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WHILE accompanying her husband on a trading expedition into the Southwest and Mexico, Susan Shelby Magoffin found amusement and companionship in her journal. Their somewhat primitive mode of travel, over the plains, into the mountains, and across the rivers, was hardly conducive to great literary effort or style in composition. Nevertheless, there is a peculiar charm in the narrative, and it takes on a dramatic cast as one comes to realize the drift of it all. In her simple and gentle way, the young lady deftly raises the curtain from before characters and events of very great importance in American history. Her journal has a distinct value in respect to the amount of detail contained in the descriptions of scenes and events, so often lacking in other journals of the same period. Most of them give mere outlines.

The journey undertaken by this Kentucky bride of eighteen with her husband, Samuel Magoffin, was, nominally at least, a trading expedition of James and Samuel Magoffin, brothers and partners. In a trade started by James before 1828, the brothers yearly, and sometimes twice a year, took large caravans of goods into Santa Fé and old Mexico. This expedition, however, was different from the others. James was not with a wagon train as usual, but had gone on well in advance of both caravans, leaving the one he ordinarily would have commanded in charge of his brother Wil-

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liam. Samuel with his train preceded William, and reached Santa Fé about twelve days ahead.

The Mexican War had begun. James was really on a secret mission for the Government of the United States, it being hoped that he would be able to pave the way for General Kearny to enter Santa Fé and gain possession of New Mexico without bloodshed. The letter of the Secretary of War, Mr. Marcy, given in the Appendix (p. 263), shows what was expected of Magoffin. The comments of Susan in her diary, under date of August 18, on the work James was engaged in at Santa Fé, and later, December 1, 1846, about his capture by the Mexicans, indicate that she, as well as her husband, was cognizant of the serious nature of the whole expedition.

The choice of James Wiley Magoffin for this unusual service was due in a large measure to Senator Thomas H. Benton of Missouri. The latter had become acquainted with Mr. Magoffin at Washington in the year 1845. He had learned that Magoffin "was a man of mind, of generous temper, patriotic and rich; that he spoke the Spanish language fluently, knew every man in New Mexico, his character and all the localities." It was thought that he could be of immense value to the United States on such a mission, and President Polk requested him to undertake it.

Bloodless conquest of New Mexico was what President Polk fondly wished. James Magoffin accomplished everything that was desired of him. In his own clever way he diverted the people from their Mexican governor, General Manuel Armijo, imbued the latter with an indisposition to fight, and then secured the

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alliance of the lieutenant governor, Colonel Diego Archuleta, the second in command. As a result, General Kearny was able to enter Santa Fé with his army of about seventeen hundred men and take possession of all of New Mexico without the firing of a shot, or the spilling of a drop of blood. All this in spite of the fact that General Armijo had three thousand troops with which to guard the narrow defiles through which the American troops had to go in order to enter Santa Fé.

Armijo seemed to have suddenly discovered that his troops were indisposed to support him in resisting the Americans, and after receiving the reports of his officers that they were not prepared to resist, he took about one hundred dragoons along with him and fled into the state of Chihuahua. There he was imprisoned, some months later, for not resisting the Americans. Archuleta could have persuaded Armijo to make a defense, but he did not. The former had one thousand of the best troops in New Mexico attached to him, and he himself would have defended the pass, had it not been for the subtlety of Magoffin. The influence exerted upon him was quite as effective as that practiced upon Armijo. His personal ambitions were played upon, not without sincerity. Indeed, at Magoffin's request General Kearny decided to appoint Archuleta to office, but for some reason these plans never were carried out. As a result of this mistake, Archuleta afterwards organized a revolt at Taos, which was put down only after much bloodshed, by General Price and his Missourians.

It is a notable fact that this journal, together with

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certain documents unearthed in the War Department and published by William E. Connelley of Kansas, has dispelled the doubt created by some historians as to the credit due to Mr. Magoffin for the "*Bloodless Conquest*" of New Mexico. One historian has expressed the belief that Benton's account of this incident in his *Thirty Years' View* was absurd and the result of yarns told by Magoffin, "who was full of fun, an Irishman by descent, and a Kentuckian by birth." (Rives, *United States and Mexico*, vol. 2, p. 215.) This trinity of faults, as it would seem, cannot be imputed altogether to General Kearny, Captain Philip St. George Cooke, and Governor Henry Connelly of New Mexico. These records, since revealed, show that they knew the facts and gave full credit to Magoffin.¹ In fact, the letter of Kearny certifying to the service rendered by him, captured from a messenger who was bearing the same to Chihuahua, almost resulted in the execution of Magoffin. Connelly was the messenger; Cooke was Magoffin's escort into Santa Fé on his original mission; and Kearny sent Magoffin to Chihuahua to do like service in behalf of General Wool.

The people of New Mexico were not friendly to their governor, General Armijo. In fact, they feared him more than they did the Americans. When Magoffin told them that General Kearny had set out to take the country east of the Del Norte as part of Texas; that they were really Americans now, and, as such, would be protected by the American Government from the Indians; that their religion would not be disturbed; they believed him, and developed a feel-

¹ See Cooke's letter to Magoffin, Appendix, p. 264.

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ing of friendliness to the approaching American troops.

James Magoffin was not the first agent sent by the Government of the United States to aid in the capture of New Mexico. On May 14, 1846, the Secretary of War sent George T. Howard with a letter to General Kearny. The latter, complying with the instructions therein contained, sent an escort to accompany Howard as far as Bent's Fort. Howard went to the neighborhood of Taos and Santa Fé to create an impression favorable to the United States. Hughes, in his *Doniphan's Expedition*, says of Howard's experience: "He failed, however, to accomplish fully the purpose of his mission. . . . His report produced quite a sensation in our camp. It was now expected that Colonel Kearny's entrance into Santa Fé would be obstinately disputed" (pp. 50-51).

As indicated above, after the negotiations at Santa Fé James Magoffin went forward, under the directions of General Kearny, to render the same service at Chihuahua for General Wool. Unfortunately, General Wool did not go to Chihuahua, and the Mexicans, finally becoming suspicious of Magoffin, cast him into prison as a spy. Two Mexicans of prominence in the city of Chihuahua were in New Mexico at the time of the approach of the American troops. They knew that the positive intention of General Armijo, and particularly of Archuleta, was to defend that place. These men retired to Chihuahua and reported to the governor there that James Magoffin had been the cause of the nonresistance at Santa Fé, and that he had

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bought over General Armijo and Colonel Archuleta. This, with other information, caused his arrest.

Magoffin was saved from execution only through his popularity with Mexican officers, which was in no degree lessened by his liberality with money and entertainments with champagne. Quoting Captain Cooke: "His life was really long in danger, but I am happy to record that he dissolved all charges, prosecutions and enmities in three thousand three hundred and ninety-two bottles of Champagne wine, (by close computation)." One of these officers, a judge advocate, told Mr. Magoffin of the capture of an American (Dr. Connelly) with a letter addressed to him. The officer presented the letter to Magoffin, unopened, and advised him to destroy it. The letter, as stated before, was from General Kearny, setting forth the character and worth of Magoffin's service to him at Santa Fé. After reading it, and exchanging looks with the Mexican officer, Magoffin tossed the letter into the fire. He was kept in jail, however, for a period of nine months—until the end of the war. First confined at Chihuahua, he was sent to Durango on the approach of Colonel Doniphan's command. He had lost three years of his time as well as much goods and money, and had endured great hardships in the pursuit of the undertaking.

The ways of politics and politicians are not always intelligible to the wayfaring man. The United States Senate appropriated fifty thousand dollars to be paid to Magoffin for his expenses and losses incident to the secret mission. Unfortunately there was no fund on hand to meet this appropriation, and the incoming ad-

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ministration, being of opposite politics, was disposed to quibble about the matter. President Taylor, on hearing what Magoffin had done for Kearny, expressed the wish that he had had some one to do the same for him, and gave orders to the Secretary of War to treat the matter as if there had been no change in the administration. That gentleman, however, was disposed to take nothing for granted, and although the mission was secret and documentary proof necessarily lacking, he was technical to a degree. He urged that there was no "contract" with Magoffin. The latter treated that suggestion with scorn, and in giving an attempted itemization of his expenses and losses, stated: "The above [statement] is submitted, not as an account against the United States, but as data to assist in forming an opinion of the amount that ought to be paid me for my services, by showing what they cost me; as for the services themselves, they cannot be valued in money." One item in his account, with no amount given, was expressed as follows: "Nine months' imprisonment at Chihuahua and Durango, (can't be estimated)."

Although the Senate had appropriated the larger sum, Mr. Crawford, the succeeding Secretary of War, proposed to Magoffin that he accept thirty thousand dollars. Magoffin, having undertaken the matter under patriotic impulse, made no complaint, preferring to be underpaid rather than to have the character of his work lowered by a quarrel over finances.

The incidents immediately preceding the journey to Santa Fé by James Magoffin for the execution of the mission from the United States Government are in-

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teresting. On May 25, 1846, James W. Magoffin and party with a number of wagons returned to Independence, Missouri, from Chihuahua. He and three others took the steamer *Nimrod* and traveled on the Missouri River to St. Louis, arriving May 30, 1846. They carried with them forty thousand dollars in specie. At Independence Mr. Magoffin had received a message from Senator Benton asking him to come to Washington for an interview with the President. On the seventeenth day of June following, he was in Washington and had an extended interview with President Polk and Secretary of War Marcy. As a result of their deliberations Magoffin received letters addressed to General Kearny, and "also to the officer who might be in command of an expedition to Chihuahua," requesting them to avail themselves of his services. On the following July 31, he presented his letters to General Kearny at a camp near Bent's Fort, and three days later proceeded to Santa Fé with an escort of twelve men in command of Captain Philip St. George Cooke.

The Magoffins were of a large and prominent family of Kentucky. Their father was Beriah Magoffin of County Down, Ireland, who married their mother, Jane McAfee, daughter of Samuel McAfee, in Mercer County, Kentucky. Beriah Magoffin came to America prior to 1799, settling first in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, and later removed to Harrodsburg, Kentucky. James Wiley Magoffin, as well as Samuel, was born in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, the former in 1799, and the latter March 31, 1801. One of their brothers, Beriah, became the governor of

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Kentucky. There were other brothers, Ebenezer, John (afterwards a prominent physician of St. Louis), William, and Joseph. Their sisters were Jane, Hannah, and Sarah.

In 1830 James married Mary Gertrude Valdez of Chihuahua, Mexico, where he was engaged in merchandising. She was an accomplished lady, kind-hearted, affable, and exceedingly well informed. Kendall speaks of her kindness to him and fellow prisoners in Mexico after the Texan Santa Fé Expedition of 1841. James Magoffin was the first United States consul in Chihuahua and Durango, and was familiarly known there, and in New Mexico, as "Don Santiago," and "The Don." In 1844 James and his family moved to Independence, Missouri, purchasing a farm near by. His wife died the following January, leaving two sons, Joseph and Samuel, and four daughters. Mr. Magoffin left Missouri after the Mexican War and settled in Texas, opposite the Mexican town of El Paso del Norte. At that time (1848) there was no settlement on the American side, and the rich bottoms were but partially cultivated. In 1850 there were three settlements in that locality, of which the principal one was Magoffinsville, now a part of the city of El Paso, Texas. Magoffinsville consisted of a large square around which were unusually substantial adobe buildings, including about eight large stores and warehouses well filled with merchandise. The town belonged wholly to James Magoffin, and it was prophesied at that time that his energy and public spirit would undoubtedly make it the principal place on the frontier. United States Attorney Davis speaks in his

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book, *El Gringo*, of being a guest of Mr. Magoffin at Magoffinsville, which he names as the site of Fort Bliss and places it directly opposite the Mexican town of El Paso. He says he found Mr. Magoffin living quite in nabob style in a large Spanish-built house that reminded him somewhat of an old mansion of the feudal ages.

During the war between the states, Colonel Magoffin, as he was then called, furnished supplies to the Confederates at Fort Bliss, and subsequently died at San Antonio, Texas, September 28, 1868. His sons, Joseph and Samuel, served in the Confederate Army, the latter giving his life to that cause. Joseph survived and returned to El Paso.

Samuel Magoffin, spoken of in the journal as "Don Manuel," and often more tenderly as "*mi alma*," received most of his education from private tutors. Being a child of a frontier state, he had only such facilities as were afforded to men who cultivated their fields with a loaded rifle slung over their shoulders, always in danger of attack from a savage foe. From such environment sprang men with iron in their blood, and courage that knew no such thing as fear. Samuel, in 1830, joined his brother James in the overland trade to Mexico, when merchandise was conveyed over the Santa Fé Trail in ox teams, and either specie or the products of that land, including furs, jacks, mules, etc., were brought back to the States. This trade was of great importance and filled with hazard; chivalry and romance in the natures of those who participated were very necessary qualities. The volume of business in that trade in 1846 amounted to nearly one million

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dollars. The canvas-covered wagons of these merchant trains, glistening like banks of snow in the distance, and winding their tortuous way over the undulating surface of the prairies, were often the object of attack by Indian tribes and Mexican robbers. Few trips were made without a tragedy to some member of the expedition.

Samuel continued in this business until the expedition mentioned in the journal, which terminated the partnership enterprise. In the latter part of 1847 he returned to Kentucky, where he purchased a large estate near Lexington. In the spring of 1852 he moved his family to St. Louis County, Missouri, where he built a fine home at Barrett's Station, not far from the present town of Kirkwood. Here he engaged in cultivating the land and dealing generally in real estate. Active business was not necessary then, because of his ample property, and he passed his declining years in the quiet life of a country gentleman. He died at his home April 23, 1888.

Susan Shelby Magoffin was born July 30, 1827, at "Arcadia," as her father's place was called. It was located about six miles south of Danville, Kentucky, and adjoined "Traveler's Rest," the home of her grandfather, Governor Isaac Shelby. She was educated by private tutors at her home, and was married to Samuel Magoffin, November 25, 1845, at the place of her birth. One of her sisters, Anna N., also married a Magoffin. Her husband was Beriah, afterwards governor of Kentucky, and brother of Samuel and James.

Samuel took his bride to Philadelphia and New York for their honeymoon, spending the winter in the