

MYSTERY.

A COSTLY JOKE.

In the flush times when oil wells were the theme...

Why need I more repeat the old, old story? We never saw again our cherished poet...

At having sacrificed our little store, For you rich folk, who know so vastly more...

THE HAUNTED ISLAND.

BY JOHN H. WHITSON.

A party of hunters were slowly picking their devious way among the boulders of the Rocky Mountains...

The party numbered three, two of whom were brouned and hardy trappers...

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starting sight, but which, if the mystery were solved, would be robbed of half its terrors...

"Ben, I am greatly interested in this account you have given me, and would like to see this monster for myself...

The trappers protested against any such procedure, Ben bawling his folly in revealing his knowledge...

They soon reached the fringe of timber, and finding a gully where they would be safe from the eyes of prowling savages...

They remained here, smoking and chatting, until the moon had risen high above the tree tops...

"See, y're now," he said, turning to the others, "we're almost to the infernal place, and as huntin' ghosts is a ticklish sort o' business...

Again they moved on, and soon came in sight of the stream, gleaming in the moonlight like a bed of molten silver...

"It's about time the critter was a comin', if he's a goin' to," whispered Ben. "He generally appears near the shadow o' that tree, leanin' over the water..."

The words had scarcely left his lips when the waters near the position indicated were violently agitated, and a huge, hairy form in human resemblance rose out of the water...

The trio seemed riveted to the spot by a strange fascination, and it was not until the reverberating echoes had died away, that they ventured to breathe freely...

"What do you call that, I wonder?" Knowland's strained nerves relaxed at the sound of Ben's voice...

"That's the most wonderful phenomenon I ever beheld," said Knowland. "It's not a spirit, though, I reckon?"

"No, I can't believe that it is. It may be some aquatic animal of which we have not heard, or more probably some miner who has found a rich lead endavoring to frighten and prevent any one from approaching his claim..."

"I mout a knowed you wouldn't believe what you see yourself. The next thing you'll be sayin' it was an optical delusion, and we didn't hear any noise at all. I'll tell you, I believe it's the Old Boy himself, and that we'd better get away from this section if we want to save our hair..."

"What is it like?" queried the young man, in a half-serious, half-jocular tone. "See here," said the trapper, turning upon him, angrily, "nebbe you think as how I lie about this?"

"He par-don, Ben," replied the young man, seeing his mistake; "but I am skeptical upon the subject of ghosts; in fact I don't believe there are any such things. I think everything of the kind can be accounted for in a natural manner, and as the result of natural causes. But what appearance does this ghost, or hobgoblin, present?"

"Well," said Ben, slightly mollified, "as I said afore, it stays around this yer island, though no one ever seed it on the island itself, for it allers comes up in the middle of the river, and gives a yell, like ten thousand Blackfeet howlin' all at once. You could only see its shoulders an' head, for the rest of it was under water. It hed a face suthin' like a human face, but all over hairy, an' with its hairy-lookin' head war horns that stood right straight up, an' as white as snow. When I seed it, the tar-nal thing hed lopped right up within ten feet o' me, and hed off the most ear-splittin' yell ever heard. Why, I could feel the flesh creep on my very bones, an' my hair stood up till it a' most lifted my cap off my head. I couldn't move hand or foot, until the thing div under water again, an' then I was so weak I could scarcely walk..."

Knowland felt like laughing, but the serious tone and lugubrious expression upon the face of Blackben warned him that, if he wished to retain his friendship, he must not be too reckless in scoffing at the trapper's superstition. He knew that Blackben had seen some

face, then suddenly the waters were violently disturbed, and the hairy monster rose into full view, with a horrid shriek upon its lips, and scarcely ten feet from the boat. Quick as the lightning's flash, the strong coil of lasso shot from the hands of the young man and settled upon the shoulders of the strange creature...

"One of the institutions that every Iowa has a right to be proud of is the Burlington Insurance Company. It is one of the oldest in the west, having been established in 1820, and is the oldest stock company in the State...

The low, bushy island was carefully examined the next day, and a commodious cave found, the entrance to which was close to the water's edge, and hidden by the tangled masses of overhanging vines...

They now paddled with all their might, and the canoe soon grated upon the shore opposite their camp, and their prisoner, who had now ceased his struggles, was borne to their fire. As soon as he was released and the gag removed, he opened his lips to give vent to a shriek, but Blackben grasped him firmly by the shoulders, and the poor fellow cowered down in speechless terror...

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