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The Valley of Death and its Tradition

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**STONE—DWELLING-HOUSES, WATCH-TOWERS, AND
TEMPLES—WHOLE VILLAGES IN RUINS—THE
VALLEY OF DEATH AND ITS TRADITION—SOME
HINTS OF THE FORMER HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE.**

[FROM AN OCCASIONAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]

DENVER, Col. Ter., Oct. 23.—We had heard, before leaving Denver, strange stories told by prospectors who claimed to have seen in the south-western corner of Colorado wonderful ruins of great extent and surprising architecture, entirely different from anything before observed in the country. It was impossible to ascertain anything definite with respect to the exact character or whereabouts of these reported ancient dwellings; but as other duties also led the photographic party of the Survey into that portion, the careful investigation of whatever facts gave foundation to the rumors was especially enjoined upon them. The instructions were complied with during the first half of September, in what manner and with what result I propose this letter shall tell.

But a little preliminary geography is necessary. Just along the south-western border of Colorado the mountains sink almost abruptly into plains, which stretch away to the Gila and Colorado Rivers. Rising in northern New-Mexico, at the end of the main range of the Rocky Mountains, which here stops short, and flowing south and west into Arizona, thence north into Utah 25 or 30 miles west of the Colorado line, then gradually westward into the Colorado River, is the Rio San Juan, the largest river of this district. It receives but one tributary of consequence from the south, but from the north many streams draining the southern slopes of the mountains, the principal of which are the Rio Pietra, Rio Las Animas, and its branch the Florida, Rio La Plata, Rio Mancos, and Montezuma Creeks, naming them from east to west.

Leaving the main camp stationed in Baker's Park at the head of the Las Animas, Mr. Jackson and myself with two muleteers, Steve and Bob, took the smallest possible outfit, except of cartridges, and started for a rapid reconnaissance of the valleys of these rivers in which we hoped to find what we sought.

Our first and second days' marches carried us across high, rugged, volcanic mountains, wild and picturesque and full of gizzlies, and down into Animas Park, which is a succession of grassy valleys, diversified by frequent groves, and seemingly always warm and lovely. A few adventurous ranchmen have located here, and raise splendid crops. From here across to the La Plata is a day's pleasant ride. At the La Plata we found a jolly camp of old Californians preparing to work the gold placers. Their leader was Capt. ...

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THE SANDSTONE HOUSE OF FORMER TIMES.

Proceeding west 15 miles and descending some 2,000 feet, we struck the Rio Mancos a few miles down where we began to come upon mounds of earth which had accumulated over fallen houses, and about which were strewn an abundance of fragments of pottery variously painted in colors, often glazed within, and impressed in various designs without. Then the perpendicular walls that hemmed in the valley began to contract, and for the next ten miles the trail led over rocks which were anything but easy to traverse. That night we camped under some forlorn cedars, just beneath a bluff a thousand or so feet high, which for the upper half was absolutely vertical. This was the edge of the table-land, or mesa, which stretches over hundreds of square miles hereabouts, and is cleft by these great cañons through which the drainage of the country finds its way into the great Colorado. In wandering about after supper we thought we saw something like a house away up on the face of this bluff, and two of us running the risk of being overtaken by darkness, clambered over the

A TRAGIC INCIDENT.

There was a moment of suspense, then came a cry that stopped the beating of our hearts as we watched with bated breath a dark object, no larger than a cricket, whirling, spinning, dropping through that awful space, growing larger as it neared the earth, till it fell with muffled thud on the cruel sharp rocks below. But ere we could reach it, another object seemed to fall backward from the highest point and reeled down through the flooding sunshine, casting its flying shadow on the brilliant bluff, gathering dreadful momentum with which to dash its poor self dead on the dentless stones beneath.

The Captain had thrown down his boots. He was still there, crawling carefully along, clinging to the wall like a lizard, till finally a broader ledge was reached; and, having the nerve of an athlete, he got safely to the house. He found it perfect, almost semi-circular in shape, of the finest workmanship yet seen at the springs being cut thro' a feet wide, 10 inches long and 3 inches thick, ground perfectly smooth on one side so as to require no plastering. It was about 20 feet 6 inches in interior dimensions and 6 feet high. The door and window were bounded by lintels, sills and caps of single flat stones. Yet all this was done, so far as we could learn, with no other tools than those made of stone. No implements of any kind were, however, found here. Overhanging the house and fully 800 feet from the ground was a thin projecting shelf of rock. Upon this bracket Bob was now to be seen dancing about in a very lively manner, and endeavoring to get below. It would have somewhat damped his ardor if he had known how thin a stratum held him from the voyage the Captain's boots had taken! At any rate he turned pale when he got down and saw where he had unconsciously been.

INTERESTING REMAINS OF INDIAN LIFE.

Photographs and sketches completed, we pushed on, rode 20 miles or more, and camped just over the Utah line, two miles beyond Aztec Springs, which, for the first time in the Captain's experience, were dry. It was a sore disappointment to us all. There were about these springs, which are at the base of the Ute Mountains, the natural corner post of four Territories, formerly many large buildings, the relics of which are very impressive. One of them is 200 feet square, with a wall 20 feet thick, and inclosed in the center a circular building 100 feet in circumference. Another near by was 100 feet square, with equally thick walls, and was divided north and south by a very heavy partition. This building communicated with the great stone reservoir about the springs. These heavy walls were constructed of outer strong walls of cut sandstone regularly laid in mortar, filled in with firmly packed fragments of stone, chiefly a reddish fossiliferous limestone containing a profusion of beautiful fossil shells—especially Ammonites and Bacculites. Some portions of the wall still stand 20 or 30 feet in height, but, judging from the amount of material thrown down, the building must originally have been a very lofty one. What puzzled me was to place the entrance, or to satisfy myself that there had been any at all on the ground floor. About these large edifices were traces of smaller ones, covering half a square mile, and out in the plain another small village indicated by a collection of knolls. Scarcely anything now but white sage grows thereabouts, but there is reason to believe that in those old times it was under careful cultivation.

Our next day's march was westerly, leaving the mesa bluffs on our right to gradually behind. The road was an interesting one intellectually, but not at all so physically—dry, hot, dusty, long and wearisome. We passed a number of quite perfect houses, perched high up on rocky bluffs, and many other remains. One, I remember, occupied the whole apex of a great conical bowlder as big as two Dutch barns, that ages ago had become detached from its mother mountain and rolled out into the valley. Another worth mention was a round tower, beautifully laid up, which surmounted an immense bowlder that had somehow rolled to the very verge of a lofty cliff overlooking the whole valley. This was a watch-tower, and we were told that almost all the high points were occupied by such sentinel boxes. From it a deeply worn, devious trail led up over the edge of the mesa, by following which we should, no doubt, have found a whole town. But this was only a reconnaissance, and we could not now stop to follow out all indications.

had been used to support the angle of the house and a half hogheads. The water was taken out of this from a window of the upper room, and the outer wall was earthen up high, so as to protect one so engaged from missiles from below. In front of the house, which was the left side to one facing the bluff, an esplanade had been built to widen the narrow ledge and probably furnish a commodious place for a kitchen. The abutments which supported it were founded upon a steeply-inclined smooth face of rock; yet so consummate was their masonry that these abutments still stand, although it would seem that a pound's weight might slide them off.

INNUMERABLE GROUPS OF DESTROYED EDIFICES.

Searching further in this vicinity we found remains of many houses on the same ledge, and some perfect ones above it quite inaccessible. The rocks also bore some inscriptions—unintelligible hieroglyphics for the most part—reminding one of those given by Lieut. Whipple in the third volume of the Pacific Railroad Reports. All these facts were carefully photographed and recorded.

Leaving here we soon came upon traces of houses in the bottom of the valley in the greatest profusion, nearly all of which were entirely destroyed, and broken pottery everywhere abounded. The majority of the buildings were square, but many round, and one sort of ruin always showed two square buildings with very deep cellars under them and a round tower between them, seemingly for watch and defense. In several cases a large part of this tower was still standing. These latter ones, judging from the analogy of the underground workshops of the present Moquis, were manufactories of utensils and implements. Another isolated ruin that attracted our attention particularly consisted of two perfectly circular walls of cut stone, one within the other. The diameter of the inner circle was 22 feet and of the outer 83 feet. The walls were thick and were perforated apparently by three equi-distant doorways. Was this a temple?

We continued to meet with these groups of destroyed edifices all day, but nothing of especial interest except two or three round towers, and no perfect cliff houses, until next morning, when a little cave high up from the ground was found, which had been utilized as a home-stead by being built full of low houses communicating with one another, some of which were intact, and had been appropriated by wild animals. About these dwellings were more hieroglyphics scratched on the wall, and plenty of pottery, but no implements. Further on were similar but rather ruder structures on a rocky bluff, but so strongly were they put together that the tooth of time had found them hard gnawing; and in one instance, while that portion of the cliff upon which a certain house rested had cracked off and fallen away some distance without falling, the house itself had remained solid and upright. Traces of the trails to many of these dwellings, and the steps cut in the rock, were still visible, and were useful indications of the proximity of habitations.

They had lived there from time immemorial—since the earth was a small island, which augmented as its inhabitants multiplied. They cultivated the valley, fashioned whatever utensils and tools they needed very neatly and handsomely out of clay and wood and stone, not knowing any of the useful metals, built their homes and kept their flocks and herds in the fertile river bottoms, and worshiped the sun. They were an eminently peaceful and prosperous people, living by agriculture rather than by the chase. About a thousand years ago, however, they were visited by savage strangers from the North, whom they treated hospitably. Soon these visits became more frequent and annoying. Then their troublesome neighbors—ancestors of the present Utes—began to forage upon their farms; and at last to massacre them and devastate their farms; so, to save their lives at least, they built houses high upon the cliffs, where they could store food and hide away till the raiders left. But one summer the invaders did not go back to their mountains as the people expected, but brought their families with them and settled down. So driven from their homes and lands, starving in their little niches on the high cliffs, they could only steal away during the night, and wander across the cheerless uplands. To one who has traveled these steppes, such a flight seems terrible, and the mind hesitates to picture the suffering of the sad fugitives.

At the entrance they halted and probably found friends, for the rocks and caves are full of the nests of these human wrens and swallows. Here they collected, erected stone fortifications and watch-towers, dug reservoirs in the rocks to hold a supply of water, which in all cases is precarious in this latitude, and once more stood at bay. Their foes came, and for one long month fought and were beaten back, and returned day after day to the attack as merciless and inevitable as the tide. Meanwhile the families of the defenders were evacuating and moving south, and bravely did their protectors shield them till they were all safely a hundred miles away. The besiegers were beaten back and went away. But the narrative tells us that the hollows of the rocks were filled to the brim with the mingled blood of conquerors and conquered, and red veins of it ran down into the cañon. It was such a victory as they could not afford to gain again, and they were glad when the long fight was over to follow their wives and little ones to the South. There in the deserts of Arizona, on well nigh unapproachable isolated bluffs, they built new towns, and their few descendants—the Moquis—live in them to this day, preserving more carefully and purely the history and veneration of their forefathers, than their skill or wisdom. It was from one of their old men that this traditional sketch was obtained.

This is but a picture here and there of one fortnight among these prehistoric ruins. Ten times as much might be said, but limits forbid. Suffice it to say that no item will be forgotten or neglected that can throw any light on this intensely interesting phase of the aboriginal history of our country, and no opportunity let slip to elucidate further the origin and character of these antiquities.

CAVITIES IN THE LUNGS.—A peculiar method of treating pulmonary cavities in phthisis, pursued by Prof. Mosler of Wiesbaden, is described as consisting in the injection of certain drugs through the wall of the chest, and leaving the canula in, so as to repeat the operation at discretion. He has even made an incision into the wall of the cavity, inserted a silver tube or elastic catheter, and succeeded in drawing away the secretion and in disinfecting the pyogenic walls by means of

enough less of work; yet so unimpaired was their industry that these abutments still stand, although it would seem that a pound's weight might slide them off.

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A SECRET A THOUSAND FEET DEEP.

We were now getting fairly away from the mountains and approaching the great, sandy, alkaline plains of the San Juan River. Our Valley of the Moquis was gradually widening, but still on either hand rose the perpendicular sides of the mesa, composed of horizontal strata of red and white sandstone, chiseled by the weather

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