

# OUR STORY TELLER



## THE TRAGEDY OF COYOTE HOLE.

At daybreak Indian Tom emerged from his wickup and stood at the doorway, open, as is the custom, toward the east, whence the desert tribes expect a Messiah. He surveyed the forbidding landscape with an air of proprietorship. Tall, gaunt, with an eye like a coyote's and a skin clinging close to his bony frame, tanned to yellow parchment by hundreds of electric storms, Indian Tom was a veritable wizard of the wilds. Half a dozen snarling curs scattered at sight of him, yelping, and the three squaws who formed his household hastened about their morning tasks. Evidently there was excellent discipline at his rancheria.

Not far to the westward rose the long, undulating outlines of the Funeral Mountains bordering Death Valley. On every other hand stretched the monotonous wastes of the Mojave Desert, now a long way of barren plain, now a range of hills rising above it. A few yards from Tom's habitation was a pool of black water which oozed slowly from the ground on a little slope. When it reached a certain level, it overflowed and trickled in a narrow rivulet along the sands into a piece of ground inclosed by wires. Here it kept alive a scanty growth of native grasses. In the background of Indian Tom's immediate landscape were dozens of burros, which constituted his worldly wealth and made him a lord among his fellows. When a burro became famished to the point of starvation on the sparse sage-brush, it was admitted to the little inclosure and permitted to feed until it could stand strong upon its legs. Then it was clubbed forth upon the desert again. Indian Tom often sold burros to prospectors, but the number did not diminish, and the source of constant supply was a mystery which no man had fathomed.

Above the low mountains in the distant east the sun rose like a ball of fire. There were no soft tints of blue and purple along the summits to herald the approach of dawn and indicate a little moisture in the air. But instead came a sudden flare of light that burned at once in the sky and along the mountain sides and on the wide reaches of the plains. The air was shot through and through with penetrating, stinging rays. Here and there appeared puffs of wind, whirling sand aloft, with an ominous, swinging, funnel-like motion. And in the far north these gradually increased, until a cloud of dust hung like a curtain against the sky, higher above the earth than the tops of the highest mountains. Indian Tom surveyed the scene, sniffed the hot blasts which saluted his withered nostrils, and muttered, in the composite lingo which he had picked up from prospectors of different nationalities: "Egh! Mucho calor! Heap dam hot wind!" Then, as one of his squaws looked before him a chunk of dingy-baked bread, a black bottle, and a savory combination of jack-rabbit and bacon, he squatted beside them, upon the ground, and attacked, with great gusto, a breakfast which, for a desert Indian, was an epicure's dream.

Three hours later the shifting gusts of wind had united in a constant furnace blast. And at a point fifteen miles from Indian Tom's across the range, and upon the edge of the basin-like depression known as Death Valley, two men were suffering constant torments from the almost insupportable heat. These were Anderson and Grimes, prospectors. At the first indications of an electric storm they had prepared an insufficient shelter by making a low tent of some canvas, under which they had crawled for protection. They had also tried to shield their two burros by muffling their heads in gunny-sacks, to screen them from the driving sands which rode on the sweeping blasts of the wester. This sand penetrated everywhere, and cut the skin, if exposed, like needles. Its drift was not sufficient to bury any living, moving thing alive, but man or beast might become exhausted by the heat, and so incapable of motion, and then suffocated. Grimes and Anderson had placed the various articles of their mining outfit as a low rampart on the side next the wind, and the sand had drifted over them. When Grimes lifted an ax, to place it among their other possessions, a spark of electricity passed to his arm, with a report like the crack of a pistol, and the arm was still benumbed from the shock. The high electrical tension in the atmosphere was, in itself, a tremendous strain upon the nerves. Moreover, it turned all vitality out of the air and hurried to its heat. To expose a hand from the partial shelter of the canvas meant a blister on the skin; and the sun was high upon the ground, strag-

gling for breath, moistening their lips, every few moments, from the contents of their canteens, and swearing a constant succession of miners' oaths at the "tick" which had brought them to the confines of Death Valley on this dreful day.

"I wonder if the critters is alive?" said Anderson, in a lull of the tempest which permitted the raising of his voice above the whistling of the wind. "If they be," he added, "I would be a mercy to wet their noses with a little water."

Grimes struggled to his feet, throwing off the weight of the canvas, which had been pressed down upon them by the drifting sand. Five minutes later the burros had been resurrected, the gunny-sacks had been removed from their heads, and their mouths had been thoroughly sponged. When these things had been done, and everything had been adjusted for a probable recurrence of the tempest, the men found that they had just one canteen of water left, one which had been filled at Coyote Hole as they had come past a few hours before. It had been kept until the last as being the freshest. They each took a "pull" at this.

"It's pretty bitter and brackish, isn't it?" Grimes remarked. "Some way I never liked that water. It tastes to me like arsenic and asphalt. But—by—, it's good! Give me some more. It's good, it's good, it's good. Ha! this is life. No man knows what joy he can get out of a little thing until he's been almost dead with hunger or with thirst. Don't you think so, pard?"

"Don't be an idiotic fool," Anderson replied. "The wind's a-comin' up again. Better curl down here behind the outfit, and see that you make that water go just as far as it will. If we can stand it till night, and the moon comes up, and the wind goes down, and the burros is alive, and we can get to Indian Tom's, where there's water, we're all right. But if we can't—why, then we're just dead and buried, and that's all there is of it," was Anderson's grimly philosophical reply.

So, as the long afternoon wore drearily on, the two men lay under their improvised shelter and suffered in silence, their lips too parched and swollen to talk, their eyes bloodshot, their cheeks puffed and blackened as the blood thickened and grew sluggish in their veins. They turned their faces apart, as though each dreaded to witness the sufferings of the other, and pressed their swollen lips against their teeth to keep back tell-tale groans.

When the sun went down, blood-red in the west, the wind sank to rest, like the spent wrath of an angry giant. The heat, which had been pressing down upon the earth, seemed lifted all at once and flung abroad into space. For a brief interval the darkness of night swept over the mountains, pierced in the illimitable vault overhead by thousands of brilliant points of fire. Then the moon came up, swimming in a sea of silvery radiance. Anderson and Grimes, by a supreme effort, aroused themselves from the lethargy which had overtaken them in the closing hours of the day, and prepared to leave the spot where so much suffering had been compressed into so brief a time.

They had adjusted the pack upon Nobles, the smaller of the two burros, and were preparing to "clinch" the load on Jerusalem, a big and brawny specimen of her patient race, and their principal dependence as a pack animal. Anderson stood with his foot against her side, pulling on the rope that held the pack in place, when properly adjusted. But there was no answering pull from the other side, where Grimes was standing. Anderson was angered.

"Why the devil don't you pull?" he thundered. Then, in gentler tones, "Why, boy, what in the name of Simon Peter's ghost is a-illin' you? Have you got the St. Vitus dance?"

Grimes was reeling in aimless circles, frothing at the mouth and making inarticulate cries of pain. Then he fell to the ground, and his legs and arms thrashed the ground with spasmodic contortions. Then came nausea, worse than any seasickness. And a moment later Grimes sat up and "pulled himself together."

"God!" he said. "That's terrible. Little the worst I ever had. Who would have thought a man could live through such pain as that?"

"I tell you what," Anderson replied. "You've eaten something that don't agree with you—it's almost like poison. You're loosed. We've got to camp here again and make some coffee to settle your stomach."

"Come," said Anderson, gently, "can't you be yourself for just a minute?"

Don't you know that I can't give you water? Try to reason, just a little!"

"Water!" was the imperious reply—"water, or kill me, in mercy."

Anderson drew his revolver from its holster for the first time. The moonlight glanced from the polished steel as he held the handle toward Grimes. He intended to test him.

"Here is the revolver," he said. "Take it and use it."

"I can't," was the reply. "My arms are paralyzed. I can't lift my elbows. Don't you see that I'm only a wreck of a man—nothing left of me except a voice and a brain that's all on fire? Anderson, I'm myself now. I know what I'm saying, and I call on you, as you are my friend, to do your duty."

Anderson hesitated for a moment. He wavered to and fro and toyed with the revolver, undecided. Then, with a quick movement, he turned the weapon upon his own heart and pulled the trigger. There was a report, followed by a cry. Anderson threw his arms into the air, fell, clutched vainly at the edge of the precipice, and disappeared into the depths.

Again, at the first break of day, Indian Tom stood at the door of his wickup, holding erect his messenger form, unburdened by the weight of a hundred years, and gazing into the far reaches of the landscape. The atmosphere, swept by the norther of the day before free from every particle of moisture, was perfectly transparent, and every outline of the mountains, every naked rock and shrunken desert bush, was distinct with a startling individuality.

Here and there a jack-rabbit bounded over the barren plain, or a coyote sneaked away from the approach of day. Shuffling unsteadily across the sands came two gray forms which Tom watched intently from their first appearance in the distance. Nobles was in advance, with the lighter load, crazed for water, and frantic to bury her nose in the black, sluggish ooze beneath the shadow of Tom's habitation. Then came Jerusalem, trembling with fever and weariness and staggering under her twofold burden. For, lying back upon the blankets, dead so that it could not fall, was a human form, rigid, uncovered, the beard and cheeks flecked with bloody foam, the glassy eyes staring unmovably into the face of the morning sun.

Then Indian Tom, lifting his hands to the east, chanted, in guttural monotone, a verse of thanksgiving to the spirit on high who puts into the white man's heart the lust of gold, and sends him forth into the wilds, driving his dirt-footed little beasts laden with the miner's pick and pan, with tobacco, with bacon, and, best of all, with whisky, which warms the marrow and gladdens the heart of the Great Father's dusky servant.—William M. Tisdale, in San Francisco Argonaut.

### HARVEST OF THE SEA.

#### A Peculiar Occupation Followed On The Coast of Ireland.

Along the northwest coast of Ireland, on the borders of the Atlantic, dwells a hardy race of men whose chief occupation, when not engaged in fishing, consists in the manufacture of "kelp."

This "kelp" is of great commercial importance, as from it is obtained nearly all our iodine—a body of vast use in medicine.

During the winter months the kelp-burners set out in their frail little "curraghs" (small canoe-like boats about twelve feet long, made of canvas), and, proceeding along the coast, fill the boats with seaweed, from which the kelp is made. In this they are assisted by the women, who, bareheaded and shoeless, take their turn regularly at the oars, and are almost as expert at it as the men.

After a storm is the time selected for obtaining the seaweed, as by the force of the waves it has been torn from its bed and is cast in along the shore in large quantities.

When the boats are laden, the seaweed is brought to a small creek, and there placed in heaps out of reach of the tide. From this it is carried in ereels on the backs of men and women to a point further inland, where it has to undergo a process of drying.

The drying consists in exposing it to the sun and wind, and the better to do this they have rows of loose stones laid about twenty yards in length and a few feet in height. Along the tops of these they scatter the seaweed.

The drying takes months, so that spring is well advanced ere it is ready for burning. This does not matter, however, as owing to the fuel—the peat or turf got from the bogs at hand—not being yet cut and dried (or "win" as it is termed), it is summer before the burning in the kilns can commence.

The kiln is a deep trench dug in the ground. Alternate layers of turf and seaweed are laid in this till full, and the whole is kept burning for about three weeks, until it cokes together in a large black mass resembling coke, but much more solid and heavier. This is the "kelp."

It is then broken into blocks about fourteen inches square and brought by boat to the villages, where it is sold, to be shipped to more profitable markets.—Boston Post.

#### Russia's Powerful Fleet.

The Russian fleet in the Black Sea is a most formidable one. There are seven line-of-battleships, ranging between 8,000 and 12,000 tons, 2 armored coast defense vessels, 6 armored cruisers, 3 torpedo cruisers, 28 torpedo boats and 11 cruisers belonging to the volunteer fleet. The latter are not armored, but carry 6 to 14 quick-firing guns. Three of them can steam 20 knots an hour. It is not thought that Turkey can prevent the progress of this powerful fleet.

No man's life is as beautiful as the prayer he makes in prayer meeting.

### PLACES THAT BREED EPIDEMICS

#### Three Spots to Which Great Plagues Can Generally Be Traced.

There are three noted plague spots in the world to which the start of most epidemics of this nature can be traced. These are Hurdwar (India), Mecca (Arabia), and Nijni Novgorod (Russia). Hurdwar is the place to which pilgrims from all parts of India resort in April of each year for purification by bathing in the holy waters of the Ganges River. At the same time a fair is held to which come merchants from China, Arabia, Persia, Tartary, and other countries. The average annual attendance is 1,000,000, and it is the exception when disease of some kind does not break out among this multitude of people. Mecca, where the faithful Mohammedans go every year to drink water from the holy well and kiss the miraculous stone, is also the scene of an immense fair to which come vast throngs of people from all parts of Arabia and wherever the religion of the Koran is taught. Destitute of anything like sanitary arrangements and aided by the promiscuous drinking from the same vessels and the constant kissing of the same spot, disease spreads fast. In 1847 more than 37,000 pilgrims, members of one caravan returning from Mecca to Damascus, died of Asiatic cholera contracted under the conditions named. The annual gathering of Russian peasants at Nijni Novgorod in August is for the purpose of kissing the image of the holy virgin, an act which is supposed to bring about miraculous cures. As a consequence, many of the pilgrims are people suffering with leprosy and other loathsome afflictions. The fair which is a feature of the gathering attracts thousands of healthy folk. Sick and well commingle, kiss the image at the same spots, and wash in the same water in the basin of the holy fountain. A writer in the Deutsche Versicherungs Zeitung, who visited the place in 1877, during the annual fair, says a brown, repulsive-looking crust of matter, five millimeters in thickness, was formed on the image of the virgin in one day by the kisses of the worshippers, while the water in the holy basin presented a still more disgusting sight.

#### Solar Heat on House Roofs.

The calculating genius figures on everything. He can tell you exactly how far you could hear the whine of a mosquito if the little insect should suddenly develop into a creature as large as an elephant, or how far a flea could jump if his weight were equal to that of the average man. He knows exactly how many tons of shoe leather is worn off on the St. Louis pavements every year and how many pounds of tacks are wearing into fine powder while the soles are wearing down. He knows several odd things and is even now figuring on others. His latest calculation is on the amount of solar heat received by the roofs of our large cities. He finds that in Philadelphia enough of sun heat is wasted each day to keep 5,000 20-horse power engines in motion. This means the equivalent to 100,000-horse power. While his estimation may not be exaggerated, he might have extended his calculations to the whole State, the Mississippi Valley, or to the United States. Philadelphia has only 120 square miles of area. There are several spots of that size in America that receive an equal amount of sunshine.—St. Louis Republic.

#### A Zoo Freak.

Some of the antiquities of this country which find their way into museums are rivaled in age by a living creature at the Zoo. It is an alligator terrapin, or Mississippi snapper, whose 150 pounds of substance have been accumulated in a lifetime of five centuries or more. At least, that is what the scientists calculate, and they say that there is no reason to doubt that it was paddling around as a little turtle in the Mississippi when De Soto first gazed upon that river. The giant terrapin measures about five feet from snout to tip of tail, and during its residence of seven or eight years at the Zoo it has grown not a particle. It is too lazy to move about much, and so nature has endowed it with special facilities for catching food. When hungry it lies in the water with its mouth wide open, and the bright little red tongue looks so much like a worm that it serves as a bait to attract fish, on which the terrapin feeds.—Philadelphia Record.

#### Indifferent French Voters.

The recent elections which have taken place in France have served to call attention to the remarkable indifference of the population to political matters. In three of the most important departments of France less than 50 per cent of the voters, inscribed on the registers took the trouble to go to the polls, while in the departments of Yonne and of the Doubs an extra ballot was actually found necessary, as none of the candidates had polled the number of votes required by law. The same phenomenon is apparent in Italy and in Spain, and constitutes a somewhat remarkable point for the consideration of the champions of parliamentary forms of government.

#### Germany's Mercantile Progress.

Germany is forging ahead in an altogether phenomenal manner with her mercantile marine. In 1871 it consisted of 147 steamships, with a total tonnage of 82,000, whereas last year the government returns showed a total of some 1,200 steamers, with a tonnage of over 1,000,000.

#### One Woman's Record.

A Worcester, Mass., woman covered 10,257 miles on her bicycle last year. During the season she rode thirteen centuries. Her record is unequalled by any other woman rider in America, and she now has the honor of being the national champion long-distance woman bicyclist.

#### The Trouble.

She (delightedly)—Papa says if we want to get married he'll pay half the expenses of furnishing a house for us. He (despondently)—But who the devil would pay the other half?—New York World.

### PASSING OF THE MONGOOSE.

#### Its Career of Ruin in Jamaica Being Brought to an End.

A singular feature of natural history is reported from Jamaica, in the West Indies. The story of how the mongoose was brought to the island from India in 1872, for the purpose of destroying the rats which were devouring the crops of sugar cane, and how it increased until it became a veritable pest, and made the life of the inhabitants a burden, is well known.

Every kind of bird was prey for the fabled visitor, but it developed a special fondness for snakes, ground lizards, frogs, turtles and turtles' eggs and land crabs. In some instances it even killed small pigs, kids, lambs, calves, puppies and kittens. When animal diet ran scarce it devastated the "grounds" of the negroes and made rapacious assaults upon ripe bananas, pineapples, young corn, avocado pears, sweet potatoes, coconuts, yams, peas and various fruits. Finally it took the place of its former enemy, the rat, and acquired a taste for sugar cane.

The game and birds of the island were practically destroyed, and as a result of the mongoose's taste for reptiles, the twenty-two specimens of lizards and five species of harmless snakes which had hitherto proved an inestimable blessing to the country in keeping down small insect pests, such as the tick, fell victims to its depredations. The ticks became a scourge. One could not brush against a bush or put his feet down in the grass without being covered by myriads of them. The tick and the mongoose, in fact, became the victorious survivors of this struggle for existence among the lower animals.

But a strange retribution has befallen the mongoose. It at last is beset by the ticks, and, according to reports from all parts of the island, it is not nearly so plentiful as formerly. Some of those caught are found to be literally eaten up by the insects. The result of the diminution is shown in the marked increase of certain species of reptiles and birds, some of which were supposed to have become exterminated.

#### Hard Luck Tale.

This story, told by an actor to a little gathering the other evening, made a "hit," says the Chicago Record. It is not strictly new, but, as the apologetic storyteller always says, "maybe some of you haven't heard it."

A theatrical company was stranded in a small town in Arkansas. The season had been disastrous. The advance agent had proved himself a rainmaker, and the counter attractions had been too good. And so this company was stranded, hundreds of miles from the gay Rialto in New York, with every prospect of walking homeward and starving en route.

In this hour of despair a letter came from the manager of the opera house at Lone Rock. He wrote that if the company would come to Lone Rock and play at his house he would guarantee enough money to carry all the people back to New York. He said the company would be sure to do well, as there had not been a troupe in town for two weeks, and he had the only theater.

The members of the company were overjoyed. They sold or pawned all their property which they did not actually need, and succeeded in raising just enough money to take them to Lone Rock by the afternoon train.

The actors were in excellent spirits as the train pulled into Lone Rock late in the afternoon. At last they would see the dear old Rialto again! Once in New York they would doubtless "sign" with gilt-edge combinations playing week stands. No wonder they were happy.

A bus was waiting to take the company to the hotel. The leading man climbed up and sat beside the driver. He was at peace with the world. The clouds had rolled away. His soul expanded with love for his fellow-man, and he spoke in gentle condescension to the driver.

"I have never before appeared in your beautiful little city," said he, with his hand in the bosom of his coat. "It seems to be a delightful place."

"Yes—purty nice town."

"Handsome residences and all that—lovely avenues of trees. I'm very much pleased with this section of the country. I like the climate, too—and you have such fine weather, clear skies and all that. Now, I couldn't imagine anything more lovely than that sunset over in the west."

"That ain't sunset," said the driver. "That's the opery house burnin' down."

#### Dogs Were His Only Mourners.

Dogs were the only mourners at the funeral of the late Henry Hamilton, of England, which took place recently. Little was known of Hamilton by his neighbors, except that he seemed to be fond of hunting. Whenever he was seen anywhere he was always accompanied by some of his pack of fifty dogs. By his will the bulk of his property goes to a distant cousin, but the will also provides for the old servants of the house and all of the dogs. It was stipulated in the will that no one should follow his body to the grave except his own pack of hounds and the footmen who were to keep them in line.

#### Rather Costly Charity.

A Maine paper complains somewhat bitterly because some good people of its town got up a show that cost \$20 to raise \$6 for payment of the freight on a barrel of clothes worth \$10 to be sent to the Indians of North Dakota, when the clothes were greatly needed by the poor around home.

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