

ANDREW J. GRAYSON: THE AUDUBON OF THE  
PACIFIC.

BY JULIETTE MOURON HOOD.

IN the Capitol at Washington, D. C. is a celebrated painting entitled "Westward Ho," by Emanuel Leutze, a German-American historical painter of the Düsseldorf school. It depicts emigrants crossing the great plains and in the painting are full length portraits of a man of splendid physique, with his wife and child. Such groups had a prominent part in the colorful pageant that graces the highway to historic and romantic California and the dreamy south coast of the Pacific.

Behind a similar trek is another picture. In Louisiana, on the Ouachitain, in 1819, a babe, Andrew J. Grayson first saw the light of day. His boyhood was spent in the backwoods and there in the forest primeval, among birds and flowers, the youth imbibed a love of Nature. The first glimmerings of genius in the child were crushed by a misunderstanding and brutal teacher and an unappreciative and unsympathetic father. His aspirations were clouded by discouragement and he went through college much as other youths and later took up a business life, in which, like most men of an artistic turn of mind, he soon failed.

In 1846, the overland tide of emigration was sweeping toward California. None but the most daring spirits of that day would risk their lives on arid plains and savage wilderness that separated the great central valley of the continent from the Pacific Ocean. Of these, Andrew J. Grayson was one. He advertised in the St. Louis papers of that day and soon called together resolute men and women equal to the undertaking and organized a train which joined the westward trekking caravan. Ex-Governor Boggs of Missouri, with his train accompanied that of Grayson and to their number was added the historic Donner party whose separation from them at Fort Bridger led to their terrible fate.

The Graysons experienced no difficulties, as they escaped the rains and the extreme heat. They were blessed with good health and were well provided for with fresh provisions. Each day, for

five months and a half, the train traveled from four to twenty miles. The Sierras presented the greatest difficulty, but the Graysons succeeded in crossing them in four days.

Upon their arrival in San Francisco, which was then but a mere hamlet known as Yerba Buena, Andrew Grayson offered his services to the State and joined Frémont's battalion, and was honored by Commodore Stockton with a commission. His duties kept him in and about San Francisco, which made it pleasant for his wife and child. Professor Chester Smith-Lyman, who visited San Francisco in 1847, noted in his diary: "Thurs. July 15, 1847,— Got a horse from Mr. Ridley and at 10½ A. M. started for a ride with Mrs. Grimes and Mrs. Andrew J. Grayson. We rode over a very sandy road to Mission Dolores, about three miles south west of the town. We found Mrs. Grayson to be very ladylike and intelligent. She came with her husband over the mountains last fall."

When the hostilities engaging Frémont ceased, Colonel Grayson decided to enter into business. He opened the first stationery store in San Francisco, in the City Hotel, corner of Clay and Kearney streets. Later he became interested in a store with a Mr. Stephens, in Stockton, California.

On the west bank of the San Joaquin River, about two miles from where the Tuolumne empties into it, was a picturesque spot overlooking the curving contours of the San Joaquin, the intervening valleys and plains with the beautiful Coast Range forming a frame for the whole. The site appealed to Colonel Grayson's artistic mind and in January 1850, he decided to locate there. Friends as well as himself were impressed with the location, as a choice site for a city, as travel to the rich southern mines was heavy and the commercial prospects were good.

In February 1850, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a city. It received the name of Graysonville in honor of its founder. A ferry was established and Grayson moved his store from Stockton to his dream city. Travel and trade to the mines created a business activity and the new city flourished. Lumber for the Grayson House came from the East 'round the Horn. In 1852, the mining trade and travel were diverted to Stockton and Graysonville declined. Colonel Grayson then removed to San

José. The fortunes of Graysonville rose again in the sixties and it became a place of importance, but the coming of the iron horse tolled its knell.

In 1855, Grayson's attention was accidentally redirected to ornithology, by a volume of Audubon's, 'Birds of America,' which he discovered in the Mercantile Library, and so awakened was his youthful ardor for the pursuit that he resolved to abandon all else and devote the rest of his life to science. He studied drawing and in three years had painted and described most of the birds of California.

During 1856, while the Graysons were living in San José, their home was known as "Bird Nest Cottage." It was while there, that he sent a letter to Bishop Kip, thanking him for a book and praising a Miss Cooper, who had written it, for being such a close observer of nature. A quotation from the letter says: "How much more happy and pleasing it would be if others of her sex would keep such a journal instead, as is often the case, of devoting their time to so much idle gossip and fashions."

In 1857, with his wife he sailed down the dreamy coast of Tehuantepec, Mexico, but their vessel was wrecked at Ventosa and Grayson found himself without money or friends in a strange land. Getting employment temporarily, in surveying a town for the Tehuantepec railroad, he replenished his purse and went on with his ornithological work. Returning to San Francisco, he sold his collection, from stress of pecuniary circumstances, and it was carried east where a part of it found its way to the Smithsonian Institution.

About this time, 1859, Grayson and his wife visited the valleys of northern California. They visited Napa Valley and then went to Calistoga, which was at that time a sheep ranch belonging to Sam Brannon a prominent pioneer. Under letters from Brannon to his herder, they were made welcome to the ranch. Here Grayson made drawings and secured specimens of all the birds in the valley. It was here also that the celebrated drawing of the Quail was made. It was later lithographed and in that form adorned thousands of homes throughout the land.

Soon after, Grayson again made a trip down the Mexican coast with Hutchings of Yosemite Valley fame. In a small canoe, the

"Wanderer," they explored the region about San Blas. This trip caused Grayson to decide to return and locate permanently in Mazatlan.

Colonel Grayson's collection of 150 beautiful pictures of Californian and Mexican birds was examined by Maximilian and his Empress Carlotta, during the brief existence of his "empire" and so pleased was the Emperor with it, that a contract was made with the Academy of Arts and Sciences at the city of Mexico for its publication in Europe and for furnishing the means for its completion. The downfall of the empire, however, prevented the fulfillment of the contract.

A letter of Grayson's to the Academy directors, tells us something of his work:

"To the President and Members of the Academy of Sciences, Mexico.

Sirs:—I have the honor of making the following report to the Academy of my progress in ornithology since my departure from the Capital in April last.

(1)—I proceeded at once to Guadalajara District and to the region surrounding the lakes, which has been but little explored, where I commenced my researches. I am happy to say that in this region I made many valuable collections, for the continuation of my work on the "Birds of Mexico" and am still further pleased to state to the Academy, that I had the good fortune to make some new additions to the birds of my collection that have not been discovered before and which will now first be made known to the science of Zoology, in my forth coming work on the "Birds of Mexico."

(2)—After I had exhausted the meat of ornithology which I required most, so far as my time would permit in the District of Guadalajara, I proceeded to the District of Tepic, where I made another collection of great interest.

(3)—In order to replace the articles which I lost upon the road by the depredations of the ladrones—such as my gun, ammunition, drawing materials, paints etc., I found it necessary to come to Mazatlan in order to send directly to San Francisco for these articles; this I did and have already recovered them. I am now engaged upon my drawings of the birds lately collected and in writing their descriptions, which will occupy me for the next three months. It was my intention to have transmitted all of my collection to the Academy before this but as the rainy season was at hand, by the time I reached here, I deemed it most provident not to venture the chances of having them damaged by rains or perhaps by the ladrones, that now infest the route. Taking these things into consideration, would it not be better for me to wait until

the rains have passed and then go with them myself, taking with me my drawings and descriptions in manuscript, which will then be ready for the engraver and the press? I shall however, await the advice of the Academy and go by the Academy's instructions, in what manner it would be prudent for me to proceed as the loss of such a collection could not soon be replaced and the loss of the drawings and manuscripts would be irreparable, that the Academy can well conceive.

The Academy may be assured that I shall use every precaution that enthusiasm and ambition can make possible to accomplish this work with satisfaction to the Institution as well as with honor and distinction to myself.

In conclusion, I offer my thanks and gratitude to the men of this worthy Institution for having conferred upon me the agreeable task of producing a work upon the "Birds of Mexico," which has been my study for so many years. I shall devote myself closely to the fulfillment of my plans and endeavor to make it an ornament to the Society that has given it patronage as well as to the country of my adoption from whence the beautiful objects discovered have been attained.

I have the honor to subscribe myself,

Your servant,  
A. J. Grayson."

One of the rare birds Grayson describes is the White-crested Hawk. His description states: "This remarkable species is only met with in the thick forests of the warmer regions of Mexico and South America and is common in Theuantepec and Mazatlan."

Its well known scream of "Guaco" [Waco], continues often for an hour or more. The half savage natives, the Yaquis of Sonora, have a song which is called "Guaco," in which the chorus is an exact imitation of the cry of the bird.

The following is a verse from the Yaqui Indian's song:

"Guaquito! s aum bircha, que sica-y ne'  
Guaquito! cuere sainé que dura né  
Guaquito! bonito cherri que istedo vente con migo  
Deame in tranquito, en diras que no  
Yo diré que no  
Yolo quieroa V  
Pero ve mi no."

The Solitary Dove was first discovered by Grayson's son, Eddie Grayson, on the Socorro Islands, May 20, 1867. In writing of its discovery, Grayson said:

"In entering upon the history of this species, newly discovered upon

the Island of Socorro, I do it with a sweetly saddened feeling in commemoration of the event of its discovery by my son and only child, the last but one of all that was dear to me upon this earth. I cannot think of the time and circumstances connected with the capture of this bird without the sensation of emotion swelling my heart with sorrow; the vivid remembrances of the last happy hours spent with my dear boy in these remote solitudes had formed a nebula around my soul, which will never be dispelled during my life.

"How well do I recollect the lovely and honest expression of his youthful and manly brow when he presented me with the first specimen of the Solitary Dove, exclaiming: 'A new dove! A new dove!' We were happy then; although our ship was a wreck and we were alone upon this solitary island far from human aid. Still we both felt a sense of inexplicable security and confidence, if not a pleasure in the adventurous situation. We were together and well; we feared nothing. In God we trusted and we both felt a pride in the sacrifices made in the cause of science. . . .

"The reader will, I trust, pardon the digression of a father in describing incidents connected with the discovery of a new species which has been so kindly dedicated to the name of my son by Professor Baird of the Smithsonian Institute, . . . .

"While we were absorbed in contemplation, a lone Dove came as if from the very depths of solitude and perched upon a neighboring rock . . . . it was the very picture of loneliness and seemed to regard us with wonder and curiosity, as much as we did in beholding its strange and sudden appearance; we knew it at once; it was the Lonely Dove. . . . Knowing it to be a stranger or rather not existing in any other part of the world, my natural conjectures were elicited in its origin. In my conjectures, I could come to no other conclusion, but that it had been here created to fill its part in the great plan of Nature. It, indeed, appeared like a thing from a spirit world doomed to wander over the solitude of this sea girt land."

The tragic death of his beloved son upon leaving the Island plunged Andrew Grayson into the deepest sorrow.

The following letter to his wife, is heart revealing:

Mazatlan, July 21, 1867.

This, dear wife, is the anniversary of our 25th wedding day and with it comes, oh, how many recollections of the happy wedded days of our begone and eventful life? A life in whose path roses have not always bloomed; but those that did bloom were sweet and fragrant. Let us remember only the flowery spots, the sunshine, and not the clouds and storms that sometimes o'er cast the happy visions of our aspiring hopes. But the mind, in spite of our philosophy, will still dream of that bitter part of yesterday,—of the glowing, youthful days gone for ever,—of

the untrodden future when we went with hand and heart so lovingly and so hopefully set out to explore its mysteries.

How many of those alluring anticipations of that future have passed unrealized with the years like autumn leaves.

Thoughts of other days,—of the loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead, which can, alas, never return again will return to memory, mellowed into tenderness by years of a checkered life. They are ended, a panacea, their recollections that soothe our afflicted hearts which die unforbidden, has at last darkened with the deepest sorrow.

This is indeed, according to custom our silver wedding. A day to be celebrated with cheerful hearts and warm greetings from friends. A day in which numerous presents, little mementoes of silver are made to the pair who have attained this period of life,—but to us come no warm greetings or those little trifles of friendship and kindly wishes. There are no friendly greetings this day for us,—the bright sunshine of our hearts of yesterday are today darkened in deepest mourning and grief.”

Grayson died at Mazatlan on August 17, 1869, and Mrs. Grayson, the life companion and devoted assistant of her husband, in all his labors, and who followed him in every vicissitude, became the wife of Dr. G. B. Crane of St. Helena, California.

The portfolios, of his paintings, faithfully colored figures of the feathered songsters and rare birds of California and Mexico, acknowledged by critics to be only second to the work of Audubon, were exhibited at the Centennial Exposition, in Philadelphia, and later, about 1879, donated to the University of California.

In the Bancroft Library of the University, repose these volumes of original drawings in colors, unfaded, of the birds of the Pacific Slope. Volume I contains 80 plates of 150 birds while in the second volume there are 74 plates of 143 birds. Many of the drawings were made from living birds. Much of the material here presented was obtained from original manuscripts in the same institution through the courtesy of the Director and has not been previously published.

As Grayson did for the Pacific Slope what Audubon did for the Atlantic, he well merits the title of “Audubon of the Pacific.”

*Sonora, California.*