

organized themselves into bands to carry on their depredations, not being very particular as to whether they robbed Mexicans or their own countrymen. They emphatically "made war on their own hook." Many of these miscreants were sent home by General Taylor, and every possible precaution was taken to prevent their entrance into Mexico. Many of their misdeeds came under my personal observation, but the difficulty was to identify the individual. In general, the troops behaved with great forbearance and humanity.

In the northern provinces of Mexico there is a strong feeling in favor of a federal, and in decided opposition to a central form of government. This is the instinctive result of a sense of self-preservation, for these people are not prone to indulge in abstract speculations. As there may be said to be no government many miles beyond the city of Mexico, they feel that, while they bear more than a just proportion of the burdens of the state, they receive none of its fostering care or paternal protection. The Federalists are called the American, and the Centralists the Mexican party. The former have been in favor either of becoming an integral portion of our Union, or an independent republic, under our protection and guarantee. How far this would *now* be practicable or desirable, is a question for the politician to settle: the trade of which the joint right of navigating the Rio Grande would give us almost the exclusive advantage, and the introduction of American machinery, to be paid for in the precious metals, might be a matter of some consequence. With the slightest encouragement during the last summer, the whole State of Coahuila would have pronounced against the existing government of Mexico.

Very truly, your obedient servant,

GEO. W. HUGHES.

To Colonel J. J. ABERT,
Chief Topographical Engineers.

CAMP NEAR MONCLOVA,
Mexico, November 14, 1846.

SIR: Having completed the reconnaissance of the country from Monclova to Quatro Cienegas, (and its vicinity,) on the route to Chihuahua, I have now the honor to submit to the commanding general, in addition to my short communication of the 12th instant, the following descriptive memoir, and accompanying topographical map, of the country embraced in the general's instructions of the 6th instant.

Owing to circumstances not necessary to mention, our first day's march (the 7th of November) terminated at the hacienda of Pozuelos. We left the plaza of Monclova by the main road to Monterey and Saltillo, but soon after quitting the city turned suddenly to the right, skirting the base of a high mountain range to our south, and leaving a series of hills of variable heights to the north. Our course was nearly due west, over a wild and barren region, for several miles, when we entered upon a wide and pretty valley, which, at a distance of nine miles from the city, brought us to the hacienda de Pozuelos, or the *hot well*, an artificial excavation some forty feet deep, which discharges a large volume of hot water, very palatable when it has been allowed to cool. This well irrigates two large

plantations, which nearly exhaust the supply—the surplus being lost in the swamps near Nadadores.

A mule track to Saltillo diverges from this well, as is shown on the map. Our first encampment was at the base of a high chain of mountains, which apparently blocked our further progress in that direction; but by pursuing a circuitous course bearing from NW. to SW. through the highlands, we reached, at a distance of eleven miles by a good road, the San Pedro spring, the source of a large creek flowing in a northwesterly direction down the valley of the Sacramento, which we followed for about three miles to La Villa Nueva, a small and modern town of four hundred and fifty inhabitants. In this quiet and secluded valley we saw the first appearance of improvement since our entrance upon Mexican soil. Within a few miles of each other, two new and respectable looking towns have recently sprung into existence, and many acres of rich but waste lands have been brought into successful cultivation. Here there are no wealthy proprietors nor lordly haciendas to please the eye with their immense proportions, but, what was more gratifying to an American, small, neat tenements, occupied by the owners and tillers of the soil. This valley was covered for miles with fields of maize and cotton, but it is so difficult to obtain authentic statistical information, that I am unable to state the amount of their production.

From Villa Nueva, a course of N. 85 W. brought us, over a distance of eight miles across the valley, to a remarkable mountain pass called el Puerto del Sacramento. It is about three hundred yards wide, the mountain rising almost vertically to an altitude of nearly 2,000 feet, and a huge rock directly in the pass gives it the appearance of a gigantic propylon of some vast temple. The road follows up this gorge, (through which flows a large and rapid stream, called the San Juan, that rises west of Cienegas,) for about six miles, where the mountains widen out, leaving between them a broad and most lovely valley, at the lower end of which is built the hacienda of San Juan. There is not a mile of this pass that does not offer a strong position for defence; but the most formidable is at the upper outlet of the gorge, where it is scarcely two hundred and fifty yards wide, with huge and inaccessible mountains rising almost perpendicularly from its two extremities, while the ground slopes down the pass as evenly as a glacis. As far as I could ascertain, it would be difficult to turn this position if occupied by an enemy.

To the south of the hacienda there are extensive salt ponds, which render the running water rather brackish, and probably impregnate them with sulphate of magnesia.

From the hacienda, a ride along the mountain on the north of the valley for twelve miles in a direction a little south of west brought us to the town of Quatro Cienegas, situated in the midst of this upland valley. For about eight miles the land, though rich and easily irrigated, is left uncultivated, and produces only a luxuriant growth of tall, wild grass.

The town of Cienegas contains, according to the last census, 1,428 inhabitants, or, including its dependencies (of St. Catarina, Rosarios, and Villa del Sacramento) subject to the jurisdiction of the alcalde, 2,682. The people of this district are distinguished for their industry, sobriety, and attachment to their religion. In politics, unlike the citizens of Monclova, they are mostly federalists, and unfriendly to the ruling powers of Mexico. We found them, as they had been represented, favorably inclined

to our government and its institutions. To us, individually, they were unbounded in their kindness and hospitality. For miles around the town the land is cultivated like a garden, and produces the great staples of wheat and cotton in abundance. The grape vine is also reared successfully in large vineyards, and furnishes both a red and white wine of tolerable quality. The first is said to be good, but we saw it only in a dried state. It yields by distillation a pure, but not agreeably flavored brandy, called *aguardiente*. The maguey, (*agave Americana*), growing sometimes to the height of forty feet, is planted for its pulque. Peaches, figs, melons, and pecans find here a congenial soil and propitious climate.

Nothing can be more enchanting to the sight than this broad and lovely valley, intersected in every direction by streams of running water, surrounded on every side by lofty mountains, impassable except through a few narrow chasms just wide enough to admit the roads and the rushing brooks whose waters are gathered within their recesses. I looked down upon the scene from an eminence, and could but liken it to the Happy Valley of Rasselas.

There are two grist-mills near Cienegas, and two cotton-gins (of American manufacture,) all driven by water-power. The buildings are large, well proportioned, and imposing in appearance; but the machinery of the grist-mills is of the most simple and primitive construction. The shaft is vertical, with a tub-wheel attached to the lower extremity, and the upper millstone to the top. The nether-stone is fixed in the floor, above the pit, and the shaft revolves inside of it, carrying with it the upper stone. The wheat (which in Mexico is always washed and dried before grinding) is taken in sacks, and thrown into a hopper, from which it descends between the stones, and is ground into flour. These mills are unprovided with bolting apparatus, as the flour and bran are not separated for ordinary use. When white bread is baked, (and the best in the world is made in Mexico,) the flour is sifted by hand. The mechanic arts have made but little progress in Mexico, and labor-saving machinery, for ordinary purposes, is almost unknown. Their tools, carts, and agricultural implements are of the rudest description, and are obviously literal copies of their original models. The type of their mode of harnessing and driving oxen, and the form of their carts and ploughs, may be found in the Egyptian drawings and bas-relief. By changing their seed-grain, and introducing the best American system of agriculture, I have no doubt that, with their natural advantages of soil, climate, and means of irrigation, the crops in this portion of Mexico might be more than doubled. At present they never till the earth to a greater depth than three inches; and this has been their system from the beginning. The markets for this district are Monterey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosi, and Chihuahua. Clear cotton is worth here from \$5 to \$6 the cargo of 300 lbs., and flour \$7. Very little maize is grown here; but in the Sacramento it sells for \$1 50 to \$2 the fanega—a little short of three bushels. There are no mines in the vicinity, and no manufactures except those already mentioned.

The roads leading from Cienegas are, 1st, to Monclova, the route we travelled; 2d, to Saltillo, by a mule track, ninety miles; 3d, to Parras, one hundred and eighty miles, by a good cart road, but the deficiency of water for a long distance has caused it to be in a great measure abandoned; 4th, to Sta. Catarina, by a good wagon road, well watered.

St. Catarina, a small hamlet of four hundred and sixteen inhabitants, is situated at the foot of an elevated plateau called the Bolson de Mapimi, about 30 miles N. 80 W. of Cienegas. The road passes alternately through mountain defiles and narrow valleys.

In the mountains between Cienegas and Sta. Catarina there are very extensive forests of white pine and oaks of different kinds, growing to an immense size. The route to Chihuahua passes through St. Catarina; and it is here the real difficulties begin. For at least ninety miles there is no water, except in the rainy season; and several persons who have recently traversed the Bolson de Mapimi unite in saying that the present season is unusually dry, and that the water, which is sometimes to be found in holes, has entirely disappeared. There is only a mule track, and no wagon road, in this direction, after leaving St. Catarina. A Mexican cart has been driven over this line; but it was found necessary often to shift the load, and even to take the carts to pieces, owing to the abrupt and broken nature of the country.

From Agua Chili to Chihuahua the road is said to be excellent; but there is a deficiency of water to St. Rosalin, from whence there is an abundance of everything necessary for the subsistence of troops to Chihuahua. Supposing the representations to be true, (and I have no reason to doubt them,) the natural inference is, the route is impassable for artillery, infantry, and the wagon train. Dragoons mounted on mules, and taking with them pack-mules to carry water, could no doubt effect a passage by this route; but I should consider it to be a most hazardous undertaking to attempt it with any other arm of the service.

Having executed, as far as practicable, the instructions of the commanding general, I returned with the escort as far as the Puerto del Sacramento over our former route, and from thence diverged through the valley of Rancho Nuevo to the outlet of the Sacramento, in a direction nearly N. 80 E., across the valley. At this point the San Pedro, the San Juan, and the Sacramento creeks unite, forming a large and rapid stream, called the Nadadores, flowing into the Rio Monclova near the Hacienda Las Hermanas, where the junction of the two produces the Rio Salado. This latter river soon afterwards unites with the Sabinos—retaining, however, its original name—and finally discharges its waters into the Rio Grande at Revilla, or Guerrilla, as it is sometimes called on the maps.

The pass above mentioned is similar to those already described, the road and the creek occupying nearly the whole of the defile, while the mountain rises suddenly to the height of probably fifteen hundred feet. There are several large caves in the rocks, from which saltpetre is obtained. This defile is about six miles long, and terminates at the rancho Leco. We had now left the mountains, and descended into the plains of Monclova. The road from the rancho soon brought us to a large and new hacienda belonging to Señor Gonzales; and six miles farther, in a nearly straight road, to the town of Nadadores, containing about eight hundred inhabitants. Before reaching this town we passed over a low but very rich country, much of which has been recently drained and cultivated. The position of the village is flat and unhealthy. San Juan Buenaventura lies about three miles off to the north. There is a great deal of corn, cotton, and wheat growing in the neighborhood of this town. Near San Juan is a grist-mill and cotton-gin, driven by water-power; and there is another

grist-mill on a stream called the Sta. Gertrudes, about four and a half miles from San Juan.

From Nadadores to Monclova is about sixteen miles in a southeasterly direction; the road is good, and much of the land in a high state of cultivation. The inhabitants of this village are not very favorably disposed towards us; but many gentlemen of wealth and intelligence are bitterly averse to their present form of government. One of them, who had been in the United States, said to me with great emphasis: "Sir, we have a glorious country, and a good population; but our government is the worst in the world. I would rather be under the dominion of a Comanche chief." The great scourge of this country, which I have attempted to describe in these papers, after its government, is to be found in the sudden irruptions of the Indian tribes—the Lipans, the Mescaleros, and the Comanches—the most treacherous and ruthless of our nomadic races. On our return we found the country in alarm. Couriers had been sent to all the small villages to say that a party of three hundred warriors had passed through the mountains near Santa Rosa, and was descending upon the upland villages, by the way of Santa Catarina. We saw nothing of the Indians, but heard of their being on our trail. So bold are they, or so little do they respect their Mexican neighbors, that a few of them will not hesitate to ride into towns of the size of Cienegas, and lay them under contribution.

I was escorted on this tour of duty by Captain Porter's company of Arkansas cavalry; and it is but an act of justice to the officers and men to say that I have no complaints to make of their conduct, but everything to commend.

The distance to Cienegas, *via* Pozuelos, is about fifty miles; *via* Nadadores, (by a smoother road,) it is some six miles farther. For the dry season, this is the preferable route.

I was accompanied in this expedition by Captain Howard, commissary of subsistence, who succeeded in purchasing a large quantity of wheat flour.

Very respectfully, &c., &c., &c.,

GEO. W. HUGHES,
Captain Topographical Engineers.

Captain J. H. PRENTISS,

Assistant Adjutant General, Centre Division, &c., &c., &c.

A.

August 31.—From La Vaca, eight miles, to the Placedores, a small rivulet, course nearly west across level prairie; very muddy prairie—very muddy from recent rains; thence four miles further in the same direction to the house of —, a Frenchman, on the right bank of a small muddy stream, with banks eight to ten feet high.

September 1.—After crossing this the road continues about WNW. over the same kind of prairie, six miles, to another stream of the same character as the last, up the right bank of which it runs some two miles; and thence a little more northerly to a belt of timbers, two miles from Victoria. Whole distance thirty miles.

September 2.—At Victoria crossed the Guadalupe, some 200 feet wide, by a ferry; thence about two miles, through a thickly timbered bottom, to an open rolling prairie, dry and hard, except at the crossing of two gulleys and a rivulet, twelve miles to the Coletto, a small clear stream, with hard sand and rock bottom. Thence in the same general direction, a little N. of W., thirteen miles to the Manahuila, the crossing of which was muddy and difficult, and six miles further to Goliad, passing another stream of similar character.

September 4.—From Goliad seven miles to the Cabeza, and thence NNW. six miles to a pond in the prairie, near which we encamped.

September 5.—Twelve miles to a grassy stream, with bad water; thence two miles to another small stream of good water, having a pretty grove upon its banks. Five miles further crossed a fine stream, with high steep banks. Thence sixteen miles to a rancho, on the right bank of the Cibolo, a considerable stream, with hard stony bottom; the whole distance over rolling prairie, dry and sandy, and covered with muskeet (mezquite?) grass; the timber becoming more abundant. Course about NW., a little N. From the Cibolo six miles to a small stream, and six miles further to a rancho, which is some distance off the road to the left, and on the banks of the San Antonio river. The San Antonio is here some 100 feet wide, with very high, steep banks. Nine miles hence, through pretty well timbered land, to Canteen's rancho, on a fine stream, with steep banks at its crossing. From Canteen's rancho twelve miles across open prairie to the Salado, and nine miles thence to San Antonio, which we reached on the 6th of September.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. SITGREAVES,
Brevet Captain Corps Topographical Engineers.

B.

MEMOIR.

There are two roads leading from La Vaca, Texas, to San Antonio de Bexar. One of these, the shorter of the two, diverges from the other at Victoria, thirty miles from La Vaca. This passes through Goliad, and is the road which was used by General Wool for the transportation of his supplies. The other passes through Gonzales and Seguin.

I was ordered by you to proceed by the latter route from Victoria to San Antonio, and incidentally to make a reconnaissance of the country passed over by it.

There were no supplies furnished by the quartermaster's department on this road; consequently I was obliged to leave my instruments at Victoria, to be sent by the shorter route, and to set out with no other instrument than a pocket compass. As it was mid-summer, to save our horses we left Victoria just at dusk. During the day the flies are so numerous that the horses are set nearly frantic, and humanity as well as his own comfort will dictate to the traveller in this part of Texas that he must lie by during the day and travel at night. In consequence of this night travelling, my notes have been very imperfect.

Ex.—4