

# JOSEPH WARD

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

1879-1928.

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## CHAPTER II

In September, 1892, I stood on Eagle Peak, Crater Lake, Oregon, alone. It was snowing. I remembered reading of the Oregon engineers sinking their boat in 1887 in this beautiful place, so no vandal hands would touch it. They could not get an Indian guide, as Indian mythology told of a great serpent in the waters of the lake. This so affected my imagination, that not for worlds would I have gone down to the lake alone, though it was only 1,000 feet below. Yet had I been accompanied by even a little boy, I would have done so.

At another time, east of Big Meadows, Tulare County, in the high Sierras, during the matchless summer weather, unrivalled in the world, which prevails there, I found a lake one quarter of a mile long, east and west, perhaps one hundred yards wide, north and south, or less, marshy on the north, but on the south a bare granite slope dipped under the lake at an angle of perhaps 40 degrees. The sun was in the west, about two hours high. I made a raft of logs and poled out to the middle of the lake. Looking down, I saw a mighty serpent, perhaps 30 or 40 feet long, and a foot or more wide. A feeling of utter helplessness overcame me; not for worlds could I have moved for a few moments.

At last I awoke, controlled my fears, and paddled over to near the sloping granite, and when within thirty feet of the granite and the water still perhaps ten feet deep, my fears had wholly vanished. Had it really been a serpent it could have eaten me at ten feet, as well as fifty. There was probably not a living thing in the lake except a few tadpoles. What I saw was in all probability either a water log or the shadow of the slanting sun on a ledge of rock subtending an angle of perhaps one and a half feet wide, and the air currents barely moving the water caused that peculiar vibration which my excited imagination translated into life. It was very real to me then, however laughable now.

Civilization, in one of its phases being largely a series of restraints, the apathy and indifference of the average man is such that I have small hope of this being; of the immediate future. Our only hope lies in education, as I have –said, educate, educate, educate. The fight of the ages is the battle of ideas in the human brain, of which war is but one of the phases in its physical expression. This is the cause of the present unrest the world around, and the great wave of Bolshevism which is sweeping the globe. Few men are idealists like myself; most men are opportunists; often I ask myself why are things as they are.

I am deeply interested in the experiment of human government now being enacted in the former German States and Russia. If I were there I would be (though not a Communist) a Spartacist, though recognising that private property in some form will exist for ages, and if in Russia, and were a Russian, would favour repudiation of the great

war debts incurred by the Czar for immoral purpose; would favour the nationalization of land and release of all the Czar's political prisoners, and would shake the grip of the Greek Church from the throats of the people; advance education and efficiency of the people and the socialization of the state on grander, better, and nobler lines than hitherto in human experience, no matter what the cost, or how perilous the experiment.

I have devoted much time to study of social and political economy. I spent ten years studying legal tender during my wanderings and was a Gold Standard man in 1896, and came near being killed in a silver camp for it. I studied astronomy many years to enable me to master intricate problems. The greatest problem not fully explored by me is how to eliminate graft in the human heart. Or is it necessary, as I have concluded in the biology of war? I am more impressed by the physical than the moral results of war, and think of the countless slain, who, had they lived, a different set of beings would have ruled the world.

Oh, the myriads that might exist, but do not. I often ponder on these mysteries, and the more I investigate the wonderful impossible possibilities of nature, the more I am lost in hopeless divinings of unfathomable omnipotence, whose methods of source of action baffle the human mind.

To love's mysterious law, drink.

And in my dreams, to a woman's heart, the most sacred thing in nature.

Here's to a world of beauty, to which I am denied; here's to the coming darkness in which I soon expire.

Here's to my only hope and solace—death. I have cursed the God who rules the universe and author of my existence for giving me those qualities and lack of qualities which have ruled and ruined me and led me to destruction.

Yet, here's to the author of my imagination who created me, and gave me movements of body, soul and spirit—God—who gave me glories of the eye and mind; happiness unspeakable—God; who gave me music and divine harmonies, oh, such precious girls, and yet denied me love.

Here's to the author of the balance in nature, so delicately poised and organized; so exquisitely contrived, before when I bow in dumb amazement; but beyond all I stand in apostrophe and adore physical and spiritual love.

I worship at the shrine of power; manly strength and female beauty; now and forever. Yes, and all the virtues, and if attained post mortem existence and permitted, I will ask God a few questions, that power unseen, invisible behind all organic nature, the recognition of whose existence is so over-powering, the normal mind cannot escape from it. I trust that power and await with confidence the ultimate, knowing it will be well.

I live in the past or future, seldom in the present, as fate carves its eternal and resistless course.

I drink to the girls of a thousand years, to female loveliness, purity and truth, to the glorious star of optimism and invisible hosts—Kismet.

Honor the glorious star of optimism, and associate with the great ones, of earth; a cloud of witnesses, invisible hosts and visions of loveliness—creatures of my imagination.

I mourn for her who will never come, never materialised, never be; who comes not; who will never exist, never did exist. This is the cry of a lonely heart.

Who is the author of the sunset; of all this pulsing life and of my being?

In May, 1898, alone south of Monachee Meadows, west of south fork of Kern River, I reached a narrow meadow after dark, 75 yards across east and west, and on the east side two large yellow pine trees at edge of meadow; six feet east were two large rocks, 12 or 14 feet high. I fixed my bed at the north foot of the tree and picketed my little mare 40 steps north-west. We were alone—no other animals. My partner, who had left me, taking the horse, mule, and ride, was then at Lone Pine, forty miles away. It was so early I did not think there was anyone in the mountains. About 2-0 a.m. the mare awoke me; she was making a great noise. I sat up in bed and said: "Whoa, Daisy." I thought if a small bear was going towards her I would grab my axe and make towards it. I had no arms, and I could see her looking east. A moment later I saw a large black log on top of the rock adjoining. My fire was out. Watching it a few moments, I saw a star move. I said, "It's a lion; God, he's a monster." I got on my knees and tried to start a fire. The pine needles were wet and I lit many matches before I could get them to burn. A cold chill of fear shot through me, fearing every moment it would spring upon me. I finally managed to make a light, when I saw the object move slowly, silently, noiselessly, and disappear. I knew then it was a bear, and felt relieved. Later, I set half an acre of trees burning. The mare was so nervous, she would not let me go near her. I finally tied her to a tree near the fire.

In the morning I saw the great hind foot track, at least 16 inches long, go up the hill from the rock straight east. I thought I was alone, but about 9-0 a.m. a man on horseback came along and said that ten years previous, in '88, they found a bull dead there, and following the blood, found a giant grizzly, also dead, so he thought mine was a grizzly.

A strange aftermath was that I was not afraid at nights; always I had a big fire, but in days, going through the trees, a strange feeling of dread affected me which I could not shake off. When I realised that it was an enormous lion, ready to spring on me, and being suddenly awakened in the dead of night, with noone perhaps within 40 miles of me, though my brain and nerves were chilled, yet I could hold the matches steady in trying to start a projecting light, constantly glancing at the object and expecting every moment that

the monster would spring the 12 or 13 feet drop and tear me to pieces. Some men would have given anything for that moment and that opportunity.

I made three trips, sixty miles each, in the west, nothing to eat, no settlements, Madison River '82, Klamath Indian Reservation '92, on the Syken. and from Quail Springs to Yuma in 1912.

In Kansas City I once started a cat ranch to raise all sorts—Persian, Maltese and Thibetian Cats, but like all other schemes, with my usual success, it failed before I started. As in dreams of mineral discoveries, I made and built many railroads, but always came to earth again, checked by the balance wheel of judgment. Day dreams, yes, what odds? One thousand years from now who cares, or will care? Better with old Omar, sing :—

I sometimes think that never blows so red,  
That rose as where some buried Caesar bled;  
That every hyacinth the garden wears,  
Dropt from someone's lovely head.

We magnify our own importance. Yesterday I saw a man, a cigar a foot long in his mouth. I was invisible on his mental horizon. He was surrounded by a wall of conceit so vast you couldn't penetrate it with an X-Ray. If I was as sharp as he thought he was, I'd loan myself to the Turkis Government to cut political knots. His face would advertise a pickle factory.

### **THE DESERT SONG.**

Saddle up your burros, saddle up your jack.  
Saddle up your burros and tighten up your pack.  
We'll hit the trail for ever, for we're never coming back;  
So it's saddle up your burros and away, away.  
I'll away to the desert, to the hot, burning desert;  
I'll away to the desert, away, I'll away:  
Where the cold and the snow and the winds never blow;  
To the hot burning desert I'll away.

The prospector:  
Tracing up the float, like a nimble mountain goat,  
For he is a regular fiend on porphyry;  
With his little pick and pan, as he travels thru the sand,  
Dodging in among such rocks you never see.  
With his horn or rubber spoon, he will know it mighty soon,  
If she carried any vaues, great or small.  
Oh, and if she runs them high, to the sky his heart will fly,  
And lie wouldn't, trade his billet for them all.

He often sits to ponder on the hills that's over yonder.  
And he wonders if the prospect over there,  
Where the boys have never been, and the leads are never seen,  
Tho' the float to find is easy if we care.  
For he seldom gets his dues, and he never gets the blues,  
For the hardships which he often undergoes.  
Oh, he is a happy man, who is footloose in this land.  
And can wander on, at will, where're he choose.  
Away to the desert, to the hot, burning desert,  
Away to the desert, I'll away;  
Where the cold and he snow, and the winds never blow;  
To the hot, burning desert I'll away.

### Chorus

Hunting pay, hunting pay, oh, so happy all tHe day;  
There we'll be, there we'll be, studying a now formation;  
So it's saddle up your burros, and away.  
Then saddle up your burros and come along with me;  
In that undiscovered country we'll get rich some day.  
We'll travel on forever, forever and day  
In the Golden El Dorado we'll locate some day.

### Second Part:

When the summers at that bourne,  
Whence it never will return.  
And the winter days are coming back to stay.  
Then it's with the waning sun,  
To the Southard we have gone,  
To the warm and sunny desert far away.

In the arrow-weed and sand  
Of the riverbottom land,  
On the Rio Colorado desert rare;  
Camping in the dark mesquite.  
Oh, so thorny to the feet.  
Where the smeel of alkali is ever there.

But when the summer sun returns,  
And the desert land it burns,  
To the glorious Sierras we will go;  
There to linger in the shade,  
Of some cool and grassy shade.  
Far above the heat and rattlesnakes below.  
Resting underneath the pines,  
Studying their graceful hues,  
With our burros on the meadows, fat and gay;

And the cool, refreshing breeze,  
Sighing deeply 'mid the trees;  
Oh, how happy in the mountains we will be.

Oh, and when he makes a strike.  
To the city he will hike,  
There to lighten up his load, as well he may.  
For he's nothing more to fear,  
So he samples booze and cheer,  
For he's a millionaire at last—or on the way.

But this city life he hates.  
With its locks and liars and gates.  
And he longs for the wild life, oh, so free,  
On the desert once again,  
Where there's neither snow nor rain,  
With the cactus and the greasewood like the sea.

So it's back again he goes  
Where the wind it never blows,  
To the desert land so clear and blue and dry;  
There to try his luck once more.  
Ere he's at that farther shore,  
Thou his deserts and his mountains, oh, good-bye

Part Three:  
Good-bye to the mountains, good-bye,  
Good-bye to the mountains, good-bye  
With the sage and rabbit brush,  
And the robbin, quail, and thrush  
Good-bye to the mountains, good-bye.

Camping in the willows, good-bye, good-bye,  
With the foothills for our pillows, good-bye,  
By the cool and shady spring,  
With the penion we will sing,  
While camping in the willows, good-bye.

Oh, my deserts, I must leave you, good-bye, good-bye;  
With the summer sun I leave you, good-bye, good-bye.  
I will visit you next fall, when the snow is over all  
The mountains, so good-bye, good-bye.

(To be continued).

