

MISSOURI HISTORICAL REVIEW.

VOL. 8.

July, 1914.

No. 4.

MAJOR ALPHONSO WETMORE'S DIARY OF A JOURNEY TO SANTA FE, 1828.

Alphonso Wetmore (1), like several other of our noteworthy early settlers, first became interested in the Territory of Missouri as an official of the National Government, and when he later resigned his office he remained in the new State and became one of its influential citizens.

Born in 1793, he was not yet twenty years of age when the second war with England commenced. He entered the national service at that time and lost his right arm in one of the northern frontier campaigns. He was retained in the service of the United States Army, however, after the war, and was stationed in the Territory of Missouri, being paymaster in the Sixth Regiment, United States Infantry. After leaving the army service some years later, he settled on the extreme frontier, in the Boone's Lick country, where he became a merchant, lawyer, and author. He was one of the original trustees of New Franklin when it was incorporated in 1833, (the former town of Franklin having been destroyed by the Missouri river.)

1. For notes on the life of Wetmore, see the following:

F. L. Billon, *Annals of St. Louis*, 1804-1821, p. 96.

A. Wetmore, *Gazeteer of Missouri*, preface.

Missouri Statesman, June 22, 1849 (gives obituary notice).

J. T. Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, Vol. II, p. 1615.

R. G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XXVI, p. 31.

Soon after 1833, he seems to have moved to St. Louis, where in 1837 he compiled and published the first *Gazeteer of Missouri*. For the next twelve years, Wetmore was engaged in the practice of law, and in writing for various periodicals. In the summer of 1849, a terrible visitation of the cholera spread over the Mississippi Valley, and claimed Wetmore as one of its victims, June 13, 1849.

It was when Franklin was the starting point for the "inland trade," and while Major Wetmore was one of its residents, that he became interested in the Santa Fe overland commerce. Various communications from his pen, in regard to the traffic, written either directly for the press or sent to prominent officials from whom it found its way into the papers, appeared from time to time in the *Missouri Intelligencer*, the famous Boone's Lick country pioneer newspaper. The following history of the trade, however, was written in response to an inquiry from Lewis Cass, Secretary of War in President Jackson's cabinet, and together with the "Diary," appeared as a part of Senate Document 90, 22nd Congress, First Session.

The Missouri Legislature petitioned Congress with more or less regularity for nearly twenty years for aid in carrying on the Santa Fe trade, and particularly for a rebate on foreign goods imported into the United States before being exported to New Mexico. Occasionally one branch or the other of Congress became interested enough to ask the President for more information as to the trade. In this instance, Secretary Cass was collecting information in response to a resolution of the Senate.

F. F. STEPHENS.

LETTER AND DIARY.

FRANKLIN, MISSOURI, October 11, 1831.

SIR: In reply to the queries transmitted under cover of your letter of the 9th ultimo, I have the honor to submit the following history of our trade to Mexico.

Early in the summer of 1821, several citizens of Boonlick made a small outfit at this place, and departed with the avowed purpose of visiting the settlements of New Mexico. The enterprise was at the time, deemed one of infinite peril; and the pecuniary venture was accordingly limited in amount; and the articles of merchandise comprised in it, were suited either to Mexican or Indian taste. In the event of failure to reach the point of destination, it was a part of the plan of the adventurous party to remunerate themselves with the capture of wild horses, or, in the manly and animating sport of the buffalo chase; they returned the same season. In the spring of 1822, an increased number of adventurers packed on mules a small amount of merchandise (valued at \$3,000) at this place, with the purpose of making a farther experiment in the Santa Fe trade. In pursuing the route, in their judgment the most direct, they fell upon a sandy desert beyond the Arkansas, where they suffered infinitely from thirst, for more than forty hours. They continued their route and were remunerated for their toil and perils with a profit of about two thousand per cent. Encouraged by this essay, in 1823, the trade assumed a more settled and regular character.

An additional number of respectable citizens, with increased capital, engaged in it, and wagons were employed this year, for the first time, in the transportation of merchandise. This company, too, suffered extremely in the passage of the great *Jornada*, or day's journey, from one watering place to another, beyond the Arkansas river. A safer route across the sands has been since traced out, and is now pursued

with little or no inconvenience. The experiment of this year, gave encouragement for an increase of the trade, which has been progressive ever since; and its importance induced Congress to appropriate \$30,000 for laying out and making the route. This task had been previously performed by the traders themselves; and no advantage was derived from the expenditure of the money in the summer of 1824. The protection subsequently afforded in 1829 by the troops, is matter of record in the War Department. The whole number of lives lost in the Mexican trade up to this year, is eight souls, to which we may add two of the fur traders, who fell on or near the trace, while the caravan of this year, which has just arrived, was returning. In 1827, the robberies on the Santa Fe trace amounted to 130 head of stock; and, in 1828, the loss was estimated at 825 head of animals of all kinds. Since that year, the losses have been so inconsiderable, that no mention is made of the particulars. The Camanches and Panis are chargeable with these frays. In 1821, the caravan consisted of 21 men, and their merchandise was valued at \$3,000. The caravan of last spring numbered 260 men, with 135 wagons, and merchandise to the amount of \$270,000. Autumn is not the most favorable season for going through the unsettled tract of country of 800 miles, although it has been several times successfully attempted. A small company went out this fall. The dangers that are encountered in this trade, consist in the hostile operations against the caravans, of the Panis, Chians, Comanches, Kiawas and Arrapaho Indians, all of whom hunt in and claim the country through which the Mexican road leads.

The Blackfeet Indians have this year, for the first time, made their appearance in great force on the trace.

To insure the safety of the caravans it is the custom of the traders, on reaching the rendezvous on the western boundary of Missouri, to elect a caravan bachi, and other officers, who are invested with such authority as may be voluntarily conceded from day to day, or such as they may have the address to enforce. This is greater or less, as the dangers increase

or diminish. When on the march, as night approaches, the wagons are thrown into a square, and made to resemble, with much aid of the imagination, a camp fortified by the Roman legions. Guards are always set, and these watch or sleep, as their interest or love of repose may predominate. The capital employed in the trade this year, is about three hundred thousand dollars. The outfits consists [sic] of wagons, mule and ox teams. The arms carried, are generally rifles and pistols, with a light piece of artillery to each caravan. A small supply of provisions is laid in to subsist the company until they reach the buffalo country, where an abundance is always procured by hunting during the march. The returns consist of bullion, Mexican dollars, fine gold, beaver, and horses, mules, and asses. One hundred packs of beaver are embraced in this year's return. The time of departure from the rendezvous on our border, is settled at or about the middle of May, when the prairie grass is sufficiently advanced to forage the teams, and the return caravans reach the same point from the 1st to the 10th of October. The time employed in going, in effecting sales, and in returning, is less than five months.

Those traders who bring their operations within the compass of one season, never penetrate the settlements more than one hundred miles, visiting the towns of Santa Fe and Toas, and some small Pueblos, and Banchos, on Rio Del Norte. Those who remain in the country, extend their operations throughout the State of Senora and as far south as some of the most considerable towns of the State of Chihuahua, (Chiquaqua,) including the city of that name.

When any of these traders may have completed their sales at a season unfavorable for their return by the interior routes, they proceed to the port of Brazos Santiago, near the mouth of Rio del Norte, or Rio Grand, (as it is there called) and return to the United States in one of the New Orleans packets. They likewise travel home through Texas. Thus it is the practice to perform the whole route from Franklin, in Missouri, with wagons, and the same mule team, to the gulf

of Mexico, a distance by the coach road of three thousand miles. There is a good coach road from Santa Fe through El Pasos, Chihuahua, El Bayo, Mapomis, Paras, Saltillo, and Monteroy, to Matamoras, the business town for the port of Brazos Santiago. It will be perceived that there is some connection subsisting between the Mexican (interior) and the fur trade. American mountain companies are annually fitted out at Santa Fe, and at Toas, after the arrival of the caravans at these towns; and our traders take into account this branch of business in laying in their goods. In responding to the inquiry "what are the facilities or impediments offered by the Mexican Government," we are led to the most interesting point to which this communication tends. There are no facilities afforded the merchants of the United States who trade to Mexico by the interior route. But great impediments have been always thrown in the way of this class of our citizens, who have, by their risks and daring enterprise, deserved much indulgence. The Mexican Government has always given a preference, strongly marked, to their own merchants. This cannot be objected to. But facilities are afforded to the merchants of Great Britain and France, that are denied to those of the United States. The most grievous exactions have been imposed on our merchants latterly in the form of a per diem tax, for keeping open retailing shops; and an arrival duty of ten dollars on each cargo, or mule load of merchandise, has been collected. State and federal enactments have sometimes conflicted, and these have tended to enhance the impositions.

The suggestion for a remedy for these evils cannot, I presume, with propriety, come within the compass of this communication. But, the merchants of the United States, trading to Mexico, by the interior, if allowed the advantage of debenture, will, on entering the market, be placed on an equal footing with those of all nations trading through the sea ports. With this change the interior trade would assume an importance, which it has never claimed; and it would,

probably, advance to several millions per annum. It might then be extended as far south as the city of Durango.

A heavy duty is now collected in our ports on many of the leading articles of the Mexican trade, to which the Mexican duty is added before the goods are offered in market. The articles of foreign manufacture chiefly in demand, and which are not contraband, in the states of Chihuahua, and Senora, and province of New Mexico, are French calico and cotton shawls, English calico, brown and bleached cotton shirtings, and cotton hose, India black silk handkerchiefs, and German linens. If it is in contemplation to do anything for this trade, it is only necessary to allow drawback on all merchandise imported into the United States for the Mexican market, and actually exported by the interior, and our caravans will be strong enough for self defence.

With all the disadvantages which have been encountered, this trade has continued to increase steadily for a period of nine years, and the circulating medium of Missouri now consists principally of Mexican dollars. Many of our citizens are profitably engaged in the trade; horses, mules, and oxen, are employed in carrying it on; the farmers and mechanics derive advantage from the outfits, and our whole community is benefitted by this interesting traffic. It has been remarked that the Government of Mexico evinces an unfriendly disposition towards the citizens of this country engaged in the trade; yet, in the personal intercourse I have had with the Mexicans in their own country, I find nothing to justify a belief that they entertain any but the most friendly, if not kindred feelings, for their republican friends of the north.

The commercial regulations of which we have a right to complain, have been always effected by the deep laid schemes of the English merchants resident in that country. They, too, may have retarded the negotiation of our commercial treaty with Mexico, and its ratification by that Government. The unsettled state of the Mexican Government gives encouragement, and insures success to the machi-

nations of crafty men, who, perhaps, address themselves, on some occasions, to irresponsible and corrupt officers.

The accompanying letter from a respectable merchant in Chihuahua is offered for the information of the War Department; but it would, perhaps, be impolitic to publish its contents.

With the existence of the kind feelings which the people and the Government of this country entertain towards the Mexicans, there can be no occasion for a hint, which, at this moment, occurs to me, but adopting the doctrine which may be applicable, if our just expectations are not realized, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," it may not be amiss to observe, that a field or battering train would encounter little or no obstruction between the place where I write and the city of Mexico. The provisional government of New Mexico has sometimes facilitated the operations of our traders; and, in 1829, furnished the return caravan with an escort commanded by Colonel Biscarara, a very distinguished officer of the Mexican army.

The following extract from a diary which I kept while traveling from Missouri to New Mexico, may not be inappropriate, and it is accordingly offered for your perusal. In the memoranda made while pursuing my route from Santa Fe to the mouth of the Rio Grande, I find nothing that relates to the subjects embraced in your inquiries, which I have not already noted or alluded to, and the extracts, therefore, end on reaching the former place.

DIARY.

May 28, 1828. Reached the Blue Spring, the rendezvous of the Mexican traders, in season to attend to the election of officers; *ourself* elected captain of the host. "There may be some honor in it," as the deacon remarked on his own promotion, "but not much profit." 29th. In preparation for departure, inspection of arms, fixing ammunition. 30th. The caravan moved at 7 o'clock, a. m. made 16 miles, and encamped early. Formed our wagons into an

oblong square, and set a horse guard. 31st. Made ten miles at noon, halted, and prepared for the approaching storm; after dinner, the rain commenced, and continued until sunset.

June 1. (Sunday), a tempest just as we were ready to set forward, the mules disengaged from the wagons in haste, and *double reefs* taken in the wagon covers. All hands employed in detaining the mules, who are disposed to take leave of *nos amigos*. At 9 o'clock under way, reached the 'Big Blue,' all our spades in requisition to make the descent into the river practicable; the wagons eased down the bank by 20 men at a trail rope; encamped in the prairie beyond the river; met here two bee hunters; one of our hunters brought in a deer in the red, and lean of course; one prairie fly discovered today, alarming; my Mexican servant furnished with a gun, proud as Franklin was with his whistle. This character is today mounted on the *verbatim* copy of old Rosinante, caparisoned in character.

June 2. Set off early, and marched 14 miles, and encamped at the Round Grove.

3d. Our route today lies over a fine prairie country, timber at a distance on our right, and a little on our left; encamped at 20 miles distance from last night's camp, at a point of timber opposite Bel Mont. Found today a swarm of bees in our path.

4th. Moving smoothly forward, met an Indian moccasin track; encamped at a little grove on the left of the trace. Made 18 miles.

5th. The road today fine and the country beautiful; nothing wanting but timber; two irregular hills on our right, passed over corn hill, encamped on the right of the trace, one mile from timber. March of the day estimated at 18 miles.

6th. At 5 miles reached Elk creek, where we discovered the corpse of a wagon which had been left by the preceding caravan. O Temperance! O Ditch Water! Crossed Mari De Signe. Made 16 miles.

7th. At ten o'clock reached Rock creek, 8 miles; ate strawberries and caught fish; crossed two other small creeks, and, at 6 o'clock, encamped, after completing 18 miles.

8th. (Sunday). Passed three or four rocky fords, and over a thin rocky soil; rolling ground; took our siesta at an old Indian camp; picked up a soft-shelled turtle; saw fresh Indian signs. Made 18 miles.

9th. At 2 o'clock, a. m., thunder, lightning, and rain; in motion at ten o'clock; and at six miles arrested by high water. This, and the last stream, fell into the Arkansas river. Ate this morning bacon and goose eggs, and at noon turtle soup. Not an alderman present! ! !

10th. Still waiting for the fall of the small water course in our route.

11th. The small streams are down this morning, and we are in motion at the usual hour. Road muddy; reached Council Grove; the creek Ni Osho too high to ford. Made 8 miles.

12th. Detained by high water; one mess breakfasting on ham and eggs, another dining on alderman soup; met here a return caravan.

13th. Made a bridge to the water edge and crossed the wagons in season to encamp before the storm; rain in the evening, and at midnight a thunder gust.

14th. Rain continues, which detains us until the middle of the day. Made only six miles, and encamped in time to reef wagon cover before a Noah-like tempest descended.

15th. Under way at 8 o'clock; made eight grievous miles, and encamped early at Diamond Spring; a mutinous disposition repressed by *bandit logic*.

16th. With infinite labor, through mud, we reached 8 miles, and slept in the prairie at a spring; no fuel.

17th. In four hours' march made only 8 miles; found weeds and brush sufficient to boil coffee. Our route today is over a roundabout (Irish) cutoff; encamped after marching 14 miles; not a tree in view; enough fuel procured to dress our suppers. These scanty gleanings consist of sumack

brush. While suffering with extreme thirst, about the middle of today, one of the party discovered a spring, the water of which bubbled through white sands, at the head of a prairie ravine.

18th. Made a prairie bridge, and marched 12 miles, to Cotton Wood grove.

19th. After having proceeded 10 miles, halted at a place where there are "ferruginous appearances;" our mules found salt here on the surface of the earth. The antelope is a subject of speculation this morning, and one of our hunters has been occupied in decoying, with a flag, one of these nimble-footed animals. He likewise attempted this ruse de guerre to draw a wolf within reach of his rifle: a piece of flesh on the end of his gun-stick would have been more effectual. We find buffalo grass today; and fresh traces of buffalo remind us of the approaching marrow-bone feasts that are to change the monotony of our meals. No fuel; made 18 miles.

20th. Our route today is over a fine tract of table-land; passed several branches of Turkey creek, which runs into the Arkansas; saw one wild horse and a few antelope; encamped at a little creek; without fuel; two men lost; fired a gun, and, late at night, they reached camp. This day's march extended 20 miles.

21st. A little before daylight, the mules made an abortive attempt to raise a stampido; half an hour later an alarm was created by a shot from one of the sentinels, and the cry of Indians, aroused the whole camp. Killed and wounded, blank; alarmed, none.

22d. At 5 o'clock, a. m., after moving quietly forward three hours and a half, a team in rear of the caravan took fright, and, in an instant, more than twenty were coursing over the prairie with Olympic speed. Dined at twelve miles, and dressed our first meal over a fire made of dry buffalo ordure; marched six miles further, and encamped on the branch of Little Arkansas. An Irish sentinel of the horse guard, about 10 o'clock, mistook one of the company

for an Indian; he fired, and then challenged. Several fish caught this evening.

23d. At six o'clock commenced a bridge, and completed it at ten. Several fine fish caught this morning; crossed, and put the caravan in motion at 2 o'clock. The road lies over a less fertile country than that which we have passed; a hot wind from the sand hills to the south, and on our left. The ground here, in many places, covered with salt; made 12 miles, and encamped at a branch of Cow creek; timber on its banks.

24th. Dined at a difficult crossing of another branch of Cow creek, which we passed after an interesting entertainment of a wagon race. It is one of the *foibles* of mule teams that, after they have travelled four or five hundred miles, and when it is supposed they are about to tire, to take fright from a profile view of their shadows, and run like the antelope of these plains. After marching 13 miles, reached the main branch of Cow creek, which is barely fordable. Bridged the crossing.

25th. Finished crossing at 10 o'clock; a good supply of fish caught last night, and this morning. Reached the Arkansas at 4 o'clock, encamped and replenished our shot pouches. "Keep your eyes skinned now," said the old trapper. We are now entering upon the most dangerous section of the trace, the war ground of the Panis, Osages and Kansas. This is likewise a fine buffalo country, but we have no hump! no marrow bones! and no tongues, except our own *parts of speech*. Our hunters have brought in an antelope. We have observed in the prairie, during the last six days, the sensitive plant, or, as our Englishman says, "the plant to try maids with." One of our hunters has filled the camp with "smiles" and buffalo meat: the first two buffaloes which we discovered are slain. Netty Bumpo himself would have granted an approving grin on such a hunt.

26th. Our route today lies up the left bank of the Arkansas river. Saw a hare, larger than the English animal

of that name. We have bigger thunder here, too. Passed through several prairie-dog villages. Our hunters saw thirty buffalo, and selected two. Made 20 miles. We find the Walnut creek swimming.

27th. A fish resembling a shad caught this morning. Waiting for the high water to recede.

28th. Discovered a shallow ford, and crossed. The prairie on our right and left, and in front, speckled with buffalo. Encamped early near the Arkansas. Our hunters give tongue and hump meat: this our old trapper calls "strong" buffalo signs, and the old Englishman was heard to mutter something about one Sir Loin, whom he had seen once or twice in Cumberland. A strong gale of wind at night-fall. Made six miles today.

29th. Fine short grass prairie; buffalo in immense herds on all sides; selected several fat ones, and encamped, after a march of 19 miles.

30th. At 8 miles, reached the Pani fork of the Arkansas, cut down and bridged the muddy banks, and passed over in a thundergust.

July 1st. Half the day spent in drying, and bringing up arrears of meals. Our route continued over a beautiful inclined plain 15 miles. During this day's march, the caravan bachi shot his own mule through the head in a buffalo chase. Stearne's lament over the dead ass repeated.

2d. Saw two small herds of wild horses; hunters killed five buffalo. Our road lies over a fine buffalo grass plain until noon, when we enter a rolling prairie country. Twenty-one miles today.

3d. Our march today is through a plain and rolling prairie, surrounded with buffalo. A herd of these attempted to break through our column of teams. "It will take a smart skirmmage and a sprinkle of shots," said the old trapper, "to turn them aside," and the leader fell at the flash of his rifle. Marched 20 miles, and encamped without timber—our supper dressed as usual, over buffalo fuel.

4th. Continued our march over the finest natural road in the world, along the left bank of the Arkansas, 18 miles, to Anderson's caches. Saw here the grave of a white man and a broken swivel; two miles farther reached the ford of the river. Encamped.

5th. This day employed in preparation for passing the deep ford.

6th. Doubled teams, and passed the river. Here we take in water for three days' march.

7th. At 4 p. m. we entered *Jornada*. After passing the sand hills, a few buffalo were discovered, which is an indication of water, and at 5 and 7 miles, ponds were discovered; at the last we encamped for the night.

8th. We have found water at 3, 4, and 12 miles; all apprehensions are at rest. Wild horses have approached within four miles of our line of march. Made 22 miles, and encamped without water.

9th. Three miles from camp, on the trace, we observed water; sixteen miles further on several ponds of water were discovered, which had been indicated as we were approached by herds of buffalo and swarms of mosquitoes. Encamped, after a march of 19 miles.

10th. Water in abundance along the trace today. At the pool where we dined, a buffalo approached within gunshot, and was slain. This day's march is estimated at 22 miles.

11th. Our course today was parallel with the Semiron. Crossed Sandy creek, and, at 14 miles, halted. The Semiron here presents a fine view of water, and 8 miles further up, at our camp, not a drop of water appears in the channel. Our course from the Arkansas to the Semiron is generally southwest; along the left bank of the latter, it lies almost due—west.

12th. At 12 o'clock reached water. In the afternoon our course changed to south-southwest; about sunset a hill ahead and buffalo in view: both these indicate water. At 7 o'clock encamped at a small pond, after completing 22 miles.

13th. At 8 miles reached the Semiron, changed our

course up the stream two miles, and dined at a spring which waters a small piece or parcel of *tierra calicante*. In the evening, proceeded up the stream 8 miles: the earth whitened with salt and saltpetre; thunder and wind; the earth thirsting, but not a drink obtained from the clouds. This day's march 18 miles.

14th. Advanced 11 miles up the left bank of the Semiron, and dined. In the evening marched 10 miles, crossing and recrossing the river. Saw two wild horses. Course southwest in the forenoon, and south-southwest in the evening. 21 miles, a stampido at night, with wind and rain.

15th. At 7 miles, reached the Willows, a noted land mark, and at the same time obtained a view of the Sugarloaf mound; the two middle mounds, and the table mound, all above and near the upper Semiron spring. At 12 o'clock, encountered an Indian and squaw of the Kiawa nation. Several teams tired; the road good, but the saltpetre along the river bottom weakens our animals. This might be avoided by keeping out on the plains. Only 17 miles today.

16th. Crossed and filed off from the Semiron, and at 10 miles reached the upper Semiron spring, at the base of a very abrupt rocky hill, on the summit of which is a cross standing over the bones of two white men, who were slain while asleep by the *gallant, high-minded, persecuted, gentlemen Indians*. Saw here the first timber in nine days' march.

17th. At 7 miles a creek; cedars in abundance on the neighboring cliffs; marched 8 miles farther, and encamped at water, in a drain: 15 miles.

18th. After two hours' march, discovered the Rabbit Ears, two high isolated mountains which rise above the plain; since we crossed the Arkansas, the soil is miserably poor; marched 10 miles over hilly ground. In the evening, our road lies up an inclined plain, toward the Rock Mountains; seven miles to our camp, on the bank of a muddy pool, around which one hundred and sixty mules are pressing; a puddle is reserved for ourselves, which is deemed a luxury, after having drank unto pickling the salt waters of the Semiron;

our long-eared stoics opened their konks half an hour before we halted, inviting this humane measure. The chapter of untoward events today, are, the resignation, in disgust, of a guard sergeant, and a gun-broken head of a driver, who held a seditious rein of ill-governed ass colts: at 17 miles we halted, without timber.

19th. The road this morning over rolling ground six miles, to a dry creek; thence up the bed of the creek to a rocky basin of water; the videttes ahead. In the evening discovered three Kiawa Indians, who were at war with a buffalo bull; they hid themselves in clift of a rock; when they came forth, they uttered all the Spanish they were masters of, bellowing lustily *amigo! amigo! friend! friend!* This day's march estimated at fifteen miles.

20th. The road today hilly until noon; in the evening over a plane; passed an excellent spring, and a small creek, *La Madre Loma*, (Mother hill), in our view. Yesterday morning after we encamped, a small party of red gentlemen called on us; smoked, ate, drank, and slept with us; one of them, at the first setting, drank nine pints of water; he was probably a secretary of some cold water conventicle. The chief of this little band claimed the honor for them of being Kiawas. Through the medium of the Pani language, we learned that they had been on a gentleman-like horse stealing expedition against the Chians, in which they were at first successful, but when they believed that had escaped with their booty, the Chians were down upon them, and retook the cavalry and a few scalps. They had walked at double quick step for the last two or three days; finding themselves at ease and secure in our camp, they 'slept fast.' Our march of the day was 15 miles.

21st. This morning, we parted with our guests, with mutual expressions of esteem and good will; our old trapper told them that when he returned their visit, he would leave his card, meaning a ball cartridge. The soil today is improving as we advance. Saw wild horses, deer, and antelope; encamped four miles short of the Round Mound; 15 miles.

22d. Sent a party of 8 men ahead today to make arrangements for payment of duties; the supposed distance from Toas, the nearest settlement, is one hundred miles. This evening our road is fine, and lies over a plane, on all sides of which, detached mountains render the scenery extremely picturesque; a few wild horses in view; the buffalo have been banished their usual range in these plains, by the droughth of the seasons. Recent rains have afforded us a supply; and in the deep rocky branch near where we are tonight encamped, there is really a deficiency. Our mules, during the last few days, have been thriving.

23d. Reached this morning the summit of the ridge which divides the waters of the Semiron and Canadian branch of the Arkansas. From this point, we have a view of a spar of the Rocky Mountains; we observe, likewise, *Cievas las Gallinas*, (Chicken Hills,) which are situated not far from St. Magill. The atmosphere on this mountain region is so clear that we can, with the naked eye, take in incalculable distances; a hill that may seem within an hour's ride, proves to be ten leagues from us.

24th. After four hours' march, we find ourselves at the Point of Rocks. We were today gratified with a full view of the Rocky Mountains ranging along to the right. When our Mexican, from a hill top, caught a distant view of the mountain, he leapt for joy, discharged his carabine, and exclaimed, "La luz de mis ojos, mi casa, mi alma;" light of my eyes, my house, my love. Such emotions as these, we call, in Spanish, *amor de la patria*. Marched 17 miles.

25th. In the morning entertained with mule races by several teams; crossed the Canadian branch of the Arkansas; encamped after a march of 15 miles.

26th. Still encamped at the ford of Canadian river; the base of the Rocky Mountains appeared to us not more than six leagues distant; the mountain tops are covered with snow. This evening when threatened with a famine, or a mule feast, two black specks appeared far off, up the

ravine leading to the mountains: these were buffalo, and they cost us only two ball cartridges.

27th. Marched today twenty-five miles, and encamped at the *Pilot Knobs*. The only occurrence worthy of note, is a sample of sharpshooting by Maj. Nimrod; he attempted to create a wild mule, and shot him somewhere about the hips.

28th. Timber to the right and left, not far off; the soil sufficiently fertile for growing small grain. Our mules have been recently much benefited by the *gramme grass*, the best pasturage between the Atlantic and Pacific ocean. A heavy shower of rain fell on us as we were about to renew our afternoon march; before we halted for the night, another shower; and, about 9 o'clock, a rain far hung over the hills on our right; the moon was up; encamped near a grove of pines, after completing 20 miles.

29th. At dawn of day the whole caravan of merchants and muleteers resolved themselves into a committee of tar makers, and long before night every tar bucket was filled. Ourselves here "bruised a serpent's head;" the snake measured 5 feet 3 inches in length, and one of the tar kill operators killed his brother or cousin, which measured 5 feet 4 inches, inclusive of rattles. This last had swallowed a prairie dog of mature age and full grown.

30th. Resumed our march, and crossed *el Moro* and *el Sapiote*. Timber in all the streams of this region of country.

31st. Waiting the return of our advance party. The Mexicans spinning rope yarn out of the foretops of buffalo.

August 1st. The caravan in motion at the usual time; at one mile from camp, "a horse loose in a cane brake," said the old trapper; turned around and saw twenty teams in full career; the mules had rested one day, and grateful for the indulgence, volunteered this entertainment. About noon saw a party of horsemen on the trace ahead; they were our advance party, with several Mexicans. Continued our march, and encamped at *Rio las Gallinas*.

2d. Left the caravan, which was within a day's march of San Magill, the first Mexican settlement through which the wagon road passes. A guide proposed to lead the light party which I had joined, by a direct route, in one day to Santa Fe; he did so, but over Alps and Appenines. Before we reached the summit of the mountain, in mercy to our mules, we were constrained to dismount. All marvellous, and some scientific, travellers write, "that, on ascending the summit of cloud ridden mountains, they feel great difficulty in respiration, on account of a change in the atmosphere;" never bearing in mind that their impatience to reach the end of the journey, imposes on their lungs the double duty of a blacksmith's bellows.

End of extracts from the diary.

In expressing an opinion that the caravans are competent to self-defense, I have perhaps adopted the impression that prevails among men, with arms in their hands, and impelled by that fearless spirit which animates the people of this country.

But the loss of several valuable lives in this trade has occurred; and this evil may be extended, if the Blackfeet Indians and the Chians continue to infest the route of the traders. These tribes are numerous, warlike, and extremely hostile. Perhaps the War Department may suggest some mode of military protection to this trade, which will meet with the approbation of Congress, so as to prevent a recurrence of the disasters of 1820. [Should be 1828—Ed.]

In the autumn of that year, the largest return caravan was repeatedly attacked, and two lives lost. A smaller company, which returned late in the fall, was defeated, with the loss of one man, all their horses and mules; and they were to a precipitate flight in the night, lighted on the way by the blaze of their wagons. Toiling under the grievous weight of their money packs, feeding on the herbage of the prairies, they marched in this manner more than three hundred miles to our frontier settlements.

The larger company was strong enough, and so prudent as to escape defeat, although two of their number were slain. One of these, with only the faint flickerings of life remaining, was borne along, with great care, two days' march; and when at length the caravan halted in the wilderness, to perform for him the last sacred office, the enemy appeared. A band of the same nation which had enacted the mischief, approached with friendly indications. The grief and indignation which were mingled, and strongly operating at the grave of their companion, rendered abortive all the conciliatory efforts of the commander of the caravan: not from the pipe of peace, but from fifty rifles, a volume of smoke arose. The bloody reprisal was complete; and when the traveller subsequently passed that way, he saw the wolf of the prairie

“Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb;
They were too busy to bark at him;
From a Panis' scull they had stripped the flesh,
As ye peel the fig when the fruit is fresh;
And their white tusks crunched o'er the whiter scull
As it slipped through their jaws, when their edge grew
dull,
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
When they scarce could rise from the spot where they
fed.”

Permit me to conclude this communication, which, perhaps, has been already extended beyond endurance, with the description of a surgical operation that was performed on the plains beyond the Arkansas. One of the traders had a dangerous gun-shot wound in the arm; he was reduced to the alternative of death or amputation. The last was attempted, with such instruments as could be found in the camp. The operation was performed by one of the hunters of the company, who had attained some celebrity in cutting out hump meat. A small cord twisted around the limb was the tourquet; the cutis was separated from the muscles by the application of the sharpest butcher's knife in camp.

The muscles were divided, and the bone was cut asunder with a carpenter's saw. It was not deemed necessary to take up the arteries, and a large wagon bolt was heated, with which the stump was seared so effectually as to prevent hemorrhage.

The whole operation was concluded by the application of a dressing from the nearest tar bucket. Not a groan nor a sigh was uttered during the operation, and the patient recovered.

This is a lively picture of the shifts to which human ingenuity is sometimes driven; and the fortitude evinced by the sufferer in this case, is a trait of character belonging to the pioneers of the perilous commerce.

I am, very respectfully,

Sir, your obedient servant,

ALPHONSO WETMORE.

HON. LEWIS CASS,

Secretary of War.

VOL. VIII.

JULY, 1914.

NO. 4.

MISSOURI HISTORICAL REVIEW.



PUBLISHED BY
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF MISSOURI.

F. A. SAMPSON, Secretary,
Editor.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE \$1.00 PER YEAR.
ISSUED QUARTERLY.

• COLUMBIA, MISSOURI.

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER AT COLUMBIA, MO., JULY 18, 1907.