

1000 words approx.

ROLLING STONE.

Burnfield - Pathway → By J. H. SMYTHE.
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It is often said that a rolling stone gathers no moss - meaning, of course, that from a financial aspect there is no point in wandering all over the globe.

Well there is no doubt a lot of truth in the old proverb, but at the same time the rolling stone does acquire a certain amount of polish in the process and most assuredly does run across many curious people and incidents.

I must confess to being a rolling stone - or more correctly speaking - was, and though, in my case the moss and the polish are rather negligible quantities I have the recollections of many interesting people, places and things.

Speaking of travelling I am afraid my method of getting from one place to another would not appeal to the ordinary tourist as usually I journeyed in rather unorthodox ways. There were three ways open to you if you went by train; you could pay the legitimate fare and travel in comfort, in a carriage, or you could forego the fare, ride beneath the carriage on the brake rods and take the risk of being found out and rudely flung off by some vigilant and husky brakeman; I do not recommend

this second way, I've had some. The third way, was the one I usually adopted, that is if I were not particular as to destination.

For instance when Tommy Burns fought Jack Jeffries for the heavyweight championship I travelled over a thousand miles to Reno, Nevada to see the fight and all it cost me was roughly 15/- as against the ordinary fare of nearly £8. This is how I did it.

Going along to a labour exchange in Frisco which was advertising for railway navvies for a job in Nevada I paid the fee - one dollar - signed on and along with 30 or 40 fellow navvies was conveyed at the Railway Company's expense to the scene of operations - in this case a place called Mogué, seven miles from Reno.

Arrived at Mogué, I worked one day, for it was a point of honour amongst railroad stiffs to put in one day's work.

You see the first dollar earned went to the navvies' sick and accident fund, and goodness knows the fund had to bear many a heavy tax. My day in, I ^{gave} gave myself the sack - forfeiting the balance of my day's pay, I guess I was owe the company that, and walked the seven miles to Reno.

It was a great fight, with Tommy Burns a good loser. Did you ever see the staff of life at the point of death, in case you haven't I'll tell you what it looks like. I saw it in

Wyoming, in a small 5 cent museum. The curious exhibit was a small, hard, dirty brown loaf of bread impaled on the point of a rusty bayonet.

The story told me by the museum proprietor was that the loaf and bayonet were found after the battle of Bunkers Hill, but when found, the bayonet had passed through the body of a soldier before becoming imbedded in the loaf which was in the man's haversack.

Red hair excites no special interest amongst our people, but if you suddenly run into a coal black negro adorned with a thatch of flaming red hair, I feel sure you would stare as I did in open mouthed amazement.

I ran across the owner of the ginger mop in Arizona, but could elicit no reason ancestral or otherwise for the black man's startling shade of wool.

One blazing hot day I rolled into Sacramento and being in dire need of something moist and cool I went into Jack Cunha's saloon at the corner of Main Street, and the first thing that met my eye was the queerest and most pointed annoucement ever I saw in print.

It was printed on a large placard which hung above the bar, and read as follows, "In God alone we trust, all others cash".

A very definite hint that all drinks were on a strictly cash basis. No doubt many listeners will remember the great San Francisco earthquake and fire, and the great loss of life and property occasioned by the disaster. The area round Van Ness Avenue was particularly hard hit and many people were killed there when their homes suddenly collapsed.

Looting was ripe, for it was a wealthy quarter, and in order to check the pillagers, guards were enlisted, armed, and a cordon drawn round the area. The orders were to shoot anyone caught looting or who did not halt when called upon.

One fellow was seen making a bolt from a house, challenged but paid no heed to the command and sped on, a partly filled gunny sack slung over his shoulder. A quick shot however put an end to his headlong career, and when a guard investigated the bag what do you think it contained.

Literally dozens of human fingers, all with rings upon them.

It would have taken the robber too long to remove the rings from the fingers of the dead bodies, so the callous looter had simply hacked off the finger wearing the ring, which could be removed at leisure.

A rather too gruesome a note to end on, so here's a tip for bear hunters.

Marks of bear had been seen around our camp in the Okanagan Valley, and I had visions of a bear skin coat, so asked an old timer what was the best method to pursue in order to secure the coveted skin.

"Well Scotty" he said, "I guess the most certain way, is the way the old Spanish bear hunters used to get bruin and if you do the same you'll get that coat alright.

You know son, a bear always get's up on his hind legs and opens his mouth wide when he's going to hug you, so all you've got to do is to walk straight up to him, shove the barrel of your gun into his mouth and blow his head clean off, there's nothing to it".

I suddenly lost my enthusiasm and I've never owned a bear skin coat.