

JOURNAL
OF A
MILITARY RECONNAISSANCE,
FROM
SANTA FÉ, NEW MEXICO,
TO THE
NAVAJO COUNTRY,

MADE WITH THE

TROOPS UNDER COMMAND OF BREVET LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN
M. WASHINGTON, CHIEF OF NINTH MILITARY DEPARTMENT,
AND GOVERNOR OF NEW MEXICO, IN 1849.

BY

JAMES H. SIMPSON, A. M.,
FIRST LIEUTENANT CORPS OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS.

PHILADELPHIA:
LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO AND CO.,
SUCCESSORS TO GRIGG, ELLIOT AND CO.
1852.

penetrate into the very heart of their country; and thus a geographical knowledge has been obtained, which cannot but be of the highest value in any future military demonstration it may be necessary to make.

It is true the Navajos may fail to comply with the terms of the treaty. But, whether they comply or not, the fact still remains the same, that a treaty *covering the whole ground* of their fealty, (the former covered but a few points,) as well in the general as the particular, was necessary, in order to satisfy the public mind, as well as testify to the whole world that, should any future coercion become necessary, it would be but a just retribution, and, in a manner, their own act.

In the afternoon, after the treaty was concluded, quite a number of Navajo warriors, at least a hundred, came within the vicinity of the camp to trade with the troops, seemingly happy that so peaceful a termination had been given to affairs. They were generally armed with bows and lances, and carried also shields. Very few of them had rifles. In some instances they were very handsomely dressed, an appendage of eagle feathers to their helmet-shaped cap adding not a little to the picturesqueness of their appearance. (For a sketch of a Navajo in costume, see Plate 52.).

Their principal articles of traffic consisted of blankets of their peculiar and superior handiwork, dressed skins, and peaches.

The blankets, though not purchasable with money, as it is not used as a tender among them, were sold, in some instances, for the most trifling article of ornament or clothing; it being their manner, if they saw anything about your dress which they fancied, and wanted to buy, to point to it, and then to the article for which they were willing to barter it.

There was a Moqui Indian present at the council this morning as a spectator; and a more intelligent, frank-hearted looking fellow, I have seldom beheld. (See a sketch of him in Plate 51.) Indeed, it occurred to me that he had all the air and manner of a well-bred, vivacious American gentleman; and the only thing Indian in his appearance was his complexion. His people, whom he represents as living three days' travel from this place, have the *reputation* of being quite intelligent and orderly; it being one of the articles of their political as well as religious creed that they are at liberty under no circumstances to take human life;

all these cases they are far inferior to our own, in point of bulk and power.

Nineteenth camp, Chelly, September 9.—To-day, the two chiefs, Mariano Martinez and Chapaton, the latter the chief of the San Juan Navajos—(see his portrait in Plate 50) have been in, on the part of the nation, to deliver up some of the captives, stock, and other property required to be delivered according to the treaty made by Colonel Nuby; and also to enter into a more comprehensive and complete treaty. A large portion of this property not being immediately available, as they said, on account of the distance whence it had to be brought, the colonel commanding, with their consent, appointed a limited period—thirty days—in which all that yet remained outstanding was to be delivered up at Jémez. The murderer of a citizen of Jémez was, as soon as he could be apprehended, to be turned over to the governor at Santa Fé.

The parties then entered into a treaty, by which the government of the United States assumed the paternal control it has been in the habit of exercising over the tribes of Indians within or bordering upon its domain; and the Navajo nation, on its part, through its head chiefs, Martinez and Chapaton, who represented that what they did was binding on the whole nation, gave their full and unequivocal assent to all its terms. Particular care was taken, both by the colonel commanding and the Indian commissioner, to make the chiefs comprehend the full import of the treaty to which they were invited to give their assent. And, to be certain that all was done that could be done to insure this, each and every officer present was appealed to, to know whether he considered the treaty had been sufficiently explained; to which they all, without exception, responded in the affirmative.

All that could be accomplished by the expedition, then, may be considered as having been accomplished. A full and complete treaty has been made with the Navajos, by which they have put themselves under the jurisdiction and control of the government of the United States, in the same manner and to the same extent as the tribes bordering the United States. The portion of the captives and stolen property near enough to be made available have been given up, and the remainder has been promised to be restored within a determinate period. Add to this, what is of no inconsiderable value, the troops have been enabled to

most suitable for such a state of things—the lodge they now inhabit.

In regard to the manufacture of *cotton* fabrics, in which, according to Gregg, they excel, we observed no evidences at all of this species of manufacture among them, nor any signs of the domestic culture of the plant from which, rather than from a foreign source, they would be most likely to draw the raw material.*

In regard to the manufacture of *plumage*, or feather-work, they certainly display a greater fondness for decorations of this sort than any Indians we have seen; but, though they exhibit taste in the selection and disposition of this kind of ornament about their persons, I saw no exhibition of it in the way of embroidery.

In respect to the population of the Navajo nation, it has been impossible for me to arrive at anything like an approximation of it. Indeed, if the few we have seen bear a proper proportion to the whole number contained in the country, the extent of this population has been greatly exaggerated. But I prefer to believe that, as a nation, they live much scattered, and that those through whose precincts we have passed have studiously avoided us. All things considered, then, I would estimate the population from eight thousand to ten thousand souls: this last number is Gregg's estimate.

As regards their stock, so far as I could observe, and from what the reclaimed Mexican captive before referred to has told me, I should say that it consisted mainly of sheep and horses; mules and cattle forming but an inconsiderable portion of it. We have as yet, however, not fallen upon a drove of either of these animals; which the Mexican explains by saying that they have, the better to conceal them from the troops, been driven to the mountains. Innumerable signs of sheep, however, have been seen by us. The horses, though generally better than those to be seen among the New Mexicans, and capable of long and rapid journeys under the saddle, are not, in my judgment, near so fine as what I have seen among the Comanches; and in

* Since writing the above, on inquiry, I learn from Señor Vigil that the Navajos (he has been in their country) formerly manufactured a few cotton fabrics from the raw material, which they were in the habit of importing from Santa Fé and other places; but that this species of manufacture has now almost, if not entirely, ceased.

and in regard to infidelity on the part of their women, their laws are said to be very stringent. These people, I am informed, herd stock, grow corn, and live in pueblos, of which there are, according to the Moqui present at this time, but three. It is reported that originally they had a greater number of towns; but, one or more of them becoming guilty of shedding human blood, they were on that account excinded. Does not this article of their creed, if true, point to a civilized origin? At all events, there is nothing in the features, manners, and general appearance of the Moqui I have seen to belie such an hypothesis, but, on the contrary, a great deal to make it probable.*

Martinez, the principal Navajo chief, brought in a beautiful mule this morning to present to the colonel commanding. The colonel, however, with the remark that it was neither customary nor proper on the part of public officers to receive such presents, graciously declined it.

There having been various contradictory reports among us relative to other American troops having visited Chelly besides Colonel Washington's command, I to-day inquired of Martinez whether such was the fact. His reply was, that the first American troops that had visited Chelly were those at present there.

The climate of this valley we find much milder during the night than that we have heretofore experienced since leaving Jémez.

Twentieth camp, September 10.—Colonel Washington learning yesterday from Chapaton that Captain Ker was not on his way to meet him at this place, as he was led at Tunecha, through information from a chief, to believe might be the case; and a report having been received that the Apaches had within a few days made an attack upon the friendly Pueblo Indians of Zuñi, and killed a number of them; the programme of operations has accordingly been altered; and our destination is now Santa Fé,

* It is proper, however, to state that Señor Vigil, who has twice visited these people, says he knows nothing of this peculiar article of their faith. He knows, however, that, though they are a docile people, they once were in a defensive war with the Navajos, against whom they used the bow and arrow. I suspect, when the exact truth is known with regard to these people, it will be found that, though inclined to a state of peace, they are not so disinclined to war as not, under coercive circumstances, to stand up, even at the risk of bloodshed, to defend their lives and property.

by the way of Zuffi; the object being to afford this people all the necessary aid which their reported situation demands.

The troops accordingly took up their line of march from Chelly at 7 A. M., the general course for the day being south-east. For the first two miles our route lay up the valley of Chelly, and then turned more eastwardly; it at this point commencing the ascent of a species of *mésa*, or rather upland. Three miles further, the road approximates within a few yards of the Cañon of Chelly. To this point the road is exceedingly rocky and hilly; but these hills can in all probability be avoided by continuing up the valley of Chelly as far as opposite the point mentioned, and then turning to the left up the *mésa*. (See map.) The country at the point referred to begins to be rolling; scrub pine and a species of spruce, thickly interspersed, constituting the *sylva*. Four miles further, a protrusion of trap rock, looking for all the world like the square tower of a church, with windows, could be seen, bearing northeast, some twelve miles off. Eighteen miles from our last camp, we commenced the ascent of the *Sierra de Laguna*, the slope of which wagons would find some difficulty in overcoming, unless one more easy could be found—a thing not at all improbable—or some labor be expended. The ascent we found to be two miles long—which accomplished, we were on a plateau; a mile more bringing us to our camp-ground for the night, where we find an abundance of wood, a sufficiency of pasturage, but no water.

The soil to-day has been principally of an arid, argillaceous character; the scrub pine and cedar characterizing this portion of the route. Since commencing the ascent of the *Sierra de Laguna*, scrub oak and yellow pine of a large growth have been the *sylva*. *Cacti* have been frequently seen. We crossed a number of heavy Navajo trails; and signs of large droves of sheep were observable. The day's march has been 20.50 miles.

Twenty-first camp, September 11.—The troops raised camp at a quarter after 6 A. M., and followed, as yesterday, a well-beaten trail; the general course for the day continuing about southeast. Having proceeded two and a half miles, one of the guards sent in advance yesterday to find water, returning and informing the colonel commanding that there was some in a cañon to the left, about five miles off, a detour to the northeast was made by the troops in order to reach it. This cañon is *said* to be a branch

of the Cañon de Cholly; and its banks were so steep as to make it necessary for the animals to be disburdened of their packs to enable them to reach the water at its bottom. The supply we found ample, and it doubtless is constant.

After halting for about an hour, the troops resumed the march, the remaining portion of the day's route continuing slightly more southwardly.

For the first fourteen and a half miles the country is a pine barren, resembling very much in appearance, and in the arenaceous character of its soil, the pine barrens of Florida, excepting that the former is more compact. For the remaining portion of the route, it is a rolling prairie, variegated with copses of piñon; the soil being of a reddish color, argillaceous in character and doubtless fertile, if sufficiently watered. Five miles before reaching our present camp, a *mésa* escarpment comes in from the left, and skirts the road on that side for the balance of the way. The walls of this *mésa* are probably from three to four hundred feet in height. Just before reaching camp, a most singular-looking column appears on the left of the road; resembling, when viewed near by, a vase; when remotely, a statue. It is of sandstone formation, and has an altitude of from thirty to forty feet. (See sketch in Plate 56.)

Our camp for the night is more pleasant than usual—a small pond or lake, bordered by a margin of green luxuriant grass, being directly in front of us, to gladden our sight; and the beautiful stratified walls of the *Cañoncito Bonito*, down which we are to turn to-morrow, adding its beauty to the scene. Some ducks, I notice, are constantly hovering around this spot.

The road to-day has been good. The distance marched is 24.83 miles. Several showers of rain have passed around us.

Astronomical observations put this camp in longitude $109^{\circ} 15' 30''$.

Twenty-second camp, September 12.—Failing, on account of a hazy atmosphere, to get my usual astronomical observations last evening, I succeeded, after the exercise of a great deal of patience, to get a few barely tolerable ones after midnight.

The command left this excellent camp-ground at 7 A. M.; its general course for the day being a trifle west of south. Immediately on resuming the march, we turned short to the left, or eastwardly, to thread the *Cañoncito Bonito*, (Beautiful Little

Cañon.) This cañon, which is about a quarter of a mile in length, is, on account of its high enclosing walls, and the well-defined character of their stratification, beautiful. The walls, which are nearly vertical, are probably from three to four hundred feet high. The formation is a red friable sandstone; the stratification, which discloses a dip of about ten degrees towards the east, as also the line of cleavage, being very distinctly marked. The width of the cañon is about one hundred feet, a small stream finding its way through its bottom. This cañon differs from that of Chelly, in the face of its walls not being so smooth; in not presenting as large unstratified masses; and having a *talus* of *debris* at the foot of the walls.

This cañon passed through, the route turned almost due south; following, for the remaining portion of the day, a succession of wide, shallow, fertile valleys, which are generally bordered on their eastern side by escarpment walls of a white and red sandstone formation.

Just after we debouched from the *Cañoncito Bonito*, a most singular prospect of detached turret-like rocks appeared skirting the valley just referred to on its eastern side. And down the valley, in a more southerly direction, a trap dyke of a striking character presented itself, a short distance to our front. For a sketch of this view, see Plate 57. This dyke, on examination, I found to present a most interesting exhibition of igneous action and vertical protrusion. Its height above the plain is some three or four hundred feet; its breadth, one hundred and fifty; and its length, about two hundred yards. Its strike is nearly due east. Here can be seen, in the same formation, rocks that have been once perfectly fused, and then cooled under pressure, the effect being to make them more dense; rocks that have been fused, and then cooled under the pressure only of the atmosphere, the effect being to make them scoriaceous; and rocks that look as if they had not been fused, but merely baked. I noticed also here, in a sort of cave, a large mass of the same kind of black, agglutinated, pitchy substance I have already described as having been seen, August 24, in the rocks of the *Cañon de la Copa*. It was here, as there, intermingled with bits of straw, &c. These are the only trap rocks we have seen near our route since we left our eighteenth camp.

About nine miles from our last camp, on the route, is *Siene-*