazed for a moment in panting silence; then dropped the box with a curse, and seized her by the arm, his face distorted with anger.

She felt a dreadful, sickening fear as she looked into the evil, threatening face; she threw up her arms wildly, and uttered a terrified cry.

Nothing was quite clear after that. She was dimly conscious that something came crashing through the window; that the dreadful grasp was loosened from her arm, and that there was a heavy fall; and that she sank against something or somebody with a strange singing in her ears.

She was lying on the old parlor-sofa when she came to herself.

There was something cool and wet upon her head, and a smell of camphor in the room.

The first rays of the dawn were struggling through the shutters, and her mother sat beside her.

There was a bunch of red berries in a vase on the mantle, and it had all rushed back over her in a moment. She raised herself on her elbow, easily.

'There!' said her mother, soothingly, beginning to wield the big fan she held.

'Where is Tracy?' said Kitty, faintly, and anxiously. 'Is—is he all right?'

'Oh, yes,' replied her mother. 'He cut his wrist breaking through that window; but he didn't make much of that. He left those berries for you.'

Kitty smiled faintly.

'But it wasn't Leary, was it?' she said slowly. 'It couldn't have been Leary.'

'But it was,' said her mother, in a crestfallen way. 'I never was so upset in my life; and your father's just done for! I declare, Kitty, I could 'most wish you had not found him out. I did think such a sight of him. But I suppose the squire is glad to get his money back.'

The squire was glad to get his money back; so glad that, after Leary's trial was safely over, and that worthy had received a sentence satisfactory even to the squire, he insisted upon presenting Tracy with twice the reward he had offered.

Nobody was surprised, therefore, when that young man completed the purchase of the old Gilforth place, and set about improving it; nor at the announcement of his engagement to pretty Kitty Clark.

'But I shall have to confess to you, Kitty, he said,' with a laugh, when they had gone one day to note the progress of the building—'I shall have to confess that your suspicions were quite just, for one dreadful moment that night, when you rose before me, tall and white, and threw up your arms with a shriek; for that moment I believed quite thoroughly in the Gilforth ghost.'