

### The Night Watch

It was about five o'clock when the camping party began to assemble. In Minnehaha the sun does not rise until six at least, so that the men, as they moved about loading the donkeys, were barely visible, except when the light from the kitchen window streamed upon them.

We were making elaborate preparations for our week at "The Pit," which to us children meant loads of good things to eat. Great boxes loaded with cookies and other irresistibles were being fastened on the burros as they stood patiently with heads bent and ears pointed downward, trying to make up the sleep they had been robbed of.

Our house was the rendezvous for the party and the people from the cabins over the falls scurried in and out of our little kitchen, depositing their baskets and pails and then hurrying back for more. On an occasion of this sort we children were not allowed to help, so Jack and I amused ourselves by taking turns at keeping Bleutcher awake. Bleutcher was a saddle burro and our favorite.

"I'm going to ride Blue, ain't I, Pete?" Jack begged eagerly of a bent old man who came out loaded with blankets.

"You kids just clean out," Pete answered crossly. "This here donk's going to be rode by a Missouri gent and—Clear out, will you!" This addressed wholly to Jack, who was half-way into Blue's saddle. "If you don't git, I'll just leave you up to the Pit—for the ghost," and he shook his huge sombrero fiercely at the boy.

Jack slid down noiselessly and fled around the corner of the cabin.

"Say," he called back from a safe distance, "here comes Mr. Benton."

It certainly was Mr. Benton's lantern that appeared now and then through the shrubbery, for it was accompanied by an audible wheezing.

"Bet I'll beat you," Jack challenged and was half-way down the hill before I started, but I was about a foot taller than the little fellow and didn't mean to let him beat me so easily.

We were both puffing as hard as old Mr. Benton when we reached him, and laughing over our run, so that for a moment we didn't see the stranger with him. Then we dropped behind, shy and awed—the man had on buff golf trousers and beautiful plaid stockings. It is so seldom that we see anything but blue shirts and corduroys in Minnehaha that an individual in such a costume was enough to frighten anyone. We could not see his face in the glare of the lantern, but we knew the rest of the man was just as queer. He was introduced to the group in the kitchen as Professor McCall and we knew he must be that stupid Missourian who was going to monopolize Blue.

We were standing outside of the door, Jack and I, and Jack was bumping his head against the side of the cabin ferociously.

"Wish't the old thing hadn't come. He'll just spoil all our fun." Then an idea seemed to strike him and he drew me around the corner of the cabin. "Let's just leave him behind. Papa said he was coming up to see the ghost, and we'll just let him stay as long as he wants up there," and the little fellow danced joyously.

I wanted to hear what was going on in the kitchen, and so we crept back into the shadow of the doorway.

"Yes," Mr. Benton was saying, "Professor McCall came up from Missouri especially for this trip. I couldn't make him believe about the 'Night Watch-mah' in the Bottomless Pit, so I says 'Just come up and see if your old sel-

ence will dissolve him.'"

Then, as Mr. Benton and father walked out to the burros. Mr. Benton slapped his side and almost lost his balance in a fit of mirth.

"I'd like to see him analyze that ghost. I'll just bet that he leaves tomorrow evening."

"Missouri," father said, laughing, but Mr. Benton insisted.

"Well, we'll wait and see."—Father never bets.

It was beautifully crisp and cool when we started out, and we were miles up the winding trail before the sun came out full and hot, as a Colorado sun can do on occasion.

Some of our party were walking, but most of them were on burros. Professor McCall had apparently never ridden anything of the kind before—at least nothing so small—and he did not seem to enjoy his first experience.

He sat with his knees almost on a lever with his chin, grasping the pommel, in front, with both hands, his body working back and forth with every movement of the donkey.

Pete walked beside him with his black mule. I never saw the old fellow so voluble or so interesting. He pointed out everything we passed that had interesting associations, and his familiarity with every step of the trail threatened to make him talk all the way. He had to drop behind, however, occasionally to hurry up some of the burros in the rear of the cavalcade. It was one of his many duties to look after the animals—besides that he was chief cook, guide, doctor, when any of us got sick in the camp, and I have even heard of his building some of the log cabins at Minnehaha. His real and only name was Seven-Toed-Pete, but we always left off the two first sections and called him Pete. The families at camp prized this half-Indian, half-Mexican highly, and relied on him in everything, especially on a trip of this kind. We children were fond of the old fellow, but our attachment was a combination of awe, admiration, and curiosity, because he was said to have seven toes.

About 11 o'clock we turned from the main canyon—Bear Creek gorge—and took a trail which zig-zaged up the steep mountainside. When we reached the top we stopped to rest and cool off under the huge pines. We seemed to be above everything now but the rocky old peak itself—and it seemed near enough to touch, but we remembered with a sigh that this ridge we were now on was called "half-way mark." So we mounted our burros and started on down the other side of the ridge. The whole trail to the pit is just a series of ups and downs. You have no more than struggled to the top of a ridge than you must brace yourself in the same for a down-hill jog.

We ate our luncheon in a little valley where a rippling brook flowed, with banks of moss and ferns, and the rustling of aspens was the only other sound.

Professor McCall entertained us all by giving us the long botanical names for the common little flowers we called hare-bells and pointed-noses.

About 1 o'clock we came to the ruins of what was once a three-romed cabin. As we approached the little pile of logs Pete was telling about the hermit who had lived there fifty years before and his steady diet of muskrats. A little brook flowed aimlessly around the house, and Dr. McCall did not see it until his burro stopped suddenly on the opposite bank with his feet planted firmly and obstinately.

"Will he jump?" gasped the rider from his elevated and uncertain position, as the burro still hesitated. "I think I had better get off anyway," and the man tried to untangle himself from stirrups and bridle.

"Naw, that burro couldn't jump if you licked the hide off'n him," Pete hastened to drawl.

But just as the professor had loosened his grip on the pommel, the burro made the distance with the most astonishing leap.

There was a distinct line of daylight between the rider and his saddle, but the man didn't fall off. He sat still limply for a moment, and when he got his breath he turned around to Pete reproachfully: "I thought you said that donkeys didn't jump and couldn't."

Pete looked at him incredulously from under his broad sombrero.

"You don't call that a jump, do you? Why Blue just walked across it. And

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