

A Canyon Voyage

The Narrative of the Second Powell Expedition down
the Green-Colorado River from Wyoming,
and the Explorations on Land, in
the Years 1871 and 1872

By

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with a Foreword by William H. Goetzmann

too literal

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fifteen feet high and fifteen inches thick. The dimensions on the ground were 12 x 22 feet outside. It had been of two or three stories, and exhibited considerable skill on the part of the builders, the corners being plumb and square. Under the brink of the cliff was a sort of gallery formed by the erosion of a soft shale between heavy sandstone beds, forming a floor and roof about eight or ten feet wide, separated by six or seven feet in vertical height. A wall had been carried along the outer edge, and the space thus made was divided by cross walls into a number of rooms. Potsherds and arrow-heads, mostly broken ones, were strewn everywhere. There were also numerous picture-writings, of which I made copies.

As we pulled on and on the Major frequently recited selections from the poets, and one that he seemed to like very much, and said sometimes half in reverie, was Longfellow's:

"Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.
And a verse of a Lapland song
Is haunting my memory still:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'"

He would repeat several times, with much feeling:

"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Another thing he enjoyed repeating was Whittier's *Skipper Ireson's Ride*:

"Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!"

Towards evening we came to another Shinumo ruin, where we made camp, having run altogether sixteen miles, with

ten rapids, all small, between walls of red, homogeneous sandstone, averaging about one thousand feet in height. The river, some three hundred and fifty feet wide, was low, causing many shoals, which formed the small rapids. We often had to wade alongside to lighten the boats, but otherwise these places were easy. A trifle more water would have done away with them, or at least would have enabled us to ignore them completely. The house ruin at our camp was very old and broken down and had dimensions of about 20 x 30 feet. Prof. climbed out to a point 1215 feet above the river, where he saw plainly the Unknown Mountains, Navajo Mountain, and a wide sweep of country formed largely of barren sandstone. Steward felt considerably under the weather and remained as quiet as possible.

In the morning we were quickly on the water, pushing along under conditions similar to those of the previous day, making twenty-seven miles and passing eleven very small rapids, with a river four hundred feet wide and the same walls of homogeneous red sandstone about one thousand feet high. The cliffs in the bends were often slightly overhanging, that is, the brink was outside of a perpendicular line, but the opposite side would then generally be very much cut down, usually to irregular, rounded slopes of smooth rock. The vertical portions were unbroken by cracks or crevices or ledges, being extensive flat surfaces, beautifully stained by iron, till one could imagine all manner of tapestry effects. Along the river there were large patches of alluvial soil which might easily be irrigated, though it is probable that at certain periods they would be rapidly cut to pieces by high water.

Prof. again climbed out at our noon camp, and saw little but naked orange sandstone in rounded hills, except the usual mountains. In the barren sandstone he found many pockets or pot-holes, a feature of this formation, often thirty or forty feet deep, and frequently containing water. Wherever we climbed out in this region we saw in the depressions flat beds of sand, surrounded by hundreds of small round balls of stone an inch or so in diameter, like marbles—concretions and hard

smooth
surfaces
tapestry
alluvial
soil

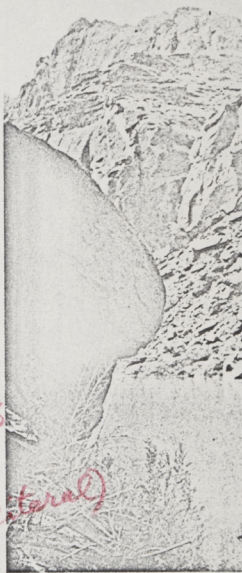
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fragments which had been driven round and round by the winds till they were quite true spheres.¹

The next day, October 4th, we ran into a stratum of sandstone shale, which at this low stage of water for about five miles gave us some trouble. Ledge after ledge stretched across the swift river, which at the same time spread to at least six hundred feet, sometimes one thousand. We were obliged to walk in the water alongside for great distances to lighten the boats and ease them over the ridges. Occasionally the rock bottom was as smooth as a ballroom floor; again it would be carved in the direction of the current into thousands of narrow, sharp, polished ridges, from three to twelve inches apart, upon which the boats pounded badly in spite of all exertions to prevent it. The water was alternately shallow and ten feet deep, giving us all we could do to protect the boats and at the same time avoid sudden duckings in deep water. With all our care the *Nell* got a bad knock, and leaked so fast that one man continually bailing could barely keep the water out. We repaired her at dinner-time, and, the shales running up above the river, we escaped further annoyance from this cause. Even with this interference our progress was fairly good, and by camping-time we had made twenty-one miles.

We had a rapid shallow river again the following day, October 5th, but the water was not so widely spread out and there were fewer delays. The walls were of orange sandstone, strangely cut up by narrow side canyons some not more than twenty feet wide and twisting back for a quarter of a mile where they expanded into huge amphitheatres, domed and cave-like. Alcoves filled with trees and shrubs also opened from the river, and numerous springs were noted along the cliffs. Twelve miles below our camp we passed a stream coming in on the left through a canyon about one thousand feet deep, similar to that of the Colorado. This was the San Juan, now shallow and some eight rods wide. We did not stop till noon when we were two miles below it near one of the amphitheatres or

¹ The illustration on page 43 of *The Romance of the Colorado* well shows the character of the Glen Canyon country, and that on page 63 the nature of the pot-holes.



G
Photograph b

Music Temple

grottoes to which the first party had given the name of "Music Temple." The entrance was by a narrow gorge which after some distance widened at the bottom to about five hundred feet in diameter leaving the upper walls arching over till they formed a dome-shaped cavern about two hundred feet high with a narrow belt of sky visible above. In the farther end was a pool of clear water, while five or six green cottonwoods and some bushes marked the point of expansion. One side was covered with bright ferns, mosses, and honeysuckle. Every whisper or cough resounded. This was only one of a hundred such places but we had no time to examine them. On a smooth space of rock we found carved by themselves the names of Seneca Howland, O. G. Howland, and William Dunn, the three men of the first party who were killed by the Shewits in 1869. Prof. climbed up eight hundred feet and had a fine view of Navajo Mountain which was now very near. We then chiefly called it Mount Seneca Howland, applied by the Major in memory of that unfortunate person but later, the peak already having to some extent been known as Navajo Mountain, that name was finally adopted. No one had ever been to it, so far as we knew, and the Major was desirous of reaching the summit.

Leaving the Music Temple, which seemed to us a sort of mausoleum to the three men who had marked it with their names, we soon arrived at a pretty rapid with a clear chute. It was not large but it was the only real one we had seen in this canyon and we dashed through it with pleasure. Just below we halted to look admiringly up at Navajo Mountain which now loomed beside us on the left to an altitude of 10,416 feet above sea level or more than 7100 feet above our position, as was later determined. The Major contemplated stopping long enough for a climb to the top but on appealing to Andy for information as to the state of the supplies he found we were near the last crust and he decided that we had better pull on as steadily as possible towards El Vado. We ran down a considerable distance through some shallows and camped on the left having accomplished about twenty miles in the day towards our goal. Here the remaining food was divided into two portions, one for supper, the other for breakfast in the

The almost vertical walls ran from two hundred to one thousand feet in height, cut by many very narrow side canyons opening into large glens or alcoves. On and on we steadily pulled till noon, making $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles when we stopped on the right on a sandstone ledge against a high cliff. Andy had a few scraps left, among them a bit of bacon which Jack enterprisingly used for baiting a hook and soon drew out several small fish, so that after all we had quite a dinner. The walls became more broken as we went on apparently with numerous opportunities for entrance from the back country, though the sandstone even where not very steep was so smooth that descent over it would be difficult. We had gone about three miles after dinner when we saw a burned place in the brush on the right where there was quite a large piece of bottom land. We thought this might be some signal for us but we found there only the tracks of two men and horses all well shod proving that they were not natives. About three miles farther down we caught a glimpse of a stick with a white rag dangling from it stuck out from the right bank, and at the same moment heard a shot. On landing and mounting the bank we found Captain Paryn Dodds and two prospectors, George Riley and John Bonnemort, encamped beside a large pile of rations. Dodds was one of the men with Old Jacob who had tried desperately to reach the mouth of the Dirty Devil with our supplies. He thought he had arrived at a point where he could see it and went back to inform Jacob when they received an order from the Major to come to this place, El Vado de los Padres, by September 25th, and here he was. Jacob had come with him but had gone on to Fort Defiance, the Navajo Agency, to settle some Indian business, leaving him to guard the rations. Having left Kanab early in September they had no late news. They had become discouraged by our non-appearance and concluded that we would never be heard from again. Consequently they had planned to cache the rations and leave for the settlement on Sunday. That night Andy was able to summon us to "go fur" the first "square" meal we had eaten for nearly a month. There was among the supplies some plug tobacco which we cut up, all but Steward,

cliffs
side canyons
alcoves