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The Ghost of Tim O'Leary

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Edith G. Bayne

The little cabin hung like an eagle's nest on the purple crest of the mountain and our driver raised the whip with which he had been momentarily flicking at the team, and pointed to the crudely picturesque log hut.

"Now that 'ere cabin you see up there, that's the 'aunted 'ouse of Ragged Ridge," he said, boastfully.

"Br-r-r!" emanated from some of the party, shudderingly. "Do we pass it in crossing over?" asked the school teacher. "We do, its right along the trail. Mebbe we'll see ole Tim hisself too, bein' as 'twill soon be gettin' dark."

And Joe literally smacked his lips at the prospect of giving us "the shivers." He was a little Englishman from Leeds.

No idea of encountering such an entertaining object as a spirit-haunted house, had crossed our minds when setting out in the early morning from Sandy Plain in Alberta on the stage journey to Coalport Landing in British Columbia, nor did the guide-book contain any reference to it. Undoubtedly therefore it was either a fabrication of Joe's fertile brain, or a pleasant little surprise which he kept in reserve. The cabin was still several miles distant, though appearing to be much closer and we gazed with

in the western sky, while a restless wind began to moan among the jack-pines. Rain was coming.

"Is there no way by which we could cut across the trail and avoid it—the cabin?" inquired the new Coalport school teacher, who was making the journey for the first time and vowed inwardly it should be the last—till the railroad came in.

"No ma'am—unless by airship, but don't you worry Tim's sperrit is real friendly to lydies."

Two members of the party, a young Ruthenian homesteader and his fourteen-year-old bride had remained silent throughout. It was doubtful whether they even vaguely understood the talk. For her going-away gown the bride was wearing a white dress made of curtain net, with accoutrements even more unique—large brass-toed boots, durable and thick, and a wonderful collar formed of knitted Berlin wool and glass beads, from the tassel ends of which there dangled elongated glass globules, that gave forth a gentle tinkling, musical sound whenever the wearer moved, reminding one forcibly of the old-fashioned hanging-lamp shades, once so popular. Over her small flaxen head was



Steam shovels at work in Spokane mining district

mingled emotions upon it, demanding the legend or tale, if there were one. This, Joe was in no way loath to impart, now that he had us out beyond the foot-hills and wholly at his mercy.

"It's ole Tim O'Leary's late residence," he began, turning about at an angle of forty-five degrees, the better to embrace his audience in the rear seats. "Tim was the biggest man in these 'ere regions onct-time o' the big gold rush. Tim 'ad all kinds o' luck. Could rustle more cattle an' never git pinched! They 'ad a score o' wararnts out fer 'im but no one never cud ketch 'im 'e was that slippy! Gold miner 'e was too but nobody ever cud git a line on where 'e cached 'is pile. An' then 'e up an' croaked!"

"He was rich then?" we asked. "Rich! Tim cud put it all over Croesus. Used to pitch nuggets into Moon Lake—y' can see the wee lake over there in the coulee—jest to watch the ripples. Oh 'e 'ad a free an' easy life—never in all 'is life wore a collar, nor 'ad a shave—an'—aircut. Looked like a twin brother o' Robinson Crusoe 'e did!"

One of the passengers evinced a desire to pursue the question of the gold.

"Oh, 'tain't no use lookin' up there fer it. That's what causes 'is sperrit t' walk. There's been 'eaps o' people diggin' an' nosin' round—daytimes. They ain't never found so much as a glint o' gold dust! The sperrit knows where it is an' keeps guard."

"Perhaps had they gone at night, with a spade and a dark lantern," began an occupant of the front seat.

But a prolonged shuddering and teeth-chattering cut in upon the remark.

There was silence for a moment or two, during which dark grey clouds were observed for the first time rapidly rising

wound a variegated silk scarf, from beneath which her quaint little face peered forth with a sober and most unbride-like air. Her eyes were large, bright and alert, though she spoke no word and seemed not to hear any of the conversation. With her youthful husband she shared the middle seat with an English woman of Amazonian proportions who was going to Fort George, to hew out a fortune for herself as lady-secretary of a lumbering firm. The school teacher and newspaper reporter occupied the front seat beside Joe and in the extreme rear two dour Scotsmen had disposed themselves amongst the luggage.

Before half an hour had gone by, the clouds that had been gathering ominously in the west, were over us and the first large drops of rain splattered down. Joe halted long enough to draw the side blinds and produce the oilcloth rugs, but we had scarcely resumed our journey before it became evident that a storm was upon us. So suddenly had it loomed up in the afternoon sky that when the first thunderclap fell on our ears we started as at a cannon-shot, while the horses plunged and reared. The lightning played incessantly over us and Joe lashed the team to greater speed.

"Where can we take shelter?" asked the teacher.

"Times like this I gen'rally put into Tim's cabin," replied Joe, calmly. "Storms come up sudden-like in the mountings."

"Oh, but—the ghost!" cried the teacher, clutching Joe's sleeve, preferring the danger of which she knew something to that of which she knew nothing. We were close to the cabin.

"That ghost ma'am revels in thunder an' lightning! 'E ain't a bit frightened. Why some say as 'ow they've seen 'im up there dancin' an' wavin' of 'is arms



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