

the road was rough; passed through a cañon; the cañon was wide, but we had to clamber along the edge of the hills; in many places, the road was insecure, from its being a long declivity. After leaving this cañon, we found ourselves in a bottom which lay to the west, and which proved to be the delta between the Gila and Colorado; we marched about twenty-one miles, and found ourselves near the junction of those rivers. We here discovered the greatest abundance of recent signs of horses, and began to think in truth that General Castro may have returned from *Sonora* with a large mounted force, to regain possession of California. The signs proved to be very fresh, and indicated that to whom they belonged they were not more than half a day off. The speculations of course were various, and all the knowledge of sign-studying put in practice. Carson went down the river and discovered fresh signs of fires of half a dozen messes, with no military regularity, and a trail coming from the crossing, half a mile wide, indicating a great number of loose animals. No trail could be discovered leading away from this place; the signs of very few men could be seen, a woman's track was found, a dead colt, colt tracks, and finally, straggling men were seen. Fires were discovered in the bottom up the Gila, and Lieutenant Emory went with 20 men to reconnoitre them, and found the camp of a party of Spaniards from California, with 400 or 500 animals, going to *Sonora*; he brought some of them to camp, and, as usual, they lied so much that we could get very little out of them. One of them told us, in confidence, that we would find 800 men in arms at the Pueblo opposed to the Americans, and that a party was at *San Diego* friendly to the United States of 200, and that three ships of war, he heard, were at *San Diego*, and advised us to be on our guard as we advanced. One of the others said the Mexicans were quiet at the Pueblo, and that the Americans had quiet possession of all the country. They were dismissed for the night; and the general determined not to lose so good a chance to get fresh animals. Camp on dry grass, in the sand hills.

November 23—Monday.—The Mexicans came to camp on poor animals, and said they had no very good ones; they evidently are disposed to be shy and uncommunicative; one of them, who reported in confidence about the 800 men at *Angelos*, tells us that they had killed several Americans at the Pueblo. They say the *Jornada* is 50 miles without water; that they were lost upon it, and



Mountains—Mouth of Gila and Colorado.

found water half way by accident. One of them was caught by Lieutenant Emory with a bundle of letters, some of which were to General Castro; one giving an account of the rising of the Mexicans, and placing one Flores at their head, at the Pueblo de *los Angeles*; another letter, to a different person, was to the effect

that 80 Mexicans (cavalry) had chased 400 Americans at the ravines (corbean?) between the Pueblo and *San Pedro*, and had driven them back, and had captured a cannon called the Teazer. The letters being opened, were resealed by Capt. Turner, and all returned to the man, who was discharged. These fellows tell various stories about the ownership of the horses; they all acknowledge that a part of them belong to General Castro. We are encamped one mile and a half south of the junction of the Gila and Colorado; these two rivers join together and run through a stone hill, through which they have broken a passage, although there are bottom lands on either side of the hill by which they may once have flowed; the place is remarkable, and being the junction of two important rivers, both of which are to a certain degree navigable, this point being also a point in the route from *Sonora* to California, may one day fill a large space in the world's history. The Colorado disappears from here in a vast bottom; the last we can see of its cotton-woods is in the southwest, beyond which lies a low range of mountains, whether on the right or left bank, is not plain, probably on the right bank. Toiling about through the sand hills in thick boots, one is convinced that to perform a journey on foot in this country, a moccasin, with a thick but elastic sole, is far preferable to the boot. The condition of our animals is sad enough to take the *Jornada*. Poor animals, that have come with us from the United States will lay their bones on the desert; some of the few horses we brought through are not able to go on; an animal fat, and well rested in New Mexico, could have come through. It is necessary in this country of loose stones to look at least once a day into the feet of shod animals, otherwise you may have them lamed by a loose stone getting in the shoe.

November 24.—Completed our trading with the Mexicans; Captain Moore's men being in part remounted on wild horses, on which never man sat, they got of course many tumbles, but they stuck to the furious animals until they succeeded. One old Mexican said, "Why those fellows can ride as well as us, if they had good horses; they are not a bit afraid!" We got off about 10 o'clock, and marched about ten miles to the river, and encamped on the sand bar, the willows being about 10 feet high and thick, with a good deal of grass mixed with their roots; the river is perhaps one third of a mile wide, and about four feet of water in the channel; its color is like that of the *Arkansas* at *Fort Smith*, and resembles that river where its banks are lowest; the banks of the Colorado are about six feet above the water now low. The bottom, on the river here is about ten miles wide, and much of the land could bear cultivation; it is all now overgrown with almost impenetrable thickets of willows, mesquite, *Frémontia*, &c. We did not dare to let our animals loose, as we could not hope to see them again. We followed the trail of the horse drovers, and found four animals which they had lost, two of which we secured; but the others got off before our New Mexican *arrieros* could lasso them, they not being so expert with the noose as the Californians. The mare we took soon was carrying a dragoon about; the other, a colt, we design for food, as we are now

without meat. The Colorado would at all seasons carry steamers of large size to the future city of La Vaca, at the mouth of the Gila. A few geese and brant were to be seen on the river.

November 25.—Marched at a quarter past 9, and crossed the river, Carson having found the ford for us; we all got over safe, but the water was deep for small mules; it being cold, the mules had to be kept in motion after getting over, for they were disposed to roll in the dry sand. We found the thicket on the right bank much more dense in places than on the left. After about five miles we came to a range of sand hills which border the bottom on the north side, and we skirted the base of these for 10 miles, and halted at an old Indian well, which we dug out, and found water at about 9 feet below the bottom of the ravine—there was once an Indian village; and in our ride to-day we passed an old secia, of various sizes, of former cultivation. The sand on the north is in motion a floating mass like snow drift, and extends no doubt far into the plains; whether it came from the bars of the Colorado is not certain, but it is probable it covers the plain, which is of the usual diluvial character, perhaps 30 feet thick. Our animals found the beans of the mesquite palatable, and ate them like corn where there were any old hands to show them how; they covered the ground in many places. We packed some grass for them to-day, and they will do pretty well to-night, except for water, which is scarce for man—the waters being like those at the pool of Silioam of old.

November 26.—Marched at half past 6, at sunrise, and took the jornada, and expected to find the place where the Spaniards had watered their horses as they came out, but after riding 22 or 23 miles, we found ourselves at an old well, dug in the sand, in a dry creek in the plain, and no sign of the Mexican trail or the place where they found water. We examined the well and found water, but the prospect of watering 250 animals and 150 men at the well was gloomy enough; and it was necessary to decide whether to halt here, or run the risk, or go on without water for 60 miles—the command having been 30 hours without water. Now, the prospect was gloomy enough; but we halted, and, by dint of perseverance, dipping constantly, and with system, we got out abundance of water for all our animals and men; probably we took 800 or 1,000 buckets full of water out before morning—some of the horses taking five buckets full without stopping—the buckets holding about four gallons. We have nothing at our camp but the leaves of mesquite, but the animals pick at them for want of better food. The pods are eaten greedily by the animals, especially the California animals; they were quite abundant at the last camp. Our route was through the southern end of a long range of sand hills, stretching from the Colorado as far out in the plain to the north, and afterwards we came upon the plain of diluvial drift, with small rounded pebbles, of one of which I found the fragments several yards apart, but rounded and polished by attrition. On this plain there were places where grass grew abundantly for this country. We halted an hour, and let our animals pick; we were on a plain

track all the way, and making towards the mountains on the west of the plain until we struck the well, (Alamo Solo.)

November 27.—Marched early, and set out for the 60 miles; after travelling a few miles we encountered the sand hills and heavy roads, and after 6 or 8 miles, fell upon a few patches of grama grass, which were very acceptable; we halted an hour, and set out, after getting out of our way to the northwest, finally came in the night (31 miles from the Alamo) to the salt lake; but, alas! the waters were bitter!—bitter! We halted for the night, lying until 4 o'clock, and got off a little before day.

November 28.—Reached the Carmisa at noon in a fog from the sea, (27 miles on our march of the 27th;) passed the bed of a former fresh water lake, muscles, spinelas, &c., secured a specimen of each, and the clay detritus of the bottom. This plain is covered in places with the small spinela, the shells are thin, and one would suppose easily decayed; from which it would appear that at no distant day this place, which is now a dry desert, from which the traveller will always turn away if he can, was once a permanent lake, probably bordered with the greenest products of the vegetable world, and cheering to the eye amidst the adjacent barren mountains. The muscle shells were found at the Alamo in the sands, several feet under the surface. In this plain water can be found by digging in any of the deep indentations or hollows; it needs a curb, built like a small log hut, to keep the walls of the well from caving in; the water can then be got by bailing with a shallow basin, taking out, after every bucket or two, a panfull of sand, which, being a sort of semi-fluid, rises in the well as the water is agitated. Our animals are now over the jornada; some of them we were obliged to leave, to perish on the plain, and of those several are the young horses which our men took from the drove at the mouth of the Gila. It is probable that the greatest trial during a horse's life is the first hard work he does, as it would be with a man. The Carmisa is a place in the pass of the mountain where a stream rises, and sinks again immediately. The water comes out warm, and flows freely in a clear little stream towards the plains, and half a mile down it is lost in the sand; around this water the carissa grows, and a species of salt grass. About this are hills of reddish clay-seamed gypsum, like those on the Canadian forks of the Arkansas; these strata are inclined in various directions, as they have been upheaved by the volcanic mountains on either side; the diluvion lays upon this unconformably, and also in places disturbed. The diluvion is composed of granite and silicious stones, more or less rounded, and thick seams of mud.

November 29, (Sunday.)—Marched at half past 8, and continued up the same hollow 20 miles; at 9, we came to some palmetto trees, at a spring of saltish water; on the road the agave abounded, and some of the flower stalks were just budding forth; although the road led up a hollow all day, still it appeared we were going down hill, as the mountains appeared higher on the right and left than those in front, and there were no trees on the hills to show the horizontal lines. The camp is in a narrow valley, with abundance

of grass; it is called Bayou Cita. The mules appear to like the dry grass on the hill sides better. We are near a corn patch of some California Indians. We may consider ourselves as partly in the country. It looks poorly here. It must be said the distance over the jornada is 91 miles, or thereabouts; and to cross it properly, one should come to it prepared with a little corn for each animal—say a peck—and then it could be passed without difficulty, by making three or four days of it over the plains. The constant seeing pieces of pottery shows that Indians have traversed it time out of mind. In fact, at one place, was evidence of a former abode of Indians, (diggers,) as they are called—probably the lowest order of the human race—living on lizzards, bugs, seed, &c., and naked as they came into the world, except the covering of grass which the women hang around their loins. How far from being arrayed in purple and fine linen, and feasting sumptuously every day, or from the enjoyment of the fruits of man's intellect, in the bright pages of modern literature! The vegetation on the jornada is the creosote bush, the mesquite, the Fremontia, and occasionally patches of thin grass, mostly on the higher lands of it; a few willows grew on the dry stream, where we found the second well. Before leaving camp this morning, a mule was found cast in a hollow opposite to camp, and was not recognized as any one of those belonging to the column, but after getting it out, it proved to be a poor thing which had been abandoned to die 50 miles back, and which had followed our trail, and getting near camp, had mistaken the way, and got in bad ground, and fallen so as not to be able to extricate itself, the fog of the 28th no doubt being its salvation; it brought with it one other mule left back 30 miles, but it had passed several we would like to have seen come with it.

November 30.—Laid by at the Bayou Cita, to be a green spot, no doubt, in the memory of our animals. It would be considered a poor camp on the Arkansas, but here it is fine; the green grass reaches two or three miles along the narrow valley where the water comes to the surface, and then all is dry and barren again, except the greenness given by the stink-bush and its kindred plants, inhabitants only of dry places. A few willows on the water furnish fuel, and the mountains hang over, high and bleak, destitute of trees, and almost vegetation, composed of granite and other silicious rocks, rived and torn with the volcanic action, and seamed with volcanic matter. The granite is various in kind; some of it beautiful structure and micacious; the agave abounds, and the Indians have baked it in every direction, using as fuel the dried stalks of cactus, and bushes of various kinds. The fish-hook cactus is found here. Our men killed a horse to-day for food, the first animal we have found necessary to sacrifice for the satisfaction of appetite. Our men were inspected to-day. Poor fellows! they are well nigh naked—some of them barefoot—a sorry looking set. A dandy would think that, in those swarthy sun-burnt faces, a lover of his country will see no signs of quailing. They will be ready for their hour when it comes. I ascended one of the mountains near camp, and when about 3,000 feet above camp, found myself surrounded by peaks. I

would have gone further, but was alone and exhausted; a fog overhung the west range, so that my view was cut off; else, in one direction, I think I might have seen the Pacific ocean; the mountain was covered with loose masses of granite, round; but whether by water or not, I could not tell; some of them, evidently fragments of the same piece, lay side by side.

December 1.—The first day of winter; we left camp at the usual hour, and found the air cold and chilly. The mountain peaks on the coast range are covered with snow slightly; the whole of yesterday, these peaks were covered with clouds which drifted off in loose masses over the desert. This morning, most of the clouds had disappeared, and a strong wind blew from the west. Our route for the day was devious through narrow passes, without any great elevation; a bad road for our little howitzers, and impassable, without work, for wagons. We marched 18 miles, and encamped at the vegus San Phillippe, near the deserted Indian village; the rocks were mostly of mica slate and granite; the water of the vegus is apparently fresh, but the adjacent swamp is salty, and the grass bad for animals, especially at this season. The grass, the long salty grass of the Del Norte, and the soda grass.

December 2.—Marched at the usual hour, our animals having spent a bad night from the cold and bad grass; the few remaining horses, except one, gave out to-day, having been purged by the grass, and very much weakened. Our route was now over a rolling country. About six miles, we met some Mexicans escaping out of the country, with women and children; we allowed them to pass free; they informed us of the existence of war still in this country, so that we count now upon meeting the enemy. It appears that there are no armed forces opposed to each other in the field, but that, generally, parties of California rancheros can be found in every quarter. We will probably have a long time with an unseen enemy, with no pitched battles. Arrived at Warner's ranch very unexpectedly to them. This point is about 60 miles from San Diego, and perhaps 80 from the Pueblo. It is occupied by an American, from Connecticut, who settled in this country, and became naturalized, married, &c. He is now on the main route leading to Sonora, and of course is very much exposed to both parties. He is now said to be a prisoner in the hands of the Americans. Our approach to California improves to-day, and we came part of the day under the shade of fine live-oak trees, and on the mountain tops, clumps of lofty pines; as we came to Warner's, we got upon the western slope of mountains, and here nature had made pretty successful efforts to clothe her nakedness; the shrubs and trees almost hid the rocks of the mountains, and the hills had grass in abundance, but still nothing like the luxuriant growth of the prairies of Missouri, but doubtless a most enchanting sight, when it is green, to one who has just crossed the desert. We found Warner's a place which would be considered a poor location in the United States, with a hot spring and a cold one on his place; a good place for stock, but bad for grain, one would think. We are told wheat yields thirty-fold. The labor is performed by California Indians, who are stimu-

lated to work by three dollars per month and repeated floggings. We encamped a quarter of a mile west of the warm spring. Having heard of a herd of mules 15 miles hence, belonging to Flores, the insurgent chief, Lieutenant Davidson, with 25 men, was despatched with Carson and Sanders, to see if we could get a remount; they started at dark. A Mr. Stokes, an Englishman, who lives 15 miles hence, came to camp, and gave us information that Commodore Stockton was at Diego, with the larger part of his naval force; that he had to remain neutral. A letter was sent to Commodore Stockton, and it was determined to remain at this point until morning, and determine whether to march upon San Diego or the Pueblo, or to halt on the Sonora outlet, until it was known what was to be done with the American prisoners said to be in the hands of the rancheros. We hear that the Californians are very savage, killing any of their people whom they suspect of treachery, and forcing those who were unwilling to join them. We were struck with the fact that a furious wind blew in our faces as we approached the coast range, but after crossing it, we found all calm, and were told there had been no wind.

December 3.—Lieutenant Davidson and Carson returned about noon, with a large gang of tame and wild animals, most of which are said to belong to Flores, the Californian general. After them, came a party of French, English, and a Chilian, claiming their riding animals, as they were going out of the country, which the general gave them. Many of the animals from the herd were put into service, and arrangements made to secure the balance by driving them into some safe place in the mountains. Laid by for the rest of the day; did not have time to examine the Tawa Caliente; but it is said to be remarkable.

December 4.—Marched at 9, and took the route for San Diego, to communicate with the naval forces and to establish our dépôt, not knowing yet in what state we would find the country. Marched 15 miles in a rain, cold and disagreeable, and encamped at St. Isabella, a former ranch of San Diego mission, now, by hook or by crook, in the possession of an Englishman named Stokes; here hospitality was held out to us—Stokes having gone to San Diego. We ate heartily of stewed and roast mutton and tortillas. We heard of a party of Californians, of 80 men, encamped at a distance from this; but the informant varied from 16 to 30 miles in his accounts, rendering it too uncertain to make a dash on them in a dark, stormy night; so we slept till morning.

HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE ARMY OF THE WEST,

San Diego, (California,) January 25, 1847.

The foregoing is a literal copy of the rough notes of my late aide-camp, Captain A. R. JOHNSTON, 1st dragoons, who was killed at daybreak on the 6th December, 1846, in an action with the Californians at San Pasqual.

S. W. KEARNY,
Brigadier General.

