

A GHOST STORY.

Down south of Lincoln, perhaps a half mile this side of the penitentiary there is an old cave. There are all sorts of stories as to its origin. Some say that it was dug by robbers, others say that counterfeiters burrowed into the hill and made bogus new money. The more prosaic say that it was dug by brewers who had a brewery there and that the cave was a cellar where the beer was kept in great vats. This latter conjecture may not be so romantic as the robber or the counterfeiter theory, but it has more probability about it, and some of the oldest inhabitants, are the ones who are most positive about the brewery.

There may be some grown people in the city who do not know there is a cave down there, but the small boy knows all about it. It is just such a place as the heroes in many a dime novel inhabit, and there is always an element of the dime novel in the small boy. So the cave has been explored times innumerable by gangs of boys bent on adventure.

The place is a desolate one. The fields of dead sunflowers that surround it and the wind sighing through the dry cornfields near by, make an uncanny sound. Three yawning mouths in the side of the hill mark the entrances to the cave. You must stoop a little as you enter, but after you are in the cave is high enough. There are three long tunnels that lead into the hill, gothic roofed, having been dug out of soft sandstone. The tunnels are connected with each other by narrow and low man-holes, black as an old hat, and it takes the small boy to explore them as he is not afraid of lowering his dignity by crawling on his hands and knees, and was never known to be the least bit afraid of soiling his clothes.

The walls are hieroglyphiced with innumerable initials and rude drawings, and in one of the tunnels some pious hand has carved in bold letters, "Though your sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow." The floor is covered deeply with the sand that is always wearing from the sides, and there are old wells half filled, which make a blacker hole in the already black place and you shudder a little as you think what a lonesome place it would be down in an old well, with the toads for company.

The place has not been inhabited for a long time save by bats and tramps. It is a paradise for tramps. The railroad is but a step below the mouth of the cave, and the Weary Willies and the Dusty Petes always find a welcome awaiting them in the side of the old hill, a cool place in summer and a warm one in winter. No matter how hard the blizzard may blow outside no blast is so strong as to reach into the depths of the old beer cellar. And so the old place shelters many a ragged and friendless man, the wrecks of life that float hither and thither, till they find a narrow home at last in the ground where no policeman cries "Move on," and where perhaps no judge pronounces sentence.

They say that the old cave is haunted. Did you ever know of any such place that was not? It is a shame to let such a place go without some ghost to haunt its dreary depths, and so there is a ghost wandering through the tunnels. And strange to say, the ghost has to do with the least romantic story of the origin of the cave, that of the brewery. They say that the place is haunted by a beautiful young woman who wanders through it wringing her hands and sobbing. She is always dressed in long robes of white and her long tawny hair wraps about her like a robe of gold. A friend of mine who has, I must confess, a nervous temperament, and a well developed imagination, told me that he slept there one night and that he saw an awful sight. He had heard that the

cave was haunted, and being overmastered by a desire to see a real live ghost, he went there to sleep. This is what he said about his experience:

"I went down to the cave about 11 o'clock. I was alone. I took with me some blankets to spread on the floor. I must confess that I felt a little shaky about the knees as I neared the cave. It was a bright moonlight night, but it looked desolate around that cave. The wind blew a mournful chant among the dead weeds, and to heighten the creepy feeling, I heard a dog in the distance, howl forebodingly.

"However, I had come down to see the ghost, and I was not going to let the howling of a dog deter me from my purpose. I lighted a small candle that I had brought, stooped down and went into the hill. A bat flew by my head, just grazing my cheek, and out went my light. I groped on in the dark, and soon felt myself falling forward, and then remembered the old well that I had seen once before when I was in the cave, and gave myself up for lost, but I soon touched bottom and found that the well had been filled up so that it was waist deep. I scrambled out and went on to the end of the cave, spread out my blankets and prepared to go to sleep. The mouth of the cave looked small to me from where I lay, the bright moonlight made it look like a round plate of silver with one golden star shining near the center.

"Some way I could not go to sleep. I was as wide awake as I could be. I had gotten all over my nervousness, but still I had no desire to sleep. The bats flew in and out, and their squealing and fluttering must have kept me awake. I do not know how long I laid there in the dark watching the glimmering mouth of the cave, but after a while the cave began to change. The place began to fill with dark shadows, and soon the long narrow room had a row of big vats along the side. I saw other shadows along the walls of things I did not know the use of, and piles of grain sacks and kegs and bottles.

"By and by I heard some one moving about the entrance. I saw a man enter with a light, and after him came more men carrying a shapeless mass. The men were hurried and panting as if they had ran and they cursed as they pulled and tugged at their burden. At last they climbed up on a ladder by the side of one of the great vats, and lifted their burden high and I could see what it was. I nearly screamed aloud as I saw that it was a beautiful woman with long golden hair hanging like a silken shroud about her. The men swung her back and forth and then flung her over the edge of the vat. There was a heavy splash that sounded hollow in the wooden walls of the great tub, a gurgling half smothered cry, a few struggles and then silence. The men looked at each other a moment with scared wide open eyes and then began to get ready to leave the cave.

"Up to this time I had been turned almost to stone, incapable of making a sound and almost paralyzed, but as I saw the men leaving the cave, with one supreme effort I moved and screamed. Well, the bats were still flying a little, up in the top of the cave, and the plate of silver at the south had changed to one of gold with no stars in it."

This story rather pleased me and I thought if a night in a cave would only bring ghostly dreams that I would try it myself. Well, I got my roommate to go with me one dark gloomy night in November. The wind blew a wild fanfare, the forerunner of the storm that I was sure was coming as we wended our way to the cave. We had some blankets and were prepared to spend a comfortable night. We got to the cave without any mishap, and as there were two of us we did not feel nervous. We chatted a while after we had got into our blankets and at last were in dreamland. We had

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