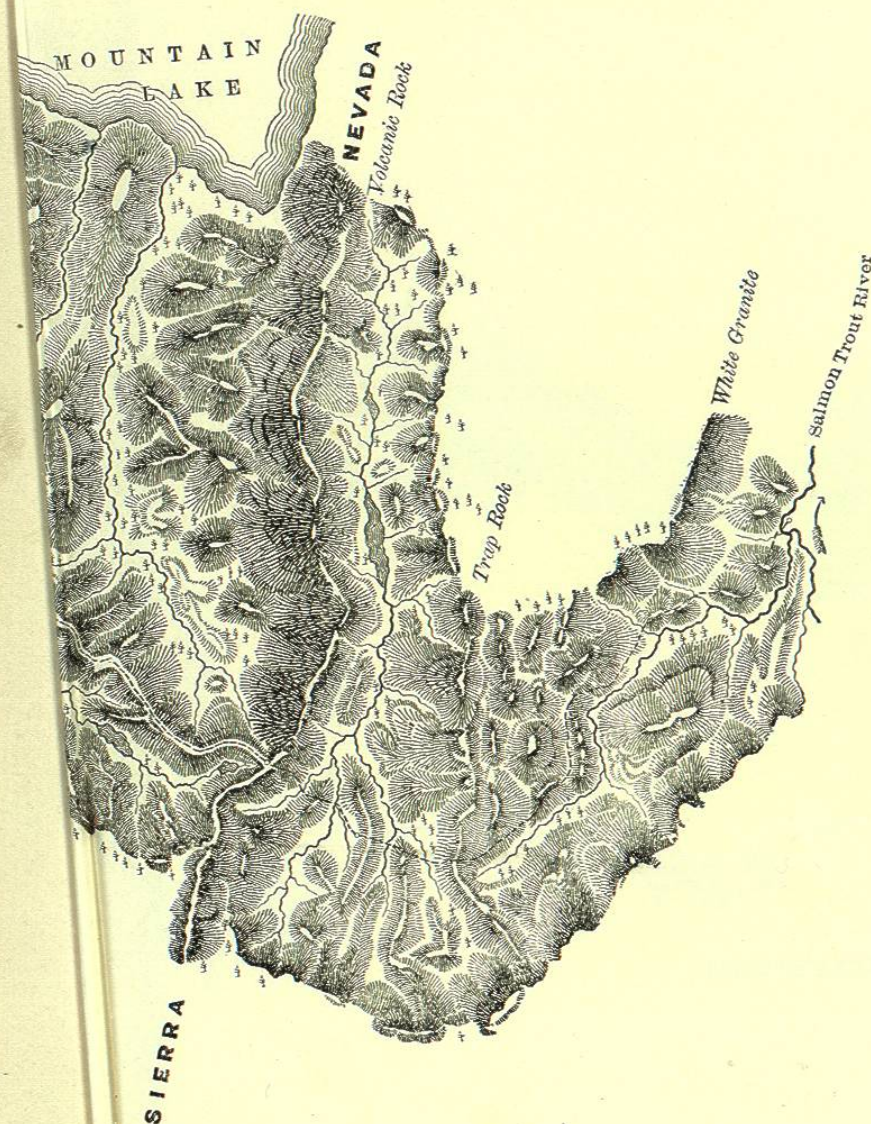


been trained as a *vaquero* and who would be serviceable in managing our cavalcade, great part of which were nearly as wild as buffalo; and who was besides very anxious to see the mountains.



CHAPTER X.

Homeward Bound—Found San Joaquin—Pass Creek—Sierra Nevada—The Great Plains—Spanish Indian leaves Us—The Spanish Trail Struck—A Sad Story—Carson and Godey's Indian Fight—Find Corpses of two White Men—Surrounded by Savages—Tabeau Killed.

March 25th.—We travelled for twenty-eight miles over the same delightful country as yesterday, and halted in a beautiful bottom at the ford of the *Rio de los Mokelumnes*, receiving its name from another Indian tribe living on the river. The bottoms on the stream are broad, rich, and extremely fertile; and the uplands are shaded with oak groves. A showy *lupinus* of extraordinary beauty, growing four to five feet in height, and covered with spikes in bloom, adorned the banks of the river and filled the air with a light and grateful perfume.

On the 26th we halted at the *Arroyo de las Calaveras* (Skull Creek), a tributary to the San Joaquin—the previous two streams entering the bay between the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers. This place is beautiful, with open groves of oak, and a grassy sward beneath, with many plants in bloom; some varieties of which seem to love the shade of the trees, and grow there in close, small fields.

Near the river, and replacing the grass, are great quantities of *amole* (soap plant), the leaves of which are used in California for making, among other things, mats for saddle-cloths. A vine with a small white flower (*melothria*?), called here *la yerba buena*, and which, from its abundance, gives name to an island and town in the bay, was to-day very frequent on our road—sometimes running on the ground or climbing the trees.

March 27th.—To-day we travelled steadily and rapidly up the valley; for, with our wild animals, any other gait was impossible, and making about five miles an hour. During the earlier part of the day our ride had been over a very level prairie, or rather a succession of long stretches of prairie, separated by lines and groves of oak-timber, growing along dry gullies, which are filled with water in seasons of rain; and, perhaps, also by the melting snows. Over much of this extent the vegetation was sparse; the surface showing plainly the action of water, which, in the season of flood, the Joaquin spreads over the valley.