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Jules Leclercq

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Yellowstone, Land of Wonders

Promenade in North America's
National Park



JULES LECLERCQ

*Translated and edited by Janet Chapple
and Suzanne Cane*

Foreword by Lee H. Whittlesey

University of Nebraska Press
Lincoln & London

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About the jacket: The painting *Yellowstone Falls (Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River)* by Germany-born American artist Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) was painted soon after Bierstadt's visit to Yellowstone in 1881. In 1874 two of Bierstadt's landscape paintings were installed in the chamber of the U.S. House of Representatives. The image is used courtesy of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY.

Foreword

Lee H. Whittlesey

It is a pleasure to write a few words about Janet Chapple and Suzanne Cane's translation *Yellowstone, Land of Wonders: Promenade in North America's National Park*. Seeing this important historical book finally translated in full from its original French has meaning for me as a professional historian, especially because of my close interest in and affinity for Yellowstone National Park.

More than thirty years ago—in or about 1977—I encountered Jules Leclercq's 1886 *La Terre des Merveilles* languishing on the shelves of the rare book room in Yellowstone National Park's research library at Mammoth Hot Springs. I eagerly plucked it from the shelf for a look and was instantly caught up in its beautiful woodcut drawings and mysterious phrases. Because I had a thorough Latin background, I could read enough French to know that Leclercq's book contained important material from his early trip to this place about which I had so much interest. I knew that it might even contain clues to the origins of Yellowstone's place-names, which I was fervently researching as the topic of my first book.

Unable to read the complete text, I set the book aside for future reference. My chance came two years later, when I met Chris MacIntosh, a fellow Yellowstone employee who hailed from England. She had an excellent understanding of French and a passion for Yellowstone, so I showed her the book and was pleased to learn that she was interested in translating some of it. From late 1978 to 1983, I sent chapters of the book to Chris, and beginning in February 1979 I received her translations by return mail. My copies are still filed in the envelopes she sent to me with their postmarked dates from those years.

As I read her translations I was transported back in time to 1883, the year Jules Leclercq came to Yellowstone, rented horses, and set out “on his own hook” (as they said in those days) to camp his way through the new park. By that time I had learned that 1883 was Yellowstone’s “grand opening” year, the year that the Northern Pacific Railroad’s rails reached the park and opened it to large-scale tourism. It seemed that Leclercq’s book was even more important than I had earlier known. His description of the tents at Norris supplied one of the few actual accountings of this short-lived tourist lunch station (with its Chinese cook) that lasted for only three summers. I realized that his portrayal of the newly built first hotel at Mammoth and his sighting of President Arthur’s horseback expedition — and even his report of Arthur’s fake abduction by kidnappers — were important. And I soon found that his observations of eruptions of Giantess and Beehive Geysers were detailed enough for me to include them verbatim in my own book *Wonderland Nomenclature*.

Many years later, when Montana State University student Elizabeth Watry was searching for a class project in French, I suggested that she use one of Leclercq’s chapters. Her translation further extended my interest in his work.

But alas! Neither Chris nor Elizabeth translated Jules Leclercq’s entire work. I thus was excited in 2008 when I learned from my friend Janet Chapple that she and Suzanne Cane were planning a complete translation of Leclercq’s book. I followed their progress closely, noting that they quickly produced a corrected spelling of Leclercq’s name and a biography of him. I thrilled in his actual meeting of former president Ulysses S. Grant and railroad president Henry Villard on the station platform at Livingston, Montana, and I reveled in his encounter with the local character “Yankee Jim” George.

But Janet and Suzanne’s complete translation has revealed much more to us than merely the Yellowstone descriptions of which I am personally so fond. The fact that Leclercq was well educated in an era when many were not makes his observations and his narrative all the more fascinating. We now experience western geography with him — Chicago, Illinois; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; Saint Paul, Minnesota; and the vast open country of Dakota and Montana Territories. Arriving at “Livingstone,” so often misspelled then, Leclercq rode

south into Paradise Valley first by train, then transferred to a “classic Concord coach,” which he described as “an old barouche in the style of Louis XV that one finds from one end of the Rocky Mountains to the other.” He then hired a park coach just south of the second canyon, opining that its “jolts made us bounce like peas on a drum,” and he soon experienced the “horrifying cannonade” of a prairie thunderstorm. And his fellow travelers on his first coach were so colorful that I cannot resist sharing a glimpse of them here: “My companions looked like authentic Far West bandits, solidly built men with thick, bushy beards, feet thrust into enormous, muddy boots, and heads crowned with immense felt hats. They wore cartridge belts and a whole arsenal of revolvers. The women, brown as chestnuts and dressed in red wool, soaked up whisky like the men, who always took care to help themselves first.”

This sounds to us like nothing less than the American West of our imaginations. And Jules Leclercq actually saw it, for this was ten years prior to Frederick Jackson Turner’s declaration that the American frontier was “settled up” and thus supposedly wild no more. The establishment of Yellowstone, of course, predated that event by over twenty years, and Leclercq was present for its grand opening. He soon abandoned his coach for the adventures of horseback riding, and that put him in even closer touch with the newly revealed “Wonders of the Yellowstone.”

So settle back, open this book, and enjoy the journey. It is easy to pretend that you are there.

Acknowledgments

The translators want to express gratitude to Chris MacIntosh, who translated parts of *La Terre des Merveilles* at the request of Yellowstone Park historian Lee H. Whittlesey many years ago when they were both park employees. Whittlesey kindly gave Janet Chapple copies of MacIntosh's translation of the preface and chapters 1, 3–10, and 12. With her generous permission we have incorporated some of her work into ours. More recently, Elizabeth A. Watry translated chapter 14 for Whittlesey, and she graciously permitted us to compare and use some of her work in our version of that chapter.

We also thank Elizabeth Jung for her careful examination of the translation and her invaluable suggestions for improving and clarifying the English text; Lee H. Whittlesey for his review of the manuscript and constructive advice about expanding the notes; Beth Chapple for early copyediting of the manuscript and for creating the index; Linton A. Brown for creating the English version of Leclercq's Yellowstone National Park map; Janet Dean for assistance with questions about nineteenth-century American English; Evelyne Rossi for help with accurate translations of some French expressions; Aurore Tenenbaum for explaining a French legal term; Paul Schullery and Robert Root for their careful evaluation of the manuscript; Peter Schulman for his meticulous reading and constructive recommendations for enhancing the translation; and Ann Poulos of the Providence Public Library for her genius in researching some sources. Our thanks are also due to librarians at Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, the Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, the Chicago and Oakland Public Libraries, and the Bibliothèque nationale

de France for their able assistance and to copyeditor Joy Margheim and our editors at the University of Nebraska Press, Matthew Bokovoy, Elisabeth Chretien, and Ann Baker, for patiently guiding us through publication.

Our very warm thanks go to our husbands, Bruno Giletti and David Cane, both scientists, for valuable advice on numerous issues and unwavering moral support during this project.

Translators' Introduction

Jules Joseph Leclercq (1848–1928) visited Yellowstone National Park only eleven years after its establishment in 1872. Three years later he published the engrossing account *La Terre des Merveilles: Promenade au Parc National de l'Amérique du Nord* (The Land of Wonders: Promenade in North America's National Park), translated here as *Yellowstone, Land of Wonders*. A man of universal erudition, Leclercq was a careful observer and an experienced travel writer. He was the first to describe the natural beauty of Yellowstone National Park in French, and although it was published more than a century ago, his book has never before been completely translated into English.

Leclercq's observations were made when so few people had visited Yellowstone that seeing geysers erupt was a great novelty and a cause for wonder and astonishment. Protective walkways and barriers did not yet separate visitors from the hydrothermal features, although by the time of his 1883 visit the hand of man was already evident in the geyser basins, not only in the several buildings and trails found here and there but also in the vandalism that marred many thermal features, as he discussed in chapter 9.

Leclercq's style of writing was representative of travel literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: this Yellowstone account fell somewhere between the very detailed and technical approaches found in writings by government geologists, biologists, and army officers—men such as Ferdinand V. Hayden, William H. Holmes, Captain William Ludlow, and Arnold Hague—and the many tourist accounts that told of washing clothes in hot springs, watching geysers spout, and traveling with companions.

A broadly educated man with a sound understanding of science, Leclercq read extensively about his many destinations and recorded his impressions while traveling, as when he wrote that Beehive Geyser erupted “just as I was taking notes in the tent, writing in my lap by the light of a candle.” With impressive scholarship, he combined knowledge he acquired through reading with information he garnered through his own experiences and observations during only ten days of horseback travel in Yellowstone. Sometimes he paraphrased or even directly translated passages from his English readings. He produced an informative and accurate narrative based on the best knowledge of the late nineteenth century, often in language both poetic and personal.

Leclercq made references to classical literature and comparisons to items with which he knew his readers to be familiar, such as European landmarks, and he related amusing anecdotes from his own experience. He conveyed his impressions frankly, without pretense or affectation, and his own disposition was revealed in his writings: he was curious, enthusiastic, fair-minded, and undeterred by fatigue or danger.¹ Often including what he felt, smelled, and heard, as well as what he saw, Leclercq chose his words to give readers a sense of actually being there—and his word pictures are delightful.

Take, for example, the beginning of Leclercq’s description of Grand Prismatic Spring: “Mute with amazement and astonishment, we gazed upon this expanse of steaming, sapphire-colored water so surpassingly transparent that the thousand fantastical forms on the festooned walls could be distinguished under the crystal liquid. The aqueous layers take on a more and more intense blue color as the eye penetrates deeper into the abyss. Several meters from the edge one loses sight of the bottom of the basin, and the dark color of the water indicates unfathomable depths that are concealed from view.”

It was by sheer chance that Leclercq found himself in Yellowstone during the red-letter summer of 1883. He had been on his way overland from New York to Mexico, but arriving in St. Louis in August, he encountered heat so oppressive that he decided to postpone his visit to the tropics and instead visit the mountains. In his book about Mexico he wrote, “At St. Louis I opened a long parenthesis in my itinerary: I went to the Rocky Mountains with the goal of explor-

ing the geysers of Yellowstone, which I wanted to compare to those that I had just admired in Iceland.”² Leclercq gave himself only ten days in the park, yet he covered an impressive amount of territory on horseback and saw most of the outstanding features.

The summer of 1883 was a record season for Yellowstone visits, chiefly because the Northern Pacific branch rail line had just been extended nearly to the park. Many visitors were notables. As historian Hiram M. Chittenden wrote in a footnote in his 1895 history of Yellowstone, “The list of arrivals for that year includes the President of the United States and a member of his cabinet; the Chief-Justice and an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court; the General, Lieutenant-General, and a large number of other distinguished officers of the army; six United States Senators; one Territorial Governor; a prominent railroad president; the Ministers from Great Britain and Germany; the President of the Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice, England; three members of Parliament; and a considerable number of other eminent personages, both from this country and abroad.”³

The U.S. president mentioned by Chittenden was Chester A. Arthur, the first of several presidents to visit Yellowstone. He and his large entourage arrived at Mammoth Hot Springs after traversing the park from the south, just as Leclercq was setting out from Mammoth for his horseback tour. Arnold Hague and Walter Weed of the U.S. Geological Survey, as well as German geologist G. M. Von Rath, were all in the park that summer. So were members of the Hatch excursion, celebrating the opening of some park facilities, and the Villard excursion, organized to celebrate the Northern Pacific Railroad’s completion of its branch line from Livingston to Cinnabar, Montana Territory, three miles north of the North Entrance.

Although Jules Leclercq was born, lived, worked, and died in Brussels, he traveled the world and, through his writings, opened new horizons for his readers. Having earned doctorates in law as well as political science and administration, he practiced law and fulfilled often arduous duties as a judge in small claims court. His passions, however, were traveling and writing. Known during his lifetime as “The Traveler,” he chronicled his frequent expeditions, spending his two months of summer vacation in one or more countries of Europe,

Africa, Asia, South America, and North America. He traveled as far as New Zealand and various remote islands, both polar and tropical. He wrote copiously during a travel-writing career that spanned nearly half a century, and two of his books won prizes from the French Academy. He authored twenty-four volumes of prose, five collections of poetry, translations of Icelandic sagas, and numerous articles for serious journals and popular magazines. The same year that he visited Yellowstone his book about Iceland, *La Terre de Glace* (The Land of Ice), was published. In *La Terre des Merveilles* he compared the thermal features of Yellowstone to those he saw in Iceland.

Ten years after visiting Yellowstone, Leclercq traveled to the British African colony then called the Cape Colony (the present Republic of South Africa). He was entertained at dinner by Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes, who asked his guest to bear a request to Belgium's King Leopold II.⁴ Rhodes wanted to link the British Cape Colony in the south with British-occupied Egypt in the north by a railway that would have to pass through Congo territory controlled by the Belgian king. Leclercq carried a verbal request for authorization to his king and transmitted to Rhodes the king's response, which ignored the question of a railway and instead proposed a trans-African telegraph line. According to Henri Rolin, Rhodes did not deign even to acknowledge receipt of the king's letter. Much later both the railway and the telegraph line were partially built, but neither passed through the Congo.

Leclercq was awarded many honors: he was elected to the Belgian Royal Academy of Science, Letters, and Fine Arts; he was a founder, president, and vice president of the Royal Geographical Society of Belgium, where he delivered twenty-eight lectures over the course of thirty-four years; and he was a member of the Geographical Society of Paris. In 1898, after addressing delegates at the Geographical Society of Lisbon, he reported in detail to King Leopold about Portugal's king, Don Carlos, and his court.

In his many travel books, Leclercq did not usually assess governments or heads of state, nor did he express reactions to the suffering of the people he encountered. In a biographical article about Jules Leclercq, Henri Rolin asks, "Was he superficial? He can in no way be criticized on this account. The number of countries he traveled

through, the brevity of his sojourns, and the lack of specific research objectives made it impossible for him to make detailed studies.”⁵

Leclercq’s career as a travel writer ended abruptly in 1914, when he was sixty-five years old, with the outbreak of World War I. Caught en route to the Congo, he returned immediately to Belgium. He wrote, “One realizes with advancing age that there are three seasons in life: the first, when one hopes to travel; the second, when one travels; and the third, when one remembers one’s travels.”⁶ In his own third season Leclercq embraced a new passion: poetry. He published three collections of poems about impressions from his travels, transforming from narrative to poetry some of the images engraved on his mind that still charmed or astonished him: polar and tropical landscapes, mountain silhouettes, monuments to past glories, sunsets from a former time. His poems received warm praise for their evocative imagery and beautiful form. In fact, he realized that “accounts of travel age faster than their authors,” but he thought perhaps his verse would survive him better.⁷ Curiously, and perhaps because French was the dominant world language in his time, none of the works of this extraordinary man — judge, traveler, writer, poet, translator, and intermediary for a king — has been translated into English, until the present volume.

Translation and Editorial Method

Jules Leclercq arrived at Mammoth Springs at night on August 29, 1883, and left the park on September 8. Although he wrote that he met U.S. president Chester A. Arthur's party at Mammoth Springs on August 30 (chapter 6), the *Livingston Enterprise* places President Arthur's arrival there on August 31, so Leclercq had to be mistaken about the date.

Upon leaving the park (chapter 3), Leclercq went directly to Livingston, Montana Territory,¹ where he met dignitaries arriving to celebrate the joining of the transcontinental Northern Pacific Railroad tracks, a ceremony that occurred on September 8. On the English version of the Yellowstone National Park map at the back of this book, we have entered the correct dates at points where Leclercq stayed each night.²

While Leclercq generally wrote respectfully of the people he encountered, he sometimes used terms current in his day that might be considered offensive today, such as "Redskins" for Native Americans or "Celestials" for Chinese. In some instances the translators have chosen to keep such terms, since they contribute to maintaining a nineteenth-century flavor and sensibility in this English version.

Occasionally the author's punctuation and spelling of names are modified, and occasionally his long sentences and paragraphs are broken up for ease in reading and understanding. We have deliberately preserved some nineteenth-century spellings and capitalization, such as "sulphur," "boulder," and "National Park." In the French original Leclercq used italics for terms that seemed to him typically American (such as *shacks* and *sleeping car*). We have substituted

quotation marks for his italics in many such cases in this American translation but left words foreign to both French and English (such as Latin words) in italics. He also used both metric and U.S. units of measurement. We have translated each occurrence directly, providing equivalents only where Leclercq himself did, except in the case of degrees centigrade, which we have converted to Fahrenheit, and hectares, converted to acres.

The few notes written by Jules Leclercq are included with our notes but are identified with his italicized initials at the beginning of the note: *JL*.

We have added many explanatory notes that clarify or supplement the text for twenty-first-century readers. Our primary source for notes about place-names was the pioneering work of Yellowstone Park historian Lee H. Whittlesey, who traced the provenance of Yellowstone Park names in two invaluable works, *Wonderland Nomenclature* and *Yellowstone Place Names*. Likewise, *The Yellowstone Story*, by the park's late historian Aubrey L. Haines, was our indispensable reference for questions pertaining to park history. Information not directly relating to Yellowstone Park came from many standard sources.

Page numbers for the sources of quotations are given in the notes, while the complete references are listed either in Leclercq's "Works to Consult" or in the translators' bibliography, both at the back of the book.

Leclercq paraphrased or translated some passages directly from his English-language sources. When possible, we have used the original English text, as indicated in the notes. The writing style in these passages is therefore that of the original authors rather than that of Leclercq.

A Note on the Illustrators

The wood engravings in *Yellowstone, Land of Wonders* were cut in the nineteenth century by French artists copying images from photographs, paintings, or drawings made by men who had visited Yellowstone National Park. In those days a multistep process was required in order to print photographs in books. An original image was first copied by an artist and then carefully and laboriously cut into wood by an engraver. Sometimes a photograph was transferred directly to the block of wood before cutting began.

Although no credit was given to the American painters or photographers who created the original images, the French artists and engravers usually signed their work. Since paintings, drawings, and photographs were not covered by copyright at that time, the same engravings often appeared in several publications.

Many of the images in Leclercq's book were cropped at the bottom where the signatures would have appeared, but an article about the new national park in the 1874 French periodical *Le Tour du Monde* (Round the world) includes many of the same images, uncropped and containing recognizable signatures.

The list of illustrations below includes the American photographer or artist, when known, followed by the French artist and/or engraver. Earlier appearances of the illustrations are also listed; full citations for these works appear in the bibliographies. Brief information about the artists for which information is available follows the image list.

1. Jules Leclercq. Appeared in Société Royale Belge de Géographie, *La fondation de la Société*, 39.
2. The Giant. Auguste Victor Deroy.
3. Dr. Hayden, United States geologist. Henri Thiriat. Appeared in Williams, *Pacific Tourist*, 30, after an albumen print in the National Portrait Gallery.
4. The Badlands. No information available.
5. Cinnabar Mountain. William H. Jackson photo, 1871; Th. Taylor.
6. Mammoth Springs. Jackson photo, 1872; Édouard Riou, Charles Laplante. Image in Leclercq book is reversed.
7. The Liberty Cap. Jackson photo, 1872; Taylor, Laplante. Reversed.
8. Terraces at Mammoth Springs. Riou, Henri Théophile Hildibrand. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 327.
9. A bath at Mammoth Springs. Riou, Hildibrand. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 328.
10. The Lone Star Geyser. Jackson photo, 1878; Deroy.
11. The Minute Man. Riou, Laplante. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 314.
12. Cone built up by hot spring deposits. Taylor, Charles Barbant. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 304.
13. Crater of Old Faithful. Jackson photo, 1872; Riou, Hildibrand.
14. Eruption of Old Faithful. Riou, Laplante. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 309.
15. Eruption of the Beehive. Taylor, Barbant.
16. Crater of the Beehive. Jackson photo, 1872; Riou, Barbant. Reversed.
17. The Giantess. Thomas Moran; Deroy. Appeared in Langford, "Wonders of the Yellowstone," June 1871, 127.
18. Crater of the Grand Geyser. Jackson photo, 1872; Riou, Hildibrand.
19. The Devil's Well and the Castle. Jackson photo, 1871; Riou, Hildibrand.
20. The Grotto. Jackson photo, 1872; Riou, Barbant.
21. The Fan. Moran, Riou. Appeared in Langford, "Wonders of the Yellowstone," June 1871, 113.
22. The Comet. Deroy.
23. Panorama of the Firehole Valley. Moran drawing; Riou. Appeared in Langford, "Wonders of the Yellowstone," June 1871, 121, as "Bird's-Eye View of the Geyser Basin."

24. Geyserite deposits at the Castle. Deroy.
25. Diagram of a geyser. Langlois. Appeared in Peale, "Report of A. C. Peale, M.D.," in Hayden, *Sixth Annual Report*, opposite page 421.
26. Appearance of a geyser after eruption. Deroy. Probably Splendid Geyser.
27. Excelsior Geyser. Deroy.
28. The large, boiling spring. Riou.
29. The Mud Caldron. Jackson photo, "Mud Puffs, or Hot Mud Spring, in Lower Firehole Basin," 1872; Barbant. Probably Fountain Paint Pot.
30. Indian chief. Riou, Barbant. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 350.
31. The Yellowstone Lake. Jackson photo, 1871; Hildibrand.
32. Mud spring crater. Jackson stereo view, "Mud Puffs in Lower Geyser Basin," 1872; Riou, Barbant.
33. Rocky Mountain bear cubs. Théophile Louis Deyrolle, Laplante. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 330.
34. Cougar. No information available.
35. After the hunt. Joshua Crissman photo, 1872; Deyrolle, Laplante. Reversed.
36. Rocky Mountain moose. Deyrolle. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 302.
37. Rocky Mountain deer. Deyrolle, Alfred-Louis Sargent. Appeared in Hayden, Doane, and Langford, "Le parc national," 352.
38. Sulphur Mountain. Deroy.
39. Upper Falls of the Yellowstone. Jackson photo, 1871–; Taylor.
40. Lower Falls of the Yellowstone. Jackson photo, 1871; Taylor.
41. The Grand Cañon. Jackson photo, 1878; Taylor.
42. Eagles' nest in the Grand Cañon. Deroy.
43. Tower Fall. Jackson photo, 1871; Taylor, Laplante.
44. Basalt Walls of the Grand Cañon. Deroy. Appeared in Hayden, *Twelfth Annual Report*, opposite page 46.

Contributing Artists

American Artists

JOSHUA CRISSMAN (1833–1922). Photographer living in Bozeman, Montana Territory, during the early 1870s. Photographed in Yellowstone four summers, two of them alongside W. H. Jackson. Sold his photographs and stereo views only locally and to other photographers. Some were later attributed to Jackson.

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON (1843–1942). Photographer for Hayden expeditions, 1870–78. Took many of the earliest views of Yellowstone and other western subjects. His pictures appeared in numerous publications throughout the late 1800s.

THOMAS MORAN (1837–1926). Painter influenced by his brother Edward and by other Philadelphia artists and also by the works of English painter J. M. W. Turner. Visited Yellowstone with the 1871 Hayden expedition, earlier than his rival Albert Bierstadt. Produced numerous Yellowstone paintings from his sketches but drew the panorama in figure 23 before seeing Upper Geyser Basin.

French Artists and Engravers

CHARLES BARBANT (1844–1922). Illustrator and wood engraver, son and student of wood engraver Nicolas Barbant. Exhibited at Salon de Paris. Produced work for many publications, including Jules Verne's novels.

AUGUSTE VICTOR DEROY (1823–1906). Painter and lithographer. Son and student of Isodore Laurent Derooy. Exhibited his work at Salon des Artistes Français, 1863–89.

THÉOPHILE LOUIS DEYROLLE (1844–1923). Painter of portraits and genre scenes. Studied in Paris but lived in Finistère (France) and developed oyster parks in addition to painting. Won awards at Salon de Paris.

HENRI THÉOPHILE HILDIBRAND (1824–97). Wood engraver. Made engravings for many artists, including for the celebrated Gustave Doré. Exhibited at Salon de Paris. Produced engravings for Dante's *Purgatorio* and Jules Verne's novels. Worked for many publishers, including Librairie Hachette, publisher of *La Terre des Merveilles* and other Leclercq books.

LANGLOIS. No information available.

CHARLES LAPLANTE (1861–1903). Wood engraver and illustrator. Worked with Gustave Doré. Produced illustrations for Jules Verne's novels. Worked for Librairie Hachette and exhibited at Salon de Paris.

ÉDOUARD RIOU (1833–1900). Prolific painter, illustrator, and engraver. Drew genre and hunting scenes, landscapes, and scenes in Italy, Egypt, and Russia. Exhibited at the Salon de Paris, published in periodicals, and provided sketches for the novels of Jules Verne, Alexandre Dumas, Guy de Maupassant, and Victor Hugo.

ALFRED-LOUIS SARGENT (1828–?). Wood engraver of landscapes. Exhibited at Salon de Paris. Brother of Louis Sargent (1830–?), also a French engraver in Paris.

TH. TAYLOR. No information available.

HENRI THIRIAT (dates unknown). Wood engraver of portraits and other pictures for illustrated periodicals. Exhibited at the Salon de Paris; awarded bronze medal in 1877.

Yellowstone, Land of Wonders

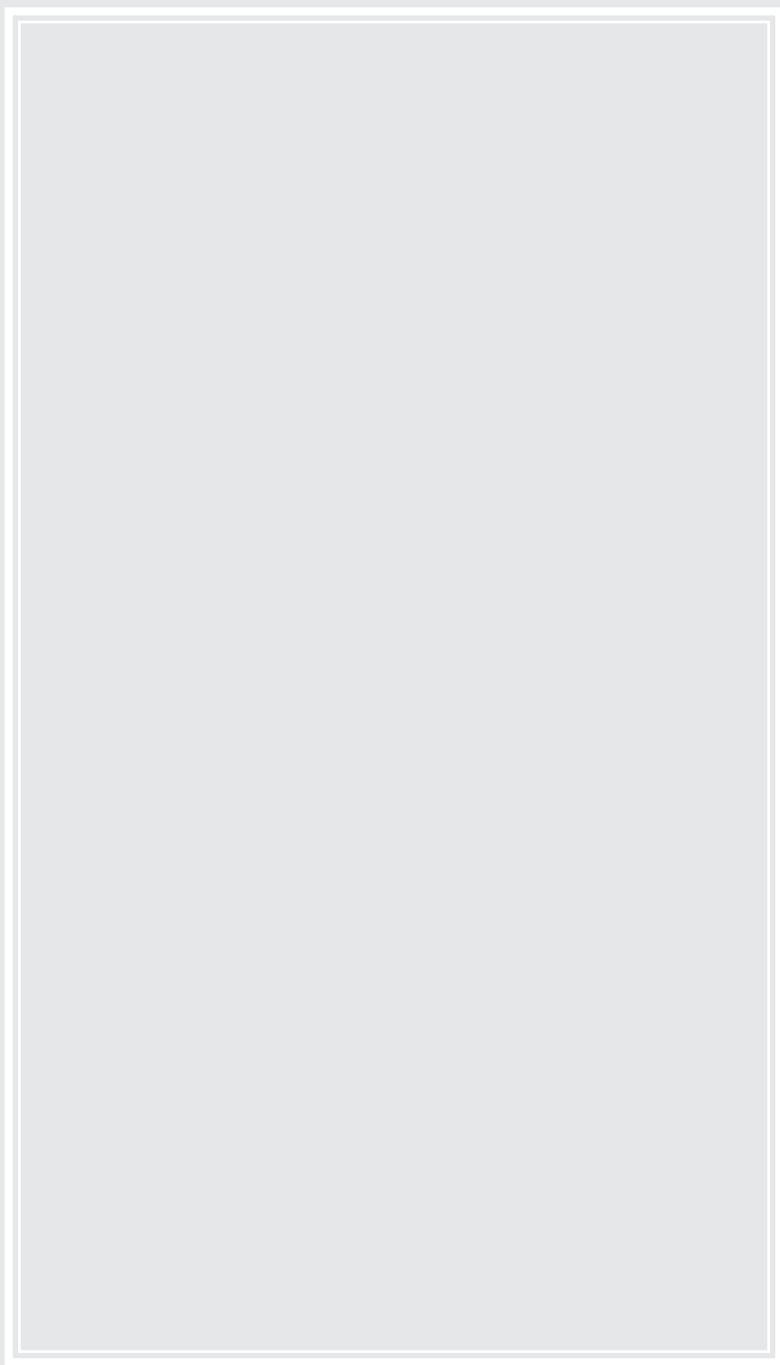
*Promenade in North America's
National Park*

by JULES LECLERCQ

*President of the Royal Belgian Geographical Society
Member of the Geographical Society of Paris*

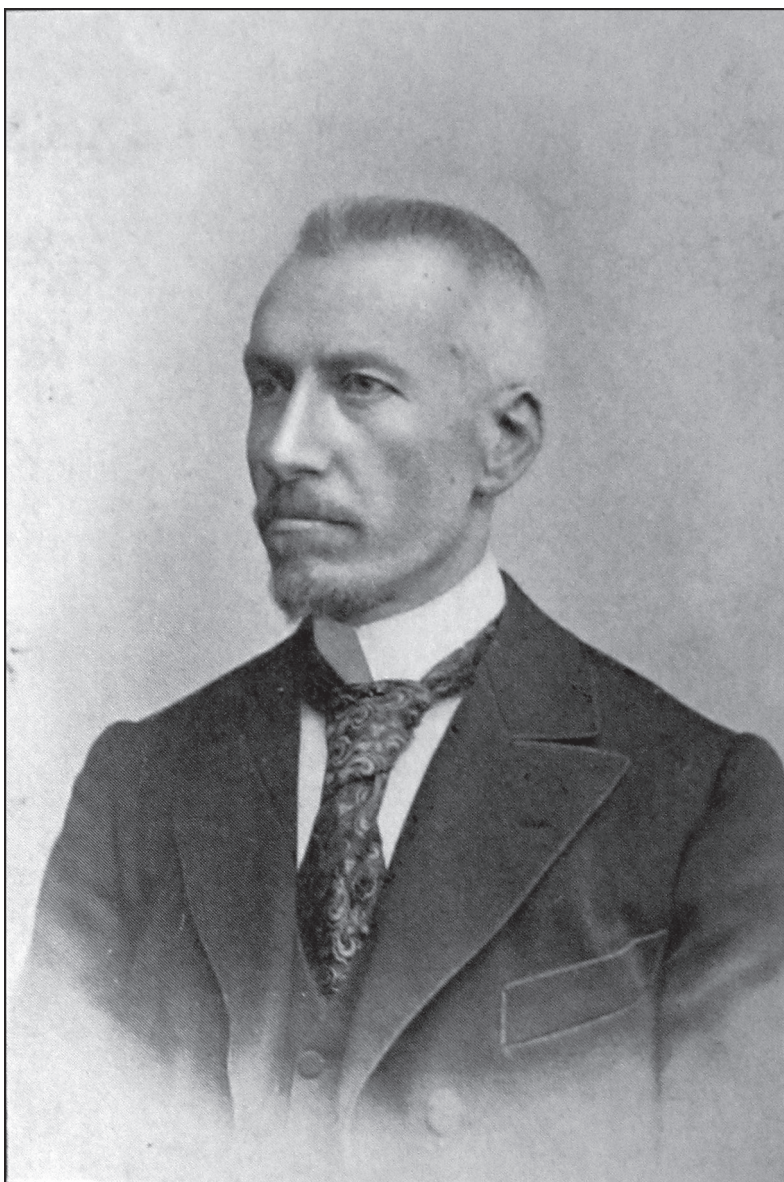
*Work containing forty-two engravings,
two drawings, and three maps*

*Originally published by
Librairie Hachette et Cie.,
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1886*



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To
Professor R. B. Anderson
United States Minister to Copenhagen
and to his family
Affectionate remembrance of their cordial
welcome in Wisconsin
Cortenbergh, November 1885



1. Jules Leclercq.

PREFACE

The wonders of the Yellowstone have been known for so few years that they have scarcely ever been described except by Americans. Some few articles scattered among travel and geography collections and in periodicals make up the whole body of French literature relating to this strange part of the globe. The *Tour du Monde* has played the largest part in making it known in France by means of an excellent summary of the travels of the American explorers Hayden, Doane, and Langford.¹ Mr. Paul le Hardy, who accompanied Captain Jones's expedition in 1873 serving as topographer, wrote a short but important account of the Yellowstone.² At about the same time, the eminent geologist Mr. de la Vallée-Poussin addressed the subject of this area in a remarkable study of the works of his American colleagues.³ More recently Messrs. Gauilleur and Seguin published in geographical collections⁴ accounts whose only shortcoming is that they are too short. One of these predicts that someday entire books will be written on the Yellowstone; perhaps it is because of this prophecy that I wrote this.

In the United States the Yellowstone has already been the object of numerous and important publications. Explorations organized by the government have given rise to some very well-written reports. The reader who wishes to study the subject in more detail might have recourse to these official works,⁵ on which army engineers, naturalists, and astronomers have collaborated. They are scientific monuments that honor the American government as well as the men whose talents and courage made them possible.

The first account that revealed the wonders of the Yellowstone was that of Mr. Langford, published in the American pe-

riodical *Scribner's Monthly*. It caused a sensation even in the scientific world.

Since that time, each year has seen new travel accounts appear in America.

That a region known for only a few years has already been the object of so many works and attracts the attention of Americans more than ever—here is a phenomenon that gives a foretaste of just how extraordinary this region is.

CHAPTER I

The Land of Wonders

The Land of Wonders.—Situation, boundaries and area.—Continental divide of the American continent.—High altitudes.—Rigors of the climate.—Comparison with Iceland.—Volcanic phenomena.—Beauty of the countryside.

In 1871 the American geologist Hayden revealed the existence of one of the most phenomenal regions on earth. It was named the “Land of Wonders.”

A law of the U.S. Congress has established this part of the American territory as a public park, placed under the surveillance of the state and intended for the enjoyment and edification of the nation. No part of this reserved domain may be settled, given away, or sold, and no one may live there without governmental authorization.

The boundaries set by legal power do not correspond to natural divisions. They circumscribe a zone extending approximately from the 110th to the 111th degree of longitude west of the Washington meridian and from the 44th to the 45th degree of north latitude.¹ It is a rectangle drawn parallel to the meridian, with that geometric regularity that Americans are fond of; it measures 88 kilometers from east to west and 105 kilometers from north to south. Its area of more than nine thousand square kilometers is thus almost equal in extent to one-third of the territory of Belgium. It lies at the junction of one state and two territories that are not yet established as states. The largest portion of the rectangle occupies the northwest section of Wyoming; the rest consists of a strip of southern Montana and a strip of eastern Idaho.

Nature has kept the Land of Wonders hidden in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, in the highest part of that gigantic chain. A formidable rampart of peaks and glaciers defends it. Within this enclosure slumbers large Yellowstone Lake, one of the highest expanses of water in the world. Here, too, fall the snows that feed the brooks that will become giant rivers. Here are born the Missouri and its tributaries, which flow to the Gulf of Mexico; the Snake River, which joins the Columbia and the Pacific Ocean; and the Green River, which rushes to the Colorado and the Gulf of California. It is one of the most remarkable divides on the American continent, a *divortium aquarum* of the first order.

The official designation as “National Park” is not quite precise; it is not so much a park as a group of valleys arranged as so many distinct little parks, each isolated from the next and situated on both sides of the Rocky Mountain chain. These valleys are located at altitudes that are nowhere less than eighteen hundred meters; several of them reach two thousand to twenty-five hundred meters above sea level. The height of the mountain peaks overhanging the valleys varies between three thousand and thirty-seven hundred meters.

These great altitudes make the climate of this region one of the most rigorous in America; even after scorching midsummer days, it freezes almost every night. It is not unusual to see the thermometer fluctuate from $+30^{\circ}$ to -10° [Celsius; 86°F – 14°F] within twenty-four hours. This region is therefore not suitable for cultivation.

Here, as in Iceland, nature shows herself as rebellious to man. Why should this region not be baptized New Iceland, as it has not yet received a definitive name? Are not its scenery and geology constantly reminiscent of the great island in the north? Like Iceland, this is a land of enchantments and marvels, a land where it seems that nature wished to use all her powers and display all her splendors. Like Iceland, this region abounds in volcanic phenomena and offers the astonishing spectacle of those intermittent fountains that shoot columns of boiling water into the air, called by the Icelandic name of *gey-*



2. The Giant.

sers. One would perhaps search in vain through the entire terrestrial globe for a collection of valleys and basins where the existence of subterranean fires manifests itself so obviously, so close to the surface, and on such a vast scale. There are more than ten thousand eruptive vents, and as yet this country has not been fully explored.

Besides its geologic interest, this part of the Rocky Mountains also contains some of the most beautiful scenery in North America. Nature has here gathered together all her alpine beauties, verdant valleys, forests, cañons, lakes, waterfalls, rushing streams, and, as sublime frames for these enchanting tableaux, haughty mountains whose eternal diadems of snow sparkle under the pure and luminous sky of these high elevations.

I had seen Iceland in 1881; two years later the fortunes of travel brought me to the Land of Wonders. In the month of July 1883 I disembarked at New York. I intended to go overland to Mexico to avoid the yellow fever, which was then reigning with fearsome intensity in Veracruz.² The railroad took me to the banks of the Mississippi in two days. In St. Louis I encountered a veritable furnace; the heat was so oppressive that, losing all my energy, I let myself be persuaded to postpone until the month of September the continuation of my trip toward the torrid region of Texas and the Rio Grande.

The Rocky Mountains, which I had not revisited for seven years, offered themselves to my imagination like an enticing mirage. I was only two thousand kilometers from them—bah!—that was only one stride in a country where one thinks nothing of distance. An unwavering idea found accommodation in my mind: I conceived a tempting plan: in the Land of Wonders I would seek refuge from the implacable heat of the Union sun.

The Land of Wonders occupies a corner of the Rocky Mountains that I was not able to explore in my rapid 1876 excursion.³ In consulting the map, I felt myself drawn by some unknown magnetic attraction toward this enchanted land and I could not tear my eyes away. The spirit of travel seethed in my brain at the recollection of all I had heard about it.

Against this fascination the will is powerless, and, although an excursion to the northwest United States would divert me by more than one thousand leagues⁴ from my Mexican route, instead of taking the road to Rio Bravo del Norte, I took the one to Yellowstone.