

PART I OF GREGG'S COMMERCE OF THE PRAIRIES, OR,
THE JOURNAL OF A SANTA FÉ TRADER, 1831-1839

Reprint of chapters i-xi of Volume I of the second edition:
New York, 1845



COMMERCE OF THE PRAIRIES

OR THE

Journal of a Santa Fé Trader,

DURING

EIGHT EXPEDITIONS ACROSS

THE GREAT WESTERN PRAIRIES,

AND

A RESIDENCE OF NEARLY NINE YEARS

IN

NORTHERN MEXICO.

Illustrated with Maps and Engravings.

BY JOSIAH GREGG.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:

J. & H. G. LANGLEY, 8 ASTOR HOUSE.

1845.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1844, by
HENRY G. LANGLEY,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of
New York.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE favor with which the public has received the "*Commerce of the Prairies*," and through which an unusually large edition has already been exhausted, induces the author to believe that a second edition at this time will not be esteemed premature. He has therefore embraced the opportunity to make some additions and improvements in the body of the work, the most important of which consist in such alterations and notes as appeared necessary to bring its information down to the present period, and which are calculated in some degree to enhance whatever of merit or value his previous labors might be thought to possess.

With a view of facilitating reference, a copious analytical index has been prepared for this edition, with considerable care — intended to embrace every topic of interest touched upon in its pages, and which, it is hoped, will not be esteemed altogether an unimportant addition.

The frequent use of Spanish words and phrases, which the nature of his subjects has made it convenient for the author to resort to, may have proved a serious inconvenience to some of his readers who are ignorant of the Spanish language. By the advice of his publisher, therefore, he has prepared a brief glossary, which he has placed at the end of the first volume,¹ because that volume contains nearly all the words requiring any definition.

Since the publication of the first edition of this work, a new and interesting event in the history of the Santa Fé trade has come to the author's knowledge, which, from its nature and importance, he cannot forbear alluding to in

¹ This glossary is placed at the end of our volume xx.— ED.

this connection. On page 165 of the second volume, a brief allusion is made to the rich trade of the more [iv] southern provinces of Northern Mexico, which, the author then thought, might to a degree be secured to us, through the aid of a drawback on merchandise exported across the Great Western Prairies. He has since had the satisfaction of learning that already have his anticipations been partially realized. Even without any governmental assistance, our enterprising merchants are beginning to extend their trade into the Departments of Durango, Zacatecas, and even further south. Last year, a large amount of goods introduced at Santa Fé, found their way to the *Feria de San Juan* (some 800 miles south of Chihuahua, and nearly 1400 from Santa Fé), and were sold to advantage. When our merchandise can thus successfully compete, through such an extent of the richest interior of Northern Mexico, with the importations *via* the ports on the Mexican Gulf, and the Pacific Ocean, a new market is opened, which ten times the amount ever taken across the Prairies in one season could not overstock: nay, ten millions a year would not suffice to supply.

The author desires to express his gratitude to the Press, and to the public generally, for the indulgence with which the "*Commerce of the Prairies*" has been received; and he ventures to hope that the care and labor bestowed upon this new edition may render his labors in some measure more worthy of the consideration they have already received.

SEPTEMBER, 1845.

PREFACE

IN adding another to the list of works which have already been published, appearing to bear more or less directly upon the subject matter of these volumes, I am aware that my labors make their appeal to the public under serious disadvantages. Topics which have occupied the pens of Irving and Murray and Hoffman,² and more recently, of Kendall, the graphic historiographer of the "Texan Santa Fé Expedition," may fairly be supposed to have been so entirely exhausted, that the entrance of a new writer in the lists, whose name is wholly unknown to the republic of letters, and whose pretensions are so humble as mine, may be looked upon as an act of literary hardihood, for which there was neither occasion nor excuse. In view of

² After his return from Spain in the spring of 1832, Washington Irving made an extended tour through the western and southern states, accompanying Indian treaty commissioners to Fort Gibson, on the Arkansas. The account is embodied in his *Tour of the Prairies*, one of the "Crayon Miscellany," published in Philadelphia in 1835.

Hon. Charles Augustus Murray, grandson of Lord Dunmore the last colonial governor of Virginia, and himself master of the queen's household, came to the United States in 1834, and spent two years in its borders; passing one summer among the Pawnee, west of the Missouri. His experiences were embodied in *Travels in the United States* (London, 1839), a work abounding in charm and presenting a favorable view of his American cousins, with enthusiastic accounts of prairie life.

Charles Fenno Hoffman, of a distinguished New York family, made in 1833-34 a western journey, which he described in his first book, *A Winter in the West* (New York and London, 1835). Hoffman crossed from Detroit to Chicago, and he entertainingly describes the early society of the latter place. Thence he proceeded to Galena and Prairie du Chien, then down the Mississippi to St. Louis, and home via Cincinnati; he thus did not visit the great western plains, which Gregg is herein to describe. The life thereon, however, fired Hoffman's imagination, and from reports of others he issued in 1839 *Wild Scenes in Forest and Prairie*, comprising Indian legends and adventures on the plains.— ED.

this "foregone conclusion," I trust I may be pardoned for prefacing my literary offering with a few words in its justification,— which will afford me an occasion to explain the circumstances that first led to my acquaintance with life upon the Prairies and in Northern Mexico.

For some months preceding the year 1831, my health had been gradually declining under a complication of [vi] chronic diseases, which defied every plan of treatment that the sagacity and science of my medical friends could devise. This morbid condition of my system, which originated in the familiar miseries of dyspepsia and its kindred infirmities, had finally reduced me to such a state, that, for nearly a twelvemonth, I was not only disqualified for any systematic industry, but so debilitated as rarely to be able to extend my walks beyond the narrow precincts of my chamber. In this hopeless condition, my physicians advised me to take a trip across the Prairies, and, in the change of air and habits which such an adventure would involve, to seek that health which their science had failed to bestow. I accepted their suggestion, and, without hesitation, proceeded at once to make the necessary preparations for joining one of those spring Caravans which were annually starting from the United States, for Santa Fé.

The effects of this journey were in the first place to re-establish my health, and, in the second, to beget a passion for Prairie life which I never expect to survive. At the conclusion of the season which followed my first trip, I became interested as a proprietor in the Santa Fé Trade, and continued to be so, to a greater or less extent, for the eight succeeding years. During the whole of the above periods I crossed the Prairies eight different times; and, with the exception of the time thus spent in travelling to and fro, the greater part of the nine years of which I speak, were passed in Northern Mexico.

Having been actively engaged and largely interested in the commerce of that country and across the Prairies, for so long a period, I feel that I have at least had opportunities [vii] for observation, upon the subjects of which I have ventured to treat, superior to those enjoyed by any writers who have preceded me. But not even an attempt has before been made to present any full account of the origin of the Santa Fé Trade and modes of conducting it; nor of the early history and present condition of the people of New Mexico; nor of the Indian tribes by which the wild and unreclaimed regions of that department are inhabited. I think I may also assure my readers that most of the facts presented in my sketch of the natural history of the Prairies, and of the Indian tribes who inhabit them, are now published for the first time. As I have not sought to make a treatise upon these subjects, I have not felt compelled, for the purpose of giving my papers symmetry and completeness, to enter to any extent upon grounds which have already been occupied by other travellers; but have contented myself with presenting such matters and observations as I thought least likely to have come before under the notice of my readers.

I am perfectly sensible, however, that, in the selection of matter, and in the execution of my work, it is very far from being what it should be, and what, in more capable hands, it might have been. I only trust, that, with all its imperfections, it may be found to contain some new and not unimportant facts, which may be thought, in some measure, to justify my appearance for once in the capacity of a book-maker; for which vocation, in all other respects, I am free to confess myself very poorly qualified.

This work has been prepared chiefly from a journal which I have been in the habit of keeping from my youth [viii] upward, and in which I was careful to preserve memo-

randa of my observations while engaged in the Santa Fé Trade,— though without the remotest intention of ever appropriating them to the present purpose. In addition, however, I have embraced every opportunity of procuring authentic information through others, upon such matters as were beyond my own sphere of observation. From materials thus collected I have received much assistance in the preparation of the chapters from the sixth to the fifteenth inclusive, of the first volume, which are chiefly devoted to the early history of New Mexico, and the manners, customs and institutions of its people. For favors thus conferred, I beg in particular to make my acknowledgments to ELISHA STANLEY, Esq., and Doctors SAMUEL B. HOBBS and DAVID WALDO, whose names have been long and favorably associated with the Santa Fé Trade.³

Though myself cradled and educated upon the Indian border, and familiar with the Indian character from my infancy, I am yet greatly indebted, for information upon that subject, to many intelligent Indian traders, and others resident upon our border, with whose ample experience I have been frequently favored.

Yet, while I recognize my indebtedness to others, I feel bound, in self-defence, to reclaim in a single case, at least, the *waijs* of my own pen, which have been dignified with a place in the pages of a cotemporary writer. During the years 1841 and 1842, I contributed a number of letters upon the history and condition of the Santa Fé Trade, etc.,

³ Dr. David Waldo came to Missouri from Virginia in 1826. Seeking the pineries of Gasconade River, he cut timber sufficient to form a raft, floated it to St. Louis, and with the money realized from its sale went to Lexington, Kentucky, and studied medicine at Transylvania University. Returning to Missouri, he made his home on the Gasconade, where he became the most prominent citizen of the new country, serving as clerk of the courts, justice of the peace, deputy sheriff, county coroner, major of militia, postmaster, and practicing physician. In 1831 he embarked in the fur-trade with David Jackson, and later took an outfit to Santa Fé, and for thirty years was connected with western trade.— ED.

to the Galveston "Daily Advertiser" and the "Arkansas Intelligencer," under the signatures of "J. G." and "G.," [ix] portions of which I have had occasion to insert in the present volumes. In Captain Marryat's recent work, entitled "Monsieur Violet," I was not a little annoyed (when I presume I ought to have been flattered) to find large portions of this correspondence copied, much of it *verbatim*, without the slightest intimation or acknowledgment whatever, of the source from whence they were procured. The public are already so familiar with the long series of literary larcenies of which that famous work was the product, that I should not have presumed to emphasize my own grievance at all here, but that the appearance of the same material, frequently in the same words, in these volumes, might, unless accompanied by some explanation, expose me to a charge of plagiarism myself, among those who may never have seen my original letters, or who are not yet aware that "Monsieur Violet" was an offering which had evidently been intended for the altar of Mercury rather than of Minerva.⁴

In my historical sketches of New Mexico, it might have been naturally expected that some notice would be taken of the Texan Santa Fé Expedition of 1841, the events of

⁴ The *Galveston Daily Advertiser* was owned by A. J. Yates, and published after November 1, 1841. No file is known to exist.

The *Arkansas Intelligencer* was established at Little Rock by the Jacksonian Democrats, in order to support Governor John Pope (1829-35). John Steele was the first editor-in-chief.

Captain Frederick Marryat (1792-1848) was born in London of Huguenot ancestry. After an adventurous career in the British navy (1806-30), he resigned, and devoted himself to literary work. In 1837 and 1838 he visited the United States, and as a result published *A Diary in America* (London, 1839). The *Travels and Adventures of Monsieur Violet among the Snake Indians and Wild Tribes of the great Western Prairies* (London, 1843), is a loose compilation of fact and fiction, in three volumes. The parts plagiarized from Gregg are in volume i, chapter xiii. Kendall (see following note) also complains in his preface of Marryat's plagiarizing whole chapters from his work.—ED.

which are so closely connected with the history of that country. I declined, however, to enter upon the topic; for I considered that none who had seen Mr. Kendall's account of that ill-fated enterprise, would have any inducement to consult these pages upon the subject; and for those who had not, I felt sure the best thing I could do, was to direct their attention at once to its attractive pages.⁵

The maps which accompany the present work will be found, I believe, substantially correct; or more so, at least, [x] than any others, of those regions, which have been published. They have been prepared, for the most part, from personal observations. Those portions of the country which I have not been able to observe myself, have chiefly been laid down from manuscript maps kindly furnished me by experienced and reliable traders and trappers, and also from the maps prepared under the supervision of United States surveyors.⁶

The arrangement I have adopted seems to require a word of explanation. That the reader may the better understand the frequent notices, in the course of my personal narrative, of the Santa Fé Trade, the first chapter has been devoted to the development of its early history. And, though the

⁵ Advices having been received by the Texan president that the inhabitants of Santa Fé and vicinity wished to join the Lone Star republic, the Texas-New Mexican expedition was set on foot in the spring of 1841. The Texans had (1836) declared the Rio Grande as their boundary, but had taken no jurisdiction over the New Mexican province. The expedition was accompanied by a number of merchants, and was ostensibly for the purpose of trade. Its military commandant was General Hugh McLeod, and while furthered by the officials of Texas, was unauthorized by its congress. Upon reaching New Mexican borders, the inhabitants were found in arms, and the entire movement proved a failure. George Wilkins Kendall, a New Orleans editor who accompanied the expedition as a guest, became its historian. In his *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fé Expedition* (New York, 1844), he vividly describes the adventures and fate of its promoters, and the wanton cruelty and harshness of the Mexicans.—ED.

⁶ Gregg's map, somewhat enlarged, appeared in Morse's *North American Atlas* published by Harpers Brothers in 1842. Elliott Coues commends it as the best map of the period, for the region concerned.—ED.

results of my observations in Northern Mexico and upon the Prairies, as well as on the border, are sometimes interspersed through the narrative, I have, to a great degree, digested and arranged them into distinct chapters, occupying from the sixth to the fifteenth inclusive, of the first volume, and the seven last chapters, of the second. This plan was resorted to with a view of giving greater compactness to the work, and relieving the journal, as far as possible, from cumbrous details and needless repetitions.

J. G.

New York, June 12, 1844.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

- Origin and progressive Development of the Santa Fé Trade — Captain Pike's Narrative — Pursley — La Lande — Expedition of McKnight and others — Glenn — Becknell — Cooper — Sufferings of Captain Becknell and his Companions — First Introduction of wheeled Vehicles — Colonel Marmaduke — Hostility of the Indians — Recriminations — Indian Ethics — Increase of Outrages — Major Riley's Escort — Annoyed by the Indians — Government Protection — Composition of a Caravan, 173

CHAPTER II

- Head Quarters of the Santa Fé Trade — Independence and its *Locale* — A Prairie Trip an excellent Remedy for chronic Diseases — Supplies for the Journey — Wagons, Mules and Oxen — Art of Loading Wagons — Romancing Propensity of Travellers — The Departure — Storms and Wagon-covers — Quagmires — Tricks of marauding Indians — Council Grove — Fancy *versus* Reality — Electioneering on the Prairies — The Organization — Amateur Travellers and Loafers — Duties of the Watch — Costumes and Equipment of the Party — Timbers for the Journey, 187

CHAPTER III

- The 'Catch up' — Breaking up of the Encampment — Perversity of Mules — Under Way — The Diamond Spring — Eccentricities of Oxen — First Glance of the Antelope — Buffalo Herds and Prairie Novices — A John Gilpin Race — Culinary Preparations — A Buffalo Feast — Appetite of [xii] Prairie Travellers — Troubles in Forging Streams — Fresh Alarms and their Causes — A Wolfish Frolic — Arkansas River — Pleasing Scenery — Character of the Country — Extraordinary Surgical Operation — The 'Pawnee Rock' — Salutory Effects of Alarms — New Order of March — Prairie Encampment and 'Upholstery' — Hoppling and Tethering of the 'Stock' — Crossing the Arkansas — Great Battle with Rattlesnakes — A Mustang Colt and a Mule Fracas — 'The Caches' — Their Origin, and Signification of the Term, 202

CHAPTER IV

- A Desert Plain — Preparation for a 'Water-Scrape' — Accident to a French Doctor — Upsetting of a Wagon and its Consequences — A Party of Sioux Warriors — The first real Alarm — Confusion in the Camp — Friendly Demonstrations of the Indians — The Pipe of Peace — Squaws and Papooses — An Extemporary Village — Lose our Track — Search after the Lost River — Horrible Prospective — The Cimarron Found at last — A Night of Alarms — Indian Serenade and Thieving — Indian Diplomacy — Hail-stones and Hurricanes — Position of the Captain of a Caravan — His Troubles, his Powers and Want of Powers — More Indians — Hostile Encounter — Results of the Skirmish — The 'Battle-Ground' — Col. Vizcarra and the Gros Ventres, 218

CHAPTER V

- A Beautiful Ravine — 'Runners' Starting for Santa Fé — Fourth of July on the Prairies — The *Cibolero* or Buffalo-hunter — Mournful News of Captain Sublette's Company — Murder of Captain Smith and another of the Party by the Indians — Carelessness and Risks of Hunters — Captain Sublette's Peril — Character and Pursuits of the *Ciboleros* — The Art of Curing Meat — Purity of the Atmosphere — The 'Round Mound' — The Mirage or False Ponds — Philosophy thereof — Extensive and Interesting View — Exaggerated Accounts by Travellers of the Buffalo of the Prairies — Their Decrease — A 'Stampede' — Wagon Repairing — Rio Colorado or Canadian River — Meeting between old Friends — Mexican Escort — Disorganizing of the Caravan — Dreadful Thunder-storm — First Symptoms of Civilization — San Miguel — Arrival at Santa Fé — Entry of the Caravan — First Hours of Recreation — Interpreters and Custom-house Arrangements — A Glance at the Trade, etc., 232

[xiii] CHAPTER VI

- Sketches of the Early History of Santa Fé — First Explorations — Why called New Mexico — Memorial of Oñate — His Colony — Captain Leyva's prior Settlement — Singular Stipulations of Oñate — Incentives presented by the Crown to Colonizers — Enormities of Spanish Conquerors — Progress of the new Colony — Cruel Labors of the Aborigines in the Mines — Revolt of the Indians in 1680 — Massacre of the Spaniards — Santa Fé Besieged — Battles — Remaining Spanish Population finally evacuate the Province — Paso del

Norte — Inhuman Murder of a Spanish Priest — Final Recovery of the Country — Insurrection of 1837 — A prophecy — Shocking Massacre of the Governor and other distinguished Characters — American Merchants, and Neglect of our Government — Governor Armijo: his Intrigues and Success — Second Gathering of Insurgents and their final Defeat, 257

CHAPTER VII

Geographical Position of New Mexico — Absence of navigable Streams — The Rio del Norte — Romantic Chasm — Story of a sunken River — Mr. Stanley's Excursion to a famous Lake — Santa Fé and its Localities — El Valle de Taos and its Fertility — Soil of New Mexico — The first Settler at Taos and his Contract with the Indians — Salubrity and Pleasantness of the Climate of New Mexico — Population — State of Agriculture — Staple Productions of the Country — Corn-fields and Fences — Irrigation and *Acequias* — *Tortillas* and *Tortilleras* — *Atole*, *Frijoles* and *Chile* — Singular Custom — Culinary and Table Affairs — Flax and Potato indigenous — Tobacco and *Punche* — Fruits — Peculiar Mode of cultivating the Grape — Forest Growths — *Piñon* and *Mezquite* — Mountain Cottonwood — *Palmilla* or Soap-plant — Pasturage, 277

CHAPTER VIII

The Mines of New Mexico — Supposed Concealment of them by the Indians — Indian Superstition and Cozenage — Ruins of *La Gran Quivira* — Old Mines — *Placeres* or Mines of Gold Dust — Speculative Theories — Mode of Working the *Placeres* — Manners and Customs of the Miners — Arbitrary Restrictions of the Mexican Government upon Foreigners — Persecution of a Gachupin — Disastrous Effect of official Interference upon the Mining Interest — Disregard of American Rights and of the U. States Government [xiv] — *Gambucinos* and their System — Gold found throughout New Mexico — Silver Mines — Copper, Zinc and Lead — *Salinas* or Salt Lakes — Sulphurous Springs — Gypsum, and Petrified Trees, 299

CHAPTER IX

Indifference on the Subject of Horse-breeding — *Caballos de Silla* — Popularity and Usefulness of the Mule — Mode of harnessing and lading Mules for a Journey — *Arrieros* and their System — The *Mulera* or Bell-mare — Surprising Feats of

the Muleteers and *Vaqueros* — The *Lazo* and its Uses — Ridiculous Usages of the Country in regard to the Ownership of Animals — Anecdote of a Mexican Colonel — The *Burro* or domestic Ass and its Virtues — Shepherds and their Habits — The Itinerant Herds of the Plains — Sagacity of the Shepherd's Dog — The Sheep Trade — Destruction of Cattle by the Indians — Philosophical Notions of the Marauders — Excellent Mutton — Goats and their Utility — Wild Animals and their Character — A 'Bear Scrape' — Wolves, Panthers, Wild Birds and Reptiles — The Honey-bee, etc., . . . 312

CHAPTER X

Condition of the Arts and Sciences in New Mexico — Neglect of Education — Primary Schools — Geographical Ignorance — Female Accomplishments — Imported Refinements — Peculiarities of Language, etc.— Condition of the Public Press — State of Medical Science — The Mechanical Arts — Carpentry and Cabinet Work — State of Architecture — Dwelling Houses and their Peculiarities — Rustic Furniture — Curiously constructed Vehicles — Manufacture of Blankets — Other Fabrics — Want of Machinery. . . . 329

CHAPTER XI

Style of Dress in New Mexico — Riding-dress of the *Caballero* — Horse Trappings — The *Rebozo* — Passion for Jewelry — Apparel of the Female Peasantry — 'Wheeled Tarantulas' — General Appearance of the People — Tawny Complexion — Singular Mode of Painting the Human Face — Striking Traits of Character — Alms-giving — Beggars and their Tricks — Wonderful Cure of Paralysis — Lack of Arms and Officers — Traits of Boldness among the Yeomanry — Politeness and Suavity of the Mexicans — Remarks of Mr. Poinsett — Peculiarities observed in Epistolary Intercourse — Salutations — *La Siesta*. . . . 339

COMMERCE OF THE PRAIRIES

[PART I]

CHAPTER I

Origin and progressive Development of the Santa Fé Trade — Captain Pike's Narrative — Pursley — La Lande — Expedition of McKnight and others — Glenn — Becknell — Cooper — Sufferings of Captain Becknell and his Companions — First Introduction of wheeled Vehicles — Colonel Marmaduke — Hostility of the Indians — Re-
criminations — Indian Ethics — Increase of Outrages — Major Riley's Escort — Annoyed by the Indians — Government Protection — Composition of a Caravan.

THE overland trade between the United States and the northern provinces of Mexico, seems to have had no very definite origin; having been rather the result of accident than of any organized plan of commercial establishment. For a number of years its importance attracted no attention whatever. From Captain Pike's narrative we learn, that one James Pursley, after much wandering over the wild and then unexplored regions west of the Mississippi, finally fell in with some Indians on the Platte river, near its source in the Rocky Mountains; and obtaining information from them respecting the settlements [18] of New Mexico, he set out in company with a party of these savages, and descended, in 1805, to Santa Fé, where he remained for several years — perhaps till his death.⁷ It does not appear, however, that he took with him any considerable amount of merchandise.

⁷ Our knowledge of James Pursley is chiefly derived from the journals of Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, who met him in Santa Fé, and relates his adventures. Coming from Bardstown, Kentucky, to Missouri (1799), he set out on a hunting and trapping expedition in the spring of 1802 toward the sources of the Osage. There being robbed of his horses, he descended to the Missouri in a canoe, in time to join a party going up the river in search of trade. Going among the Paduca and Kiowa tribes, a sudden Sioux raid drove them into the mountains. The Indians sent Pursley to the neighboring Spanish settlements, to arrange for trade.

Although Captain Pike speaks of Pursley as the first *American* that ever crossed the desert plains into the Spanish provinces, it is nevertheless related by the same writer, that, in consequence of information obtained by the trappers, through the Indians, relative to this isolated province, a merchant of Kaskaskia, named Morrison,⁸ had already dispatched, as early as 1804, a *French Creole*, by the name of La Lande, up Platte river, with directions to push his way into Santa Fé, if the passage was at all practicable. The ingenious emissary was perfectly successful in his enterprise; but the kind and generous treatment of the natives overcame at once his patriotism and his probity. He neither returned to his employer nor accounted for the proceeds of his adventure. His expansive intellect readily conceived the advantages of setting up in business for himself upon this 'borrowed' capital; which he accordingly did, and remained there, not only unmolested, but honored and esteemed till his death, which occurred some fifteen or twenty years afterward — leaving a large family, and sufficient property to entitle him to the fame of *rico* among his neighbors.⁹

Glad to be once more among civilized people, the wanderer remained at Santa Fé plying his trade of carpenter, where Pike found him. Our only further knowledge is a notice in the *Missouri Intelligencer* (April 10, 1824), of a James Purcell lately returned from Santa Fé, where he had been a citizen for nineteen years. H. M. Chittenden conjectures that Purcell is the correct spelling of the name; *History of American Fur-Trade* (New York, 1902), ii, p. 493.— Ed.

⁸ William Morrison, a native of Pennsylvania, came to Kaskaskia in 1790, and embarked in a large mercantile business. With an uncle, who remained in Philadelphia, he founded the firm of Bryant and Morrison, which operated widely throughout Illinois and Upper Louisiana, maintaining a fleet of large boats plying between Pittsburg and New Orleans. Morrison built (1801) a large stone house at Kaskaskia, which during its owner's life was a centre of hospitality, and where he died in April, 1837.— Ed.

⁹ Baptiste Lalande was probably born in Illinois, as his name appears among the list of St. Clair County militia in 1790. Alexander Lalande was head of a Kaskaskia family, and by 1783 had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States. One of Pike's ostensible errands at Santa Fé was to recover for Morri-

The Santa Fé trade attracted very little notice, [19] however, until the return of Captain Pike,¹⁰ whose exciting descriptions of the new El Dorado spread like wildfire throughout the western country. In 1812, an expedition was fitted out under the auspices of Messrs. McKnight, Beard, Chambers, and several others (in all about a dozen), who, following the directions of Captain Pike across the dreary western wilds, finally succeeded in reaching [20]

son's firm from this renegade trader. Lalande, however, sought the American officer, in the capacity of a spy from the Mexican government; after being discovered, he was declared too poor to pay Morrison's claim. José Augustin de Escudero, in his *Noticias Historicas* (Mexico, 1849), says that on Lalande's death he left much property and many descendants.—ED.

¹⁰ This celebrated officer, who was afterwards promoted to the rank of General, and died in the achievement of the glorious victory at York, Upper Canada, in 1813, was sent, in 1806, on an exploring expedition up the Arkansas, with instructions to pass to the sources of Red River, for which those of the Canadian were then mistaken. Captain Pike, however, even passed around the head of the latter; and, crossing the mountain with an almost incredible degree of peril and suffering, he descended upon the Rio del Norte with his little party, then but fifteen in number. Believing himself now upon Red River, within the then assumed bounds of the United States, he erected a small fortification for his company, till the opening of the spring of 1807 should enable him to continue his descent to Natchitoches. As he was within the Mexican territory, however, and but sixty to eighty miles from the northern settlements, his position was soon discovered, and a force sent out to take him into Santa Fé, which, by a treacherous manœuvre, was effected without opposition. The Spanish officer assured him that the Governor, learning he had missed his way, had sent animals and an escort to convey his men and baggage to a navigable point on *Red River* (Rio Colorado), and that his Excellency desired very much to see him at Santa Fé, which might be taken on their way. As soon, however, as the Governor had Captain Pike in his power, he sent him with his men to the Commandant General at Chihuahua, where most of his papers were seized, and he and his party were sent under an escort, via San Antonio de Bexar, to the United States.

The narrative of Captain Pike gives a full account of this expedition, both previous and subsequent to its interruption by the Spaniards; but as this work is now rarely met with, the foregoing note may not be deemed altogether supererogatory. Many will believe and assert to the present day, however, that this expedition had some connection with the famous project of Aaron Burr; yet the noble and patriotic character of the officer who conducted it, will not permit us to countenance such an aspersion.—GREGG.

Comment by Ed. Consult on this point the evidence offered by Elliott Coues, *Expeditions of Zebulon M. Pike* (New York, 1895), ii, pp. 499, 565, 571.

Santa Fé in safety. But these new adventurers were destined to experience trials and disappointments of which they had formed no conception. Believing that the declaration of Independence by Hidalgo, in 1810, had completely removed those injurious restrictions which had hitherto rendered all foreign intercourse, except by special permission from the Spanish Government, illegal, they were wholly unprepared to encounter the embarrassments with which despotism and tyranny invariably obstruct the path of the stranger. They were doubtless ignorant that the patriotic chief Hidalgo had already been arrested and executed, that the royalists had once more regained the ascendancy, and that all foreigners, but particularly Americans, were now viewed with unusual suspicion.¹¹ The result was that the luckless traders, immediately upon their arrival, were seized as spies, their goods and chattels confiscated, and themselves thrown into the *calabozos* of Chihuahua, where most of them were kept in rigorous confinement for the space of nine years; when the republican forces under Iturbide getting again in the ascendant,¹² McKnight and his comrades were finally set at liberty. It is said that two of the party contrived, early in 1821, to return to the United States in a canoe, which they succeeded in forcing down the Canadian fork of the Arkansas.¹³ The stories promulgated by these

¹¹ Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, patriot priest of Mexico, raised the standard of revolt in his parish of Dolores, September, 1810. At first successful, he was later captured (March 21, 1811), while trying to escape through the northern provinces to the United States. After trial and degradation from his priestly offices, he was shot, July 31, 1811. American sympathies were largely with the revolutionists.—ED.

¹² For Iturbide, see Pattie's *Narrative*, in our volume xviii, note 141.—ED.

¹³ The names of this party are given in *Annals of Congress*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., 1954-1966, in relating an unsuccessful attempt (1817-18) of the state department to secure their release from the Spanish authorities. James Baird appears to have been the leader, although Robert McKnight was also prominent. According to the report of John Scott, a Missouri congressman, orders for their release were issued in 1817; but no passport accompanying this order, no person from Missouri

men soon induced others to launch into the same field of enterprise, [21] among whom was a merchant of Ohio, named Glenn, who, at the time, had an Indian trading-house near the mouth of the Verdigris river. Having taken the circuitous route up the Arkansas towards the mountains, this pioneer trader encountered a great deal of trouble and privation, but eventually reached Santa Fé with his little caravan, before the close of 1821, in perfect safety.¹⁴

During the same year, Captain Becknell, of Missouri, with four trusty companions, went out to Santa Fé by the far western prairie route. This intrepid little band started from the vicinity of Franklin, with the original purpose of trading with the Iatan or Comanche Indians; but having fallen in accidentally with a party of Mexican rangers, when near the Mountains, they were easily prevailed upon to accompany them to the new emporium, where, notwithstanding the trifling amount of merchandise they were possessed of, they realized a very handsome profit. The fact is, that up to this date New Mexico had derived all her supplies from the Internal Provinces by the way of Vera Cruz; but at such exorbitant rates, that common calicoes, and even bleached and brown domestic goods, sold as high as

dared venture overland to New Mexico — which suggests one reason why the Santa Fé commerce languished at this period. Compare also the experiences of Chouteau and De Munn, related in Chittenden, *Fur-Trade*, ii, pp. 497-500, *Annals of Congress*, 15 Cong., 2 sess., 1957-1966. McKnight's brother, John, went to Mexico in 1821, and either through his efforts, or because of the revolutionary movement the men were released. Gregg relates (*post*) Baird's further connection with the Santa Fé trade. McKnight returned and made a fortune in the Santa Rita mines, which he finally abandoned because of Apache hostilities. See John T. Hughes, *Doniphan's Expedition* (Cincinnati, 1848), p. 213. Henry Inman, *Old Santa Fé Trail* (New York, 1897), p. 41, says Robert McKnight was murdered by Indians in 1822; this was his brother John.—ED.

¹⁴ For this expedition of Glenn, consult Elliott Coues, *Journal of Jacob Fowler* (New York, 1898), who accompanied the party. See also Nuttall's *Journal*, volume xiii in our series, pp. 61, 62; and James's *Long's Expedition*, our volume xvi, note 89.—ED.

two and three dollars per *vara* (or Spanish yard of thirty-three inches). Becknell returned to the United States alone the succeeding winter, leaving the rest of his company at Santa Fé.¹⁶

The favorable reports brought by the enterprising Captain, stimulated others to embark [22] in the trade; and early in the following May, Colonel Cooper and sons, from the same neighborhood, accompanied by several others (their whole number about fifteen), set out with four or five thousand dollars' worth of goods, which they transported upon pack-horses.¹⁶ They steered directly for Taos, where they arrived without any remarkable occurrence.¹⁷

The next effort of Captain Becknell was attended with very different success. With a company amounting to near thirty men, and perhaps five thousand dollars' worth of goods of various descriptions, he started from Missouri, about a month after Colonel Cooper. Being an excellent woodsman, and anxious to avoid the circuitous route of the Upper Arkansas country, he resolved this time, after having

¹⁶ The date of this first expedition of Captain William Becknell is variously given by secondary writers all the way from 1812 (Inman) to 1822 (Chittenden). Gregg is correct, as is proved by the *Journal* of this pioneer trader, published in the *Missouri Intelligencer* for April 22, 1823. They left Arrow Rock Ferry (near Franklin, Missouri), September 1, 1821; the thirteenth of November, they encountered a party of Spanish troops, who brought them to San Miguel, where they found a Frenchman who could act as interpreter. At Santa Fé they "were received with apparent pleasure and joy," visited the governor, and on December 13, Becknell, with one companion, started for Missouri, which they reached safely in forty-eight days.—ED.

¹⁶ For the Cooper family, see Brackenridge's *Journal*, in our volume vi, note 11. The leader of the first Santa Fé expedition was Colonel Benjamin Cooper, who was accompanied by his nephews, Braxton and Stephen — *Senate Ex. Docs.*, 18 Cong., 2 sess., 79. Braxton was later killed by the Comanche (Draper MSS. 23585, 135), on the confines of New Mexico. Stephen led a party of his own in 1823. Later he became a California pioneer, and as late as 1883 was living in Colusa. See his own account of his adventures and sufferings on the Santa Fé trail, in *History of Howard and Cooper Counties* (St. Louis, 1883), pp. 152-155.—ED.

¹⁷ For Taos, see Pattie's *Narrative*, in our volume xviii, p. 73, note 44.—ED.

reached that point on the Arkansas river since known as the 'Caches,' to steer more directly for Santa Fé, entertaining little or no suspicion of the terrible trials which awaited him across the pathless desert. With no other guide but the starry heavens, and, it may be, a pocket-compass, the party embarked upon the arid plains which extended far and wide before them to the Cimarron river.

The adventurous band pursued their forward course without being able to procure any water, except from the scanty supply they carried in their canteens. As this source of relief was completely exhausted after two days' march, the sufferings of both men and beasts had driven them almost to distraction. [23] The forlorn band were at last reduced to the cruel necessity of killing their dogs, and cutting off the ears of their mules, in the vain hope of assuaging their burning thirst with the hot blood. This only served to irritate the parched palates, and madden the senses of the sufferers. Frantic with despair, in prospect of the horrible death which now stared them in the face, they scattered in every direction in search of that element which they had left behind them in such abundance, but without success.

Frequently led astray by the deceptive glimmer of the mirage, or false ponds, as those treacherous oases of the desert are called, and not suspecting (as was really the case) that they had already arrived near the banks of the Cimarron, they resolved to retrace their steps to the Arkansas. But they now were no longer equal to the task, and would undoubtedly have perished in those arid regions, had not a buffalo, fresh from the river's side, and with a stomach distended with water, been discovered by some of the party, just as the last rays of hope were receding from their vision. The hapless intruder was immediately dispatched, and an invigorating draught procured from its stomach. I have

since heard one of the parties to that expedition declare, that nothing ever passed his lips which gave him such exquisite delight as his first draught of that filthy beverage.

This providential relief enabled some of the strongest men of the party to reach the [24] river, where they filled their canteens, and then hurried back to the assistance of their comrades, many of whom they found prostrate on the ground, and incapable of further exertion. By degrees, however, they were all enabled to resume their journey; and following the course of the Arkansas for several days, thereby avoiding the arid regions which had occasioned them so much suffering, they succeeded in reaching Taos (sixty or seventy miles north of Santa Fé) without further difficulty. Although travellers have since suffered excessively with thirst upon the same desert, yet, having become better acquainted with the topography of the country, no other equally thrilling incidents have subsequently transpired.¹⁸

It is from this period — the year 1822 — that the virtual commencement of the SANTA FÉ TRADE may be dated. The next remarkable era in its history is the first attempt to introduce wagons in these expeditions. This was made in 1824 by a company of traders, about eighty in number, among whom were several gentlemen of intelligence from Missouri, who contributed, by their superior skill and undaunted energy, to render the enterprise completely successful. A portion of this company employed pack-mules: among the rest were owned twenty-five wheeled vehicles, of which one or two were stout road-wagons, two were carts,

¹⁸ Gregg is the only one to narrate the sufferings from thirst experienced by this second caravan of Becknell. He is incorrect, however, concerning two particulars furnished by the journal of Becknell (see note 15, *ante*) — this was the first expedition going out with wagons, and its New Mexican terminus was San Miguel, not Taos. *Senate Ex. Docs.*, 18 Cong., 2 sess., 79. These facts establish Becknell as the founder of the Santa Fé trail, as followed for the next twenty years. See Chittenden, *Fur-Trade*, ii, pp. 501-506. All that is known of Becknell's later life is the trapping journey to Green River (1824).— ED.

and the rest dearborn carriages — the whole conveying some \$25,000 or \$30,000 worth of merchandise. Colonel Marmaduke, [25] the present Governor of the State of Missouri,¹⁹ having formed one of the party, has been pleased to place his diary of that eventful journey at my disposal; but want of space necessarily compels me to pass over the many interesting and exciting incidents which it contains. Suffice it to say that the caravan reached Santa Fé with much less difficulty than must have been anticipated from a first experiment with wheeled vehicles. The route, indeed, appears to have presented fewer obstacles than any ordinary road of equal length in the United States.

It was not until several years after this experiment, however, that adventurers with large capital began seriously to embark in the Santa Fé trade.²⁰ The early traders having but seldom experienced any molestations from the Indians, generally crossed the plains in detached bands, each individual rarely carrying more than two or three hundred dollars' worth of stock. This peaceful season, however, did not last very long; and it is greatly to be feared that the traders were not always innocent of having instigated the savage hostilities that ensued in after years. Many seemed to forget the wholesome precept, that they should not be savages

¹⁹ Meredith Miles Marmaduke was a native of Westmoreland County, Virginia, (August 28, 1791), where he had served as colonel of county militia in the War of 1812-15. About 1824 he came to Missouri for his health, and settling at Old Franklin, embarked in the Santa Fé trade. After six years in this enterprise, in which he was very successful, he settled near Arrow Rock, in Saline County, and was soon a public servant, acting as county judge and holding other offices of trust. As a strong Jackson Democrat he was elected lieutenant-governor of Missouri in 1840, and upon the death of Governor Reynolds (1844), served for a few months as governor. In 1847 he was member of the Missouri constitutional convention; and upon the outbreak of the War of Secession was a strong unionist. He died at his home near Arrow Rock, March 26, 1864. Two of his sons were Confederate officers, and one of them was governor of his state in 1884.— ED.

²⁰ For a list of the early caravans and their leaders, etc., see Chittenden, *Fur-Trade*, ii, pp. 508-510.— ED.

themselves because they dealt with savages. Instead of cultivating friendly feelings with those few who remained peaceful and honest, there was an occasional one always disposed to kill, even in cold blood, every Indian that fell into their power, merely because some of [26] the tribe had committed some outrage either against themselves or their friends.

Since the commencement of this trade, returning parties have performed the homeward journey across the plains with the proceeds of their enterprise, partly in specie, and partly in furs, buffalo rugs and animals. Occasionally, these straggling bands would be set upon by marauding Indians, but if well armed and of resolute spirit, they found very little difficulty in persuading the savages to let them pass unmolested; for, as Mr. Storrs very justly remarks, in his representation presented by Colonel Benton, in 1825, to the United States Senate, the Indians are always willing to compromise when they find that they cannot rob "without losing the lives of their warriors, which they hardly ever risk, unless for revenge or in open warfare."²¹

The case was very different with those who through carelessness or recklessness ventured upon the wild prairies without a sufficient supply of arms. A story is told of a small band of twelve men, who, while encamped on the Cimarron river, in 1826, with but four serviceable guns between them, were visited by a party of Indians (believed

²¹ Thomas Hart Benton, senator from Missouri (1821-51), introduced a bill in the last session of the eighteenth congress (1824-25) to authorize the building of a road from Missouri through the Indian country to the borders of New Mexico. To demonstrate its importance, he presented a paper from Augustus Storrs, formerly of New Hampshire, then employed in the Santa Fé trade, setting forth the progress and returns of this branch of commerce (*Niles Register*, xxvii, pp. 312-316). Gregg quotes from this paper. See Thomas H. Benton, *Thirty Years' View* (New York, 1854), chapter xvi; *Debates of Cong.*, 18 Cong., 2 sess., 7. The bill passed into a law, whose signature was one of Monroe's last official acts. Stephen Cooper was one of those employed in marking out this road. See his reminiscences, cited in note 16, *ante*.—ED.

to be Arrapahoes),²² who made at first strong demonstrations of friendship and good will. Observing the defenceless condition of the traders, they went away, but soon returned about thirty strong, each provided with a *lazo*, and all on foot. The chief then began by informing the Americans that his men were tired of walking, and must have horses. Thinking it folly [27] to offer any resistance, the terrified traders told them if one animal apiece would satisfy them, to go and catch them. This they soon did; but finding their requests so easily complied with, the Indians held a little parley together, which resulted in a new demand for more — they must now have two apiece. “Well, catch them!” was the acquiescent reply of the unfortunate band — upon which the savages mounted those they had already secured, and, swinging their lazos over their heads, plunged among the stock with a furious yell, and drove off the entire *caballada* of near five hundred head of horses, mules and asses.

The fall of 1828 proved still more fatal to the traders on their homeward trip; for by this time the Indians had learned to form a correct estimate of the stock with which the return companies were generally provided. Two young men named McNees and Monroe, having carelessly lain down to sleep on the banks of a stream, since known as McNees's creek, were barbarously shot, with their own guns, as it was supposed, in very sight of the caravan. When their comrades came up, they found McNees lifeless, and the other almost expiring.²³ In this state the latter was carried nearly forty miles to the Cimarron river, where he died, and was buried according to the custom of the Prairies.²⁴

²² For the Arapaho, consult Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 225, note 120.— ED.

²³ Daniel Monroe and young McNees, son of Samuel, were both from Franklin, Missouri.— ED.

²⁴ These funerals are usually performed in a very summary manner. A grave is dug in a convenient spot, and the corpse, with no other shroud than its own

[28] Just as the funeral ceremonies were about to be concluded, six or seven Indians appeared on the opposite side of the Cimarron. Some of the party proposed inviting them to a parley, while the rest, burning for revenge, evinced a desire to fire upon them at once. It is more than probable, however, that the Indians were not only innocent but ignorant of the outrage that had been committed, or they would hardly have ventured to approach the caravan. Being quick of perception, they very soon saw the belligerent attitude assumed by some of the company, and therefore wheeled round and attempted to escape. One shot was fired, which wounded a horse and brought the Indian to the ground, when he was instantly riddled with balls! Almost simultaneously another discharge of several guns followed, by which all the rest were either killed or mortally wounded, except one, who escaped to bear to his tribe the news of their dreadful catastrophe!

These wanton cruelties had a most disastrous effect upon the prospects of the trade; for the exasperated children of the desert became more and more hostile to the 'pale faces,' against whom they continued to wage a cruel war for many successive years. In fact, this same party suffered very severely a few days afterwards. They were pursued by the enraged comrades of the slain savages to the Arkansas river, where they were robbed of nearly a thousand head of mules and horses. But the Indians were not yet satisfied. Having [29] beset a company of about twenty men, who followed shortly after, they killed one of their number, and subsequently took from them all the animals they had in their possession. The unfortunate band were now not only compelled to advance on foot, but were even constrained to

clothes, and only a blanket for a coffin, is consigned to the earth. The grave is then usually filled up with stones or poles, as a safe-guard against the voracious wolves of the prairies.—GREGG.

carry nearly a thousand dollars each upon their backs to the Arkansas river, where it was *cached* (concealed in the ground) till a conveyance was procured to transfer it to the United States.

Such repeated and daring outrages induced the traders to petition the Federal Government for an escort of United States troops. The request having been granted, Major Riley,²⁵ with three companies of infantry and one of riflemen, was ordered to accompany the caravan which left in the spring of 1829. The escort stopped at Chouteau's Island, on the Arkansas river, and the traders thence pursued their journey through the sand-hills beyond.²⁶ They had hardly advanced six or seven miles, when a startling incident occurred which made them wish once more for the company of the gallant Major and his well-disciplined troops. A vanguard of three men, riding a few hundred yards ahead, had just dismounted for the purpose of satisfying their thirst, when a band of Kiawas, one of the most savage tribes that infest the western prairies,²⁷ rushed upon them from the immense hillocks of sand which lay scattered

²⁵ Bennett Riley was born in Alexandria, Virginia (1787), and entered the army from Maryland as an ensign in 1813. He attained a captaincy in 1818, and for long and efficient service was breveted major in 1828. He was an adept at campaigning on the plains, leading a wing of the Arikara expedition in 1823, and being distinguished for bravery in the Seminole war. In the Mexican war, he was a trusted lieutenant of General Winfield Scott, who publicly attributed much of his success at Monterey and Cerro Gordo to Colonel Riley's prowess. In 1847, he became brigadier-general, and the next year was sent in command of the division of the West to California, where he acted as last territorial governor, and aided in forming the state constitution. On his departure from California (1850), his popularity was signalized by testimonials of popular respect. He died in Buffalo in 1853.—ED.

²⁶ Chouteau Island was in the upper Ford of the Arkansas River, just above the present town of Hartland, Kearney County, Kansas. The name dates from the disastrous expedition of 1815-1817 (see note 134, in our volume xv) when Chouteau retreated to this island to withstand a Comanche attack. For the Chouteaus, see our volume xvi, p. 275, note 127.—ED.

²⁷ For the Kiowa, see our volume xv, p. 157, note 48.—ED.

in all directions. The three men sprang upon their animals, but two only who had horses were [30] enabled to make their escape to the wagons; the third, a Mr. Lamme, who was unfortunately mounted upon a mule, was overtaken, slain and scalped before any one could come to his assistance.²⁸ Somewhat alarmed at the boldness of the Indians, the traders dispatched an express to Major Riley, who immediately ordered his tents to be struck; and such was the rapidity of his movements, that when he appeared before the anxious caravan every one was lost in astonishment. The reinforcement having arrived in the night, the enemy could have obtained no knowledge of the fact, and would no doubt have renewed the attack in the morning, when they would have received a wholesome lesson from the troops, had not the *reveille* been sounded through mistake, at which they precipitately retreated. The escort now continued with the company as far as Sand creek,²⁹ when, perceiving no further signs of danger, they returned to the Arkansas, to await the return of the caravan in the ensuing fall.³⁰

The position of Major Riley on the Arkansas was one of serious and continual danger. Scarce a day passed without his being subjected to some new annoyance from predatory Indians. The latter appeared, indeed, resolved to check all further concourse of the whites upon the Prairies; and fearful of the terrible extremes to which their excesses might be carried, the traders continued to unite in single caravans during many years afterwards, for the sake of

²⁸ Samuel Craig Lamme, a merchant of Franklin, Missouri, who had lately come thither from Harrison County, Kentucky. See *Niles Register*, xxxvii, p. 230.—ED.

²⁹ For Sand Creek, see James's *Long's Expedition*, in our volume xvi, note 78.—ED.

³⁰ Major Riley continued in this vicinity until October, when he met the returning caravan, escorted by Mexican troops under command of Colonel Vizcarra, with whom civilities were exchanged. For Riley's report of his summer's experiences, consult *American State Papers*, "Military Affairs," iv, pp. 277-280.—ED.

mutual protection. [31] This escort under Major Riley, and one composed of about sixty dragoons, commanded by Captain Wharton, in 1834,³¹ constituted the only government protection ever afforded to the Santa Fé trade, until 1843, when large escorts under Captain Cook accompanied two different caravans as far as the Arkansas river.³²

Of the composition and organization of these trading caravans, I shall take occasion to speak, from my own experience, in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

Headquarters of the Santa Fé Trade — Independence and its *Locale* — A Prairie Trip an excellent Remedy for Chronic Diseases — Supplies for the Journey — Wagons, Mules and Oxen — Art of Loading Wagons — Romancing Propensity of Travellers — The Departure — Storms and Wagon-covers — Quagmires — Tricks of marauding Indians — Council Grove — Fancy *versus* Reality — Electioneering on the Prairies — The Organization — Amateur Travellers and Loafers — Duties of the Watch — Costumes and Equipment of the Party — Timbers for the Journey.

PEOPLE who reside at a distance, and especially at the North, have generally considered St. Louis as the emporium

³¹ There was some criticism in the press, of government protection for this trade, especially in view of its small value; therefore the request for an escort in 1830 was refused, and no others granted until 1834.

Clifton Wharton, of Pennsylvania, entered the army in 1818 as second lieutenant. He attained his captaincy in 1826, and was appointed to the regiment of dragoons in 1836. Passing through successive ranks, he became colonel in 1846, and died two years later.— ED.

³² General Philip St. George Cooke was born in Virginia (1809), and after graduating from West Point (1827) entered the army, in which he continued for forty-six years. His first active service was connected with the Black Hawk War, wherein he served with the regulars at the battle of Bad Axe (August 1, 1832); the next year, he was appointed lieutenant in the dragoons, and captain two years later. During the Mexican War, he was with Kearny in New Mexico and California, returning in time to enter the City of Mexico with Scott, in 1848. At the outbreak of the War of Secession, he decided for the union, and commanded the cavalry in the peninsula campaign. At the close of this war he was successively commander of the departments of the Platte, and of the Great Lakes, retiring in 1873. He died March 20, 1895. His experiences during the escort of the caravan here referred to, are found in his *Scenes and Adventures in the Army* (New York, 1857), pp. 236-282. He also published *Conquest of New Mexico and California* (New York, 1878).— ED.

of the Santa Fé Trade; but that city, in truth, has never been a place of rendezvous, nor even of outfit, except for a small portion of the traders who have started from its immediate vicinity. The town of Franklin on the Missouri river, over a hundred and fifty miles further to the westward, seems truly to have been the cradle of our trade; and, in conjunction with several neighboring towns, continued for many years to furnish the greater number of these adventurous traders.³³ Even subsequently to 1831, many wagons have been fitted out and started from this interior section. But as the navigation [33] of the Missouri river had considerably advanced towards the year 1831, and the advantages of some point of debarkation nearer the western frontier were very evident, whereby upwards of a hundred miles of troublesome land-carriage, over unimproved and often miry roads, might be avoided, the new town of INDEPENDENCE, but twelve miles from the Indian border and two or three south of the Missouri river, being the most eligible point, soon began to take the lead as a place of debarkation, outfit and departure, which, in spite of all opposition, it has ever since maintained. It is to this beautiful spot, already grown up to be a thriving town, that the prairie adventurer, whether in search of wealth, health or amusement, is latterly in the habit of repairing, about the first of May, as the caravans usually set out some time during that month. Here they purchase their provisions for the road, and many of their mules, oxen, and even some of their wagons — in short,

³³ The town of Franklin, in the present Howard County, opposite the site of Booneville, was the first founded in Boone's Lick County (1816) — see our volume v, p. 52, note 24. The next year, it was made the county seat, and during the year following a land office was opened there. Franklin was the most important town west of St. Louis, at the beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century; but in 1823, the county seat was removed, and in 1828 the entire site was washed into the river. Many of the houses were removed two miles farther back to a place called New Franklin, but it never attained the prosperity of the old town.— ED.

load all their vehicles, and make their final preparations for a long journey across the prairie wilderness.³⁴

As Independence is a point of convenient access (the Missouri river being navigable at all times from March till November), it has become the general 'port of embarkation' for every part of the great western and northern 'prairie ocean.' Besides the Santa Fé caravans, most of the Rocky Mountain traders and trappers, as well as emigrants to Oregon, take this town in their route. During the [34] season of departure, therefore, it is a place of much bustle and active business.

Among the concourse of travellers at this 'starting point,' besides traders and tourists, a number of pale-faced invalids are generally to be met with. The Prairies have, in fact, become very celebrated for their sanative effects — more justly so, no doubt, than the most fashionable watering-places of the North. Most chronic diseases, particularly liver complaints, dyspepsias, and similar affections, are often radically cured; owing, no doubt, to the peculiarities of diet, and the regular exercise incident to prairie life, as well as to the purity of the atmosphere of those elevated unembarrassed regions. An invalid myself, I can answer for the efficacy of the remedy, at least in my own case. Though, like other valetudinarians, I was disposed to provide an ample supply of such commodities as I deemed necessary for my comfort and health, I was not long upon the prairies before I discovered that most of such extra preparations were unnecessary, or at least quite dispensable. A few knick-knacks, as a little tea, rice, fruits, crackers, etc.,

³⁴ Independence, seat for Jackson County, Missouri, five miles east of Kansas City, was laid out in 1827, and by 1831 had become the western rendezvous both for the Santa Fé and the Oregon traffic. Its early settlers were chiefly Tennesseans and Kentuckians. It was connected with the Mormon migration of 1831-33 and nearly two thousand votaries of that faith yet reside in the vicinity. It is now a railway centre, and a residential suburb for Kansas City, and in 1900 had a population of nearly seven thousand.— ED.

suffice very well for the first fortnight, after which the invalid is generally able to take the fare of the hunter and teamster. Though I set out myself in a carriage, before the close of the first week I saddled my pony; and when we reached the buffalo range, I was not only as eager for the chase as the sturdiest of my companions, but I enjoyed far more exquisitely my share of the buffalo, [35] than all the delicacies which were ever devised to provoke the most fastidious appetite.

The ordinary supplies for each man's consumption during the journey, are about fifty pounds of flour, as many more of bacon, ten of coffee and twenty of sugar, and a little salt. Beans, crackers, and trifles of that description, are comfortable appendages, but being looked upon as *dispensable* luxuries, are seldom to be found in any of the stores on the road. The buffalo is chiefly depended upon for fresh meat, and great is the joy of the traveller when that noble animal first appears in sight.

The wagons now most in use upon the Prairies are manufactured in Pittsburg; and are usually drawn by eight mules or the same number of oxen. Of late years, however, I have seen much larger vehicles employed, with ten or twelve mules harnessed to each, and a cargo of goods of about five thousand pounds in weight. At an early period the horse was more frequently in use, as mules were not found in great abundance; but as soon as the means for procuring these animals increased, the horse was gradually and finally discarded, except occasionally for riding and the chase.

Oxen having been employed by Major Riley for the baggage wagons of the escort which was furnished the caravan of 1829, they were found, to the surprise of the traders, to perform almost equal to mules. Since that time, upon an average about half of the wagons [36] in these expeditions have been drawn by oxen. They possess many advantages,

such as pulling heavier loads than the same number of mules, particularly through muddy or sandy places; but they generally fall off in strength as the prairie grass becomes drier and shorter, and often arrive at their destination in a most shocking plight. In this condition I have seen them sacrificed at Santa Fé for ten dollars the pair; though in more favorable seasons, they sometimes remain strong enough to be driven back to the United States the same fall. Therefore, although the original cost of a team of mules is much greater, the loss ultimately sustained by them is usually less,— to say nothing of the comfort of being able to travel faster and more at ease. The inferiority of oxen as regards endurance is partially owing to the tenderness of their feet; for there are very few among the thousands who have travelled on the Prairies that ever knew how to shoe them properly. Many have resorted to the curious expedient of shoeing their animals with 'moccasins' made of raw buffalo-skin, which does remarkably well as long as the weather remains dry; but when wet, they are soon worn through. Even mules, for the most part, perform the entire trip without being shod at all; though the hoofs often become very smooth, which frequently renders all their movements on the dry grassy surface nearly as laborious as if they were treading on ice.

The supplies being at length procured, and [37] all necessary preliminaries systematically gone through, the trader begins the difficult task of loading his wagons. Those who understand their business, take every precaution so to stow away their packages that no jolting on the road can afterwards disturb the order in which they had been disposed. The ingenuity displayed on these occasions has frequently been such, that after a tedious journey of eight hundred miles, the goods have been found to have sustained much less injury, than they would have experienced on a turn-

pike-road, or from the ordinary handling of property upon our western steam-boats.

The next great difficulty the traders have to encounter is in training those animals that have never before been worked, which is frequently attended by an immensity of trouble. There is nothing, however, in the mode of harnessing and conducting teams in prairie travelling, which differs materially from that practised on the public highways throughout the States,—the representations of certain travellers to the contrary, notwithstanding. From the amusing descriptions which are sometimes given by this class of writers, one would be apt to suppose that they had never seen a wagon or a team of mules before, or that they had just emerged for the first time from the purlieus of a large city. The propensity evinced by these writers for giving an air of romance to everything they have either seen or heard, would seem to imply a conviction on their part, that no statement of [38] unvarnished facts can ever be stamped with the seal of the world's approbation — that a work, in order to prove permanently attractive, should teem with absurdities and abound in exaggerated details. How far such an assumption would be correct, I shall not pause to inquire.

At last all are fairly launched upon the broad prairie — the miseries of preparation are over — the thousand anxieties occasioned by wearisome consultations and delays are felt no more. The charioteer, as he smacks his whip, feels a bounding elasticity of soul within him, which he finds it impossible to restrain;—even the mules prick up their ears with a peculiarly conceited air, as if in anticipation of that change of scene which will presently follow. Harmony and good feeling prevail everywhere. The hilarious song, the *bon mot* and the witty repartee, go round in quick succession; and before people have had leisure to take cognizance of the fact, the lovely village of Independence,

with its multitude of associations, is already lost to the eye.

It was on the 15th of May, 1831, and one of the brightest and most lovely of all the days in the calendar, that our little party set out from Independence. The general rendezvous at Council Grove was our immediate destination. It is usual for the traders to travel thus far in detached parties, and to assemble there for the purpose of entering into some kind of organization, for mutual security [39] and defence during the remainder of the journey. It was from thence that the formation of the *Caravan* was to be dated, and the chief interest of our journey to commence: therefore, to this point we all looked forward with great anxiety. The intermediate travel was marked by very few events of any interest. As the wagons had gone before us, and we were riding in a light carriage, we were able to reach the Round Grove, about thirty-five miles distant, on the first day, where we joined the rear division of the caravan, comprising about thirty wagons.³⁵

On the following day we had a foretaste of those protracted, drizzling spells of rain, which, at this season of the year, so much infest the frontier prairies. It began sprinkling about dark, and continued pouring without let or hinderance for forty-eight hours in succession; and as the rain was accompanied by a heavy north-wester, and our camp was pitched in the open prairie, without a stick of available timber within a mile of us, it must be allowed that the whole formed a prelude anything but flattering to valetudinarians. For my own part, finding the dearborn carriage in which I had a berth not exactly water-proof, I rolled myself in a blanket and lay snugly coiled upon a

³⁵ Round Grove, also called "Lone Elm" and "The Glen," was on the headwaters of Cedar Creek, between Olathe and Gardner, Johnson County, Missouri. So far the Oregon Trail coincided with that of Santa Fé, but branched north a few miles beyond.—ED.

tier of boxes and bales, under cover of a wagon, and thus managed to escape a very severe drenching.

It may be proper to observe here, for the benefit of future travellers, that in order to make a secure shelter for the cargo, against [40] the inclemencies of the weather, there should be spread upon each wagon a pair of stout Osnaburg sheets, with one of sufficient width to reach the bottom of the body on each side, so as to protect the goods from driving rains. By omitting this important precaution many packages of merchandise have been seriously injured. Some have preferred lining the exterior of the wagon-body by tacking a simple strip of sheeting all around it. On the outward trips especially, a pair of Mackinaw blankets can be advantageously spread betwixt the two sheets, which effectually secures the roof against the worst of storms. This contrivance has also the merit of turning the blankets into a profitable item of trade, by enabling the owners to evade the custom-house officers, who would otherwise seize them as contraband articles.

The mischief of the storm did not exhaust itself, however, upon our persons. The loose animals sought shelter in the groves at a considerable distance from the encampment, and the wagoners being loth to turn out in search of them during the rain, not a few of course, when applied for, were missing. This, however, is no uncommon occurrence. Travellers generally experience far more annoyance from the straying of cattle during the first hundred miles, than at any time afterwards; because, apprehending no danger from the wild Indians (who rarely approach within two hundred miles of the border), they seldom keep any watch, although that is the very [41] time when a cattle-guard is most needed. It is only after some weeks' travel that the animals begin to feel attached to the caravan, which they then consider about as much their home as the stock-yard of a dairy farm.

After leaving this spot the troubles and vicissitudes of our journey began in good earnest; for on reaching the narrow ridge which separates the Osage and Kansas waters (known as 'the Narrows'),³⁶ we encountered a region of very troublesome quagmires. On such occasions it is quite common for a wagon to sink to the hubs in mud, while the surface of the soil all around would appear perfectly dry and smooth. To extricate each other's wagons we had frequently to employ double and triple teams, with 'all hands to the wheels' in addition — often led by the proprietors themselves up to the waist in mud and water.

Three or four days after this, and while crossing the head branches of the Osage river, we experienced a momentary alarm. Conspicuously elevated upon a rod by the roadside, we found a paper purporting to have been written by the Kansas agent, stating that a band of Pawnees were said to be lurking in the vicinity! The first excitement over, however, the majority of our party came to the conclusion that it was either a hoax of some of the company in advance, or else a stratagem of the Kaws (or Kansas Indians), who, as well as the Osages, prowl about those prairies, and steal from the caravans, during [42] the passage, when they entertain the slightest hope that their maraudings will be laid to others. They seldom venture further, however, than to seize upon an occasional stray animal, which they frequently do with the view alone of obtaining a reward for returning it to its owner. As to the Pawnees, the most experienced traders were well aware that they had not been known to frequent those latitudes since the commencement of the Santa Fé trade.³⁷ But what contributed as much as

³⁶ The Narrows, also called "Willow Springs" and "Wakarusa Point," was just west of Baldwin, where the affluents of Wakarusa Creek (Kansas tributary) and Ottawa Creek (of the Osage system) approach.— ED.

³⁷ For the Kansas and Osage, see our volume v, pp. 50, 67, notes 22, 37; for the Pawnee, Brackenridge's *Journal*, in our volume vi, p. 61, note 17.— ED.

anything else to lull the fears of the timid, was an accession to our forces of seventeen wagons which we overtook the same evening.

Early on the 26th of May we reached the long looked-for rendezvous of Council Grove, where we joined the main body of the caravan. Lest this imposing title suggest to the reader a snug and thriving village, it should be observed, that, on the day of our departure from Independence, we passed the last human abode upon our route; therefore, from the borders of Missouri to those of New Mexico not even an Indian settlement greeted our eyes.

This point is nearly a hundred and fifty miles from Independence, and consists of a continuous stripe of timber nearly half a mile in width, comprising the richest varieties of trees; such as oak, walnut, ash, elm, hickory, etc., and extending all along the valleys of a small stream known as 'Council Grove creek,' the principal branch of the Neosho [43] river. This stream is bordered by the most fertile bottoms and beautiful upland prairies, well adapted to cultivation: such indeed is the general character of the country from thence to Independence. All who have traversed these delightful regions, look forward with anxiety to the day when the Indian title to the land shall be extinguished, and flourishing 'white' settlements dispel the gloom which at present prevails over this uninhabited region. Much of this prolific country now belongs to the Shawnees and other Indians of the border, though some portion of it has never been allotted to any tribe.³⁸

Frequent attempts have been made by travellers to invest

³⁸ For the early history of the Shawnee, see in our volume i, Weiser's *Journal*, p. 23, note 13, and Croghan's *Journals*, p. 134, note 102. After 1818 the Shawnee lived in northern Ohio, upon a tract thirty miles square. Some years before (1793) a body had gone beyond the Mississippi, and received a grant from the Spanish Governor Carondelet. In 1825, General William Clark procured that tract in exchange for a larger one on the Kansas River, and thither in 1831 the Ohio Shawnee removed, and reunited the tribe. By a treaty in 1854, the Kansas land was ceded, and the remnant of the tribe removed to Indian Territory.—ED.

the Council Grove with a romantic sort of interest, of which the following fabulous vagary, which I find in a letter that went the rounds of our journals, is an amusing sample: "Here the Pawnee, Arapaho, Comanche, Loup and Eutaw Indians, all of whom were at war with each other, meet and smoke the pipe once a year." Now it is more than probable that not a soul of most of the tribes mentioned above ever saw the Council Grove. Whatever may be the interest attached to this place, however, on account of its historical or fanciful associations, one thing is very certain,—that the novice, even here, is sure to imagine himself in the midst of lurking savages. These visionary fears are always a source of no little merriment to the veteran of the field, who does not hesitate to travel, with a single wagon and a [44] comrade or two, or even alone, from the Arkansas river to Independence.

The facts connected with the designation of this spot are simply these. Messrs. Reeves, Sibley and Mathers, having been commissioned by the United States, in the year 1825, to mark a road from the confines of Missouri to Santa Fé,³⁹ met on this spot with some bands of Osages, with whom they concluded a treaty, whereby the Indians agreed to allow all citizens of the United States and Mexico to pass unmolested, and even to lend their aid to those engaged in the Santa Fé trade; for which they were to receive a gratification of eight hundred dollars in merchandise. The commissioners, on this occasion, gave to the place the name of 'Council Grove.'⁴⁰

³⁹ For the law authorizing this road, see note 21, *ante*. For George C. Sibley, consult our volume v, p. 66, note 36. Thomas Mather, a native of Connecticut (1795), came to Illinois in 1818, settling first at Kaskaskia, and removing to Springfield in 1835. He was a member of the Illinois legislature for several terms, and opposed the proposition to admit slavery to the state. He died in 1853.

Benjamin Reeves was probably from Kentucky.—Ed.

⁴⁰ Council Grove was one of the important stations on the Santa Fé trail. Cooke describes it as "a luxuriant heavily timbered bottom of the Neosho of about one hundred and sixty acres. . . . It is a charming grove, though somber, for we

But, although the route examined by the Commissioners named above, was partially marked out as far as the Arkansas, by raised mounds, it seems to have been of but little service to travellers, who continued to follow the trail previously made by the wagons, which is now the settled road to the region of the short 'buffalo grass.'

The designation of 'Council Grove,' after all, is perhaps the most appropriate that could be given to this place; for *we* there held a 'grand council,' at which the respective claims of the different 'aspirants to office' were considered, leaders selected, and a system of government agreed upon,— as is the standing custom of these promiscuous caravans. One would have supposed that electioneering [45] and 'party spirit' would hardly have penetrated so far into the wilderness: but so it was. Even in our little community we had our 'office-seekers' and their 'political adherents,' as earnest and as devoted as any of the modern school of politicians in the midst of civilization. After a great deal of bickering and wordy warfare, however, all the 'candidates' found it expedient to decline, and a gentleman by the name of Stanley, without seeking, or even desiring the 'office,' was unanimously proclaimed 'Captain of the Caravan.' The powers of this officer were undefined by any 'constitutional provision,' and consequently vague and uncertain: orders being only viewed as mere requests, they are often obeyed or neglected at the caprice of the subordinates. It is necessary to observe, however, that the captain is expected to direct the order of travel during the day, and to designate the camping-ground at night; with many other functions of a general character, in the exercise of which the company find it convenient to acquiesce. But the little attention

love the contrast to the vast plains hot and shadeless." A town at this site is now the seat of Morris County, Kansas, with a population of about two thousand five hundred.— ED.

that is paid to his commands in cases of emergency, I will leave the reader to become acquainted with, as I did, by observing their manifestations during the progress of the expedition.

But after this comes the principal task of organizing. The proprietors are first notified by 'proclamation' to furnish a list of their men and wagons. The latter are generally apportioned into four 'divisions,' particularly [46] when the company is large — and ours consisted of nearly a hundred wagons,⁴¹ besides a dozen of dearborns and other small vehicles, and two small cannons (a four and six pounder), each mounted upon a carriage. To each of these divisions, a 'lieutenant' was appointed, whose duty it was to inspect every ravine and creek on the route, select the best crossings, and superintend what is called in prairie parlance, the 'forming' of each encampment.

Upon the calling of the roll, we were found to muster an efficient force of nearly two hundred men without counting invalids or other disabled bodies, who, as a matter of course, are exempt from duty. There is nothing so much dreaded by inexperienced travellers as the ordeal of guard duty. But no matter what the condition or employment of the individual may be, no one has the smallest chance of evading the 'common law of the prairies.' The amateur tourist and the listless loafer are precisely in the same wholesome predicament—they must all take their regular turn at the watch. There is usually a set of genteel idlers attached to every caravan, whose wits are forever at work in devising schemes for whiling away their irksome hours at the expense of others. By embarking in these 'trips of pleasure,' they are enabled to live without expense; for the hospitable traders seldom refuse to accommodate even a loafing companion [47] with

⁴¹ About half of these wagons were drawn by ox-teams, the rest by mules.—
The capital in merchandise of the whole caravan was about \$200,000.—GREGG.

a berth at their mess without charge. But then these lounging *attachés* are expected at least to do good service by way of guard duty. None are even permitted to furnish a substitute, as is frequently done in military expeditions, for he that would undertake to stand the tour of another besides his own, would scarcely be watchful enough for the dangers of the Prairies. Even the invalid must be able to produce unequivocal proofs of his inability, or it is a chance if the plea is admitted. For my own part, although I started on the 'sick list,' and though the prairie sentinel must stand fast and brook the severest storm (for then it is that the strictest watch is necessary), I do not remember ever having missed my post but once during the whole journey.

The usual number of watches is eight, each standing a fourth of every alternate night. When the party is small the number is generally reduced; while in the case of very small bands, they are sometimes compelled for safety's sake to keep one watch on duty half the night. With large caravans the captain usually appoints eight 'sergeants of the guard,' each of whom takes an equal portion of men under his command.

The heterogeneous appearance of our company, consisting of men from every class and grade of society, with a little sprinkling of the softer sex, would have formed an excellent subject for an artist's pencil. It may appear, perhaps, a little extraordinary that females [48] should have ventured across the Prairies under such forlorn auspices. Those who accompanied us, however, were members of a Spanish family who had been banished in 1829, in pursuance of a decree of the Mexican congress, and were now returning to their homes in consequence of a suspension of the decree. Other females, however, have crossed the prairies to Santa Fé at different times, among whom I have known two respectable French ladies, who now reside in Chihuahua.

The wild and motley aspect of the caravan can be but imperfectly conceived without an idea of the costumes of its various members. The most 'fashionable' prairie dress is the fustian frock of the city-bred merchant furnished with a multitude of pockets capable of accommodating a variety of 'extra tackling.' Then there is the backwoodsman with his linsey or leather hunting-shirt — the farmer with his blue jean coat — the wagoner with his flannel-sleeve vest — besides an assortment of other costumes which go to fill up the picture.

In the article of fire-arms there is also an equally interesting medley. The frontier hunter sticks to his rifle, as nothing could induce him to carry what he terms in derision 'the scatter-gun.' The sportsman from the interior flourishes his double-barrelled fowling-piece with equal confidence in its superiority. The latter is certainly the most convenient description of gun that can be carried on this journey; as a charge of buck-shot in night [49] attacks (which are the most common), will of course be more likely to do execution than a single rifle-ball fired at random. The 'repeating' arms have lately been brought into use upon the Prairies, and they are certainly very formidable weapons, particularly when used against an ignorant savage foe. A great many were furnished beside with a bountiful supply of pistols and knives of every description, so that the party made altogether a very brigand-like appearance.

During our delay at the Council Grove, the laborers were employed in procuring timber for axle-trees and other wagon repairs, of which a supply is always laid in before leaving this region of substantial growths; for henceforward there is no wood on the route fit for these purposes; not even in the mountains of Santa Fé do we meet with any serviceable timber. The supply procured here is generally lashed under the wagons, in which way a log is not unfrequently carried to Santa Fé, and even sometimes back again.

CHAPTER III

The 'Catch up' — Breaking up of the Encampment — Perversity of Mules — Under way — The Diamond Spring — Eccentricities of Oxen — First Glance of the Antelope — Buffalo Herds and Prairie Novices — A John Gilpin Race — Culinary Preparations — A Buffalo Feast — Appetite of Prairie Travellers — Troubles in Fording Streams — Fresh Alarms and their Causes — A Wolfish Frolic — Arkansas River — Pleasing Scenery — Character of the Country — Extraordinary Surgical Operation — The 'Pawnee Rock' — Salutary Effects of Alarms — New Order of March — Prairie Encampment and 'Upholstery' — Hoppling and Tethering of the 'Stock' — Crossing the Arkansas — Great Battle with Rattlesnakes — A Mustang Colt and a Mule Fracas — 'The Caches' — Origin and Signification of the Term.

OWING to the delays of organizing and other preparations, we did not leave the Council Grove camp till May 27th. Although the usual hour of starting with the prairie caravans is after an early breakfast, yet, on this occasion, we were hindered till in the afternoon. The familiar note of preparation, "Catch up! catch up!" was now sounded from the captain's camp, and re-echoed from every division and scattered group along the valley. On such occasions, a scene of confusion ensues, which must be seen to be appreciated. The woods and dales resound with the gleeful yells of the light-hearted wagoners, [51] who, weary of inaction, and filled with joy at the prospect of getting under way, become clamorous in the extreme. Scarcely does the jockey on the race-course ply his whip more promptly at that magic word 'Go,' than do these emulous wagoners fly to harnessing their mules at the spirit-stirring sound of 'Catch up.' Each teamster vies with his fellows who shall be soonest ready; and it is a matter of boastful pride to be the first to cry out — "All's set!"

†The uproarious bustle which follows — the hallooming of those in pursuit of animals — the exclamations which the unruly brutes call forth from their wrathful drivers; together

with the clatter of bells — the rattle of yokes and harness — the jingle of chains — all conspire to produce a clamorous confusion, which would be altogether incomprehensible without the assistance of the eyes; while these alone would hardly suffice to unravel the labyrinthian manœuvres and hurly-burly of this precipitate breaking up. It is sometimes amusing to observe the athletic wagoner hurrying an animal to its post — to see him ‘heave upon’ the halter of a stubborn mule, while the brute as obstinately ‘sets back,’ determined not to ‘move a peg’ till his own good pleasure thinks it proper to do so — his whole manner seeming to say, “Wait till your hurry’s over!” I have more than once seen a driver hitch a harnessed animal to the halter, and by that process haul ‘his mulishness’ forward, while each of his four projected feet [52] would leave a furrow behind; until at last the perplexed master would wrathfully exclaim, “A mule will be a mule any way you can fix it!”

“All’s set!” is finally heard from some teamster — “All’s set,” is directly responded from every quarter. “Stretch out!” immediately vociferates the captain. Then, the ‘heps!’ of drivers — the cracking of whips — the trampling of feet — the occasional creak of wheels — the rumbling of wagons — form a new scene of exquisite confusion, which I shall not attempt further to describe. “Fall in!” is heard from head-quarters, and the wagons are forthwith strung out upon the long inclined plain, which stretches to the heights beyond Council Grove.

After fifteen miles’ progress, we arrived at the ‘Diamond Spring’ (a crystal fountain discharging itself into a small brook), to which, in later years, caravans have sometimes advanced, before ‘organizing.’ Near twenty-five miles beyond we crossed the Cottonwood fork of the Neosho, a

creek still smaller than that of Council Grove, and our camp was pitched immediately in its further valley.⁴²

When caravans are able to cross in the evening, they seldom stop on the near side of a stream — first, because if it happen to rain during the night, it may become flooded, and cause both detention and trouble: again, though the stream be not impassable after rain, the banks become slippery and difficult to ascend. A third and still more important [53] reason is, that, even supposing the contingency of rain does not occur, teams will rarely pull as well in ‘cold collars,’ as wagoners term it — that is, when fresh geared — as in the progress of a day’s travel. When a heavy pull is just at hand in the morning, wagoners sometimes resort to the expedient of driving a circuit upon the prairie, before venturing to ‘take the bank.’

We experienced a temporary alarm during the evening, while we lay encamped at Cottonwood, which was rather more boisterous than serious in its consequences. The wagons had been ‘formed’ across the neck of a bend in the creek, into which the cattle were turned, mostly in their yokes; for though, when thoroughly trained, teamsters usually unyoke their oxen every night, yet at first they often leave them coupled, to save the trouble or re-yoking them in their unruly state. A little after dark, these animals started simultaneously, with a thundering noise and rattle of the yokes, towards the outlet protected by the wagons, but for which obstacle they might have escaped far into the prairie, and have been irrecoverably lost, or, at least, have occasioned much trouble and delay to recover them. The cause of the fright was not discovered; but oxen are exceed-

⁴² Diamond Springs was a little north of the town of that name in Morris County, Kansas. See description in Hughes, *Doniphan’s Expedition*, p. 41.

Cottonwood River rises in Marion County and flows south and then east through Marion, Chase, and Lyon counties, embouching into the Neosho below Emporia. The camp of the Santa Fé trail was near Durham.— ED.

ingly whimsical creatures when surrounded by unfamiliar objects. One will sometimes take a fright at the jingle of his own yoke-irons, or the cough of his mate, and, by a sudden flounce, set the whole herd in a flurry. This was probably the case in the present instance; [54] although some of our easily excited companions immediately surmised that the oxen had scented a lurking Pawnee.

Our route lay through uninterrupted prairie for about forty miles — in fact I may say, for five hundred miles, excepting the very narrow fringes of timber along the borders of the streams. The antelope of the high prairies which we now occasionally saw, is sometimes found as far east as Council Grove;⁴³ and as a few old buffaloes have sometimes been met with about Cottonwood, we now began to look out for this desirable game. Some scattering bulls are generally to be seen first, forming as it would appear the 'van' or 'piquet guards' of the main droves with their cows and calves. The buffalo are usually found much further east early in the spring, than during the rest of the year, on account of the long grass, which shoots up earlier in the season than the short pasturage of the plains.

Our hopes of game were destined soon to be realized; for early on the second day after leaving Cottonwood (a few miles beyond the principal Turkey creek),⁴⁴ our eyes were greeted with the sight of a herd amounting to nearly a hundred head of buffalo, quietly grazing in the distance before us. Half of our company had probably never seen a buffalo before (at least in its wild state); and the excitement that the first sight of these 'prairie beeves' occasions among a party of novices, beggars all description. Every

⁴³ For the antelope, see Pattie's *Narrative*, in our volume xviii, note 28.—ED.

⁴⁴ Turkey Creek is a branch of the Little Arkansas in McPherson County, Kansas. This camping place was two hundred and seventeen miles from Independence.—ED.

horseman was off in a scamper: and some of the wagoners, [55] leaving their teams to take care of themselves, seized their guns and joined the race afoot. Here went one with his rifle or yager — there another with his double-barrelled shot-gun — a third with his holster-pistols — a Mexican perhaps with his lance — another with his bow and arrows — and numbers joined without any arms whatever, merely for the 'pleasures of the chase'— all helter-skelter — a regular John Gilpin race, truly 'neck or naught.' The fleetest of the pursuers were soon in the midst of the game, which scattered in all directions, like a flock of birds upon the descent of a hawk.

A few 'beeves' were killed during the chase; and as soon as our camp was pitched, the bustle of kindling fires and preparing for supper commenced. The new adventurers were curious to taste this prairie luxury; while we all had been so long upon salt provisions — now nearly a month — that our appetites were in exquisite condition to relish fresh meat. The fires had scarcely been kindled when the fumes of broiling meat pervaded the surrounding atmosphere; while all huddled about, anxiously watching their cookeries, and regaling their senses in anticipation upon the savory odors which issued from them.

For the edification of the reader, who has no doubt some curiosity on the subject, I will briefly mention, that the 'kitchen and table ware' of the traders usually consists of a skillet, a frying-pan, a sheet-iron camp-kettle, a coffee-pot, and each man with his tin cup and a [56] butcher's knife. The culinary operations being finished, the pan and kettle are set upon the grassy turf, around which all take a 'lowly seat,' and crack their gleesome jokes, while from their greasy hands they swallow their savory viands — all with a relish rarely experienced at the well-spread tables of the most fashionable and wealthy.

The insatiable appetite acquired by travellers upon the Prairies is almost incredible, and the quantity of coffee drank is still more so. It is an unfailling and apparently indispensable beverage, served at every meal—even under the broiling noon-day sun, the wagoner will rarely fail to replenish a second time, his huge tin cup.

Early the next day we reached the 'Little Arkansas,' which, although endowed with an imposing name, is only a small creek with a current but five or six yards wide. But, though small, its steep banks and miry bed annoyed us exceedingly in crossing.⁴⁵ It is the practice upon the prairies on all such occasions, for several men to go in advance with axes, spades and mattocks, and, by digging the banks and erecting temporary bridges, to have all in readiness by the time the wagons arrive. A bridge over a quagmire is made in a few minutes, by cross-laying it with brush (willows are best, but even long grass is often employed as a substitute), and covering it with earth,—across which a hundred wagons will often pass in safety.

We had now arrived at the point nearest [57] to the border, I believe, where any outrages have been perpetrated upon the traders to Santa Fé. One of the early packing companies lost their animals on this spot, and had to send back for a new supply.

Next day we reached Cow creek,⁴⁶ where all the difficulties encountered at Little Arkansas had to be reconquered: but after digging, bridging, shouldering the wheels, with the usual accompaniment of whooping, swearing and cracking

⁴⁵ For the Little Arkansas, see James's *Long's Expedition*, our volume xvi, note 112. The point where the Santa Fé trail crossed was below Little River in Rice County, and is estimated at two hundred and thirty-four miles from Independence.—ED.

⁴⁶ This tributary is described in our volume xvi, note 111. Upon this creek a Mexican trader, Antonio José Chavez, was robbed and murdered in 1843 by a marauding party from Texas. See Hughes, *Doniphan's Expedition*, p. 45, and Gregg, *post.*—ED.

of whips, we soon got safely across and encamped in the valley beyond. Alarms now began to accumulate more rapidly upon us. A couple of persons had a few days before been chased to the wagons by a band of — buffalo; and this evening the encampment was barely formed when two hunters came bolting in with information that a hundred, perhaps of the same 'enemy,' were at hand — at least this was the current opinion afterwards. The hubbub occasioned by this fearful news had scarcely subsided, when another arrived on a panting horse, crying out "Indians! Indians! I've just escaped from a couple, who pursued me to the very camp!" "To arms! to arms!" resounded from every quarter — and just then a wolf, attracted by the fumes of broiling buffalo bones, sent up a most hideous howl across the creek. "Some one in distress!" was instantly shouted: "To his relief!" vociferated the crowd — and off they bolted, one and all, arms in hand, hurly-burly — leaving the camp entirely unprotected; so that had an enemy been at hand indeed, [58] and approached us from the opposite direction, they might easily have taken possession of the wagons. Before they had all returned, however, a couple of hunters came in and laughed very heartily at the expense of the first alarmist, whom they had just chased into the camp.

Half a day's drive after leaving this camp of 'false alarms' brought us to the valley of Arkansas river. This point is about 270 miles from Independence. From the adjacent heights the landscape presents an imposing and picturesque appearance. Beneath a ledge of wave-like yellow sandy ridges and hillocks spreading far beyond, descends the majestic river (averaging at least a quarter of a mile in width), bespeckled with verdant islets, thickly set with cottonwood timber. The banks are very low and barren, with the exception of an occasional grove of stunted trees,

hiding behind a swamp or sand-hill, placed there as it were to protect it from the fire of the prairies, which in most parts keeps down every perennial growth. In many places, indeed, where there are no islands, the river is so entirely bare of trees, that the unthinking traveller might approach almost to its very brink, without suspecting its presence.⁴⁷

Thus far, many of the prairies have a fine and productive appearance, though the Neosho river (or Council Grove) seems to form the western boundary of the truly rich and beautiful country of the border. Up to that point the prairies are similar to those of Missouri [59]—the soil equally exuberant and fertile; while all the country that lies beyond, is of a far more barren character—vegetation of every kind is more stunted—the gay flowers more scarce, and the scanty timber of a very inferior quality: indeed, the streams, from Council Grove westward, are lined with very little else than cottonwood, barely interspersed here and there with an occasional elm or hackberry.

Following up the course of this stream for some twenty miles, now along the valley, and again traversing the points of projecting eminences, we reached Walnut creek.⁴⁸ I have heard of a surgical operation performed at this point, in the summer of 1826, which, though not done exactly *secundum artem*, might suggest some novel reflections to the man of science. A few days before the caravan had reached this place, a Mr. Broadus, in attempting to draw his rifle from a wagon muzzle foremost, discharged its contents into his arm. The bone being dreadfully shattered, the unfortunate man was advised to submit to an amputation at once; otherwise, it being in the month of August, and excessively warm, mortification would soon ensue. But

⁴⁷ The trail neared the Arkansas at the Great Bend, somewhere in the vicinity of Ellinwood, Barton County.—ED.

⁴⁸ For Walnut Creek, see our volume xvi, p. 229, note 107.—ED.

Broadus obstinately refused to consent to this course, till death began to stare him in the face. By this time, however, the whole arm had become gangrened, some spots having already appeared above the place where the operation should have been performed. The invalid's case was therefore considered perfectly [60] hopeless, and he was given up by all his comrades, who thought of little else than to consign him to the grave.

But being unwilling to resign himself to the fate which appeared frowning over him, without a last effort, he obtained the consent of two or three of the party, who undertook to amputate his arm merely to gratify the wishes of the dying man; for in such a light they viewed him. Their only 'case of instruments' consisted of a handsaw, a butcher's knife and a large iron bolt. The teeth of the saw being considered too coarse, they went to work, and soon had a set of fine teeth filed on the back. The knife having been whetted keen, and the iron bolt laid upon the fire, they commenced the operation: and in less time than it takes to tell it, the arm was opened round to the bone, which was almost in an instant sawed off; and with the whizzing hot iron the whole stump was so effectually seared as to close the arteries completely. Bandages were now applied, and the company proceeded on their journey as though nothing had occurred. The arm commenced healing rapidly, and in a few weeks the patient was sound and well, and is perhaps still living, to bear witness to the superiority of the 'hot iron' over ligatures, in 'taking up' arteries.

On the following day our route lay mostly over a level plain, which usually teems with buffalo, and is beautifully adapted to the chase. At the distance of about fifteen miles, the attention of the traveller is directed to the [61] 'Pawnee Rock,' so called, it is said, on account of a battle's having once been fought hard by, between the Pawnees and some

other tribe. It is situated at the projecting point of a ridge, and upon its surface are furrowed, in uncouth but legible characters, numerous dates, and the names of various travellers who have chanced to pass that way.⁴⁹

We encamped at Ash creek, where we again experienced sundry alarms in consequence of 'Indian sign,' that was discovered in the creek valley, such as unextinguished fires, about which were found some old moccasins,— a sure indication of the recent retreat of savages from the vicinity. These constant alarms, however, although too frequently the result of groundless and unmanly fears, are not without their salutary effects upon the party. They serve to keep one constantly on the alert, and to sharpen those faculties of observation which would otherwise become blunted or inactive. Thus far also we had marched in two lines only; but, after crossing the Pawnee Fork, each of the four divisions drove on in a separate file, which became henceforth the order of march till we reached the border of the mountains.⁵⁰ By moving in long lines as we did before, the march is continually interrupted; for every accident which delays a wagon ahead stops all those behind. By marching four abreast, this difficulty is partially obviated, and the wagons can also be thrown more readily into a condition of defence in case of attack.

[62] Upon encamping the wagons are formed into a 'hollow

⁴⁹ Pawnee Rock, a well-known landmark on the right side of the trail, and about two miles back from the river, was a sandstone cliff about twenty feet high, surmounted by a pyramidal pile of stones. Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, p. 259, gives a somewhat fanciful account of the siege of a few Pawnee on the summit by a horde of Comanche. The former, overcome by thirst, perished in attempting to cut their way to the river, whereupon the victors raised the mound of stones in commemoration. See also Inman, *Old Santa Fé Trail*, pp. 403-421. The Rock is no longer conspicuous, having been demolished by the railroad and by settlers.— ED.

⁵⁰ Ash Creek, in Pawnee County, is nearly three hundred miles from Independence. For the Pawnee Fork, see our volume xvi, note 105. The trail crossed just where the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé railroad enters the present town of Larned, seat of Pawnee County.— ED.

square' (each division to a side), constituting at once an enclosure (or *corral*) for the animals when needed, and a fortification against the Indians. Not to embarrass this cattle-pen, the camp fires are all lighted outside of the wagons. Outside of the wagons, also, the travellers spread their beds, which consist, for the most part, of buffalo-rugs and blankets. Many content themselves with a single Mackinaw; but a pair constitutes the most regular pallet; and he that is provided with a buffalo-rug into the bargain, is deemed luxuriously supplied. It is most usual to sleep out in the open air, as well to be at hand in case of attack, as indeed for comfort; for the serene sky of the Prairies affords the most agreeable and wholesome canopy. That deleterious attribute of night air and dews, so dangerous in other climates, is but little experienced upon the high plains: on the contrary, the serene evening air seems to affect the health rather favorably than otherwise. Tents are so rare on these expeditions that, in a caravan of two hundred men, I have not seen a dozen. In time of rain the traveller resorts to his wagon, which affords a far more secure shelter than a tent; for if the latter is not beaten down by the storms which so often accompany rain upon the prairies, the ground underneath is at least apt to be flooded. During dry weather, however, even the invalid prefers the open air.

Prior to the date of our trip it had been customary [63] to secure the horses by hopting them. The 'fore-hopple' (a leathern strap or rope manacle upon the fore-legs) being most convenient, was more frequently used; though the 'side-line' (a hopple connecting a fore and a hind leg) is the most secure; for with this an animal can hardly increase his pace beyond a hobbling walk; whereas, with the fore-hopple, a frightened horse will scamper off with nearly as much velocity as though he were unshackled. But, better than either of these is the practice which the caravans have since

adopted of tethering the mules at night around the wagons, at proper intervals, with ropes twenty-five or thirty feet in length, tied to stakes fifteen to twenty inches long, driven into the ground; a supply of which, as well as mallets, the wagoners always carry with them.

It is amusing to witness the disputes which often arise among wagoners about their 'staking ground.' Each teamster is allowed, by our 'common law,' a space of about a hundred yards immediately fronting his wagon, which he is ever ready to defend, if a neighbor shows a disposition to encroach upon his soil. If any animals are found 'staked' beyond the 'chartered limits,' it is the duty of the guard to 'knock them up,' and turn them into the *corral*. Of later years the tethering of oxen has also been resorted to with advantage. It was thought at first that animals thus confined by ropes could not procure a sufficient supply of food; but experience [64] has allayed all apprehension on the subject. In fact, as the camp is always pitched in the most luxuriantly clothed patches of prairie that can be selected, a mule is seldom able to dispatch in the course of one night, all the grass within his reach. Again, when animals are permitted to range at liberty, they are apt to mince and nibble at the tenderest blades and spend their time in roaming from point to point, in search of what is most agreeable to their 'epicurean palates;' whereas if they are restricted by a rope, they will at once fall to with earnestness and clip the pasturage as it comes.

Although the buffalo had been scarce for a few days,—frightened off, no doubt, by the Indians whose 'sign' we saw about Ash creek, they soon became exceedingly abundant. The larger droves of these animals are sometimes a source of great annoyance to the caravans, as, by running near our loose stock, there is frequent danger of their causing *stampedes* (or general scamper), in which case mules,

horses and oxen have been known to run away among the buffalo, as though they had been a gang of their own species. A company of traders, in 1824, lost twenty or thirty of their animals in this way. Hunters have also been deprived of their horses in the same way. Leaping from them in haste, in order to take a more determinate aim at a buffalo, the horse has been known to take fright, and, following the fleeing game, has disappeared with saddle, bridle, pistols and all — most probably [65] never to be heard of again. In fact, to look for stock upon these prairies, would be emphatically to ‘search for a needle in a haystack;’ not only because they are virtually boundless, but that being everywhere alive with herds of buffalo, from which horses cannot be distinguished at a distance, one knows not whither to turn in search after the stray animals.

We had lately been visited by frequent showers of rain, and upon observing the Arkansas river, it was found to be rising, which seemed portentous of the troubles which the ‘June freshet’ might occasion us in crossing it; and, as it was already the 11th of this month, this annual occurrence was now hourly expected. On some occasions caravans have been obliged to construct what is called a ‘buffalo-boat,’ which is done by stretching the hides of these animals over a frame of poles, or, what is still more common, over an empty wagon-body. The ‘June freshets,’ however, are seldom of long duration; and, during the greatest portion of the year, the channel is very shallow. Still the bed of the river being in many places filled with quicksand, it is requisite to examine and mark out the best ford with stakes, before one undertakes to cross. The wagons are then driven over usually by double teams, which should never be permitted to stop, else animals and wagons are apt to founder, and the loading is liable to be damaged. I have witnessed a whole team down at once, rendering it necessary

[66] to unharness and drag each mule out separately: in fact, more than common exertion is sometimes required to prevent these dumpish animals from drowning in their fright and struggles through the water, though the current be but shallow at the place. Hence it is that oxen are much safer for fording streams than mules. As for ourselves, we forded the river without serious difficulty.

Rattlesnakes are proverbially abundant upon all these prairies, and as there is seldom to be found either stick or stone with which to kill them, one hears almost a constant popping of rifles or pistols among the vanguard, to clear the route of these disagreeable occupants, lest they should bite our animals. As we were toiling up through the sandy hillocks which border the southern banks of the Arkansas, the day being exceedingly warm, we came upon a perfect den of these reptiles. I will not say 'thousands,' though this perhaps were nearer the truth — but hundreds at least were coiled or crawling in every direction. They were no sooner discovered than we were upon them with guns and pistols, determined to let none of them escape.

In the midst of this amusing scramble among the snakes, a wild mustang colt, which had, somehow or other, become separated from its dam, came bolting among our relay of loose stock to add to the confusion. One of our mules, evidently impressed with the impertinence of the intruder, sprang forward and attacked it, with the apparent intention [67] of executing summary chastisement; while another mule, with more benignity of temper than its irascible compeer, engaged most lustily in defence of the unfortunate little mustang. As the contest was carried on among the wagons, the teamsters soon became very uproarious; so that the whole, with the snake fracas, made up a capital scene of confusion. When the mule skirmish would have ended, if no one had interfered, is a question which remained unde-

terminated; for some of our company, in view of the consequences that might result from the contest, rather inhumanly took sides with the assailing mule; and soon after they entered the lists, a rifle ball relieved the poor colt from its earthly embarrassments, and the company from further domestic disturbance. Peace once more restored, we soon got under way, and that evening pitched our camp opposite the celebrated 'Caches,' a place where some of the earliest adventurers had been compelled to conceal their merchandise.⁶¹

The history of the origin of these 'Caches' may be of sufficient interest to merit a brief recital. Beard, of the unfortunate party of 1812, alluded to in the first chapter, having returned to the United States in 1822, together with Chambers, who had descended the Canadian river the year before, induced some small capitalists of St. Louis to join in an enterprise, and then undertook to return to Santa Fé the same fall, with a small party and an assortment of merchandise. Reaching the Arkansas [68] late in the season, they were overtaken by a heavy snow storm, and driven to take shelter on a large island. A rigorous winter ensued, which forced them to remain pent up in that place for three long months. During this time the greater portion of their animals perished; so that, when the spring began to open, they were unable to continue their journey with their goods. In this emergency they made a *cache* some distance above, on the north side of the river, where they stowed away the most of their merchandise. From thence they proceeded to Taos, where they procured mules, and returned to get their hidden property.

Few travellers pass this way without visiting these mossy pits, many of which remain partly unfilled to the present

⁶¹ The Caches, whose origin is described by Gregg, were five miles west of where Dodge City now stands.— ED.

day. In the vicinity, or a few miles to the eastward perhaps, passes the hundredth degree of longitude west from Greenwich, which, from the Arkansas to Red River, forms the boundary between the United States and the Mexican, or rather the Texan territory.⁵²

The term *cache*, meaning a *place of concealment*, was originally used by the Canadian French trappers and traders. It is made by digging a hole in the ground, somewhat in the shape of a jug, which is lined with dry sticks, grass, or anything else that will protect its contents from the dampness of the earth. In this place the goods to be concealed are carefully stowed away; and the aperture is then so effectually closed as to protect [69] them from the rains. In *caching*, a great deal of skill is often required, to leave no signs whereby the cunning savage might discover the place of deposit. To this end, the excavated earth is carried to some distance and carefully concealed, or thrown into a stream, if one be at hand. The place selected for a cache is usually some rolling point, sufficiently elevated to be secure from inundations. If it be well set with grass, a solid piece of turf is cut out large enough for the entrance. The turf is afterward laid back, and taking root, in a short time no signs remain of its ever having been molested. However, as every locality does not afford a turfy site, the camp fire is sometimes built upon the place, or the animals are penned over it, which effectually destroys all traces of the cache.

This mode of concealing goods seems to have been in use from the time of the earliest French voyagers in America. Father Hennepin, during his passage down the Mississippi

⁵² Most of the maps of this period place the 100° meridian too far west by nearly 30'; therefore Gregg locates the Caches east of this point. The treaty of 1819 defined the boundary between the United States and Spanish-American territory as follows: from the Gulf of Mexico up the Sabine River to latitude 32°, thence due north to Red River (forming now the western boundary of Louisiana); thence up the Red to the 100° meridian; thence north to the Arkansas; following that stream to its source, and the 42° parallel to the Pacific Ocean.—ED.

river, in 1680, describes an operation of this kind in the following terms: "We took up the green Sodd, and laid it by, and digg'd a hole in the Earth where we put our Goods, and cover'd them with pieces of Timber and Earth, and then put in again the green Turf; so that 'twas impossible to suspect that any Hole had been digg'd under it, for we flung the Earth into the River." Returning a few weeks after, they found the cache all safe and sound.⁵³

CHAPTER IV

A Desert Plain — Preparation for a 'Water-Scrape' — Accident to a French Doctor — Upsetting of a Wagon and its Consequences — A Party of Sioux Warriors — The first real Alarm — Confusion in the Camp — Friendly Demonstrations of the Indians — The Pipe of Peace — Squaws and Papooses — An Extemporary Village — Lose our Track — Search after the Lost River — Horrible Prospective — The Cimarron Found at last — A Night of Alarms — Indian Serenade and Thieving — Indian Diplomacy — Hail-stones and Hurricanes — Position of the Captain of a Caravan — His Troubles, his Powers and Want of Powers — More Indians — Hostile Encounter — Results of the Skirmish — The 'Battle-Ground' — Col. Vizcarra and the Gros Ventres.

OUR route had already led us up the course of the Arkansas river for over a hundred miles, yet the earlier caravans often passed from fifty to a hundred further up before crossing the river; therefore nothing like a regular ford had ever been established.⁵⁴ Nor was there a road, not even a trail, anywhere across the famous plain, extending between the

⁵³ For this quotation from Hennepin, see Thwaites, *Hennepin's New Discovery*, p. 193.— Ed.

⁵⁴ One passage was by way of Chouteau Island (see note 26, *ante*), called usually the Upper Crossing. Lower Crossing was below Dodge City, near the modern Ford, in the county of the same name. The ford followed by Gregg was the usual one after 1829, and was known as Cimarron Crossing, near the town of that name in Gray County, Kansas. See Dr. A. Wislizenus, "Memoir of a Tour to Northern Mexico" in *Senate Misc.*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 26. The earlier caravans followed the course of the Arkansas for many miles farther, crossing at Bent's Fort. See our volume xvi, notes 43, 108. The terminus of the upper Arkansas route was Taos; that of the lower or Cimarron trail, San Miguel.— Ed.

Arkansas and Cimarron rivers, a distance of over fifty miles, which now lay before us — the scene of such frequent sufferings in former times for want of water. It having been determined upon, however, to strike across this dreaded desert the following morning, the whole party was busy in preparing for the 'water scrape,' [71] as these droughty drives are very appropriately called by prairie travellers. This tract of country may truly be styled the grand 'prairie ocean;' for not a single landmark is to be seen for more than forty miles — scarcely a visible eminence by which to direct one's course. All is as level as the sea, and the compass was our surest, as well as principal guide.

In view of this passage, as well as that of many other dry stretches upon the route, the traveller should be apprised of the necessity of providing a water-cask holding at least five gallons to each wagon, in which a supply for drinking and cooking may be carried along to serve in cases of emergency.

The evening before the embarking of a caravan upon this plain, the captain's voice is usually heard above the din and clatter of the camp, ordering to "fill up the water kegs," — a precaution which cannot be repeated too often, as new adventurers are usually ignorant of the necessity of providing a supply sufficient to meet every contingency that may befall during two or more days' journey over this arid region. The cooks are equally engrossed by their respective vocations: some are making bread, others preparing viands, and all tasking their ingenuity to lay by such stores as may be deemed expedient for at least two days' consumption. On the following morning (June 14th), the words 'catch up' again resounded through the camp, and the caravan was once more in motion.

For the first five miles we had a heavy pull [72] among the sandy hillocks; but soon the broad and level plain opened

before us. We had hardly left the river's side, however, when we experienced a delay of some hours, in consequence of an accident which came very nigh proving fatal to a French doctor of our company. Fearful lest his stout top-heavy dearborn should upset whilst skirting the slope of a hill, he placed himself below in order to sustain it with his hands. But, in spite of all his exertions, the carriage tumbled over, crushing and mashing him most frightfully. He was taken out senseless, and but little hopes were at first entertained of his recovery. Having revived, however, soon after, we were enabled to resume our march; and, in the course of time, the wounded patient entirely recovered.

The next day we fortunately had a heavy shower, which afforded us abundance of water. Having also swerved considerably toward the south, we fell into a more uneven section of country, where we had to cross a brook swelled by the recent rain, into which one of the wagons was unfortunately overset. This, however, was not a very uncommon occurrence; for unruly oxen, when thirsty, will often rush into a pool in despite of the driver, dragging the wagon over every object in their way, at the imminent risk of turning it topsy-turvy into the water. We were now compelled to make a halt, and all hands flocked to the assistance of the owner of the damaged cargo. In a few minutes [73] about an acre of ground was completely covered with calicoes, and other domestic goods, presenting altogether an interesting spectacle.

All were busily occupied at this work when some objects were seen moving in the distance, which at first were mistaken for buffalo; but were speedily identified as horsemen. Anxiety was depicted in every countenance. Could it be possible that the party of Capt. Sublette, which was nearly a month ahead of us, had been lost in these dreary solitudes? or was it the band of Capt. Bent, who was expected to follow

some time after us?⁵⁵ This anxious suspense, however, lasted only for a few minutes; and the cry of "Indians!" soon made the welkin ring. Still they appeared to approach too slowly for the western prairie tribes. A little nearer, and we soon perceived that they carried a flag, which turned out to be that of the United States. This welcome sight allayed at once all uneasiness; as it is well known that most savages, when friendly, approach the whites with a hoisted flag, provided they have one. It turned out to be a party of about eighty Sioux, who were on a tour upon the Prairies for the purpose of trading with, stealing from or marauding upon the south-western nations. Our communications were carried on entirely by signs; yet we understood them perfectly to say, that there were immense numbers of Indians ahead, upon the Cimarron river, whom they described by symbolic language to be Blackfeet and Comanches; [74] a most agreeable prospect for the imagination to dwell upon!⁵⁶

We now moved on slowly and leisurely, for all anxiety on

⁵⁵ William L. Sublette came of a Kentucky pioneer family, being born in that state in 1799. In 1818, he removed to St. Charles, and shortly after embarked in the fur-trade. He was with General Ashley's division in the Arikara fight (1823); and three years later bought out that pioneer's share in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and began a career of opposition to the American Fur Company. His connection with the Santa Fé trade was slight; this caravan of 1831 seems to be the only one in which he enlisted. In 1832 he formed a partnership with Robert Campbell for the Rocky Mountain trade, with which he was connected for ten years. He died on his way to Washington in 1845.

Colonel Charles Bent was one of several brothers, sons of Silas Bent, a New Englander who held offices of prominence in Upper Louisiana. The Bents were chiefly occupied with the Santa Fé trade, and built Fort Bent on the mountain trail. Charles married a New Mexican, and resided at Taos. He accompanied the American army of occupation (1846) as captain of scouts; and in September was appointed first American governor of New Mexico. In an attempted revolt he was murdered at Taos (January, 1847).—ED.

⁵⁶ For the Sioux and Blackfeet, consult Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, pp. 90, 225, notes 55, 120; for the Comanche, volume xvi of our series, note 109. On the Indian sign language, see Garrick Mallery, "Collection of Gesture Signs and Signals" in American Bureau of Ethnology *Report*, 1879-80, i, p. 263; W. P. Clark, *Indian Sign Language* (Philadelphia, 1885).—ED.

the subject of water had been happily set at rest by frequent falls of rain. But imagine our consternation and dismay, when, upon descending into the valley of the Cimarron,⁵⁷ on the morning of the 19th of June, a band of Indian warriors on horse-back suddenly appeared before us from behind the ravines — an imposing array of death-dealing savages! There was no merriment in this! It was a genuine alarm — a tangible reality! These warriors, however, as we soon discovered, were only the van-guard of a ‘countless host,’ who were by this time pouring over the opposite ridge, and galloping directly towards us.

The wagons were soon irregularly ‘formed’ upon the hill-side: but in accordance with the habitual carelessness of caravan traders, a great portion of the men were unprepared for the emergency. Scores of guns were ‘empty,’ and as many more had been wetted by the recent showers, and would not ‘go off.’ Here was one calling for balls — another for powder — a third for flints. Exclamations, such as, ‘I’ve broke my ramrod’ — ‘I’ve spilt my caps’ — ‘I’ve rammed down a ball without powder’ — ‘My gun is ‘choked;’ give me yours’ — were heard from different quarters; while a timorous ‘greenhorn’ would perhaps cry out, ‘Here, take my gun, you can out-shoot me!’ The more daring bolted off to [75] encounter the enemy at once, while the timid and cautious took a stand with presented rifle behind the wagons. The Indians who were in advance made a bold attempt to press upon us, which came near costing them dearly; for some of our fiery backwoodsmen more than once had their rusty but unerring rifles directed upon the intruders, some of whom would inevitably have

⁵⁷ The route from the Arkansas to the Cimarron was the most dreaded portion of the trail. It was, as Gregg says, unmarked, and destitute of water. Passing southwest through Gray, Haskell, and Grant counties, Kansas, it was somewhat over fifty miles in length, requiring two days or more for its passage. See Wislizenus, *Memoir*, pp. 11-13.— ED.

fallen before their deadly aim, had not a few of the more prudent traders interposed. The savages made demonstrations no less hostile, rushing, with ready sprung bows, upon a portion of our men who had gone in search of water; and mischief would, perhaps, have ensued, had not the impetuosity of the warriors been checked by the wise men of the nation.

The Indians were collecting around us, however, in such great numbers, that it was deemed expedient to force them away, so as to resume our march, or at least to take a more advantageous position. Our company was therefore mustered and drawn up in 'line of battle;' and, accompanied by the sound of a drum and fife, we marched towards the main group of the Indians. The latter seemed far more delighted than frightened with this strange parade and music, a spectacle they had, no doubt, never witnessed before, and perhaps looked upon the whole movement rather as a complimentary salute than a hostile array; for there was no interpreter through whom any communication could be conveyed to them. But, whatever may have been [76] their impressions, one thing is certain,—that the principal chief (who was dressed in a long red coat of strouding, or coarse cloth) appeared to have full confidence in the virtues of his calumet; which he lighted, and came boldly forward to meet our warlike corps, serenely smoking the 'pipe of peace.' Our captain, now taking a whiff with the savage chief, directed him by signs to cause his warriors to retire. This most of them did, to rejoin the long train of squaws and papooses with the baggage, who followed in the rear, and were just then seen emerging from beyond the hills. Having slowly descended to the banks of the stream, they pitched their wigwams or lodges; over five hundred of which soon bespeckled the ample valley before us, and at once gave to its recently meagre surface the aspect of an immense Indian

village. The entire number of the Indians, when collected together, could not have been less than from two to three thousand — although some of our company insisted that there were at least four thousand souls. In such a case they must have mustered nearly a thousand warriors, while we were but little over two hundred strong. Still, our superior arms and the protection afforded by the wagons, gave us considerably the advantage, even supposing an equality in point of valor. However, the appearance of the squaws and children soon convinced us, that, for the present at least, they had no hostile intentions; so we also descended into the valley [77] and formed our camp a few hundred yards below them. The ‘capitanes,’⁵⁸ or head men of the whites and Indians, shortly after met, and, again smoking the calumet, agreed to be friends.

Although we were now on the very banks of the Cimarron, even the most experienced traders of our party, whether through fright or ignorance, seemed utterly unconscious of the fact. Having made our descent, far below the usual point of approach, and there being not a drop of water found in the sandy bed of the river, it was mistaken for Sand creek, and we accordingly proceeded without noticing it.⁵⁹ Therefore, after our ‘big talk’ was concluded, and dinner dispatched, we again set out southward, in search of the Cimarron. As we were starting, warriors, squaws and papooses now commenced flocking about us, gazing at our wagons with amazement; for many of them had never, perhaps, seen such vehicles before. A few chiefs and others followed us to our next encampment; but these were sent away at night.

⁵⁸ The use of the Spanish term “capitan” (headman) was common on the plains, both for Indian chiefs and white leaders.— ED.

⁵⁹ Sand Creek is an affluent of the Cimarron, about half way between it and the Arkansas, and frequently is destitute of water.— ED.

Our guards were now doubled, as a night attack was apprehended; for although we were well aware that Indians never commit outrages with their families at hand, yet it was feared that they might either send them away or conceal them during the night. A little after dark, these fears seemed about to be realized; as a party of thirty or forty Indians were seen coming up towards the encampments. Immediate preparations were made [78] to attack them, when they turned out to be a band of squaws, with merely a few men as gallants — all of whom were summarily turned adrift, without waiting to speculate upon the objects of their visit. The next morning a few others made their appearance, which we treated in precisely the same manner, as a horse was missing, which it was presumed the Indians had stolen.

We continued our march southward in search of the 'lost river.' After a few miles' travel we encountered a ledge of sand-hills, which obstructed our course, and forced us to turn westward and follow their border for the rest of the day. Finding but little water that night, and none at all the next day, we began by noon to be sadly frightened; for nothing is more alarming to the prairie traveller than a 'water-scraps.' The impression soon became general that we were *lost* — lost on that inhospitable desert, which had been the theatre of so many former scenes of suffering! and our course impeded by sand-hills! A council of the veteran travellers was called to take our emergency into consideration. It was at once resolved to strike in a northwesterly direction in search of the 'dry ravine' we had left behind us, which was now supposed to have been the Cimarron.

We had just set out, when a couple of Indians approached us, bringing the horse we had lost the night before; an apparent demonstration of good faith which could hardly have been anticipated. It was evidently an effort [79] to

ingratiate themselves in our favor, and establish an intercourse — perhaps a traffic. But the outrages upon Major Riley, as well as upon a caravan, not two years before, perpetrated probably by the same Indians, were fresh in the memory of all; so that none of us were willing to confide in their friendly professions.⁶⁰ On inquiring by means of signs for the nearest water, they pointed to the direction we were travelling: and finally taking the lead, they led us, by the shortest way, to the valley of the long-sought Cimarron, which, with its delightful green-grass glades and flowing torrent (very different in appearance from where we had crossed it below), had all the aspect of an ‘elysian vale,’ compared with what we had seen for some time past. We pitched our camp in the valley, much rejoiced at having again ‘made a port.’

We were not destined to rest long in peace, however. About midnight we were all aroused by a cry of alarm, the like of which had not been heard since the day Don Quixote had his famous adventure with the fulling-mills; and I am not quite sure but some of our party suffered as much from fright as poor Sancho Panza did on that memorable occasion. But Don Quixote and Sancho only heard the thumping of the mills and the roaring of the waters; while we heard the thumping of the Indian drums, accompanied by occasional yells, which our excited fancies immediately construed into notes of the fearful war-song.

[80] After the whole company had been under arms for an hour or two, finding the cause of alarm approached no nearer, we again retired to rest. But a little before daylight we were again startled by the announcement — “The Indians are coming! — they are upon the very camp!” In a moment every man was up in arms; and several guns were presented to ‘salute’ the visitors, when, to our extreme

⁶⁰ See note 30, *ante*, and report therein cited.— ED.

mortification, they were found to be but eight or ten in number. They were immediately dispatched, by signs, and directed to remain away till morning — which they did.

On the following day, we had been in motion but a few minutes, when the Indians began flocking around us in large numbers, and by the time we encamped in the evening, we had perhaps a thousand of these pertinacious creatures, males and females, of all ages and descriptions, about us. At night, every means, without resorting to absolute violence, was employed to drive them away, but without entire success. At this time a small band of warriors took the round of our camp, and 'serenaded' us with a monotonous song of *hee-o-hehs*, with the view, I suppose, of gaining permission to remain; hoping, no doubt, to be able to 'drive a fair business' at pilfering during the night. In fact, a few small articles were already missing, and it was now discovered that they had purloined a pig of lead (between fifty and a hundred pounds weight) from one of the cannon-carriages, where it had been carelessly left. This increased [81] the uneasiness which already prevailed to a considerable extent; and many of us would imagine it already moulded into bullets, which we were perhaps destined to receive before morning from the muzzles of their fusils. Some were even so liberal as to express a willingness to pardon the theft, rather than give the Indians the trouble of sending it back in so hasty a manner. After a tedious night of suspense and conjecture, it was no small relief to those whose feelings had been so highly wrought upon, to find, on waking up in the morning, that every man still retained his scalp.

We started at a much earlier hour, this morning, in hopes to leave our Indian tormentors behind; but they were too wide awake for us. By the time the wagoners had completed the task of gearing their teams, the squaws had

'geared' their dogs, and loaded them with their lodge poles and covers, and other light 'plunder,' and were travelling fast in our wake. Much to our comfort, however, the greatest portion abandoned us before night; but the next day several of the chiefs overtook us again at noon, seeming anxious to renew the 'treaty of peace.' The truth is, the former treaty had never been 'sealed'—they had received no presents, which form an indispensable ratification of all their 'treaties' with the whites. Some fifty or sixty dollars' worth of goods having been made up for them, they now left us apparently satisfied; and although they continued to return and annoy us [82] for a couple of days longer; they at last entirely disappeared.

It was generally supposed at the time that there was a great number of Comanches and Arrapahoes among this troop of savages; but they were principally if not altogether Blackfeet and Gros Ventres.⁶¹ We afterward learned that on their return to the northern mountains, they met with a terrible defeat from the Sioux and other neighboring tribes, in which they were said to have lost more than half their number.

We now encountered a great deal of wet weather; in fact this region is famous for cold protracted rains of two or three days' duration. Storms of hail-stones larger than hen's eggs are not uncommon, frequently accompanied by the most tremendous hurricanes. The violence of the wind is sometimes so great that, as I have heard, two road-wagons were once capsized by one of these terrible thunder-gusts; the rain, at the same time, floating the plain to the depth of several inches. In short, I doubt if there is any known region out of the tropics, that can 'head' the great

⁶¹ For the Grosventres, see Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 371, note 183. For their periodical visits to their kinsfolk, the Arapaho, see Chittenden, *Fur-Trade*, ii, p. 852.—ED.

prairies in 'getting up' thunder-storms, combining so many of the elements of the awful and sublime.

During these storms the guards were often very careless. This was emphatically the case with us, notwithstanding our knowledge of the proximity of a horde of savages. In fact, the caravan was subject to so little control that the patience of Capt. Stanley underwent some very severe trials; so much so [83] that he threatened more than once to resign. Truly, there is not a better school for testing a man's temper, than the command of a promiscuous caravan of independent traders. The rank of captain is, of course, but little more than nominal. Every proprietor of a two-horse wagon is apt to assume as much authority as the commander himself, and to issue his orders without the least consultation at head-quarters. It is easy then to conceive that the captain has anything but an enviable berth. He is expected to keep order while few are disposed to obey — loaded with execrations for every mishap, whether accidental or otherwise; and when he attempts to remonstrate he only renders himself ridiculous, being entirely without power to enforce his commands. It is to be regretted that some system of 'maritime law' has not been introduced among these traders to secure subordination, which can never be attained while the commander is invested with no legal authority. For my own part, I can see no reason why the captain of a prairie caravan should not have as much power to call his men to account for disobedience or mutiny, as the captain of a ship upon the high seas.

After following the course of the Cimarron for two days longer, we at length reached a place called the 'Willow Bar,'⁶² where we took the usual mid-day respite of two or three

⁶² The trail wound along the Cimarron River for over eighty miles (see our volume xvi, note 73), passing from Kansas through the southeast corner of Colorado into Oklahoma. Willow Bar was a well-known camping place, not far from the Colorado-Oklahoma border.— ED.

hours, to afford the animals time to feed, and our cooks to prepare dinner. Our wagons were regularly 'formed,' and the animals [84] turned loose to graze at leisure, with only a 'day-guard' to watch them. Those who had finished their dinners lay stretched upon their blankets, and were just beginning to enjoy the luxury of a siesta — when all of a sudden, the fearful and oft-reiterated cry of "Indians!" turned this scene of repose into one of bustle and confusion.

From the opposite ridge at the distance of a mile, a swarm of savages were seen coming upon us, at full charge, and their hideous whoop and yell soon resounded through the valley. Such a jumbling of promiscuous voices I never expect to hear again. Every one fancied himself a commander, and vociferated his orders accordingly. The air was absolutely rent with the cries of "Let's charge 'em, boys!"—"Fire upon 'em, boys!"—"Reserve! don't fire till they come nearer!"—while the voice of our captain was scarcely distinguishable in his attempts to prevent such rash proceedings. As the prairie Indians often approach their friends as well as enemies in this way, Captain Stanley was unwilling to proceed to extremities, lest they might be peacefully inclined. But a 'popping salute,' and the whizzing of fusil balls over our heads, soon explained their intentions. We returned them several rifle shots by way of compliment, but without effect, as they were at too great a distance.

A dozen cannoniers now surrounded our 'artillery,' which was charged with canister. Each of them had, of course, something to [85] say. "Elevate her; she'll ground," one would suggest. "She'll overshoot, now," rejoined another. At last, after raising and lowering the six-pounder several times, during which process the Indians had time to retreat beyond reach of shot, the match was finally applied, and — bang! went the gun, but the charge grounded midway. This was followed by two or three shots with single

ball, but apparently without effect; although there were some with sharp eyes, who fancied they saw Indians or horses wounded at every fire. We came off equally unscathed from the conflict, barring a horse of but little value, which ran away, and was taken by the enemy. The Indians were about a hundred in number, and supposed to be Comanches, though they might have been a band of warriors belonging to the party we had just left behind.

The novices were not a little discouraged at these frequent inroads of the enemy, although it is very seldom that any lives are lost in encounters with them. In the course of twenty years since the commencement of this trade, I do not believe there have been a dozen deaths upon the Santa Fé route, even including those who have been killed off by disease, as well as by the Indians.

On the following day we encamped near the 'Battle Ground,' famous for a skirmish which a caravan of traders, in company with a detachment of Mexican troops, under the command of Col. Vizcarra, had in 1829 with [86] a band of Gros Ventres. The united companies had just encamped on the Cimarron, near the site of the burial catastrophe which occurred the preceding year. A party of about a hundred and twenty Indians soon after approached them on foot; but as the Americans were but little disposed to admit friendly intercourse between them, they passed into the camp of the Mexican commander, who received them amicably — a circumstance not altogether agreeable to the traders. As the Indians seemed disposed to remain till morning, Col. Vizcarra promised that they should be disarmed for the night; but the cunning wretches made some excuse to delay the surrender of their weapons, until the opportunity being favorable for a *coup de main*, they sprang to their feet, raised a fearful yell, and fired upon the unsuspecting party. Their aim seems chiefly to have been

to take the life of the Mexican colonel; and it is said that a Taos Indian who formed one of the Mexican escort, seeing a gun levelled at his commander, sprang forward and received the ball in his own body, from the effects of which he instantly expired! The Indians were pursued for several miles into the hills, and a considerable number killed and wounded. Of the Americans not one received the slightest injury; but of the Mexican dragoons, a captain and two or three privates were killed.⁶³

CHAPTER V

A Beautiful Ravine — 'Runners' Starting for Santa Fé — Fourth of July on the Prairies — The *Cibolero* or Buffalo-hunter — Mournful News of Captain Sublette's Company — Murder of Captain Smith and another of the party by the Indians — Carelessness and Risks of Hunters — Captain Sublette's Peril — Character and Pursuits of the *Ciboleros* — The Art of Curing Meat — Purity of the Atmosphere — The 'Round Mound' — The Mirage or False Ponds — Philosophy thereof — Extensive and Interesting View — Exaggerated Accounts by Travellers of the Buffalo of the Prairies — Their Decrease — A 'Stampede' — Wagon Repairing — Rio Colorado or Canadian River — Meeting between old Friends — Mexican Escort — Disorganizing of the Caravan — Dreadful Thunder-storm — First Symptoms of Civilization — San Miguel — Arrival at Santa Fé — Entry of the Caravan — First Hours of Recreation — Interpreters and Custom-house Arrangements — A Glance at the Trade, etc.

It was on the last day of June that we arrived at the 'Upper Spring,' which is a small fountain breaking into a ravine that declines towards the Cimarron some three or four miles to the north.⁶⁴ The scarcity of water in these desert regions, gives to every little spring an importance which, of course, in more favored countries it would not enjoy. We halted at noon on the brook below, and then branched off towards the waters of the Canadian, in an

⁶³ See another account of this affair, in Riley's report (note 30, *ante*).— ED.

⁶⁴ Upper Spring of the Cimarron was just beyond the New Mexican-Oklahoma boundary, and the usual point of departure from the Cimarron River.— ED.

average direction of about [88] thirty degrees south of west. As the wagon-road passes upon the adjacent ridge a quarter of a mile to the south of this spring, some of us, to procure a draught of its refreshing water, pursued a path along the ravine, winding through dense thickets of underbrush, matted with green-briers and grape-vines, which, with the wild-currant and plum-bushes, were all bent under their unripe fruit. The wildness of this place, with its towering cliffs, craggy spurs, and deep-cut crevices, became doubly impressive to us, as we reflected that we were in the very midst of the most savage haunts. Often will the lonely traveller, as he plods his weary way in silence, imagine in each click of a pebble, the snap of a firelock, and in a very rebound of a twig, the whisk of an arrow. After regaling ourselves with a draught of the delicious beverage which gushed from the pure fountain, we ascended the rugged heights and rejoined the caravan half a mile beyond.

We had now a plain and perfectly distinguishable track before us, and a party of *avant-couriers*, known in the technical parlance of the Prairies as 'runners,' soon began to make preparations for pushing forward in advance of the caravan into Santa Fé, though we were yet more than two hundred miles from that city. It is customary for these runners to take their departure from the caravans in the night, in order to evade the vigilance of any enemy that might be lurking around the encampment. They are generally proprietors or [89] agents; and their principal purpose is to procure and send back a supply of provisions, to secure good store-houses, and what is no less important, to obtain an agreeable understanding with the officers of the custom-house.

The second day after the departure of the runners, as we lay encamped at McNees's creek, the Fourth of July dawned

upon us.⁶⁵ Scarce had gray twilight brushed his dusky brow, when our patriotic camp gave lively demonstrations of that joy which plays around the heart of every American on the anniversary of this triumphant day. The roar of our artillery and rifle platoons resounded from every hill, while the rumbling of the drum and the shrill whistle of the fife, imparted a degree of martial interest to the scene which was well calculated to stir the souls of men. There was no limit to the huzzas and enthusiastic ejaculations of our people; and at every new shout the dales around sent forth a gladsome response. This anniversary is always hailed with heart-felt joy by the wayfarer in the remote desert; for here the strifes and intrigues of party-spirit are unknown: nothing intrudes, in these wild solitudes, to mar that harmony of feeling, and almost pious exultation, which every true-hearted American experiences on this great day.

The next day's march brought us in front of the Rabbit-Ear Mounds,⁶⁶ which might now be seen at a distance of eight or ten miles south of us, and which before the present track was established, served as a guide to travellers. [90] The first caravan of wagons that crossed these plains, passed on the south side of these mounds, having abandoned our present route at the 'Cold Spring,' where we encamped on the night of the 1st of July. Although the route we were travelling swerves somewhat too much to the north, that pursued by the early caravans as stated above, made still a greater circuit to the south, and was by far the most inconvenient.

⁶⁵ McNeas Creek, so-called because of the tragedy in which that young man was killed (see *ante*, p. 183), was the one now known as Currampaw Creek, in Union County, New Mexico, constituting the upper waters of Beaver Creek, which is an affluent of the North Fork of the Canadian.— ED.

⁶⁶ Rabbit Ear Mounds are in eastern Union County, New Mexico, just north of Clayton, the county seat, on the Colorado and Southern Railway. They are named from a fancied resemblance to rabbit's ears, and are almost the first elevations seen after crossing the Cimarron plain.— ED.

As we were proceeding on our march, we observed a horseman approaching, who excited at first considerable curiosity. His picturesque costume, and peculiarity of deportment, however, soon showed him to be a Mexican *Cibolero* or buffalo-hunter. These hardy devotees of the chase usually wear leathern trousers and jackets, and flat straw hats; while, swung upon the shoulder of each hangs his *carcage* or quiver of bow and arrows. The long handle of their lance being set in a case, and suspended by the side with a strap from the pommel of the saddle, leaves the point waving high over the head, with a tassel of gay parti-colored stuffs dangling at the tip of the scabbard. Their fusil, if they happen to have one, is suspended in like manner at the other side, with a stopper in the muzzle fantastically tasselled.

The *Cibolero* saluted us with demonstrations of joy; nor were we less delighted at meeting with him; for we were now able to obtain information from Santa Fé, whence no news had been received since [91] the return of the caravan the preceding fall. Traders and idlers, with equal curiosity, clustered around the new visitor; every one who could speak a word of Spanish having some question to ask: —“What prospects?”—“How are goods?”—“What news from the South?”—while the more experienced traders interested themselves chiefly to ascertain the condition of the custom-house, and who were the present revenue officers; for unpropitious changes sometimes occur during the absence of the caravans.

But whatever joy we at first experienced was soon converted into mourning, by a piece of most melancholy news — the tragical death of a celebrated veteran mountain adventurer. It has already been mentioned that Capt. Sublette and others had started near a month in advance of our company. We had frequently seen their trail, and once

or twice had received some vague information of their whereabouts through the Indians, but nothing satisfactory. Our visitor now informed us that a captain of this band had been assassinated by the Indians; and from his description we presumed it to be Capt. Smith, one of the partners,— which was afterwards confirmed, with many particulars of the adventures of this company.

Capt. Smith and his companions were new beginners in the Santa Fé trade, but being veteran pioneers of the Rocky Mountains, they concluded they could go anywhere; and imprudently set out without a single person [92] in their company at all competent to guide them on the route. They had some twenty-odd wagons, and about eighty men. There being a plain track to the Arkansas river, they did very well thus far; but from thence to the Cimarron, not a single trail was to be found, save the innumerable buffalo paths, with which these plains are furrowed, and which are exceedingly perplexing to the bewildered prairie traveller. In a great many places which I have observed, they have all the appearance of immense highways, over which entire armies would seem to have frequently passed. They generally lead from one watering place to another; but as these reservoirs very often turn out to be dry, the thirsty traveller who follows them in search of water, is liable to constant disappointment.

When Capt. Sublette's party entered this arid plain, it was parched with drought; and they were doomed to wander about for several days, with all the horrors of a death from thirst staring them continually in the face. In this perilous situation, Capt. Smith resolved at last to pursue one of these seductive buffalo paths, in hopes it might lead to the margin of some stream or pond. He set out alone; for besides the temerity which desperation always inspires, he had ever been a stranger to fear; indeed, he was one of the most un-

daunted spirits that had ever traversed the Rocky Mountains; and if but one-half of what has been told of him be true,— of his bold enterprises — his perilous wanderings — [93] his skirmishings with the savages — his hair-breadth escapes, etc.— he would surely be entitled to one of the most exalted seats in the Olympus of Prairie mythology. But, alas! unfortunate Captain Smith! after having so often dodged the arrow and eluded the snare of the wily Mountain Indian, little could he have thought, while jogging along under a scorching sun, that his bones were destined to bleach upon those arid sands! He had already wandered many miles away from his comrades, when, on turning over an eminence, his eyes were joyfully greeted with the appearance of a small stream meandering through the valley that spread before him. It was the Cimarron. He hurried forward to slake the fire of his parched lips — but, imagine his disappointment, at finding in the channel only a bed of dry sand! With his hands, however, he soon scratched out a basin a foot or two deep, into which the water slowly oozed from the saturated sand. While with his head bent down, in the effort to quench his burning thirst in the fountain, he was pierced by the arrows of a gang of Comanches, who were lying in wait for him! Yet he struggled bravely to the last; and, as the Indians themselves have since related, killed two or three of their party before he was overpowered.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Jedediah S. Smith was one of the most remarkable men in the early Western fur-trade. Born in New York, where he was well educated, he came west while still a youth, and entered the service of General Ashley, of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. He first acquired public notice by his intrepidity in the Arikara campaign of 1823, and at its close volunteered to take a message to Andrew Henry, on the Yellowstone — a perilous journey which he performed with address. During the following year he trapped upon the Yellowstone and Snake rivers, and visited the Hudson's Bay Company's post among the Flatheads. His report of this visit and the operations of the British was included in a message to the United States war department. In 1824 he entered the Rocky Mountain Fur Company as a partner, and for two years seconded Ashley's efforts with marked success. In 1826, forming a partnership with Jackson and Sublette, they purchased the rights

Every kind of fatality seems to have attended this little caravan. Among other calamities, we also learned that a clerk in their company, named Minter, had been killed by [94] a band of Pawnees, before they crossed the Arkansas. This, I believe, is the only instance of loss of life among the traders while engaged in hunting: although the scarcity of accidents can hardly be said to be the result of prudence. There is not a day, from the time a caravan reaches the 'buffalo range,' that hunters do not commit some indiscretion, such as straying at a distance of five and even ten miles from the caravan, frequently alone, and seldom in bands of more than two or three together. In this state, they must frequently be spied by prowling savages; so that the frequency of escape, under such circumstances, must be partly attributed to the cowardice of the Indians: indeed, generally speaking, the latter are very loth to charge upon even a single armed man, unless they can take him at a decided disadvantage. Therefore, it is at all times imprudent to fire at the first approach of Indians; for, seeing their guns empty, the savages would charge upon them; while very small bands of hunters have been known to keep large num-

of the company, whereupon Smith began a series of explorations, designed to open up new territory, in the course of which he traversed immense reaches of the Far West. Leaving Salt Lake in August, 1826, he descended the Colorado, crossed the California deserts to San Diego; proceeding north, parallel to the coast, some fifty miles or more in the interior, he wintered on Sacramento River, and crossed to the Salt Lake post by June, 1827. Returning to California, he wintered once more in its northern regions, advancing north the following spring until he reached the Umpquah River, where all but three of his party were slain by Indians. Escaping to Fort Vancouver, Smith was hospitably treated by Dr. McLoughlin, the British factor. His furs recovered and purchased, he was permitted to remain until the spring of 1829, when he ascended the Columbia and Snake in August, joining his partners on the headwaters of the latter river. The following year, the firm sold out and embarked in the Santa Fé trade, with the disastrous consequences which Gregg relates. Smith was a man of strong Christian character and undaunted courage. His contributions to geographical knowledge were considerable, and were to have been embodied in an atlas, had he not met so untimely a death.—ED.

bers of the enemy at bay, by presenting their rifles, but reserving their fire, till assistance was at hand.

The companions of Capt. Smith, having descended upon the Cimarron at another point, appear to have remained ignorant of the terrible fate that had befallen him, until they were informed of the circumstances by some Mexican traders, who had ascertained the facts from the murderous savages themselves. [95] Not long after, this band of Capt. Sublette very narrowly escaped a total destruction. They had fallen in with that immense horde of Blackfeet and Gros Ventres, with whom we afterwards met, and, as the traders were literally but a handful among their thousands, they fancied themselves for awhile in imminent peril of being virtually 'eaten up.' But as Capt. Sublette possessed considerable experience, he was at no loss how to deal with these treacherous savages; so that although the latter assumed a menacing attitude, he passed them without any serious molestation, and finally arrived at Santa Fé in safety.

But to return to our *Cibolero*. He was desirous to sell us some provisions, which, by the by, were welcome enough; for most of the company were out of bread, and meat was becoming very scarce, having seen but few buffalo since our first encounter with the Indians on the Cimarron. Our visitor soon retired to his camp hard by, and, with several of his comrades, afterwards brought us an abundance of dry buffalo beef, and some bags of coarse oven-toasted loaves, a kind of hard bread, much used by Mexican travellers. It is prepared by opening the ordinary leavened rolls, and toasting them brown in an oven. Though exceedingly hard and insipid while dry, it becomes not only soft but palatable when soaked in water — or better still in 'hot coffee.' But what we procured on this occasion was unusually stale and coarse, prepared [96] expressly for barter

with the Comanches, in case they should meet any: yet bread was bread, emphatically, with us just then.

A word concerning the *Ciboleros* may not be altogether uninteresting. Every year, large parties of New-Mexicans, some provided with mules and asses, others with *carretas* or truckle-carts and oxen, drive out into these prairies to procure a supply of buffalo beef for their families. They hunt, like the wild Indians, chiefly on horseback, and with bow and arrow, or lance, with which they soon load their carts and mules. They find no difficulty in curing their meat even in mid-summer, by slicing it thin and spreading or suspending it in the sun; or, if in haste, it is slightly barbecued. During the curing operation they often follow the Indian practice of beating or kneading the slices with their feet, which they contend contributes to its preservation.

Here the extraordinary purity of the atmosphere is remarkably exemplified. The caravans cure meat in the same simple manner, except the process of kneading. A line is stretched from corner to corner on each side of a wagon-body, and strung with slices of beef, which remains from day to day till it is sufficiently cured to be stacked away. This is done without salt, and yet it very rarely putrifies. In truth, as blow-flies are unknown here, there is nothing to favor putrefaction. While speaking of flies, I might [97] as well remark, that, after passing beyond the region of the tall grass, between the Missouri frontier and Arkansas river, the horse-fly also is unknown. Judging from the prairies on our border, we had naturally anticipated a great deal of mischief from these brute-tormentors; in which we were very agreeably disappointed.

But I have not yet done with the meat-curing operations. While in the midst of the buffalo range, travellers usually take the precaution of laying up a supply of beef for exigencies in the absence of the 'prairie cattle.' We had

somewhat neglected this provision in time of abundance, by which we had come near being reduced to extremities. Caravans sometimes lie by a day or two to provide a supply of meat; when numbers of buffalo are slaughtered, and the flesh 'jerked,' or slightly barbecued, by placing it upon a scaffold over a fire. The same method is resorted to by Mexicans when the weather is too damp or cloudy for the meat to dry in the open air.

We were now approaching the 'Round Mound,' a beautiful round-topped cone, rising nearly a thousand feet above the level of the plain by which it is for the most part surrounded.⁶⁸ We were yet at least three miles from this mound, when a party set out on foot to ascend it, in order to get a view of the surrounding country. They felt confident it was but half a mile off — at most, three-quarters; but finding the distance so much greater than they had anticipated, many began to lag behind, [98] and soon rejoined the wagons. The optical illusions occasioned by the rarified and transparent atmosphere of these elevated plains, are often truly remarkable, affording another exemplification of its purity. One would almost fancy himself looking through a spy-glass, for objects frequently appear at scarce one-fourth of their real distance — frequently much magnified, and more especially elevated. I have often seen flocks of antelopes mistaken for droves of elks or wild horses, and when at a great distance, even for horsemen; whereby frequent alarms are occasioned. I have also known tufts of grass or weeds, or mere buffalo bones scattered on the prairies, to stretch upward to the height of several feet, so as to present the appearance of so many human beings. Ravens in the same way are not unfre-

⁶⁸ The nomenclature of the maps of New Mexico changed greatly between 1872 and 1879, due probably to surveys for railroads in that period, and to public land surveys. Round Mound, which appears in all early cartography, seems to have been an outlying spur of the present Don Carlos range, in Union County.—ED.

quently taken for Indians, as well as for buffalo; and a herd of the latter upon a distant plain often appear so increased in bulk that they would be mistaken by the inexperienced for a grove of trees. This is usually attended with a continual waving and looming, which often so writhe and distort distant objects as to render them too indistinct to be discriminated. The illusion seems to be occasioned by gaseous vapors rising from the ground while the beaming rays of the sun are darting upon it.

But the most curious, and at the same time the most perplexing phenomenon, occasioned by optical deception, is the *mirage*, or, as familiarly called upon the Prairies, the 'false [99] ponds.' Even the experienced traveller is often deceived by these upon the arid plains, where a disappointment is most severely felt. The thirsty wayfarer, after jogging for hours under a burning sky, at length espies a pond — yes, it must be water — it looks too natural for him to be mistaken. He quickens his pace, enjoying in anticipation the pleasure of a refreshing draught: but lo! as he approaches, it recedes or entirely disappears; and when upon its apparent site, he is ready to doubt his own vision — he finds but a parched plain under his feet. It is not until he has been thus a dozen times deceived, that he is willing to relinquish the pursuit: and then, perhaps, when he really does see a pond, he will pass it unexamined, for fear of another disappointment.

The philosophy of these 'false ponds' seems generally not well understood. They have usually been attributed to *refraction*, by which a section of the bordering sky would appear below the horizon: but there can be no doubt that they are the effect of *reflection*, upon a gas emanating perhaps from the sun-scorched earth and vegetable matter. Or it may be that a surcharge of carbonic acid, precipitated upon the flats and sinks of those plains, by the action of the sun, pro-

duces the effect. At least, it appears of sufficient density, when viewed very obliquely, to reflect the objects beyond: and thus the opposite sky being reflected in the *pond of gas*, gives the appearance of water. As a proof that it is the effect [100] of reflection, I have often observed the distant trees and hilly protuberances which project above the horizon beyond, distinctly inverted in the 'pond;' whereas, were it the result of refraction, these would appear erect, only cast below the surface. Indeed, many are the singular atmospheric phenomena observable upon the plains, which would afford a field of interesting research for the curious natural philosopher.

At last, some of the most persevering of our adventurers succeeded in ascending the summit of the Round Mound, which commands a full and advantageous view of the surrounding country, in some directions to the distance of a hundred miles or more. Looking southward a varied country is seen, of hills, plains, mounds, and sandy undulations; but on the whole northern side, extensive plains spread out, studded occasionally with variegated peaks and ridges. Far beyond these, to the north-westward, and low in the horizon a silvery stripe appears upon an azure base, resembling a list of chalk-white clouds. This is the perennially snow-capped summit of the eastern spur of the Rocky Mountains.

These immense bordering plains, and even the hills with which they are interspersed, are wholly destitute of timber, except a chance scattering tree upon the margins of the bluffs and ravines, which but scantily serves to variegate the landscape. Not even a buffalo was now to be seen to relieve the dull monotony [101] of the scene; although at some seasons (and particularly in the fall) these prairies are literally strewed with herds of this animal. Then, 'thousands and tens of thousands' might at times be seen

from this eminence. But the buffalo is a migratory animal, and even in the midst of the Prairies where they are generally so very abundant, we sometimes travel for days without seeing a single one; though no signs of hunter or Indian can be discovered. To say the truth, however, I have never seen them anywhere upon the Prairies so abundant as some travellers have represented — in dense masses, darkening the whole country. I have only found them in scattered herds, of a few scores, hundreds, or sometimes thousands in each, and where in the greatest numbers, dispersed far and wide; but with large intervals between. Yet they are very sensibly and rapidly decreasing. There is a current notion that the whites frighten them away; but, I would ask, where do they go to? To be sure, to use a hunter's phrase, they 'frighten a few out of their skins;' yet for every one killed by the whites, more than a hundred, perhaps a thousand, fall by the hands of the savages. From these, however, there is truly 'nowhere to flee;' for they follow them wheresoever they go: while the poor brutes instinctively learn to avoid the fixed establishments, and, to some degree, the regular travelling routes of the whites.

As the caravan was passing under the northern base of the Round Mound, it presented [102] a very fine and imposing spectacle to those who were upon its summit. The wagons marched slowly in four parallel columns, but in broken lines, often at intervals of many rods between. The unceasing 'crack, crack,' of the wagoners' whips, resembling the frequent reports of distant guns, almost made one believe that a skirmish was actually taking place between two hostile parties: and a hostile engagement it virtually was to the poor brutes, at least; for the merciless application of the whip would sometimes make the blood spurt from their sides — and that often without any apparent motive

of the wanton *carrettieri*, other than to amuse themselves with the flourishing and loud popping of their lashes!

The rear wagons are usually left without a guard; for all the loose horsemen incline to be ahead, where they are to be seen moving in scattered groups, sometimes a mile or more in advance. As our camp was pitched but a mile west of the Round Mound, those who lingered upon its summit could have an interesting view of the evolutions of 'forming' the wagons, in which the drivers by this time had become very expert. When marching four abreast, the two exterior lines spread out and then meet at the front angle; while the two inner lines keep close together until they reach the point of the rear angle, when they wheel suddenly out and close with the hinder ends of the other two; thus systematically concluding a right-lined quadrangle, with a gap left at the rear corner for the introduction of the animals.

[103] Our encampment was in a beautiful plain, but without water, of which, however, we had had a good supply at noon. Our cattle, as was the usual custom, after having grazed without for a few hours, were now shut up in the pen of the wagons. Our men were all wrapt in peaceful slumber, except the guard, who kept their silent watch around the encampment; when all of a sudden, about the ominous hour of midnight, a tremendous uproar was heard, which caused every man to start in terror from his blanket couch, with arms in hand. Some animal, it appeared, had taken fright at a dog, and by a sudden start, set all around him in violent motion: the panic spread simultaneously throughout the pen; and a scene of rattle, clash, and 'lumbering,' ensued, which far surpassed everything we had yet witnessed. A general 'stampede' (*estampida*, as the Mexicans say) was the result. Notwithstanding the wagons were tightly bound together, wheel to wheel, with ropes or chains,

and several stretched across the gaps at the corners of the *corral*, the oxen soon burst their way out; and though mostly yoked in pairs, they went scampering over the plains, as though Tam O'Shanter's 'cutty-sark' Nannie had been at their tails. All attempts to stop them were vain; for it would require 'Auld Cloutie' himself to check the headway of a drove of oxen, when once thoroughly frightened. Early the following morning we made active exertions to get up a sufficient quantity of teams to start [104] the caravan. At Rock Creek, a distance of six or seven miles, we were joined by those who had gone in pursuit of the stock.⁶⁹ All the oxen were found, except some half a dozen, which were never recovered. No mules were lost: a few that had broken loose were speedily retaken. The fact is, that though mules are generally easiest scared, oxen are decidedly the worst when once started. The principal advantage of the latter in this respect, is, that Indians have but little inducement to steal them, and therefore few attempts would be made upon a caravan of oxen.

We were now entering a region of rough, and in some places, rocky road, as the streams which intervene from this to the mountains are all bordered with fine sandstone. These rugged passes acted very severely upon our wagons, as the wheels were by this time becoming loose and 'shackling,' from the shrink of the wood, occasioned by the extreme dryness and rarity of this elevated atmosphere. The spokes of some were beginning to reel in the hubs, so that it became necessary to brace them with 'false spokes,' firmly bound with 'buffalo tug.' On some occasions, the wagon tires have become so loose upon the felloes as to tumble off while travelling. The most effective mode of tightening slackened tires (at least that most practiced on the plains,

⁶⁹ Rock Creek is one of the upper waters of Ute Creek, the first tributary of the Canadian met upon the trail.— Ed.

as there is rarely a portable forge in company), is by driving strips of hoop-iron around between the tire and felloe — simple wedges of wood are sometimes made to supply the place [105] of iron. During halts I have seen a dozen wheels being repaired at the same time, occasioning such a clitter-clatter of hammers, that one would almost fancy himself in a ship-yard.

Emerging from this region of asperities, we soon passed the 'Point of Rocks,' as a diminutive 'spur' projecting from the north is called, at the foot of which springs a charming little fount of water. This is but thirty or forty miles from the principal mountains, along whose border, similar detached ridges and hills are frequently to be seen. The next day, having descended from the table plain, we reached the principal branch of the Canadian river, which is here but a rippling brook, hardly a dozen paces in width, though eighty miles from its source in the mountains to the north.⁷⁰ The bottom being of solid rock, this ford is appropriately called by the ciboleros, *el Vado de Piedras*. The banks are very low and easy to ascend. The stream is called *Rio Colorado* by the Mexicans, and is known among Americans by its literal translation of *Red River*. This circumstance perhaps gave rise to the belief that it was the head branch of our main stream of this name:⁷¹ but the [106] nearest

⁷⁰ Point of Rocks is a southern spur of the Raton range, near the parallel separating Colfax and Mora counties.

For the Canadian River and its exploration, consult our volume xiii, p. 231, note 188; xvi, p. 191, note 94.— ED.

⁷¹ Previous to the year 1820, this '*Rio Colorado*' seems universally to have been considered as the principal source of *Red River*; but in the expedition of Maj. Long, during that year, he discovered this to be the head branch of the Canadian. The discovery cost him somewhat dearly too; for striking a branch of the Colorado near the Mountains, he followed down its course, believing it to be of the main Red River. He was not fully undeceived till he arrived at its junction with the Arkansas; whereby he failed in a principal object of the expedition — the exploration of the true sources of 'Red River of Natchitoches.'— GREGG.

Comment by Ed. See our reprint in volumes xiv-xvii.

waters of the legitimate 'Red River of Natchitoches,' are still a hundred miles to the south of this road.

In descending to the Rio Colorado, we met a dozen or more of our countrymen from Taos, to which town (sixty or seventy miles distant) there is a direct but rugged route across the mountains.⁷² It was a joyous encounter, for among them we found some of our old acquaintances whom we had not seen for many years. During our boyhood we had 'spelt' together in the same country school, and roamed the wild woods with many a childish glee. They turned about with us, and the remainder of our march was passed in answering their inquiries after their relatives and friends in the United States.

Before reaching the stream, we encountered another party of visitors, being chiefly custom-house agents or clerks, who, accompanied by a military escort, had come out to guard the caravan to the Capital. The ostensible purpose of this escort was to prevent smuggling,—a company of troops being thus dispatched every year, with strict injunctions to watch the caravans. This custom appears since to have nearly grown out of use: and well might it be discontinued altogether, for any one disposed to smuggle would find no difficulty in securing the services of these preventive guards, who, for a trifling *douceur*, would prove very efficient auxiliaries, rather than obstacles to the success of any such designs. As we were forming in the valley opposite [107] where the escort was encamped, Col. Vizcarra, the commandant, honored us with a salute from his artillery, which was promptly responded to by our little cannon.

Considering ourselves at last out of danger of Indian hostilities (although still nearly a hundred and forty miles from Santa Fé); and not unwilling to give our 'guard' as

⁷² For Taos, see Pattie's *Narrative*, in our volume xviii, note 44. The upper, or mountain route to Santa Fé went by way of Taos.—ED.

much trouble as possible, we abandoned the organization of our caravan a few miles beyond the Colorado; its members wending their way to the Capital in almost as many detached parties as there were proprietors. The road from this to San Miguel (a town nearly a hundred miles distant), leads in a southwestern direction along the base of, and almost parallel with, that spur of snow-clad mountains, which has already been mentioned, bearing down east of the Rio del Norte.

This region is particularly celebrated for violent showers, hail-storms, and frightful thunder-gusts. The sudden cooling and contraction of the atmosphere which follows these falls of rain, very often reverses the current of the lower stratum of air; so that a cloud which has just ceased pouring its contents and been wafted away, is in a few minutes brought back, and drenches the traveller with another torrent. I was deeply impressed with a scene I witnessed in the summer of 1832, about two days' journey beyond the Colorado, which I may be excused for alluding to in this connection. We were encamped at noon, when a murky cloud issued from [108] behind the mountains, and, after hovering over us for a few minutes, gave vent to one of those tremendous peals of thunder which seem peculiar to those regions, making the elements tremble, and leaving us so stunned and confounded that some seconds elapsed before each man was able to convince himself that he had not been struck by lightning. A sulphureous stench filled the atmosphere; but the thunderbolt had skipped over the wagons and lighted upon the *caballada*, which was grazing hard by; some of which were afterward seen stretched upon the plain. It was not a little singular to find an ox lying lifeless from the stroke, while his mate stood uninjured by his side, and under the same yoke.

Some distance beyond the Colorado, a party of about a

dozen (which I joined) left the wagons to go ahead to Santa Fé. Fifty miles beyond the main branch of this stream we passed the last of the Canadian waters, known to foreigners as the *Mora*.⁷³ From thence to the *Gallinas*,⁷⁴ the first of the Rio del Norte waters, the road stretches over an elevated plain, unobstructed by any mountainous ridge. At Gallinas creek, we found [109] a large flock of sheep grazing upon the adjacent plain; while a little hovel at the foot of a cliff showed it to be a *rancho*. A swarthy *ranchero* soon made his appearance, from whom we procured a treat of goat's milk, with some dirty ewe's milk 'curdle cheese' to supply the place of bread.⁷⁵

Some twenty miles from this place we entered San Miguel, the first settlement of any note upon our route. This consists of irregular clusters of mud-wall huts, and is situated in the fertile valley of Rio Pecos, a silvery little river which ripples from the snowy mountains of Santa Fé — from which city this frontier village is nearly fifty miles to the

⁷³ As *mora* means *mulberry*, and this fruit is to be found at the mouth of this stream, one would suppose that it had acquired its name from that fact, did not the Mexicans always call it *Rio de lo de Mora*, thus leaving it to be inferred that the name had originated from some individual called Mora, who had settled upon it.— GREGG.

Comment by Ed. River Mora was named for the abundance of that fruit growing on its banks. It is a swift mountain stream, tributary of the Canadian. In irrigating months, it is in that manner now entirely drained of its waters. The river gives its name to a New Mexican county, important for its agricultural products. It was first settled in 1832; but, exposed to Indian depredations, it had few inhabitants until after 1840. American troops burned the town of Mora in 1847.

⁷⁴ Called *Rio de las Gallinas* by Mexicans. Though *gallina* is literally *hen*, it is here also applied to the *turkey* (usually with a 'surname,' as *gallina de la tierra*). It is therefore *Turkey* river.— GREGG.

⁷⁵ This was the first dwelling in Las Vegas, now a thriving city of ten thousand inhabitants, the second in size in New Mexico. It was definitely colonized in 1835, and eleven years later Wislizenus found there over a hundred houses. Las Vegas is noted as a health resort; the Hot Springs, five miles distant, are much frequented by convalescents.— Ed.

southeast.⁷⁶ The road makes this great southern bend, to find a passway through the broken extremity of the spur of mountains before alluded to, which from this point south is cut up into detached ridges and table plains. This mountain section of the road, even in its present unimproved condition, presents but few difficult passes, and might, with little labor, be put in good order.

A few miles before reaching the city, the road again emerges into an open plain. Ascending a table ridge, we spied in an extended valley to the northwest, occasional groups of trees, skirted with verdant corn and wheat fields, with here and there a square block-like protuberance reared in the midst. A little further, and just ahead of us to the north, irregular clusters of the same opened to our view. "Oh, we are approaching the suburbs!" [110] thought I, on perceiving the cornfields, and what I supposed to be brick-kilns scattered in every direction. These and other observations of the same nature becoming audible, a friend at my elbow said, "It is true those are heaps of unburnt bricks, nevertheless they are *houses* — this is the city of SANTA FÉ."

Five or six days after our arrival, the caravan at last hove in sight, and wagon after wagon was seen pouring down the last declivity at about a mile's distance from the city. To judge from the clamorous rejoicings of the men, and the state of agreeable excitement which the muleteers seemed to be laboring under, the spectacle must have been as new to them as it had been to me. It was truly a scene for the

⁷⁶ The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railway, having followed the mountain trail, coincides with the Cimarron route from about the present town of Springer. A detour to the south is made in order to pass the mountains. At its extremity is San Miguel, a customs frontier and during the days of the Santa Fé trade a considerable Mexican town; it is now a hamlet of less than five hundred inhabitants.

For Pecos River and a brief sketch of Santa Fé, see our volume xviii, pp. 76, 77, notes 48, 49.—ED.

artist's pencil to revel in. Even the animals seemed to participate in the humor of their riders, who grew more and more merry and obstreperous as they descended towards the city. I doubt, in short, whether the first sight of the walls of Jerusalem were beheld by the crusaders with much more tumultuous and soul-enrapturing joy.

The arrival produced a great deal of bustle and excitement among the natives. "*Los Americanos!*"—"Los carros!"—"La entrada de la caravana!" were to be heard in every direction; and crowds of women and boys flocked around to see the new-comers; while crowds of *léperos* hung about as usual to see what they could pilfer. The wagoners were by no means free from excitement on this occasion. [III] Informed of the 'ordeal' they had to pass, they had spent the previous morning in 'rubbing up;' and now they were prepared, with clean faces, sleek combed hair, and their choicest Sunday suit, to meet the 'fair eyes' of glistening black that were sure to stare at them as they passed. There was yet another preparation to be made in order to 'show off' to advantage. Each wagoner must tie a bran new 'cracker' to the lash of his whip; for, on driving through the streets and the *plaza pública*, every one strives to outvie his comrades in the dexterity with which he flourishes this favorite badge of his authority.

Our wagons were soon discharged in the ware-rooms of the Custom-house; and a few days' leisure being now at our disposal, we had time to take that recreation which a fatiguing journey of ten weeks had rendered so necessary. The wagoners, and many of the traders, particularly the novices, flocked to the numerous fandangoes, which are regularly kept up after the arrival of a caravan. But the merchants generally were anxiously and actively engaged in their affairs — striving who should first get his goods out of the custom-house, and obtain a chance at the 'hard chink' of

the numerous country dealers, who annually resort to the capital on these occasions.

Now comes the harvest for those idle interpreters, who make a business of 'passing goods,' as they term it; for as but a small portion of the traders are able to write the Spanish language, they are obliged to employ [112] these legal go-betweens, who pledge themselves, for a stipulated fee, to make the 'arrangements,' and translate the *manifestos* (that is, bills of merchandise to be *manifested* at the custom-house), and to act the part of interpreters throughout.

The inspection ensues, but this is rarely carried on with rigid adherence to rules; for an 'actuated sympathy' for the merchants, and a 'specific desire' to promote the trade, cause the inspector to open a few of such packages only, as will exhibit the least discrepancy with the manifest.

The *derechos de arancel* (tariff imposts) of Mexico are extremely oppressive, averaging about a hundred per cent. upon the United States' cost of an ordinary 'Santa Fé assortment.' Those on cotton textures are particularly so. According to the Arancel of 1837 (and it was still heavier before), all plain-wove cottons, whether white or printed, pay twelve and a half cents duty per *vara*, besides the *derecho de consumo* (consumption duty), which brings it up to at least fifteen. But it is scarcely necessary to add that there are believed to be very few ports in the Republic at which these rigid exactions are strictly executed. An 'arrangement'—a compromise is expected, in which the officers are sure at least to provide for themselves. At some ports, a custom has been said to prevail, of dividing the legal duties into three equal parts: one for the officers — a second for the merchants — the other for the government.

[113] For a few years, Gov. Armijo of Santa Fé,⁷⁷ estab-

⁷⁷ Manuel Armijo was a native of New Mexico, who was appointed governor for one term, in 1827-28. Taking advantage of the revolt of 1837-38, he succeeded

lished a tariff of *his own*, entirely arbitrary,— exacting five hundred dollars for each wagon-load, whether large or small — of fine or coarse goods! Of course this was very advantageous to such traders as had large wagons and costly assortments, while it was no less onerous to those with smaller vehicles or coarse heavy goods. As might have been anticipated, the traders soon took to conveying their merchandise only in the largest wagons, drawn by ten or twelve mules, and omitting the coarser and more weighty articles of trade. This caused the governor to return to an *ad valorem* system, though still without regard to the *Arancel general* of the nation. How much of these duties found their way into the public treasury, I will not venture to assert.

The arrival of a caravan at Santa Fé changes the aspect of the place at once. Instead of the idleness and stagnation which its streets exhibited before, one now sees everywhere the bustle, noise and activity of a lively market town. As the Mexicans very rarely speak English, the negotiations are mostly conducted in Spanish.

Taking the circuit of the stores, I found they usually contained general assortments, much like those to be met with in the retail variety stores of the west. The stocks of the inexperienced merchants are apt to abound in unsalable goods — *mulas*, as the Mexicans figuratively term them.

[114] Although a fair variety of dry goods, silks, hardware, &c., is to be found in this market, domestic cottons, both bleached and brown, constitute the great staple, of which nearly equal quantities ought to enter into a 'Santa

in securing the position of governor, which he maintained, with one brief interval, until the American invasion (1846). His connection with the revolt of 1837, and with the Texan expedition of 1841, is described by Gregg, *post*, and Kendall, *Santa Fé Expedition*. Upon the approach of the American army, Armijo prepared defenses, but abandoned them without striking a blow, and retreated to Mexico. Armijo ruled as an absolute despot, and was disliked by both New Mexicans and Americans.— Ed.

Fé assortment.' The demand for these goods is such that at least one half of our stocks of merchandise is made up of them. However, although they afford a greater nominal per centum than many other articles, the profits are reduced by their freight and heavy duty. In all the Southern markets, where they enter into competition, there is a decided preference given to the American manufactures over the British, as the former are more heavy and durable. The demand for calicoes is also considerable, but this kind of goods affords much less profit. The quantity in an assortment should be about equal to half that of domestics. Cotton velvets, and drillings (whether bleached, brown or blue, and especially the latter), have also been in much request. But all the coarser cotton goods, whether shirtings, calicoes or drillings, &c., were prohibited by the *Arancel* of 1837; and still continue to be, with some modifications.

CHAPTER VI

Sketches of the Early History of Santa Fé — First Explorations — Why called New Mexico — Memorial of Oñate — His Colony — Captain Leyva's prior Settlement — Singular Stipulations of Oñate — Incentives presented by the Crown to Colonizers — Enormities of Spanish Conquerors — Progress of the new Colony — Cruel Labors of the Aborigines in the mines — Revolt of the Indians in 1680 — Massacre of the Spaniards — Santa Fé Besieged — Battles — Remaining Spanish Population finally evacuate the Province — Paso del Norte — Inhuman Murder of a Spanish Priest — Final Recovery of the Country — Insurrection of 1837 — A Prophecy — Shocking Massacre of the Governor and other distinguished Characters — American Merchants, and Neglect of our Government — Governor Armijo: his intrigues and Success — Second Gathering of Insurgents and their final Defeat.

HAVING resided for nearly nine years in Northern Mexico, and enjoyed opportunities for observation which do not always fall to the lot of a trader, it has occurred to me that a few sketches of the country — the first settlements — the early, as well as more recent struggles with the aboriginal inhabitants — their traditions and antiquities —

together with some account of the manners and customs of the people, etc., would not be altogether unacceptable to the reader. The dearth of information which has hitherto prevailed on this subject, is my best apology for travelling [116] out of my immediate track, and trespassing as it were upon the department of the regular historian.

The province of NEW MEXICO, of which SANTA FÉ, the capital, was one of the first establishments, dates among the earliest settlements made in America. By some traditions it is related that a small band of adventurers proceeded thus far north shortly after the capture of the city of Mexico by Hernan Cortés. The historian Mariana speaks of some attempts having been made, during the career of this renowned chieftain in America, to conquer and take possession of these regions.⁷⁸ This, however, is somewhat doubtful; for it is hardly probable that the Spaniards, with all their mania for gold, would have pushed their conquests two thousand miles into the interior at so early a day, traversing the settlements of hostile savages, and leaving unexplored intermediate regions, not only more beautiful, but far more productive of the precious metals.

Herrera, writing of the events of 1550, mentions New Mexico as a known province lying north of New Galicia, though as yet only inhabited by the aborigines.⁷⁹ It was

⁷⁸ Juan de Mariana (1536-1623), the famous Jesuit historian of Spain. His work in thirty volumes appeared (1592-1600) first in Latin, as *Historia de Rebus Hispaniae*. A Spanish edition is also a classic. An English translation appeared in 1699.

The earliest exploration of New Mexico was that of Coronado (1540-42); see George P. Winship, *Coronado Expedition* (Washington, 1896), for an English translation of the original journals.—ED.

⁷⁹ Antonio de Herrera (1549-1625) was official historiographer of Spain, under three successive monarchs. His *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos* (Madrid, 1601) is a prime source for early Spanish-American history.

New Galicia was in the sixteenth century the northwestern province of New Spain, comprising Jalisco, Aguas Calientes, and Zacatecas, with its capital at Guadalajara. It was explored in 1524, conquered by Nuño de Guzman in 1529-31, and made a bishopric in 1544, after the suppression of the Mixton revolt (1540-42).—ED.

probably called New Mexico from the resemblance of its inhabitants to those of the city of Mexico and its environs. They appear to have assimilated in their habits, their agriculture, their manufactures and their houses; while those of the intermediate country (the Chichimecos, &c.) were in a much ruder state, leading a [117] more wandering life, and possessing much less knowledge of agriculture, arts, etc.⁸⁰

The only paper found in the archives at Santa Fé which gives any clue to the first settlement of New Mexico, is the memorial of one Don Juan de Oñate, a citizen of Zacatecas, dated September 21, 1595,⁸¹ of which I have been furnished with a copy through the politeness of Don Guadalupe Miranda, Secretary of State at Santa Fé. This petition prayed for the permission and assistance of the vice-regal government at Mexico, to establish a colony on the Rio del Norte in the region already known as New Mexico; which having been granted, it was carried into effect, as I infer from the documents, during the following spring.

This appears to have been the first *legal* colony established in the province; yet we gather from different clauses in

⁸⁰ H. H. Bancroft, *History of New Mexico and Arizona*, pp. 73, 91, shows how the term "New Mexico" was in the sixteenth century vaguely applied to any portion of the country north of the known regions, and that the definite application occurs after the explorations of 1581-83. He is inclined to the same opinion which Gregg expresses, on the suitability of the term to a land whose people and buildings resembled those of the Mexican valley.

Chicimecos was a general term applied by the Mexicans to all the wild border tribes of the north who were in a lower culture stage than the Pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona, or the aborigines of Mexico proper.—ED.

⁸¹ This document has disappeared, and the résumé given by Gregg is probably the only one extant. It is valuable for the early history of New Mexico. Juan de Oñate was the son of a conquistador, and himself rich and popular. Either his wife or his mother was a granddaughter of Hernando Cortez. For his conquest of New Mexico, a chief source is an epic poem published in 1605 by Villegra, one of his trusted subordinates. The final start was not made until 1597, and the territory was occupied the succeeding year. Oñate made several exploring journeys to the northeast and southwest, in the latter reaching the Gulf of California. He was governor as late as 1608, and still living in 1620; but records of his later career are lacking.—ED.

Oñate's memorial, that an adventurer known as Captain Francisco de Leyva Bonillo had previously entered the province with some followers, without the king's permission, whom Oñate was authorized to arrest and punish.⁸² Some historians insist that New Mexico was first visited by a few missionaries in 1581; and there is a tradition in the country which fixes the first settlement in 1583 — both having reference no doubt to the party of Leyva.⁸³

Oñate bound himself to take into New Mexico two hundred soldiers, and a sufficiency of provisions for the first year's support of the colony; with abundance of horses, black [118] cattle, sheep, etc., as also merchandise, agricultural utensils, tools and materials for mechanics' purposes; and all at his own cost, or rather at the ultimate expense of the colonists.

This adventurer, in the course of his memorial, also stipulates for some extraordinary provisions on the part of the King: such as, artillery and other arms, ammunitions, etc.— six priests, with a full complement of books, ornaments and church accoutrements — a loan of \$20,000 from the royal treasury — a grant of thirty leagues square of land wheresoever he might choose to select it, with all the vassals (Indians) residing upon it — his family to be ennobled, with the hereditary title of Marquis — the office of Governor, with the titles of *Adelantado* and the rank of Captain-general for four generations — a salary of 8,000 ducats of Castile per annum — the privilege of working mines exempt from the usual crown-tax — permission to

⁸² Francisco Leyva Bonilla was a Portuguese explorer, who in 1574-76 led a contraband expedition into New Mexico. He was killed by a lieutenant, Juan de Humaña, who thereupon assumed chief command. The results of the exploration were slight, except for the impression of Spanish power made upon the natives.— ED.

⁸³ On the explorations of the Franciscan friar Rodriguez (1581), and of Espejo (1583), not connected with that of Leyva Bonilla, see H. H. Bancroft, *History of New Mexico and Arizona*, ch. iv.— ED.

parcel out the aborigines among his officers and men; and, besides other favors to his brothers and relatives, to have "Indians recommended to their charge," which, in other words, was the privilege of making slaves of them to work in the mines — with many other distinctions, immunities and powers to himself, sufficient to establish him in an authority far more despotic than any modern monarch of Europe would venture to assume. And although these exorbitant demands were not all conceded, they go to demonstrate by what incentives of pecuniary [119] interest, as well as of honors, the Spanish monarchs sought the "*descubrimiento, pacificacion y conversion*," as they modestly termed it, of the poor aborigines of America.

The memorial referred to is extremely lengthy, being encumbered with numerous marginal notes, each containing the decree of assent or dissent of the Viceroy. All this, however, serves rather to illustrate the ancient manners and customs of the Spaniards in those feudal days — the formalities observed in undertaking an exploring and christianizing enterprise — than to afford any historical data of the expedition.

In every part of this singular document there may be traced evidences of that sordid lust for gold and power, which so disgraced all the Spanish conquests in America; and that religious fanaticism — that crusading spirit, which martyred so many thousands of the aborigines of the New World under Spanish authority.

But to return to Oñate: In one article, this adventurer, or contractor, or whatever else we may choose to call him, inquires, "In case the natives are unwilling to come quietly to the acknowledgment of the true Christian faith, and listen to the evangelical word, and give obedience to the king our sovereign, what shall be done with them? that we may proceed according to the laws of the Catholic Church,

and the ordinances of his Majesty. And what tributes, that they may be christianly borne, shall be imposed upon them, as [120] well for the crown as for the adventurers?" — showing that these 'missionaries' (as they were wont to call themselves) not only robbed the Indians of their country and treasure, and made menial slaves of them, but exacted tribute beside — promulgated the gospel at the point of the bayonet, and administered baptism by force of arms — compelling them to acknowledge the 'apostolic Roman Catholic faith,' of which they had not the slightest idea. Cervantes, who wrote his *Don Quixote* about this time, no doubt intended to make a hit at this cruel spirit of religious bigotry, by making his hero command his captives to acknowledge the superiority of his Dulcinea's beauty over that of all others; and when they protest that they have never seen her, he declares, that "the importance consists in this — that without seeing her, you have it to believe, confess, affirm, swear and defend."

It is much to be regretted that there are no records to be found of the wars and massacres, the numberless incidents and wild adventures which one would presume to have occurred during the first three-quarters of a century of the colonization of New Mexico. It is probable, however, that, as the aborigines seem to have been at first of a remarkably pacific and docile character, the conqueror met with but little difficulty in carrying out his original plans of settlement. Quietly acquiescing in both the civil and religious authority of the invaders, the yoke was easily riveted upon them, as they had neither [121] intelligence nor spirit to resist, until goaded to desperation.

The colony had progressed very rapidly, the settlements extending into every quarter of the territory — villages, and even towns of considerable importance were reared in remote sections; of which there now remain but the ruins,

with scarce a tradition to tell the fate of the once flourishing population. Many valuable mines were discovered and worked, as tradition relates, the locations of which have been lost, or (as the Mexicans say) concealed by the Indians, in order to prevent a repetition of the brutal outrages they had suffered in them. Whether this was the case or not, they surely had cause enough for wishing to conceal those with which they were acquainted; for in these very mines they had been forced to perform, under the lash, the most laborious tasks, till human strength could endure no more. Even then, perhaps, they would not have ventured upon resistance, but for the instigations of an eloquent warrior from a distant tribe, who pretended to have inherited the power of Montezuma, of whose subjects all these Indians, even to the present day, consider themselves the descendants. Tecumseh-like, our hero united the different tribes, and laid the plan of a conspiracy and general massacre of their oppressors; declaring that all who did not enter into the plot, should share the fate of the Spaniards. I have been furnished, through the kindness of the Secretary of [122] State before mentioned, with an account of this insurrection and consequent massacre of the Spanish population, taken from the journal of Don Antonio de Otermin, governor and commandant at the time, which was preserved in the public archives at Santa Fé.⁸⁴

It appears that the night of the 13th of August, 1680, was

⁸⁴ The journal of Antonio de Otermin is still preserved in the Mexican archives. The document at Santa Fé was apparently a transcript. The information regarding New Mexico from 1598 to 1680, is scanty, owing to the destruction of local records during the revolt of the latter year. Gregg somewhat exaggerates the oppression of the natives. The causes of the Indian revolt appear to have been religious rather than economic — a fierce reversion to pagan customs. The Indian leader is known as Popé or Pocpec of the pueblo of San Juan. Upon the expulsion of the Spaniards, he assumed domination, and the pueblos began to quarrel among themselves. He was deposed by one faction, but maintained a form of power until his death, in 1688.— Ed.

the time fixed for a general insurrection of all the tribes and *Pueblos*.⁸⁵ At a stated hour the massacre of the Spanish population was to commence. Every soul was to be butchered without distinction of sex or age — with the exception of such young and handsome females as they might wish to preserve for wives! Although this conspiracy had evidently been in agitation for a great while, such strict secrecy had been maintained, that nothing was known or even suspected, till a few days before the appointed time. It is said that not a single woman was let into the secret, for fear of endangering the success of the cause; but it was finally disclosed by two Indian chiefs themselves to the governor; and about the same time information of the conspiracy was received from some curates and officers of Taos.

Gov. Otermin, seeing the perilous situation of the country, lost no time in dispatching general orders for gathering the people of the south into the Pueblo of Isleta,⁸⁶ where the lieutenant-governor was stationed, and those [123] of the north and adjacent districts into Santa Fé. A considerable number collected in the fortifications of Isleta, and many families from the surrounding jurisdictions were able to reach the capital; yet great numbers were massacred on the way; for the Indians, perceiving their plot discovered, did not await the appointed time, but immediately commenced their work of destruction.

General hostilities having commenced, every possible

⁸⁵ A general term for all the *Catholic Indians* of N. Mexico, and their *villages*. — GREGG.

⁸⁶ The old pueblo of Isleta was situated on an island in the Rio Grande, not far from the site of the present pueblo. Otermin advanced against this stronghold in 1681, captured it without being resisted, and carried away many of the Indians, who founded Isleta del Sur in Texas. The old pueblo was abandoned until 1718, when it was rebuilt by fugitives returned from among the Hopi (Moki). It has constantly been occupied since that time, and has now over a thousand inhabitants, who have a large agricultural grant in Bernalillo County.— ED.

preparation was made for a vigorous defence of the capital. The population of the suburbs had orders to remove to the centre, and the streets were all barricaded. On the evening of the 10th two soldiers arrived from Taos, having with much difficulty escaped the vigilance of the Indians. They brought intelligence that the Pueblos of Taos had all risen; and that on arriving at La Cañada,⁸⁷ they had found the Spaniards well fortified, although a great number of them had been assassinated in the vicinity. The governor now sent out a detachment of troops to reconnoitre, instructing them to bring away the citizens who remained at La Cañada. They returned on the 12th, with the painful information that they had found many dead bodies on their way — that the temples had been plundered, and all the stock driven off from the *ranchos*.

The massacre of the Spaniards in many neighboring Pueblos, was now unreservedly avowed by the Indians themselves; and as those who remained in Santa Fé appeared in [124] the most imminent danger, the government buildings were converted into a fortification. By this time two friendly Indians who had been dispatched in the direction of Galisteo,⁸⁸ came in with the intelligence that

⁸⁷ For the pueblo of Taos, of a kindred language to that of Isleta, see Pattie's *Narrative* in our volume xviii, p. 73, note 44.

Santa Cruz de la Cañada is first mentioned during this revolt. It was formally founded in 1695, and again in 1706, and became one of the four chief centres of population in the territory. For its relation to the revolt of 1837, see *post*. In 1847, a battle between the New Mexicans and the American invaders took place near La Cañada. It is now a village in northern Santa Fé County, with a population of about seven hundred.— Ed.

⁸⁸ Galisteo was a pueblo of the Tanos nation, a few miles west of Santa Fé. A church and mission existed there before 1629. After the Spaniards were expelled from Santa Fé (1680), the Tanos of Galisteo occupied the place, and a battle occurred (1693), after which they were expelled. The pueblo was later re-established; but at the close of the eighteenth century its inhabitants, decimated by smallpox and attacks of Apache, abandoned it and retired to the pueblo of Santo Domingo. Its ruins are still to be seen a mile and a half from the present small agricultural settlement which bears the ancient name.— Ed.

500 warriors of the tribe called *Tagnos*,⁸⁹ were marching towards the city, being even then only about a league distant. By conversing with the enemy the spies had been able to ascertain their temper and their projects. They seemed confident of success — “for the God of the Christians is dead,” said they, “but our god, which is the sun, never dies;” adding that they were only waiting the arrival of the *Teguas*,⁹⁰ Taosas and Apaches,⁹¹ in order to finish their work of extermination.

Next morning the savages were seen approaching from the south. On their arrival they took up their quarters in the deserted houses of the suburbs, with the view of waiting for their expected allies, before they laid siege to the city. A parley was soon afterwards held with the chief leaders, who told the Spaniards that they had brought two crosses, of which they might have their choice: one was red, denoting war, the other was white and professed peace, on the condition of their immediately evacuating the province. The governor strove to conciliate them by offering to pardon all the crimes they had committed, [125] provided they would be good Christians and loyal subjects thereafter. But the Indians only made sport of him and laughed heartily at his propositions. He then sent a detachment to dislodge them; but was eventually obliged to turn out in person, with all the efficient men he had. The battle continued the whole day, during which a great number of Indians and some

⁸⁹ The *Pecos* and several other populous *Pueblos* to the southward of Santa Fé were *Tagnos*.— GREGG.

⁹⁰ These embraced nearly all the *Pueblos* between Santa Fé and Taos.— GREGG.
Comment by Ed. Gregg is correct in his reference to these two linguistic groups, save that the *Pecos* belonged to the *Jemez* stock, not the *Tanos*. A. F. Bandelier gives the following stocks as embracing all the *pueblos*: *Tigua* (*Taosas*), *Tehuas* (*Teguas*), *Tanos* (*Tagnos*), *Queres*, *Jemez*, *Piros*, and *Zuñi*. See his “Final Report on Investigations among the Southwestern Indians,” in *Archæological Institute of America Papers*, American series, iv.

⁹¹ For the Apache, see *Pattie's Narrative*, in our volume xviii, note 60.— ED.

Spaniards were killed. But late in the evening, the Teguas, Taosas and others, were seen pouring down upon the city from the north, when the troops had to abandon the advantages they had gained, and fly to the defence of the fortifications.

The siege had now continued for nine days, during which the force of the Indians had constantly been on the increase. Within the last forty-eight hours they had entirely deprived the city of water by turning off the stream which had hitherto supplied it; so that the horses and other stock were dying of thirst. The want of water and provisions becoming more and more insupportable every moment, and seeing no chance of rescue or escape, Governor Otermin resolved to make a sortie the next morning, and die with sword in hand, rather than perish so miserably for want of supplies. At sunrise he made a desperate charge upon the enemy, whom, notwithstanding the inferiority of his forces, he was soon able to dislodge. Their ranks becoming entirely disordered, more than three hundred were slain, and an abundance of [126] booty taken, with forty-seven prisoners, who, after some examination as to the origin of the conspiracy, were all shot. The Spaniards, according to their account of the affair, only had four or five men killed, although a considerable number were wounded — the governor among the rest.

The city of Santa Fé, notwithstanding a remaining population of at least a thousand souls, could not muster above a hundred able-bodied men to oppose the multitude that beset them, which had now increased to about three thousand. Therefore Governor Otermin, with the advice of the most intelligent citizens in the place, resolved to abandon the city. On the following day (August 21), they accordingly set out, the greater portion afoot, carrying their own provisions; as there were scarcely animals enough for the

wounded. Their march was undisturbed by the Indians, who only watched their movements till they passed Isleta, when nothing more was seen of them. Here they found that those who had been stationed at Isleta had also retreated to the south a few days before. As they passed through the country, they found the Pueblos deserted by the Indians, and the Spaniards who pertained to them all massacred.

They had not continued on their march for many days, when the caravan became utterly unable to proceed; for they were not only without animals, but upon the point of starvation — the Indians having removed from the route everything that could have afforded [127] them relief. In this emergency, Otermin dispatched an express to the lieutenant-governor, who was considerably in advance, and received from his party a few carts, with a supply of provisions. Towards the latter end of September, the Governor and his companions in misfortune reached Paso del Norte (about 320 miles south of Santa Fé), where they found the advance party.

The Governor immediately sent an account of the disaster to the Viceroy at Mexico, soliciting reinforcements for the purpose of recovering the lost province, but none arrived till the following year. Meanwhile the refugees remained where they were, and founded, according to the best traditions, the town of *el Paso del Norte*, so called in commemoration of this retreat, or *passage from the north*. This is in an extensive and fertile valley, over which were scattered several Pueblos, all of whom remained friendly to the Spaniards, affording them an asylum with provisions and all the necessaries of life.⁹²

⁹² For a brief sketch of El Paso, see our volume xviii, note 89. H. H. Bancroft thinks the name not derived from this circumstance, but that it had been applied by Oñate nearly a hundred years before.

The Mexican viceroy was Don Tomas Antonio de la Cerda, marquis de la Laguna.—Ed.

The following year Governor Otermin was superseded by Don Diego de Vargas Zapata, who commenced the work of reconquering the country. This war lasted for ten years. In 1688, Don Pedro Petrir de Cruzate⁹³ entered the province and reduced the Pueblo of Zia, which had been famous for its brave and obstinate resistance. In this attack more than six hundred Indians of both sexes were slain, and a large number made prisoners. Among the latter was a warrior named Ojeda, celebrated [128] for valor and vivacity, who spoke good Spanish. This Indian gave a graphic account of all that had transpired since the insurrection.⁹⁴

He said that the Spaniards, and especially the priests, had been everywhere assassinated in the most barbarous manner; and particularly alluded to the murder of the curate of Zia, whose fate had been singularly cruel. It appears that on the night of the outbreak, the unsuspecting *padre* being asleep in the convent, the Indians hauled him

⁹³ Gregg appears at this point to have misinterpreted the records. Otermin was not superseded until 1683, and then by Cruzate. Vargas did not begin his administration until 1691, and it was under him that the reconquest was finally accomplished. Don Domingo Jironza Petroz de Cruzate came out from Cadiz in 1680. He was recommended for office to the viceroy, who in 1683 made him governor of New Mexico. Cruzate made his headquarters at El Paso, and his connection with New Mexico was limited to this campaign of 1688, in which he appears to have subdued several pueblos. Replaced by Vargas in 1691, his services were later rewarded with the governorship of Sonora.—ED.

⁹⁴ The pueblo of Zia (Cia) of Queres stock, is one of the oldest in New Mexico. It is said to occupy the same site as in the days of Coronado; and the church dates from the rebuilding after 1688 (see preceding note). Cruzate appears not only to have subdued the people of Zia (either in 1688 or 1689), but to have won their allegiance, since in the reconquest (1691-99) they espoused the Spanish cause. Possibly this was due to the influence of their leader Bartolomé Ojeda, who after his capture was won over by the Spanish. A series of documents, printed in the United States Land Commissioner's *Report*, 1856, pp. 307-326, speak of Ojeda as one "who distinguished himself the most in the battle, lending his aid everywhere, and surrendered, being wounded with a bullet and an arrow." He is also declared to have been able to read and write the Spanish language, and possessed of much intelligence. His account of the pueblos, their intestinal differences and feuds, was valuable information for the conquerors. Gregg appears to have seen the written report of his testimony.—ED.

out, and having stripped him naked, mounted him upon a hog. Then lighting torches, they carried him in that state through the village, and several times around the church and cemetery, scourging him all the while most unmercifully! Yet, not even contented with this, they placed the weak old man upon all-fours, and mounting upon his back by turns, spurred him through the streets, lashing him without cessation till he expired!

The discord which soon prevailed among the different Pueblos, greatly facilitated their second subjugation, which closely followed their emancipation. These petty feuds reduced their numbers greatly, and many villages were entirely annihilated, of which history only furnishes the names.

In 1698, after the country had been for some time completely subdued again by the Spaniards, another irruption took place in which many Pueblos were concerned; but through the energy of Governor Vargas Zapata it was soon quelled.⁹⁵

[129] Since this last effort, the Indians have been treated with more humanity, each Pueblo being allowed a league or two of land, and permitted to govern themselves. Their rancorous hatred for their conquerors, however, has never entirely subsided, yet no further outbreak took place till 1837, when they joined the Mexican insurgents in another

⁹⁵ Don Diego Vargas Zapata Lujan Ponce de Leon, selected as governor of New Mexico (1691) for the express purpose of its reconquest, advanced from El Paso in August, 1692. He received the submission of the pueblos, and repossessed the province without bloodshed. Colonists came in the wake of the army, and by 1694 the province was again Spanish. The following year, mutterings of discontent were to be heard, and in June, 1696 (not 1698, as stated by Gregg), the revolt began with the murder of five friars, besides other Spaniards. After considerable fighting the pueblos once more submitted, and assumed their earlier docility. Vargas, superseded in 1697, was arrested by his successor, and for three years kept imprisoned at Santa Fé. Released by orders from Mexico, he proceeded thither, vindicated his conduct, and was reinstated in the governorship (1703). The following year he died, and was buried at Santa Fé.—ED.

bloody conspiracy. Some time before these tragic events took place, it was prophesied among them that a new race was about to appear from the east, to redeem them from the Spanish yoke. I heard this spoken of several months before the subject of the insurrection had been seriously agitated. It is probable that the Pueblos built their hopes upon the Americans, as they seemed as yet to have no knowledge of the Texans. In fact, they have always appeared to look upon foreigners as a superior people, to whom they could speak freely of their discontent and their grievances. The truth is, the Pueblos, in every part of Mexico, have always been ripe for insurrection. It is well known that the mass of the revolutionary chief Hidalgo's army was made up of this class of people. The immediate cause of the present outbreak in the north, however, had its origin among the Hispano-Mexican population. This grew chiefly out of the change of the federal government to that of *Centralismo* in 1835.⁹⁶ A new governor, Col. Albino Perez, was then sent from the city of Mexico, to take charge of this isolated department; which was not very agreeable [130] to the 'sovereign people,' as they had previously been ruled chiefly by native governors. Yet while the new form of government was a novelty and did not affect the pecuniary interests of the people, it was acquiesced in; but it was now found necessary for the support of the new organization, to introduce a system of direct taxation, with which the people were wholly unacquainted; and they would sooner have paid a *doblon* through a tariff than a *real* in this way. Yet, although the conspiracy had been brewing for some time, no indications of violence were demonstrated, until, on

⁹⁶ This was a reactionary movement, supported by the clergy and the army, and in part by Santa Ana, that drew up a new constitution depriving the Mexican states of their local self-government, and reducing them to departments. This was one of the causes of the Texas revolt.—Ed.

account of some misdemeanor, an *alcalde*⁹⁷ was imprisoned by the *Prefecto* of the northern district, Don Ramon Abreu. His honor of the staff was soon liberated by a mob; an occurrence which seemed as a watchword for a general insurrection.

These new movements took place about the beginning of August, 1837, and an immense rabble was soon gathered at La Cañada (a town some twenty-five miles to the north of Santa Fé), among whom were to be found the principal warriors of all the Northern Pueblos. Governor Perez issued orders to the *alcaldes* for the assembling of the militia; but all that could be collected together was about a hundred and fifty men, including the warriors of the Pueblo of Santo Domingo.⁹⁸ With this inadequate force, the Governor made an attempt to march from the capital, but was soon surprised by the insurgents who lay in ambush near La Cañada; when his own [131] men fled to the enemy, leaving him and about twenty-five trusty friends to make their escape in the best way they could. Knowing that they would not be safe in Santa Fé, the refugees pursued their flight southward, but were soon overtaken by the exasperated Pueblos; when the Governor was chased back to the suburbs of the city, and savagely put to death. His body was then

⁹⁷ A doubloon (Spanish *doblon*) was a large gold coin employed both in the mother country and the colonies, with a value at this period of about eight American dollars. A real was a subsidiary silver coin; those of Mexico were counted at one-eighth of an American dollar.

The *alcalde* was the local municipal officer, combining the functions of mayor with those of justice of the peace. The office was appointive, but usually purchased.—ED.

⁹⁸ The pueblo of Santo Domingo is of Queres origin, and one of the best known in New Mexico. Apparently the site has been changed several times, because of freshets, the last of which occurred in 1886, carrying away the church. Pike visited the pueblo in 1807, and was surprised at the rich decorations of the church. It is now on the east bank of the Rio Grande just below Galisteo River, and the largest pueblo in Sandoval County, having a population of about eight hundred.—ED.

stripped and shockingly mangled: his head was carried as a trophy to the camp of the insurgents, who made a football of it among themselves. I had left the city the day before this sad catastrophe took place, and beheld the Indians scouring the fields in pursuit of their victims, though I was yet ignorant of their barbarous designs. I saw them surround a house and drag from it the secretary of state, Jesus Maria Alaria, generally known by the sobriquet of Alarid. He and some other principal characters (including Prefect Abreu), who had also taken refuge among the ranchos, were soon afterwards stripped, and finally dispatched *á lanzadas*, that is, pierced through and through with lances, a mode of assassination very common among those demi-civilized savages.

Don Santiago Abreu (brother of the prefect), formerly governor and the most famed character of N. Mexico, was butchered in a still more barbarous manner. They cut off his hands, pulled out his eyes and tongue, and otherwise mutilated his body, taunting him all the while with the crimes he was accused of, by shaking the shorn members in his face. Thus perished nearly a dozen of the most conspicuous [132] men of the obnoxious party, whose bodies lay for several days exposed to the beasts and birds of prey.

On the 9th of August about two thousand of the insurgent mob, including the Pueblo Indians, pitched their camp in the suburbs of the capital. The horrors of a *saqueo* (or plundering of the city) were now anticipated by everyone. The American traders were particularly uneasy, expecting every instant that their lives and property would fall a sacrifice to the ferocity of the rabble. But to the great and most agreeable surprise of all, no outrage of any importance was committed upon either inhabitant or trader. A great portion of the insurgents remained in the city for about two days, during which one of their boldest leaders, José Gon-

zalez of Taos, a good honest hunter but a very ignorant man, was elected for governor.⁹⁹

The first step of the revolutionists was to seize all the property of their proscribed or murdered victims, which was afterwards distributed among the victors by a decree of the *Asamblea general* — that being the title by which a council summoned together by Governor Gonzalez, and composed of all the alcaldes and principal characters of the territory, was dignified. The families of the unfortunate victims of this revolutionary movement were thus left destitute of everything; and the foreign merchants who had given the officers credit to a large amount upon the strength of their reputed property and salaries, remained [133] without a single resource with which to cover their demands. As these losses were chiefly experienced in consequence of a want of sufficient protection from the general government, the American merchants drew up a memorial setting forth their claims, which, together with a schedule of the various accounts due, was sent to the Hon. Powhattan Ellis, American Minister at Mexico.¹⁰⁰ These demands were certainly of a far more equitable character than many of those which some time after occasioned the French blockade;¹⁰¹ yet our Government has given the unfortunate claimants no hope of redress. Even Mexico did not dispute the justness of

⁹⁹ Gregg is good authority for the facts of the revolution of 1837, having been at Santa Fé during the time. For other accounts, see Bancroft, *New Mexico and Arizona*, pp. 316-320; W. W. H. Davis, *El Gringo* (New York, 1857), pp. 86-91. Davis saw the plan of government drawn by the revolutionists at La Cañada, and prints a translation thereof.— ED.

¹⁰⁰ Powhattan Ellis was a Virginian (1794-1844), who removed at an early day to Mississippi, and was first supreme judge of that state (1812-25). He was elected to the United States senate in 1827, resigning before the close of his term to take a place as United States circuit judge. In 1836 he was made chargé d'affaires at Mexico, and minister from 1839 to 1842.— ED.

¹⁰¹ Gregg refers to the so-called Pastry War of 1838-39, when France bombarded and captured the stronghold of San Juan de Ulloa at Vera Cruz, and imposed terms upon the government, in recompense for certain just claims of French citizens, which Mexico had refused to pay.— ED.

these claims, but, on the contrary, she promptly paid to the order of General Armijo, a note given by the late Governor Perez to Mr. Sutton, an American merchant, which Armijo had purchased at a great discount.

In the South, the Americans were everywhere accused of being the instigators of this insurrection, which was openly pronounced another Texas affair. Their goods were confiscated or sequestered, upon the slightest pretexts, or for some pretended irregularity in the accompanying documents; although it was evident that these and other indignities were heaped upon them, as a punishment for the occurrence of events which it had not been in their power to prevent. Indeed, these ill-used merchants were not only innocent of any participation in the insurrectionary movements, but had actually furnished means to [134] the government for the purpose of quelling the disturbances.

As I have observed before, the most active agents in this desperate affair were the Pueblo Indians, although the insurgent party was composed of all the heterogeneous ingredients that a Mexican population teems with. The *rancheros* and others of the lowest class, however, were only the instruments of certain discontented *ricos*, who, it has been said, were in hope of elevating themselves upon the wreck of their enemies. Among these was the present Governor Armijo, an ambitious and turbulent demagogue, who, for some cause or other, seemed anxious for the downfall of the whole administration.

As soon as Armijo received intelligence of the catastrophe, he hurried to the capital, expecting, as I heard it intimated by his own brother, to be elected governor; but, not having rendered any personal aid, the 'mobocracy' would not acknowledge his claim to their suffrages. He therefore retired, Santa-Anna-like, to his residence at Albuquerque, to plot, in imitation of his great prototype, some measures for counteracting the operation of his own intrigues. In

this he succeeded so well, that towards September he was able to collect a considerable force in the Rio-Abajo,¹⁰² when he proclaimed a *contra-revolucion* in favor of the federal government. About the same time the disbanded troops of the capital under Captain Caballero, made a similar *pronunciamento*, demanding their arms, [135] and offering their services gratis. The 'mobocratic' dynasty had gone so far as to deny allegiance to Mexico, and to propose sending to Texas for protection: although there had not been any previous understanding with that Republic.

Armijo now marched to Santa Fé with all his force, and Governor Gonzalez being without an army to support him, fled to the north. After his triumphal entrance into the capital, Armijo caused himself to be proclaimed Governor and *Comandante General*, and immediately dispatched couriers to Mexico with a highly colored account of his own exploits, which procured him a confirmation of those titles and dignities for eight years.

In the meanwhile news of the insurrection having reached Mexico, the *Escuadron de Vera Cruz*, from Zacatecas, consisting of about two hundred dragoons, with an equal number of regulars from the *Presidios* of Chihuahua, under the command of Colonel Justiniani, were ordered to New Mexico. Having arrived at Santa Fé, these troops, together with Governor Armijo's little army, marched in January, 1838, to attack the rebels, who, by this time, had again collected in considerable numbers at La Cañada.

The greatest uneasiness and excitement now prevailed at the Capital, lest the rabble should again prove victorious, in which case they would not fail to come and sack the city. Foreign merchants had as usual the greatest cause for fear, as vengeance had been openly [136] vowed against them for having furnished the government party with supplies. These, therefore, kept up a continual watch, and had every-

¹⁰² For Rio Abajo, see note III, *post.*—ED.

thing in readiness for a precipitate flight to the United States. But in a short time their fears were completely dispelled by the arrival of an express, with the welcome news of the entire defeat of the insurgents.¹⁰³

It appeared that, when the army arrived within view of the insurgent force, Armijo evinced the greatest perturbation. In fact, he was upon the point of retiring without venturing an attack, when Captain Muñoz, of the Vera Cruz dragoons, exclaimed, "What's to be done, General Armijo? If your Excellency will but permit me, I will oust that rabble in an instant with my little company alone." Armijo having given his consent, the gallant captain rushed upon the insurgents, who yielded at once, and fled precipitately — suffering a loss of about a dozen men, among whom was the deposed Governor Gonzalez, who, having been caught in the town after the skirmish had ended, was instantly shot, without the least form of trial.

CHAPTER VII

Geographical Position of New Mexico — Absence of navigable Streams — The Rio del Norte — Romantic Chasm — Story of a sunken River — Mr. Stanley's Excursion to a famous Lake — Santa Fé and its localities — El Valle de Taos and its Fertility — Soil of N. Mexico — The first Settler at Taos and his Contract with the Indians — Salubrity and Pleasantness of the Climate of New Mexico — Population — State of Agriculture — Staple Productions of the Country — Corn-fields and Fences — Irrigation and *Acequias* — *Tortillas* and *Tortilleras* — *Atole*, *Frijoles*, and *Chile* — Singular Custom — Culinary and Table Affairs — Flax and the Potato indigenous — Tobacco and *Punche* — Fruits — Peculiar Mode of cultivating the Grape — Forest Growths — *Piñon* and *Mezquite* — Mountain Cottonwood — *Palmilla* or Soap-plant — Pasturage.

NEW MEXICO possesses but few of those natural advantages, which are necessary to anything like a rapid progress in civilization. Though bounded north and east by

¹⁰³ Apparently there were two battles, the second of which occurred at La Cañada January 27, 1838. Davis, *El Gringo*, p. 92, gives the names of other insurgents who were shot, besides José Gonzales; and accuses Armijo of cruelty and private assassination.— ED.

the territory of the United States, south by that of Texas and Chihuahua, and west by Upper California, it is surrounded by chains of mountains and prairie wilds, extending to a distance of 500 miles or more, except in the direction of Chihuahua, from which its settlements are separated by an unpeopled desert of nearly two hundred miles — and without a single means of communication by water with any other part of the world.

[138] The whole nominal territory, including those bleak and uninhabitable regions with which it is intersected, comprises about 200,000 square miles — considered, of course, according to its original boundaries, and therefore independently of the claims of Texas to the Rio del Norte. To whichever sovereignty that section of land may eventually belong, that portion of it, at least, which is inhabited, should remain united. Any attempt on the part of Texas to make the Rio del Norte the line of demarkation would greatly retard her ultimate acquisition of the territory, as it would leave at least one third of the population accustomed to the same rule, and bound by ties of consanguinity and affinity of customs, wholly at the mercy of the contiguous hordes of savages, that inhabit the Cordilleras on the west of them. This great chain of mountains which reaches the borders of the Rio del Norte, not far above El Paso, would, in my opinion, form the most natural boundary between the two countries, from thence northward.¹⁰⁴

There is not a single navigable stream to be found in New Mexico. The famous Rio del Norte is so shallow, for the most part of the year, that Indian canoes can scarcely

¹⁰⁴ Although no definite boundary had been established between New Mexico and Texas, the River Pecos was usually accepted as such, until the treaty between Santa Ana and the Texans in 1836, whereby the latter agreed not to claim farther than the Rio Grande. The Texan congress, in December of the same year, defined the western and southwestern limits of the new state as the Rio Grande to its source, thence north to latitude 42°.— ED.

float in it. Its navigation is also obstructed by frequent shoals and rippling sections for a distance of more than a thousand miles below Santa Fé. Opposite Taos, especially, for an uninterrupted distance of nearly fifteen miles, it runs pent up in a deep *cañon*, through which [139] it rushes in rapid torrents. This frightful chasm is absolutely impassable; and, viewed from the top, the scene is imposing in the extreme. None but the boldest hearts and firmest nerves can venture to its brink, and look down its almost perpendicular precipice, over projecting crags and deep crevices, upon the foaming current of the river, which, in some places, appears like a small rippling brook; while in others it winds its serpentine course silently but majestically along, through a narrow little valley; with immense plains bordering and expanding in every direction, yet so smooth and level that the course of the river is not perceived till within a few yards of the verge. I have beheld this *cañon* from the summit of a mountain, over which the road passes some twenty miles below Taos, from whence it looks like the mere fissure of an insignificant ravine.

Baron Humboldt speaks of an extraordinary event as having occurred in 1752, of which he says the inhabitants of Paso del Norte still preserved the recollection in his day. "The whole bed of the river," says the learned historian, "became dry all of a sudden, for more than thirty leagues above and twenty leagues below the Paso: and the water of the river precipitated itself into a newly formed chasm, and only made its reappearance near the *Presidio* of San Eleazarío.¹⁰⁵ . . . At length, after the lapse of several weeks, the water resumed its course, no doubt because the chasm and the subterraneous conductors [140] had filled

¹⁰⁵ For Baron von Humboldt, see Pattie's *Narrative*, in our volume xviii, note 136. San Elizario is an old Mexican village in El Paso County, Texas, now a station on the Southern Pacific Railway.—ED.

up." This, I must confess, savors considerably of the marvellous, as not the least knowledge of these facts appears to have been handed down to the present generation. During very great droughts, however, this river is said to have entirely disappeared in the sand, in some places, between San *Elceario* and the *Presidio del Norte*.

Notwithstanding the numerous tributary streams which would be supposed to pour their contents into the *Rio del Norte*, very few reach their destination before they are completely exhausted. *Rio Puerco*, so called from the extreme muddiness of its waters, would seem to form an exception to this rule. Yet this also, although at least a hundred miles in length, is dry at the mouth for a portion of the year. The creek of *Santa Fé* itself, though a bold and dashing rivulet in the immediate vicinity of the mountains, sinks into insignificance, and is frequently lost altogether before it reaches the main river. *Pecos* and *Conchos*, its most important inlets,¹⁰⁶ would scarcely be entitled to a passing remark, but for the geographical error of Baron Humboldt, who set down the former as the head branch of 'Red River of Natchitoches.' These streams may be considered the first constant-flowing inlets which the *Rio del Norte* receives from *Santa Fé* south — say for the distance of five hundred miles! It is then no wonder that this 'Great River of the North' decreases in volume of water as it descends. In fact, above the region of tide-water, it is almost [141] everywhere fordable during most of the year, being seldom over knee-deep, except at the time of freshets. Its banks are generally very low, often less than ten feet

¹⁰⁶ For the *Rio Puerco*, see our volume, xviii, p. 159, note 90. For the *Pecos*, *ibid.*, p. 77, note 49.

The *Conchos* is the largest western tributary of the *Rio Grande*, rising in the *Sierra Madre* and flowing north and east for nearly three hundred miles, through the province of *Chihuahua*. It discharges into the main river at *Presidio del Norte*.— ED.

above low-water mark; and yet, owing to the disproportioned width of the channel (which is for the most part some four hundred yards), it is not subject to inundations. Its only important rises are those of the annual freshets, occasioned by the melting of the snow in the mountains.

This river is only known to the inhabitants of Northern Mexico as *Rio del Norte*, or North river, because it descends from that direction; yet in its passage southward, it is in some places called *Rio Grande*, on account of its extent; but the name of *Rio Bravo* (Bold or Rapid river), so often given to it on maps, is seldom if ever heard among the people. Though its entire length, following its meanders from its source in the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico, must be considerably over two thousand miles, it is hardly navigable to the extent of two hundred miles above its mouth.

The head branch of Pecos, as well as the creeks of Santa Fé and Tezuque, are said to be fed from a little lake which is located on the summit of a mountain about ten miles east of Santa Fé. Manifold and marvellous are the stories related of this lake and its wonderful localities, which although believed to be at least greatly exaggerated, would no doubt induce numbers of travellers to visit this [142] snow-bound elysium, were it not for the laboriousness of the ascent. The following graphic account of a 'pleasure excursion,' to this celebrated 'watering place,' is from the memoranda of Mr. E. Stanley, who spent many years in the New Mexican capital.

"The snow had entirely disappeared from the top of the highest mountains, as seen from Santa Fé before the first of May, and on the eighteenth we set off on our trip. All were furnished with arms and fishing-tackle — well prepared to carry on hostilities both by land and water. Game was said to be abundant on the way — deer, turkeys, and

even the formidable grizzly bear, ready to repel any invasion of his hereditary domain. Santa Fé creek, we knew, abounded with trout, and we were in hopes of finding them in the lake, although I had been told by some Mexicans, that there were no fish in it, and that it contained no living thing, except a certain nondescript and hideously misshapen little animal. We travelled up the course of the creek about eight miles, and then began to climb the mountain. Our journey now became laborious, the ascent being by no means gradual — rather a succession of hills — some long, others short — some declivitous, and others extremely precipitous. Continuing in this way for six or seven miles, we came to a grove of aspen, thick as cottonwoods in the Missouri bottoms. Through this grove, which extended for nearly a mile, no sound met the ear; no sign of life — not even an insect was [143] to be seen; and not a breath of air was stirring. It was indeed a solitude to be felt. A mile beyond the grove brought us near the lake. On this last level, we unexpectedly met with occasional snow-banks, some of them still two or three feet deep. Being late, we sought out a suitable encampment, and fixed upon a little marshy prairie, east of the lake. The night was frosty and cold, and ice was frozen nearly an inch thick. Next morning we proceeded to the lake; when, lo — instead of beholding a beautiful sheet of water, we found an ugly little pond, with an area of two or three acres — frozen over, and one side covered with snow several feet deep. Thus all our hope of trout and monsters were at an end; and the *tracks* of a large bear in the snow, were all the *game* we saw during the trip.”

SANTA FÉ, the capital of New Mexico, is the only town of any importance in the province. We sometimes find it written *Santa Fé de San Francisco* (Holy Faith of St. Francis),

the latter being the patron, or tutelary saint. Like most of the towns in this section of country it occupies the site of an ancient Pueblo or Indian village, whose race has been extinct for a great many years.¹⁰⁷ Its situation is twelve or fifteen miles east of the Rio del Norte, at the western base of a snow-clad mountain, upon a beautiful stream of small mill-power size, which ripples down in icy cascades, and joins the river some twenty miles to the southwestward. The population of the city itself [144] but little exceeds 3000; yet, including several surrounding villages which are embraced in its corporate jurisdiction, it amounts to nearly 6,000 souls.¹⁰⁸

The town is very irregularly laid out, and most of the streets are little better than common highways traversing scattered settlements which are interspersed with corn-fields nearly sufficient to supply the inhabitants with grain. The only attempt at anything like architectural compactness and precision, consists in four tiers of buildings, whose fronts are shaded with a fringe of *portales* or *corredores* of the rudest possible description. They stand around the public square, and comprise the *Palacio*, or Governor's house, the Custom-house, Barracks (with which is connected the fearful *Calabozo*), the *Casa Consistorial* of the *Alcaldes*, the *Capilla de los Soldados* or Military Chapel, besides

¹⁰⁷ For a brief sketch of Santa Fé, see our volume xviii, note 48. The best authorities now conclude that there was no pueblo on the site of Santa Fé for at least a century before the Spanish occupation. See A. F. Bandelier, in *Archæological Institute of America Papers*, American series, iv, part ii, pp. 89, 90.—ED.

¹⁰⁸ The latitude of Santa Fé, as determined by various observations, is 35° 41' (though it is placed on most maps nearly a degree further north); and the longitude about 106° west from Greenwich. Its elevation above the ocean is nearly 7,000 feet; that of the valley of Taos is no doubt over a mile and a half. The highest peak of the mountain (which is covered with perennial snow) some ten miles to the northeast of the capital, is reckoned about 5,000 feet above the town. Those from Taos northward rise still to a much greater elevation.—GREGG.

several private residences, as well as most of the shops of the American traders.¹⁰⁹

The population of New Mexico is almost exclusively confined to towns and villages, the suburbs of which are generally farms. Even most of the individual *ranchos* and *haciendas* have grown into villages,— a result almost [145] indispensable for protection against the marauding savages of the surrounding wilderness.¹¹⁰ The principal of these settlements are located in the valley of the Rio del Norte, extending from nearly one hundred miles north to about one hundred and forty south of Santa Fé.¹¹¹ The most important of these, next to the capital, is *El Valle de Taos*,¹¹² so called in honor of the *Taos* tribe of Indians, a remnant of whom still forms a *Pueblo* in the north of the valley. No part of New Mexico equals this valley in amenity of soil, richness of produce and beauty of appearance. Whatever is thrown into its prolific bosom, which the early frosts of autumn will permit to ripen, grows to a wonderful degree of perfection.

Wheat especially has been produced of a superlative

¹⁰⁹ Most of these buildings have been swept away by the advance of American civilization; the military chapel, built in 1730, with its altar tablet of 1761, formerly faced the plaza. The governor's palace still remains, perhaps the oldest building in the United States. It is built of adobe, with walls three feet in thickness, one story in height, three hundred feet in length by forty in depth, with a long "portal," or porch, across the entire front. It is still the official residence of the governor; the eastern end is occupied by the New Mexican Historical Society's museum. Tourists visit the room in which General Lew Wallace, then territorial governor, wrote the last chapters of *Ben Hur*.— ED.

¹¹⁰ Various estimates have been made of the population at the time of the American conquest. About eighty thousand seems to be a fair average, although one contemporary gives twice the number.— ED.

¹¹¹ The settlements *up the river* from the capital are collectively known as *Rio-Arriba*, and those *down the river* as *Rio-Abajo*. The latter comprise over a third of the population, and the principal wealth of New Mexico.— GREGG.

¹¹² The '*Valley of Taos*,' there being no *town* of this name. It includes several villages and other settlements, the largest of which are Fernandez and Los Ranchos, four or five miles apart.— GREGG.

quality, and in such abundance, that, as is asserted, the crops have often yielded over a hundred fold. I would not have it understood, however, that this is a fair sample of New Mexican soil; for, in point of fact, though many of the bottoms are of very fertile character, the uplands must chiefly remain unproductive; owing, in part, to the sterility of the soil, but as much, no doubt, to want of irrigation; hence nearly all the farms and settlements are located in those valleys which [146] may be watered by some constant-flowing stream.¹¹³

The first settler of the charming valley of Taos, since the country was reconquered from the Indians, is said to have been a Spaniard named Pando, about the middle of the eighteenth century. This pioneer of the North, finding himself greatly exposed to the depredations of the Comanches, succeeded in gaining the friendship of that tribe, by promising his infant daughter, then a beautiful child, to one of their chiefs in marriage. But the unwilling maiden having subsequently refused to ratify the contract, the settlement was immediately attacked by the savages, and all were slain except the betrothed damsel who was led into captivity. After living some years with the Comanches on the great prairies, she was bartered away to the Pawnees, of whom she was eventually purchased by a Frenchman of St. Louis. Some very respectable families in that city are descended from her; and there are many people yet living who remember with what affecting pathos the old lady was wont to tell her tale of woe. She died but a few years ago.

Salubrity of climate is decidedly the most interesting

¹¹³ For the generally barren and desolate appearance which the uplands of New Mexico present, some of them have possessed an extraordinary degree of fertility; as is demonstrated by the fact that many of the fields on the undulating lands in the suburbs of Santa Fé, have no doubt been in constant cultivation over two hundred years, and yet produce tolerable crops, without having been once renovated by manure.—GREGG.

feature in the character of New [147] Mexico. Nowhere — not even under the much boasted Sicilian skies, can a purer or a more wholesome atmosphere be found. Bilious diseases — the great scourge of the valley of the Mississippi — are here almost unknown. Apart from a fatal epidemic fever of a typhoid character, that ravaged the whole province from 1837 to 1839, and which, added to the smallpox that followed in 1840, carried off nearly ten per cent. of the population, New Mexico has experienced very little disease of a febrile character; so that as great a degree of longevity is attained there, perhaps, as in any other portion of the habitable world. Persons withered almost to mummies, are to be encountered occasionally, whose extraordinary age is only to be inferred from their recollection of certain notable events which have taken place in times far remote.

A sultry day, from Santa Fé north, is of very rare occurrence. The summer nights are usually so cool and pleasant that a pair of blankets constitutes an article of comfort seldom dispensed with. The winters are long, but not so subject to sudden changes as in damper climates; the general range of the thermometer, throughout the year, being from 10° to 75° above zero, of Fahrenheit. Baron Humboldt was led into as great an error with respect to the climate of New Mexico as to the rivers; for he remarks, that near Santa Fé and a little further north, “the Rio del Norte is sometimes covered for a succession of several years, with ice thick enough to admit the [148] passage of horses and carriages:” a circumstance which would be scarcely less astounding to the New Mexicans, than would the occurrence of a similar event in the harbor of New York be to her citizens.

The great elevation of all the plains about the Rocky Mountains, is perhaps the principal cause of the extraordinary dryness of the atmosphere. There is but little rain

throughout the year, except from July to October — known as the *rainy season*; and as the Missouri traders usually arrive about its commencement, the coincidence has given rise to a superstition, quite prevalent among the vulgar, that the Americans bring the rain with them. During seasons of drought, especially, they look for the arrival of the annual caravans as the harbinger of speedy relief.

There has never been an accurate census taken in New Mexico. Of the results of one which was attempted in 1832, the Secretary of State at Santa Fé speaks in the following terms: "At present (1841) we may estimate the Spanish or white population at about 60,000 souls or more, being what remains of 72,000, which the census taken eight or nine years ago showed there then existed in New Mexico." He supposes that this great diminution resulted from the ravages of the frightful diseases already alluded to. The decrease of population from these causes, however, is thus greatly overrated. The discrepancy must find its explanation in the original inaccuracy of the census referred to.

[149] If we exclude the unsubjected savages, the entire population of New Mexico, including the Pueblo Indians, cannot be set down, according to the best estimates I have been able to obtain, at more than 70,000 souls. These may be divided as follows: white creoles, say 1,000; Mestizos, or mixed creoles, 59,000; and Pueblos, 10,000. Of naturalized citizens, the number is inconsiderable — scarcely twenty; and if we except transient traders, there are not over double as many alien residents. There are no negroes in New Mexico, and consequently neither mulattoes nor *zambos*. In 1803, Baron Humboldt set down the population of this province at 40,200, so that according to this the increase for forty years has barely exceeded one per cent. per annum.

Agriculture, like almost everything else in New Mexico,

is in a very primitive and unimproved state. A great portion of the peasantry cultivate with the hoe alone — their ploughs (when they have any) being only used for mellow grounds, as they are too rudely constructed to be fit for any other service. Those I have seen in use are mostly fashioned in this manner:— a section of the trunk of a tree, eight or ten inches in diameter, is cut about two feet long, with a small branch left projecting upwards, of convenient length for a handle. With this a beam is connected to which oxen are yoked. The block, with its fore end sloped downwards to a point, runs flat, and opens a furrow similar to that of [150] the common shovel-plough. What is equally worthy of remark is, that these plows are often made exclusively of wood, without one particle of iron, or even a nail to increase their durability.

The *labores* and *milpas* (cultivated fields) are often, indeed most usually, without any enclosure. The owners of cattle are obliged to keep herdsmen constantly with them, else graze them at a considerable distance from the farms; for if any trespass is committed upon the fields by stock, the proprietor of the latter is bound to pay damages: therefore, instead of the cultivator's having to guard his crop from the cattle as with us, the owners of these are bound to guard them from the crops. Only a chance farm is seen fenced with poles scattered along on forks, or a loose hedge of brush, mud-fences, or walls of very large *adobes*, are also occasionally to be met with.

The necessity of irrigation has confined, and no doubt will continue to confine agriculture principally to the valleys of the constant-flowing streams. In some places the crops are frequently cut short by the drying up of the streams. Where water is abundant, however, art has so far superseded the offices of nature in watering the farms, that it is almost a question whether the interference of nature in the matter

would not be a disadvantage. On the one hand the husbandman need not have his grounds overflowed if he administers the water himself, much less need he permit them [151] to suffer from drought. He is therefore more sure of his crop than if it were subject to the caprices of the weather in more favored agricultural regions.

One *acequia madre* (mother ditch) suffices generally to convey water for the irrigation of an entire valley, or at least for all the fields of one town or settlement. This is made and kept in repair by the public, under the supervision of the *alcaldes*; laborers being allotted to work upon it as with us upon our county roads. The size of this principal ditch is of course proportioned to the quantity of land to be watered. It is conveyed over the highest part of the valley, on which, these mountain streams, is, for the most part, next to the hills. From this, each proprietor of a farm runs a minor ditch, in like manner, over the most elevated part of his field. Where there is not a superabundance of water, which is often the case on the smaller streams, each farmer has his day, or portion of a day allotted to him for irrigation; and at no other time is he permitted to extract water from the *acequia madre*. Then the cultivator, after letting the water into his minor ditch, dams this, first at one point and then at another, so as to overflow a section at a time, and with his hoe, depressing eminences and filling sinks, he causes the water to spread regularly over the surface. Though the operation would seem tedious, an expert irrigator will water in one day his five or six acre field, if level, and everything well arranged; yet on [152] uneven ground he will hardly be able to get over half of that amount.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ There is no land measure here correspondent to our acres. Husbandmen rate their fields by the amount of wheat necessary to sow them; and thus speak of a *janega* of land — *janega* being a measure of about two bushels — meaning

All the *acequias* for the valley of the Rio del Norte are conveyed from the main stream, except where a tributary of more convenient water happens to join it. As the banks of the river are very low, and the descent considerable, the water is soon brought upon the surface by a horizontal ditch along an inclined bank, commencing at a convenient point of constant-flowing water — generally without dam, except sometimes a wing of stones to turn the current into the canal.

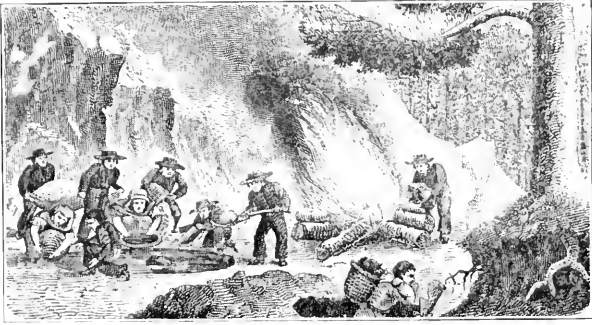
The staple productions of the country are emphatically Indian corn and wheat. The former grain is most extensively employed for making *tortillas* — an article of food greatly in demand among the people, the use of which has been transmitted to them by the aborigines. The corn is boiled in water with a little lime: and when it has been sufficiently softened, so as to strip it of its skin, it is ground into paste upon the *metate*,¹¹⁵ and formed into a thin cake. This is afterwards spread on a small sheet of iron or copper, called [153] *comal* (*comalli*, by the Indians), and placed over the fire, where, in less than three minutes, it is baked and ready for use. The thinness of the tortilla is always a great test of skill in the maker, and much rivalry ensues in the art of preparation. The office of making tortillas has, from the earliest times, pertained chiefly to the women, who appear to be better adapted to this employ than the other sex, both as regards skill and dexterity, in preparing this particular food for the table. I perfectly agree with

an extent which two bushels of wheat will suffice to sow. Tracts are usually sold by the number of *leguas* (leagues), or *varas* front of irrigable lands; for those back from the streams are considered worthless. The *vara* is very nearly 33 English inches, 5,000 of which constitute the Mexican league — under two miles and two-thirds.— GREGG.

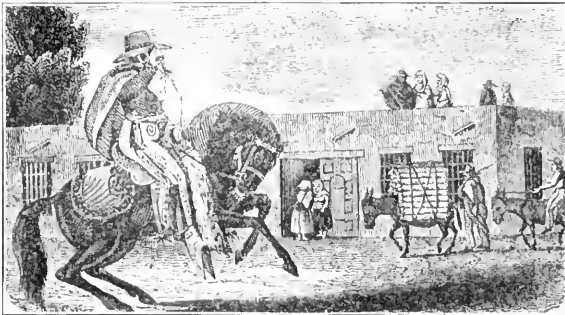
¹¹⁵ From the Indian word *metall*, a hollowed oblong stone, used as a grinding-machine.— GREGG.



A Kitchen Scene



Gold-Washing



Riding Dress of Caballero

the historian Clavigero,¹¹⁶ however, in the opinion that "although this species of corn-bread may be very wholesome and substantial, and well-flavored when newly made, it is unpleasant when cold."

A sort of thin mush, called *atole*, made of [154] Indian meal, is another article of diet, the preparation of which is from the aborigines; and such is its nationality, that in the North it is frequently called *el café de los Mexicanos* (the coffee of the Mexicans). How general soever the use of coffee among Americans may appear, that of *atole* is still more so among the lower classes of Mexicans. They virtually 'breakfast, dine and sup' upon it. Of this, indeed, with *frijoles* and *chile* (beans and red pepper), consists their principal food. The extravagant use of red pepper among the Mexicans has become truly proverbial. It enters into nearly every dish at every meal, and often so predominates as entirely to conceal the character of the viands. It is likewise ground into a sauce, and thus used even more abundantly than butter. *Chile verde* (green pepper), not as a mere condiment, but as a salad, served up in different ways, is reckoned by them one of the greatest luxuries. But however much we may be disposed to question their taste in this particular, no one can hesitate to do homage to their incomparable chocolate, in the preparation of which the Mexicans surely excel every other people.

Besides these, many other articles of diet peculiar to the country, and adopted from the aborigines, are still in use —

¹¹⁶ Francisco Xavier Clavigero, of Mexican birth (1731), entered the Jesuit order, and taught history and rhetoric in their college in his native country. He became interested in the subject of Aztec antiquities, and made researches of value. Interrupted by the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, Clavigero retired to Italy, where in 1780 appeared his history in Italian, *Storia Antica del Messico*. A Spanish version appeared later, and an English translation in 1787, the year of the author's death. His *Storia della California* (Venice, 1789), was issued posthumously.— Ed.

often of rich and exquisite flavor, and though usually not much relished at first by strangers, they are for the most part highly esteemed after a little use.

The rancheros, and all the humbler classes [155] of people, very seldom use any table for their meals, an inconvenience which is very little felt, as the dishes are generally served out from the kitchen in courses of a single plate to each guest, who usually takes it upon his knees. Knives and forks are equally dispensed with, the viands being mostly hashed or boiled so very soft as to be eaten with a spoon. This is frequently supplied by the *tortilla*, a piece of which is ingeniously doubled between the fingers, so as to assist in the disposal of anything, be it ever so rare or liquid. Thus it may well be said, as in the story of the Oriental monarch, that these rancheros employ a new spoon for every mouthful: for each fold of the tortilla is devoured with the substance it conveys to the mouth.

The very singular custom of abstaining from all sorts of beverage during meals, has frequently afforded me a great deal of amusement. Although a large cup of water is set before each guest, it is not customary to drink it off till the repast is finished. Should any one take it up in his hand while in the act of eating, the host is apt to cry out, "Hold, hold! there is yet more to come." I have never been able to ascertain definitely the meaning of this peculiarity; but from the strictness with which it is observed, it is natural to suppose, that the use of any kind of drink whilst eating, is held extremely unwholesome.¹¹⁷ [156] The New Mexicans use but little wine at meals, and that exclusively of the produce of the Paso del Norte.

But to return to the productions of the soil. *Cotton* is

¹¹⁷ What also strikes the stranger as a singularity in that country, is that the females rarely ever eat with the males — at least in the presence of strangers — but usually take their food in the kitchen by themselves.— GREGG.

cultivated to no extent, although it has always been considered as indigenous to the country; while the ancient manufactures of the aborigines prove it to have been especially so in this province. *Flax* is entirely neglected, and yet a plant resembling in every respect that of the *linum usitatissimum*, is to be found in great abundance in many of the mountain valleys. The potato (*la papa*), although not cultivated in this country till very lately, is unquestionably an indigenous plant, being still found in a state of nature in many of the mountain valleys — though of small size, seldom larger than filberts: whence it appears that this luxury had not its exclusive origin in South America, as is the current opinion of the present day.¹¹⁸ Universal as the use of tobacco is among these people, there is very little of it grown, and that chiefly of a light and weak species, called by the natives *punche*, which is also indigenous, and still to be met with growing wild in some places. What has in a great measure contributed to discourage people from attending to the cultivation of the tobacco plant, is the monopoly of this *indispensable* by the federal government; for although the tobacco laws are not enforced in New Mexico (there being no *Estanquillo*, or public store-house), yet the people cannot carry it anywhere else in the [157] republic for sale, without risk of its being immediately confiscated. A still more powerful cause operating against this, as well as every other branch of agriculture in New Mexico, is the utter want of navigable streams, as a cheap and convenient means of transportation to distant markets.

Famous as the republic of Mexico has been for the quality and variety of its fruits, this province, considering its lati-

¹¹⁸ The potato (Spanish *patata*) is a native of both North and South America, being indigenous in both tropical and semi-tropical mountain districts, from Chile to the southern part of Colorado.— ED.

tude, is most singularly destitute in this respect. A few orchards of apples, peaches and apricots, are occasionally met with, but even these are of very inferior quality, being only esteemed in the absence of something better. A few small vineyards are also to be found in the valley of the Rio del Norte, but the grape does not thrive as at El Paso.¹¹⁹ The mode of cultivating the grape in these parts is somewhat peculiar, and might, I have no doubt, be practised to great advantage in other countries. No scaffold or support of any kind is erected for the vines, which are kept pruned so as to form a sort of shrubbery. Every fall of the year, these are completely covered with earth, which protects them during the winter. Upon the opening of spring the dirt is scraped away, and the vines pruned again. This being repeated from year to year, the shrubs soon acquire sufficient strength to support the heavy crops of improved and superiorly-flavored grapes which they finally produce.

Indigenous wild fruits are not quite so scarce; a clear evidence that the lack of cultivated [158] fruit is not so much the fault of nature, as the result of indolence and neglect on the part of the people. The prickly pear is found in greatest abundance, and of several varieties: and though neither very wholesome nor savory, it is nevertheless frequently eaten.

There is but little timber in New Mexico, except in the mountains and along the water-courses; the table-lands and valleys are generally all open prairie. The forest growths, moreover, of all the north of Mexico, present quite a limited variety of timber, among which a species of pitch-pine mostly predominates. The tree which appears to be most peculiar to the country, is a kind of scrub pine called

¹¹⁹ The fruit of New Mexico is now coming into our markets in large quantities. Apples hold the chief place; grapes are also well known, the value of property devoted to that industry (1903) exceeding three million dollars.— Ed.

piñon, which grows generally to the height of twenty or thirty feet, with leaves ever-green and pine-like, but scarcely an inch long.¹²⁰ From the surface of this tree exudes a species of turpentine resembling that of the pitch-pine, but perhaps less resinous. The wood is white and firm, and much used for fuel. The most remarkable appendage of this tree is the fruit it bears, which is also known by the same name. This is a little nut about the size of a kidney-bean, with a rich oily kernel in a thin shell, enclosed in a chestnut-like bur. It is of pleasant flavor and much eaten by the natives, and considerable quantities are exported annually to the southern cities. It is sometimes used for the manufacture of a certain kind of oil, said to be very good for lamps.

The *mezquite* tree, vulgarly called *muskeet* [159] in Texas, where it has attained some celebrity, grows in some of the fertile valleys of Chihuahua to the height of thirty and forty feet, with a trunk of one to two feet in diameter. The wood makes excellent fuel, but it is seldom used for other purposes, as it is crooked, knotty, and very coarse and brittle, more resembling the honey-locust (of which it might be considered a scrubby species) than the mahogany, as some people have asserted. The fruit is but a diminutive honey-locust in appearance and flavor, of the size and shape of a flattened bean-pod, with the seeds disposed in like manner. This pod, which, like that of the honey-locust, encloses a glutinous substance, the Apaches and other tribes of Indians grind into flour to make their favorite *pinole*. The *mezquite* seems undoubtedly of the *Acacia Arabica* species; as some physicians who have examined the gum which exudes from the tree, pronounce it genuine Arabic.¹²¹

On the water-courses there is little timber to be found

¹²⁰ Piñon is a Spanish-American word applied to several varieties of nut-bearing pines of the Rocky Mountains: *Pinus Parryana*, *P. edulis*, etc.—ED.

¹²¹ For the *mezquite*, see our volume xviii, p. 94, note 56.—ED.

except cottonwood, scantily scattered along their banks. Those of the Rio del Norte are now nearly bare throughout the whole range of the settlements, and the inhabitants are forced to resort to the distant mountains for most of their fuel. But nowhere, even beyond the settlements, are there to be seen such dense cottonwood bottoms as those of the Mississippi valley. Besides the common cottonwood there is another to be found upon the mountain streams of New Mexico, which has been called willow-leaf [160] or bitter cottonwood (*populus angustifolia*?) and has been reckoned by some a species of cinchona, yet for no other reason perhaps than that the bark possesses efficacious tonic qualities. Attached to the seeds of this tree is also a cotton similar to that of the sweet cottonwood, or *populus angulata*.

Among the wild productions of New Mexico is the *palmilla* — a species of palmetto, which might be termed the *soap-plant* — whose roots, as well as those of another species known as *palma* (or palm), when bruised, form a saponaceous pulp called *amole*, much used by the natives for washing clothes, and is said to be even superior to soap for scouring woollens.¹²²

But by far the most important indigenous product of the soil of New Mexico is its pasturage. Most of the high table-plains afford the finest grazing in the world, while, for want of water, they are utterly useless for most other purposes. That scanty moisture which suffices to bring forth the natural vegetation, is insufficient for agricultural productions, without the aid of irrigation. The high prairies of all Northern Mexico differ greatly from those of our border in the general character of their vegetation. They are remarkably destitute of the gay flowering plants

¹²² The soap-plant is of the lily rather than of the palm family — *Chlorogalum pomeridianum*. It has long linear leaves, with a panicle of white flowers. The bulb is the part employed, and was used by the Indians before the Spanish conquest.— ED.

for which the former are so celebrated, being mostly clothed with different species of a highly nutritious grass called *grama*, which is of a very short and curly quality. The highlands, upon which alone this sort of grass is produced, [161] being seldom verdant till after the rainy season sets in, the *grama* is only in perfection from August to October. But being rarely nipt by the frost until the rains are over, it cures upon the ground and remains excellent hay — equal if not superior to that which is cut and stacked from our western prairies. Although the winters are rigorous, the feeding of stock is almost entirely unknown in New Mexico; nevertheless, the extensive herds of the country, not only of cattle and sheep, but of mules and horses, generally maintain themselves in excellent condition upon the dry pasturage alone through the cold season, and until the rains start up the green grass again the following summer.

CHAPTER VIII

The Mines of New Mexico — Supposed Concealment of them by the Indians — Indian Superstition and Cozenage — Ruins of *La Gran Quivira* — Old Mines — *Placeres* or Mines of Gold Dust — Speculative Theories as to the original Deposites of the Gold — Mode of Working the *Placeres* — Manners and Customs of the Miners — Arbitrary Restrictions of the Mexican Government upon Foreigners — Persecution of a Gachupin — Disastrous Effects of official Interference upon the Mining Interest — Disregard of American Rights and of the U. States Government — *Gambucinos* and their System — Gold found throughout N. Mexico — Silver Mines — Copper, Zinc and Lead — Sulphurous Springs — Gypsum, and Petrified Trees.

TRADITION speaks of numerous and productive mines having been in operation in New Mexico before the expulsion of the Spaniards in 1680; but that the Indians, seeing that the cupidity of the conquerors had been the cause of their former cruel oppressions, determined to conceal all the mines by filling them up, and obliterating as much as possible every trace of them. This was done so effectually,

as is told, that after the second conquest (the Spaniards in the mean time not having turned their attention to mining pursuits for a series of years), succeeding generations were never able to discover them again. Indeed it is now generally credited by the Spanish population, [163] that the Pueblo Indians, up to the present day, are acquainted with the *locales* of a great number of these wonderful mines, of which they most sedulously preserve the secret. Rumor further asserts that the old men and sages of the Pueblos periodically lecture the youths on this subject, warning them against discovering the mines to the Spaniards, lest the cruelties of the original conquest be renewed towards them, and they be forced to toil and suffer in those mines as in days of yore. To the more effectual preservation of secrecy, it is also stated that they have called in the aid of superstition, by promulgating the belief that the Indian who reveals the location of these hidden treasures, will surely perish by the wrath of their gods.

Playing upon the credulity of the people, it sometimes happens that a roguish Indian will amuse himself at the expense of his reputed superiors in intelligence, by proffering to disclose some of these concealed treasures. I once knew a waggish savage of this kind to propose to show a valley where virgin gold could be 'scraped up by the basketful.' On a bright Sunday morning, the time appointed for the expedition, the chuckling Indian set out with a train of Mexicans at his heels, provided with mules and horses, and a large quantity of meal-bags to carry in the golden stores; but, as the shades of evening were closing around the party, he discovered — that he couldn't find the place.

It is not at all probable, however, that the [164] aborigines possess a tenth part of the knowledge of these ancient fountains of wealth, that is generally attributed to them; but that many valuable mines *were* once wrought in this

province, not only tradition but authenticated records and existing relics sufficiently prove. In every quarter of the territory there are still to be seen vestiges of ancient excavations, and in some places, ruins of considerable towns evidently reared for mining purposes.¹²³

Among these ancient ruins the most remarkable are those of *La Gran Quivira*, about 100 miles southward from Santa Fé.¹²⁴ This appears to have been a considerable city, larger and richer by far than the present capital of New Mexico has ever been. Many walls, particularly those of churches, still stand erect amid the desolation that surrounds them, as if their sacredness had been a shield against which Time dealt his blows in vain. The style of architecture is altogether superior to anything at present to be found north of Chihuahua — being of hewn stone, a building material wholly unused in New Mexico. What is more extraordinary still, is, that there is no water within less than some ten

¹²³ Very few mines were opened in New Mexico under the Spanish régime, and almost none before the Indian revolt of 1680. An official report of 1725 states that not a single mine of gold or silver had ever been worked in the territory, and that all the plate required for the services of the church was imported at considerable cost from Mexico.— ED.

¹²⁴ The myth of "La Gran Quivira" is comparable to that of "El Dorado" in South America. Coronado's march (1540) was undertaken in search of a mythical Quivira. Much later the myth attached itself to the place which Gregg describes — a series of ruins in northeastern Socorro County, on a desolate mesa one hundred and fifty miles south of Santa Fé. Search for fabulous hidden treasure has been conducted there for many years. Reports of modern archæologists, notably those of A. F. Bandelier, have proved that the city which Gregg describes was a pueblo of the Piros Indians, commonly known as Tabira. This was first visited by the Spaniards in 1581; it rendered submission to Oñate in 1598, and later a priest was assigned thereto. This mission was founded in 1628, and the first church built. In 1644 a new and larger church and convent were begun, which constitute the largest of the ruins. These are not of hewn stone, but of slabs of sandstone fastened with adobe mortar, formed with Spanish tools. The site was abandoned between 1670 and 1675, because of Apache raids. The problem of the water supply was solved by the discovery of artificial reservoirs near the pueblo. Consult A. F. Bandelier, in *The Nation*, xl, pp. 348, 365; Archæological Institute of America *Papers*, American series, iv, part ii, pp. 282-291; Charles F. Lummis, *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (New York, 1893), chap. xi.— ED.

miles of the ruins; yet we find several stone cisterns, and remains of aqueducts eight or ten miles in length, leading from the neighboring mountains, from whence water was no doubt conveyed. And, as there seem to be no indications whatever of the inhabitants' ever having been engaged in agricultural pursuits, what could have induced the rearing of a city [165] in such an arid, woodless plain as this, except the proximity of some valuable mine, it is difficult to imagine. From the peculiar character of the place and the remains of the cisterns still existing, the object of pursuit in this case would seem to have been a *placer*, a name applied to mines of gold-dust intermixed with the earth. However, other mines have no doubt been worked in the adjacent mountains, as many spacious pits are found, such as are usually dug in pursuit of ores of silver, etc.; and it is stated that in several places heaps of scoria are still to be seen.

By some persons these ruins have been supposed to be the remains of an ancient Pueblo or aboriginal city. That is not probable, however; for though the relics of aboriginal temples might possibly be mistaken for those of Catholic churches, yet it is not to be presumed that the Spanish coat of arms would be found sculptured and painted upon their façades, as is the case in more than one instance. The most rational accounts represent this to have been a wealthy Spanish city before the general massacre of 1680, in which calamity the inhabitants perished — all except one, as the story goes; and that their immense treasures were buried in the ruins. Some credulous adventurers have lately visited the spot in search of these long lost coffers, but as yet none have been found.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ In the same vicinity there are some other ruins of a similar character, though less extensive; the principal of which are those of Abó, Tagique and Chililí. The last of these is now being resettled by the Mexicans.— GREGG.

Comment by Ed. The last of these pueblo ruins is in southeastern Sandoval County; the first two in Valencia. Abo is of Piro origin, with a history similar

[166] The mines of *Cerrillos*,¹²⁶ twenty miles southward of Santa Fé, although of undoubted antiquity, have, to all appearance, been worked to some extent within the present century; indeed, they have been reopened within the recollection of the present generation; but the enterprise having been attended with little success, it was again abandoned. Among numerous pits still to be seen at this place, there is one of immense depth cut through solid rock, which it is believed could not have cost less than \$100,000. In the mountains of Sandía, Abiquiú, and more particularly in those of Picuris and Embudo, there are also numerous excavations of considerable depth.¹²⁷ A few years ago an enterprising American undertook to reopen one of those near Picuris; but after having penetrated to the depth of more than a hundred feet, without reaching the bottom of the original excavation (which had probably been filling up for the last hundred and fifty years), he gave it up for want of means. Other attempts have since been made, but with as little success. Whether these failures have been caused by want of capital and energy, or whether the veins of ore were exhausted by the original miners, remains for future enterprise to determine.

The only successful mines known in New Mexico at the

to that of Tabira (Quivira). Tajique and Chilili were Tigua pueblos built near the salines, probably in the seventeenth century, and abandoned before 1680 because of Apache raids. The modern village of Chilili is founded on a grant made in 1841.

¹²⁶ Cerillos, about twenty miles south of Santa Fé, is on the main line of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railway, a small mining town with a smelter in operation. Neighboring mines are of gold, silver, lead, and zinc ore; and a few miles distant is Turquesa, where turquoises have been mined from prehistoric times, and are still taken out by the American Turquoise Company. Cerillos is claimed as the oldest gold-mining district in the United States.—ED.

¹²⁷ The Sandia Mountains are in southeastern Sandoval and northeastern Bernalillo counties. For Abiquiú, see our volume xviii, note 47. Picuris is a pueblo among the mountains of Taos County. Embudo is a small settlement in Rio Arriba.—ED.

present day, are those of gold, the most important one of which is that originally incorporated as *El Real de Dolores*, but generally known by the significant name of [167] *El Placer*.¹²⁸ This mine lies in a low detached spur of mountains, at a distance of twenty-seven miles south of the capital. In 1828, a *Sonoreño* who was in the habit of herding his mules in that vicinity, being one day in pursuit of some that had strayed into the mountains, happened to pick up a stone, which he soon identified as being of the same class that was to be found in the gold regions of Sonora. Upon a little further examination, he detected sundry particles of gold, which did not fail to occasion some degree of excitement in the country. Although the amount procured from these mines, was, for the first two or three years, very insignificant, yet it answered the purpose of testing the quality of the metal, which was found to be of uncommon purity. A market was therefore very soon opened with foreign merchants.

The quantity of gold extracted between the years 1832 and '35 could not have amounted to less than from \$60,000 to \$80,000 per annum. Since this time, however, there has been a considerable falling off, some seasons producing but \$30,000 or \$40,000. It is believed, notwithstanding, that the entire aggregate yield since the first discovery has exceeded half a million of dollars. The reduction in profit during the last few years has been caused more by want of energy and enterprise, than by exhaustion of the precious metal, as only a very small portion of the 'gold region' has as yet been dug; and experience has shown that the 'dust' is about [168] as likely to be found in one part of it as in

¹²⁸ This mining region in southern Santa Fé County still produces much gold. If there were more water, the amount might be large; but modern methods are being introduced, and the production increased. A nugget of gold worth four hundred dollars was found some time since at Dolores, and throughout a district of eight miles there is much placer gold.—Ed.

another. All the best 'diggings' in the immediate vicinity of the water, however, seem pretty well excavated: in some places the hills and valleys are literally cut up like a honey-comb.

It has been the impression of some persons, that the gold of this region was originally accumulated in some particular deposit, and that it has thus been spread over the surface of the country by some volcanic eruption.

The dust and grains obtained at this mine, are virgin gold, and, as before remarked, of very fine quality, producing at the United States Mint an average of at least \$19 70 to the ounce troy after melting, or about \$19 30 gross. It was at first bought by the traders at the rate of fifteen dollars per ounce, but in consequence of the competition which was afterwards excited among the dealers, its price was raised for a short time above its maximum at the Mint, although it has since settled down at about \$17 30 per ounce troy.

During the process of these excavations, when such a depth has been reached as to render a ladder indispensable, a pole ten or fifteen feet long is cut full of notches for that purpose, and set diagonally in the orifice. In proportion as the pit becomes deeper, others are added, forming a somewhat precarious zigzag staircase, by which the agile miner descends and ascends without even using his hands to assist himself, although with a large [169] load of earth upon his shoulders. It is in this way that most of the rubbish is extracted from these mines, as windlasses or machinery of any kind are rarely used.

The winter season is generally preferred by the miners, for the facilities it affords of supplying the gold-washers with water in the immediate neighborhood of their operations; for the great scarcity of water about the mining regions is a very serious obstacle at other seasons to successful

enterprise. Water in winter is obtained by melting a quantity of snow thrown into a sink, with heated stones. Those employed as washers are very frequently the wives and children of the miners. A round wooden bowl called *batea*, about eighteen inches in diameter, is the washing [170] vessel, which they fill with the earth, and then immerse it in the pool, and stir it with their hands; by which operation the loose dirt floats off, and the gold settles to the bottom. In this manner they continue till nothing remains in the bottom of the *batea* but a little heavy black sand mixed with a few grains of gold, the value of which (to the trayful) varies from one to twelve cents, and sometimes, in very rich soils, to twenty-five or more. Some attempts have been made to wash with machinery, but as yet without success; partly owing to the scarcity of water, but as much perhaps to a lack of perseverance, and to the arbitrary restrictions imposed upon foreigners, who, after all, are the only persons that have ever attempted any improvements of the kind. An instance or two will fully illustrate the embarrassments and disadvantages to which foreigners are subject, in embarking capital in mining enterprises in this country.

When the Placer was in its greatest *bonanza* — yielding very large profits to those engaged in the business — the ‘mining fever’ rose to such a tremendous pitch among the New Mexicans, particularly the government officers, that every one fancied he saw a door opened for the accumulation of a princely fortune.

About the commencement of this gold mania, a very arbitrary and tyrannical measure was adopted in order to wrest from a persecuted *Gachupin*¹²⁰ his interest in a mine, in [171] which he had made a very propitious commencement. This mine, different from the rest of the *Placer*,

¹²⁰ A term used to designate European Spaniards in America.— GREGG.

consisted of a vein of gold in a stratum of rock, which it was necessary to grind and separate with quicksilver; and as it belonged to a native named Ortiz who knew nothing of this operation, the latter formed a partnership with Don Dámaso Lopez, the Gachupin before alluded to, who had some experience and skill in mining operations and the extraction of metals. The partners went vigorously to work, and at the close of the first month found that their net profits amounted to several hundred dollars, consisting in a few balls of gold. At the sight of these, Ortiz was so overjoyed that he must needs exhibit his valuable acquisitions to the governor and other officers and magnates of the capital, who, with characteristic cupidity, at once begrudged the Gachupin his prospective fortune. A compact was thereupon entered into between the *oficiales* and the acquiescent Ortiz, to work the mine on their joint account, and to exclude Lopez altogether. This they effected by reviving the old decree of expulsion (spoken of in another place), which had virtually become obsolete. The unfortunate victim of this outrageous conspiracy was accordingly ordered to the frontier, as the patriotic officers alleged that they "could no longer connive at his residence so near the capital in contravention of the laws."

The new company now commenced operations with additional zeal and earnestness. [172] But they were destined to expiate their ill conduct in a way they had least anticipated. The ores collected during the first month, had been ground and impregnated with quicksilver, and the amalgamation being supposed complete, all the partners in the concern were summoned to witness the splendid results of the new experiments. Yet, after the most diligent examination, not a grain of gold appeared! The fact is, that they were all ignorant of mining operations, and knew nothing of the art of separating the metals from the ores.

The mine had therefore soon to be abandoned, and Ortiz found himself prostrated by his losses — a victim to the unprincipled rapacity of his new associates.¹³⁰

Lest foreigners generally should share the wealth which was being developed in these mountains, an order was subsequently issued prohibiting all except natives from working at the mines. Some who had commenced operations at the Placer, and incurred considerable expense, were compelled suddenly to break up, with an entire loss of all their labor and outlays.

Acts of political oppression like these have discouraged Americans from making any further attempts, although the decree of prohibition has ceased to be enforced. Could any dependence be placed in the integrity of the government, I have no doubt that, with sufficient capital and the aid of machinery (such as is used in the mines of Georgia and Carolina), the old mines of this province might be [173] reopened, and a great number of the *placeras* very extensively and profitably worked. But as New Mexico is governed at present, there is no security in an enterprise of the kind. The progress of a foreign adventurer is always liable to be arrested by the jealousy of the government, upon the first flattering *bonanza*, as the cited instances abundantly demonstrate. Americans in particular would have little to hope for in the way of redress; for our government has shown itself so tardy in redressing or revenging injuries done its citizens by foreign states, that they would be oppressed, as they have been, with less scruple because with more impunity than the subjects of any other nation.

The gold regions are, for the most part, a kind of common property, and have been wrought chiefly by an indigent class of people, known familiarly as *gambucinos*, a name

¹³⁰ There is now an Ortiz mine, worked by a St. Louis company, having a large modern plant, near the site of the mine described by Gregg.— ED.

applied to petty miners who work 'on their own hook.' Among these one very seldom finds any foreigners; for according to the present simple method of working, the profit is too small and too precarious to entice the independent American laborer, who is seldom willing to work for less than a dollar a day, clear of all expenses; while the Mexican *gambucino* is content with two or three *reales*, most of which is required to furnish him food. Therefore these poor miners lead a miserable life after all. When short of means they often support themselves upon only a *real* each per day, their usual food consisting of bread and a kind of [174] coarse cake-sugar called *piloncillo*, to which is sometimes added a little crude rancho cheese; yet they seem perfectly satisfied.

To prevent collision among such heterogeneous multitudes as are to be found at the mining places, some municipal provisions have been established, in pursuance of which any person may open a *labor* or pit on unoccupied ground not nearer than ten paces to another, and is entitled to the same extent in every direction, not interfering with prior claims — his *labor* being confirmed for a small fee by application to the *alcalde*. But if the proprietor abandon his *labor* for a certain time, any one that chooses may take possession.

Besides the Placer of which I have already spoken, others have lately been discovered in the same ledge of mountains towards the south, one of which is now extensively worked, being already filled with retail shops of every description, where all the gold that is extracted, is either sold or bartered. The *gambucinos* being generally destitute of all other resources, are often obliged to dispose of their gold daily — and very frequently in driblets of but a few cents value. *Placeres* of gold have also been discovered in the mountains of Abiquiú, Taos and elsewhere, which have been worked

to some extent. In truth, as some of the natives have justly remarked, New Mexico is almost one continuous *placer*; traces of gold being discoverable over nearly the whole surface of the country. The opinion formerly entertained that gold is only to [175] be found in southern climates, seems fully confuted here; for at a point called Sangre de Cristo, considerably north of Taos, (above the 37th degree of latitude), and which from its location among the snowy mountains of that region, is ice-bound over half the year, a very rich *placer* has been discovered; yet owing to the peculiarly exposed situation in which it lies, it has been very little worked.¹³¹

For the last century no *silver* mines have been in successful operation in New Mexico. A few years ago there was discovered near the village of Manzano, in the mountains of Tomé, a vein of silver which bid fair to prove profitable; but when the ore came to be tested, the rock was found to be so hard that the pursuit has been entirely abandoned.¹³²

In addition to gold and silver, there are also to be found, in many isolated spots, ores of copper, zinc, and lead; although the latter is so mixed up with copper and other hard metals, as to be almost unfit for ordinary purposes. The copper obtained in the province has frequently been found to contain a slight mixture of the precious metals, well worth extracting. Iron is also abundant.

Besides the mines of metals which have been discovered, or yet remain concealed in the mountains of New Mexico, those of *Salt* (or *salt lakes*, as they would perhaps be called), the *Salinas*, are of no inconsiderable importance. Near a hundred miles southward from the capital, on the high

¹³¹ The Sangre de Cristo Mountains are on the northern border of New Mexico, and its mineral region is a continuation of that of southern Colorado. Large mines are now in operation in this district.—ED.

¹³² The mines of the Manzano Mountains, east of Tomé, on the Rio Grande in Valencia County, have not yet been developed. Silver production in New Mexico has in recent years notably diminished.—ED.

table land between the Rio del Norte and Pecos, there are some extensive [176] salt ponds, which afford an inexhaustible supply of this indispensable commodity, not only for the consumption of this province, but for portions of the adjoining departments. The largest of these *Salinas* is five or six miles in circumference. The best time to collect the salt is during the dry season, when the lakes contain but little water; but even when flooded, salt may be scooped up from the bottom, where it is deposited in immense beds, in many places of unknown depth; and, when dried, much resembles the common alum salt. The best, however, which is of superior quality, rises as a scum upon the water. A great many years ago, a firm causeway was thrown up through the middle of the principal lake, upon which the *carretas* and mules are driven, and loaded with salt still dripping with water. The *Salinas* are public property, and the people resort to them several times a year,—in caravans, for protection against the savages of the desert in which they are situated. Although this salt costs nothing but the labor of carrying it away, the danger from the Indians and the privations experienced in an expedition to the *Salinas* are such, that it is seldom sold in the capital for less than a dollar per bushel. On the same great plain still a hundred miles further south, there is another *Salina* of the same character.¹³³

While I am on this subject, I cannot forbear a brief notice of the mineral springs of New Mexico. There are several warm springs (*ojos calientes*), whose waters are generally [177] sulphurous, and considered as highly efficacious in the cure of rheumatisms and other chronic diseases. Some are bold springs, and of a very agreeable temperature for bathing; but there is one in the west of the province, which

¹³³ The northern salines in eastern Valencia County have long been utilized; the pueblos of Abo and Tajiique (see note 125) were connected with this industry. The southern salines are in southeast Socorro County, and but little developed.—ED.

does not flow very freely, but merely escapes through the crevices of the rocks, yet it is hot enough to cook any article of food. It is a curious phenomenon, that, within a few paces of it, as in the case of the hot springs of Arkansas, there is another spring perfectly cold.

New Mexico affords many interesting geological productions, of which the most useful to the natives is *yesso* or gypsum, which abounds in many places. Being found in foliated blocks, composed of laminæ, which are easily separated with a knife into sheets from the thickness of paper to that of window-glass, and almost as transparent as the latter, it is used to a great extent in the ranchos and villages for window-lights, for which indeed it is a tolerable substitute.

In several places about the borders of the *mesas* are to be found some beautiful specimens of petrified trees. One lies between Santa Fé and the Placer, broken into blocks since its petrification, which shows every knot, crack and splinter almost as natural as in its ligneous state. It is said that there are some of these arboreous petrifications in the vicinity of Galisteo, still standing erect.

CHAPTER IX

Domestic Animals and their Condition — Indifference on the subject of Horse-breeding — *Caballos de Silla* — Popularity and Usefulness of the Mule — Mode of harnessing and lading Mules for a Journey — *Arrieros* and their System — The *Mulera* or Bell-mare — Surprising feats of the Muleteers and *Vaqueros* — The *Lazo* and its uses — Ridiculous Usages of the country in regard to the Ownership of Animals — Anecdote of a Mexican Colonel — The *Burro* or domestic ass and its Virtues — Shepherds and their Habits — The Itinerant Herds of the Plains — Sagacity of the Shepherds' Dogs — The Sheep Trade — Destruction of Cattle by the Indians — Philosophical notions of the Marauders — Excellent Mutton — Goats and their Utility — Wild Animals and their Character — A 'Bear Scrape' — Wolves, Panthers, Wild Birds and Reptiles — The Honey-bee, etc.

NOTHING that has come within my sphere of observation in New Mexico, has astonished me more than the little

attention that is paid to the improvement of domestic animals. While other nations have absolutely gone mad in their endeavors to better their breeds of horses, and have ransacked the four quarters of the world for the best blood and purest pedigrees, the New Mexicans, so justly celebrated for skilful horsemanship, and so much devoted to equestrian exercise, that they have been styled a race of centaurs, leave the propagation of their horses exclusively to [179] chance; converting their best and handsomest steeds into saddle-horses.

Their race of *horses* is identical with that which is found running wild on the Prairies, familiarly known by the name of *mustang*. Although generally very small, they are quick, active and spirited: and were they not commonly so much injured in the breaking, they would perhaps be as hardy and long-lived as any other race in existence. Some of their *caballos de silla* or saddle-horses are so remarkably well trained, that they will stop suddenly upon the slightest check, charge against a wall without shrinking, and even attempt to clamber up its sides. In addition to this, a complete riding horse should have a peculiar up-and-down gait, affording all the exercise of the most violent trotter, while he gets over the ground so slowly as to enable the *caballero* to enjoy the 'pleasures' of a fatiguing ride of hours, without losing sight of his mistress's balcony.

The little attention paid to the breeding of horses in New Mexico, may perhaps be accounted for from the fact that, until lately, when the continued depredations of the hostile Indians discouraged them from their favorite pursuit, the people of the country had bestowed all their care in the raising of *mules*. This animal is in fact to the Mexican, what the camel has always been to the Arab — invaluable for the transportation of freight over sandy deserts and mountainous roads, where no other means of conveyance could be used to [180] such advantage. These mules will travel

for hundreds of miles with a load of the most bulky and unwieldy articles, weighing frequently three or four hundred pounds.

The *Aparejo* (or pack-saddle, if it can be so styled), is a large pad, consisting of a leathern case stuffed with hay, which covers the back of the mule and extends half way down on both sides. This is secured with a wide sea-grass bandage, with which the poor brute is so tightly laced as to reduce the middle of its body to half its natural size. During the operation of lacing, the corseted quadruped stands trembling in perfect agony, not an inapt emblem of some fashionable exquisites who are to be met with lounging on tip-toe, in all the principal thoroughfares of large cities.

The muleteers contend that a tightly laced beast, will travel, or at least support burdens, with greater ease; and though they carry this to an extreme, still we can hardly doubt that a reasonable tension supports and braces the muscles. It is necessary too for the *aparejo* to be firmly bound on to prevent its slipping and chafing the mule's back; indeed, with all these precautions, the back, withers and sides of the poor brute are often horribly mangled — so much so that I have seen the rib-bones bare, from day to day, while carrying a usual load of three hundred pounds! The *aparejo* is also furnished with a huge crupper, which often lacerates the tail most shockingly. It is this packing that leaves most of the lasting cicatrices and marks so common upon Mexican mules.

[181] The *carga*, if a single package, is laid across the mule's back, but when composed of two, they are placed lengthwise, side by side; and being coupled with a cord, they are bound upon the *aparejo* with a long rope of sea-grass or raw-hide, which is so skilfully and tensely twined about the packages as effectually to secure them upon the animal. The mule is at first so tightly bound that it seems scarcely

able to move; but the weight of the pack soon settles the *aparejo*, and so loosens the girths and cords as frequently to render it necessary to tighten them again soon after getting under way. It keeps most of the muleteers actively employed during the day, to maintain the packs in condition; for they often lose their balance and sometimes fall off. This is done without detaining the *atajo* (drove of pack-mules), the rest of which travel on while one is stopped to adjust its disordered pack. Indeed it is apt to occasion much trouble to stop a heavily laden *atajo*; for, if allowed a moment's rest, the mules are inclined to lie down, when it is with much difficulty they can rise again with their loads. In their efforts to do so they sometimes so strain their loins as to injure them ever after. The day's travel is made without a nooning respite; for the consequent unloading and reloading would consume too much time: and as a heavily-packed *atajo* should rarely continue *en route* more than five or six hours, the *jornada de recua* (day's journey of a pack-drove) is usually but twelve or fifteen miles.

[182] It is truly remarkable to observe with what dexterity and skill the *Arrieros*, or muleteers, harness and adjust the packs of merchandise upon their beasts. Half a dozen usually suffice for forty or fifty mules. Two men are always engaged at a time in the dispatch of each animal, and rarely occupy five minutes in the complete adjustment of his *aparejo* and *carga*. In this operation they frequently demonstrate a wonderful degree of skill in the application of their strength. A single man will often seize a package, which, on a 'dead lift,' he could hardly have raised from the ground, and making a fulcrum of his knees and a lever of his arms and body, throw it upon the mule's back with as much apparent ease as if the effort cost him but little exertion. At stopping-places the task of unpacking is executed with still greater expedition. The packages are

piled in a row upon the ground, and in case of rain the *aparejos* are laid upon them, over which is stretched a covering of *mantas de guangoche* (sheets of sea-grass texture), which protects the goods against the severest storms; a ditch also being cut around the pile, to prevent the water from running underneath. In this way freights are carried from point to point, and over the most rugged mountain passes at a much cheaper rate than foreigners can transport their merchandise in wagons, even through a level country. The cheapness of this mode of transportation arises from the very low wages paid to the *arrieros*, and the little expense incurred to feed [183] both them and the mules. The salary of the muleteer ranges from two to five dollars per month; and as their food seldom consists of anything else except corn and *frijoles*, it can be procured at very little cost. When the *arrieros* get any meat at all, it is generally at their own expense.

An *atajo* is conducted in a very systematic manner, each *arriero* having his appropriate sphere of action allotted to him. They have also their regulations and technicalities, which, if not as numerous, are about as unintelligible to the uninitiated as sailors' terms. One person, called the *savanero*, has the charge of the mules at night, which are all turned loose without tether or halter, with the *mulera* or bell-mare, to prevent them from straying abroad. Although the attachment of the mules to the *mulera* appears very great, it seems to be about as much for the bell as for the animal. What the queen-bee is to a hive, so is the *mulera* to an *atajo*. No matter what may be the temper of a mule, it can seldom be driven away from her; and if she happen to be taken from among her associates, the latter immediately become depressed and melancholy, and ramble and whinny in every direction, as if they were completely lost. In addition to preparing food for the party,

it is the office of the *madre* (or mother, as the cook of the company is facetiously called) to lead the *mulera* ahead, during the journey, after which the whole pack follows in orderly procession.

[184] The muleteers, as well as the *vaqueros* (cow-herds), are generally mounted upon swift and well-trained horses, and in their management of the animals will often perform many surprising feats, which would grace an equestrian circus in any country; such, for instance, as picking up a dollar from the ground at every pass with the horse at full gallop. But the greatest display of skill and agility consists in their dextrous use of the *lazo* or *lareat*,¹³⁴ which is usually made of horse-hair, or sea-grass tightly twisted together, with a convenient noose at one end. Their aim is always more sure when the animal to be caught is running at full speed, for then it has no time to dodge the *lareat*. As soon as the noose is cast, the *lazador* fetches the end of his *lazo* a turn round the high pommel of his saddle, and by a quick manœuvre the wildest horse is brought up to a stand or topsy-turvy at his pleasure. By this process, the head of the animal is turned towards his subduer, who, in order to obtain the mastery over him more completely, seldom fails to throw a *bozal* (or half-hitch, as boatmen would say) around the nose, though at full rope's length.

If the object of pursuit happens to be a cow or an ox, the *lazo* is usually thrown about the horns instead of the neck. Two *vaqueros*, [185] each with his rope to the horns, will thus subject the wildest and most savage bull, provided they are mounted upon well-trained steeds. While the infuriated animal makes a lunge at one of his pursuers, the other wheels round and pulls upon his rope, which always brings

¹³⁴ *Lasso* and *lariat*, as most usually written, are evidently corruptions of the Spanish *lazo* and *la reata* (the latter with the article *la* compounded), both meaning kinds of rope. I have therefore preferred retaining the orthography indicated by their etymology.—GREGG.

the beast about in the midst of his career; so that between the two he is jerked to and fro till he becomes exhausted and ceases to make any further resistance. The use of the lazo is not confined to the *arrieros* and *vaqueros*, although these generally acquire most skill in that exercise: it prevails in every rank of life; and no man, especially among the *rancheros*, would consider his education complete until he had learned this national accomplishment. They acquire it in fact from infancy; for it forms one of the principal rural sports of children, who may daily be seen with their *lazitos*, noosing the dogs and chickens about the yards, in every direction.

The lazo is often employed also as a 'weapon' both offensive and defensive. In skirmishes with the Indians, the mounted *vaquero*, if haplessly without arms, will throw this formidable object round the neck or the body of his enemy, who, before he has time to disencumber himself, is jerked to the ground and dragged away at full speed; when, if his brains are not beaten out against the stones, roots, or trees, he becomes at least so stunned and disabled that the *lazador* can dispatch him at his leisure. The panther, the bear, and other ferocious animals of the mountains and [186] prairies, are also successfully attacked in this manner.

The laws and customs of the country with regard to the ownership of animals are very annoying to the inexperienced foreign traveller. No matter how many proprietors a horse or mule may have had, every one marks him with a huge hieroglyphic brand, which is called the *fierro*, and again, upon selling him, with his *venta*, or sale-brand; until at last these scars become so multiplied as to render it impossible for persons not versed in this species of 'heraldry,' to determine whether the animal has been properly *vented* or not: yet any *fierro* without its corresponding *venta* lays the beast liable to the claim of the brander. Foreigners are the most

frequently subjected to this kind of imposition; and when a party of *estrangeros* enters any of the southern towns, they are immediately surrounded by a troop of loungers, who carefully examine every horse and mule; when, should they by chance discover any *unvented* brand, they immediately set to work to find some one with a branding-iron of the same shape, by which the beast is at once claimed and taken; for in all legal processes the only proof required of the claimant is his *ferro*, or branding-iron, which, if found to assimilate in shape with the mark on the animal, decides the suit in his favor. A colonel in Chihuahua once claimed a mule of me in this manner, but as I was convinced that I had bought it of the legitimate owner, I refused to give it up. The officer, unwilling [187] to lose his prize, started immediately for the *alcalde*, in hopes of inducing that functionary to lend him the aid of the law; but during his absence I caused the shoulder of the animal to be shorn, so that the *venta* became distinctly visible. As soon as the discovery was made known to the colonel and his judge, they made a precipitate exit, as though conscious of detected fraud.

But while I fully acknowledge the pretensions of the mule, as an animal of general usefulness, I must not forget paying a passing tribute to that meek and unostentatious member of the brute family, the 'patient ass;' or, as it is familiarly called by the natives, *el burro*. This docile creature is here emphatically the 'poor man's friend,' being turned to an infinite variety of uses, and always submissive under the heaviest burdens. He is not only made to carry his master's grain, his fuel, his water, and his luggage, but his wife and his children. Frequently the whole family is stowed away together upon one diminutive donkey. In fact, the chief riding animal of the peasant is the *burro*, upon which saddle, bridle, or halter, is seldom used. The

rider, seated astride his haunches instead of his back, guides the docile beast with a bludgeon which he carries in his hand.

Nothing, perhaps, has been more systematically attended to in New Mexico than the raising of *sheep*. When the territory was at the zenith of its prosperity, *ranchos* were to be met with upon the borders of every stream, [188] and in the vicinity of every mountain where water was to be had. Even upon the arid and desert plains, and many miles away from brook or pond, immense flocks were driven out to pasture, and only taken to water once in two or three days. On these occasions it is customary for the shepherds to load their burros with *guages* filled with water, and return again with their folds to the plains. The *guage* is a kind of gourd, of which there are some beautiful specimens with two bulbs; the intervening neck serving to retain the cord by which it is carried.

These itinerant herds of sheep generally pass the night wherever the evening finds them, without cot or enclosure. Before nightfall the principal shepherd sallies forth in search of a suitable site for his *hato*, or temporary sheep-fold; and building a fire on the most convenient spot, the sheep generally draw near it of their own accord. Should they incline to scatter, the shepherd then seizes a torch and performs a circuit or two around the entire fold, by which manœuvre, in their efforts to avoid him, the heads of the sheep are all turned inwards; and in that condition they generally remain till morning, without once attempting to stray. It is unnecessary to add that the flock is well guarded during the night by watchful and sagacious dogs against prowling wolves or other animals of prey. The well-trained shepherd's dog of this country is indeed a prodigy: two or three of them will follow a flock of sheep for a distance [189] of several miles as orderly as a shepherd, and drive them

back to the pen again at night, without any other guidance than their own extraordinary instincts.

In former times there were extensive proprietors who had their *ranchos* scattered over half the province, in some cases amounting to from three to five hundred thousand head of sheep. The custom has usually been to farm out the ewes to the *rancheros*, who make a return of twenty per cent. upon the stock in merchantable *carneros* — a term applied to sheep generally, and particularly to wethers fit for market.

Sheep may be reckoned the staple production of New Mexico, and the principal article of exportation.¹³⁵ Between ten and twenty years ago, about 200,000 head were annually driven to the southern markets; indeed, it is asserted, that, during the most flourishing times, as many as 500,000 were exported in one year. This trade has constituted a profitable business to some of the *ricos* of the country. They would buy sheep of the poor *rancheros* at from fifty to seventy-five cents per head, and sell them at from one to two hundred per cent. advance in the southern markets. A large quantity of wool is of course produced, but of an inferior quality. Inconsiderable amounts have been introduced into the United States *via* Missouri, which have sometimes been sold as low as fifteen cents per pound. It is bought, however, at the New Mexican *ranchos* at a very low rate — [190] three or four cents per pound, or (as more generally sold) per fleece, which will average, perhaps, but little over a pound. Yet, from the superiority of the pasturage and climate, New Mexico might doubtless grow the finest wool in the world. In conformity with their characteristic tardiness in improvement, however, the natives

¹³⁵ Sheep-raising is still the largest industry in New Mexico; the wool crop for 1903-04 was twenty million pounds, and there were over five million head of sheep upon the ranges.— ED.

have retained their original stocks, which are wretchedly degenerate. They formerly sheared their flocks chiefly for their health, and rarely preserved the fleece, as their domestic manufactures consumed but a comparatively small quantity.

But the *ganado menor*, or small beasts of pasture (that is, sheep and goats in general), have of late been very much reduced in quantity; having suffered to a deplorable extent from the frequent inroads of the aboriginal 'lords of the soil,' who, every now and then, whenever hunger or caprice prompts them, attack the ranchos, murder the shepherds, and drive the sheep away in flocks of thousands. Indeed, the Indians have been heard to observe, that they would long before this have destroyed every sheep in the country, but that they prefer leaving a few behind for breeding purposes, in order that their Mexican shepherds may raise them new supplies!

The sheep of New Mexico are exceedingly small, with very coarse wool, and scarcely fit for anything else than mutton, for which, indeed, they are justly celebrated. Their flesh has a peculiarly delicious flavor, and is reckoned by epicures to be far superior to our best [191] venison; owing probably in part to the excellence of the grass upon which they feed. The flesh of the sheep is to the New Mexican what that of the hog is to the people of our Western States, — while pork is but seldom met with in Northern Mexico. The sheep there are also remarkable for horny appendages, which frequently branch out in double or triple pairs, giving the head a very whimsical and grotesque appearance. I have seen some of them with at least six separate horns, each pointing in a different direction.

Although the raising of *goats* has not been made so much of a business as the raising of sheep, the former are nevertheless to be found in great abundance. Their milk is

much more generally used than that of the cow, not only because it is sweeter and richer, but because the goat, like the *burro*, sustains itself upon the mere rubbish that grows in the mountain passes, and on the most barren hills, where cows could not exist without being regularly fed. The flesh of the goat is coarse, but wholesome, and being cheaper than mutton or beef, it is very freely used by the poor. That of the kid is hardly surpassed for delicacy and sweetness.

With regard to domestic *fowls*, it may be worthy of remark, that there is not to be found, as I believe, in all New Mexico, a single species (saving half a dozen turkeys perhaps, and a few pigeons), except the common hen, of which, however, there is a sufficient [192] abundance. The goose, the duck, the peacock, etc., are altogether unknown.

Of wild animals there is not so great a variety as in the southern districts of the republic, where they are found in such abundance. The *black* and *grizzly bear*, which are met with in the mountains, do not appear to possess the great degree of ferocity, however, for which the latter especially is so much famed further north. It is true they sometimes descend from the mountains into the corn-fields, and wonderful stories are told of dreadful combats between them and the *labradores*; but judging from a little adventure I once witnessed, with an old female of the grizzly species, encountered by a party of us along the borders of the great prairies, I am not disposed to consider either their ferocity or their boldness very terrible.

Our company had just halted at noon, to take refreshments, when we perceived a group of these interesting animals,— a dam with a few cubs fully as large as common wolves,— busily scratching among the high grass in an adjacent valley, as if in search of roots or insects. Some of our party immediately started after the brutes, in hopes of

getting a shot at them, in which, however, they were disappointed. One or two 'runners,' who had followed on horseback, then made a desperate charge upon the enemy, but the old monster fled to the thickets, without even so much as turning once upon her pursuers, although one of her cubs was killed, and the remainder [193] were scattered in different directions, during the general scamper.

The sequel of the adventure served to confirm me in the opinion I had of the exaggerated stories in regard to these much dreaded animals. We had in our company a giant blacksmith and general repairer of wagons, named Campbell, who measured full six feet eight in his stockings, and was besides, elegantly proportioned. Independently of his universal utility as 'Jack-of-all-trades,' our colossal friend was in such constant requisition, that he might well have given origin to the western phrase of one's being 'a whole team;' for if a wagon happened to be in the mire, he was worth more than the whole team to extract it. He was, in short, the most appropriate subject for a regular grizzly-bear scrape. On the occasion I speak of, Campbell had laid himself down under the shade of a bush, upon the brink of a precipice about ten feet high, and was taking a comfortable snooze, while his companions were sporting in the neighborhood. During the chase, one of the young bears, which had been scared from its mother, was perceived loping down the trail towards our camp, apparently heedless of the company. Several of us seized our guns, and as it sprang across the ravine through a break near the spot where Campbell lay, we gave it a salute, which caused it to tumble back wounded into the branch, with a frightful yell. Campbell being suddenly roused by the noise, started up with the rapidity of lightning, and [194] tumbled over the precipice upon the bear. "Whauh!" growled master bruin—"Murder!" screamed the giant—"Clinch it, Campbell, or you're

gone!" exclaimed his comrades; for no one could venture to shoot for fear of killing the man. The latter, however, had no notion of closing clutches with his long-clawed antagonist, but busied himself in vain attempts to clamber up the steep bank; while the bear rising upon his hinder legs, and staring a moment at the huge frame of the blacksmith, soon made up his mind as to the expediency of 'turning tail,' and finally succeeded in making his escape, notwithstanding a volley of shot that were fired after him.

The large *gray wolf* of the Prairies is also to be found in great abundance in Northern Mexico.¹³⁶ They sometimes make dreadful havoc among the cattle, frequently killing and devouring even mules and horses; but they never extend their rapacity so far as to attack human beings, unless urged by starvation. There are other animals of prey about the mountains, among which the panther is most conspicuous.

Elk and deer are also to be met with, but not in large quantities. Of the latter, the species known as the *black-tailed* deer is the most remarkable. It differs but little from the common buck, except that it is of darker color and its tail is bordered with black, and that, though its legs are shorter, its body is larger. The *carnero cimarron* or bighorn of [195] the Rocky Mountains — the *berrendo* or antelope and the *tuza* or prairie dog of the plains — hares, polecats, and other animals of lesser importance, may also be considered as denizens of these regions.¹³⁷

Of wild *birds*, the water fowls are the most numerous; the

¹³⁶ The large grey wolf of the prairies is *Canis lupus occidentalis*.— ED.

¹³⁷ The black-tailed, or mule deer (*Cariacus macrotis*), is one of the largest of the species in North America, and is confined to the western part of the continent. The Bighorn, or Rocky Mountain sheep (*Ovis Montana*), is sometimes called argal. The antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) is a distinct species. The prairie dog is *Cynomys ludovicianus*, a kind of marmot. All the above animals were first described by Lewis and Clark; see Thwaites, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, index. Gregg here gives the Spanish or New Mexican names for these animals.— ED.

ponds and rivers being literally lined at certain seasons of the year with myriads of geese, ducks, cranes, etc. In some of the mountains, wild turkeys are very numerous; but partridges and quails are scarce. There is to be found in Chihuahua and other southern districts a very beautiful bird called *paisano* (literally 'countryman'), which, when domesticated, performs all the offices of a cat in ridding the dwelling-houses of mice and other vermin. It is also said to kill and devour the rattlesnake; a reptile, however, which seems much less vicious here than elsewhere. Scorpions, tarantulas and centipedes also, although found in this province, are almost harmless, and very little dreaded by the natives. Another indigenous reptile is the horned-frog of the Prairies, known here by the name of *camaleon* (or chameleon), of which it is probably a species, as its color has been observed to vary a little in accordance with the character of the soil it inhabits.¹³⁸

The *honey-bee* would appear to have originated exclusively from the east, as its march has been observed westward, but none have yet reached this portion of the Mexican dominion. According to ancient historians, different species were indigenous to the south of [196] the republic; but in the north, the only insect of the kind more resembles the bumble-bee than that of our hives; and builds in rocks and holes in the ground, in some parts of the mountains. They unite in but small numbers (some dozens together), and seldom make over a few ounces of honey, which is said, however, to be of agreeable flavor.

As to *flies*, like the high plains, this dry climate is but little infested — particularly with the more noxious kinds. Fresh meats are preserved and dried in mid-summer without

¹³⁸ The *paisano* is the chaparral cock (*Geococcyx californianus* or *affinis*). The horned frog is a lizard of the *Phrynosoma* genus. There are eight or nine species in our Southwestern states.— Ed.

difficulty, as there are very few blow-flies. Horse-flies are not seen except sometimes in the mountains: the prairie-fly, so tormenting to stock with us in the West, is unknown.

CHAPTER X

Condition of the Arts and Sciences in New Mexico — Neglect of Education — Primary Schools — Geographical Ignorance — Female Accomplishments — Imported Refinements — Peculiarities of Language, etc. — Condition of the Public Press — State of Medical Science — The Mechanical Arts — Carpentry and Cabinet Work — State of Architecture — Dwelling Houses and their Peculiarities — Rustic Furniture — Curiously constructed Vehicles — Manufacture of Blankets — Other Fabrics — Want of Machinery.

THERE is no part of the civilized globe, perhaps, where the Arts have been so much neglected, and the progress of Science so successfully impeded as in New Mexico. Reading and writing may fairly be set down as the highest branches of education that are taught in the schools; for those pedants who occasionally pretend to teach arithmetic, very seldom understand even the primary rules of the science of numbers. I should perhaps make an exception in favor of those ecclesiastics, who have acquired their education abroad; and who, from their vocation, are necessarily obliged to possess a smattering of Latin. Yet it is a well known fact that the majority of this privileged class, even, are lamentably deficient in the more important [198] branches of familiar science. I have been assured by a highly respectable foreigner, who has long resided in the country, that the questions were once deliberately put to him by a curate — whether Napoleon and Washington were not *one* and the *same* person, and whether Europe was not a province of Spain!

From the earliest time down to the secession of the colonies, it was always the policy of the Spanish Government as well as of the papal hierarchy, to keep every avenue of knowledge closed against their subjects of the New World; lest the lights of civil and religious liberty should reach them from their

neighbors of the North. Although a system of public schools was afterwards adopted by the republic, which, if persevered in, would no doubt have contributed to the dissemination of useful knowledge, yet its operations had to be suspended about ten years ago, for want of the necessary funds to carry out the original project.¹³⁹ It is doubtful, however, whether the habitual neglect and utter carelessness of the people, already too much inured to grope their way in darkness and in ignorance, added to the inefficiency of the teachers, would not eventually have neutralized all the good that such an institution was calculated to effect. The only schools now in existence, are of the lowest primary class, supported entirely by individual patronage, the liberal extension of which, may be inferred from the fact, that at least three-fourths of the present population can neither read nor write. [199] To illustrate the utter absence of geographical information among the humbler classes, it is only necessary to mention that I have been asked by persons, who have enjoyed a long intercourse with Americans, whether the United States was as large a place as the town of Santa Fé!

Female education has, if possible, been more universally neglected than that of the other sex; while those who have received any instruction at all, have generally been taught in private families. Indeed, until very lately, to be able to read and write on the part of a woman, was considered an indication of very extraordinary talent; and the fair damsel who could pen a billet-doux to her lover, was looked upon as almost a prodigy. There is, however, to be found among the higher classes a considerable sprinkling of that superficial refinement which is the bane of fashionable society everywhere, and which consists, not in superiority of understand-

¹³⁹ H. H. Bancroft, *New Mexico and Arizona*, p. 341, note 52, gives the gleanings from the archives on these early public schools, for which in 1834 an appeal was made for private contributions.—ED.

ing, not in acquired knowledge, but in that peculiar species of assumption, which has happily been styled "the flowing garment with which Ignorance decks herself."

Yet, notwithstanding this dreadful state of ignorance on all those subjects which it behooves man to be acquainted with, it is truly astonishing to notice the correctness with which the common people speak their mother tongue, the Spanish. The application of words out of their classical sense may occasionally occur, but a violation of the simple [200] grammatical rules (which is so common among the illiterate who use the English language), is extremely rare. In pronunciation, the only material difference between them and the Castilian race, consists in the adoption of certain provincialisms, which can hardly be ranked as defects. Thus, instead of giving *c* before *e* and *i*, and *z* in all cases, the Castilian lisp of *th* as in *thin*, they sound both like *s* in *sin*; and instead of pronouncing *ll* as the Italian liquid *gl* in *seraglio*, they sound this double letter precisely like *y* in *yes*; and in writing, frequently confound the *ll* and *y* indiscriminately together. These may be considered as their only peculiarities of pronunciation, and they prevail through most sections of the republic. In fact, this point of difference is looked upon by many with national pride, as distinguishing their language from that of their former oppressors. They have also adopted many significant Indian words from their aboriginal predecessors and neighbors, which serve to embellish and amplify this already beautiful and copious language.

In nothing is the deplorable state of things already noticed made more clearly manifest, than in the absence of a public press. There has never been a single newspaper or periodical of any kind published in New Mexico, except in the year 1834, when a little foolscap sheet (entitled *El Crepúsculo*) was issued weekly, for about a month, to the tune of fifty

subscribers, and was then abandoned, partially for want of patronage and partially because [201] the editor had accomplished his object of procuring his election to Congress.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, the only printing press in the country is a small affair which was brought the same year across the prairies from the United States, and is now employed occasionally in printing billets, primers and Catholic catechisms. This literary negligence is to be attributed, not more to the limited number of reading people, than to those injudicious restrictions upon that freedom of the press, which is so essential to its prosperity. An editor attempting to arraign the conduct of public functionaries, or to oppose 'the powers that be,' is sure to subject himself to persecution, and most probably suspension, a tyrannical course of proceeding which has checked the career of two or three papers even among the more enlightened inhabitants of Chihuahua; where a miserable organ of the Government is still occasionally issued from the office of the *Imprenta del Gobierno*, or Government Press. No wonder then that the people of Northern Mexico are so much behind their neighbors of the United States in intelligence, and that the pulse of national industry and liberty beats so low!

Medical science is laboring under similar disadvantages; there being not a single native physician in the province;¹⁴¹ although a great multitude of singular cures are daily performed with indigenous roots and herbs that grow [202] in abundance all over the country. But lest a knowledge of this scarcity of doctors should induce some of the Esculapian faculty to strike for Santa Fé in quest of fortune, I would remark that the country affords very poor patronage.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Bancroft says (*op. cit.* p. 34) that the editor of *El Crepusculo* was Padre Martinez, and that a newspaper of 1876 notes the death of a New Mexican who had been a printer thereon.—ED.

¹⁴¹ Neither is there a professed lawyer in New Mexico: a fact which at least speaks favorably of the state of litigation in the country.—GREGG.

¹⁴² But see the tour of Dr. Willard, noted in our volume xviii, pp. 325-364.—ED.

Foreign physicians who have visited New Mexico, have found the practice quite unprofitable; not more for the want of patients, than on account of the poverty of the people. Nine-tenths of those who are most subject to disease, are generally so destitute of means, that the only return they can make, is, "*Dios se lo pague*" (May God pay you!) Even the more affluent classes do not hesitate sometimes to liquidate their bills in the same currency. A French doctor of Santa Fé, who had been favored with too many payments of this description, was wont to rebuke their "*Dios se lo pague*" with a "*No, señor, su bolsa me lo pagará*"—No, sir, your pocket shall pay me!

The mechanical arts have scarcely risen above the condition they were found in among the aborigines. Gold and silversmiths are perhaps better skilled in their respective trades than any other class of artisans whatever; as the abundance of precious metals in former days, and the ruling passion of the people for ostentatious show, gave a very early stimulus to the exercise of this peculiar talent. Some mechanics of this class have produced such singular specimens of ingenious workmanship, that on examining them, we are almost unwilling to believe that rude art could accomplish [203] so much. Even a bridle-bit or a pair of spurs it would no doubt puzzle the 'cutest' Yankee to fashion after a Mexican model — such as I have seen manufactured by the commonest blacksmiths of the country.

In carpentry and cabinet-work the mechanic has to labor to great disadvantage, on account of a want of tools and scarcity of suitable timber. Their boards have to be hewed out with the axe — sawed lumber being absolutely unknown throughout New Mexico, except what is occasionally cut by foreigners. The axe commonly used for splitting and hewing is formed after the model of those clumsy hatchets known as 'squaw-axes' among Indian traders. Yet this is not unfrequently the only tool of the worker in wood: a cart or

a plough is often manufactured without even an auger, a chisel, or a drawing-knife.

In architecture, the people do not seem to have arrived at any great perfection, but rather to have conformed themselves to the clumsy style which prevailed among the aborigines, than to waste their time in studying modern masonry and the use of lime. The materials generally used for building are of the crudest possible description; consisting of unburnt bricks, about eighteen inches long by nine wide and four thick, laid in mortar of mere clay and sand. These bricks are called *adobes*, and every edifice, from the church to the *palacio*, is constructed of the same stuff. In fact, I should remark, perhaps, that though all [204] Southern Mexico is celebrated for the magnificence and wealth of its churches, New Mexico deserves equal fame for poverty-stricken and shabby-looking houses of public worship.

The general plan of the Mexican dwellings is nearly the same everywhere. Whether from motives of pride, or fear of the savages, the wealthier classes have adopted the style of Moorish castles; so that all the larger buildings have more the appearance of so many diminutive fortifications, than of private family residences. Let me add, however, that whatever may be the roughness of their exterior, they are extremely comfortable inside. A tier of rooms on each side of a square, comprising as many as the convenience of the occupant may require, encompass an open *patio* or court, with but one door opening into the street,—a huge gate, called *la puerta del zaguan*, usually large enough to admit the family coach. The back tier is generally occupied with the *cocina*, *dispensa*, *granero* (kitchen, provision-store, and granary), and other offices of the same kind. Most of the apartments, except the winter rooms, open into the *patio*; but the latter are most frequently entered through the *sala* or hall, which, added to the thickness of their walls

and roofs, renders them delightfully warm during the cold season, while they are perfectly cool and agreeable in summer. In fact, hemmed in as these apartments are with nearly three feet of earth, they may be said to possess all the pleasant [205] properties of cellars, with a freer circulation of air, and nothing of the dampness which is apt to pervade those subterranean regions.

The roofs of the houses are all flat *azoteas* or terraces, being formed of a layer of earth two or three feet in thickness, and supported by stout joists or horizontal rafters. These roofs, when well packed, turn the rain off with remarkable effect, and render the houses nearly fire-proof.¹⁴³ The *azotea* also forms a pleasant promenade, the surrounding walls rising usually so high as to serve for a balustrade, as also a breast-work, behind which, in times of trouble, the combatants take their station, and defend the premises.

The floors are all constructed of beaten earth 'slicked over' with soft mortar, and covered generally with a coarse carpet of domestic manufacture. A plank floor would be quite a curiosity in New Mexico; nor have I met with one even in Chihuahua, although the best houses in that city are floored with brick or squares of hewn stone. The interior of each apartment is roughly plastered over with a clay mortar unmixed with lime, by females who supply the place of trowels with their hands. It is then white washed with [206] calcined *yeso* or gypsum, a deleterious stuff, that is always sure to engraft its affections upon the clothing of those who come in contact with it. To obviate this, the parlors and family rooms are usually lined with wall-paper

¹⁴³ During a residence of nearly nine years in the country, I never witnessed but one fire, and that was in the mining town of Jesus Maria. There a roof of pine clap-boards is usually extended over the *azotea*, to protect it against the mountain torrents of rain. This roof was consumed, but the principal damage sustained, in addition, was the burning of a huge pile of corn and some bags of flour, which were in the garret: the body of the building remained nearly *in statu quo*.—GREGG.

or calico, to the height of five or six feet. The front of the house is commonly plastered in a similar manner, although not always white-washed. In the suburbs of the towns, and particularly in the villages and ranchos, a fantastic custom prevails of painting only a portion of the fronts of the houses, in the shape of stripes, which imparts to the landscape a very striking and picturesque appearance.

Wood buildings of any kind or shape are utterly unknown in the north of Mexico, with the exception of an occasional picket-hut in some of the ranchos and mining-places. It will readily be perceived, then, what a flat and uncouth appearance the towns of New Mexico present, with houses that look more like so many collections of brick-kilns prepared for burning than human abodes.

The houses of the villages and ranchos are rarely so spacious as those of the capital, yet their construction is much the same. Some very singular subterrene dwellings are to be found in a few places. I was once passing through the village of Casa Colorada,¹⁴⁴ when I observed some noisy urchins just before me, who very suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. Upon resorting to the spot, I perceived an aperture under a hillock, which, albeit considerably larger, was not very [207] unlike the habitations of the little prairie dogs.

The immense expense attending the purchase of suitable furniture and kitchen-ware, indeed, the frequent impossibility of obtaining these articles at any price, caused the early settlers of Northern Mexico to resort to inventions of necessity, or to adopt Indian customs altogether, many of which have been found so comfortable and convenient, that most of those who are now able to indulge in luxuries, feel but

¹⁴⁴ Casa Colorado is now a precinct of Valencia County, east of the Rio Grande, about forty miles below Albuquerque. It was formerly a small village. For a description of a visit en route to Abo and Gran Quivira, see account of Major Carleton in *Smithsonian Institution Report*, 1854, pp. 296-316.—ED.

little inclination to introduce any change. Even the few pine-board chairs and settees that are to be found about the houses are seldom used; the prevailing fashion being to fold mattresses against the walls, which, being covered over with blankets, are thus converted into sofas. Females, indeed, most usually prefer accommodating themselves, à l'Indienne, upon a mere blanket spread simply upon the floor.

Wagons of Mexican manufacture are not to be found; although a small number of American-built vehicles, of those introduced by the trading caravans, have grown into use among the people.¹⁴⁵ Nothing is more calculated to attract the curiosity of strangers than the unwieldy *carretas* or carts of domestic construction, the massive wheels of which are generally hewed out of a large cottonwood. This, however, being rarely of sufficient size to form the usual diameter, which is about five feet, an additional segment or felloe is pinned upon each edge, when the [208] whole is fashioned into an irregular circle. A crude pine or cottonwood pole serves for the axle-tree, upon which is tied a rough frame of the same material for a body. In the construction of these *carretas* the use of iron is, for the most part, wholly dispensed with; in fact, nothing is more common than a cart, a plow, and even a mill, without a particle of iron or other metal about them. To this huge truckle it is necessary to hitch at least three or four yokes of oxen; for even a team of six would find it difficult to draw the load of a single pair with an ordinary cart. The labor of the oxen is much increased by the Mexican mode of harnessing, which appears peculiarly odd to a Yankee. A rough pole serves for a yoke, and, with the middle tied to the cart-tongue, the extremities are placed

¹⁴⁵ The *Missouri Intelligencer* for February 18, 1823, cited by Chittenden, *Fur-Trade*, ii, p. 504, stated that Becknell received seven hundred dollars for a wagon in Santa Fé, that had cost him one hundred and fifty dollars.— ED.

across the heads of the oxen behind the horns, to which they are firmly lashed with a stout rawhide thong. Thus the head is maintained in a fixed position, and they pull, or rather push by the force of the neck, which, of course, is kept continually strained upwards.

Rough and uncouth as these *carretas* always are, they constitute nevertheless the 'pleasure-carriages' of the rancheros, whose families are conveyed in them to the towns, whether to market, or to *fiestas*, or on other joyful occasions. It is truly amusing to see these rude vehicles bouncing along upon their irregularly rounded wheels, like a limping bullock, and making the hills and valleys [209] around vocal with the echo of their creaking and frightful sounds.

The New Mexicans are celebrated for the manufacture of coarse blankets, which is an article of considerable traffic between them and the southern provinces, as also with the neighboring Indians, and on some occasions with the United States. The finer articles are curiously woven in handsome figures of various colors. These are of different qualities, the most ordinary being valued at about two dollars apiece, while those of the finest texture, especially their imitations of the *Sarape Navajó*, will sell for twenty dollars or more. There have also been made in New Mexico a few imitations of the *Sarape Saltillo*,— the blanket of Saltillo, a city of the south celebrated for the manufacture of the most splendid fancy blankets, singularly figured with all the colors of the rainbow. These are often sold for more than fifty dollars each. What renders the weaving of the fancy blankets extremely tedious, is, that the variegation of colors is all effected with the shuttle, the texture in other respects being perfectly plain, without even a twill. An additional value is set upon the fine *sarape* on account of its being a fashionable substitute for a cloak. Indeed, the inferior *sarape* is the only overdress used by the peasantry in the winter.

Besides blankets, the New Mexicans manufacture a kind

of coarse twilled woollen stuff, called *gerga*, which is checkered with black and white, and is used for carpets, and also [210] by the peasantry for clothing, which, in fact, with some other similar domestic stuffs, together with buckskin, constituted almost the only article of wear they were possessed of, till the trade from Missouri furnished them with foreign fabrics at more reasonable prices than they had been in the habit of paying to the traders of the southern provinces. Their domestic textures are nearly all of wool, there being no flax or hemp¹⁴⁶ and but little cotton spun. The manufacture even of these articles is greatly embarrassed for want of good spinning and weaving machinery. Much of the spinning is done with the *huso* or *malacate* (the whirling spindle), which is kept whirling in a bowl with the fingers while the thread is drawn. The dexterity with which the females spin with this simple apparatus is truly astonishing.

CHAPTER XI

Style of Dress in New Mexico — Riding-dress of the Caballero — Horse Trappings — The *Rebozo* — Passion for Jewelry — Apparel of the Female Peasantry — 'Wheeled Tarantulas' — General Appearance of the People — Tawny Complexion — Singular Mode of Painting the Human Face — Striking Traits of Character — Alms-giving — Beggars and their Tricks — Wonderful Cure of Paralysis — Lack of Arms and Officers — Traits of Boldness among the Yeomanry — Politeness and Suavity of the Mexicans — Remarks of Mr. Poinsett — Peculiarities observed in epistolary Intercourse — Salutations — *La Siesta*.

THE best society in the interior of New Mexico is fast conforming to European fashion, in the article of dress, with the exception of the peculiar riding costume, which is still

¹⁴⁶ Hemp is unknown in this province, and flax, as has before been remarked, though indigenous, is nowhere cultivated. "The court of Spain (as Clavigero tells us, speaking of Michuacan, New Mexico, and Quivira, where he says flax was to be found in great abundance), informed of the regions adapted to the cultivation of this plant, sent to those countries, about the year 1778, twelve families from the valley of Granada, for the purpose of promoting so important a branch of agriculture." The enterprise seems never to have been prosecuted, however — at least in New Mexico.— GREGG.

worn by many *caballeros*. This generally consists of a *sombrero* — a peculiarly shaped low crowned hat with wide brim, covered with oil-cloth and surmounted with a band of tinsel cord nearly an inch in diameter: a *chaqueta* or jacket of cloth gaudily embroidered with braid and fancy barrel-buttons: a curiously shaped article called *calzoneras*, intended for pantaloons, with the outer part of the legs open from hip to ankle — the borders set with tinkling filigree buttons, and the whole fantastically trimmed with tinsel lace and cords of the [212] same materials. As suspenders do not form a component part of a regular Mexican costume, the nether garment is supported by a rich sash which is drawn very tightly around the body, and contributes materially to render the whole appearance of the *caballero* extremely picturesque. Then there are the *botas* which somewhat resemble the leggins worn by the bandits of Italy, and are made of embossed leather, embroidered with fancy silk and tinsel thread and bound around the knee with curiously tasselled garters. The *sarape saltillero* (a fancy blanket) completes the picture. This peculiarly useful as well as ornamental garment is commonly carried dangling carelessly across the pommel of the saddle, except in bad weather, when it is drawn over the shoulders, after the manner of a Spanish cloak, or as is more frequently the case, the rider puts his head through a slit in the middle, and by letting it hang loosely from the neck, his whole person is thus effectually protected.

The steed of the *caballero* is caparisoned in the same pompous manner, the whole of the saddle trappings weighing sometimes over a hundred pounds. First of all we have the high pommel of the saddle-tree crowned with silver, and the 'hinder tree' garnished with the same, and a quilted cushion adjusted to the seat. The *coraza* is a cover of embossed leather embroidered with fancy silk and tinsel, with orna-

ments of silver, and is thrown loose over the cushion and *juste* or saddle-tree, the [213] extremities of which protrude through appropriate apertures. Then comes the *cola de pato*, literally 'duck's tail' (it were more appropriately called 'peacock's tail'), a sort of leathern housing, also gaudily ornamented to correspond with the *coraza*, attached to the hind-tree, and covering the entire haunches of the animal. The *estribos* or stirrups are usually made either of bent or mortised wood, fancifully carved, over which are fastened the *tapaderas* or coverings of leather to protect the toes. Formerly the stirrups constituted a complete slipper, mortised in a solid block of wood, which superseded the use of *tapaderas*. But one of the most costly articles of the saddle-suit is perhaps the bridle, which is sometimes of entire silver, or otherwise heavily ornamented with silver buckles, slides and stars. To this [214] is appended a massive bit, sometimes of pure silver, but more commonly of iron, most singularly wrought. The spurs are generally of iron, though silver spurs are very frequent. The shanks of the *vaquero* spurs are three to five inches long, with rowels sometimes six inches in diameter. I have in my possession a pair of these measuring over ten inches from one extremity to another, with rowels five and three-fourths inches in diameter, weighing two pounds and eleven ounces. Last, not least, there are the *armas de pelo*, being a pair of shaggy goat skins (richly trimmed across the top with embroidered leather), dangling from the pommel of the saddle for the purpose of being drawn over the legs in case of rain, or as a protection against brush and brambles. The *corazas* of travelling saddles are also provided with several pockets called *coginillos* — a most excellent contrivance for carrying a lunch or bottle, or anything to which convenient access may be desired.

In former times there was a kind of harness of leather

attached to the saddle behind, covering the hinder parts of the horse as low as mid-thighs, with its lower border completely fringed with jingling iron tags, but these are now seldom met with in the North. Even without this noisy appendage, however, a Mexican caballero of the present day, with full equestrian rigging, his clink and his rattle, makes altogether a very remarkable appearance.

Though the foregoing description refers particularly [215] to the chivalrous caballero of the South — the *rico* of the country, yet similar modes of costume and equipage, but of coarser material, are used by the lower classes. Nor are they restricted among these to the riding-dress, but are very generally worn as ordinary apparel. Common velveteens, fustians, blue drillings and similar stuffs, are very much in fashion among such rancheros and *villageois* as are able to wear anything above the ordinary woollen manufactures of the country. Coarse wool hats, or of palm-leaf (*sombreros de petate*), all of low crowns, are the kind generally worn by the common people.

As I have already observed, among the better classes the European dress is now frequently worn; although they are generally a year or two behind our latest fashions. The ladies, however, never wear either hat, cap or bonnet, except for riding; but in lieu of it, especially when they walk abroad, the *rebozo* (or scarf), or a large shawl, is drawn over the head. The *rebozo* is by far the most fashionable: it is seven or eight feet in length by nearly a yard in width, and is made of divers stuffs — silk, linen or cotton, and usually variegated and figured in the warp by symmetrically disposed threads waved in the dying. It is certainly a beautiful specimen of domestic manufacture. The finest articles are valued at fifty to a hundred dollars in the North; but the ordinary cotton *rebozo* ranges at from one to five dollars, and is generally [216] worn by the lower classes. A

Mexican female is scarcely ever seen without her rebozo or shawl, except when it is laid aside for the dance. In-doors, it is loosely thrown about her person, but in the promenade it is coquettishly drawn over the head, and one end of it brought round, and gracefully hooked over the opposite shoulder. As a favorite modern authoress justly remarks, however, in speaking of the rebozo and the sarape, an important objection to their use, in this unsettled society, is the facility they afford for the concealment of the person, as well as secret weapons of the wearer. Pistols, knives, and even swords are carried unsuspected under the sarape, while a lady fashionably muffled with a rebozo, may pass a crowd of familiar acquaintances without being recognized.

The ordinary apparel of the female peasantry and the *rancheras*, is the *enaguas* or petticoat of home-made flannel; or, when they are able to procure it, of coarse blue or scarlet cloth, connected to a wide list of some contrasting-colored stuff, bound around the waist over a loose white chemise, which is the only covering for the body, except the rebozo. Uncouth as this costume may appear at first, it constitutes nevertheless a very graceful sort of undress — in which capacity it is used even by ladies of rank.

The New Mexican ladies are all passionately fond of jewelry; and they may commonly be seen, with their necks, arms and fingers loaded with massive appendages of a valuable [217] description. But as there has been so much imposition with regard to foreign jewelry, articles of native manufacture, some of which are admirably executed, without alloy or counterfeit, are generally preferred.

In New Mexico, *coches de paseo* of any kind are very rare; occasionally, however, one of those huge, clumsy, old-fashioned vehicles of Mexican manufacture, so abundant in the southern cities, and often nick-named 'wheeled tarantulas,' by strangers, may be seen. Such an apparition

in a Yankee city would excite as much curiosity as a caravan of the rarest animals. The coach alone is a load for two mules, therefore the vehicle is usually drawn by four and sometimes six, and invariably driven by postillions.

The stature of both sexes in New Mexico is commonly below medium: but they are mostly well proportioned, of athletic make, and sound, healthy constitutions. Their complexion is generally dark; but every variety of shade is found among them, from the lightest European tint to the swarthiest hue. Their darkness has resulted partly from their original Moorish blood, but more from inter-marriages with the aborigines. An occasional Indian, and sometimes an entire village, have abandoned their wonted seclusion, and become identified with their conquerors. In the North, the system of Indian slavery has contributed still more to the same result. They buy the captive children of both sexes of the wild tribes, taken prisoners among each other, [218] or by the Pueblos in their petty wars with the former — and indeed by the Mexicans themselves — who are generally held in bondage to the age of twenty-one years, and some, from ignorance, their whole lives. Such as resume their liberty, intermarry with the race of their masters, becoming Mexican citizens, often undistinguishable from many of the already dark-hued natives.¹⁴⁷ The present race of New Mexicans has thus become an amalgam, averaging about equal parts of the European and aboriginal blood. The peasantry, as well from a more general intermixture with the Indian, as from exposure, are the darkest; yet the tawny complexion pervades all classes — the rich as well as the poor.

The females, although many of them are about as broad-featured as the veriest Indian, not unfrequently possess striking traits of beauty. They are remarkable for small

¹⁴⁷ Slavery was abolished in Mexico by an act of September 15, 1829, reinforced by a second decree in 1837.— ED.

fect and handsome figures, notwithstanding their profound ignorance of the 'refined art' of lacing. The belles of the ranchos and villages have a disgusting habit of besmearing their faces with the crimson juice of a plant or fruit called *alegría*, which is not unlike blood; as also with clay and starch. This is not intended, as some travellers have supposed, as a beautifying appendage, but for the purpose of protecting the skin from the sun. A country beauty will often remain in this filthy condition for a whole fortnight, in order to appear to advantage at some favorite feast or ball; when, by washing off the paint, the [219] cheeks look as fresh and ruddy as the natural darkness of their skin will permit.

The New Mexicans appear to have inherited much of the cruelty and intolerance of their ancestors, and no small portion of their bigotry and fanaticism. Being of a highly imaginative temperament and of rather accommodating moral principles — cunning, loquacious, quick of perception and sycophantic, their conversation frequently exhibits a degree of tact — a false glare of talent, eminently calculated to mislead and impose. They have no stability except in artifice; no profundity except for intrigue: qualities for which they have acquired an unenviable celebrity. Systematically cringing and subservient while out of power, as soon as the august mantle of authority falls upon their shoulders, there are but little bounds to their arrogance and vindictiveness of spirit. While such are the general features of the character of the Northern Mexicans, however, I am fain to believe and acknowledge, that there are to be found among them numerous instances of uncompromising virtue, good faith and religious forbearance.

But taking the Northern Mexicans without distinction of class or degree, there is scarcely a race of people on the face of the earth more alive to the dictates of charity — that is, alms-giving; which is more owing perhaps to the force of

religious instruction than to real sympathy for the sufferings of the indigent and the helpless. The law making no provision [220] for paupers, there is no country perhaps more infested with beggars, especially from Chihuahua south. In the large cities, Saturday is the alms-giving day by custom; and on such occasions the *limosneros* (as the mendicant race is called), may be seen promenading the streets in gangs of thirty or forty, or in smaller numbers, performing genuflections at every nook and corner of the town, each croaking aloud his favorite set of orisons and inviting the blessings of heaven upon every man, woman or child, who may have been so fortunate as to propitiate the benison by casting a few *clacos*¹⁴⁸ into his outstretched hand. In some sections of the country, this system of begging has proved so successful that parents have actually been known to maim and deform their children, during the earliest stages of infancy, in order to fit them for the trade, and thereby secure to themselves a constant source of emolument for the remainder of their lives. Persons affecting disease and frequently malformation for the purpose of exciting the commiseration of the wayfarer, are also extremely numerous. I had often observed in Chihuahua a robust-looking fellow, who, to all appearance, had partially lost the use of his lower extremities, sliding about the streets from door to door upon a sort of cushion, asking alms. One fine day, a furious bull, pursued by some *vaqueros*, came plunging down in the direction where he sat, moaning and grieving most piteously; when, forgetting his physical disabilities, he sprang to his feet with [221] the agility of a dancing master, and incontinently betook himself to his heels.

The Northern Mexicans have often been branded with cowardice: a stigma which may well be allowed to rest upon

¹⁴⁸ A claco (better tlaco) was a coin representing the eighth part of a Mexican silver shilling.—ED.

the wealthier classes, and the city-bred caballeros, from whose ranks are selected the military leaders who decide the fate of battles. But the rancheros, or as they might be still more appropriately styled — the yeomanry of the country, inured as they are from their peculiar mode of life to every kind of fatigue and danger, possess a much higher calibre of moral courage. Their want of firmness in the field, is partially the result of their want of confidence in their commanders; while the inefficacy and worthlessness of their weapons are alone sufficient to inspire even a valiant heart with dismal forebodings. It is true that most of the regular troops are provided with English muskets, which, by the way, they are generally too ignorant to keep in order; but a great portion of the militia are obliged to use the clumsy old-fashioned *escopeta*, or firelock of the sixteenth century; while others have nothing but the bow and arrow, and sometimes the lance, which is in fact a weapon very much in use throughout the country. I have seen persons of the lower class do things, however, which would really seem to indicate a superlative degree of courage. Some of them will often perform journeys alone through wildernesses teeming with murderous savages; but as they not unfrequently [222] embark upon these perilous jaunts unarmed, it is evident they depend greatly upon good luck and swiftness of limbs, and still more upon the protection of their favorite saint, *la Virgen de Guadalupe*.

The Mexicans, like the French, are remarkable for their politeness and suavity of manners. You cannot visit a friend but he assures you that, "*Está V. en su casa, y puede mandar,*" etc. (You are in your own house, and can command, etc.), or, "*Estoy enteramente á su disposicion*" (I am wholly at your disposal), without, however, meaning more than an expression of ordinary courtesy. Nor can you speak in commendation of any article, let its value be what it may,

but the polite owner immediately replies, "*Tómelo, V. Señor; es suyo*" (Take it, sir; it is yours), without the slightest intention or expectation that you should take him at his word. — Mr. Poinsett observes,¹⁴⁹ "Remember, when you take leave of a Spanish grandee, to bow as you leave the room, at the head of the stairs, where the host accompanies you; and after descending the first flight, turn round and you will see him expecting a third salutation, which he returns with great courtesy, and remains until you are out of sight; so that as you wind down the stairs, if you catch a glimpse of him, kiss your hand, and he will think you a most accomplished cavalier." Graphic as this short sketch is, it hardly describes the full measure of Mexican politeness; for in that country, when the visitor reaches the [223] street, another tip of the hat, and another inclination of the head, will be expected by the attentive host, who gently waves, with his hand, a final '*á dios*' from a window.

In epistolary correspondence, the ratio of respect is generally indicated by the width of the left margin. If the letter is addressed to an equal, about one-fourth of the page is occupied for that purpose; but when extraordinary respect is intended to be shown to a superior, nearly one-half of the page is left a blank. There are other marks of civility and respect peculiar to the country, which among us would be accounted absolute servility.

In their salutations, the ancient custom of close embrace,

¹⁴⁹ Joel R. Poinsett, a South Carolina statesman (1779-1851), had been sent by the United States government to study conditions in the revolting Spanish colonies in South America, where he participated in the Chilean revolution. Upon his return he was for two terms (1821-25) in congress, where he advocated the cause of the new South American republics. During that period (1822) he was sent by President Monroe on a special mission to Mexico, after which he published *Notes on Mexico made in 1822* (Philadelphia, 1824) to which Gregg undoubtedly refers. Poinsett was minister to Mexico 1825-29; upon his return he became leader of the Union party in his native state, in opposition to nullification. He was secretary of war during Van Buren's administration, and at its close retired from public life, save that he opposed the Mexican War.— Ed.

not only between individuals of the same sex, but between those of different sexes, is almost universal. It is quite a luxury to meet a pretty señorita after some absence. The parties approach, shake hands in a cordial manner, and without loosening the grasp, the left arm of each is brought about the other's waist; and while a gentle embrace brings their persons closer to each other, the contact of the cheeks becomes inevitable — without admitting a kiss, however, which would be held as decidedly indelicate. In short, it is worth while absenting oneself, for the gratification of a first meeting with the prettier of one's female friends upon the return.

Among the least unpleasant customs of this country is that of the *siesta* or afternoon nap; a species of indulgence in which all classes [224] are prone to share. The stores, private and public offices, are, by common consent, generally closed at one o'clock (that being the usual dinner hour), and not reopened till three. During that interval nearly every kind of business and labor is suspended. The streets are comparatively deserted; the rich and the poor retire to their respective couches, and remain wrapped in slumber, or 'thinking o' nothing,' till the loud peal of the three o'clock bell warns them to resume their occupations.





RESERVE B

Return to desk from which borrowed
This book is due on the LAST DAY
and HOUR stamped below.

REC'D SEP 2 10 30 PM '80

REC. CHL MAY 11 1980

REC. CIR. JAN 10 1980

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

MAR 17 1989

UNIV. OF CALIF., BERK.

RET'D SEP 21 1981

APR 24 1985

RECEIVED

JUN 3 1985

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
CIRCULATION DEPT., Berkeley

