

"Does it Pay to Visit Yo Semite?" (1870) by Olive Logan

Olive Logan

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THE GALAXY.

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DOES IT PAY TO VISIT YO SEMITE?

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r Lunatics had not yet reached such depth of imbecility as to ride of their own free will in Californiar
stages.—*Bret Harte in "The Luck of Roaring Camp," etc., p. 121.*r

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r I canr imagine with what a shout of derision my audacious question will ber received by those valiant
travellers who have never been to the celebratedr Valley; but as I have just returned from my trip *de rigueur* to
Yo Semite, andr am now, thank fortune, comfortably quartered in a civilized hotel, I think it notr unwise to
tell a plain, unvarnished tale of what awaits the Yo Semite pilgrim;r for of the dozens of persons who have
written about Yo Semite, I have neverr known one who gave anything like an accurate description of the
perils and torturesr attendant upon the journey thither.r

r r

r I have said the trip was *de rigueur*. No sooner do you announce to yourr friends in New York that you are
going to California than they immediately cryr out, "Ah, then you will see the Yo Semite!" It reminds one of
the old storyr of the Irish peasant: "Is it going to the United States ye are? Then wouldr ye mind taking a
parcel to me brother in Rio Janeiro?"r

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r I have known Californians who went to New York, and returned home without seeing the Adirondacks; but wo betide the wandering Easterner if he seekr the Pacific without bringing a trip to Yo Semite back with him! All along ther railroad westward he is badgered with inquiries as to the probable data of hisr journey to Yo Semite; and when, after the long ride across the continent, he isr received at last within the hospitable walls of one of San Francisco's grandr hotels, the first thing he receives is the card of the agent for Yo Semite, who enclosesr a small map showing the three different modes of reaching the same.r The newspapers in chronicling your arrival speak of your intention of visitingr Yo Semite, and the first question asked by the persons to whom you haver brought letters of introduction is—as the reader will naturally suppose—"Whenr do you leave for Yo Semite?" It may cause you some surprise, perhaps, whenr you discover that they who live here have themselves never been to Yo Semite;r but you naturally imagine that this is because they do not feel that greatr love for the beautiful which distinguishes your noble self; perhaps they have notr the time, nor the money; in fact, you frame a thousand excuses for them, and itr never once enters your head that it is because they don't care to go. Of ther scores of people I met in San Francisco only two or three had been to Yo Semite.r But then there must have been insuperable obstacles in the way of their going,r or they certainly would all have rushed in a body. Thrice happier I! Thricer luckier I! Nothing stood in my way. Would something had!r

r r

r I must confess it was rather appalling to discover that of the three roadsr leading to the Valley, even the shortest required two days of staging and oner whole day on horseback—before reaching the Earthly Paradise. The Mariposar road is admitted to have fifty miles of horseback trail; the Coulterville twenty-five;r that via Hardin's and Chinese Camp only eighteen. I chose the last.r

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r I chose the last, being the shortest, because at Salt Lake City I had metr Mrs. B., of Cambridge, Massachusetts. O Mrs. B. of Cambridge, Massachusetts!r having told me so much, why did you not tell me more? "I cried bitterr tears," said she with a shudder; "but then I am not at all used to horseback exercise;r are you?" "I ride as well as the generality of American women," repliedr r r I, with an air. "Then perhaps you'll not suffer so terribly as I did. Tor me it was dreadful." "But does it pay you for the trouble—the Yo Semite?"r "Yes," said she, falteringly, "I—I—*think*—it does!"r

r r

r Now Mrs. B. of Cambridge, Massachusetts, if you had frankly told me what Ir am now sure you felt—and that is that you "thought" it "didn't"—you wouldr have sincerely obliged the writer of this article, who, if the whole truth—or evenr part of it—had been told her, would have vigorously braved public opinion, ther proud man's contumely, the finger of scorn, the astonishment of her mother, ther disgust of her artist cousin, and stayed severely away from the Yo Semite Valley.r You are an honorable lady, Mrs. B.; but the mistaken enthusiasm whichr led you to exaggerate the good and lessen the ill of this Yo Semite journey isr the same with you as with many other persons who have gone there and writtenr or talked about the spot.r

r r

r I was informed by one of the few ladies who had been to the Valley, whom Ir met in San Francisco, that it was next to an impossibility to accomplish ther journey without arraying myself in a Bloomer costume. Pardon me that Ir recoiled at this. I feel that my charms are not so numerous that I can afford tor lessen them by the adoption of this most ungraceful and unbecoming of dresses;r but when she assured me that it was

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almost a necessary precaution against being thrown from the horse to ride astride, I saw at once that my time had come, and a Bloomer costume I must wear. The dressmaker to whom I applied had made others, and needed no instructions when I told her I was going to the Yo Semite. She carved me out a costume; but pardon me once more if I shrink from the task of describing it. It was simply hideous. "The larger the hat the better," said my friend; and I remembered a "flat" which I bought last year for Long Branch, but never used much because of the high winds getting under it and carrying it away. I drew it out of my trunk, and she pronounced it just the thing. It stuck out in front and poked out behind, and was tied down over the ears with a ribbon. Cotton gloves, which fitted as cotton gloves alone can fit, completed the outfit.

r r

I found that travellers cannot take baggage to Yo Semite. The stages are full of passengers, and have small accommodation for superfluous freight; and when you leave the stage and take to horses, the transportation of baggage is next to impossible. Everything is carried into the Valley on pack-mules, and travellers are frankly told by the agent that a small hand-bag is all that can be taken. "What, no linen—no clean dress? Nothing in the world for two weeks in summer, but a comb and a tooth-brush?" Even so.

r r

At my last breakfast at the Grand Hotel in San Francisco, prior to leaving by rail for Stockton and thence to Yo Semite, there entered the dining room and sat down opposite our party a very distinguished-looking Englishman, who, hearing us talking about Yo Semite, begged our pardons and wanted to know if we were going there. Superfluous question! Doesn't everybody go there? "A terrible trip," said this English gentleman, when I answered in the affirmative, "especially for ladies; and you may take my word for it, it's a trip that *don't pay*."

r r

Now wasn't it absurd and offensive in that Englishman to talk in this disparaging manner about one of our country's grandest sights? Might as well say that Bunker Hill Monument didn't pay, or that Niagara was only fit to run a saw-mill. Like as not one of those mean Englishmen who go home and write books about this "blasted country," after Squire Jones has done them the honor to ask them to dinner with him. Should we allow this prejudiced creature to influence our judgment, upset our well-laid plan, and cast a slur upon the national honor, represented in this instance by the Yo Semite Valley? No. Patriotism forbade it. Besides, our tickets were bought and paid for, and the agent wouldn't have taken them back at any price.

r r

We arrived at Stockton in the evening, and strolled out for a walk. Stockton, you will observe, is the starting point for the Yo Semite. If you don't know that before you get there, you will soon discover it. The leading hotel is the Yo Semite House. Be very sure I stopped there. I was stricken with the Yo Semite fever. I was enthusiastic over the prospect of what was before me. I wanted to commune with Nature.

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A short walk in the town revealed the fact that there was an Insane Asylum there. Can this have any connection with its being the returning point for Yo Semite tourists? There were also a large number of runners for the different stage lines. These persons asked questions with an easy familiarity which was delightful; and recommended different routes with noise and persistency enough to disgust a New York hack-driver.

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r The stages all leaving at 6 o'clock, we were pounded awake at 4 and summoned to breakfast. What the flies left of the meal was very dirty and disgusting. Sick at the very outset, myself and the other idiots went outside. The air there was sweet and refreshing. While we waited, the rival stager drew up. It was already full of Chinese, Irish, Italians, and Mexicans, who were going—not to Yo Semite (*pas si bêtes*)—but to different stations in the mountains—to mines, to fruit ranches, to vineyards, wineshops, and other queer places up in the wonderful Sierras. They all seemed jolly; the Chinese with their pigtailed wrapped around their heads and their queer shoes dangling on their feet, tucked themselves away in incredibly small places; the Italians swearing *Per Baccor* and the Mexicans *Caramba*, their driver's whip-lash snaps like a pistol-shot; and so good-by to them.

r r

r Our own stage comes rattling up a minute later. It is soon full of tourists—not a business person among us. Oh, what fun we are going to have! Here is a young couple from Chicago; a pretty girl is the young wife, with dreamy eyes and raven hair eked out with a monstrous chignon that begins at her very brow and ends somewhere between her shoulder-blades. She will have trouble with that before she gets to Yo Semite; even the least experienced of us can see that; but nothing can be serious with us. We are all youngish persons, gay, healthful, and bound for the Yo Semite Valley.

r r

r Pretty soon the sun's rays begin to fall heavily. There is not a breath of air stirring. The road is level as yet, but the dust is dreadful. I had heard of the dust of California roads, but this surpasses belief. It would be an impossibility for any road in an Eastern State to be so dusty, try as it might; for its soil is nowhere parched with a six months' drought. California ladies have told me that they have seen their husbands come home after stage rides so begrimed with dust that neither the wives of their bosoms nor the mothers who bore them could recognize the wanderers. I tried to talk to my companion in the stage; he was choked by the dust. Conversation was impossible. A fence six feet from the stage window was invisible behind the dust cloud. I put my head gasping out of the window to see the driver. He was gone; so were the horses. The crack of the whip was still heard, and some locomotive power was impelling us forward; but through the dust who should say what it was? The features of my companions grew indistinguishable through the layers upon layers which gathered upon their once ruddy faces; the jet-black waterfall of the Chicago bride miraculously turned white after the fashion of the prisoner of Chillon; and more than that—it began to wobble. But if the wobbling had been confined to waterfalls alone, never, oh never, should this plaint have been penned. The wobbling very soon became general, universal, annoying, painful, intolerable, maddening! We had left the few miles of level road which beguile the traveller on leaving Stockton, and were now ascending the foot-hills. And our troubles were but begun. At Chinese Camp some of our passengers got out to go by another route. We also got out, for here we changed stages. We left the decent coach which took us up at Stockton, and were now ensconced in a hard, lumbering, springless, unpainted fiend (I am satisfied this wagon was a thing of feeling, and chuckled in every one of its rusty bolts and creaked in all its ugly joints at the pain it caused us), and were thumped along at the pace of lunatics over the stony ascent. Past deserted mining towns with their dried-up sluices and ruined huts; past Chinese and Chinese and yet again Chinese, and after that Chinese out of all whooping; Chinese gambling, and Chinese mining and irrigating and planting, and finally—oh, would it be believed in the Celestial Kingdom?—past Chinese on horseback.

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r And we picked up a jolly little Italian with his wife and babies. He was chatty and merry, and smelt of onions and wore gold rings in his ears. He had been in California ten years, he told us, and had been back to

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Italy twice. Wer dropped him at his ranch, a dirty place, but running wild with luscious grapes.r His babies were lifted down by an Italian youth of olive skin and midnight eyes,r who was clad in picturesque tatters, and greeted the new-comers with a musicalr holla! A neighbor of the same nationality devotes his time and acres to raisingr onions—and such onions! As large as a muskmelon, and with an odor proportionater to their size. May they never make the trip eastward, by sea or overland.r

r r

r We try our best to enjoy life. Along the road we stop at ranches and buyr delicious fruit at moderate prices. The scenery is wild and grand; the air isr pure and sweet; the fruit we buy is so ripe and juicy that it fairly melts in ther mouth. Isn't this a delightful picture? This is what all tourists write about.r Now the truth is, that the possession of these things—even no further than thisr on our journey—is scarcely noticed. After this Yo Semite trip is all over, andr you try to find some excuse for yourself for having been such a ninny as to runr sheep-like where the other sheep bells tinkled, then you remember that thoser ranches where the fruit was sold were luxuriant, the fret was delicious, the viewr of the mountains grand. At present you are coated with dust, your eyes arer smarting, your tongue is clogged, your hair is caked, your limbs are sore, yourr flesh is inflamed, you want to go home, And this is only the first day, over ther best part of the road, and in the stage. What will it be when it comes to ther "trail" and the "pack" and the "horseback" part of it?r

r r

r At 10 o'clock on the night of the first day (having been jolted since 6 o'clockr in the morning) we pulled up supperless at Garrote. Here, for the first time inr the journey so far, we get food which is eatable, even palatable. The cook is ar Chinaman, the landlady French, and the landlord a Boston man. "We must leave at 4 o'clock," the driver says, as we creep wearily and painfully to bed.r "Oh, very well, just as you say; I'll get up at midnight if you desire it; *only*—r I thought this was a pleasure trip."r

r r

r These satires were uttered by the wag of our party, who fondly hoped—as didr we all—that now we had got to a haven, we could at least have a full night'sr sleep there. What an insane belief this was we found out very thoroughly beforer the trip was over. The comfort of passengers is just the last thing consideredr r r on the Yo Semite journey. I never was a galley slave, and have no veryr clear idea of what their special grievance is; but if they—or any other man—r are or is treated worse than stage-drivers, landlords, horses, and coaches treatr pleasure-seeking people *en route* to Yo Semite, all I can say is, Alas, poorr Galley!r

r r

r At 4 o'clock we were up and off. The only thing that was really and unmistakablyr delicious in all this trip was the morning air. O sweet pine breezes,r how I wish I could have taken some of you home in my pocket, as school-childrenr do lollipops from a party. O odorous atmosphere, how good you didr smell! It is gratifying to me to remember that I sniffed up as much of you as Ir possibly could, and opened my mouth as wide as it would go, and swallowed your whole.r

r r

r We left Garrote a mile or so behind, and until we reached Big Gap the roadr was endurable enough. This was lucky, because we were so sore and stiff fromr the previous day's ride that a repetition so early the next morning would haver probably killed us. The young bride's waterfall, too, had acted yesterday in ar very undignified manner from the merciless jolting it received. It wobbled andr wiggled and shot off hair-pins, and finally settled, a sticky mass, somewhere inr the region of her left ear. She giggled as it wiggled, and clapped

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her hand to her head and vowed that it was too bad! and that she was going to shave her head like the Chinese, you see if she didn't! But this was her honeymoon, you understand, when it is hard not to be looking one's prettiest. So out she came on the second morning still bearing the waterfall triumphant, though it flapped like a pendant flag through lack of the needful pins. Presently the road began to grow worse, then worse; then—"Oh, driver, stop! let me get out and walk! Oh, do go slowly!"—a chorus from inside. The brute, unmindful, tears madly on—jolting over rocks, goading his horses down the hollows only to run up the opposite side at an insane gallop, sending the battered inmates to the roof, where their heads are banged and beaten; around jutting and dangerous precipices, where one inch too near the edge will pitch the stage, crashing through pines, to destruction. One passenger—an interesting lumberman from Maine, whose fifteen years' exploits in California, as he related them to us, would make a curious and fascinating chapter—remembers when a stage did tip over from reckless driving. Not very long ago. Stage broken all to smash, and a lady killed. This is cheerful. Will it be likely to do so some more? Not impossible. Bang bang! over rocks and stones. Up we go to the roof; and then down we are crushed on the hard-as-iron seats. The bride from Chicago pays no more attention to her waterfall. Let it flap, let it fly, let it tumble off; she is reckless, poor soul, with suffering. Even yesterday her hysterical laughter as she was flung about the stage broke now and then into a shriek; but to-day it is her shriek without the laugh. She is in agony. Great black rings show themselves under her eyes, drops of cold sweat break out on her forehead, her hands nervously clutch the window straps; she supplicates with tears to be allowed to get out—to be left upon the road. She is sea-sick as well as sore, and in truth we are all in a pitiable plight, and nobody but ourselves, and other travelled monkeys who have endured this style of tail-cutting, to blame for it. And only to think that the worst is yet to come. O Mrs. B., of Cambridge, Mass., no wonder you cried bitter tears! O distinguished Englishman at the Grand Hotel, in sooth it does not pay!

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r But this is premature. How do we know it does not pay? We have not seen the Valley yet. The Valley will repay us for all, the stage-driver says, as r r he stops to water his horses. This is the first sign of human feeling we have discovered in this brutal driver who took us from Chinese Camp to Hardin's. If this should meet the eye of the stage-driver with the long German name who drove us to Hardin's from Chinese Camp, he is requested to accept my compliments and those of the rest of the party in his coach, and the assurance that the universal verdict of all assembled was that he is the vilest brute that ever drove a horse.

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r During the respite afforded by the watering of the horses some good souls, who still entertain the fallacious idea that we shall be repaid for all when we get into the Valley, try to amuse the rest by relating threadbare stories similar to those in vogue at sea in like distressing circumstances. The standard joke at sea is the sailor's mock remedy for sea-sickness—the bit of pork tied to a string. The standard joke in the stage-coach is the anecdote about Mr. Greeley and Hank Monk the driver. Everybody has heard it; no matter, everybody must hear it again. Probably you, reader, have read it; be assured that trifling circumstances shall not deter me from relating it to you here.

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r To be brief, I will say that once upon a time Mr. Greeley set out for a trip over the mountains, having for driver a celebrated character, by name Hank Monk. Perfectly aware of the dreadful condition of the road over which they were travelling, this driver, with a consideration which his *confrères* would do well to employ, drove along for some miles at a slow and deliberate pace. Knowing that he had a lecture engagement to meet, Mr. Greeley called out to the driver that he should be glad to get on a little faster, as he had to be at a certain town at a certain hour. "Oh, very well," cried Hank Monk, firing off the pistol-shot in his whip-cord "just keep your seat, Mr. Greeley, and I'll get you there in time." Off they flew at a thundering gait, rattling over

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the stones, bumping into ruts, while the unhappy Mr. Greeley was shaken about in their coach like an undignified inanimate object; his venerable spectacles broken, his revered hat thrown off his head, his white locks left waving in the dusty wind. In vain he cried for mercy; the die was cast; Hank Monk was inexorable. "Keep your seat, Mr. Greeley," was his derisive shout; "I'll get you there in time." Whether alive or dead, he said not; and nearer dead than alive, he got him there in time.

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This is the story in its simple form. It has variations, like a fantasia for piano. One of the most incredible is that Mr. Greeley afterwards presented Hank Monk with a watch, with the famous but futile injunction inscribed upon it. Another and the most amusing is the recital of the change in deferential address which took place between driver and passenger by reason of this incident; for when the distinguished editor entered the stage he was "Mr. Greeley," with all honor from the driver, and the driver in turn was plain "Hank"; but when he got out the editor was plain "Horace" in a patronizing tone, and the driver was "Mr. Monk!"

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But our horses have been watered long before this, and our tortures have again begun. Bang! bang! "Keep your seat, Mr. Greeley!" shouts their facetious-minded. And that of all things is just now the most impossible.

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Hail, log cabin! Relief has come at last. Here is where we drop their stage, and take the horses. We have dinner here. This is Hodgden's. Their three principal stations on this route form an unpleasant alliterative trio—Hardin's, Hodgden's, and Hutchings's. Fancy a Briton tackling all these at once. Perhaps that was the reason the *distingué* Englishman—but no! he went their other way, with its "Mariposa," its "Hornitas," and other liquid Spanish stations. *Pardon, Monsieur l'Anglais.*

r r r r

The dinner is execrable at Hodgden's. It is composed of salt beef cold beans, watery potatoes, and boiling tea, as weak as hot. We pay the same price for it, however, as we do for the delicious dinner at the Grand Hotel in "Frisco;" and indeed log-cabin accommodations in the mountains are more expensive (to tourists) than the finest quarters in your city shut in behind its Golden Gate. And how we all wish we were there! "Vot's the hods?" questions our wag. "But we are not 'appy," is the doleful reply.

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Dinner over, we mount our steeds—sorry brutes, who look at us with eyes of sullen reproach. I must confess they are badly treated. Not the slightest politeness is shown even the most aged of them.

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At first the change from the stage to the horse is pleasant. At least you can now regulate your own miseries, and need no longer be a poor thing beaten and banged by a merciless stage-driver without remorse. This is your theory. It is groundless. Ferguson now takes the place of the stage-driver and becomes the Avenger. The reader will scarcely ask me who Ferguson the Avenger is. He is the guide. All guides are Fergusons since the Innocents went Abroad, and The Only Twain returned to chronicle their Pilgrimage. Boniface is a landlord, Jehu is a hack-driver, Ferguson is a guide. So be it.

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r Ferguson is a Mexican born in California, and as graceful and as handsomer as a picture. No mistake about this. He'd be a fortune for a painter, with hisr tawny, smooth skin tingling with red on the cheeks, his scarlet lips, his whiter teeth, his profusion of blackest hair. His other name is Manuel, and he hasr never been away from these mountains. He has never seen a steamboat, nor ar railroad, nor a city. He wants to do so very much. So do we all just at thatr minute.r

r r

r Particularly the bride from Chicago. She moans, she weeps, she bends herr poor battered head down upon the horse's neck for relief. Her waterfall is goner—whither we know not. On investigation we find Ferguson has it. It droppedr off in the trail, and he thought her head was coming oft; but picking it upr found she was only painlessly scalped. Without joking, this poor creature'sr condition is very alarming. We are afraid she will have to be left behind. Herr husband is sick. Everybody is sick and sore. Poor idiots, wandering on horsebackr over these mountain fastnesses, we all get what we deserve for coming!r

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r Ferguson does not want to alarm us, but says if we don't hurry up we won'tr get to Hamilton's, (another H!) at Tamarack Flat to-night. That will be bad, asr there is not a single habitation between us and that place. To increase ourr discomforts, night falls early and a heavy mountain rain sets in. We arer drenched and weary—oh, so weary! We let the reins fall over the horse's neck.r He follows the trail of his own free-will, and has such an affectionate regard forr the blazes, that he scrubs us up against the trees to our infinite discomfort.r Another pleasing diversion takes place. Ferguson is driving a pack-muler heavily laden; and with the obstinacy of its race, every ten minutes or so it runsr off and has to be followed on the keen gallop by Ferguson, hallooing and shouting,r and using the rope about his horse's neck for a whip, driving it back intor the path. All our horses being accustomed to drive mules, they all turn outr and gallop after the offender, causing their weary riders to perform involuntaryr circus feats which bring tears to their eyes.r

r r

r At Tamarack Flat the experienced Hamilton is ready—he is ready every timer every saddle train arrives, for he knows the state the arriverr will be in—and her lifts the poor tourist-women off their horses. Our limbs are paralyzed. Somer of us are barely alive; the bride from Chicago has swooned. The good wifer r r Hamilton does all she can for us. She offers wine—she rubs us with whiskey;r and at last all of us—men, women, and children, married and unmarried, friendsr and total strangers—lie down in the one only room which composes their cabin,r and pass the night in blissful disregard of civilization and modesty at once.r *A propos*—lest the reader might forget it, I wish to again remind him here thatr this is a pleasure trip.r

r r

r We are up betimes in the morning, and quaff again the delicious mountainr air. Time to be off! The rumor is that we shall get to Hutchings's (in ther Valley) at noon. Another episode. A rival Ferguson, runner for the otherr route and the other Valley hotel, makes us more unhappy than we haver hitherto been by aspersionr on the fair fame of Hutchings, the host of the hotelr to which we are bound. Hutchings, according to Ferguson No. 2, is a villainr who starves his guests, and puts them into beds already habited by another genus. The road over which we are to pass is more dangerous, rockier, morer mountainous, more unendurable than any we have seen. These are reassuringr tidings to people in our demoralized condition. Ferguson No. 1 denies the aspersionr of No. 2, and together they have it hot and heavy. Meantime,r to horse! There are only ten miles more of this torture left. At least sor we are told by one party; another says there are fifteen. In San Francisco

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wer were told that the whole distance on horseback (of which we have come alreadyr considerably more than ten miles) was but eighteen. Doctors and mountaineersr disagree. At length an astute person settles it. "It may be eighteen milesr measuring as the bird flies, but as *you don't go that way*, you'll find it's aboutr double." No; not being birds, we don't go that way; that is, we are not birdsr unless geese are birds.r

r r

r And now begins the weary trudge again. Oh, positively we shall never liver through it. We are obliged to be lifted from our horses every two or three miles,r and placed under the shade of trees to rest. The sun creeps higher and higher.r It pours its burning rays upon our aching heads, for we are again mounted. Ther pack-mule runs away; we all run with unpleasant regularity after it, our horsesr trotting like trip-hammers, and beating the very breath out of our bodies. Andr so on and on and on we go. Eight miles! It is eighty! At length we reachr the precipice which is to conduct us into the Valley.r

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r (I have requested the printer to leave a blank space here. I think it will ber more eloquent than words.)r

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r Also here, to represent the dreary period of suffering which elapsed after wer began the steep descent of the precipice, and until we reached the goal of ourr hopes—Hutchings's Hotel.r

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r We do get there at last—all things have an end. But the night has fallenr again; we should have reached Hutchings's at noon, but were not able. At anyr rate, here we are. Our sufferings are at an end now. And to-morrow shallr burst upon our enchanted eyes the glorious sight whose beauty is to atone forr all. Meantime we are too paralyzed to stir; Hutchings lifts us off our horses—r inert masses of what were once tolerably strong-minded and particularly strong-bodiedr women. Hutchings pours wine down our throats. He tells us we arer doing well, as most ladies faint. Mrs. Hutchings rubs us with whiskey; thisr r feels good except in places where the skin is gone; then it makes us moan. Wer have not strength enough left to squirm.*r

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r [* It must not be supposed that the women alone suffered. The men were almost as bad. Mr. Greeleyr visited Yo Semite eleven years ago, when he was at the zenith of his physical strength; but read in what ar condition he was, as told byr r Hutchings himself in his palavering "Guide":r r "The mule he rode was considered the hardest trotting brute in America; and Mr. G. (not the mule) beingr somewhat corpulent, there was but little unabraded cuticle left him. Arriving at the hotel after midnight,r *he was lifted from his saddle*, and at his own request put supperless to bed. A little after noon the samer day, having speaking engagements to fill, he started back without even seeing the lake, or the great sights onr the main river."r

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r r

r The dawn breaks in the morning of the next day, and, shining red as fire through the pine knots of the log-cabin where Hutchings dwells, strikes our leaden eyelids and bids us arise. Reluctantly we do so. This is the end of our wanderings. Here is the great prize to obtain a view of which we have come so many weary miles. Now we are to be repaid for all. We make a hurried toilet, and as quickly as our stiffened limbs will permit, we drag out to see the view which shall awe us, shall make us lose our identity, shall cause us to feel as though we were in the spirit land.†r

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r [† These phrases are quoted from divers authorities; any one who has read about the Yo Semite will recognize these old acquaintances.]r

r r

r And what do we see? Tall rocks, a few tall trees, a high and narrow waterfall, a pretty little river! No more. A lovely natural scene, I grant you; but oh! where in this broad and beautiful land of ours are not lovely natural scenes the rule? Words cannot tell the feeling of cold despair which came over me and all our party as we looked about us. Was it for this we had so suffered! O Englishman, Englishman, how painfully correct was your report! In truth and very truth, it does not pay.r

r r

r We never rallied from that first impression.r

r r

r "But that stone wall is nearly a mile high."r

r r

r It may be so, but it does not look it; and if it did, the stars are higher, and, thank God, the stars shine at home!r

r r

r "That waterfall is eleven times higher than Niagara."r

r r

r Indeed! it looks like a fireman's hose playing over the top of Stewart's store.r

r r

r And then we learn to our dismay, that to see anything more than this in the Valley we have got to mount those unhappy brutes again, and, with Ferguson tagging at our heels at an exorbitant price daily, make trips as dangerous and as perilous, as rocky and as unpleasant in every way as that which with so much difficulty we have just now accomplished! In the house there is neither amusement nor comfort. We are dirty, sick, sore, and miserable, and at night, as we creep heartsick to bed, we can think of nothing but—the Yo Semite Fall, the Bridal Veil, El Capitan, the Cathedral Rocks? *No!* Of the weary distance which lies between us and

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civilization.r

r r

r But we try to make the best of it, once there. "Let's say it *does* pay," saysr the jolly Tapley of our party. "Yes, let's sit on the banks of this lovely river."r We do so. A companionable but not welcome watersnake does so also, and wer leave him in possession. Try again. There is an Indian camp beside Hutchings's.r It looks romantic from this point. Let us get nearer. A vile stenchr greets us. These filthy wretches found a dead horse yesterday, and are now eatingr some of its carcass. There is one of the poor brute's legs with mud-be-grimedr hoof still hanging to it. Its entrails and other parts are strung out inr the sun to dry for future eating; the black blood drips to the ground as a dogr gnaws them greedily, until driven off by an Indian woman who is unwilling tor share such a luxury. It will not do to approach these people too closely; theyr r r are covered with vermin. Their copper skins are black as soot in spots; thisr is caked dirt, pure and simple. They are clad in the discarded tatters of civilization;r and how tattered the discarded garment of the Sierra Nevada mountaineerr is, no one can know who has not seen. The consequence is that the sightr of these people so near a pleasure resort is an offence to decency. Indian menr loll under the trees playing cards for silver coin. They glare at us as we approach.r It is easy to see that these people (although Ferguson assured us theyr were "tame") would have no humanitarian scruples about waging a war of exterminationr against the whites if they had but the power.r

r r

r While the men play cards and loaf under the shade of trees, the women sitr in the broiling sun and grind acorns, beating them between heavy stones intor the finest powder. These acorns ground to meal furnish the only food theser poor creatures can rely on during winter; and to gather them and dispute theirr possession with the hogs is the work of the Indian women. That is, it is oner part of their work, for that all work is done by Indian women is an old story.r Manhood *oblige!*r

r r

r By another day some of us are well enough to mount again and begin ourr search after Beauty. We find an occasional rattlesnake, unlimited fatigue, andr the tombstone of a man who was kicked to death by his horse. The trips arer very wearying, the scenery very grand, very beautiful, but we are in no conditionr to enjoy it. We never get in such condition, and the universal verdict with usr is that if every one of the waterfalls in Yo Semite were magnified, every one ofr its granite domes were an Olympus, if its rivers were the Rhine, and its valleyr the fairy gardens of Versailles, the sight of it would not repay one for the sufferingr involved in getting to it. And the plain truth is that nine out of ten whor visit Yo Semite think this, but they will not say what they think. Some people,r it is true, never have an opinion of their own, but parrot-like repeat the refrainr which has been set them to sing. You remember in the pages of Most Gloriousr Twain the ugly little girl they saw in the Holy Land, and frank Mark's astonishmentr at everybody's bawling out in chorus, "What Madonna-like beauty!"r He knew there was an explanation. He afterward found the keynote. It wasr struck in Old Grimes's (Dead) Book on the Holy Land. So with the Yo Semite.r "I felt awed!—the spirit land—losing your own identity."r

r r

r O travelled monkey! Dare to tell the truth, why do you not? Becauser you are afraid some other travelled monkey will say you "can't appreciate" ther scenery which it makes your head ache to look at, and your bones ache to getr at. Because you are a coward, or because you know you have made an idiot ofr yourself, and flung away your money by handfuls, and endured the tortures ofr purgatory; and you are ashamed to confess yourself so easily taken in and doner for—man of the world that you are. But I am only a woman, and I

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confess all.r

r r

r At the end of three days, homesick, and above all physically sick, we concluder to go home. Hutchings is deeply chagrined at this. As he helps usr mount he says with an injured air, "Oh, that's the way! people come here andr then they go right away again. *They never stay long enough!*" And thisr truth, told by the person whose interest it is to say the reverse, is the very bestr testimony that people in general who go there are unhappy, and dissatisfied, andr disappointed. If it were not so, *they would stay*. But nobody stays longer thanr he feels he must, in deference to the certain opinions that have influenced him tor come here. Artists stay; but they work hard to hasten their day of deliverance[.]r One I met there made one complete sketch in colors for every day he stayed. Ir hope he will get a good price for his work when he gets back to Boston.r

r r r r

r I can truly say that I never in my life saw a more miserable set of peopler than the poor candle-moth tourists who were gathered this summer in ther Yo Semite Valley. The bride from Chicago was stretched in her rough bed alarmingly ill, and no physician nearer than civilization, which seemed so far that wer surely must all die before we got back to it. Her husband, who had gone to seer Mirror Lake, fell off his horse in a swoon, and lay there for six hours till helpr came. He was got home with difficulty. The only people who really seemed tor enjoy themselves were the clergymen, who gather there in force every summer.r These blessed men lead such sedentary lives, such hard treadmill lives for ther most part, that they do revel in the open air, the grand views, the freedom of ther Yo Semite trip. Then, too, they love nature more than we of the work-dayr world, I think; and therefore all the more eloquent was the confession of ar Methodist minister who was one in our returning party in the stage, and whor told me that he had made the long trip across the Desert of Sahara, riding sixr hundred miles on camel-back. He was enthusiastic about the loveliness of ther Valley; "but," said he, as we crawled in to breakfast at Knight's Ferry, havingr been thundered up and started off at two in the morning to oblige the stage-driver,r who wanted to get ahead of a rival, "*I forgot all aboid Yo Semite while Ir was in that stage!*"r

r r

r He was apparently a noble and lovely man, and he greatly mitigated the sorrowsr of our journey by his pleasant words and gentle ways.r

r r

r There was one lady in the returning stage who scorned the insinuation thatr the game at Yo Semite was not worth the cost of the candle in bruised limbs,r abraded skins, and perhaps more serious ailments. She was from New York,r and was a tall and scrawny demoiselle of uncertain age, who varied the monotonyr of the trip by spouting Shakespeare out of one window and singing "I'mr Bound to be a Butcher" out of the other. She was the travelled monkey of herr admiring friends in the East. She was going to have her photograph taken inr her Bloomer costume and her eye-glasses, and send it home to be worshipped.r She scoffed at scoffers. Why, such heretic sentiments as these would detractr from the value of her glowing report! How could she gloat over her meek stay-at-homer friends, saying, "I have been awed—thou hast not been awed; I haver lost my identity—you have not lost your identity," if reports derogatory to ther value of such experience were to be put into circulation in this ruthless manner?r

r r

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r To California women who think nothing of jumping astride an unbroken horse and riding him bareback, the trip to Yo Semite presents few hardships. Ir refer to women who live in the mountain towns, for California city women are, r like most city women, dainty and delicate. Very few of these visit Yo Semite, r believe me. For desk-tied students, for pale, cough-racked clergymen, for artists r who want to paint pretty pictures which will be sure to find sale, the trip tor Yo Semite will be a joy forever; but for women—or even for ordinary men—tor run a race for pleasure by mounting a hard-trotting mule and trotting overr cloud-topped mountains to this Valley, is to declare themselves, as Bret Harter expresses it, very low down indeed in the depths of imbecility. r

r r

r The bride from Chicago, I have since been informed, was removed from ther Valley with much difficulty, and was obliged to be placed immediately in ther hands of a surgeon, who is able to relieve her ailings with the appliances of science; r but she will never be *cured* so long as she breathes the breath of this life. r Her case is the same as that of many others. Some are not permanently injured, r but I have heard of no one who got off quite scot-free. "You'll feel it forr a month" cried a San Francisco gentleman to a party of Yo Semite tourists whor r r stood on the deck of the steamer bound for Stockton. But they were peopler from St. Louis, and felt the awful warning conveyed in these ponderous wordsr from Hutchings's "Guide": r

r r

r "*Few* would go to California and have the *courage* on their return to sayr they had not been to Yo Semite." r

r r

r Unwilling to be placed under the ban along with reprehensible Few, they persistr in making the trip, and go through the customary suffering in consequence. r

r r

r The journey across the Plains is one that every traveller should take. Ther scenery, as viewed from the observation car, is grand, and costs nothing in ther way of bruises, sprains, or torn flesh. The prairie dogs, the antelope, the differentr tribes of Indians who swoop upon every train, and invariably beg forr "two bits" (neither more nor less); the first view of Chinese in tremendours number, the Mormon territory, the soldiers' camps, the sage deserts, the townsr built of canvas—all these are the freshest of novelties. Then at the end there isr San Francisco—most curious and interesting of towns—with its cold summerr breezes which compelled me to buy and to *wear* a seal-skin, fur-lined jacket inr July Also there is Sacramento, capital of the State, and the superior of Sanr Francisco in beauty of its private residences. There are numerous other townsr with names of mellifluous beauty—Vallejo, San José, Oakland, Los Angeles. r Go to all these; spend your money freely in California, for they need it, timesr being hard, and it is better, more fraternal, to give your money to Californiar than to Europe; go to any of the mountain towns where the railroad stops (ther railroad, from end to end, is in splendid condition); but *don't* go to the Geysers, r *don't* go to Lake Tahoe, *don't* go to Yo Semite—in short, never ride of your ownr free-will in a California stage. r

r r

r Olive Logan. r

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About the Author

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r Olive Logan was born April 22, 1839 in Elmira, New Yorkr to actor and actress Cornelius and Eliza Akeley Logan.r She started out acting as a child, but didn't like the stage, so turned to writing.r In 1864, she wrote a play "Eveleen" and starred in it.r She gave up acting in 1868 and wrote novels, plays, and newspaper articles, and lectured.r At the time, she was the highest paid speaker in the U. S.r She sometimes used the pen name "Chroniqueuse."r As an early feminist and woman's rights crusader,r she felt burlesque performances degraded theater.r Some of her accounts of the stage were sensational though.r Logan married three times: first to Henry A. Delille in 1857, whom she divorced in 1869,r then writer William Wirt Sikes, who died in 1883, and finallyr James O'Neill, who was her secretary and twenty years younger than her.r Logan became demented and died in the asylum at Banstead, England, April 27, 1909.r

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Bibliographical Information

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r Olive Logan (1839–1909),r "Does it Pay to Visit Yo Semite?,"r *The Galaxy* 10(4) (New York: October 1870), pp. 498–509.r

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