

The Specters of Wolfville

"Specters? Never; I refooses 'em my beliefs utter," and with these emphatic words the Old Cattleman tasted his liquor thoughtfully on his tongue.

"But about the ghosts?" I persisted.

"Ghosts?" he retorted. "I never does hear of but one; that's a apparition which enlists the attentions of Peets an' Old Man Enright a whole lot. It's a specter that takes to ha'n'tin' about one of the Bar-B-8 sign-camps, an' escarin' up cattle; drivin' 'em over a precipice, an' all to Enright's disaster an' loss.

"It's over mebbly fifty miles to the southeast of Wolfville, some'ers in the fringes of the Tres Hermanas that thar's a sign-camp of Enright's brand, the Bar-B-8. Thar's a couple of Enright's riders holdin' down this angle of the Bar-B-8 game, an' one evenin' both of 'em comes squanderin' in—ponies a-loam an' faces pale as paper—an' puts it up that they don't return no more.

"'Cause she's ha'n'ted," says one; "Jim an' me both encounters this yere banshee an' it's got fire-eyes. Also, itsef' an' pony is likewise built of blood flames. You can gamble! I don't want no more of it in mine, an' that's whatever!"

"It looks like on two several occasions that a handful of cattle gets run over a steep bluff from the mesa above. The fall is some sixty feet in the clear. An' when them devoted cattle lights, it's pretty easy to guess they're sech no longer, an' that thar's nothin' left of 'em but beef. These beef drives happens each time in the night; an' the cattle must have been stamped complete to make sech a trip. Cattle, that a-way, can't be relied on to go chargin' over a high bluff unless their reason is first onhinged. No, the coyotes an' the mountain lions don't do it; they never chases cattle, holdin' 'em in fear an' tremblin'. These yere mountain lions pounces onto colts like a mink on a settin' hen, but never calves or cattle.

"An' it's mebbly second drink time after midnight," gasps the cow puncher who's relatin' the adventures, "an' me an' Jim is experimentin' along the aige of a mesa, when of a sudden thar comes two steers, heads down, tails up, locoed absolute they be; an' flashin' about in the r'ar of 'em rides this yere flamin' cow sperit on its flamin' cayouse. Shere! he heads 'em over the cliff, I hears 'em hit the bottom of the canyon jest as I falls off my bronco in a fit. As soon as ever I comes toan can remember into that Texas saddle agin, me Jim shably hits the high places in the scenery, an' here we-all be! An' I don't go back to that Bar-B-8 camp. I ain't ridin' herd on no apparitions; an' whenever ghosts takes to romancin' about in the cow business, that lets me out."

"I reckon," says Enright, wrinklin' up his brows, "I'll take a look into this racket myself."

"An' if you-all don't mind none, Enright," says Peets, "I'll get my chips in with yours. Thar's been no one shot for a month in Red Dog an' Wolfville, an' I'm plumb free of patients."

"You're lookin' for trouble, Doc," says Col. Sterret, kind o' laughin' at Peets. "You reminds me of a onhappy sport I encounters long ago in Looeyville."

"An' wherein does this yere Bloo Grass party resemble me?" asks Peets.

"It's one evenin'," says Col. Sterret, "an' a passel of us is settin' about a table in the Galt house baf, toyin' with our beverages. Thar's a smooth, good-lookin' stranger who's camped at a table near. Final, he yawns like he's shore weary of life, an' looks at us—sharp an' cur'ous. Then he speaks up sort o' gen'ral, as though he's addressin' the air.

"This is a mighty dull town!" he says. "Which I've been yere a fortnight an' I ain't had a fight yet." An' he continues to look us over some mournful.

"You-all needn't gaze on us that a-way," says a gent named Granger; "you can put down a stack on it, you ain't goin' to pull on no war with none of us."

"Shore, not!" says the onhappy stranger. Then he goes on apologetic: "Gents, I'm onfortunatly constituted. Unless I has trouble at least once a month, it preys on me."

"If you're honin' for a muss," says Granger, "all you has to do is go a couple of blocks to the east, an' then five to the north, an' thar on the corner you'll note a mighty prosperous s'loon."

"But can't you come an' p'int out the place," coaxes the onhappy stranger of Granger.

"At that Granger consents to guide the onhappy stranger. They drives over an' Granger stops that

outfit, mebbly she's fifty yards from the door. He p'int it out to the onhappy stranger sport.

"Come in with me," says the onhappy stranger as he gets outen the keeriage. "Come on; you-all don't have to fight none. I jest wants you to watch me. Which I'm the dandiest warrior for the whole length of the Ohio!"

"But Granger is firm that he won't. He's not inquisitive," he says, an' will stay planted right thar on the r'ar seat an' await developments a whole lot. With that, the onhappy stranger sport goes mournfully for'ard alone, an' gets into the gin mill by the said "family entrance." Granger sets thar with his head out, lookin' an' listen'.

"Everything's plenty quiet for a minute. Then slam! bang! bang! crash! the most flagrant riot breaks forth! It sounds like that store's coffin down. The racket rages an' grows worse. Thar's a smashin' of glass. The lights goes out, while customers comes boundin' an' skippin' forth from that family entrance like antelopes. At last them uproars dies down; final, they subsides complete.

"Granger is beginnin' to upbraid himsef for not gettin' the onhappy stranger's address so's he could ship home the remainder. In the midst of Granger's sef-accosations, that a-way, the lights in the gin mill begins to burn ag'in, one by one. After awhile she's reilloominated an' ablaze with old-time glory. It's then the door of the family entrance sport emerges onto the sidewalk. He's in his shirt-sleeves, an' a angelic smile wreathes his face. He shore looks plumb content!

"Get out the keeriage an' come in, pard," he shouts down to Granger. "Come on in a whole lot! I'd journey down thar an' get you, but I can't leave; I'm tendin' bar!"

"You're shore right, Colonel," says Peets when Col. Sterret ends the anecdote, "the feelin' of that onhappy stranger sport is absolutely parallel to mine. Ghosts is new to me; an' I'm goin' pirootin' off with Enright on this demon hunt an' see if I can't fetch up in the midst of a trifle of nerve-coolin' trouble."

"The ghost tales of the stampeded cow punchers excites Dan Beggs a heap. After Enright an' Peets has organized an' done p'inted out for the ha'n'ted Bar-B-8 sign-camp to investigate the spook, Dan can't talk of nothin' else.

"Them's mighty dead game gents, Enright an' Doc Peets is!" says Dan. "Which wouldn't go searchin' for no spirts more'n I'd fondit rattlesnakes! I draws the line at intimacies with fiends."

"But mebbly this yere is a angel, says Faro Nell, from her stool alongside of Cherokee Hall.

"Not criticizin' you none, Nell," says Dan, "Cherokee himsef will tel you sech surmises is reedle'ous."

"It's the next day, an' Peets an' Enright is organized in the ha'n'ted sign-camp of the Bar-B-8. Also, they've been lookin' round. By ridin' along onder the face of this yere precipice they comes, one after t'other, on what little is left of the dead steers. What strikes 'em as a heap peccoliar is, thar's no bones nor horns. Two or three of the hoofts is kickin' about, an' Enright picks up one the coyotes overlooks. It shows it's been cut off at the fetlock j'int by a knife.

"This yere specter," says Enright, passin' the hoof to Peets, "picks a bowie; an' he likewise butchers his prey. Also, onduubted, he freights the meat off some'ers to his camp, which is why we don't notice no big bones layin' round loose." Then Enright scans the grass mighty scrupolous; an' shore enough! thar's plenty of pony tracks dented into the soil. "That don't look so soopernacheral neither," says Enright, p'intin' to the hoof prints.

"Them's shorely made by a flesh an' blood pony," says Peets. "An' from their goin' some deep into the ground, I deduces that said cayouse is loaded down with what weight of beef an' man it can stagger onder."

"That evenin' over their grub, Enright an' Peets discusses the business. Thar's a Jim-Crow Mexican plaza not three miles off in the hills. Both of 'em is awar' of this yere hamlet, an' Peets, partic'lar, is well acquainted with a old Mexican sharp who lives thar—he's a kind o' schoolmaster among 'em—who's mighty cunning an' learned. His name is Jose Miguel.

"An' I'm beginnin' to figger," says Peets, "that this yere ghostly rider is the foxey little Jose Miguel. Which I've frequent talked with him; an' he saveys enough about drugs an' chemicals, that a-way, to paint up with phosphorus an' go surgin' about stampedin' them cattle over the

bluffs. It's a mighty good idee from his standp'int. He can argue that the cattle kills themse'ls—sort o' commits suicide inadvertent—an' if we-all tracks up on him afterward with the beef, he insists on his innocence; an' puts it up that his cuttin' in on the play after them cattle done slays themse'ls, injures nobody but coyotes."

"Doc," coincides Enright after roominatin' a lot in silence. "Doc, the longer I ponders, the more them theories seems shore sagacious. That enterprisin' greaser is jest about killin' my beef, an' sellin' it to the entire plaza. Not only does this yere ghost play operate to stampede the cattle, an' set 'em runnin' cimmaron an' locoed so they'll chase over the cliffs to their ends, but likewise it serves to scare my cow-punchers off the range, which last, onduubted, this Miguel looks on as a desideratum. However, it's goin' to be good an' dark tonight, an' if we-all has half luck I figgers we fixes him."

"It's full two hours after midnight, an' while thar's stars overhead, thar's no moon; an' along the top of the mesa it's as dark as the inside of a cow. Peets an' Enright is Injunniin' about on the prowl for the ghost. They don't much reckon it'll be abroad as most likely the plaza has beef enough.

"However, by tomorry night," says Enright, in a whisper, "or at the worst, by the night after, we're shore to meet up with this yere marauder."

"Hesh!" whispers Peets, at the same time stoppin' Enright with his hand, "he's out tonight!"

"An' thar for shore is something like a dim blood light movin' about over across the plains, mebbly it's half a mile. Now an' then, two brighter lights shows in spots like the flames of candles; them's the fire eyes the locoed cow boys tells of. Whatever it is, whether spook or greaser, it's a quarterin' the plains like one of these yere huntin' dogs. Its gait, that a-way, is mebbly a slow canter.

"He's on the scout," says Enright, tryin' to start a steer or two in the dark. But he ain't located none yet."

"Enright an' Peets slides to the ground an' hobbles their broncos. They don't aim to have them go pirootin' over no bluffs in any blindness of a first ghostly surprise. When the ponies is safe, they bends

plumb low an' begins makin' up towards the ground on which this yere blood-shimmerin' shadow is ha'n'tin' about. Things comes their way, they has luck. They ain't crope forty rods when the ghost sort o' heads for 'em. They can easy tell he's comin' for the fire eyes shows all the time an' not by fits an' starts as former. As the blood shimmer draws nearer, they makes out the vague shadows of a man on a hoss. Son, she's shore plenty ghostly as a vision, an' Enright allows later, it's no marvel them punchers famesech harrowin' scenes.

"How about it?" whispers Peets. "Shall I do, the shootin'?"

"Which your eyes is younger," says Enright. "You cut loose; an' I'll stand by to back the play. Only aim plenty low. You can't he'p over shootin' in the dark. Hold as low as his stirrup."

"Peets pulls himsef up straight as a saplin' an' runs his left hand along the bar' as far as his arm'll reach. An' he hangs long on the aim, as shootin' in the dark ain't no cinch. If this yere ghost is a bright ghost, it would be easy. But he ain't; he's blood an' dim like washed out moonlight or when it's jest gettin' to be dawn; Enright's twenty yards to one side so as to free himsef of Peet's smoke in case he has to make the second p'ay.

"But Peets calls the turn. With the crack of his Winchester, the ghost sets up sech a screech that it proves he ain't white; an' also that he'll live through the evenin's events. As this yere specter yelps, the blood cayouse goes over on its head an' neck an' then falls dead on its side. The lead, which only smashes the specter's knee to splinters, goes plumb through the pony's heart.

"As Peets foresees, the ghost ain't none other than the wise little Jose Miguel, schoolmaster, who's up on drugs an' chemicals. The blood glimmer is phosphorous; an' them eyes is two of these yere little lamps, like miners packs in their caps. Enright an' Peets strolls up; this Miguel is grooin' an' mournin' an' cryin' Maris, Madre de Dios! When he sees who downs him, he drags himsef to Enright an' begs a heap abject for his life. With that, Enright silently lets down the hammer of his rifle.

"Peets, when the sun comes up, enjoys himsef speshul with that operation. Peets is fond of ampytations that a-way, an' he hacks off said limb with zwst and gusto.

"Which I shore deplores it, Jose," says Peets, "to go shortenin' up a fellow scientist like this. But thar's no he'pin' it; fate has so decreed. Also, as some comfort to your soul, I'll say that I explains to Sam Enright as to how you won't ride no more when I gets you fairly trimmed. Leastwise, when I'm done prunin' you; thar won't be nuthin' but one of these yere women's saddles that you'll fit, an' no gent, be he white or be he greaser, can work cattle from a side saddle." An' with that, Peets, hummin' a blithe roundelay, cuts merrily away at that wounded member."

Swept Through a Sewer.

New York, March 24.—Edward Boyle, a plumber's helper, fell into a sewer in East 53rd street yesterday and was carried into the East river, where he was rescued. For three

quarters of a mile he was swept helplessly through the dark by a rush of water running like a mill race. Overhead the rattle and roar of the busy streets went on. At last he was thrown, dazed and bewildered from the mouth of the sewer into the East river. Men on a scow moored near by hauled him out, and brought him to land again. For a time he could not speak, for the shock of his terrible experience had paralyzed his nerves. Then, while the little crowd that had gathered about him still were asking where he had come from, he found his tongue and asked for a "smoke." Half an hour later he refused the assistance of the ambulance surgeon, who had been summoned, and had started on his way home, seemingly none the worse for his strange adventure.

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