

The Ghost's Will.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

"The first time I ever made a will I made it for a ghost," said a lawyer, pouring out a glass of port. "At least that was the opinion of many people for a long while, and no doubt is yet. If you care to hear the story I will tell it. And first, glance out of the window behind you and tell me what you think of that bit of property yonder. The handsomest home in the place; a piece of woodland behind it worth a fortune, and the town growing up about it fast."

"When I first came here and went into business for myself, a young fellow whose head was just beginning to grow, old Mr. Busch lived in that place, with a couple of servants. He was an old man of ninety, but looked no more than sixty. He rode about the country, gave big dinners to his gentlemen friends, and dressed elegantly."

"It was not thought—being a miser—that he had become so rich. He came of a wealthy family, and legacy after legacy had been left to him. He had married, but his wife died, and so did his only daughter. He never thought of marrying again, but he took a nephew to live with him; and everybody believed that he would make him his heir. But the nephew was no time-server, and did as he pleased; and somehow or other they had a falling out."

"There was a sneaking fellow named Potter about the house a good deal, a regular Uriah Heep, perpetually fawning on old Busch, and always 'so humble.' He told lies about young Allan, I think, and made his uncle think him a reprobate; and when the young man went down to New York and became an actor, the uncle was led to believe that he had gone to the dogs. And now it was well known that a will had been made in favor of Potter, and that the nephew was left without a penny."

"That had been a good many years before, and Potter was waiting for old Mr. Busch's shoes yet. The nephew was a man of forty years. It doesn't take long, after all, to change from young to middle-age in this world, and Potter was quite grizzled and had lost most of his teeth. Old Busch had never lost one yet, and his cheeks were like pippins. For all any one could see, Potter might die first, but he had lived at the mansion for twenty years, and had all he needed and more than he deserved, and no doubt thought himself a lucky fellow."

"No one knows what the day may bring forth. One morning, to the great surprise of everybody in town, a servant from the mansion was seen rushing off to the Dr. Dockweed, and soon the news spread through the village that old Mr. Busch was dying. Potter went about trying to look mournful, and lots of people were really sorry. I was, though I had never spoken to the old gentleman, he was such a hale, happy, bright old fellow. The first day he was worse. The next better, then worse again. Then they said he might live; then he was unconscious."

"It was just after this report, late in the evening, that I sat here, exactly where I was sitting now, quite alone, when the door opened and I saw a figure enter leaning on a cane. It was a great surprise to me to see the next minute that it was old Mr. Busch. He was in dressing-gown and slippers and had a night-cap on, one of those pointed affairs that old gentlemen used to wear; I'd seen him looking out of his bedroom window in it many a time."

"Good Heaven, Mr. Busch," I cried.

"You know me, I see," he answered, in a hollow, rattling voice, "and you look astonished."

"I thought you too ill to leave your room, sir," I answered. "I'm glad to see you better."

"Don't waste time in compliments, Mr. Van Buskirk," said the old gentleman. "I have very little left, and I want to get back to the house there before they know."

"Can you make a short will for me that will stand?"

"Yes, sir," said I.

"Write this, then," said Mr. Busch, "that I leave everything I possess to my nephew, Allan Busch, my sister Ada's only child. I have made one will. I want to retrieve it by a will of later date. That's my object; you know my wishes. Go to work. Go to work."

"He fell back in his chair. I set to work. When the will was written I left my office a moment, and called in my neighbor the hairdresser and his apprentice as witnesses. Both knew Mr. Busch well. They stared at him, and looked at each other, and paid their respects in faltering voices. The old man seemed to grow weaker and weaker every moment. He signed his name in a hand that trembled so that the letters were barely legible, but we all saw him sign it; and when all was done he turned to the hairdresser, and said, faintly:

"Mr. Farren, you were evidently terribly startled when you saw me. Will you tell me exactly why?"

"Well, sir, you've been so ill, faltered Mr. Farren."

"The truth, Farren," said the old man, sternly.

"It might be considered an impertinence, or it might be a shock to the nervous system, Mr. Busch, replied Mr. Farren."

"Go on," said Mr. Busch.

"We heard that you were dead, sir, not ten minutes ago," replied Mr. Farren.

"Ah! they reported that, did they? I thought as much," said Mr. Busch. "Mr. Farren, Mr. Van Buskirk, Samuel, take out your watches, said the old man, faintly, and tell me the time."

"I am eight o'clock," said Mr. Farren.

"Eight," I repeated, looking at my watch.

"I'm always fast," said the boy; "but I'm five minutes past eight."

"Remember that, all of you," said Mr. Busch. "Mr. Van Buskirk, give me your arm to my door."

"There was a path at that time across lots from my side door to his back porch, and we went that way. It had been a darkish night, but just as I opened the gate the moon shone out."

"Good-by, sir," said Mr. Busch, in

a peremptory way that could not be resisted.

"I said 'Good-by,' and turned, but I hid behind a tree to see that he got on safe, and there I saw this thing happen:

"The porch lay white in the moonlight, and as the old man was about to open the door some one pulled it from the inside, and out walked Potter, with a grin upon his wizen face. It changed as he saw the old man to a look of abject terror. He shrunk aside, clasped both hands over his eyes, uttered a terrible cry, and flew down the path, stumbling in his confusion, and falling flat upon his face amongst the petunias. I looked back again toward old Mr. Busch. He was gone."

"The next morning we all heard the news."

"Old Mr. Busch had breathed his last at seven o'clock. I confess I was startled, but that was no ghostly apparition that I saw when I walked up the path with Mr. Busch the night before, and I could not agree with my neighbor, the hairdresser, who declared that it might have been an 'appearance.'"

"Lawyer Thursby had a will in his keeping that left everything to Potter, but the date of mine was its safeguard. They tried to prove the old gentleman of unsound mind, but were merely laughed at. My neighbor confessing that he was not sure but that Mr. Busch's ghost made the will that he signed, but swearing to the night-cap and dressing-gown as facts in silk and linen, caused much laughter, but the property went to the nephew. He was generous and made a present to Potter which prevented him from suffering anything, and he was a better heir to the old property than Potter would have been. He made me legal manager of his estate and we became great friends. My friend, the hairdresser, however, had a certain trouble on his mind which he confided to me."

"It did not come up in court," said he; "but did you notice Mr. Busch's face when he signed that will that night? Close-shaved, not a spot on it, not even blue."

"Yes," said I, "I did."

"I shaved him after he was dead, Mr. Van Buskirk," said the hairdresser, in a hollow voice. "I was called in to do it about midnight, and he had a beard about an inch long. It had been growing ever since he was taken down."

"If I were you, Mr. Farren," I said, "I would not mention that to any one, or permit Samuel to do so. I know it to be a fact; but it is not fashionable to believe in ghosts."

"A year ago," continued Mr. Van Buskirk, taking some more port,—"a year ago, Allan Busch died. He lived too high—a gay, wild life—though he was a good fellow to the last. He never married. The day before he passed away he sent for me."

"I shan't be alive to-morrow," he said, "and I want you to know the truth."

"My Uncle Busch died at half-past six. I came down to see him on the five o'clock train, and went up to his room without being seen. No one was there. He was awake and going fast."

"Allan," said he, "you have come to see me."

"Yes, uncle," said I. "I only heard you were ill yesterday."

"If you had only come sooner, Allan," said he, "I've been a fool. I want to change my will. Potter is a sneak. He's anxious to have me die. I want you to have my money now. Ada's only son."

"No matter about the will," said I. "No matter about the money. I can live by my profession."

"I've been a prisoner," said the old man. "I have not been allowed to see my friends. The doctor is a tool of Potter's. I—I am neglected, Allan. I've been alone two hours, and I want some water, dreadfully."

"I gave him the water, and he put his head on my arm and kissed me. He died that way. Nobody came near us, and I kissed him again and crept down stairs; but as I passed the dining-room I saw Potter and the doctor stuffing themselves, and laughing; and then there, what with contempt of them, and a wish to see my uncle's last wish carried out, as well as the natural longing for money that seemed mine by right, I hit upon a plan. I was an actor, as you know, and my line was 'old men.' Moreover, I'm very like my uncle. I went back to his room, gave him one more kiss—he was already cold—took his gown and cap and slippers from the wardrobe, made myself up, and came to you. You know the rest. I've nobody to leave my money to. Potter is dead. You are a rich man yourself. I'd have been the heir in course of time, probably at any rate. Suppose we give this money to the orphans at the asylum. Nobody has a legal right to it."

"I'll make a will for you to that effect," said I, and so I did."

"Van Buskirk," said he, after the will was executed, "you don't owe me a grudge for having been fooled, do you?"

"Allan Busch," I answered, "I was fooled; I don't deny it, but I guessed it in a week, and I've felt sure of it for a good many years. I'll keep the secret. Get well, boy—get well, old friend."

"But he died, and the orphans have the property, and Mr. Farren still believes that he and his apprentice witnessed the will of Mr. Busch's ghost."

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Law.

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NOTARY PUBLIC, ETC., ETC.
Chatham, N. B.

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10 Bbl. ASTORIA OIL;
10 Bbl. ONIONS;
100 Boxes Layer, London Layer, Loose Muscatel, and Delmona RAISINS;
2 Cases BURNETT'S EXTRACTS;
New Walnuts, Almonds, Quinces, &c.;
25 Bbl. AMERICAN OIL, &c., &c.
78 and 80 King Street, St. John.

Notice.
The Ratepayers of School District No. 1, Chatham, are hereby notified that all rates remaining unpaid on the 1st September will be handed over for immediate collection. By