

## The Mystery of Ghost Bend

BY L. C. NOTRUE.

**Y**EARS ago, on the old canal that extended from Chicago to the Illinois River, stood a small village by the name of Ellasal. It was long before the Chicago Drainage Canal was talked of or even thought of. In the village lived a Mr. Mason. He had but one child, a boy of more than ordinary intelligence. This lad was bright, active and industrious. He excelled his playmates in everything, leading in their sports as well as in classwork. He grew to manhood with but few rivals in anything he wished to undertake.

Having little opposition, and overcoming that little so readily, caused him to have an exalted opinion of himself, which increased with his age. He thought with his superior faculties, that he could lead a dual life—be noble and manly when in the society of good people, and the reverse when with bad people. But he fell and fell quickly, as the bright young man so often does when attempting to lead a life of sin.

Young Mason entered his father's store when 21 years of age. When he reached the age of 22, his father was bankrupt from the effects of his son's intemperance and dishonesty. There being a good opening in canal work at that time, the boy sought employment as steersman. He foreswore drinking and by dint of perseverance, was soon one of the leading men of the canal, with a captain's commission; but his reformation was of short duration. In less than a year's time from receiving his commission as captain, he had beguiled an innocent girl into being his mistress with the promise of marriage as soon as he should be released from work long enough to make the necessary preparations for an extended wedding tour.

It was the same old story of a strong man tempting an innocent girl, with the same result—a wrecked and ruined life. Pretty Elsie Conway had been on board the Sherman about three months, as the wife of Captain Mason, when she suddenly disappeared. There were many sly, winks and nods and "I told you so's" among the old boatmen. The report got abroad that pretty Elsie Mason had left the captain, but there was not a man that was thoroughly acquainted with the captain who believed his story, that she had gone away with another man.

Things went along as usual for some time, although a great many suspected foul play.

One stormy night Captain Mason's boat, the Sherman, was rounding the bend which is near the central part of the canal, when the steersman, George Wilson, by a vivid flash of lightning, chanced to see a woman standing on the bridge, of the boat. There was no woman on board the boat, he thought, so he attributed it to his imagination. He waited for another flash, and, sure enough, there she stood, her hair streaming out in the wind, the rain dripping from her face. He could not leave the helm, so he shouted to the captain, who came out immediately. They stood and waited for another flash, which came all too soon for the captain, for when it did come and he beheld the woman standing on the bridge, still as a statue, he staggered back and would have fallen, had it not been for Wilson's timely aid.

"My God! It is Elsie Conway's ghost!" was all he could say.

All hands were roused and the captain was carried into the cabin and revived with brandy.

Five miles further on the boat was struck by lightning and partially destroyed but was soon repaired and put in commission again. The bend where Wilson had first seen the ghost of Elsie Conway was ever afterward termed "Ghost Bend."

Before six weeks had passed every boatman on the canal was familiar with the story of "Ghost Bend." George Wilson and Alex Wilson, brothers, were the steersmen on the Sherman. A short time after the Sherman was put in commission again she was ordered to carry a cargo of coal from Chicago to La Salle. The night of the third day found them near Ghost Bend. A storm was coming up. Alex Wilson was at the helm. He had not been awakened the night they had seen the ghost. He had laughed at his brother and told him it was all imagination. He even went so far as to say that he did not believe they had seen anything.

A few minutes before they came to the spot where the ghost had appeared, the captain came on deck. He was much worried. "Wilson, I can't sleep tonight and I thought I'd come out and chat awhile," he said. "Come out in this storm to chat? You

must be fond of rain," was the reply.

The storm increased in violence, flash after flash, while the thunder never ceased to roll. Suddenly Wilson felt the captain's grasp on his arm, while at the same time he exclaimed:

"Look Wilson! For God's sake, what was that?" pointing towards the team that was steadily following the towpath. Wilson looked in the direction indicated. There, behind the team, seemingly sitting on the towline, was Elsie Conway. She was dressed the same as before; her hair streaming down her back and the water dripping from her face.

Wilson's hair began to raise; his breath came hard; the cold sweat stood on his brow. Five successive flashes she remained the same. Then for the space of a few seconds there was no flash. When another came Elsie Conway was not there.

"My God! O, my God! Will that streaming hair and dripping face continue to torment me forever?" and Mason fell insensible at Wilson's feet.

The towline parted and it was decided to wait until the storm had subsided before they proceed. At midnight the storm cleared away and George Wilson took the helm. The moon came out, flooding the night with a soft and mellow light, seldom equaled in Northern Illinois. It was such a beautiful night and so light that it looked as if the stars could give all the light needed.

The Sherman was scarcely under headway when the steersman saw the form of Elsie Conway on the bridge again. This time she appeared to be moving toward the cabin. Soon she stopped before the cabin and hesitated. George Wilson tried to speak to her. His tongue refused to act. He could not utter a sentence. Elsie stood as if meditating for a few moments, then turned and walked past Wilson to the stern of the boat and disappeared.

An hour later the coal was discovered to be on fire. The fire was extinguished by flooding the hold. The damage was considerable. Captain Mason reported a fire, origin, spontaneous combustion. In speaking of it to Wilson, later on, he remarked that he knew he had reported a lie, for it was the hand of fate that had started the fire with the intention of destroying him for his past wickedness. Other boats were visited by the ghost but none came in such close contact as the Sherman.

A month after the Sherman unloaded her coal at La Salle, Captain Mason was arrested for murder. There was no evidence against him other than that of the two Wilsons and their consisted mainly in telling of Mason's exclamations on seeing the ghost. Mason, not being able to account for Elsie Conway's disappearance, was convicted of murder and sentenced to the penitentiary for 20 years. On hearing the sentence he broke down and confessed all. He told how he had thrown her into the canal one stormy night to keep from marrying her after he had ruined her, how she looked when the lightning flashed as she came to the surface, with her hair streaming out and her face dripping, and how when the lightning flashed again, she was nowhere to be seen.

Two days after the sentence was passed, the Sherman was rounding Ghost Bend. Suddenly the driver came to a halt. He called for a line to fasten the boat. The captain, now George Wilson, came on deck and asked what he wanted to fasten the boat for.

"That ghost is lying up here under a tree," was the reply.

The boat was made fast and the crew went forward and there in the shade of a large walnut tree lay the body of Elsie Conway, not her ghost, but her real body. Near by was found a small cave in which she had lived, also the remains of an infant. There was no writing, nothing to tell how she had lived or how she had saved herself from drowning. All that remains a mystery.

Captain Mason never reached the prison. The train wrecked near Joliet, and among the dead was Captain Mason.

### Paying for Cream.

A general practice of paying for cream according to its quality on the part of a creamery should prove very helpful in emphasizing the desirability of producing only good, sweet cream. Many creameries follow this practice of establishing two or more grades, paying a premium of 1 to 3 cents for sweet cream with a clean flavor, as compared with sour cream with clean flavor and sour cream without clean flavor. When such standards of quality are established it is

found that a premium of several cents a pound is easily obtained for the product made from the cream of superior quality. When such standards are not applied there is no particular incentive for the careful, painstaking dairyman, while on the other hand there is every opportunity both for the careful dairyman and the ambitious buttermaker, a general elevating and perfecting of the industry all along the line and a hardship on no one.

### A Fable.

The following's an allegory  
Or just a fake newspaper story,  
Or, if you keep insisting, I  
Will own up that it's just a lie.

Said Wrong to Right: Let's compromise.

Sugar boats vinegar catching flies.  
You yield a point, and I'll yield one;  
And everything will smoothly run,  
We'll save a lot of useless fuss,  
And it will profit both of us."

Said Right: "My rule has been for long  
Never to compromise with Wrong."  
"All right," said Wrong. "Just spare  
rebukes."

We'll fight it out. Put up your dukes."

And so they fought. And say, that fight

Was worth the price all right, all right.  
Right sure was strong, his blows terrific;

But Wrong was much more scientific;  
And then, besides, to save his pelt,  
He often hit below the belt;  
Though, if this tale were strictly true,  
I'd have to own that Right fouled, too.

Wrong soon a bad black optic got;  
But, used to that, he minded not.

A valiant knight of evil he.  
Full long he fought and stubbornly.  
He showed that he was in fine fettle,  
A foeman worthy of Right's mettle.

And by and by Right's eyes grew dim,  
Wrong knocked him down and sat on him.

Said Right and struggled to arise:  
"Say, Mr. Wrong, let's compromise."  
The moral now, and then we'll stop:  
It makes a difference who's on top.

—Walter G. Doty.

### War.

We give our children drums to beat  
Before they stand upon their feet;  
We give them swords and soldiers gay,  
And at the game of war they play.  
We bend the twig of humankind,  
Yet marvel if the tree's inclined.

Early we learn that that might is right,  
That life itself is one long fight.  
This world's a battlefield, we teach;  
Business is war—a common speech.  
We wash our brother on the nose,  
Yet weep if nations come to blows.

Our poems and pictures, books and plays  
The doughty deeds of warriors praise.  
Our mode of speech, our mode of life  
Are echoes of the ancient strife.  
The women dress au militaire,  
Yet—"war's a horrible affair."

—Chicago Tribune.

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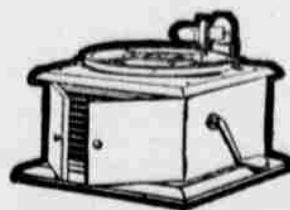
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