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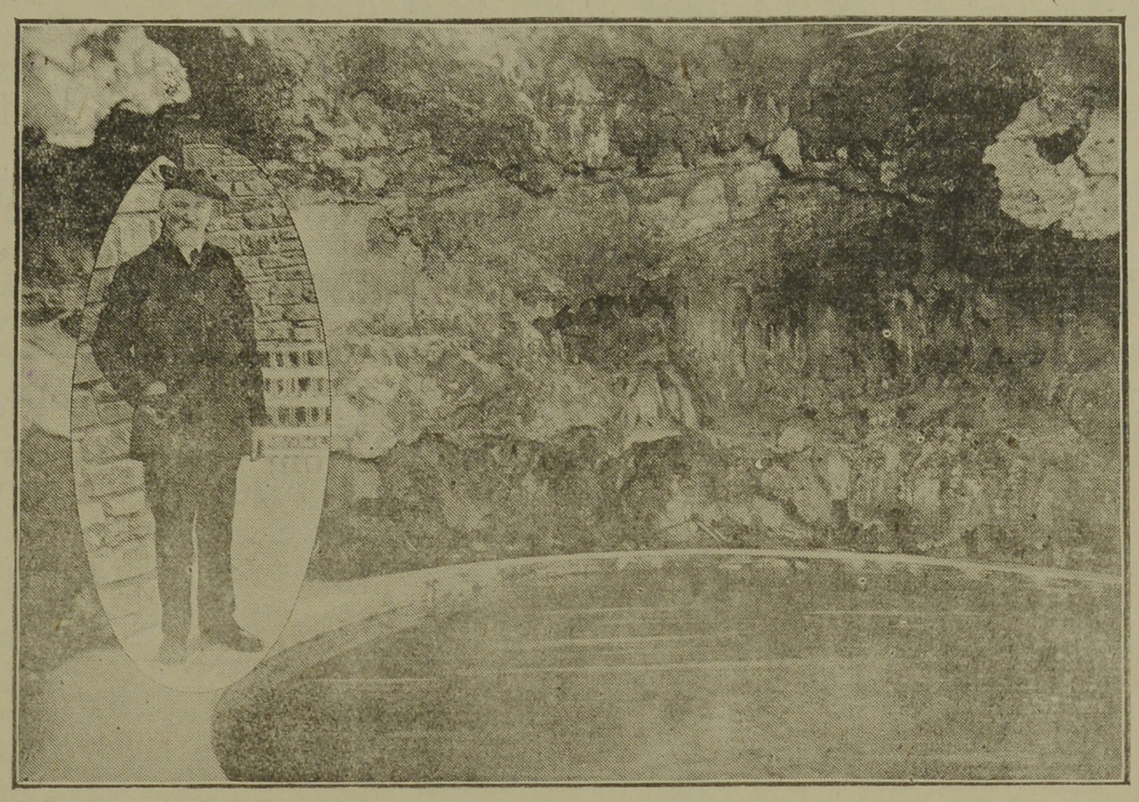
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Story of the Cave at Banff



VISITORS to Banff in the Rocky Mountains Park should make it a point to see the Cave, and in doing so should not fail to have as guide the good-natured auld Scotchman who is in charge. He is always at hand and stands true to his native heath by continually wearing a Scotch Bonnet. The guide is over 78 years of age and has seen service in connection with the Park in one way or other for over a quarter of a century, since its inception, in fact.

This Cave, as the guide's story goes, is the remains of a formally active geyser being at one time replete with grotesque stalactites, stalagmites, and other subterranean wonders. The visitor in the early days entered through a rough rocky entrance or door-way into a long dark gruesome tunnel and was conducted by the Scottish Guide through a length of darkness and along its winding course whose walls were the bold rock worn away in ages past by the running water, until the cave is reached. But now one enters through a magnificent plate-glass double door into a fine large rotunda supported by fine pillars. From this, after registering in the book placed on the desk for the purpose the tunnel proper is entered through another door. The bottom of the tunnel is now of concrete which covers the overflow from the basin as it runs to the large outer pool. The tunnel is now lighted by electricity which is another of the up-to-date innovations. The sides and top are, however, still in the regular form, being rocky and rough. Reaching the Cave the guide informs you that it is only a wider chamber where deposits of sulphur have coated the lime-stone with crystal veneer, which in the days of yore shone in the lamp light like so many precious stones. But the whole story of the Cave is best told by the guide, he of the Highland accent. After making sure that the ladies are at hand, or, seated on the bench for that purpose, he says:—

Now, if you will kindly sit down and give me your quiet attention for a few minutes, I will tell you the story of the cave, and in that story I think you will find an answer to all the questions that curiosity might prompt you to ask, and if you have any further questions to ask after I am through, fire them at me; I shall endeavour to answer them to the best of my ability.

THE HISTORY OF THE CAVE.

'It was at one time an active geyser spouting water and mud up through the orifice (pointing to the hole at the top through which day-light can be seen). The whole of this cavity was at one time full of water and gas and the gas kept the water always in a state of turmoil, tearing at the rock and converting it into mud and when the heat got a certain intensity up it went through the vent, sending a stream of water and mud about 100 feet in the air. Then the cold air rushed in and filled the vacuum and on went that grinding as before until it heated up the cold air; then away it spouted again. This continued to repeat itself for thousands of years until it made that breach in the wall that we came in by, when

Out it rushed with a great roar

And then it spouted never more. I illustrate the death of the geyser—to bring it up to modern times and modern fashions thus:—It underwent an operation for appendicitis; the operation was successful, but the patient died and it has been sending forth a strong sulphurious odor ever since. That was the last of the geyser.

If the guide has been "entranced" by the visitor he is taking care of, he may vary the introduction, and express himself, as was his habit in earlier days, after this fashion:—

"Ma freends," he would say, as he threw the light of his oil lamp now here now there, on the glittering walls. "Ye're juist gettin' a faint squint o' what the Pearly Gates and Jasper Walls are like, but ye remember how, in ye'r Bunyan, the Shepherds' o' the Delectable Mountains showed Pilgrims a hole in the hillside which was a short cut from the Pleasant Land of Beulah to the Bottomless Pit; and so here, I regret to inform ye, these walls land direct to where ye'll get a whiff and a sniff of the Brimstone Lake. Ye'll observe ye are now in the very heart o' the geyser. This whole chamber was scooped out by the awful force of water and gas. See how the giant fretted his prison walls, tearing off chunks of rock and grinding them to mud. The gas kept the water in constant turmoil. Friction from the water condensed steam, created heat, and when the heat got to a certain intensity, skyward it flew out of the orifice o' its own makin',sendin' mud and water many feet in the air with a terrible roar, then the cold air rushed in and filled the vacuum and the war of Titans went on as before; but when he wounded himself in the side,—when the pressure tore that breach in the wall by which we entered—then the gas and water escaped with a roar and it spouted "nevermore." He juist gave himself a "solar plexus" and knocked himself out of business; he 'en smote himself under the fifth rib and gave up the ghost. Like Samson, when he got his locks shorn, his strength had left him. The Cave underwent an operation for appendicitis; the operation was successful, but the patient died and has been smelling like rotten eggs ever since. I have observed there is a dame, or Delilah, connected wi' a' catastrophies i' this world: the Delilah in this case was "Dame Nature."

Once seeing a young lady from New York looking bewildered at this juncture Scotty asked her if she had ever read the story of Samson. To his dismay she replied "No." "What," he exclaimed incredulously, "never read the story o' the strong man, Samson?" (Scotty didna' tell her whaur the story was to be found, ye ken). "Oh," she replied, a light dawning upon her, "you mean the strong man Sandow, of New York, I know him." It was some time after relating this incident before Scotty recovered sufficiently to ejaculate "Ma conscience, losh preserve us, puir Lassie"

TEMPERATURE OF THE WATER.

The next question is, what is the temperature of the water ? The temperature of the water is 90, but there is quite a stream of ordinary cold water coming in from some stream in the mountains We have never located the fountain head, but it is increasing in volume every year, and it lowers the temperature to about 80. The depth of the water is about four feet, they used to bathe in here up to about twelve years ago.

Looking at the bottom of the water, you see a number of dark spots; these are holes full of quicksand and these holes are getting larger and larger every year. The friction of the water and gas combined, are eating away the rock and enlarging the holes. Those who couldn't swim were continually stepping into them and getting beyond their depths, so it was considered wise to stop the bathing before any accident happened. I bathed in there about twenty-seven years ago, and there was only one hole at that time of any consequence. You can see it situated at the opposite side; it is about the circumference of a cart wheel. We used to have a rope stretched across from one side to the other to guard against stepping into that hole, for down through that hole, you can thrust a pole about ten feet long and not find the bottom. All the rest of the holes that are in front now, were so small then that an ordinary Chicago foot (they say the ladies have very large feet you know) might have spanned them, but now a Scotch foot can't (they are said to be very much larger), so we stopped the bathing. We couldn't afford to have any Scotch people drowned; they are so very precious, and so very scarce, and yet, go where you like, you will find them (the last Scotchman to bathe in this pool, left his footprints on "the sands of time,") which you can see down there. The foot seems to me to be about a number 16, a decent sized foot—the owner of a foot like that in his ain country may well declare, as Rob Roy does in the play, "My foot is on my native heath, and my name's McGregor," he would have a good grip on his native heath with ten feet like that.

Max O'Rell, brilliant French wit (I used to call him the Mark Twain of France when he was alive), died quite a number of years ago. He was a celebrated humorous lecturer. Four of his lectures were very popular, "Jonathan on the Americans"—"John Bull on the English"—"Sandy on the Scotch"—and "Pat on the Irish." He was giving a lecture in Inverness, the Capital of the Highlands on one occasion, and he paused in the midst of his lecture and said, "I have made a remarkable discovery since I came amongst you Scotch people, I have found out how it was that you adopted the kilts as a raimant in place of the trousers," then he made another pause, and during that pause you could have heard the proverbial pin drop. Every one was listening so intently to hear what that remarkable discovery was. Then he proceeded with a loud voice, for it was a large hall, and it was a large audience, "Because your feet were so large you couldn't get them down through the trousers.

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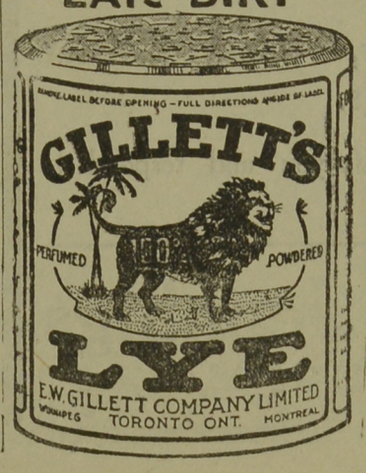
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