

NEW BABYLON PREDICTED AS MAN TAMES COLORADO

*Wild River Will Serve Conquerors
and Beauty Will Rise in Desert;
Dam Project Awes Observers*

BY JOHN STEVEN MCGROARTY

It was curious enough that St. Francis of Assisi and the Wolf of Gobbio should come into my mind when, a few days ago, I stood on the dizzy height of a jutting ledge of rock and looked down on the tawny, turbulent waters of the Rio Colorado as it swept madly through the narrow palisades of Black Canyon, 1500 feet below the rim of the canyon. The river's edge

1500 feet below.

For, the Colorado is indeed the wolf among rivers, and it is now to be tamed and made docile by science in the role of the wonder-worker of Umbria. Its wild career that has run rampant and unchallenged through the ages is to be curbed, its cruelty softened into gentleness, its wild and desperate lawlessness bent to the uses of man. The mountains shall no longer fear its onslaughts, the lowlands shall no longer dread its havoc and devastation upon fields and gardens. The snarl of its defiance shall be tuned to song in countless homes and marts of trade in the thronging cities of a far-off coastal plain.

STUPENDOUS GESTURE

This, after all is said and all that is to be done, shall be the story of the stupendous gesture now popularly known throughout the civilized world as the Hoover Dam project.

Among the great rivers of the world must the Colorado be numbered, even just as a river, merely. But, in more than one other way, it stands out unrivaled among them all. No other river that can be named rivals its physical achievements. If it were only for Black Canyon alone, the Colorado would stand distinct, which ominous gash, in turn, appears almost commonplace when compared with the Grand Canyon, where the river has savagely torn its way to a depth of sometimes 7000 feet, nearly a mile and a half, and thus giving to the world its greatest wonder.

ALL RULES IGNORED

It is a river which has arrogantly ignored all the rules and habits of rivers. When the Colorado met a mountain it did not go around it, fearing the mountain as its sisters the whole earth over have feared them. Instead, it attacked the mountain with fierce, implacable claws and tore its way through. At Black Canyon, for instance, there was an easy path around through a low pass. But the Colorado, true to its spirit of boldness, bravado and love of conquest, declined the hospitality of the pass and attacked the mountain, hurling its ceaseless bombardments against it until the mountain was forced to surrender.

For quite 2000 miles this Apache of streams wends its tortuous length from under a desolate butte in the waste of Wyoming to the Yellow C. owes little thanks for its to confluent streams. Its dawn from the white mountains of the Rockies and the avalanches of sudden descent. Droughts have, at times, weakened its power, but there never was a time when it was not to be feared.

Yet, now, at last, man comes forth to subdue and conquer it and to make the wolf eat out of his hand as the gentlest of lambs would do.

ALASCON SAW IT FIRST

We wondered as we thought of all these things when the great river flung its defiance to us up from the depths of its narrow bed in Black Canyon to the dizzy heights of the rock on which we stood, what Fernando Alascon would think were he to rise from the grave where he laid down with death nearly four centuries ago. He was the first white man to look upon the Colorado.

Many another Spanish adventurer saw the river after Alascon had seen it, and, just before our own times, American engineers explored it. The restless, pioneering Mormons for a time even navigated it as far up as the present forgotten ghost town of Callville, thirty miles above Black Canyon. But, the Colorado was never gentle with explorers. They had to battle against death when they sought its secrets. It was even less kind to navigators. The Mormons soon fled from it.

WOLF TO BE TAMED

And now it is to be tamed. The wolf of Gobbio is to come into the villages of the plain and lick the hands of little children whom it was wont to slay and devour.

This was the refrain that rang through my brain, over and over again, as I listened to the endless rattle of drills and held my ears against the concussions of dynamite blasts that tore the hills asunder even with greater savagery than the river had ever done, and with a swiftness far more appalling. The challenge of the Colorado has been met, even as the challenge of the air and the underseas has been met. Man, and not the elements, is the conqueror.

It was an inspiring day that was spent on the Hoover Dam project by a party of Los Angeles business and professional men who made the journey for no other reason than to see and be informed. They were impressed not alone by the unbelievable magnitude of the operation, but, they were, as well, uplifted in soul.

ISAIAH SPEAKS

The day was Sunday, and one man who is the son of a woman of Samaria, and who stood beside me on the high rock, spoke in a long lost voice. It was the voice of Isaiah that thundered unbidden to kings from the tents of Israel, away yonder in the dusty past—old Isaiah talking about God "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meter out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance . . . it is He that sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers."

It all seemed so true as we looked down from the rock with the voice of Isaiah speaking again from the mouth of the son of the woman of Samaria. And the toil-

ers far below on the river's edge looked for all the world like grasshoppers, too. Grasshoppers that were moving mountains to tame a wolf.

If only Isaiah and Fernando Alascon could come back. And, with them, the beaten Mormon pioneers!

MORE THRILLS

It was not easy for us to get down from all this to what the engineers were telling us. But, when we did come down, the thrills of what we heard was also very great.

For it seems true that in all the history of civilization this Hoover Dam project is the boldest gesture that man has yet made. The ancient challenge of the desert is to be met and a city reared to endure against it. And that is a feat that has been accomplished never before. Where now is Babylon? Where are Nineveh and Tyre? Go search the dust of the ages, if you would know.

What the engineers and an army of workers are now well on the way to do is to dam the waters of the Colorado between the narrow mountain walls of Black Canyon. The wall of the dam will be 725 feet high above the bed rock of the river and when completed it will be the highest dam in the world, or that ever was in the world.

WOLF TO BE RAISED

The old yellow wolf will be surprised to find itself lifted 582 feet above its normal level when the dam is finished. That's what is going to happen to it.

The water will be backed up clear to the mouth of the Virgin River, which flows down from Zion in the Mormon Empire, filling a low-lying valley with a lake that will be larger than Tahoe. A few of the buttes in the valley will be able to hold their heads above water and they will be the islands of the lake. There will be a depth of as much as 580 feet at some places. The prairie dogs and gophers in that valley will have to find other locations for their habitations.

The whole face of nature in that place will be changed. Desolation will be replaced by beauty. There shall be a mirror for the moon and stars. The Black Mountains of Nevada and the White Mountains of Arizona will salute each other across an inland sea. The flame of the Valley of Fire that leaps out upon a buried city of the Aztecs like a torch of memory below the Arrowhead Trail will have a blue screen to glow upon.

AS LARGE AS CONNECTICUT

So vast will this lake be that to travel its shorelines the wheels of an automobile will have to cover a distance of 550 miles. It will submerge an area of 227 square miles. This, which will be the largest artificial lake in the world, would cover with its waters the entire State of Connecticut. It is by such comparisons that we can sense its magnitude.

It would seem invidious to talk of what all this is to cost in money. The statistics say that it will involve an expenditure of something like \$165,000,000. But it is like wasting time to count a handful of pennies when we consider what is to be gained.

In the first place, the millions of dollars of damage that the river does whenever it goes on a rampage will be forever saved and avoided. At the same time, millions of now arid acres lying waste and useless in the desert sun will be made fruitful. Mile upon mile of bare desert desolation will blossom as the rose.

the rose.

NEW OASES TO ARISE

When the great aqueduct that is to bring the waters of the Colorado to the cities of the coastal plain of Southern California is completed there will appear along its 250 miles many a green oasis, where none now exists.

It is the dream of Paul Whitsett, chairman of the Metropolitan Water District, to tap the aqueduct at intervals and create in that manner oases, one after another. And what will the desert be like then? Arabian palms, grass growing green, cool breathing spots with the miracle of living water upon them, wanderers with the memory of home still not far away growing strong and well from the desert's healing touch. The laughter of children in long-silent places.

There is no end to the miracles that the waters of the Colorado will bring forth from its tawny depths. The old fierce wolf tamed to be gentle as a lamb. The thing that went forth to destroy, now come to save.

MANY MEN AT WORK

Nor was all this the sum of the inspiration that caught the souls of the visitors from the cities to Hoover Dam. They beheld also the thrilling spectacle of 3000 stalwart young Americans at work on the job. Three thousand of them going out from Boulder City every eight hours and returning after the shift to the best meals in the world and good clean beds in air-cooled rooms. It was a sight to be remembered in a world depressed with unemployment. It was something to think of in a world where not much real thinking is done.

These husky young fellows, so typical of our America, consume 7500 eggs alone, every morning at breakfast in the caravanserie, where they get their food. How much meat and vegetables they consume, I do not remember, although I was told how much by the man who keeps that vast boarding-house. He orders supplies by the train load.

How about building more dams as a solution of the unemployment problem?

RIVER OF LIGHT

Now also shall that dusky river that we saw as it still runs wild become the River of Light. Out

of its boundless strength shall issue electrical power unheard of yet from any other single source. It will supply electric energy in twice the output of Niagara and Muscle Shoals combined.

And so, the dim desert shall become a pathway of lighted glory. Countless wheels shall be tuned. We shall open and close our doors and windows, heat and cool our houses, cook our meals and wash our dishes merely by pressing a button. O, tawny wolf of the desert, behold to what services you shall be brought.

Ancient Babylon was the greatest city the world has yet known, but there is now being builded between Santa Barbara and San Diego a new Babylon which is destined to be greater still. The harnessing of the Colorado at Hoover Dam is the one thing alone that makes this possible. Without that achievement, even what has already been builded would stand in serious danger.

OLD BABYLON PERISHES

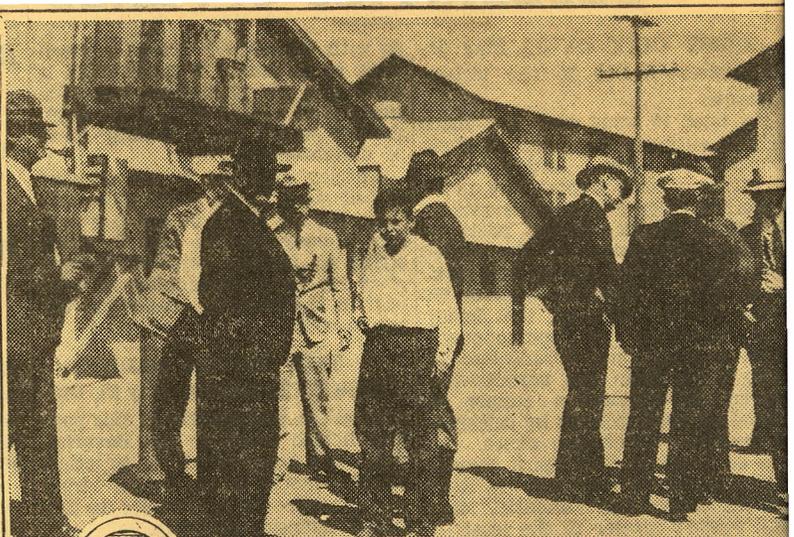
The old Babylon failed to see ahead. Long years of drought came upon it against which no provision had been made. And so it perished and was forgotten in the dust that covered it.

Wherefore, let no man stand in the way of the dream that can only fail of realization for us through the stupidity and querulous stubbornness of men who lack that vision without which the people perish. Here is the Empire of the Sun where the full destiny of America is to find realization. Let no man stand in the way.

It is not a far journey to Black Canyon. Take the road and go to it. Stand on the rock that rises sheer above it. Listen to the singing drills and the thunder of dynamite rending asunder the immemorial hills. Fill your hearts and souls with glory of the genius and the power of human brain and brawn. You will come away a better American.



LOOKING DOWN INTO THE DESERT VALLEY WHICH IS TO FORM THE GREATEST PORTION OF THE VAST LAKE.



AT THE BIG MESS HOUSE IN BOULDER CITY WAITING FOR BREAKFAST



CHIEF RECLAMATION ENGINEER WALTERS POINTING OUT BLACK CANYON OPERATIONS TO SENATOR PHIPPS AND THE LOS ANGELES PARTY.



IN THE DEPTHS OF BLACK CANYON LISTENING TO THE RATTLE OF DRILL AND THE ROAR OF DYNAMITE BLASTS.



NARROW
GORGE OF
BLACK CANYON
WHERE
HOOVER DAM
IS TO BE
BUILT

Scenes at Great Hoover Dam Project