

JOSEPH WARD

Desert Poet. Prospector. And a Manxman.
His Life and Adventures.

1879-1928.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

CHAPTER III.

The great landmarks of the desert, Charleston Peak in Southern Nevada, Telescope Peak, west of Death Valley; the Sierras, looking from the Kawich, 150 miles east; the mountains of eastern Nevada are like familiar friends to me. Views of Greyback and San Jacinto Mountains from the desert side in winter, charm my memory. I would not part with the recollections of my wanderings in '82 and '84 and in the far Northwest for all the wealth of Rockefeller.

In Groom Range, in '96 in Southern Nevada, I was in 19 snowstorms, lived three weeks on straight beans, liacks robbed the camp; no money, saw no one for four mouths. Left Johnny Mine on January 2nd to go to Hiwo, 150 miles northeast for supplies, and returned 50 miles southwest to prospect the Groom range. Range shaped like a battleship, 25 miles southwest-northeast. In the centre was a rhyolite cone 8,500 feet high, snow-crowned. It was a picture. I found a monster Indian grave on the east slopes and old Indian encampments, the pinon wickiups looked as if they had lain there in piles, perhaps by Indian children a century ago.

I spent 19 years of three periods, 8½, 4 and 6¼ years respectively, and made only 29.50 dollars; travelling 2,500 miles a year exploring; such was the prospector's luck.

In August, 1889, I ascended two Mt. Whitney in one day; New Mt. Whitney in the morning, going 10 miles south-east through the range to Wagoner Creek, at the west foot of Old Whitney, Sheep Mountain. I saw the sunset from Old Whitney, a shadow thrown across Owen's Lake, crossing the Argus and beyond to the distant Panamints, 80 miles away. The outline of the shadow was very distinct and clear cut. Descending, I reached timber line at 10-0 p.m. The view from the summit is inspiring; wonderful cliffs at its edges. The forest and meadow scenes southward over the Kern River being panoramic, a most beautiful section of the state. Atmospheric conditions were so perfect, a feather would have fallen to the ground, it was so calm. I had my coat and hat off while I was on both peaks. To show the clearness of the atmospheric conditions on Inyo deserts, I remember when at Portugese Meadow, in a cabin observing a sunbeam through a crack in the wall, no dust particles could be seen floating in it. In ordinary climates a similar light beam in a darkened room would have been filled with dust specks. The fear of consumption led me to these climates, and the constant outdoor life gave me clean, pure lungs, absolutely healthy, seldom or never catching a cold, winter or summer; and if I had one it disappeared in a few days.

I stood on the summit of one of the San Francisco Peaks, north of Flagstaff, Arizona. September, 1889, altitude 13,000 feet. I could not see Mr. Sultan 30 miles northeast in Colorado; it was invisible; but the north walls of a canyon, 50 miles northwest, were very

plain. I came across 900 Indians dancing at Hualipai Springs, threatening to take the war path over trouble with cattle men. I felt uneasy until I had crossed the Moqui Trail and reached the protection of the Coconino Forest. I left the river at 2-0 a.m. and reached the rim, 8.06 miles, at 8-0 p.m., and Red Horse Ranks at 3-0 a.m., overtaking a party who had a covered wagon and travelled with them to Flagstaff. A few days later, while stalking antelopes between the Coconino Forest and Hull's Cedar Ranch, I was astonished on firing at them, to see several large lions jump out and give chase to the startled antelopes.

In 1917 I had to go to Court at Los Angeles, and did not like coming into civilization. Travelling over the Cajon Pass I met a friend and asked him how a judge would look and act. I had an idea a crossexamining lawyer would be a phenomena who would ask the same question fifty times over, and I was extremely nervous, when going up the Court House steps, and seeing the words, "Superior Court" on the glass doors. When I got in the witness box I could not say a word, I was so nervous. The judge, to put me at ease, said, "Just think we have some of your burros here, and go ahead." It took some time to regain normality and confidence, and I was in the box for two days. A friend took me round Los Angeles in a motor car, and one night he left me sitting alone in the car opposite Rooslyn Hotel. The electric lights buffalooed me. I wouldn't have got out of that car for money, it looked like Hades to me. Later, the same night, we visited the H. and F. Restaurant on First Street. I thought that the noisiest canyon ever I never saw so many cars in my life, and I made up my mind never to leave the desert again. I was very bashful, and I imagined everyone was looking at me. After staying there all the summer, the bashfulness left me, and even the presence of women didn't worry me. I acquired the citified air, and didn't care who looked at me. I walked down the street as if I owned it. I wondered how I would feel when I returned to the wilds again. I occasionally visited some editors. I don't like those chaps; the "Times" man takes the cake, and I fight him every morning. Soon I'll be on my way exploring the distant stars, and on the firstleg of the hundred million suns now known and counted and bottled up by the astronomers in the neck of the universal bottle. Where I may run across God on my journeys in the home province. I'll have an eternal occupation, exploring endless space, where the soul can investigate all divine, all in thought which will excell our dreams. Eternal song into which we may interpret anything, either this or nothing.

I took up 80 acres of land in April, 1890, six miles north-east of Grand Junction, Colorado. Returning one night at midnight, after leaving a pot of beans, and the fire burning brightly, I found a man wrapped up in my blanket, beans gone. I cared nothing for the beans, but I was sleepy and tired and told him he must have known that someone was around. After heated argument, I grabbed a shovel. I told him that several camps had been robbed lately, and I'd gather a crowd of these Hoosiers and hang him. He didn't wait to hear any more; I couldn't catch up with him and he disappeared in the darkness.

A PICTURE IN STONE.

Wonderful volcano on the Mojave, view at sunset or sunrise unequalled; all the colours of the 'bow; midway between San Bernardino Mountains, Death Valley and the Colorado River, near the centre of the Mojave, stands Old Dad Mountain, ten miles in diameter, 6,000 feet high, a round granite mountain with jutting angles; two springs on the south-west, one on the south-east, one on the northeast, and none on the north. At its north base and west of the north-east line of the rugged Providence Mountains, lies the Devil's playground, a waste of sand hills ten miles across either way, just south of the Salt Lake Railroad. Once, in December, 1903, in the middle of this waste of sand, I was stuck with a sick mule, burro and wagon. Returned round Old Dad Mountain, leaving the mule at Orange Blossom Spring, where she died. I saw her bones years later; she was fifty years old and came from Mexico. I wished to take her to Newberry Springs, where there was feed, 60 miles west, but could not, she was too weak. This sand, some east from Soda Lake and down the Mojave River, the result of ages of mountain grinding of the San Bernardino Mountains by the ceaseless mills of the Mojave, and blown by the prevalent western winds. It seems to eddy here at Playground, and goes no further. A sandless belt between it and the Providence Mountains adjoining east and Old Dad south.

This volcano broke out immediately west of Old Dad Mountain, half a mile across the wash; the land slopes away to north-west and south-west and north over the low divide south. I forget the number of eruptive rocks in the volcano, but there are many, buff, maroon, brown, red, black, white, yellow, every conceivable shape and colour in confusion. I have trails of my own through and across it. Standing on the crests and highest points in the centre of the volcano in the bright, clear desert air just as the sun rises, the colours are brilliant; same in the evening an hour or so before sunset. It is a never-to-be-forgotten scene. I have seen many colours, scenes and pictures in nature's garden all over the west which haunt the inner recesses of my memory in pleasant moments or recollection with lingering sweetness, which I hope I may take with me to the spirit land, but I remember none which so impressed me. About 12 miles west of its centre stands a peak I have named after myself, Mount Ward. It is a crest of divide running east-west, comes off to the north in vertical bluffs of white volcanic tufas, and is in centre of opal formation, 14 by 1 mile. I found no precious opals, but there may be; most were white or yellow and of the anhydrous variety; but there are rare and beautiful crystals there. One place, an acre or so full of rare crystals and opaline structures near a dry fall 45 yards high. I could not get burros near it, except on the north and north-east; very bluffy and rough south and south-west, dark, opalised obaidian and tufa rocks. During the heavy rains when I was there, the water was tumbling over this fall – a very rare thing in the desert. I found opal leaf crystals, blue, opal, two inches square, with quartz rosettes shaped like mushrooms in the centre; these were studded with blue quartz crystals most beautiful and fragile things. I have never seen anything like them anywhere else. One large hollow geode, eight inches in diameter, was studded on its inner surface with blue quartz crystals, surrounding one shaped like a barrel cactus about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter, perfectly circular, horizontal and vertical. On the top of this strange, round crystal was a transparent red quartz crystal. I thought at first it was a flower or, vegetable. All kinds of strange crystals, different from this, may lie found there; many

are fastened to the rock and would have to be cut away, as they would break easily by hammering. Some weigh 20 or 30 lbs. The red opals are very numerous.

I forgot to mention, in writing of the volcano of the ledges, that one stands 110 feet above the ground, visible from Salt Lake R.R, 17 miles away; a little gold on its hanging wall, brecciated rhyolite very hard. I never cut into it; assays 2½; pans a little free gold. I found no other values in the volcano except a dollar or so; but manganese, iron and quartz are abundant and there may be something there. No water, and hard to explore it.

One hundred miles north-west, in another belt, 4 by 1, which I discovered. I did find some precious opals and beautiful hyalite, which the U.S. Geological Survey reported on in '15 or '16. Hyalite forms in clusters like large drops of rain; some octagon, but mostly spherical, and split up the colours of the prism like the rainbow. I find those frozen in seams on the basalt. The volcano in which I find these is about forty miles north-east of Barstow.

NEVADA.

North-east the star of Empire flies
On, on through cold Nevada skies,
To Ely and beyond to stay,
With trailing boomlets in its way.

The fabled Tonopah so great,
Remodelled poor Nevada's fate.
Where Mizpah's magic stream of gold,
Awoke the new Alladin bold.

To conquest, and the-desert gave
It's secrets up to boys so brave;
With wondrous Goldfields mystic spell,
So strange, so varied, who can tell
What things are yet to be with truth
In rare Nevada's golden youth?

The desert thrills with action now,
Where once was silence still as death.
New life, we feel it, and we'll vow
To conquer, and the gloried wreath
Of gold to win with all its sin.

The love of gold, tho curse it wrought,
The curse of of gold, the lives it bought;
But still I love the wandering life;
To neck it far afield in strife;

Battling evils in disguise
In rare Nevada's Paradise;
Where that magnetic pole does lay,
In magic charm and mystery.

(To be continued)