COBB IRVIN SHREWSBURY

ROUGHING IT DE LUXE

Irvin Cobb

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Содержание

Irvin S. Cobb
Roughing it De Luxe

A PILGRIM CANONIZED

It is generally conceded that the Grand Cañon of Arizona beggars description. I shall therefore endeavor to refrain from doing so. I realize that this is going to be a considerable contract. Nearly everybody, on taking a first look at the Grand Cañon, comes right out and admits its wonders are absolutely indescribable—and then proceeds to write anywhere from two thousand to fifty thousand words, giving the full details. Speaking personally, I wish to say that I do not know anybody who has yet succeeded in getting away with the job.

In the old days when he was doing the literature for the Barnum show, Tody Hamilton would have made the best nominee I can think of. Remember, don't you, how when Tody started in to write about the elephant quadrille you had to turn over to the next page to find the verb? And almost any one of those young fellows who write advertising folders for the railroads would gladly tackle the assignment; in fact, some of them already have—but not with any tumultuous success.

In the presence of the Grand Cañon, language just simply fails you and all the parts of speech go dead lame. When the Creator made it He failed to make a word to cover it. To that extent the thing is incomplete. If ever I run across a person who can put down on paper what the Grand Cañon looks like, that party will be my choice to do the story when the Crack of Doom occurs. I can close my eyes now and see the headlines: Judgment Day a Complete Success! Replete with Incident and Abounding in Surprises—Many Wealthy Families Disappointed—Full Particulars from our Special Correspondent on the Spot!

Starting out from Chicago on the Santa Fé, we had a full trainload. We came from everywhere: from peaceful New England towns full of elm trees and oldline Republicans; from the Middle States; and from the land of chewing tobacco, prominent Adam's apples and hot biscuits—down where the r is silent, as in No'th Ca'lina. And all of us—Northerners, Southerners, Easterners alike—were actuated by a common purpose—we were going West to see the country and rough it—rough it on overland trains better equipped and more luxurious than any to be found in the East; rough it at ten-dollar-a-day hotels; rough it by touring car over the most magnificent automobile roads to be found on this continent. We were a daring lot and resolute; each and every one of us was brave and blithe to endure the privations that such an expedition must inevitably entail. Let the worst come; we were prepared! If there wasn't any of the hothouse lamb, with imported green peas, left, we'd worry along on a little bit of the fresh shad roe, and a few conservatory cucumbers on the side. That's the kind of hardy adventurers we were!

Conspicuous among us was a distinguished surgeon of Chicago; in fact, so distinguished that he has had a very rare and expensive disease named for him, which is as distinguished as a physician ever gets to be in this country. Abroad he would be decorated or knighted. Here we name something painful after him and it seems to fill the bill just as well. This surgeon was very distinguished and also very exclusive. After you scaled down from him, riding in solitary splendor in his drawing room, with kitbags full of symptoms and diagnoses scattered round, we became a mixed tourist outfit. I would not want to say that any of the persons on our train were impossible, because that sounds snobbish; but I will say this—some of them were highly improbable.

There was the bride, who put on her automobile goggles and her automobile veil as soon as we pulled out of the Chicago yards and never took them off again—except possibly when sleeping. I presume she wanted to show the rest of us that she was accustomed to traveling at a high rate of

speed. If the bridegroom had only bethought him to carry one of those siren horns under his arm, and had tooted it whenever we went around a curve, the illusion would have been complete.

There was also the middle-aged lady with the camera habit. Any time the train stopped, or any time it behaved as though it thought of stopping, out on the platform would pop this lady, armed with her little accordion-plaited camera, with the lens focused and the little atomizer bulb dangling down, all ready to take a few pictures. She snapshotted watertanks, whistling posts, lunch stands, section houses, grade crossings and holes in the snowshed—also scenery, people and climate. A two-by-four photograph of a mountain that's a mile high must be a most splendid reminder of the beauties of Nature to take home with you from a trip.

There was the conversational youth in the Norfolk jacket, who was going out West to fill an important vacancy in a large business house—he told us so himself. It was a good selection, too. If I had a vacancy that I wanted filled in such a way that other people would think the vacancy was still there, this youth would have been my candidate.

And finally there was the corn-doctor from a town somewhere in Indiana, who had the upper berth in Number Ten. It seemed to take a load off his mind, on the second morning out, when he learned that he would not have to spend the day up there, but could come down and mingle with the rest of us on a common footing; but right up to the finish of the journey he was uncertain on one or two other points. Every time a conductor came through—Pullman conductor, train conductor or dining-car conductor—he would hail him and ask him this question: "Do I or do I not have to change at Williams for the Grand Cañon?" The conductor—whichever conductor it was—always said, Yes, he would have to change at Williams. But he kept asking them—he seemed to regard a conductor as a functionary who would deliberately go out of his way to mislead a passenger in regard to an important matter of this kind. After a while the conductors took to hiding out from him and then he began cross-examining the porters, and the smoking-room attendant, and the baggageman, and the flagmen, and the passengers who got aboard down the line in Colorado and New Mexico.

At breakfast in the dining car you would hear his plaintive, patient voice lifted. "Yes, waiter," he would say; "fry 'em on both sides, please. And say, waiter, do you know for sure whether we change at Williams for the Grand Cañon?" He put a world of entreaty into it; evidently he believed the conspiracy against him was widespread. At Albuquerque I saw him leading off on one side a Pueblo Indian who was peddling bows and arrows, and heard him ask the Indian, as man to man, if he would have to change at Williams for the Grand Cañon.

When he was not worrying about changing at Williams he showed anxiety upon the subject of the proper clothes to be worn while looking at the Grand Cañon. Among others he asked me about it. I could not help him. I had decided to drop in just as I was, and then to be governed by circumstances as they might arise; but he was not organized that way. On the morning of the last day, as we rolled up through the pine barrens of Northern Arizona toward our destination, those of us who had risen early became aware of a terrific struggle going on behind the shrouding draperies of that upper berth of his. Convulsive spasms agitated the green curtains. Muffled swear words uttered in a low but fervent tone filtered down to us. Every few seconds a leg or an arm or a head, or the butt-end of a suitcase, or the bulge of a valise, would show through the curtains for a moment, only to be abruptly snatched back.

Speculation concerning the causes of these strange manifestations ran—as the novelists say—rife. Some thought that, overcome with disappointment by the discovery that we had changed at Williams in the middle of the night, without his knowing anything about it, he was having a fit all alone up there. Presently the excitement abated; and then, after having first lowered his baggage, our friend descended to the aisle and the mystery was explained. He had solved the question of what to wear while gazing at the Grand Cañon. He was dressed in a new golf suit, complete—from the dinky cap to the Scotch plaid stockings. If ever that man visits Niagara, I should dearly love to be on hand to see him when he comes out to view the Falls, wearing his bathing suit.

Some of us aboard that train did not seem to care deeply for the desert; the cactus possibly disappointed others; and the mesquit failed to give general satisfaction, though at a conservative estimate we passed through nine million miles of it. A few of the delegates from the Eastern seaboard appeared to be irked by the tribal dancing of the Hopi Indians, for there was not a turkey-trotter in the bunch, the Indian settlements of Arizona being the only terpsichorean centers in this country to which the Young Turk movement had not penetrated yet. Some objected to the plains because they were so flat and plainlike, and some to the mountains because of their exceedingly mountainous aspect; but on one point we all agreed—on the uniform excellence of the dining-car service.

It is a powerfully hard thing for a man to project his personality across the grave. In making their wills and providing for the carrying on of their pet enterprises a number of our richest men have endeavored from time to time to disprove this; but, to date, the percentage of successes has not been large. So far as most of us are concerned the burden of proof shows that in this regard we are one with the famous little dog whose name was Rover—when we die, we die all over. Every big success represents the personality of a living man; rarely ever does it represent the personality of a dead man.

The original Fred Harvey is dead—has been dead, in fact, for several years; but his spirit goes marching on across the southwestern half of this country. Two thousand miles from salt water, the oysters that are served on his dining cars do not seem to be suffering from car-sickness. And you can get a beefsteak measuring eighteen inches from tip to tip. There are spring chickens with the most magnificent bust development I ever saw outside of a burlesque show; and the eggs taste as though they might have originated with a hen instead of a cold-storage vault. If there was only a cabaret show going up and down the middle of the car during meals, even the New York passengers would be satisfied with the service, I think.

There is another detail of the Harvey system that makes you wonder. Out on the desert, in a dead-gray expanse of silence and sagebrush, your train halts at a junction point that you never even heard of before. There is not much to be seen—a depot, a 'dobe cabin or so, a few frame shacks, a few natives, a few Indians and a few incurably languid Mexicans—and that is positively all there is except that, right out there in the middle of nowhere, stands a hotel big enough and handsome enough for Chicago or New York, built in the Spanish style, with wide patios and pergolas—where a hundred persons might perg at one time—and gay-striped awnings. It is flanked by flower-beds and refreshingly green strips of lawn, with spouting fountains scattered about.

You go inside to a big, spotlessly bright dining room and get as good a meal as you can get anywhere on earth—and served in as good style, too. To the man fresh from the East, such an establishment reminds him vividly of the hurry-up railroad lunch places to which he has been accustomed back home—places where the doughnuts are dornicks and the pickles are fossils, and the hard-boiled egg got up out of a sick bed to be there, and on the pallid yellow surface of the official pie a couple of hundred flies are enacting Custard's Last Stand. It reminds him of them because it is so different. Between Kansas City and the Coast there are a dozen or more of these hotels scattered along the line.

And so, with real food to stay you and one of Tuskegee's bright, straw-colored graduates to minister to your wants in the sleeper, you come on the morning of the third day to the Grand Cañon in northern Arizona; you take one look—and instantly you lose all your former standards of comparison. You stand there gazing down the raw, red gullet of that great gosh-awful gorge, and you feel your self-importance shriveling up to nothing inside of you. You haven't an adjective left to your back. It makes you realize what the sensations would be of one little microbe lost inside of Barnum's fat lady.

I think my preconceived conception of the Cañon was the same conception most people have before they come to see it for themselves—a straight up-and-down slit in the earth, fabulously steep and fabulously deep; nevertheless merely a slit. It is no such thing.

Imagine, if you can, a monster of a hollow approximately some hundreds of miles long and a mile deep, and anywhere from ten to sixteen miles wide, with a mountain range—the most wonderful

mountain range in the world—planted in it; so that, viewing the spectacle from above, you get the illusion of being in a stationary airship, anchored up among the clouds; imagine these mountain peaks —hundreds upon hundreds of them—rising one behind the other, stretching away in endless, serried rank until the eye swims and the mind staggers at the task of trying to count them; imagine them splashed and splattered over with all the earthly colors you ever saw and a lot of unearthly colors you never saw before; imagine them carved and fretted and scrolled into all shapes—tabernacles, pyramids, battleships, obelisks, Moorish palaces—the Moorish suggestion is especially pronounced both in colorings and in shapes—monuments, minarets, temples, turrets, castles, spires, domes, tents, tepees, wigwams, shafts.

Imagine other ravines opening from the main one, all nuzzling their mouths in her flanks like so many sucking pigs; for there are hundreds of these lesser cañons, and any one of them would be a marvel were they not dwarfed into relative puniness by the mother of the litter. Imagine walls that rise sheer and awful as the Wrath of God, and at their base holes where you might hide all the Seven Wonders of the Olden World and never know they were there—or miss them either. Imagine a trail that winds like a snake and climbs like a goat and soars like a bird, and finally bores like a worm and is gone.

Imagine a great cloud-shadow cruising along from point to point, growing smaller and smaller still, until it seems no more than a shifting purple bruise upon the cheek of a mountain, and then, as you watch it, losing itself in a tiny rift which at that distance looks like a wrinkle in the seamed face of an old squaw, but which is probably a huge gash gored into the solid rock for a thousand feet of depth and more than a thousand feet of width.

Imagine, way down there at the bottom, a stream visible only at certain favored points because of the mighty intervening ribs and chines of rock—a stream that appears to you as a torpidly crawling yellow worm, its wrinkling back spangled with tarnished white specks, but which is really a wide, deep, brawling, rushing river—the Colorado—full of torrents and rapids; and those white specks you see are the tops of enormous rocks in its bed.

Imagine—if it be winter—snowdrifts above, with desert flowers blooming alongside the drifts, and down below great stretches of green verdure; imagine two or three separate snowstorms visibly raging at different points, with clear, bright stretches of distance intervening between them, and nearer maybe a splendid rainbow arching downward into the great void; for these meteorological three-ring circuses are not uncommon at certain seasons.

Imagine all this spread out beneath the unflawed turquoise of the Arizona sky and washed in the liquid gold of the Arizona sunshine—and if you imagine hard enough and keep it up long enough you may begin, in the course of eight or ten years, to have a faint, a very faint and shadowy conception of this spot where the shamed scheme of creation is turned upside down and the very womb of the world is laid bare before our impious eyes. Then go to Arizona and see it all for yourself, and you will realize what an entirely inadequate and deficient thing the human imagination is.

It is customary for the newly arrived visitor to take a ride along the edge of the cañon—the rim-drive, it is called—with stops at Hopi Point and Mohave Point and Pima Point, and other points where the views are supposed to be particularly good. To do this you get into a smart coach drawn by horses and driven by a competent young man in a khaki uniform. Leaving behind you a clutter of hotel buildings and station buildings, bungalows and tents, you go winding away through a Government forest reserve containing much fine standing timber and plenty more that is not so fine, it being mainly stunted piñon and gnarly desert growths.

Presently the road, which is a fine, wide, macadamized road, skirts out of the trees and threads along the cañon until it comes to a rocky flange that juts far over. You climb out there and, instinctively treading lightly on your tiptoes and breathing in syncopated breaths, you steal across the ledge, going slowly and carefully until you pause finally upon the very eyelashes of eternity and look down into that great inverted muffin-mold of a cañon.

You are at the absolute jumping-off place. There is nothing between you and the undertaker except six-thousand feet, more or less, of dazzling Arizona climate. Below you, beyond you, stretching both ways from you, lie those buried mountains, the eternal herds of the Lord's cattlefold; there are scars upon their sides, like the marks of a mighty branding iron, and in the distance, viewed through the vapor-waves of melting snow, their sides seem to heave up and down like the flanks of panting cattle. Half a mile under you, straight as a man can spit, are gardens of willows and grasses and flowers, looking like tiny green patches, and the tents of a camp looking like scattered playing cards; and there is a plateau down there that appears to be as flat as your hand and is seemingly no larger, but actually is of a size sufficient for the evolutions of a brigade of cavalry.

When you have had your fill of this the guide takes you and leads you—you still stepping lightly to avoid starting anything—to a spot from which he points out to you, riven into the face of a vast perpendicular chasm above a cave like a monstrous door, a tremendous and perfect figure seven—the house number of the Almighty Himself. By this I mean no irreverence. If ever Jehovah chose an earthly abiding-place, surely this place of awful, unutterable majesty would be it. You move a few yards farther along and instantly the seven is gone—the shift of shadow upon the rock wall has wiped it out and obliterated it—but you do not mourn the loss, because there are still upward of a million things for you to look at.

And then, if you have timed wisely the hour of your coming, the sun pretty soon goes down; and as it sinks lower and lower out of titanic crannies come the thickening shades, making new plays and tricks of painted colors upon the walls—purples and reds and golds and blues, ambers and umbers and opals and ochres, yellows and tans and tawnys and browns—and the cañon fills to its very brim with the silence of oncoming night.

You stand there, stricken dumb, your whole being dwarfed yet transfigured; and in the glory of that moment you can even forget the gabble of the lady tourist alongside of you who, after searching her soul for the right words, comes right out and gives the Grand Cañon her cordial indorsement. She pronounces it to be just perfectly lovely! But I said at the outset I was not going to undertake to describe the Grand Cañon—and I'm not. These few remarks were practically jolted out of me and should not be made to count in the total score.

Having seen the cañon—or a little bit of it—from the top, the next thing to do is to go down into it and view it from the sides and the bottom. Most of the visitors follow the Bright Angel Trail which is handily near by and has an assuring name. There are only two ways to do the inside of the Grand Cañon—afoot and on mule-back. El Tovar hotel provides the necessary regalia, if you have not come prepared—divided skirts for the women and leggings for the men, a mule apiece and a guide to every party of six or eight.

At the start there is always a lot of nervous chatter—airy persiflage flies to and fro and much laughing is indulged in. But it has a forced, strained sound, that laughter has; it does not come from the heart, the heart being otherwise engaged for the moment. Down a winding footpath moves the procession, with the guide in front, and behind him in single file his string of pilgrims—all as nervous as cats and some holding to their saddle-pommels with death-grips. Just under the first terrace a halt is made while the official photographer takes a picture; and when you get back he has your finished copy ready for you, so you can see for yourself just how pale and haggard and wall-eyed and how much like a typhoid patient you looked.

The parade moves on. All at once you notice that the person immediately ahead of you has apparently ridden right over the wall of the cañon. A moment ago his arched back loomed before you; now he is utterly gone. It is at this point that some tourists tender their resignations—to take effect immediately. To the credit of the sex, be it said, the statistics show that fewer women quit here than men. But nearly always there is some man who remembers where he left his umbrella or something, and he goes back after it and forgets to return.

In our crowd there was one person who left us here. He was a circular person; about forty per cent of him, I should say, rhymed with jelly. He climbed right down off his mule. He said:

"I'm not scared myself, you understand, but I've just recalled that my wife is a nervous woman. She'd have a fit if she knew I was taking this trip! I love my wife, and for her sake I will not go down this cañon, dearly as I would love to." And with that he headed for the hotel. I wanted to go with him. I wanted to go along with him and comfort him and help him have his chill, and if necessary send a telegram for him to his wife—she was in Pittsburgh—telling her that all was well. But I did not. I kept on. I have been trying to figure out ever since whether this showed courage on my part, or cowardice.

Over the ridge and down the steep declivity beyond goes your mule, slipping a little. He is reared back until his rump almost brushes the trail; he grunts mild protests at every lurching step and grips his shoecalks into the half-frozen path. You reflect that thousands of persons have already done this thing; that thousands of others—men, women and children—are going to do it, and that no serious accident has yet occurred—which is some comfort, but not much. The thought comes to you that, after all, it is a very bright and beautiful world you are leaving behind. You turn your head to give it a long, lingering farewell, and you try to put your mind on something cheerful—such as your life insurance. Then something happens.

The trail, that has been slanting at a downward angle which is a trifle steeper than a ship's ladder, but not quite so steep perhaps as a board fence, takes an abrupt turn to the right. You duck your head and go through a little tunnel in the rock, patterned on the same general design of the needle's eye that is going to give so many of our prominent captains of industry trouble in the hereafter. And as you emerge on the lower side you forget all about your life-insurance papers and freeze to your pommel with both hands, and cram your poor cold feet into the stirrups—even in warm weather they'll be good and cold—and all your vital organs come up in your throat, where you can taste them. If anybody had shot me through the middle just about then he would have inflicted only a flesh wound.

You have come out on a place where the trail clings to the sheer side of the dizziest, deepest chasm in the known world. One of your legs is scraping against the everlasting granite; the other is dangling over half a mile of fresh mountain air. The mule's off hind hoof grates and grinds on the flinty trail, dislodging a fair-sized stone that flops over the verge. You try to look down and see where it is going and find you haven't the nerve to do it—but you can hear it falling from one narrow ledge to another, picking up other boulders as it goes until there must be a fair-sized little avalanche of them cascading down. The sound of their roaring, racketing passage grows fainter and fainter, then dies almost out, and then there rises up to you from those unutterable depths a dull, thuddy little sound—those stones have reached the cellar! Then to you there comes the pleasing reflection that if your mule slipped and you fell off and were dashed to fragments, they would not be large, mussy, irregular fragments, but little teeny-weeny fragments, such as would not bring the blush of modesty to the cheek of the most fastidious.

Only your mule never slips off! It is contrary to a mule's religion and politics, and all his traditions and precedents, to slip off. He may slide a little and stumble once in a while, and he may, with malice aforethought, try to scrape you off against the outjutting shoulders of the trail; but he positively will not slip off. It is not because he is interested in you. A tourist on the cañon's rim a simple tourist is to him and nothing more; but he has no intention of getting himself hurt. Instinct has taught that mule it would be to him a highly painful experience to fall a couple of thousand feet or so and light on a pile of rocks; and therefore, through motives that are purely selfish, he studiously refrains from so doing. When the Prophet of old wrote, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him," and so on, I judge he had reference to a mule on a narrow trail.

My mule had one very disconcerting way about him—or, rather, about her, for she was of the gentler sex. When she came to a particularly scary spot, which was every minute or so, she would stop dead still. I concurred in that part of it heartily. But then she would face outward and crane her neck over the fathomless void of that bottomless pit, and for a space of moments would gaze steadily

downward, with a despondent droop of her fiddle-shaped head and a suicidal gleam in her mournful eyes. It worried me no little; and if I had known, at the time, that she had a German name it would have worried me even more, I guess. But either the time was not ripe for the rash act or else she abhorred the thought of being found dead in the company of a mere tourist, so she did not leap off into space, but restrained herself; and I was very grateful to her for it. It made a bond of sympathy between us.

On you go, winding on down past the red limestone and the yellow limestone and the blue sandstone, which is green generally; past huge bat caves and the big nests of pack-rats, tucked under shelves of Nature's making; past stratified millions of crumbling seashells that tell to geologists the tale of the salt-water ocean that once on a time, when the world was young and callow, filled this hole brim full; and presently, when you have begun to piece together the tattered fringes of your nerves, you realize that the cañon is even more wonderful when viewed from within than it is when viewed from without. Also, you begin to notice now that it is most extensively autographed.

Apparently about every other person who came this way remarked to himself that this cañon was practically completed and only needed his signature as collaborator to round it out—so he signed it and after that it was a finished job. Some of them brought down colored chalk and stencils, and marking pots, and paints and brushes, and cold chisels to work with, which must have been a lot of trouble, but was worth it—it does add so greatly to the beauty of the Grand Cañon to find it spangled over with such names as you could hear paged in almost any dollar-a-day American-plan hotel. The guide pointed out a spot where one of these inspired authors climbed high up the face of a white cliff and, clinging there, carved out in letters a foot long his name; and it was one of those names that, inscribed upon a register, would instinctively cause any room clerk to reach for the key to an inside one, without bath. I regret to state that nothing happened to this person. He got down safe and sound; it was a great pity, too.

By the Bright Angel Trail it is three hours on a mule to the plateau, where there are green summery things growing even in midwinter, and where the temperature is almost sultry; and it is an hour or so more to the riverbed, down at the very bottom. When you finally arrive there and look up you do not see how you ever got down, for the trail has magically disappeared; and you feel morally sure you are never going to get back. If your mule were not under you pensively craning his head rearward in an effort to bite your leg off, you would almost be ready to swear the whole thing was an optical illusion, a wondrous dream. Under these circumstances it is not so strange that some travelers who have been game enough until now suddenly weaken. Their nerves capsize and the grit runs out of them like sand out of an overturned pail.

All over this part of Arizona they tell you the story of the lady from the southern part of the state—she was a school teacher and the story has become an epic—who went down Bright Angel one morning and did not get back until two o'clock the following morning; and then she came against her will in a litter borne by two tired guides, while two others walked beside her and held her hands; and she was protesting at every step that she positively could not and would not go another inch; and she was as hysterical as a treeful of chickadees; her hat was lost, and her glasses were gone, and her hair hung down her back, and altogether she was a mournful sight to see.

Likewise the natives will tell you the tale of a man who made the trip by crawling round the more sensational corners upon his hands and knees; and when he got down he took one look up to where, a sheer mile above him, the rim of the cañon showed, with the tall pine trees along its edge looking like the hairs upon a caterpillar's back, and he announced firmly that he wished he might choke if he stirred another step. Through the miraculous indulgence of a merciful providence he was down, and that was sufficient for him; he wasn't going to trifle with his luck. He would stay down until he felt good and rested, and then he would return to his home in dear old Altoona by some other route. He was very positive about it. There were two guides along, both of them patient and forbearing cowpunchers, and they argued with him. They pointed that there was only one suitable way for him to get out of the cañon, and that was the way by which he had got into it.

"The trouble with you fellows," said the man, "is that you are too dad-blamed technical. The point is that I'm here, and here I'm going to stay."

"But," they told him, "you can't stay here. You'd starve to death like that poor devil that some prospectors found in that gulch yonder—turned to dusty bones, with a pack rat's nest in his chest and a rock under his head. You'd just naturally starve to death."

"There you go again," he said, "importing these trivial foreign matters into the discussion. Let us confine ourselves to the main issue, which is that I am not going back. This rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I," he said, or words to that effect.

So insisting, he sat down, putting his own firm base against the said rock, and prepared to become a permanent resident. He was a grown man and the guides were less gentle with him than they had been with the lady school teacher. They roped his arms at the elbows and hoisted him upon a mule and tied his legs together under the mule's belly, and they brought him out of there like a sack of bran—only he made more noise than any sack of bran has ever been known to make.

Coming back up out of the Grand Cañon is an even more inspiring and amazing performance than going down. But by now—anyhow this was my experience, and they tell me it is the common experience—you are beginning to get used to the sensation of skirting along the raw and ragged verge of nothing. Narrow turns where, going down, your hair pushed your hat off, no longer affright you; you take them jauntily—almost debonairly. You feel that you are now an old mountain-scaler, and your soul begins to crave for a trip with a few more thrills to the square inch in it. You get your wish. You go down Hermit Trail, which its middle name is thrills; and there you make the acquaintance of the Hydrophobic Skunk.

The Hydrophobic Skunk is a creature of such surpassing accomplishments and vivid personality that I feel he is entitled to a new chapter. The Hydrophobic Skunk will be continued in our next.

RABID AND HIS FRIENDS

The Hydrophobic Skunk resides at the extreme bottom of the Grand Cañon and, next to a Southern Republican who never asked for a Federal office, is the rarest of living creatures. He is so rare that nobody ever saw him—that is, nobody except a native. I met plenty of tourists who had seen people who had seen him, but never a tourist who had seen him with his own eyes. In addition to being rare, he is highly gifted.

I think almost anybody will agree with me that the common, ordinary skunk has been most richly dowered by Nature. To adorn a skunk with any extra qualifications seems as great a waste of the raw material as painting the lily or gilding refined gold. He is already amply equipped for outdoor pursuits. Nobody intentionally shoves him round; everybody gives him as much room as he seems to need. He commands respect—nay, more than that, respect and veneration—wherever he goes. Joy-riders never run him down and foot passengers avoid crowding him into a corner. You would think Nature had done amply well by the skunk; but no—the Hydrophobic Skunk comes along and upsets all these calculations. Besides carrying the traveling credentials of an ordinary skunk, he is rabid in the most rabidissimus form. He is not mad just part of the time, like one's relatives by marriage—and not mad most of the time, like the old-fashioned railroad ticket agent—but mad all the time—incurably, enthusiastically and unanimously mad! He is mad and he is glad of it.

We made the acquaintance of the Hydrophobic Skunk when we rode down Hermit Trail. The casual visitor to the Grand Cañon first of all takes the rim drive; then he essays Bright Angel Trail, which is sufficiently scary for his purposes until he gets used to it; and after that he grows more adventurous and tackles Hermit Trail, which is a marvel of corkscrew convolutions, gimleting its way down this red abdominal wound of a cañon to the very gizzard of the world.

Alongside the Hermit, traveling the Bright Angel is the same as gathering the myrtles with Mary; but the civil engineers who worked out the scheme of the Hermit and made it wide and navigable for ordinary folks were bright young men. They laid a wall along its outer side all the way from the top to the bottom. Now this wall is made of loose stones racked up together without cement, and it is nowhere more than a foot or a foot and a half high. If your mule ever slipped—which he never does—or if you rolled off on your own hook—which has not happened to date—that puny little wall would hardly stop you—might not even cause you to hesitate. But some way, intervening between you and a thousand feet or so of uninterrupted fresh air, it gives a tremendous sense of security. Life is largely a state of mind, anyhow, I reckon.

As a necessary preliminary to going down Hermit Trail you take a buckboard ride of ten miles—ten wonderful miles! Almost immediately the road quits the rocky, bare parapet of the gorge and winds off through the noble, big forest that is a part of the Government reserve. Jays that are twice as large and three times as vocal as the Eastern variety weave blue threads in the green background of the pines; and if there is snow upon the ground its billowy white surface is crossed and criss-crossed with the dainty tracks of coyotes, and sometimes with the broad, furry marks of the wildcat's pads. The air is a blessing and the sunshine is a benediction.

Away off yonder, through a break in the conifers, you see one lone and lofty peak with a cap of snow upon its top. The snow fills the deeper ravines that furrow its side downward from the summit so that at this distance it looks as though it were clutched in a vast white owl's claw; and generally there is a wispy cloud caught on it like a white shirt on a poor man's Monday washpole. Or, huddled together in a nest formation like so many speckled eggs, you see the clutch of little mottled mountains for which nobody seems to have a name. If these mountains were in Scotland, Sir Walter Scott and Bobby Burns would have written about them and they would be world-famous, and tourists from America would come and climb their slopes, and stand upon their tops, and sop up romance through

all their pores. But being in Arizona, dwarfed by the heaven-reaching ranges and groups that wall them in north, south and west, they have not even a Christian name to answer to.

Anon—that is to say, at the end of those ten miles—you come to the head of Hermit Trail. There you leave your buckboard at a way station and mount your mule. Presently you are crawling downward, like a fly on a board fence, into the depths of the chasm. You pass through rapidly succeeding graduations of geology, verdure, scenery and temperature. You ride past little sunken gardens full of wild flowers and stunty fir trees, like bits of Old Japan; you climb naked red slopes crowned with the tall cactus, like Old Mexico; you skirt bald, bare, blistered vistas of desolation, like Old Perdition. You cross Horsethief's Trail, which was first traced out by the moccasined feet of marauding Apaches and later was used by white outlaws fleeing northward with their stolen pony herds.

You pass above the gloomy shadows of Blythe's Abyss and wind beneath a great box-shaped formation of red sandstone set on a spindle rock and balancing there in dizzy space like Mohammed's coffin; and then, at the end of a mile-long jog along a natural terrace stretching itself midway between Heaven and the other place, you come to the residence of Shorty, the official hermit of the Grand Cañon.

Shorty is a little, gentle old man, with warped legs and mild blue eyes and a set of whiskers of such indeterminate aspect that you cannot tell at first look whether they are just coming out or just going back in. He belongs—or did belong—to the vast vanishing race of oldtime gold prospectors. Halfway down the trail he does light housekeeping under an accommodating flat ledge that pouts out over the pathway like a snuffdipper's under lip. He has a hole in the rock for his chimney, a breadth of weathered gray canvas for his door and an eighty-mile stretch of the most marvelous panorama on earth for his front yard. He minds the trail and watches out for the big boulders that sometimes fall in the night; and, except in the tourist season, he leads a reasonably quiet existence.

Alongside of Shorty, Robinson Crusoe was a tenement-dweller, and Jonah, weekending in the whale, had a perfectly uproarious time; but Shorty thrives on a solitude that is too vast for imagining. He would not trade jobs with the most potted potentate alive—only sometimes in mid-summer he feels the need of a change stealing over him, and then he goes afoot out into the middle of Death Valley and spends a happy vacation of five or six weeks with the Gila monsters and the heat. He takes Toby with him.

Toby is a gentlemanly little woolly dog built close to the earth like a carpet sweeper, with legs patterned crookedly—after the model of his master's. Toby has one settled prejudice: he dislikes Indians. You have only to whisper the word "Injun" and instantly Toby is off, scuttling away to the highest point that is handy. From there he peers all round looking for red invaders. Not finding any he comes slowly back, crushed to the earth with disappointment. Nobody has ever been able to decide what Toby would do with the Indians if he found them; but he and Shorty are in perfect accord. They have been associated together ever since Toby was a pup and Shorty went into the hermit business, and that was ten years ago. Sitting cross-legged on a flat rock like a little gnome, with his puckered eyes squinting off at space, Shorty told us how once upon a time he came near losing Toby.

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