

THE MANCOS CLIFF DWELLERS.

There are wonders of nature and wonders of art. When one gazes for the first time on the towering peaks and craggy gorges of the Rockies, or the wonders of the Yellowstone, or the grandeur of Niagara; or when he first catches sight of the Washington monument or the Brooklyn bridge, or the ruins of the Colisen, the words involuntarily burst from him, "What hath God wrought! How wonderful are the works of man!" But when he steps into a region where the wonderful works of God and of man are combined, and he sees the majestic grandeur of Divine architecture emphasized by the imposing works of man, words are inadequate to express his feelings. It was my privilege, a few days ago, to enter a region where wonder was added to wonder, and the acme was reached in my suddenly emerging upon a result of man's industry, as majestic as it was unexpected in such a place. It is worthy the pen of a genius and my poor Faber staggers at the task of description; but as a sort of pioneer visitor from Utah to those regions, I claim the right of telling about them.

Happening to be in Mancos, Colorado, on some M. I. A. business, I decided to visit the ruins near that place, which, I am sure, are destined to become famous on two continents. If the difficulties of the trip had been known beforehand, it is doubtful if it would have been undertaken, but "where ignorance is bliss," who would care to be foolish? Full of hope and zeal, Elder William O. Robinson, of Farmington, and the writer, in company with a guide and guardian, Charles D. Brown (a better could scarcely be found), emerged from the Mancos meeting house after the services on Sunday evening, August 21st. Donning overalls, jumpers, and woolen shirts, we mounted our horses and rode toward the south. The sensation our appearance might otherwise have created, was spoiled somewhat by the night being a little darker, if possible, than the "inside of an infidel." For various reasons we rode slowly, and it was 2 a.m. on Monday before we spread our blankets in the stack yards belonging to Wheeler's ranch, with ten miles of our journey behind us. Rude as it was, that bed had at least four more hours of sleep in it when we reluctantly arose at 5. After a light breakfast we remounted and at once plunged into Mancos canyon. This is a rather wide gorge descending toward the southwest, palliaded on each hand by precipitous cliffs, and traversed at the bottom by a small stream of water, strongly impregnated with alkali, and dignified by the name of Mancos river. Here the difficulties of our journey first became apparent. The road is only a bridle path, and only a poor one at that. It seems to be good enough for the Indians, however, as they use it almost exclusively and take no pains to improve it. If it traverses the side of the mountain, it merely follows a ledge of rock almost as narrow as a school teachers margin of profit; if it follows the bottom of the gorge, it is rendered almost impassable by the heavy growth of clover, buffalo-bush, cottonwood and squaw-bush, and bramble, covering the river bed. It is not one of the most pleasant experiences imaginable, to dodge about through these tangled mazes at the imminent risk of a "punctured" eye, a broken knee, or a shattered countenance.

But this part of the trip was not without its compensations. The cliffs themselves formed a most interesting geological study. Standing out boldly and distinctly on the summits of the mountains, they plainly manifested the "artist hand of nature" in their varied hues and outlines. Here the chisel in

the Master-hand had sculptured forms of boldness and of beauty; there the artist pencil had traced the daintest and finest color-markings, in different shades of nature's ubiquitous iron paint. One of these buttes, of fantastic design, and exaggerated boldness, has been honored with the title, "Cleopatra's Needle." Our greatest interest, however, was aroused by our first sight of a cliff-dwelling. This was in the upper portion of the canyon, and in a place moderately easy of access. It was built in front of a cleft in the rock, and consisted of a single low wall of masonry with an opening about eighteen inches square, through which a man might crawl into the interior. Being in search of large game, we did not explore this index to the book of wonders.

Our ride through these varied sights and difficulties continued for about twenty miles, and at 10:40 a.m. we arrived at the mouth of Cliff canyon, which branches off toward the northwest. Fearing scarcity of grass in this canyon, on account of the long continued drouth, we left our horses grazing near the river, and walked up the canyon. Here we found ourselves in a dilemma. We had brought no water with us, as our guide was hopeful of finding some in the natural reservoirs in the bottom of the defile, where, in rainy weather, a mountain torrent dashes over the rocks. We dared not carry with us the brackish water of the river, for fear it would only tantalize our thirst and sicken us. The sequel was interesting to us, and its later recital may interest the reader.

As we proceeded up the canyon, the cliffs rose in greater boldness, and the scene grew weird in its picturesque barrenness. Precipices thrust their craggy masses many hundreds of feet into the air; on their summits or on their breasts, wherever a cleft could afford a footing, tall trees shot upward. Tangled growths on the hillsides forbade access, while in the torrent's bed huge rocks barred the way; their softer portions worn away by the water, until they resembled the skeletons of extinct monsters.

Glancing up at one of these cliffs, we had our first view of a typical cliff dwelling. In the absence of measuring instruments, our figures are uncertain, but at a height of about one thousand feet from the bottom of the defile, on the face of a perfectly vertical cliff, a long crevice had been found. By what would appear almost impossible toil, tons of sandstone had been carried to the opening of this cleft, and erected into a wall about ten feet high, completely closing the entrance to the crevice. Four small openings pierced this wall, with a row of small portholes interposed. At a somewhat greater height, another crevice, not nearly so large, was similarly filled with a wall about four feet high, with five small openings. Above these walls the cliff rises in sheer ascent several hundred feet.

How the inhabitants of these strange dwellings gained access to them, is a mystery. Approach from above is impossible on account of the overhanging cliff. From below, one may now gain access only by skillfully throwing a long lasso over a stump and climbing it hand over hand. Parts of these walls have fallen into decay, the building material lying in a pile of broken debris.

Our progress now became excessively difficult. Our only trail was the dry course of the torrent, and this had been entirely denuded of soil, huge boulders only remained. The constant process of stepping from one of these to another and the strong effort required to climb twenty feet or more to the top of monstrous rocks, began to tell on our strength. And the thirst! We had had

no water from the day before, and the heat was consuming us. But we were spurred on by the hope that two or three hollows in the gully, of which our guide told us, might still hold a little unevaporated rain-water. Soon the thirst began to produce faintness. We were unable to walk more than a hundred yards without lying down and panting. At this point for the benefit of science, I began to record the different stages in the development of intense thirst. I recorded the following: 1, Intense longing for water; 2, Imagination of all the pleasant drinking one is accustomed to; in my case lemonade, milk, water, soda water, (no beer); 3, extreme nervousness; 4, dimness and uncertainty of vision; 5, floating specks before the eyes; 6, a feeling of utter discouragement and despair, as we passed cavity after cavity and found no water. At length we came to the last one that our guide knew about; nothing there but soft, fresh mud. The situation was desperate. There seemed to be nothing to do but to hasten to the ruins we were in search of, explore them, and then make that weary four mile march down the canyon, to the brackish waters of the Mancos river. If even we had been able to reach that point, in our exhausted condition, there is no doubt that we would have drunk so deeply of the water as to endanger our lives. The scientific record was progressing most interestingly. But unfortunately for science, our guide, in his anxiety to find water, missed the way to the ruins and led us about forty rods too far up the canyon. There we found, in an almost flat rock under an overhanging cliff, an abundance of water. It was not very cool, and not very inviting, and bugs were sporting in it, but it was wet. Sacrificing our scientific ambitions, we lay down and drank deeply from our "Providence well." New life instantly returned to us, and we wandered around with considerable alacrity until we found the spur of the canyon leading to the great ruin.

Access to it is very difficult. The only way to reach it is to clamber over the almost smooth surface of a cliff, where a false step would mean sure death in the gorge below. At the most difficult point notches for the fingers and toes have been cut in the surface of the rock, but these have been almost obliterated by the action of the elements. Upon our reaching the top of this cliff, the ruin burst upon our view, so near and so imposing as to be almost startling. That it has been aptly named the "Cliff Palace" will be apparent even from the following imperfect description.

The recess of the canyon in which the ruin stands extends toward the east from the main gorge, to a distance of about a furlong. At its farthest extremity is a most magnificent natural arch, or overhanging cliff. Its form cannot be better understood than by imagining the tabernacle roof cut down the middle from end to end, and one-half of it removed. The approximate dimensions of this monster cave are: 350 feet from buttress to buttress, 400 feet from bottom of gorge to top of cliff, and 100 feet from front to back. This forms three sides and roof for the great building, the general contour of which is in the form of a crescent. The walls are built of a light-brown sandstone, cut into blocks of about the size of an ordinary adobe. These stones are laid up in adobe mud, which would rapidly disintegrate in rain; but rain under this arch is impossible.

One would judge that the building was erected as much for a fortification as for residence purposes. This is