
University of Arizona Monthly

Boating Down the Colorado

THE richest part of our country in attractive features of natural scenery and prehistoric art, is Arizona. In the northern part of the territory, made accessible by the Santa Fe Railroad, is the mountainous region from the Grand Canyon to the Magallon Mesa, whose high ridge gives a view for hundreds of miles in both directions. Along the Southern Pacific are the lower plains with their long abandoned Indian villages, their old missions, their mines, and their irrigated valleys. And everywhere is Nature's great workroom in which mountains and valleys and mineral deposit are being fashioned.

One can take a buckboard and a pair of good horses and see all these things but towering mountains and broad deserts are obstacles to be approached with reverence. It is not so much the grades, or the distance as the lack of water. Safety requires that the location of water holes and "tanks" be well known. A comfortable buckboard trip from the Santa Fe Railroad in the North, to the Southern Pacific, in the South, requires some weeks of time,

much care of horses,—especially that they do not stray away at night, and the carrying of quantities of feed for the horses and provisions and beds for the men. I have made a seven-hundred-mile trip in this way in twenty-six days. But the elegant, drawing-room method of seeing the territory is by boat down the Colorado River.

The boating trip begins at Needles, on the Santa Fe, where a blunt-ended boat may be had for fifteen dollars, and all the necessary provisions bought at the usual Arizona rates. Curiously enough, our trip by boat began on the railroad. It is some little distance from the town to the water, so some friends at the station put our boat on a flat-car and we all got in and rode (not rowed), eighteen miles to the great cantilever bridge at Mellen where the train was stopped at the right point and the crews of both train and boat lifted the boat bodily off the car and slid it down into the water. There it lay soaking for a day to become water-tight.

We spent that day in arranging provisions, getting the rolls of bedding in shape, in loading cameras and developing plates,—using as a dark-room the opening into the base of the great stone bridge pier. Then we loaded up and departed on our two hundred and fifty mile trip down the river.

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to go through the mountains in whose top the original sharp-tipped needle can be seen. Thence, for a long distance it follows canyon after canyon where the current is swift and devious and danger from running on the rocks seems imminent. But the same current that carries you directly toward a rock, swerves you away from it in the nick of time, and the trip is perfectly safe. In the midst of this mountainous country, the little creek rejoicing in the classical name of "Bill Williams Fork" comes in from the East. The Planet Copper Mines and many others are up this, the sole tributary that we pass on the entire trip. Soon after this, the last rocky walls are passed and the boat emerges into the flat country with many mining properties back in the foothills and the growing town of Parker a little way below on the left.

The trip to Parker took us several days. The very first day the north wind sprang up and we turned a canvas belt sheet into a square-rigged sail, which helped us along greatly. The time of year was late January and the weather was very cold, so early each afternoon we kept a watch for a good camping-place where firewood was abundant and the bank not too high to toss up our beds. After this we would take our time to cook a good supper, get our beds well prepared, with a tent over them if necessary, and a great heap of dry driftwood for the evening camp-fire, around

which we would play cards the whole evening.

On each side of the river, in its old flood plain, is a thick vegetation of trees and bushes. These hide vast numbers of quail, so numerous and so tame that I even shot a dozen or two at one time with my camera at a distance of ten feet. These bushes are worse than jungle, for they are very dense and are full of thorns. The best hunting is on the river where ducks and geese abound. There are delicious fish in the river, and sometimes they are caught by trailing a line behind the boat, but one cannot rely upon their gullibility.

Half way to Yuma is the old town of Ehrenburg, the old ford on the Prescott-California road put through in the late fifties, and used for twenty years. Nearby is the abandoned site of La Paz, where lead and placer gold attracted a large settlement in the sixties.

The most striking natural feature on the lower river is the Picacho or Chimney Butte near the mining camp of Picacho. For days, one drifts a straight southerly course directly toward this tall square monument. Suddenly the river bends abruptly east, and circles around it, showing it to be a thin ridge of rock with deeply furrowed sides. At its base is the famous mine of the same name.

The river water is elegant drinking water if one does not mind the mud. It is clean mud. In the early spring the water is cold, and a pair

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of rubber boots is a necessity; particularly in the lower part of the river where for some miles above the Yuma bridge the river bed spreads out to a great width and the sand-bars are numerous and at times unavoidable.

The sand-bars are troublesome in the winter and spring when water is low, and the current is weak. That is the cool time of the year and the only comfortable time to travel; it is not too hot to row if one's time is limited. With but little rowing we were sixteen days on the water, making rather short runs each day and giving ourselves plenty of time to hunt, and sleep and look for gold mines and do all the things necessary on a vacation. With more hours at the oars, and longer runs each day, the time can be reduced one-half. At high water, in early summer, with travel by day and moonlight night, three full days have sufficed for the trip from "Bridge to Bridge."

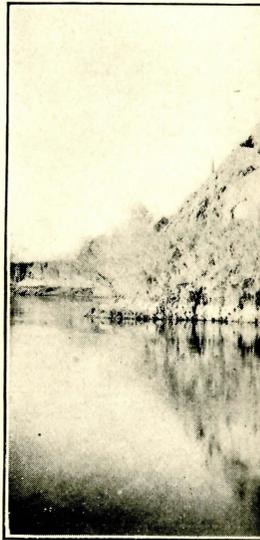
—A. E. DOUGLASS.

KNOCKING

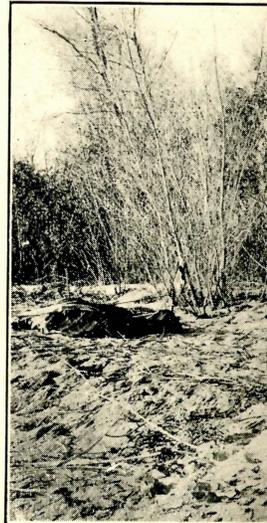
(To whom it may concern.)

Once upon a school night dreary,
As we pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a dry and stupid
Volume of assigned lore,
While we nodded, slowly rocking,
From our books we turned to talking
Till we all began a-knocking,
Knocking our poor neighbors o'er.

Ah, it grieves me now to tell you
Those we left untouched were few,
And each person's thoughts and actions
Were discussed by us and scored.
Vainly now I seek to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow
For those words so mean and narrow
Which I now deplore.
Evil words are not forgotten—
By item hearts are often broken.
Friends, I beg *you*, knock ~~no~~ more!



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