

JOSEPH WARD

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

1879-1928.

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NOMAD.

A VOICE FROM THE DESERT.

(By "ROVING RED.")

Being the ravings of a maniac, Joseph Ward, tramp and desert poet; the strangest man who ever lived. 30,000 miles with burros, 30,000 miles with horses, alone in the West; 23 consecutive years never in a house.

Wit, humour, irony, invective, caustic, sarcastic, biting, satirical, of starlit beauty.

WILD NOMADIC LIFE.

A book for the lonely prevents ennui. By a homeless wanderer, without a home on earth. The man who communes with nature, who seldom spent two nights in the same place, always alone, who beat his way 240,000 miles by rail and steamship, '78 to '95.

A book for parents, lovers, explorers, miners, prosepectors, poets, musicians, tramps, theologians, consumptives, phylosophers, socialists, bolshevists, anarchists, farmers, bankers, educaters, pleasure-seekers, militarists, lawyers. U.S. officials (present and prospective), Government functionaries, the citizen, man or woman.

Medical, educational light on questions of the hour, interspersed with descriptive scenes of the desert mountains prospecting for gold; climate, trails, and health.

Two motives—economic justice and sex.

Key note—any destruction of property is an injury to labour (Ward). This is a work reflected of my own character of myself. Work of the imagination. Reflections, pictures, views of things from many angles, sublime, ridiculous, odd, different, yet analysis of motives, human government, humanity, religion, book of the hour, diacletical didactical, efficient, brilliant, intensely fascinating human document.

“Compared to the things of the heart, all else is dross.”

Without woman, life is a desert. Yet I am denied all, in lieu of which I have learned to love nature's phenomena, trees, forests, rocks and minerals, the storms and other emotions of the elements, wandering in harmony with the various scenes, going north in summer to the higher elevations, retiring in winter to the warmer southern deserts, living

the wild life of the Indians, irresponsible to the calls and mandates of civilization; living and enjoying all the varied life out doors. Mountains of the desert and higher ranges, in the canyons of which I have camped alone so often, in places where, perhaps, no one ever stopped before, and may not for centuries to come, being like familiar friends to me. I love these and retire within myself, seeking happiness in my songs and idealistic studies of abstract things, but when the thought returns of what I am forever denied—woman, society and love—my heart sinks like lead and I crave suicide to escape the terrible thought, which, are eating my heart out. At such times I forget about the swindlers who have robbed me. These other thought so overshadowed these more material things, then vanish in my mind out of all proportion. I pine for her who will never come, never materialize, never be; I must dream alone till life's last ember dies.

This is the cause of my wandering 30,000 miles with burros, mostly alone, and as much more with horses since 1880, visiting England in 1890, the last time to see father and mother. I told my father I had then beat my way on railroads and steamships 240,000 miles and had miraculous escapes. Was on a brakebeam, December 30th, 1889, three miles east of Winslow, Arizona, on a west bound freight running 50 mile, an hour; 10 o'clock in the morning, snow on the ground; we ran into a bunch of cattle; 18 cars of merchandise were thrown from the track, piled in a heap, and I underneath amongst the wheels; tops of cars were thrown 100 feet, rails, were torn out of the track and standing vertical upright; cars were piled 20 feet high, 60 feet ahead of the engine, which was thrown on her back to the south, the escaping steam making a noise like a dying whale. I escaped unscathed. Crawling from among the wreck, the conductor coming up and perceiving me just as I was taking my hat out of my pocket and clapping my hands to get warm, stood petrified with astonishment, and said to me: "My God, young fellow, you had a narrow escape. Where is your partner?" I said, "When you threw us off at Holbrook he was afraid to get on." (The conductor having put me off an oil car and bumper at Holbrook, which, had he left me on, I would have been crushed to a pancake). I said: "I guess they are all killed ahead," and started to climb over the wreck to see if I could help the head men. Looking back, I saw the conductor standing still looking at me with amazement, my escape was so miraculous.

I had intended to quit train-beating that very trip, and was going to walk 550 miles north-east to Grand Junction, Colorado, take up land, and settle down. Only three houses on the way, wolves were bad, and dangers from renegade Navajos and snowstorms. In my wanderings, I seldom stay two nights in the same place, the very thoughts of these things, the result of the evil mentioned and its causes (defficiency of the will and motor functions of the mind, lack of control and stability or stamina or fixity of purpose or firmness or ability to decide or to stay with the decision after I have made it; and the haunting memories of these things, the wild spirit of romance and adventure and exploration which rule my very being, controlled me, and I travelled for the sake of travel, loved change for the sake of change, to escape from that which was unescapable. I being in a natural prison) preventing me from settling down and accumulating property. I simply could not do so, nor can I yet, nor will I ever. It is impossible.

I had to go, move, fly anywhere to escape the terrible thoughts which haunted me and rendered suicide sweet; thus I could net profit by the grand opportunities which I observed in my wanderings—lands, mines in Winnipeg and Red River Valley in 1880 and 1882; Colorado in 1881; Montano, Idaho and Washington in 1882, where I walked 1,950 miles through the Yellowstone and Snake River areas, to Henry's Lake to see the floating Island, and back to the Maddison River, seeing on one excet a few men in the Fire Hole Basin, and was at Old Faithful Geyser on the 28th day of July, 1882, making the last sixty miles on less than one pound of flour, nearly perishing crossing the Madison River sixty miles above the settlement; crossing Reynolds Pass at midnight; the main summit of the Rocky Mountains – no timber.

I caud hear the wolves baying and could see the Tetons in the moonlight, beautiful as a dream, and coming up the Yellowstone, very few houses, a herd of buffalo (one million strong, so a currier estimated) crossed the river going north. The report came in that the Indians had killed the surveyors. I went up alone, having only a cap and ball revolver. Rafting down the Fen Doreillee River, through the Flathead Reservation in June, 1882, two months before the surveyors of the Northern Pacific were permitted by the Indians to go through here, the Indians threatening to go on the warpath. I being captured by Chief Charlew after an Indian had missed my head by a hair's breadth with a rifle ball. Later, at Vermillion Creek, near the Cabinet Rapids, met Big Head, the Chief of the Spokane, and 25 Indians after horse thieves. I camped with them and returned to Horse Plains, and walked 1,000 miles out of my way to see the Yellowstone Park, returning in the fall and meeting the end of track at Beaver Creek above Rock Island, the track having crossed the Idaho line near Cabinet landing on the 2nd of July, '82, if I remember correctly, 7,000 Chinamen and 200 white men and 1,000 murderers and other undesirable people, camp followers, at the west front, under Supt. Halot. Leaving the lonely bitter roots late in the fall of '82 I went to Spokane, took the train to Portland, boat to San Francisco, and train to Los Angeles, and fell in love with the delightful climate and scenes of Southern California and it's Spanish flavour of romance, the charm of which has never left me.

Passing wonderful opportunities which I could not grasp, the seeing clearly. Prospecting came naturally and furnished the safety-valve which prevented suicide. Aside from the emotions, it is the strongest passion which rules me. I will even drop war suspects when opportunity to read of a new mineral presents itself. My extreme unstability and lack of thoroughness, coupled with ignorance, caused me to pass and walk over and actually camp on land which I could have had. Nothing there then but wild horses, unexplored Government land. These camps have produced three hundred millions of dollars, and will produce a total of six hundred millions. I do not count Tonopah, though I could have had this camp in October, 1833, or May, 1900, before Jim Butler passed by it, first, through losing a mule, and second through fear of a bad Indian who ranged there, Montezuma Dick, and who had killed several prospectors. In all those years I had to learn myself geological and mineralogical science; with my present knowledge I would have picked up nearly all of these camps which were later discovered after I had walked over them. I stood on the Goldfield Red Top cropping, May, 1901, and made one location there in April, 1902

ODE TO THE SIERRAS

In hazy June the northland knows
Those dazzling cones inspire;
And in the cold bright sunlight glows
Like some celestial fire.

Thy charm is not in those dark woods
Where "rolls the Oregon;"
Nor at that lake of evil moods,
Where dwells the mystic one.

Nor in that awful abyss tent
In Arizona's wilds;
Where Plutons baffled rage was spent
In melancholly's toils.

Though painted by the hand divine
In gilded scenes of love;
Yet loneliness was there enshined,
As written from above.

But thy bewitching loveliness
Endears us all to thee ;
As some sweet tone of nature blessed
By Divine symphony.

Thy cloudless skies and summed days
I never can forget;
Thy fosed scenes and shady ways,
Their memory lingers yet.

Thy winding trails by shadowy vales
I've often paused to lay
And listen to thy moaning wails
In distance far away.

To hear thy distant waters clear,
As the sun sinks in the west;
In that entrancing atmosphere,
The weary may find rest.

Warm, delicious air it sees,
No dampness there, or knows
No storms to move the silent trees,
or mar thy sunset glows.

By "Alpine" lakes in classic lines
I've lingered many a day,
To feel the sadness of the pines
In plaintive melody.

Which spoke to me in tones of truth,
Thy glories long ago;
Of hallowed scenes in thy bright youth,
The rocks of ages know.

In hot Nevada's shimmering gleams
We realize thy worth.
Thy long white line in distance seems
As something not of earth.

Thy waterfalls like angel veils,
From Heavenly fountains above,
In colour tones of music plays
Like some sweet voice of love.

Their falling mists and brilliant lights,
Like scintillating eyes;
Like some descending angels flights
Through depths of Paradise.

Falling, falling, falling, falling,
In that vale of Heavenly views ;
Distant voices calling, calling,
Whispering delightful news.

Fleecy dreams, so exquisite,
Like floating clouds of snow;
Like fire-flies they dart and flit
Down to the earth below.

Their sparkling, changing vibrant lines,
In countless myriad hues;
Like glittering gems from diamond mines,
To please us and enthuse.

In radiant tinted glories rare,
Like some white drapery
Of some sweet lady, pure and fair,
Who comes to sing with me.

Like white eagles slowly sailing
Far up yonder in the skies:
Rarest fountains never failing,
In that vale of Paradise.

Tehipite Yosemite Hetch-hetchy,
Alone in glory rest;
Thy stately dimes and minarette,
Where nature did her best.

Sequoia Park, where giants stand
In temples of the blest:
On Marblefork, that wonderland
And glory of the West.

The Kern, the Kings, and San Joaquin
And mighty Capitan.
And all those gems which crown the queen
In this dear sunset land.

(To be continued.)