



## JOSEPH WARD

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

1879-1928.

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### CHAPTER IV.

The view from Mount Ward is grand. The volcano mentioned lies east; one can see the Devil's Playground north-east 15 mile, away, beyond which is Providence Mountain, which juts up on it's north centre like a giant wall, very strange looking appearance. North-west, the country falls away to Soda Lake, 20 odd miles away across low-lying hills and to Death Valley Regions beyond north-west; south it slopes to vary-coloured hills and volcanic areas to the Santa Fe Railroad. Amboy Lake, south-east 20 or 25 miles and down the low, flat region to between Ship and Old Woman's Mountain north, and Santa Maria's coxcomb and yalens and others on the south, through the low, almost sea-level reaches to the Colorado river.

Some strange vistas to the south over the Colorado Desert; west, volcanic flows and dark eyrie-coloured buttes and ranges—a fascinating picture; rare rock structures and altitudes in the clear, dry atmosphere of the Mojave. I love the desert and Southern clime, and after my body dies, I'd like to be back again and hover over these familiar scenes in my imagination. I'd give life and movement and intelligence to those rock scenes and desolation— my home.

Amboy is 22 miles south of the volcano; Klondike Station 14 miles southwest of Mount Ward and 10 miles from Opal Belt; some tanks three or four miles north-west of Orange Blossom Spring and at West foot of Old Dad, half a mile or so across (east) the

wash from the volcano I camped one evening near sundown. About 48 mountain sheep on a bench grazing quietly on a sloping hillside less than 200 yards away. I unpacked the jacks, levelled the place for the bed, cooked supper, and walked around camp, the sheep apparently taking no notice of me. One had only two short prong horns; others none. They kept eyeing me occasionally, seemingly afraid; they grazed slowly, moving to crest of low ridge and worked over, grazing as they went; finally the big one was on view on guard. Some time later he also went. He had magnificent horns. They must have been there in my company for two hours. My friend, Adam Blitzer, blacksmith of Amboy, in same region once cornered a big buck on the steep, ragged bluff, with an impassable wall. He had often hunted this sheep, and now, at last, thought that he had him; but he hadn't. Just as Adam was closing in on him, the buck gave one terrifying look and dived. Some seconds later he hit the ground, rolled half a dozen times and struck out, apparently unharmed. Adam's artillery reverberating. The living buck disappeared over a ridge as if old hell was after him. "Their's not to reason why." At another time, same region, I saw a lone buck disappearing across a wash; white patch on his rump. He had seen me before I spotted him.

Once, South of Afton, on Salt Lake Railroad, in Mojave River Canyon, in a volcanic area, I was winding around south and in all directions to get over a malapais lava and tufa bluffy formation, going in a southerly direction. I had just rounded north side of a small butte, perhaps not over 30 feet across on the top, and down a narrow white ridge perhaps 80 yards south of the butte, leading the big jack; two Jennies tied behind and one loose. Jack pulling back, I pulled on him and cursed aloud. Looking north towards a little butte I had just rounded at that moment I saw a mighty buck, with enormous horns, leaping down west ridge of the little butte. It looked like an immense dry goods box. I dropped the strap I was holding the jack with, who had also been watching the object; ran 50 yards to a bluff, and looked down at him. "By God, but he was rambling." I hollered in four languages, French, Dutch, Chinese, and Irish, waving my harms and hat. I put the fear of God into him. I could see him going visibly faster straight ahead, turning neither to right or left; hitting the ground, and making the dirt fly as if a rain of bullets spitting little spots of dust. He thought the devil himself was after him, and I laughed until the tears came into my eyes. I don't think he ever stopped; I guess he's going yet. His heart was in his throat, and it must have taken him some time to arrange his anatomy when he finally stopped to look back; but I never saw him do this. This was what had caused the jack to pull back; he had seen the object on top of the little butte. It must have been asleep and off guard, and been awakened by my shouting at the jack, and stood on the sky-line looking at me and the canvas-covered jacks all strung out in the line on the ridge 70 or 80 yards south across the intervening hollow. He never saw a sight like that before and must have thought he had 'em. I was scared myself. Luckily he went or I would have done. I have often thought what would have happened had I climbed on top of the bluff a few steps and met him face to face. If an animal of that size and weight should rush a man, he'd break his legs like pipe stems. He had the greatest horns I've ever seen on any animal. I once found an old, weatherbeaten sheep horn thirty miles east of this place, near Heighton Springs, and it weighed 28 pounds and was broken, a portion being missing. Sheep are still plentiful in spots on the desert; ranges south of Afton and West of Broadwell on T.T. and many other ranges. Great numbers of wild burros also in

Panamints. One big pinto I was always afraid of; he was liable to kill my saddle jack. I never saw any south of Windgate Pass till I'd reached south-east of Old Dad Mountain, where a band of snow white ones ranged; also a few wild horses. Cozo is the worst range for snakes, mostly tiger rattlers. I feared to camp there after May. Sidewinders had in Indian Wells Valley, south of Cozos, as early as March and April. After September, except the Argus Range, which is well supplied with snakes, I'd go hundreds of miles south-east and wouldn't see one. Once, in Vesuvias Volcano (I so named it), 70 miles north-east of Barstow, I grabbed a flat rock, four inches high on its farther and overhanging edge, to put it on a larger one to use as a monument. It was flat and sandy. The rock was deeply bedded and I could not move it. I jumped up and yelled. A tiger rattling snake was linked underneath, his head one inch from my fingers; my friend came running up and we killed it. Pointing to a crack in a big reek. I said I feared he'd before we got him. Its mate was in the crack, and we killed it also. These were the only two snakes—with perhaps one other—that I ever saw in that whole region.

I found a dry lake, five miles north-east of Hidden Springs, twenty years ago, and had my trail through it three miles south of Windgate Pass from head of Golden Canyon to Quail Springs. A strange lake, one mile north-east, half mile north-south in a volcanic basin, round mountains east, ten miles in diameter; low volcanic hills and quail mountains south and south east and south-west. The lower Windgate Pass is three miles north. Then the rising Panamints to the north. The first ten miles volcanic; Death Valley 25 miles north-east; sink 40; a picture in the clear desert air. This little dry lake is in a volcano. High black caps, west, and white slunite-bearing leached volcanic rocks one hundred feet high, north-west. I found an iron ledge there, carrying about two or three dollars in silver. Lake itself has black andesite buttes in its floor. A fringe of whitecapping, three to five feet thick, 100 yards north-south, three-quarter miles northeast of stuff that looks like gypsum, but the Stale Mining Bureau calls it lime. It is soft and can be bitten and chewed. Must be several hundred thousand tons of it. This cap formerly covered all the lake, but now only this fringe remains, the rest being eroded away up to Windgate Pass and Death Valley. Underneath on north-west, are alum-bearing buttes, 15 to 20 feet high; 15 feet or so in diameter; green-yellow mud which looks like bee-hives; and on south-east portion of the lake are masses of epsom salts, 98 per cent, pure on slopes 20 feet high. My jacks, in crossing this used to go belly deep on the steep hillsides which dip down in slopes. I never saw such stuff, and I often told friends of it to go and locate. I had not even a dollar to record the claim, and it was 80 miles north-east of Joburg, and same north-north-east of Barstow; too far from civilisation and railroads; too isolated at that time for any use. In Death Valley, April, 1912, Mr. B. K. Brockington, Mr. Fairbanks, of Shoshone, and two others and myself, located what I presume may have been first potash located there, at foot of Green Water Mountain.

We camped at Eagle Borax Works on the west, leaving the jacks among the mesquite, walking daily six miles north-east across first one mile of borax, in which we sank several inches; then one mile of mud, ankle deep, and but for a layer of rock salt underneath we'd have gone out of sight. Then followed two miles or so of rough reddish salt pinnacles two feet high, which proved very difficult going, beyond which was a

uniformly flat, glistening salt surface, wet in places. We surveyed 34 miles square, and built monuments out of cakes of salt one or two inches thick and two or more feet long. It never proved good. I learned later that the Government and Borax Smith later bored weels, but only got one per cent, potash. I wanted my friend, Brockington, to go to Little Lake, mentioned above, and see if there was any potash there. I think that the Little Lake described was originally lower than Death Valley before the floor or bottom of the latter dropped out and was uplifted by tertiary volcanics, which broke out at south end of Panamints and north of Avavatz Mountains with sporadic out bursts 60 miles south at the Calico volcano and between, connecting with a long sinuous line which reached south from Caliente Creek. Kern County, and San Amedeas, south of Mawerfield, a side branch of Los Angeles Mountains. Coming near to Joburg, and 150 miles southeast to Amboy region, centreing near Ludlow, then to the volcano described, west of Old Dad Mountain, thence southeast twelve miles to Clipper Range and northeast to Hart aud Searchlight, meeting and forming a junction with the big Nevada belts, from which pass via El Dorado Canyon, crossing river to Gold Bonds, Arizona, and on through Yums County to Mexican cordelaros, on that mighty chain of volcanoes which, stretch through all America for 10,000 miles of tertiary time; an era of intense and unexampled volcanic activity. These are the rocks a prospector likes to work in, for that prize of ages—gold and silver—the child of his heart and dreams and mysteries. The present elevation of the Little Lake is 3,000 feet or so above sea level. How so much epsom salts got there I do not know, but there is enough to medicate all the Indians of the ages.

### **IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH.**

Like an affrightened eagle soaring to the limitless heights, my imprisoned soul, fearless gazing at the glowing orb of God in truth. Speed on, O soul, to the endless confines of the spirit world, thro' the unknown centuries in the great silence.

Then bury me deep by the lone hill side,  
Near the lonely sand hills drifting;  
In the valley of death 'tween the mountains wide,  
With the lonely Arabs, shifting.

In that desolate scene on its glittering floor ,  
Far from the haunts of the living,  
I'll rest in peace by the open door;  
And the other world forgiving.

With the silent ages of the past,  
And those that have gone before,  
The countless generations vast,  
I'll rest for evermore.

Till destiny its course is sealed;  
And with the vision ended;  
God's work to be shall stand revealed;  
In harmony 'tis blended.

The lights of this far distant past  
Will glow with new creation;  
And we again will stand at last  
Beyond this tribulation.

The spirit world, the true, the real,  
Beyond that farther shore,  
Our guardian angels will reveal  
Our home for evermore.

We'll meet our dear ones, then re-seal  
The kiss of love that death absolved;  
Again embrace those memories, feel  
The pangs of joy that fate dissolved.

Here I'll rest 'till the gloried dawn  
In this valley of death, the sleep of peace;  
And sweetly sleep till the night has gone;  
Till the sun of life shall give release.

And my thoughts shall wander far away  
O'er the wide Atlantic's billowy rolls:  
When the chill of death's cold icy wave.  
And my childhood dreams of home enscrolls.

In the glow of youth on life's long trail,  
From my native Isle I journeyed far;  
My life to cease in this shadowy vale,  
But with heaven's lights and gates ajar.

Yes, and with the angels dreaming,  
In a fairy land of joy;  
Their tears, their voices seeming  
To me a lullaby.

Of hope, their beckoning hands,  
Light as the breath of dewy eve;  
Sweet as the incense of heaven's lands;  
Gift from on high which we receive in soulful ecstasy.

The silent vigil of this land  
This home of desolation,  
Will have, by its protecting hand,  
Given me its consolation.

Forsaken one, yes, rest alone;  
The lonely coyotes calling loud;  
As the pale moonlight beauty shone  
In the speckel shadows deepening shroud.

And grim Old Telescope looks down  
On this my home till the coming dawn, dawn.  
The sad coyotes voices calling,  
As the sand storm dies and the shadows are falling,  
As evening comes and the day has gone.

Alone, alone, disturb me not,  
In this valley of death which God forgot;  
Till the valley fades from the ken of man,  
Til the rising spirits then shall stand  
Unveiled beyond the shadow land.

To the dear ones gone, who stand on guard,  
I'm coming on and on;  
Happy in death which you will retard,  
And there with you be one.

Await me there till the shades of night  
In this tragic vale have gone;  
And the mystery of the spirit free  
Through the valley of death, as it winged its way  
In the valley of Life's eternal way,  
O'er the mountain peaks of eternity.

We will arise from the dead and dwell in the temple of love,  
With our dear ones for ever, with mother, sisters, and God;  
And the morning stars sang together;  
For joy and this Valley of Death and its hideous dreams past,  
Shall fade into the unremembered oblivion of the eternal.