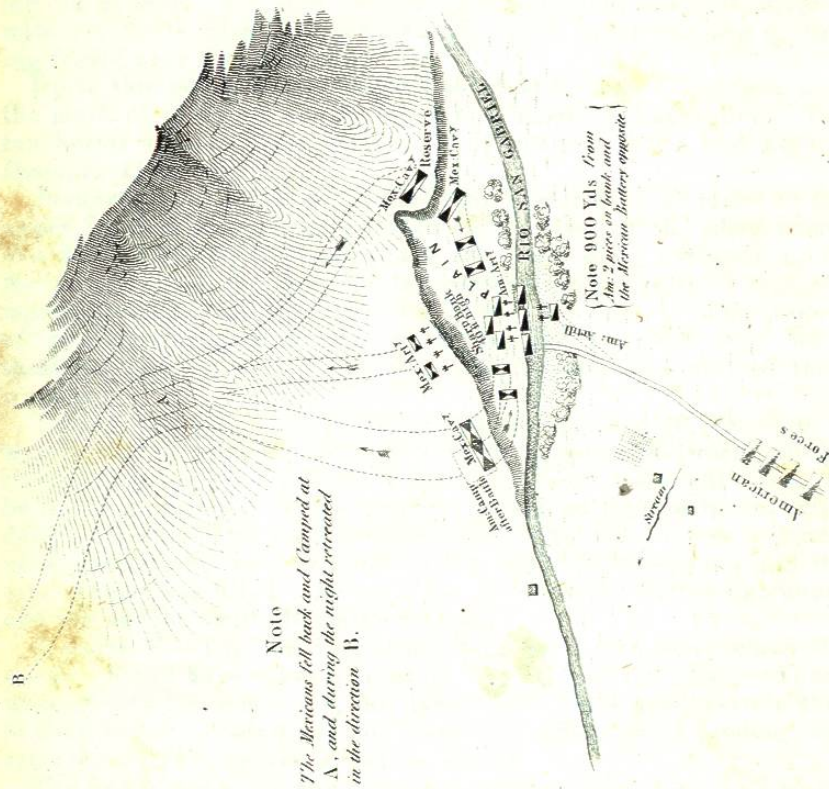


SKETCH of the PASSAGE
OF THE
RIO SAN GABRIEL
UPPER CALIFORNIA
by the
Americans, discomfiting
the opposing Mexican Forces
JANUARY 8TH 1847.



of uncultivated land within the level of irrigation. We now began to think there would be more formidable and united resistance by the enemy, but he failed to show himself; and such was the unanimity of the men, women and children, in support of the war, that not a particle of information could be obtained in reference to his force or position.

After travelling ten miles we came to the Coyotes, a rancharia owned by a rich widow lady, who had just married a handsome young fellow, who might well pass for her son. These people we found at home, and we learned from them that the enemy intended to give us battle the next day. Indeed, as we approached the rancharia, several horsemen drew off, reconnoitring us so closely as to make it doubtful if they were not some of our own vaqueros.

January 8.—We passed over a country destitute of wood and water, undulating and gently dipping towards the ocean, which was in view. About two o'clock we came in sight of the San Gabriel river. Small squads of horsemen began to show themselves on either flank, and it became quite apparent the enemy intended to dispute the passage of the river.

Our progress was necessarily very slow, our oxen being poor, and our wagons (the ox-carts of the country) with wheels only about two feet in diameter.

The enemy did not yet discover his order of battle, and we moved to the river in our habitual order of march, when near the enemy, viz: the 2d division in front, and the 1st and third on the right and left flanks respectively; the guard and a company of volunteer carbiniers in the rear; our cattle and the wagon train in the centre, making for them, what the sailors wittily termed, a Yankee corral. The artillery were distributed on the four angles of the rectangle.

This order of march was adopted from the character of the enemy's force, all of which was mounted; and in a measure from our own being men unaccustomed to field evolutions, it was necessary to keep them habitually in the order to resist cavalry attacks when in view of the enemy. We had no cavalry, and the object of the enemy was to deprive us of our cattle by sudden charges.

The river was about 100 yards wide, knee-deep, and flowing over quick-sand. Either side was fringed with a thick undergrowth. The approach on our side was level; that on the enemy's was favorable to him. A bank, fifty feet high, ranged parallel with the river, at point blank cannon distance, upon which he posted his artillery.

As we neared the thicket, we received the scattering fire of the enemy's sharp shooters. At the same moment, we saw him place four pieces of artillery on the hill, so as to command the passage. A squadron of 250 cavalry just showed their heads above the hill, to the right of the battery, and the same number were seen to occupy a position on the left.

The 2d battalion was ordered to deploy as skirmishers, and cross the river. As the line was about the middle of the river, the enemy opened his battery, and made the water fly with grape and round shot. Our artillery was now ordered to cross—it was unlimbered, pulled over by the men, and placed in counter battery on the ene-

my's side of the river. Our people, very brisk in firing, made the fire of the enemy wild and uncertain. Under this cover, the wagons and cattle were forced with great labor across the river, the bottom of which was quick sand.

Whilst this was going on, our rear was attacked by a very bold charge, and repulsed.

On the right bank of the river there was a natural banquette, breast high. Under this the line was deployed. To this accident of the ground is to be attributed the little loss we sustained from the enemy's artillery, which showered grape and round shot over our heads. In an hour and twenty minutes our baggage train had all crossed, the artillery of the enemy was silenced, and a charge made on the hill.

Half way between the hill and the river, the enemy made a furious charge on our left flank. At the same moment, our right was threatened. The 1st and 2d battalions were thrown into squares, and after firing one or two rounds, drove off the enemy. The right wing was ordered to form a square, but seeing the enemy hesitate, the order was countermanded; the 1st battalion, which formed the right, was directed to rush for the hill, supposing that would be the contested point, but great was our surprise to find it abandoned.

The enemy pitched his camp on the hills in view, but when morning came, he was gone. We had no means of pursuit, and scarcely the power of locomotion, such was the wretched condition of our wagon train. The latter it was still deemed necessary to drag along for the purpose of feeding the garrison, intended to be left in the Ciudad de los Angeles; the report being that the enemy intended, if we reached that town, to burn and destroy every article of food. Distance 9.3 miles.

January 9.—The grass was very short and young, and our cattle were not much recruited by the night's rest; we commenced our march leisurely, at 9 o'clock, over the "Mesa," a wide plain between the Rio San Gabriel and the Rio San Fernando.

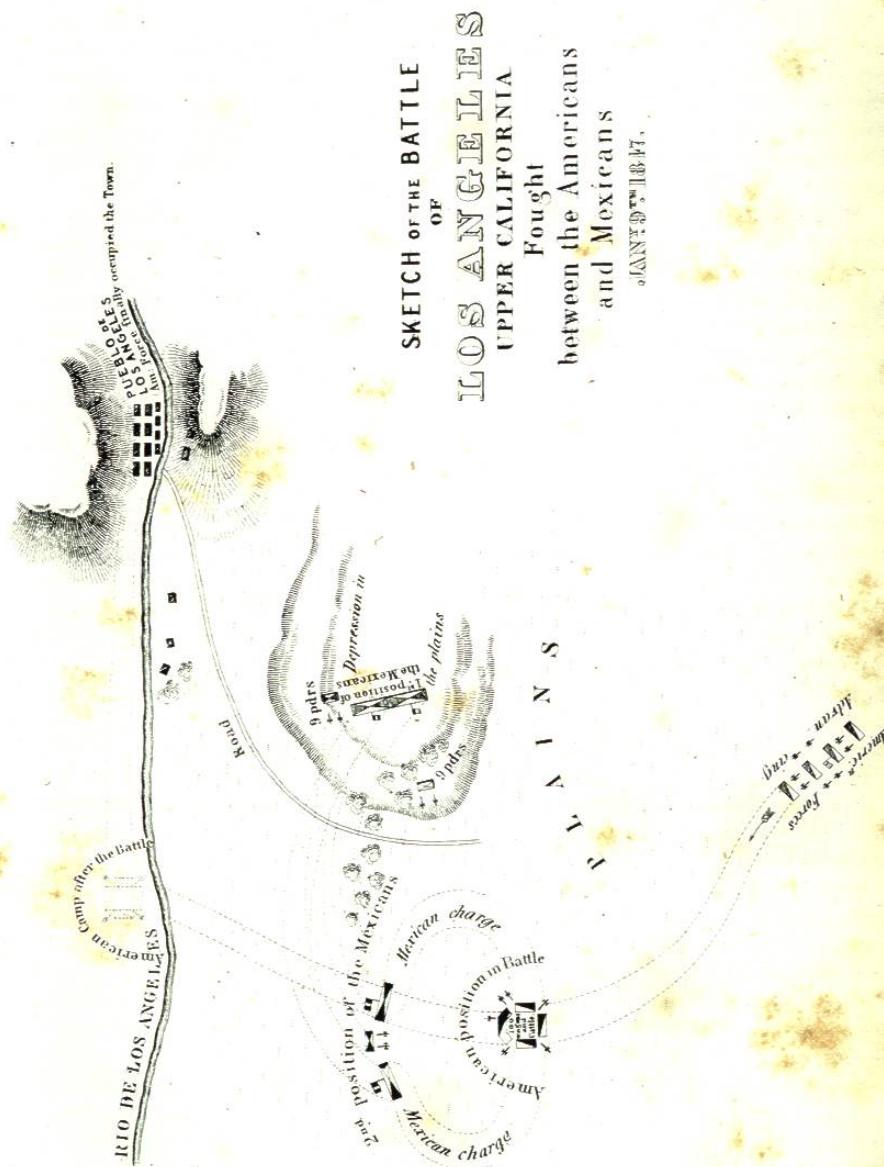
Scattering horsemen, and small reconnoitring parties, hung on our flanks. After marching five or six miles, we saw the enemy's line on our right, above the crest made by a deep indentation in the plain.

Here Flores addressed his men, and called on them to make one more charge; expressed his confidence in their ability to break our line; said that "yesterday he had been deceived in supposing that he was fighting soldiers."

We inclined a little to the left to avoid giving Flores the advantage of the ground to post his artillery; in other respects we continued our march on the Pueblo as if he were not in view.

When we were abreast of him, he opened his artillery at a long distance, and we continued our march without halting, except for a moment, to put a wounded man in the cart, and once to exchange a wounded mule, hitched to one of the guns.

As we advanced, Flores deployed his force, making a horse shoe in our front, and opened his nine-pounders on our right flank, and two smaller pieces on our front. The shot from the nine-pounders



on our flank was so annoying that we halted to silence them. In about fifteen minutes this was done, and the order "forward" again given, when the enemy came down on our left flank in a scattering sort of charge, and notwithstanding the efforts of our officers to make their men hold their fire, they, as is usually the case under similar circumstances, delivered it whilst the Californians were yet about a hundred yards distant. This fire knocked many out of their saddles, and checked them. A round of grape was then fired upon them, and they scattered. A charge was made simultaneously with this on our rear, with about the same success. We all considered this as the beginning of the fight, but it was the end of it. The Californians, the most expert horsemen in the world, stripped the dead horses on the field, without dismounting, and carried off most of their saddles, bridles, and all their dead and wounded on horseback to the hills to the right.

It was now about three o'clock, and the town, known to contain great quantities of wine and aguardiente, was four miles distant. From previous experience of the difficulty of controlling men when entering towns, it was determined to cross the river San Fernando, halt there for the night, and enter the town in the morning with the whole day before us. The distance to-day, 6.2 miles.

After we had pitched our camp, the enemy came down from the hills, and 400 horsemen, with the four pieces of artillery, drew off towards the town, in order and regularity, whilst about sixty made a movement down the river, on our rear and left flank. This led us to suppose they were not yet whipped, as we thought, and that we should have a night attack.

January 10.—Just as we had raised our camp, a flag of truce, borne by Mr. Selis a Castilian, Mr. Workman an Englishman, and Alvarado the owner of the rancheria at the Alisos, was brought into camp. They proposed, on behalf of the Californians, to surrender their dear City of the Angels, provided we would respect property and persons. This was agreed to; but not altogether trusting to the honesty of General Flores, who had once broken his parole, we moved into the town in the same order we should have done if expecting an attack.

It was a wise precaution, for the streets were full of desperate and drunken fellows, who brandished their arms and saluted us with every term of reproach. The crest, overlooking the town, in rifle range, was covered with horsemen, engaged in the same hospitable manner. One of them had on a dragoon's coat, stolen from the dead body of one of our soldiers after we had buried him at San Pasqual.

Our men marched steadily on, until crossing the ravine leading into the public square, when a fight took place amongst the Californians on the hill; one became disarmed, and to avoid death rolled down the hill towards us, his adversary pursuing and lancing him in the most cold-blooded manner. The man tumbling down the hill was supposed to be one of our vaqueros, and the cry of "rescue him" was raised. The crew of the Cyane, nearest the scene, at once, and without any orders, halted and gave the man that was

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lancing him a volley, strange to say he did not fall. Almost at the same instant, but a little before it, the Californians from the hill did fire on the vaqueros. The rifles were then ordered to clear the hill, which a single fire effected, killing two of the enemy. We were now in possession of the town; great silence and mystery was observed by the Californians in regard to Flores; but we were given to understand that he had gone to fight the force from the north, drive them back, and then starve us out of the town. Towards the close of the day we learned very certainly that Flores, with 150 men, chiefly Sonorians, and desperadoes of the country, had fled to Sonora, taking with him four or five hundred of the best horses and mules in the country, the property of his own friends. The silence of the Californians was now changed into deep and bitter curses upon Flores.

Some slight disorder took place among our men at night, from the facility of getting wine, but the vigilance of the officers soon suppressed it.

January 11.—It rained in torrents all day. I was ordered to select a site, and place a fort, capable of containing a hundred men; with this in view, a rapid reconnoissance of the town was made, and the plan of a fort sketched, so placed as to enable a small garrison to command the town and the principal avenues to it. The plan was approved. Many men came in during the day and surrendered themselves.

January 12.—I laid off the work, and, before night, broke the first ground. The population of the town, and its dependencies, is about 3,000; that of the town itself, about 1,500. It is the centre of wealth and population of the Mexico Californian people, and has heretofore been the seat of government. Close under the base of the mountains, commanding the passes to Sonora, cut off from the north by the pass at San Barbara, it is the centre of the military power of the Californians. Here all the revolutions have had their origin, and it is the point upon which any Mexican force from Sonora would be directed. It was therefore desirable to establish a fort, which, in case of trouble, should enable a small garrison to hold out till aid might come from San Diego, San Francisco, or Monterey, places which are destined to become centres of American settlements.*

January 13.—It rained steadily all day, and nothing was done on the work; at night I worked on the details of the fort.

Thursday 14.—We drank to-day the wine of the country, manufactured by Don Luis Vigne, a Frenchman. It was truly delicious, resembling more the best description of Hock than any other wine.

Many bottles were drunk, leaving no headache or acidity on the stomach. We obtained, from the same gentleman, a profusion of grapes and luscious pears, the latter resembling in color and taste the Bergamot pear, but different in shape, being longer and larger.

* Subsequently to my leaving the Ciudad de los Angeles, the entire plan of the fort was changed, and I am not the projector of the work finally adopted for the defence of that town.

January 15.—The details to work on the fort were by companies. I sent to Captain Tilghman, who commanded on the hill, to detach one of the companies under his command to commence the work. He furnished, on the 16th, a company of artillery (seamen from the Congress,) for the day's work, which they performed bravely, and gave me great hopes of success.

January 18, 19, and 20.—I received special orders which separated me from the command, and the party of topographical engineers that had been so long under my orders.

The battles of the 6th December, and the 8th and 9th January, had forever broken the Mexican authority in California, and they were daily coming in, in large parties, to sue for peace, and every move indicated a sincere desire on the part of the more respectable portion of the Californians to yield without further struggle to the United States authorities; yet small parties of the more desperate and revengeful hung about the mountains and roads; refusing or hesitating to yield obedience to their leaders, who now, with great unanimity, determined to lay down their arms. General Flores, with a small force, was known to have taken the road to Sonora, and it was believed he was on his way to that province, never to return to California.

Leaving General Kearny at San Juan de Capristano, on his return to San Diego, I took three men and pushed on for the latter place. Halting late in the evening at the deserted Indian rancharia of Santa Margarita, we broke open one of the Indian huts, and got some corn and pumpkins for our animals. When night came on, the number of insects about the hut, and the intolerable noise made by the wolves, kept us from sleep. The moon shone brightly, and about ten at night we saddled up to pursue our journey.

In this determination we were confirmed by the unexplained movement of several small parties of mounted Californians that reconnoitred our camp; a circumstance which afforded additional proof that some of the Californians were yet in arms, and led us very reasonably to the conclusion that our only safety was in changing our camp. We reached the mission of San Luis Rey, and found not a human being stirring. The immense pile of building, illuminated by the pale cold rays of the moon, stood out in bold relief on the dim horizon; a monument of the zeal of the indefatigable priests, by whom it was built. Now untenanted and deserted, it offered no resting place for the weary and hungry, and we rode on, determined to halt at the first place where grass should be in abundance.

The road here divides into two branches; one leads to the west, by the rancharia of San Barnardo, the other directly to San Diego, over the high lands, running nearly parallel to the sea coast. The first is that by which we had marched on the Pueblo de los Angeles, fearing that the hills on the sea coast road would embarrass the movement of our artillery and ox carts.

Without a guide, we had great difficulty in striking at night the trail leading over the mountains; but consulting the stars for our course, and relying upon the sagacity of my three men, who had

passed most of their days in traversing untrodden regions, we jogged along, shivering with the cold air of the elevated hills.

About twelve, we came to a large patch of luxuriant grass, wet with dew. Upon this we loosened our animals and attempted to get a little sleep, but, in the absence of blankets or fire, the cold deprived us of repose, and the dawn of day found us again in our saddles.

The only habitation on the road from San Luis Rey to San Diego is a hut about half way, where there is a good spring. Its occupants had just returned from the wars, quite as hungry as we were. They had preceded us not more than twenty minutes, yet they had a fat bullock killed, and choice bits of his flesh roasting before the fire. We outnumbered the party, and consequently received their hospitality, which was extended to us with a good deal of bonhomie.

They conversed freely of the battles fought but a few days before, acknowledged their participation in them, and expressed themselves satisfied of the uselessness of farther resistance without aid from Mexico.

The fresh meat of a bullock is all that is required by the Californian for breakfast, dinner, and supper.

Bread, tea, and coffee are rarely, if ever, used, and even when within their reach, looked upon with indifference.

We very soon fell into their habits, and it is probable the troops in California, at this time, would not consider it an excessive hardship to make a campaign with no other stores in the commissariat than a plentiful supply of fresh beef. The white teeth of the Californians, and the blood tingling in the cheeks of their olive colored faces would seem to prove this beef to be a very healthy diet.

The advantages in the movement of troops that are contented with this kind of subsistence is very great, enabling them to move without wagons, and with no other care for the morrow than herding the animals intended for food.

Our host was so well pleased with the manner in which we acquitted ourselves at his rude repast, that forgetting old animosities, he saddled up his jaded horse, and piloted us for five or six miles, until we reached the broad trail, leading to the Solidad.

About midday we reached San Diego, and next morning taking leave of my men and the animals that had done us such good service, I embarked on board the prize brig *Malek Adhel*, commanded by Lieutenant Schenck, of the navy, and prepared to take my leave of Upper or Alta California. Before doing so, however, I may venture upon a few general remarks, based upon personal observations, upon the topography, climate, and products of that portion of the country not covered by my survey, or that of others. These observations were made after I had become separated from my assistants and instruments, my mind being engrossed with other subjects. The information contained in them is, therefore, less precise than that contained in other portions of my journal.

The region, extending from the head of the Gulf of California to the parallel of the Pueblo, or Ciudad de los Angeles, is the only portion not heretofore covered by my own notes and journal, or by

the notes and journals of other scientific expeditions fitted out by the United States.

The journals and published accounts of these several expeditions combined, will give definite ideas of all those portions of California susceptible of cultivation or settlement. From this remark is to be excepted the vast basin watered by the Colorado, and the country lying between that river and the range of Cordilleras, represented as running east of the Tulare lakes, and south of the parallel of 36°, and the country between the Colorado and Gila rivers.

Of these regions nothing is known except from the reports of trappers, and the speculations of geologists. As far as these accounts go, all concur in representing it as a waste of sand and rock, unadorned with vegetation, poorly watered, and unfit, it is believed, for any of the useful purposes of life. A glance at the map will show what an immense area is embraced in these boundaries; and, notwithstanding the oral accounts in regard to it, it is difficult to bring the mind to the belief in the existence of such a sea of waste and desert; when every other grand division of the earth presents some prominent feature in the economy of nature, administering to the wants of man. Possibly this unexplored region may be filled with valuable minerals.

I have alluded, elsewhere, to the population of this country, the savage character of which is another obstacle to its exploration, and has tended to veil in mystery its true character and resources.

Alta California, between the 31st and 34th parallels of latitude, presents to the eastern man, accustomed to navigable rivers and broad estuaries of the ocean, topographical features of a very unusual character.

Two chains of mountains traverse the country in a direction nearly parallel to the sea coast, slightly converging towards each other, and finally uniting near the parallel of 32°. Here they form the promontory of Lower California, extending its entire length, and terminating abruptly in the ocean, at Cape San Lucas.

The first chain (that nearest the coast) may be considered a steppe of the second or interior range of mountains. It impinges on the coast at three different points, Santa Barbara, San Juan de Capistrano, and between San Luis Rey and San Diego—at the first two places with so much boldness as to make it necessary to conduct the road along the margin of the sea, between the lines of high and low water mark, so that both Santa Barbara and San Juan present points worthy of consideration to the military commandant charged with the defence of that country.

Between the first and second ranges of mountains there is a valley, traversed by a good road, leading directly from the great desert to the Pueblo de los Angeles, and a defending force would meet its adversary to the greatest advantage at Cariso Creek, the termination of the "jornada" across the desert. The description and locality of Cariso Creek has already been given.

The second or principal range of mountains lies at no great distance from the first, and the valley between offers some arable land. The distance between the first range and the sea coast varies from

1 to 20 or 30 miles. The surface covered with vegetation, though small, is difficult to estimate; and perhaps it is unimportant that an estimate should be made, since the productiveness of these regions depends on other considerations than smoothness of surface, and character of soil. The rains cannot be relied upon, and the tiller of the earth depends upon irrigation from the mountain streams for his crops. The extent of ground, capable of tillage, is thus reduced to very narrow limits, easy of computation. A knowledge of the water courses, their fall, volume and extent, and the quantity of lands on their margin, within the level of these waters, are the data upon which the computation must be based.

Taking this as a guide, an inspection of the accompanying map will give a general idea of the extent of arable ground, sufficiently correct for all practical purposes; but, in candor it should be said, that many streams laid down in it disappear in the sand, while the rocky cliffs, forming the banks of others, render irrigation impracticable. The scale upon which the map is projected is too small to represent these accidents of the ground.

Where irrigation can be had in this country, the produce of the soil is abundant beyond description. All the grains and fruits of the temperate zones, and many of those of the tropical, flourish luxuriantly.

Descending from the heights of San Barnardo to the Pacific, one meets every degree of temperature. Near the coast, the winds prevailing from the southwest in winter, and from the northwest in summer, produce a great uniformity of temperature, and the climate is perhaps unsurpassed in salubrity. With the exception of a very few cases of ague and fever of a mild type, sickness is unknown.

The season of the year at which we visited the country was unfavorable to obtaining a knowledge of its botany. The vegetation, mostly deciduous, had gone to decay, and no flowers nor seeds were collected. The country generally, is entirely destitute of trees. Along the principal range of mountains are a few live oaks, sycamore, and pine; now and then, but very rarely, the sycamore and cotton wood occur in the champaign country, immediately on the margins of the streams.

Wild oats every where cover the surface of the hills, and these, with the wild mustard and carrots, furnish good pasturage to the immense herds of cattle, which form the staple of California.

Of the many fruits capable of being produced with success, by culture and irrigation, the grape is perhaps that which is brought nearest to perfection.

Men experienced in growing it, and Europeans, pronounce the soil and climate of this portion of California, unequalled for the quality of the grape and the wine expressed from it.

We sailed from San Diego on the 25th of January, and coasted along the rocky and barren shores of Lower California. The information in reference to this country, which it was in my power to obtain, is not so precise as that which might be derived from an actual survey, and I have therefore embodied it in the appendix.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, yours,

W. H. EMORY.

APPENDIX No. 1.

NEW YORK, October 1, 1847.

DEAR SIR: I return you my thanks for the very interesting information contained in your letter of the 20th of September.*

It unfortunately happens that I cannot wait for the arrival of your papers, or for the publication of the map of the War Department. My essay makes part of the second volume of the transactions of the New York Ethnological Society. The work is now in the press, completed with the exception of my essay; and the printer presses me for it. The map, which will accompany it, is principally intended to show the original abodes of the Indian tribes. It will be presented as a sketch, without pretensions to accurate correctness. But there is a consideration, which makes me anxious to obtain every possible information respecting the Rio Gila, and especially its upper waters.

You may not be aware that a work has lately been recovered and published, which contains a full and authentic account of an expedition in the year 1540-1542, by order of the viceroy Mindoça, and under the conduct of Vasquez Coronado. It consisted of 350 Spaniards and 800 Indians. Setting off from Culiacan, they reached the sources of the Rio Gila, passed across the mountains to the Rio del Norte, wintered twice in the province now called New Mexico, explored it through its whole length, from north to south, and afterwards, taking a northeast course, crossed the mountains, reached the buffalo plains, through which they wandered a considerable distance eastwardly, and as far north as the 40th degree of latitude. Finding no gold, they returned to Mexico. The Spaniards did not re-enter the country till the year 1581; and the conquest of New Mexico was not completed till about the year 1595.

The veracity of the narrator, Castenador, who was a volunteer in the expedition, and who wrote the account twenty years after, is fully established by a variety of circumstances, too multiplied to be inserted here. It is sufficient to say, that the Indians of the Rio Gila, and of the upper valley of the Rio del Norte, were an agricultural people, cultivating maize, beans, pumpkins, and cotton; depending exclusively on agriculture for their subsistence, dwelling in villages built of mud, (torchis,) mixed with certain balls of hardened matter, and well cemented together. The houses were generally four stories high, with no opening on the first floor, accessible only by moveable ladders, with top terraces, and an under ground apartment occupied exclusively by the men, and used as *estufas*;

* This letter gives a general outline of the route, and twenty words of the Cocomaricopa language, and a few of the Pimos.