

Natchez, prepared for a start in the first steamer which would take us to Grand Gulf, fifty miles higher up. We amused ourselves by watching a party of young negro boys, who collected the drift wood which bordered the river, and, having tied it together into a raft, heaped some dead branches of trees upon it, placing a layer of shavings under the pile. Having set it on fire, they pushed it off from the shore, and exulted as they saw the floating bonfire, in the dusk of the evening, throwing a glaring light on the bluffs, town, and shipping. The raft was carried round and round in the great eddies near the bank, and the urchins shouted when their love of mischief was gratified by seeing the alarm of the boatmen, each of whom was observing the wandering fire with some anxiety, lest it should come too near his own craft. In the cabin of the wharf-boat we found no furniture, but were supplied with two chairs, which, like the walls and ceiling, were of unpainted wood. As it grew dark, they brought in a table and a single candle. We were not sorry when the Peytona was announced, and we were ushered into a splendid saloon, 150 feet long, lighted by two large chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, and supplied with brilliant gas, manufactured on board. The mattresses of our beds were elastic, made of India rubber, no unmeaning luxury, for we were awakened before morning by the bumping of the boat against one floating log after another, and, in spite of the frequent stoppage of the engine, no small damage was done to the paddle-wheels, which got entangled with the drift timber. We reached Grand Gulf when morning had scarcely dawned, and found the floor of the saloon covered with the sleeping colored servants, over whom we had to step. The river had risen twenty-five feet in two days, and was more turbid than we had yet seen it.

The bluff at Grand Gulf is about 180 feet high, the uppermost 60 feet, composed, as at Natchez, of yellow loam or loess, beneath which was white quartzose sand, partially concreted into solid sandstone, which is quarried here for building. From the summit, the river-plain to the westward seemed as level, blue, and boundless as the ocean. As we had now traveled two degrees of latitude northward, the spring was not more advanced