

The Shadow Ghost

BY EUGENE JONES

PART II.

The following morning Hawthorne sought his fireman at the roundhouse, where that worthy was busy tinkering with engine 99.

"Look here, Uncle Bill; I want to talk to you! Climb up in the cab a minute!"

There was no one to hear, and so the younger man repeated Katharine's story precisely as he remembered it, concluding with the remark:

"When you mentioned spooks to me last night I laughed at you; I never gave such a thing a serious thought. But now, after that confounded message from Fipps—holy smoke! He meant every word he said. I somehow got the impression of facts when Katharine told me—of a certain, positive thing—not a dying man's fancy. Besides, he did save the Limited twice when, by all that's reasonable, she ought to have been ditched."

"Suppose I get to imagining when I'm hitting the high places in Big Cypress; suppose I jam everything to pieces stopping for a shadow? They'll say 'Poor kid, he hasn't the nerve! He'll do better on freight.'"

Suddenly Hawthorne was leaning forward, his eyes pleading.

"Uncle Bill, you've got to understand! It's not a blooming ghost I'm afraid of; it's myself! We're all human; superstition is an instinct, and when it's fed, strengthened—"

"Wait a minute!" the fireman interrupted. "You listen! Can't you guess why I'm not an engineer? Has it ever struck you I'm the oldest fireman on the division with enough experience behind me to handle anything with drivers? Frank, a long while ago I made up my mind I hadn't the nerve to stand it. Firing was all right, but driving—well, I didn't want to lose my health. Then, to clinch matters, oil burners came in; and that took away the only barrier threatening my future. A man sixty years old can fire an oil burner. And so I'm doing it to-day—will always be, while I live."

"The very thing that scared me off is getting your goat now; you're up against a flat proposition of nerve. You've got to decide, and stick to it—whether you be a three-hundred-a-month man and look at death occasionally, or whether you'll be content to be another 'Uncle Bill.'"

Hawthorne brought his fist down. "I've got to earn the three hundred for Katharine—more, if I can."

"Oh! That's the lay of the land, eh?"

"Sure... We make our first run to-day; Limited leaves at four-four. Hawthorne saw Katharine at lunch time. She appeared tired and worried.

"Did you know, Frank, there was a big row in the division superintendent's office last night?" she asked.

"Edward Adler, the man who expected to land Dad's job, made an awful scene—threatened the old man himself. Somebody said he'd been drinking. Of course, he was fired outright. He blamed you, and swore he'd get even. He swore he'd make you wish you'd never heard of the Limited. Yes, the police are going to watch him, but there's a—chance—"

"And you think—"

"An accident might occur so easily in Big Cypress."

"We'll watch out for Ad'er, honey," he promised grimly.

And that was the last they saw of each other before the Limited made her run.

There was a time when 99 thundered through Big Cypress sending the echoes crashing into the moss-draped trees—a time when the men in the cab braced themselves and watched the track unrel with uneasy eyes. But the headlight found no fitting figure blocking the right of way; nor was Adler's work in evidence. Lonely? Yes. It was the loneliest run on the division; but that first night, whatever secret lay concealed in the depths of the swamp, remained hidden, allowing the train to pass unwarned and uninjured.

At Jacksonville, Hawthorne and Uncle Bill spent an hour in the dispatcher's office waiting for the northbound Limited, which arrived some fifteen minutes late. At 6 a.m. they rolled back into Savannah, none the worse for Big Cypress—tired of course but far more confident. Frank went to bed almost convinced that Adler had been one hundred per cent bluff, and that old man Fipps' message was the product of a disordered brain.

That was on Thursday. On Friday several disturbing things occurred. To begin with, it rained hard all day. Also, the police lost track of Adler, the ex-engineer. He had skipped, bag and baggage—which might mean a great deal or nothing. Toward evening reports kept coming in from the towers about the high water. The weather bureau callously promised more rain.

No. 86 left on time, but lost a half-hour crawling across Big Cypress behind an extra freight with a hot journal. Fortunately, the right of way through the swamp had been constructed with due attention to the possibility of a flood. The fill was wide and sufficiently elevated to defy the rapidly deepening pools on either side; the trestle had been built on triple rows of piling, crescented and driven through the muck to hard bottom. In spots the water had eaten into the bank, but not dangerously.

A few miles out of Jacksonville the train was held up while a wrecking crew removed some box cars which had split a siding switch. And always the rain fell steadily out of a black sky that seemed to lay its finger tips on the locomotive stack.

The northbound Limited made up a little time on the return run; but the injectors gave trouble, while two miles from Savannah a duck flew straight into the headlight, smashing the glass and snapping both arc carbons. After uncoupling and shunting 99 into the roundhouse, Frank and Uncle Bill walked home together.

Dawn was just breaking; the yards showed a dirty black in the gray light. Pools of water stood everywhere, track walkers loomed out of the mist like desisted ghosts, and disappeared, slouching their rounds with hunched shoulders. The noise of locomotive drivers was half drowned by the hiss of falling rain; the smoke hung in a great blanket, dimming what little light there was.

"I reckon," said the engineer with the tolerance of a man in love, "we'll see some more rain to-day. Pretty soon the water will be over the tracks in that rice field this side of Big Cypress. Lord, listen to it!"

They parted under the shed of the union depot, Hawthorne stopping for a cup of coffee, while Uncle Bill went home to bed.

At twelve o'clock the engineer dropped in at the dispatcher's office. The wires were hot with trouble—a wash-out here, a freight ditched there, water everywhere, except in Big Cypress.

"You're lucky," the chief said to him. "You've got the driest run in the division. Funny, too! You think a swamp would just naturally forget its manners a day like this, yet reports have it the flood's three feet from track level in Big Cypress."

Four o'clock came around at last. Hawthorne backed 99 into the shed, coupled, and climbed out of the cab. Katharine was waiting on the platform. They walked a little way off, and when they came back there was a tender light in his eyes.

"Nothing like a woman to make life worth-while!" he beamed, cleaning his goggles industriously. "Take Katharine, for instance—"

But Uncle Bill wasn't in a mood to agree.

"Women cause half the—"

His words were drowned by the safety, which popped opportunely. Frank got the conductor's signal and the drivers turned; 99 crawled out into the yards and into the storm, which presented an indefinite, gray barrier. Switch lamps burned a sickly yellow—they had been lighted early, for one couldn't see a hundred feet away.

"Damn thick!" said Hawthorne cheerfully around the end of the boiler.

"Take it easy," advised the fireman. "Remember that rice field."

Presently the yard-limit sign flashed past. Now the Limited was alone in a world of mist, thundering out of nothing into a receding wall.

"Green!" yelled Hawthorne as the first lower lights glimmered ahead.

"Green!" repeated Uncle Bill. Sixty miles an hour now. On either side lay inundated fields. Once they swooped across a bridge where the water ran sullen and yellow hardly a foot below the track.

"Green!" shouted the engineer a moment later.

Another tower swam by like a rigid ghost. The rain drove against his goggles, found the crack between overalls and coat, rained in disgusting streams down his neck. As the crossing-boards of a highway leaped out of the mist the fireman reached for the whistle cord. But the sound didn't seem as pleasant as usual; the drizzle drove it back, muffled it, proving conclusively that 99 was a prisoner of the storm.

Then, suddenly, there wasn't any track ahead—just a placid lake!

"Look out!" Uncle Bill's warning brought the jar of brakoes. The train closed up, bucked, lost momentum, while spray flew from the pilot.

"The rice field," Hawthorne explained unnecessarily.

Three hundred feet beyond, the water rose to the trucks. Then they caught the signal from tower BB-17.

"Red," grunted Frank.

THE series of short stories that have been running on this page for the past month or two will be followed next week by a serial, "Every Man for Himself," a splendid Canadian story of mystery, romance and political intrigue with a smashing climax—the sort of story that every live Canadian will enjoy.

The action begins in Toronto, the scene changes to Sparrow Lake, then up the railway lines through the Algoma district, a territory that is now tapped for the first time by a Canadian novelist. The local color of this tale is one of its most fascinating features. But above all it is an action story which keeps the reader's interest from the first to the last chapter.

The author is Hopkins Moorhouse, of Winnipeg, who has a continental reputation as a journalist and short story writer. For some years he has lived in the West, but he was educated at London, Ontario, is a graduate of the Western University in that city, and served on different newspapers in Eastern Canada. In vividness of phraseology, in racy dialogue, and in swift descriptive power, Mr. Moorhouse is regarded as one of Canada's most gifted authors.

"Red" repeated Uncle Bill as the Limited took the air of the tower, 99 swinging abreast of the tower, 99 came to a dead halt with only the noise of the injectors to break the stillness. The mirror surface of the flooded field stretched to the near horizon, deserted except for the two-storey structure which reared up on the right like a light-house on a barren coast.

Hawthorne stuck his head from the cab as a window was raised above.

"What's the matter?" he yelled.

"No O.K. on 62 yet. Maybe she's in over her boiler. Pretty slushy going, eh?"

"How's William's Creek bridge?"

"All right, so far as I know. But watch your step!"

The Limited waited fifteen minutes—fifteen minutes of rain and silence and darkening sky; night was coming. Then the semaphore flashed green.

"Good luck!" shouted the operator. Slowly the train crawled under the signal span, picked up speed. A mile beyond lay William's Creek. As the superstructure of the bridge appeared, Frank cut down to five miles. The water was over the stringers; there was no defining the original creek bed.

He nosed the pilot forward, felt a slight sag.

"Whew!" muttered Uncle Bill as the engine gained the fill on the farther side. "She's going out pretty soon!"

A mile beyond, a two per cent grade brought the track to the surface, and the train increased pace. When darkness settled, the white shaft of the headlight groped futilely in the fog like the finger of a blind man, but Hawthorne did not let his speed.

"O. K now," he grinned. "We'll make up a bit of time. Big Cypress is dry enough."

Sixty, sixty-five! They settled down to the roar of the drivers. Now on each side marched garbled trees, in a swamp, grotesque sentinels of the swayed, the locomotive lurched and swayed, the white path of the headlight suggested a lurid wound to the darkness.

Behind, Pullman after Pullman followed with the trusting confidence of a dog at his master's heels. That was the responsibility Uncle Bill had always side-stepped—all those innocent people back there, cozy in the brilliantly lit diner, or watching the porter make up their berths, or swapping lies in the smoking compartments.

And, in the cab, two white-faced, rain-soaked men with nerves as taut as bowstrings, hurling the train onward like a meteor.

Another hour of it. Still the trees peered at them; still the drizzle blinded them. They were halfway across now. Frank settled back, trying to shield his chest and throat as best he could.

"God in heaven!"

The words were Uncle Bill's, but so sharp, so desperate, they sounded like an explosion.

"Look!" he yelled. "Look!"

Something inside of Hawthorne froze; he could hardly bring his eyes to focus on the track.

The train, in the headlight, an indefinite distance beyond the pilot truck, danced a gigantic shadow. The shape was a caricature of a man, being headless but with arms fluttering directly over the rails, receding with the rush of the train, it sped. The light did not pierce it. There could be no doubting, no reasonable explanation; nothing was between that gleaming fire and the grotesque shadow. Nothing could be except—Tim McFarland!

Frank was rigid, his hands idle, his profile bloodless in the radiance of the gauge lamps. He too had fallen under the spell. The horror, the surety of the supernatural proved now beyond a doubt, held him like a vise. The trees leaned closer as if to get a better view, and the Limited rushed on.

What a moment! Things to do and do quick, yet neither man moved. Their bodies were powerless; their nerves shuddered, refusing to control their limbs. Something as intangible as the shadow itself, yet clinging, persistent, enveloped 99. It was almost as if the mists of the night had successfully braved the heat of the boiler fires and fang their shapeless arms through the cab windows. The flying thing in the searchlight was to blame—the thing they called Tim's ghost.

... Tim's shadow, headless, animated by an unearthly power, was routing the last doubt of engineer and fireman; they faced irrefutable, blood-chilling proof—such proof as is only offered those about to die.

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About the House

Virtue May Become a Vice.

Virtues can be carried to such an extreme that they degenerate into vices is an axiom. Perhaps the one which most easily and quickly slips over the border is the virtue of criticism.

A little kindly, well meant criticism is one of the best stimulants to growth. But it is seldom a critic can remain just a kindly critic. It is so easy to slip over the line and become a chronic fault finder, from whom Heaven preserve us.

One such pest has almost broken up a community organization in a prosperous farming section. Her first suggestions were constructive, but whether her success in getting the organization to change some of its plans gave her an enlarged sense of her own importance, or whether she was at heart a born fault finder, who can say? At any rate she continued to pick flaws in the methods of work until the discouraged promoters of neighborhood enterprises are all ready to give up.

Probably this woman has done no more harm, though, than her neighbor who finds fault with her family. Every woman knows that no husband is perfect, no children faultless. But why be forever telling them about it? Psychologists tell us that the best way to build up is by praising virtues rather than by stressing faults. Yet this woman—and she has many copies—almost never mentions a good thing about any of her family, but continually harps on their shortcomings.

That woman is giving her children a reputation they will have hard work living down. They are already looked upon in the community as future bad citizens, when as a matter of fact they are only normal, average children. No child ever overwhelms its parents with gratitude for its daily care. Yet because these children are not constantly thanking their mother for their bread and butter, she refers to them as monsters of ingratitude. And where is the child who hops out of bed in the morning and rushes to mother, clamoring to be given work to do? I've yet to see a healthy boy or girl who voluntarily offered to do chores or wash dishes, until months of habit had made the job seem natural. The propensity of children is to dash out to play, and if they don't whine and protest when you dragged them in to work, you'd think there was something the matter with them. Now, wouldn't you?

Yet, because this woman's children are healthy young animals and object to being broken to harness she bewails the fact that her children are lazy and idle. Bewailing at home would be bad enough, it would go far towards making the children lazy, but to tell their faults to the world is little short of criminal.

Keep Minard's Liniment in the house.

A "Never Fail" Pie Crust.

A pastry made with hot water! We ask you—the experienced cooks—can you think of anything more iconoclastic? Here it is:

½ cupful shortening (¼ cupful butter, ¼ cupful lard), ½ cupful hot (boiling) water, 2½ cupfuls flour, ¼ teaspoonful baking powder, ¼ teaspoonful salt.

Cream the shortening with the water by adding the latter only a bit at a time. Mix the salt and baking powder with the sifted flour, and stir this into the butter and water. Turn

Ladies' Aid: Can you suggest some new way of holding a small sale or bazaar?

A Pedler's Parade is novel and does not require booths. Those who take part dress up to represent peddlers (both men and women), and place their wares in baskets, packs and push-carts. The sale opens with a parade of these "merchants" headed by an organ-grinder carrying a hand-organ, if it is possible to hire one. An agile boy might be persuaded to dress as a monkey and accompany the organ-grinder throughout the evening, holding up his cap for stray pennies. If this can not be arranged, a group of musicians might serve as a street band, producing music on real or fake instruments, but remembering to "pass the hat" between numbers.

After the "parade" the pedlers endeavor to sell their wares, imitating the methods of real pedlers in order to create merriment. Sandwiches can be sold from a basket carried by a man dressed to represent a "train-boy." Another "train-boy" could sell peanut bars, marshmallows, other package candy and sweet chocolate. Ice cream could be sold from a push-cart and should be served on paper plates and eaten with tin spoons. A woman carrying a basket containing cakes should be near at hand. Other baskets should be filled with aprons, iron-holders, tea-towels, fancy-work, notions and flowers if they are available.

Minard's Liniment used by Physicians.

No Wonder.

District Visitor—"Well, one must do something for the suffering poor."

Friend—"But are you sure they do suffer?"

District Visitor—"Oh, yes, I visit them."

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