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CREEK

Through the Grand Canyon from Wyoming to Mexico

By

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With a Foreword by Owen Wister

With 72 Plates from Photographs by the Author and his brother

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Perhaps this planet does somewhere else contain a thing like the Colorado River — but that is no matter; we at any rate in our continent possess one of nature's very vastest works. After The River and its tributaries have done with all sight of the upper world, have left behind the bordering plains and streamed through the various gashes which their floods have sliced in the mountains that once stopped their way, then the culminating wonder begins. The River has been flowing through the loneliest part which remains to us of that large space once denominated "The Great American Desert" by the vague maps in our old geographies. It has passed through regions of emptiness still as wild as they were before Columbus came; where not only no man lives now nor any mark is found of those forgotten men of the cliffs, but the very surface of the earth itself looks monstrous and extinct. Upon one such region in particular the author of these pages dwells, when he climbs up out of the gulf in whose bottom he has left his boat by the River, to look out upon a world of round gray humps and hollows which seem as if it were made of the backs of huge elephants. Through such a country as this, scarcely belonging to our era any more than the mammoth or the pterodactyl, scarcely belonging to time at all, does the Colorado approach and enter its culminating marvel. Then, for 283 miles it inhabits a nether world of its own. The few that have ventured through these places and lived are a handful to those who went in and were never seen again. The white bones of some have been found on the

maybe that's not quite the term for Glen

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shores; but most were drowned; and in this water no bodies ever rise, because the thick sand that its torrent churns along clogs and sinks them.

This place exerts a magnetic spell. The sky is there above it, but not of it. Its being is apart; its climate; its light; its own. The beams of the sun come into it like visitors. Its own winds blow through it, not those of outside, where we live. The River streams down its mysterious reaches, hurrying ceaselessly; sometimes a smooth sliding lap, sometimes a falling, broken wilderness of billows and whirlpools. Above stand its walls, rising through space upon space of silence. They glow, they gloom, they shine. Bend after bend they reveal themselves, endlessly new in endlessly changing veils of colour. A swimming and jewelled blue predominates, as of sapphires being melted and spun into skeins of shifting cobweb. Bend after bend this trance of beauty and awe goes on, terrible as the Day of Judgment, sublime as the Psalms of David. Five thousand feet below the opens and barrens of Arizona, this canyon seems like an avenue conducting to the secret of the universe and the presence of the gods.

Is much wonder to be felt that its beckoning enchantment should have drawn two young men to dwell beside it for many years; to give themselves wholly to it; to descend and ascend among its buttressed pinnacles; to discover caves and waterfalls hidden in its labyrinths; to climb, to creep, to hang in mid-air, in order to learn more and more of it, and at last

The Voice of the Desert, by J. W. Krutch.

p. 24 — "We grow strong against the pressure of a difficulty, and ingenious by solving problems. Individuality and character are developed by challenge."

tiny black scratch on the sky. Without a glass one could not say for certain whether it was a man or not. One day when I sought it with the naked eye it was gone entirely, and I had to have recourse to the glass again to find the reason. The precious print had been left lying out on a table, and all the glory that was Bill Jones had suffered total eclipse by a fly-speck!

We had not intended to do any exploring about or beyond the bridge, but after a plunge in a rock-bound pool, and lunch by a crystal spring in a cool maidenhair-draped grotto, sore feet and legs were not quite equal to restraining the aspirations of soaring spirits. Tom had told us that somewhere about the place would be found a register containing the signature of every person who had visited the bridge since its discovery. He was under the impression that it was housed in a niche of the sandstone where the right-hand abutment was tied into the native rock a hundred feet above the bottom of the canyon. The way proved rough for palms of piteous feet to travel, but we persisted in full confidence that the end would justify the effort. The "guest-books" of shrines and national monuments, while rarely edifying, are often diverting—I mean diverting after the fashion of the reactions of such serious persons as word-painters, composers of city boosting slogans and writers of flowery epitaphs.

Failing to find a way to climb out immediately under the bridge, we fared a couple of hundred yards up the canyon and worked on from shelf to shelf until a faint trail leading down from the direction of