

On the map which I made, and which is in your bureau, is marked a route considerably to the north of Guadalupe pass, which, some of my guides believed, would avoid that broken descent, and be found to be nearly level throughout to San Pedro, at the point where I turned off from that beautiful little river. The most sensible and experienced of these men, Laroux, who lives in Taos, New Mexico, and who had trapped on the Gila and passed in a different direction over that country, was decidedly of this opinion, but his knowledge, on the other hand, was sufficient to forbid to explore it, in my situation, on account of scarcity of water. The Rio Grande bottoms for a hundred miles above, and at the point where I left, are well timbered; there is no timber on the table land, save upon the small mountains which are everywhere to be seen; this is cedar and pine, but of small growth. Rock is everywhere to be had, secondary rocks of almost every kind; but by this wonderfully level route, the continent may be passed with scarcely a view of granite. As far as Tucson the gramma grass is abundant; it will fatten cattle while working, and in winter. The route from Tucson passes through a country abounding in exceedingly rich gold mines.

I am, very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

P. ST. GEO. COOKE,

Major 2d Dragoons.

To Col. J. J. ABERT,

Topographical Engineers.

REPORT OF LIEUT. J. W. ABERT,

OF HIS

EXAMINATION OF NEW MEXICO,

IN THE YEARS 1846-47.

The first of these is the fact that the
 country is a vast plain, and that the
 population is very sparse. The
 second is the fact that the
 country is very fertile, and that
 the soil is very rich. The
 third is the fact that the
 country is very healthy, and that
 the climate is very pleasant.

REPORT OF LIEUT. J. W. ABERT

OF THE
 Topographical Engineers

EXAMINATION OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE YEARS 1846-47



SANTA FÉ.

REPORT.

To Colonel J. J. ABERT,

Chief of the corps of topographical engineers:

We left Fort Leavenworth on the 27th June, 1846, under the command of General Kearny; as the events of the march of the army were recorded by Major Emory, I shall not touch upon them. On the 22d of July I was taken ill, to such a degree that it was necessary to carry me in a wagon from that time until the 30th of July, on which day we arrived at Bent's fort. At this time my disease had obtained such an influence over my senses, that days and nights were passed in delirium, and a mental struggle to ascertain whether the impressions my mind received were true or false. Even my sight was affected, and when I gazed on Bent's fort, the buildings seemed completely metamorphosed; new towers had been erected, the walls heightened, and, as I then thought, everything put in readiness to resist an attack of the New Mexicans. The army under General Kearny marched on to Santa Fé, while I was left, harrassed with the thoughts of having come thus far, and having been stopped just as I was entering upon a field full of interest to the soldier, the archeologist, the historian, and the naturalist.

On the 26th of August, I had recovered sufficiently to resume my diary; this, with a copy of Horace, a Greek testament, and my sketch book, served to make the hours of confinement pass pleasantly.

It was on the 26th of August that we first heard of the capitulation of Santa Fé; General Kearny had entered the city without meeting any opposition, except pompous threats from his excellency Don Manuel Armijo. Mexican officers met our army at "El Rio Moro," others at "Las Vegas," but our bold soldiers heeded not the messages or letters which they brought, and our general is said to have replied in these words: "Tell your commander that I shall meet him in Santa Fé on the 18th day of August; if he wishes to be friendly, I am ready to meet him as his friend; if he wishes otherwise, I am ready to meet him as his foe."

The cool determination of our brave army seemed to have completely overawed the enemy; he first yielded his position at the "cañon," near "Vegas," and fell back to a more formidable pass, which lies fifteen miles east of Santa Fé. At this place the road

leads alongside of a torrent shut in closely by rugged rocks that beetle overhead; such a pass that a few bold men could there hold an army at defiance.

Armijo, knowing the advantages of this place, threw up breast-works on the crest of cliffs on both sides of the cañon, filled them with armed men, who also collected piles of huge fragments of rock to hurl down upon the heads of us heretics. He also stationed some pieces of artillery, so as to have a sweeping fire along the road, enclosing them by an "abattis" constructed of the trunks of the cedar, and often whole trees, with the ends of the limbs sharpened and pointed outward, offering an impenetrable barrier to a cavalry charge. As our army approached Armijo retreated, "huyeron cobardmente los que juraron morir ó vencer," and General Kearny entered Santa Fé on the 18th day of August.

This joyful news made me the more anxious to hurry on to Santa Fé; but my recovery was extremely slow, as my sickness had been so prolonged. Seeing that I took an interest in the natural history of the country, the gentlemen of the fort would daily visit my room, bringing rare plants and minerals; and I also succeeded in enlisting the services of several Cheyenne Indians, who were lounging about the trading post. On the 26th August, a commissary train of 42 wagons arrived. The teamsters refused to go beyond this place, as their articles of agreement did not require them to go further. During the day, Mr. Nourse, of Washington, who had remained with me ever since I had been sick, kindly procured me some ornithological specimens; among these were the killdeer plover, *charadrius vociferous*, the dove, *ectopistes carolinensis*. The men in their leisure moments amused themselves with fishing. Cat fish and hickory shad are the only kinds I have ever seen in these waters; and we found them very palatable, although they may not be compared with the white fish of Lake Superior or the rock fish of the Potomac. To-day, Captain Walker, so famous for his adventures in California, paid us a visit. He has a party encamped on the banks of the river about 8 miles north of the fort, and is there awaiting the arrival of Colonel Price's regiment, for which he has a supply of mules. As the antelope and deer were quite abundant in the vicinity of his camp, Mr. Marcellus St. Vrain went off with him, intending to spend a week in hunting, and obtain relief from the close confinement of the fort.

Thursday, August 27.—Anxious to arrange all my preparations in good time, I set about purchasing mules, and bought some very good looking ones, but they were not yet broken to the draught. I had them harnessed, and got Pilka, an old voyageur, to drive them. He was one of those hardy men who had become inured to all kinds of difficulty in the service of the American Fur Company, and, having often been placed by necessity in emergencies which called forth all the resources of his ingenuity, had acquired a facility of doing well everything that he undertook. Such men know the necessity of discipline; are ever ready in time of danger,

and never allow their courage to be damped, or their cheerfulness clouded by the difficulties with which they may be surrounded.

Although he had never driven before, yet he at once threw himself into the saddle of the wheel mule and took the reins. Twice the mules ran off with the wagon, and, notwithstanding Pilka was obliged to throw himself out of the saddle, he at length succeeded in subduing them. I had now recovered my health sufficiently to walk down a flight of steps unaided, and I rejoiced with great joy to find myself gaining strength so rapidly.

Mr. Holt presented me with a beautiful skin of a wild cat, (*Felis rufa*), such as is found in the neighborhood. He informed me that the wild cat frequently attacks the oxen, springing upon their backs or chest, and wounding them terribly with its sharp claws. The wounds thus produced are extremely poisonous. Great inflammation and swelling of the injured parts ensue, and often the oxen die, although the wounds may be but skin deep. On the other hand, the wounds made by the wolves heal rapidly, although the ox may have its hams so much torn to pieces that one would think its recovery impossible. Whenever any one of the cattle raised at this place has wandered off, and is attacked by either of the above mentioned beasts of prey, it bellows loudly for help, and the rest of the herd always rush to the rescue. In the winter season the wolves become extremely bold, and will attack any animal they may meet alone upon the prairies, with the exception of man.

On the 28th of August we had an arrival of from 40 to 50 commissary wagons. The teamsters crowded into the "patio," and from thence commenced a minute scrutiny of every object around them, greatly to our annoyance, and unfavorable to their character for politeness. To-day "Nah-co-mense," or "Old Bark," a chief of the Cheyennes, and one of my last year's friends, entered my room. He appeared delighted to meet with me again, and sorry to see me looking so emaciated. After regarding me for a short time in silence, he placed his hand upon his heart and fluttered his fingers rapidly to intimate that my pulse had been beating with the high excitement of fever. As I was glad to meet with him, I treated him to some hard bread and to some molasses and water.

During the morning Captain Walker sent me some fine venison, but what delighted me exceedingly was the promise I received from the hunter who brought it, that he would procure me skins of the three different varieties of ground squirrels that are to be had in this part of the country; also that of the prairie dog; for although the last mentioned animal is well known, yet the skins are rarely to be met with in cabinets of Zoology. When shot with the rifle, the skin is too badly injured to be preserved.

There were some men encamped near the fort who procured 5 or 6 prairie dogs by pouring water into their burrows until the animals were driven out. They soon became perfectly tame, and were carried into the settlement by their owners a few days before I heard of the circumstance.

August 29.—Doctor Hempstead, one of the residents here, made me a present of a number of minerals which he had collected.

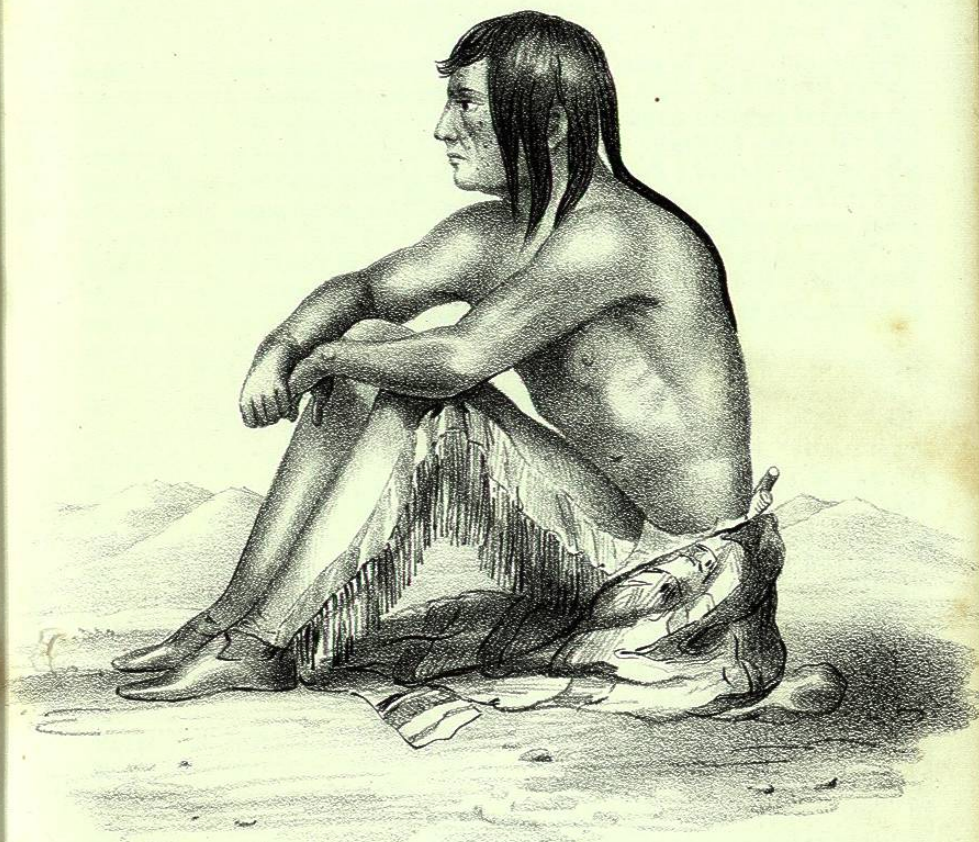
He also brought me some specimens of the *Myrtinia Proboscidea*, and *cleome integrifolia*. The pods of the first mentioned plant are often used for pickles, and the latter plant is one of the most beautiful that meets the eye of the prairie traveller, covered as it is with rich clusters of pink flowers.

To day a number of Cheyennes visited the fort, amongst them were Old Bark, his son "Ah-mah-nah-co," and Yellow Wolf, "O-cum-who-wast." The latter is a man of considerable influence, of enlarged views, and gifted with more foresight than any other man in his tribe. He frequently talks of the diminishing numbers of his people, and the decrease of the once abundant buffalo. He says that in a few years they will become extinct; and unless the Indians wish to pass away also, they will have to adopt the habits of the white people, using such measures to produce subsistence as will render them independent of the precarious reliance afforded by the game.

He has proposed to the interpreter at Bent's fort, to give him a number of mules, in the proportion of one from every man in the tribe, if he would build them a structure similar to Bent's fort, and instruct them to cultivate the ground, and to raise cattle. He says that for some time his people would not be content to relinquish the delights of the chase, and then the old men and squaws might remain at home cultivating the grounds, and be safely secured in their fort from the depredations of hostile tribes.

The Cheyennes are among the few tribes for whom the United States has not done anything, and they are among the most deserving of assistance. Of late they appear to be getting discontented with such treatment; they say, "we have not robbed or stolen from you, and you take no notice of us, nor do you make us any presents, while you are continually doing benefits to the Pawnees, who both kill and rob your people, and who are our enemies."

They have the reputation of conducting themselves well, of trading liberally, and of committing fewer depredations upon the whites than any other nation. Seventeen years ago they numbered 400 lodges, but they are now reduced to one half that number. Last year they suffered great ravages from the measles and the hooping cough, and what was to them a still greater calamity, they were suffering from hunger, not having seen any buffalo, except now and then a single bull. This year they did not see any droves, from January, when they were hunting in company with Mr. William Bent, at the crossing of the Arkansas, until the early part of this month. As the people of the United States have been, and are, the great cause of the diminution in the quantity of game, by continually travelling through the country, by multiplying roads, and thus destroying the quiet ranges where the animals breed; by killing many of them, and by the immense numbers that they induce the Indians to destroy for their robes, it seems but fair that the United States should assist these Cheyennes. At this moment a very beneficial influence might be exerted upon them, as they have their minds now full of this plan of O-cum-who-wast's, of forming per-



O-CUM-WHO-WAST.

manent habitations, and of living like the whites, by tilling the ground and raising cattle.

The next morning, Sunday, August 30, was a day of rest. The constant repairing of the wagons that were daily coming in from Fort Leavenworth, kept the people here very busy. The ring of the blacksmith's hammer, and the noise from the wagoner's shop were incessant, so we all hailed the day with gladness; those who labored, as a day of repose, those who did not labor, as a day of quiet.

During the day Ah-mah-nah-co paid me a visit, bringing a present of a pair of moccasins, ornamented with porcupine quills, worked into a figure resembling a squaw; this ornament seems peculiar to the Cheyennes. "Nah-moust," or "Big left hand," also came to see me; he is one of the largest Indians of the tribe, measuring 6 feet 2½ inches in height, and is very stout and broad shouldered. He has grown so large that he has been obliged to give up hunting, of which he was fond in his more youthful days, for few Indian horses could sustain his weight through a buffalo chase. He is extremely ingenious, and handles his knife with great skill, and is considered the best arrow-maker in the village. The young men, when going to hunt or to war, call on the skillful "Nah-moust" to obtain their arrows, and his lodge receives, when they return successful, a fair partition of the fruits of the chase, or the spoils of the Indian foray.

August 31.—While walking around and endeavoring to recruit my strength by exercise, I was struck with the countenance of a strange Indian. Upon inquiry I learned that he was called "Mi-ah-tose," and the whites had given him the sobriquet of "slim-face." Not long ago he made a visit to St. Louis, Missouri. It is curious to hear with what close scrutiny he regarded every thing that chanced to meet his eye. Being a man of great influence, and the often chosen partizan of war parties, his companions do not fail to give credit to his narrations, which to them are truly marvellous. The weight of his character, or more probably the fear of his anger, as he is a great warrior, forbids their daring to utter a doubt.

He seems to have been best pleased with the riding and the horses that he saw one evening at a circus. He recollects perfectly every horse that appeared, and gives an account of the colors, marks, and trappings of each one of them, with extraordinary exactness and minuteness of detail. To see the whites ride so well, was to him almost incomprehensible, and was the only superiority that he would admit that the civilized man had derived from his civilization, when compared with his own rude manners of life. He wondered much, too, to see so many people living in one town, so far from any hunting grounds. Wishing one day to ascertain exactly the number of inhabitants, he procured a long square stick, and set himself down on the pavement to note the passers by, cutting a notch in his stick for each one; in a little while his stick had no place left for another notch, and he commenced counting, and counted, and counted, but as the busy stream of the multitude flowed on undiminished, the Indian was obliged to give up his in-

tention, and now threw away the stick that he had at first resolved to take home and show to his people.

Our Indian friends intended leaving here yesterday, but as they get well fed, and have nothing to pay, they are not over anxious to go away.

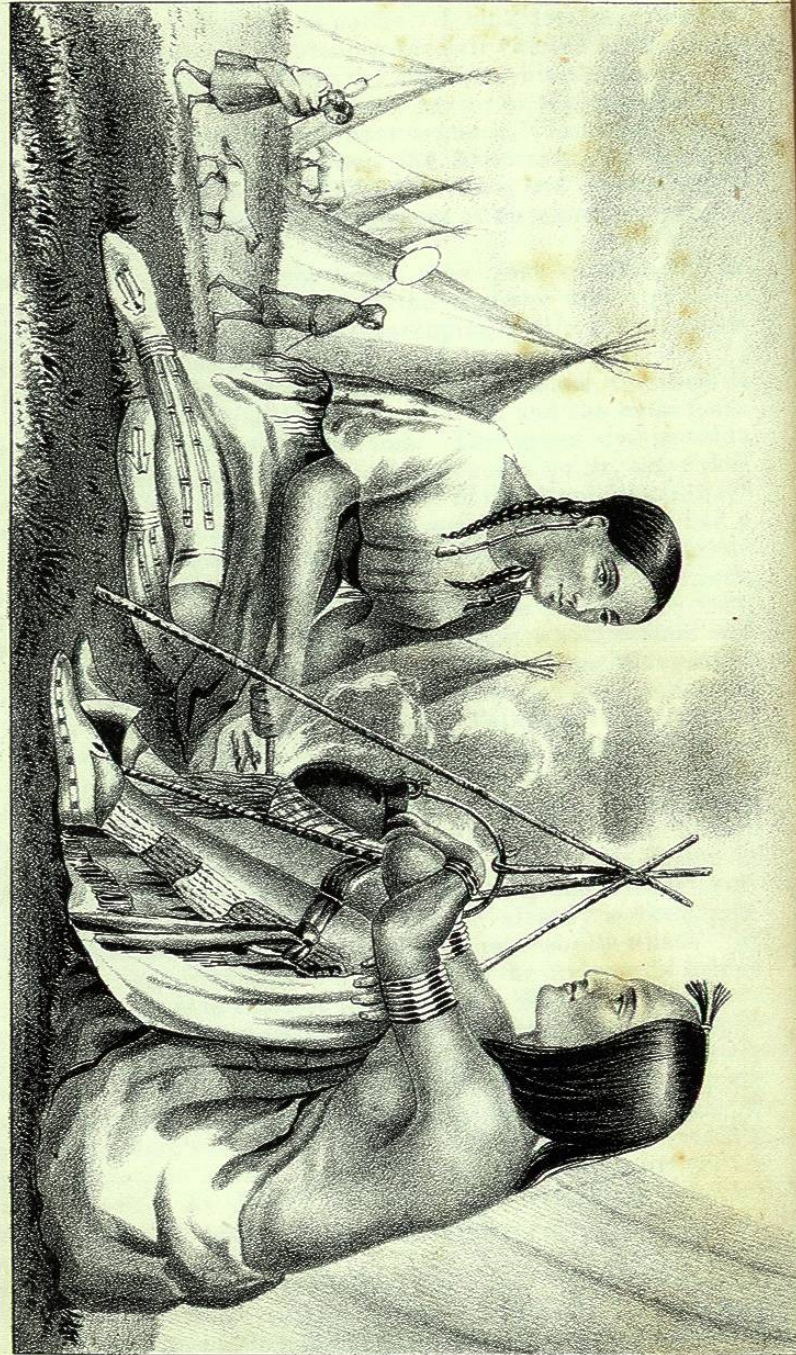
In the evening I was carried down to the river, and took a bath in the refreshing waters of the Arkansas. Between the fort and the river there is a low piece of ground that was once cultivated, the traces of the "Acequia," by which it was irrigated, are yet visible, but the Indian destroyed everything before the owners could reap the fruits of their labor; hence, although the soil gave great promise of being productive, it has ever since been neglected. This bottom land was now chequered with brilliant masses of color, produced by the groups of plants which were growing in great luxuriance. The golden rod, (*S. altissima*), the purp. Eupatorium, (*E. purpurea*), the sunflower, silver marged euphorbia, (*E. marginata*), and the pink cleome, mingled together, clad in their brightest hues; and the sandy plain that skirted the bottom was varied with the golden gourd, *cucumis perennis*, and a beautiful species of solanæ.

I measured to-day the skin of a panther, *felis coucolor*, that was 6½ feet in length from the end of the nose to the root of the tail. It had been killed on the Cañadian by the Kioways. I also examined some skins of the grey and white wolves; and, from all I can learn, these animals are one and the same kind, as the grey wolf becomes whiter as it advances in age. Some of the skins were white, some grey, and others in a transition state.

September 1.—I obtained several singular plants, and amongst them a beautiful species of the lobelia; and I had scarce finished, my drawings of them, when "Nah-moust" and "Ah-mah-nah-co" knocked at the door of my room. I showed them my port-folio, and got them to give the names of the plants, insects, and animals that they knew. After making a complete inspection of my port-folio, I induced "Ah-mah-nah-co" to sit for me; he willingly complied, and, choosing his attitude, sat perfectly motionless until I had both drawn and painted my sketch. I then showed it to him, whereupon he seemed much pleased, and after regarding it for some time, he desired me to write his name underneath; I commenced and he gave me two names, first, "Nah-moust," and then "Ah-mah-nah-co," which means the bear above. The surname had been bestowed in accordance with an Indian custom, similar to that of the knights of ancient chivalry, who always received a surname after they had done some valiant deed.

Our Indian friends have become completely domiciled here, where they are fed and have every thing they need furnished to them; for if their wishes were not gratified, they would not bring their furs to this place to trade. As food is scarce, the people of the fort are obliged to give them something to eat, and the Indians never fail to be present at meal times.

An old man called "Isse-wo-ne-mox-ist," supplied his family with fish that he caught in a species of dam or trap that he had



OLD BARK'S SON AH-MAH-NAH-CO AND SQUAW.