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**RECONNAISSANCES OF ROUTES FROM SAN ANTONIO TO
EL PASO,**

BY

BREVET LT. COL. J. E. JOHNSTON;
LIEUTENANT W. F. SMITH;
LIEUTENANT F. T. BRYAN;
LIEUTENANT N. H. MICHLER; AND
CAPTAIN S. G. FRENCH, OF Q'RMASER'S DEP'T.

ALSO,

THE REPORT OF CAPT. R. B. MARCY'S ROUTE FROM FORT SMITH
TO SANTA FE; AND THE REPORT OF LIEUT. J. H. SIMPSON
OF AN EXPEDITION INTO THE NAVAJO COUNTRY;

AND

THE REPORT OF LIEUTENANT W. H. C. WRITING'S RECONNAISSANCES OF THE
WESTERN FRONTIER OF TEXAS.

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within half an hour, before the whole column had passed over, it was scarcely fordable.

Some fine specimens of trap dike are discoverable just after crossing the Rio Galisteo—one of them resembling, as nearly as may be, an artificial wall; another, the dark-colored remains of an old pueblo. About six miles further, we crossed the small affluent of the Rio de Santa Fe, on which Delgado's *rancho* is situated. Travellers sometimes make this rancho a stopping-place for the night between Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Sixteen miles more traversed, at half-past three in the afternoon, much to the gratification of the whole party, we reached Santa Fe. The road from Algodones to Santa Fe is generally very good, the only exception being a few short steep hills.

The face of the country to-day has presented, with some trifling exceptions—along the Rio Grande, at Delgado's, and between Agua Fria and Santa Fe—one extended barren waste of uncultivable soil.

Santa Fe, September 26.—The artillery, under Major Kendrick, reached this place yesterday; the infantry, under Captain Sykes, to-day.

*Character of the soil from the eastern base of the Sierra de Tumecha to Chelly, and thence to Santa Fe, by the return route.**

It may be thought, from the frequent mention of good land along the route since we left the eastern base of the Tumecha mountains, on our return trip, that fertility has characterized the country generally through which we have passed since that period. But, lest so erroneous an impression may obtain, I think it proper to observe that, for the greater portion of this distance, the road has threaded the valleys of the country, and therefore the land has presented itself such as I have described it. The country, it is true, has exhibited a greater extent of cultivable soil than that traversed between Santa Fe and the Tumecha mountains, but yet, in comparison with the whole area of surface, it should still be considered as but a very *small fractional part*.

The idea I pertinaciously adhered to when in the States, before ever having seen this country, was, that, besides partaking of the bold characteristics of the primary formations, rocks confusedly piled upon rocks, deep glens, an occasional cascade, green fertile valleys—the usual accompaniments of such characteristics with us in the States—it was also, like the country of the States, generally fertile, and covered with verdure. But never did I have, nor do I believe anybody can have, a full appreciation of the almost universal barrenness which pervades this country, until they come out, as I did, to “search the land,” and behold with their own eyes its general nakedness. The primary mountains present none of that wild, rocky, diversified, pleasing aspect which they do in the United States, but, on the contrary, are usually of a rounded form, covered by a dull, lifeless-colored soil, and generally destitute of any other sylvia than pine and cedar, most frequently of a sparse and dwarfish character. The sedimentary rocks, which, contrary to my preconceived notions, are the prevalent formations of the country, have a crude, half-made-up appearance, sometimes of a dull buff color, sometimes white, sometimes red, and some-

* See *ante*, thirteenth camp, August 31, for general character of the country traversed east of the Sierra de Tumecha.

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Johnston
U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers

times these alternating, and, being almost universally bare of vegetation, except that of a sparse, dwarfish, sickening-colored aspect, cannot be regarded as a general thing—at least, not until familiarity reconciles you to the sight—without a sensation of loathing. The face of the country, for the same reason—the general absence of all verdure, and the dead, dull, yellow aspect of its soil—has a tendency to create the same disagreeable sensation. I desire it, therefore, to be borne in mind that, when I have in the course of my journal spoken of *fertile* soil, or of *beautiful* prospects, I have spoken *relatively*—that is, in relation or contrast with the other portions of the country in which these exceptions have occurred, and not in relation to our more favored domain in the States.

Conclusion.

Before concluding my journal, I think it proper to bring to the notice of the department the expediency of having the country examined west of the Pueblo of Zuñi, for the ascertainment of a wagon-route from the former point to the Pueblo of los Angeles, or, failing in this, to San Diego.

The route from Santa Fe to Zuñi—a distance of two hundred and four miles—is, with a very slight application of labor, practicable for wagons; and the guide, Carravahal, who has been down the Rio de Zuñi to its junction with the Colorado of the West, says it continues practicable all the way along this tributary to the point mentioned.

Mr. Richard Campbell, of Santa Fe, since my return, has informed me that, in 1827, with a party of thirty-five men and a number of pack animals, he travelled from New Mexico to San Diego by the way of Zuñi and the valley of the Rio de Zuñi, and found no difficulty throughout the whole distance. He further states, there is no question that a good wagon-route, furnishing the proper quantum of wood, water, and grass, can be found in this direction, both to San Diego and the Pueblo de los Angeles. He informs me, however, that, in order to reach the Rio Colorado, the Rio de Zuñi would have to be diverged from at the falls, within a few miles of its confluence with the Colorado, and a valley running generally southwardly followed down to its junction with the valley of that river.

He has further informed me that above the mouth of the Rio de Zuñi there is a ford, called *El Vado de los Padres*, (the Ford of the Fathers,) to which a route leads from Zuñi by the way of the pueblos of the Moquis. This route, which he represents as much shorter than the other, is, however, on account of the difficulty of crossing the cañon of the river at the ford, only practicable for pack animals.

The Colorado, when he crossed it, near the mouth of the Rio de Zuñi, was fordable; but he is of the opinion that it might not always be found so.

It is proper for me, however, in this connexion, to state that I have conversed with two or three trappers, who represent that the Colorado is so deeply cañoned from its mouth upwards as to make a wagon-route in the direction proposed impracticable. These persons, however, have at the same time stated that they know nothing personally of the continuous existence of this cañon, never having been immediately on the ground: their representations, then, should not counterbalance the statement of those who have.

I have introduced the above representations, to which I might add those

