



Down the Yellowstone

Lewis R. Freeman

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“Adventures and observations made during a trip from the source of the Yellowstone to the Missouri.” -
Bookseller and Stationer

There were several moving considerations operative in bringing about my decision to attempt a Yellowstone-Missouri-Mississippi voyage last summer. Not the least of these, doubtless, was the desire to complete the unfinished business of the original venture. A more immediate inspiration, however, was traceable to a voyage I had made down the Columbia the previous autumn. Second only to the scenic grandeur and the highly diverting sport of running the rapids of this incomparable stream, was the discovery that the supposedly long-quenched flame of frontier kindness and hospitality still flickered in the West, that there were still a few folk in existence to whom the wayfarer was neither a bird to be plucked nor a lemon to be squeezed. It wasn't quite a turning of the calendar back to frontier days, but rather, perhaps, to about those not unhappy pre-war times before the yellow serum of profiteering was injected into the red blood of so many Americans. Living well off the main arteries of travel, these river folk seemed to have escaped the corroding infection almost to a man, and it was a mightily reassuring experience to meet them, if no more than to shake hands and exchange greetings in passing. So few will have had the experience of late, that I quite despair of being understood when I speak of the good it does one to encounter a fellow being whom one knows wants and expects no more than is coming to him. Meeting a number of such was like going into a new world.

I told myself frankly that I could do with a lot more people of that kind, and perhaps come out rather less of an undesirable myself as a consequence of the contact. If I found them all along the Columbia, why not along the Yellowstone, and perhaps the Missouri and the Mississippi? And what wouldn't four or five months' association with such do in the way of eradicating incipient Bolshevism? And so I planned, embarked upon, and finally completed the journey from the snows of the Continental Divide where the Yellowstone takes its rise, to New Orleans where the Mississippi meets the tide of the Gulf of Mexico. I trust the dedication to this rambling volume of reminiscence may give some hint of the extent to which my hopes for the voyage were justified.

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