

NEWPORT, R. I., 2d July, 1886.

MY DEAR FRIENDS: I have just received the first of your joint tribute to Benton and the path to Oregon. I remember the days when the eyes of the world were turned towards the bold adventurer who was to demonstrate that Oregon can be reached by a mid-winter journey as well as by a trip through the wilderness in summer; and when Benton predicted in the Senate, in the lecture-room, in all companies, the ease with which the East and the Pacific shore could meet together; and the consequent changes in the affairs of the world.

It had been my desire to acquire California by all honorable means much before that time [1846].

I look upon the acquisition of California by ourselves as the decisive point in the perfect establishment of the Union on a foundation that cannot be moved. Up to that time the division was between North and South. From that moment all division,

if there was one, was between the North, Center, and West against the South. Now that we have got rid of slavery, it seems to me that all distinction between North and South has vanished. But the acquisition of California, making our country the highway between Europe and Asia and establishing domestic free trade through our almost boundless territory, promises to our institutions and our Union perpetuity.

Best regards to Mrs. Frémont. Ever yours,
GEORGE BANCROFT.

Rarely does life offer such opportunities; more seldom still do men, each specially fitted to his part, combine to carry out such noble, enduring work — work which time has proved good. And the remembering people feel the truth, "Though the pathfinders die, the paths remain open."

Jessie Benton Frémont.

ROUGH TIMES IN ROUGH PLACES.

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF THE TERRIBLE EXPERIENCES OF FRÉMONT'S FOURTH EXPEDITION.

[The earlier explorations of Frémont through the Rocky Mountains and into California—those of 1842, 1843, and 1845—were made under the direction and at the expense of the United States Government, and of these we have full reports. Far less is known of the fourth expedition, which he made in 1848-49, at private expense.

The following article is made up of the records and diary of a member of the party, left at his death, and never before published. It is sent to THE CENTURY by his brother, Mr. C. G. McGehee, of Woodville, Mississippi.

As far as Pueblo, on the Arkansas River, at the entrance to the Rocky Mountains, this party followed very nearly the same line taken by the expedition of 1844, which in the main follows the present route of railway travel on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé line. The experiences of the party in their slow progress over the plains—their encounters with Indians, buffaloes, elk, antelopes, and wild horses—are not unique, and will, therefore, be omitted. We take up the diary where the old trail is left and the party plunges into the unknown mazes of the Rockies under the guidance of one of the trappers, named Bill Williams,—of a type which has long passed out of existence,—and who is thus described:]



BILL WILLIAMS was the most successful trapper in the mountains, and the best acquainted with the ways and habits of the wild tribes among and near whom he spent his adventurous life. He first came to the West as a sort of missionary to the Osages. But "Old Bill" laid aside his Christianity and took up his rifle and

came to the mountains. He was full of oddities in appearance, manner, conversation, and actions. He generally went out alone into the mountains, and would remain there trapping by himself for several months together, his lonely camps being often pitched in the vicinity of hostile savages. But he was as well versed in stratagem as they, and though he bore the marks of balls and arrows, he was a terror to them in single fight. He had ingratiated himself into the favor of several tribes; he had two or three squaws among the Utahs, and spoke their language and also that of several other tribes.

He was a dead shot with a rifle, though he always shot with a "double wabble"; he never could hold his gun still, yet his ball went always to the spot on a single shot. Though a most indefatigable walker, he never could walk on a straight line, but went staggering along, first on one side and then the other. He was an expert horseman; scarce a horse or mule could unseat him. He rode leaning forward upon the pommel, with his rifle before him, his stirrups ridiculously short, and his breeches rubbed up to his knees, leaving his legs bare even in freezing cold weather. He wore a loose monkey-jacket or a buckskin hunting-shirt, and for his head-covering a blanket-cap, the two top corners drawn up into two wolfish, satyr-like ears, giving him somewhat the appearance of the representations we generally meet with of his Satanic Majesty, at the same time rendering his *tout ensemble*

exceedingly ludicrous. He was a perfect specimen of his kind, an embodiment of the reckless and extravagant propensity of the mountaineers, and he pursued his lucrative but perilous vocation from an innate love of its excitement and dangers. He had no other care for the gains of his labors than as a means of affording him a "big spree," and enabling him to procure more powder and lead. It is told of him that he once came into Taos and spent on one spree six thousand dollars, the result of a successful season of trapping, and then left the place in debt. One of his amusements on this occasion was to buy whole bolts of calico, then quite a costly article in Taos, and, going into the street, to take hold of one end and throw out the other as far as he could, unrolling it on the ground, and then call out the Mexican women to scramble for it. In this way, and with drinking and gambling, three or four weeks would suffice to run through his money. Taking his traps and rifle, and some provision on his mules, he would disappear among the mountains, and nothing would be heard of him for months, until he would come into the fort with a new supply of peltries. He would sometimes gamble until he lost all his money and animals; then borrowing as many as he wanted of the best horses belonging to his fellow-trappers, who never opposed him, he would leave the fort, one or two thousand dollars in debt, and take to the mountains again, certain to return after a few months with another large supply. If he was much in need of a horse, or tired of his squaw, he would sell her, or "swap" her off for one or two horses. For twenty-one years he had lived in the mountains without returning to civilized life until he was taken back under guard, a year or two previous, by Captain Cook, for the offense of manoeuvring and acting the Indian in his buckskin suit on the plains, thereby deceiving the captain into the belief that he was an Indian, and giving his men a fruitless chase of several miles over the prairies before they could overtake him on his pony, much to his diversion and the officer's chagrin.

Such was old Bill Williams—he who was destined to be our guide at this time. But it was not without some hesitation that he consented to go, for most of the old trappers at the pueblo declared that it was impossible to cross the mountains at that time; that the cold upon the mountains was unprecedented, and the snow deeper than they had ever known it so early in the year. However, Old Bill con-

cluded to go, for he thought we could manage to get through, though not without considerable suffering.¹

On the 26th of November [1848] we entered the Rocky Mountains, which had been for days looming up before us, presenting to view one continuous sheet of snow. The snow already covered the mountains and was rapidly deepening. I have frequently since called to mind the expression of one of the men as we rode along before entering Hard Scrabble. As we looked upon the stormy mountain so portentous of the future, he said, "Friends, I don't want my bones to bleach upon those mountains." Poor fellow, little did he dream of what the future would be!

In the evening, from our first camp, eight miles in the mountains, several of us climbed to a high point to take a last look at the plains. The sight was beautiful; the snow-covered plain far beneath us stretching eastward as far as the eye could reach, while on the opposite side frowned the almost perpendicular wall of high mountains.

We entered the mountains on foot, packing our saddle-mules with corn to sustain the animals. We traveled on, laboring through the deep snow on the rugged mountain range, passing successively through what are called White Mountain Valley and Wet Mountain Valley into Grand River Valley. The cold was intense, and storms frequently compelled us to lie in camp, from the impossibility of forcing the mules against them. A number of the men were frozen; the animals became exhausted from the inclemency of the weather and want of food, what little grass there was being all buried in the snow. As we proceeded matters grew worse and worse. The mules gave out one by one and dropped down in the trail, and their packs were placed upon the saddle-mules. The cold became more and more intense, so many degrees below zero that the mercury sank entirely into the bulb. The breath would freeze upon the men's faces and their lips become so stiff from the ice that it was almost impossible to speak; the long beard and hair stood out white and stiff with the frost. The aspect of the mules was as bad as that of the men; their eyelashes and the long beard about their mouths were frozen stiff, and their breath settled upon their breasts and sides until they were perfectly white with frost. The snow, too, would clog under their hoofs until it formed a ball six inches long, making them appear as though they were walk-

¹ Frémont, in a letter to his wife dated Taos, January 27, 1849, says of Williams: "The error of our journey was in engaging this man. He proved never to have in the least known, or entirely to have forgotten, the whole region of country through which we were to

pass. We occupied more than half a month in making the journey of a few days; blundering a tortuous way through deep snow which already began to choke up the passes, for which we were obliged to waste time in searching."

ing on stilts. With the deep snow around us, and the pendant frost upon the leafless trees, Nature and ourselves presented a very harmonious picture. Two trappers, Old Bill informed us, had been frozen to death here the year previous.

After coming through Robideaux's Pass, which was exceedingly difficult, we descended into Grand River Valley. The snow lay deep, as elsewhere, and there was no sign of vegetation. One broad, white, dreary-looking plain lay before us, bounded by lofty white mountains. The Rio Grande lay fifty miles ahead, so we determined to get through the snow-covered plain as quickly as possible. We traveled late and camped in the middle of it, without any shelter from the winds, and with no fuel but some wild sage, a small shrub which grew sparsely around. At night the thermometer stood at seventeen degrees below zero. During the day Ducatel, a young fellow in the company, had come very near freezing to death. By collecting a quantity of the sage we made sufficient fire to cook, or rather half-cook, our supper of deer meat, five deer having been killed that evening by two of the men. Bolting down the half-cooked meat, we quickly turned into our blankets in order to keep tolerably warm and to protect ourselves against the driving snow, for since leaving the States we had scarcely stretched our tents. In the night, as ill luck would have it, our mules, poor creatures, which had stood shivering in the cold with bowed backs and drooping heads, suffering from their exposed situation and half starved, being now reduced to a pint of corn twice a day, and having no other resource for food, broke loose from their weak fastenings of sage bushes and started off *en masse* on the back trail. As soon as it was ascertained that they were gone, in the middle of the night, we had to rise from our beds, lifting half a foot of snow with our top blankets, and strike out in pursuit of them. We overtook them several miles from camp, and, taking them back, made them secure. But we rested little the remainder of the night.

The next day we reached the Rio Grande del Norte. This we found frozen over, and we camped on the river bottom, which is thickly timbered with cottonwood and willow. Here my feet and those of several others were frozen—the result in part of wearing boots, for which I quickly substituted moccasins, with blanket wrappers, which are much warmer than socks, and which, with leggings of the same material, afford the best protection for the lower extremities against severe cold.

Continuing up the river two or three days, we again entered the mountains, which soon assumed a very rugged character. Nature, in the

ascent towards the Sierra Madre, presents herself with all her features prominent and strongly marked, her figures bold and colossal. Our progress became slow and laborious. Our track lay through deep mountain gorges, amid towering precipices and beetling crags, and along steep declivities where at any other season it would have been next to impossible to travel, but where now the deep snow afforded a secure foothold. In making the ascent of some of these precipitous mountain sides, now and then a mule would lose its footing and go tumbling and rolling many feet down. My saddle mule took one of these tumbles. Losing her foothold, she got her rope hitched upon a large log which lay loosely balanced on the rocks, and, knocking me down and jerking the log clear over my head, they went tumbling down together. But fortunately no one was hurt. A great obstacle to our progress were the rapid, rough-bottomed, but boggy streams which we had frequently to encounter in the deep and narrow ravines, where the mules would get balked, half a dozen at a time, with their packs on. Then we had to wade in up to our middle among the floating ice in the freezing water to help them out.

The farther we went the more obstacles we had to encounter; difficulties beset us so thickly on every hand as we advanced that they threatened to thwart our expedition. The snow became deeper daily, and to advance was but adding dangers to difficulties. About one-third of the men were already more or less frost-bitten; every night some of the mules would freeze to death, and every day as many more would give out from exhaustion and be left on the trail. It seemed like fighting fate to attempt to proceed, but we were bent on our course, and continued to advance. At one time men were sent ahead to report the prospect, and returned stating that grass appeared in the distance before them: they supposed that the snow was abating, but on coming up what they saw proved to be the tops of bushes six feet high projecting above the snow; nor did anything appear upon which the animals could subsist. The corn we had packed along for them was already consumed. Sometimes we would attempt to move on, and the severity of the weather would force us back into camp. In one of these attempts, before we could beat our way half a mile against the tempest, our guide, Old Bill Williams, was nearly frozen; he dropped down upon his mule in a stupor and was nearly senseless when we got into camp. A number of the men came in with their noses, ears, faces, fingers, and feet partly frozen, and one or two of the mules dropped down and froze to death under their packs. Poor mules, it was pitiable to see them! They

would roam about all night, generally, on account of their extreme weakness, following back the path of the previous day, pawing in the snow three or four feet deep for some sign of vegetation to keep them alive. They would fall down every fifty yards under their packs, and we would have to unpack them and lift them up, and that with fingers frozen and lacerated by the cold. Finally they began eating the ropes and rawhide lariats with which they were tied, until there were no more left in camp to tie them with; then they ate the blankets which we tied over them at night; then they came into camp and ate the pads and rigging off the pack-saddles, and ate one another's manes and tails entirely bare, even into the flesh, and would come to us while sleeping and begin to eat the blankets off us; they would even tumble into our fires, over the cooking utensils. But, poor things, little relief could we afford them, for, although they suffered much, we were in no better condition. Our provisions were nearly exhausted, and we were more or less frozen.

Finally, on the 17th of December, after frequent ineffectual attempts, we found that we could force our way no farther. By our utmost endeavors with mauls and spades we could make but half a mile or a mile per day. The cold became more severe, and storms constant, so that nothing was visible at times through the thick driving snow. For days in succession we would labor to beat a trail a few hundred yards in length, but the next day the storm would leave no trace of the previous day's work. We were on the St. John Mountain, a section of the Sierra Madre and the main range of the Rocky Mountains proper. At an elevation of 11,000 feet the cold was so intense and the atmosphere so rare that respiration became difficult; the least exertion became laborious and fatiguing, and would sometimes cause the blood to start from lips and nose. The mercury in the thermometer stood 20° below zero, and the snow was here from four to thirty feet deep. When we built our campfires deep pits were formed by the melting of the snow, completely concealing the different messes from each other. Down in these holes we slept, spreading our blankets upon the snow, every morning crawling out from under a deep covering of snow which had fallen upon us during the night. The strong pine smoke,—for here there was no timber but pine,—together with the reflection from the snow, so affected our sight that at times we could scarcely see. The snow drifted over us continually, driven about by the violence of the chill blasts which swept over the mountains.

Besides ourselves and our mules, no vestige of animal life appeared here in this lofty and

dreary solitude; not even the ravens uttered their hoarse cry, nor the wolves their hollow and dismal howl. Finally nearly the entire band of our one hundred mules had frozen to death. After remaining in this condition for five days without being able to move camp, the colonel [Frémont] determined to return as quickly as possible by a different course to the Rio Grande. There we had left game upon which we could subsist until a party, to be previously despatched, should return with relief. So on the 22d of December we commenced our move, crossing over the bleak mountain strewn with the frozen mules, and packing our baggage with us. We were more than a week moving our camp and equipage over the top of this mountain, a distance of two miles from our first camp. The day we began to move (our provisions having been all consumed, except a small portion of macaroni and sugar, reserved against hard times) we commenced to eat the carcasses of the frozen mules. It was hoped we might save the few that yet lived, but this proving impossible, we began to kill and eat the surviving ones. On Christmas Day the colonel despatched a party of four men, King, Croitzfeldt, Brackenridge, and Bill Williams, to proceed down the Rio del Norte with all possible speed to Albuquerque, where they were to procure provisions and mules to relieve us. He allowed them sixteen days to go and return. We made our Christmas and New Year's dinner on mule meat,—not the fattest, as may be judged,—and continued to feed upon it while it was within reach.

Our way to the river was very rough, passing over rugged and precipitous mountain spurs difficult of passage, and across deep ravines, with rapid streams frozen over, in which the water was pitching and roaring beneath us as we crossed. We would move camp three or four miles at a time, then, packing all the baggage down, we would move again in the same way; on an average, at our best, we scarcely made a mile a day. On our way the last provisions were issued,—a little macaroni and sugar,—and we began eating the rawhide tug ropes and *parfeches*, cutting them into strips and boiling to a sort of glue, or browning on the coals until soft enough to bite. Between the last camps, over a bleak and barren stretch of seven miles before reaching the river, the cold was unusually severe, and perfectly unbearable storms prevailed. In crossing this stretch, one of the party, Proue, froze to death beside the trail; we passed and re-passed his lifeless body, not daring to stop long enough in the intense cold to perform the useless rite of burial. One day I started to cross this stretch, determined to go on to the river that night or to freeze. Andrews

started with me, but before we could get half way across he became exhausted and lay down upon the snow, declaring that he could go no farther. I tried to urge him on, but he could not go on, and I could not leave him; so, proceeding a short distance, I got him into a cave, which afforded a shelter against the severity of the storm, and, climbing among the rocks, ascended to the top of the mountain, where the wind was blowing such a hurricane that I had to lie down flat at times, to keep from being swept off. Taking advantage of the intervals between the gusts of wind, I rolled down some of the piñon logs which lay upon the mountain side, pitching them over the crags below, and, descending to the cave, struck a fire. By this time two others, Captain Cathcart and R. Kern, arrived to take shelter from the storm. They had nothing to eat, and we had our last portion; in the extremity of our situation we had, the day before, divided out the last morsel which remained, the share which had fallen to each man being a cupful of boiled macaroni and a cup of sugar. This we had with us and we offered to share it with the others, but Andrews, in trying to warm it, by an unlucky move upset it into the fire, and thus went the last mouthful that we had to eat on earth, and we half starved. The storm continued to rage with such violence that we could not leave, and here we were kept for two whole days. In looking around I found a small roll of rawhide snow-shoe strings which had been left by one of the men. These we cut into pieces and boiled. I also found some dry bones in an old wolf den among the rocks. How many years they had been lying there I will not undertake to say; but these we pounded to pieces between the rocks and boiled with the strings, and upon this mess we four lived for two days. A number of others, on their way, had been forced like us to take shelter from the storm here and there among the rocks.

At last we reached the river, but we found no game; the deer and elk had been driven off by the deep snow. For days we had been anxiously looking for the return of King's party with relief. The time allotted him had already expired; day after day passed, but with no prospect of relief. We concluded that the party had been attacked by Indians, or that they had lost their way and had perished. The colonel, who had moved down to the river before us, waited two days longer, and then, taking just enough provision before it was all exhausted to last them along the river, himself started off with Mr. Preuss, Godey, Theodore (Godey's nephew), and Sanders, the colonel's servant-man, intending to find out what had become of the party and hasten them back, or, if our fears concerning them proved

true, to push on himself to the nearest settlement and send relief. He left an order, which we scarcely knew how to interpret, to the effect that we must finish packing the baggage to the river, and hasten on down as speedily as possible to the mouth of Rabbit River where we would meet relief, and that if we wished to see him we must be in a hurry about it, as he was going on to California.

Two days after the colonel left we had all assembled on the river. The last of our provisions had been consumed, and we had been living for several days upon parfleche. Our condition was perilous in the extreme. Starvation stared us in the face; to remain there longer was certain death. We held a consultation and determined to start down the river the next day and try to make our way to some settlement where we could get relief; in the mean time keeping as much together as possible, and hunting along as we went as our only chance of safety. The two Canadian Frenchmen, Tabeau, or Sorel, as we called him, and Moran, did not delay as long as we, but, pinched by hunger, had started off the day before. So, with a handful of sugar to each man, we divided some candles, pieces of rawhides, tug ropes and parfleches, and strapping on a blanket apiece and shouldering our rifles, we started upon our gloomy march down the frozen river. Over its congealed surface a somber shade was cast by the overhanging trees covered with long white frost which hung like a thick fringe from their barren boughs. Tottering from weakness, and some with frozen and bleeding feet, our progress was slow. We kept upon the ice down the middle of the river, to get a level track, and to avoid as much as possible the deep snow.

Now commenced a train of horrors which it is painful to force the mind to dwell upon, and which memory shrinks from. Before we had proceeded far Manuel, a California Indian of the Cosumne tribe, who had his feet badly frozen, stopped and begged Mr. Vincent Haler to shoot him, and failing to meet death in this way turned back to the lodge at the camp we had left, there to await his fate. The same day Wise lay down on the ice and died; and the Indian boys, Joaquin and Gregorio, who came along afterward, having stopped back to get some wood for Manuel, seeing his body, covered it over with brush and snow. That night Carver, crazed by hunger, raved terribly all night, so that some in the camp with him became alarmed for their safety. He told them, if any would follow him back, he had a plan by which they might live. The next day he wandered off and we never saw him again. The next night Sorel, his system wrought upon by hunger, cold, and exhaustion, took

a violent fit which lasted for some time, and to which succeeded an entire prostration of all his faculties. At the same time he was almost totally snow-blind. Speaking to E. Kern of our situation, he said, "O Kern! this is a *misse Dieu* [a visitation from God], and we can't avoid it." Poor fellow, the next day he traveled as long as his strength would allow, and then, telling us we would have to leave him, that he could go no farther, blind with snow he lay down on the river-bank to die. Moranson joined him, and they never came up again. Late at night, arriving one by one, we all came into a camp together on the river-bank. Gloom and despondency were depicted on every face. Our condition had become perfectly desperate. We knew not what to do; the candles and parfleche had kept us alive thus far, but these were gone. Our appearance was most desolate as we sat in silence around the fires, in view of a fast approaching death by starvation, while hunger gnawed upon our vitals. Then Vincent Haler, to whom the colonel had left the charge of the camp, and whom for that reason we had allowed to have the chief direction, spoke up and told us that he then and there threw up all authority; that he could do nothing, and knew not what to advise; that he looked upon our condition as hopeless, but he would suggest, as the best advice he could give, that we break up into small parties, and, hunting along, make the best of our way down separately, each party making use of all the advantages that might fall in its way, so that if any should chance to get through to a settlement they could forward relief to the others.

Accordingly the next morning he joined himself with Scott, Martin, Hibbard, Bacon, Ducatel, Rohrer, and the two Indians, Joaquin and Gregorio. Ferguson and Beedle went in company, and the rest of us, the three Kerns, Captain Cathcart, Captain Taplin, Stepperfeldt, Andrews, and myself, went together; we agreed not to leave one another while life lasted. Again we resumed our unsteady course down the river. We traveled hard all day, and late in the evening, weak and worn out, staggered into a camp near the river-side, some coming in far behind the rest. Dr. Kern came up so exhausted that he fell down almost senseless and remained in this torpid state a whole day. After a while Andrews came up, and arriving within several hundred yards of camp raised a faint call and fell down completely exhausted and senseless; two or three of us had to go and pack him in. He never recovered from this exhaustion. Soon Rohrer came up. Vincent Haler's party, to which he belonged, was ahead of us, and being too weak to proceed farther he stopped with us. Here we remained, determined, as we had promised, not

to leave any while they lived. So we commenced hunting, all that had strength and sight sufficient to do so, for the most of us were so completely snow-blind that we could not see to shoot. After long and frequent hunts, two prairie chickens or grouse were killed. These we divided with scrupulous exactness among the nine of us, dividing the entrails and all that appertained to them, even to the pin-feathers. Taplin found part of a dead wolf upon the river and brought it in. One side of it and the entrails had been eaten away, but we divided the skin and roasted it, hair and all, for one meal; for another we drank the meager broth, and then we ate the meat, and even devoured the bones. This was the last we got. Day after day we staid here, but no game came near. Occasionally we could hear the distant, dismal howl of a wolf, as if weary of waiting for its prey, but none came near; at distant intervals a raven would go screaming by, beyond our reach. We found a handful or two of rosebuds along the river which we divided and ate, and Dr. Kern found a few small bugs upon the water where the ice was broken, and ate them. We had already devoured our moccasin soles, and a small sack made of smoked lodge skin. We dug in the ground beneath the snow with our knives for roots, but it proved a useless labor. We became weaker daily, and to walk thirty steps once a day to get some dry cottonwood sticks to keep up our fire fatigued us greatly. Our strength was rapidly failing. Andrews, after lingering several days, died in the night as he lay by our side, and the next day Rohrer was nearly gone; he was talking wildly, a fearful expression of despair resting upon his countenance. The mention of his family at home had served to rouse him and keep him going longer than his strength would otherwise have borne him up; but now it was too late. Taking from Andrews's pocket a small gilt-embossed Bible, carefully preserved, which we intended, in case any of us lived to get through, to hand over as a memento to his friends, we laid his body to one side, covered it with a blanket, and sat down, waiting until Rohrer should die, intending, as soon as the breath left his body, to commence another move down the river. As we sat waiting, — came over to the fire where Taplin, Stepperfeldt, and I were sitting, and in a sad tone said: "Men, I have come to make a proposition. I don't know how you will take it. It is a horrid one. We are starving; in two or three days more, unless something be done, we shall all be dead. As soon as we leave this body it will become the prey of wild beasts. Now I propose instead that we make use of it to save life. It is horrible, I know, but I will undertake to do the butchery, as you may call it, and you need

have nothing to do with that part; you need not even see it done. Do you agree to my proposition?" All sat in silence; then several of us objected. I spoke up and said that, for my part, I had no conscientious scruples against such a procedure. I knew that early prejudice and conventional opinion founded on prejudice were at the bottom of our objections to it; but these existed, and it was a horrible proposition to entertain. I fully appreciated our situation, but I thought that, by making up our minds to it and remaining quiet, we could hold out three days longer, by which time, after finding that we could not possibly bear up longer, it would be soon enough to think of adopting so horrible an alternative, and then, if I did not approve, I would not censure it. "But by that time," he said, "we will be too weak and too far gone ever to recover. You see what they have come to, and you see what you will come to." "I can't help it," I said: "I am determined to risk it at the peril of my life"; and so saying, I walked over to the other fire. They talked about it a few minutes, but were unwilling to follow such a course unless all united in it, and so we all waited together.

We remained around the fire, stirring as little as possible, and firing signal guns at frequent intervals during the day. Rohrer died. Two days passed by, and no relief came. Several times we imagined we heard an answer to our signal and would raise ourselves up to listen; but being as often disappointed, we ceased to notice. The morning of the third day arrived and was far advanced towards midday; we all sat in the deepest gloom. Suddenly "Hush!" said one. We all listened intently. A call was heard. "Relief, by heaven!" exclaimed one of the men, and we all started to our feet; and relief it was, sure enough, for soon we spied Godey riding towards us followed by a Mexican. We were all so snow-blind that we took him to be the colonel until he came up, and even then some saluted him as the colonel. Dismounting, he quickly distributed several loaves among us, with commendable forethought giving us but a small piece at first, and making us wait until the Mexican could prepare some *tole* (boiled corn-meal), which he quickly made, and we more quickly devoured. It required considerable persuasion to prevent us from killing the Mexican's old horse in order to eat it; but Godey informed us that there were two colts in the camp below, which, if we would wait, we might have. This was the 25th of January.

After leaving the party, Godey, with the colonel and the others that were with them, had traveled on as rapidly as possible down the river. They came upon two Indians with several old horses, and engaged them to pilot them in;

and going on had overtaken King's party, who had left the river and had undertaken to strike across the country to Albuquerque, but becoming involved in the deep snow, their provisions being exhausted, they had eaten their knife scabbards and had tried to eat their boots. Being compelled to lie out night after night without fire upon the barren plain, they were more or less frozen from their hips down. They had then returned to the river, where King died, and here the colonel's party found them in a weak and emaciated condition, nearly dead, and with intellects shaken and scarcely a sense left. They were put upon the Indian horses and taken into the little outer settlement of the Rio Colorado. Here, quickly obtaining what provisions he could, and hiring several Mexicans with mules, Godey set out as speedily as possible up the river. On his way he fell in with two other Mexicans, who, with mules loaded with bread and flour and corn-meal, were going out to trade with the Utah Indians. These, with their burdens, he pressed into service, and hastening on, traveling late and early, he met Vincent Haler's party about twenty miles below us. Two of their number were missing. They had agreed among themselves that when one became so exhausted that he could not travel the rest should not wait for him. First Hibbard had been left, and soon after Scott. Leaving most of the animals and provisions at Vincent Haler's camp, Godey proceeded rapidly up. He found Scott sitting in a listless manner by a fire he had just kindled, his head resting upon his hand, and almost totally snow-blind. Having strengthened him with food, Godey furnished him a horse and sent a Mexican with him to the camp below, and, proceeding, came to Hibbard, who had just died, his body being yet warm. Failing in his attempts to restore him, Godey kept on. Taking across a short bend in the river, he passed entirely by us without knowing it, and found Ferguson a little distance above us. Beedle was dead, and his body was lying near by. Ferguson informed Godey that we were below him, and coming down with him, he found us. Leaving us, and taking with him several Mexicans with pack-mules, he followed up along our track, which was marked by the bodies of the dead as they had perished day by day, and now were lying the prey of wolves and ravens, the deep and gloomy silence of their solitude broken only by the snarls and yells of packs of quarreling wolves. He found the bodies of Sorel and Moran together. Friends in life, they had proved friends in death. Sorel was lying prostrate on the snow, and Moran, apparently after having tried to strike a fire, had dropped his head upon the log against which he was sitting, and had expired by Sorel's side.

Godey found the Indian, Manuel, in the lodge, still alive, and brought him down. Manuel afterward stated that Carver came up to the lodge with a piece of meat which he said was part of a deer he had killed, and that he undertook to go to the previous camp, seven miles back, for something, and had frozen to death.

We sent for animals to take us down, for we were wholly unable to walk. They came the next day. Our blankets were tied on for saddles, and rope stirrups were rigged, and we were lifted (for we could not lift even our skeleton frames) upon these miserable animals, and after a two days' journey reached the camp, twenty miles below. We were now lank and thin-visaged, our eyes sunken, and our hair and beard long, tangled, and knotty, while our faces were black with pine smoke which had not been washed off for two months. Here we fell to eating enormously, and it required the exercise of all our self-restraint to prevent plenty now from being hurtful to us, as want had been before. The abundance of food where there had just been such a lack made us all sick and kept us sick for some days, but that could not stop us. Our appetites were unbounded and we were eating constantly, at all hours of the day, and throughout the night. We had such a craving for meat of some kind that we killed two well-grown colts and ate them. We were even more ravenous than the ravens themselves, which, now that we did not need them, came crowding around, with hawks and wolves. Some of all these we killed and devoured.

It was curious to hear different men tell of the workings of the mind when they were starving. Some were constantly dreaming or imagining that they saw before them a bountiful feast, and would make selections of different dishes. Others engaged their minds with other thoughts. For my part, I kept my mind amused by entering continually into all the minutiae of farming, or of some other systematic business which would keep up a train of thought, or by working a mental solution of mathematical problems, bringing in review the rudiments of some science, or by laying out plans for the future, all having a connection with home and after life. So in this way never allowing myself to think upon the hopelessness of our condition, yet always keeping my eyes open to every chance, I kept hope alive and never once suffered myself to despond. And to this course I greatly attribute my support, for there were stronger men who, by worrying themselves, doubtless hastened their death. Ten out of our party of thirty-three that entered the mountains had perished, and a few days more would have finished the others.

Vincent Haler's party, having been first relieved, soon recruited sufficiently to leave, and all except Ducatel and the two Indian boys, who remained with the rest of us, proceeded to the Rio Colorado, distant three or four days' journey. When Godey arrived we all left together. On our way we were overtaken by a violent snow-storm. Having no compass to guide us, and not being able to see the sun or even the mountains through the thickly falling snow which rendered everything invisible a few rods distant, and without any object to show us our course across the barren, snow-clad plain, we kept traveling all day in a circle, once coming in sight of our starting-point. Once we were on the point of stopping in the midst of the stormy plain to take our chances, and before we could get to our intended camp we were almost frozen.

Late in the afternoon of February 9, cold, hungry, and weary, with no little joy we all at once hailed the sight of the little Pueblo of the Colorado. We raised a yell as we came in sight which made the Pueblanos stand out and gaze. In a few minutes, with their assistance, we dismounted from our horses and sought the comfort which the place afforded. Here we met Mr. Preuss and Croitzfeldt — one of the first relief party who had come very near perishing, and had not sufficiently recovered to proceed. Each had thought the other dead, and it was like the joy after a long parting with which we then grasped their hands. The rest of our companions, they told us, had gone on to Taos, where the colonel had preceded them to make arrangements, for such as were able to proceed, to go on to California by the Gila route, or what is called the Lower California or Lower Spanish trail.

In sight of Taos, and several miles to the southeast, at the mouth of a deep gorge or cañon by which the Taos River debouches from the mountains, is a walled town or pueblo, one of a great many of the same kind in this country, inhabited by the Pueblos or civilized Indians, a remnant of the race of Montezuma. They live in houses built of stone and earth, or of adobe, most of which at this place were three or four stories high, and some of which even attained the height of eleven stories, each story receding a few feet back from the front of the one below it, and each one reached by a ladder placed against the wall, communicating with the door on top, and capable of being let down or drawn up at pleasure. A high mud wall incloses the buildings, which front towards the center, and in the middle is a lofty church of the same material as the other buildings, with walls six feet thick.

These Indians are the descendants of the original Mexican people, or ancient race of

Aztecs, and retain many of their customs, though nominally Roman Catholic in their religion. Early after the Spanish conquest they embraced the forms of religion and the manners and customs of their conquerors. But three hundred years of oppression and injustice have failed to extinguish in this race the recollection that they were once the undisputed lords of the soil, and, cherishing a deep-rooted animosity towards their conquerors, they only wait a favorable opportunity to reassert their liberty. They are superior to their neighbors in social position, in morals, circumstances, civil regulations, and all that pertains to civilization. They are brave and upright in their intercourse with others, and their women are chaste and virtuous, presenting in this respect a favorable contrast with their sex among the Spanish population. They cultivate the soil for a subsistence, and rear large herds of cattle, sheep, and horses, and their women spin and weave with considerable skill. Some of their fabrics are of a very superior quality.

They still expect the return of Montezuma to reinstate his people in their former dominion and power. In this strange faith, according to an alleged injunction from Montezuma, they have kept a constant fire burning from his death to the present time, a period of nearly three hundred years. At the pueblo near Taos a fire has been kept up without intermission until within ten years past.

On the Rio Pecos, sixty miles east of Santa Fé, are the ruins of the ancient town of Pecos, once a fortified town, and portions of the stone wall that inclosed it are still standing. Here burned, until within ten years, the eternal fires of Montezuma, sustained by an ancient order of priests ministering at a temple of unknown age, the ruins of which are still to be seen, and near by are the remains of the old Catholic church, exhibiting in a prominent manner the ingraftment of the Catholic upon the ancient religion of the country, and both, in the characteristic features and design of the architecture, displaying the distinctive marks and emblems of the two religions, which, though so entirely different in theory, were here, as throughout all Mexico, blended in harmonious practice until about a century since, when the town was sacked and plundered by a hostile band of Indians. Notwithstanding this, the faithful Indian managed to keep his fire burning in the *estufa*, and it was continued until a few years since, when the tribe, which rapidly diminished in numbers, became almost extinct, and the few that remained abandoned the place and joined a tribe of the original race among the mountains to the southward. There, it is said, they keep up their fire to this day. Time and the peculiarities attend-

ing their devotion and the practice of their faith are rapidly reducing this remnant of the Montezuma race.

At Taos we first heard with certainty of the abundance of gold in California, the first account of which had reached the States immediately before our departure, but was scarcely believed.

On the 13th of February, having laid in a supply of provisions from the quartermaster's department, being facilitated by the generous kindness of the army officers, and having hired muleteers and a train of mules to take us down to Albuquerque, we set out for Santa Fé, leaving behind Captain Cathcart, who was not able to prosecute the journey farther, the three Kerns, Stepperfeldt, and Bill Williams, the guide, and taking Lindsay Carson and T. Bogg, son of the ex-governor of Mexico. From here, in the spring of the year, Bill Williams and Dr. Kern, with a company of Mexicans, went back into the mountains to recover some of the most valuable of the property left by us, and were attacked and killed, either by the Indians or by the Mexicans who went out with them, we never could ascertain which.

We learned that gold was most abundant in the mines on the Sangre de Cristo. We were told by a resident in Taos Valley that he with one or two companions had on one occasion visited this place and washed out as high as nine dollars per day to the man for several days in succession, but were compelled to abandon it on account of the hostility of the Utah Indians, for whom they had constantly to keep on the lookout. I have heard of pieces being found of the value of seven dollars, and a Mexican is said to have taken out a lump for which he was offered \$2200, which he refused, and afterward sold to a priest for \$150. This tends to show the influence which the priests have over these people. There is good reason to believe that gold is much more extensively diffused throughout the eastern range of the Rocky Mountains and the country intervening between that and the California mountains, or Sierra Nevada, than is at present generally known. Gold has been found as far north as the Chugwater, a large affluent of the Laramie Fork of the Platte, taking its rise in the desolate region of the Black Hills, and also upon Horse Creek, an affluent of the Platte, heading in the same barren vicinity. Concerning this discovery, I have been told by a trapper who was acquainted with the circumstance that an old French trapper, Du Shay, in hunting buffalo in this region a few years ago, on Horse Creek, discovered in the bed of the stream, while drinking, a singular looking rock, very heavy, and containing numerous yellow specks. It excited his curiosity

and he deposited it in his bullet pouch; but subsequently finding it in his way in approaching a band of buffaloes, he thoughtlessly threw it away. The following year, when at Santa Fé, he was emptying his pouch, and among its contents several bright particles which had become detached from the rock attracted the attention of the Mexicans. These were carefully gathered up, and after examination proved to be virgin gold. The old trapper on his return sought for the source of the treasure, but was unable to find it.

John Hawken, an adventurous and daring trapper with whom I became intimately acquainted, told me that seven years before he was trapping with a companion upon Salt River, about one hundred and twenty miles above its mouth, which empties into the Gila after its confluence with the San Francisco,

below the Pino village. While there they fell in with a party of Apaches, with one of whom they traded for a parcel of yellow metal which he called *oro*, and which he told them he obtained at a place half a day's travel from where they were and where he said there was *mucho*; but he did not specify further, for the other Indians threatened to kill him if he revealed the locality or made any further disclosures. This being the first native gold Hawken had seen, he was not sure of its identity; but on the opinion of his companion, who had seen it before, they took it with them to Taos, and it proved to be nine dollars in value of pure gold.

We heard here very extravagant accounts of the gold brought from California by those returning from there; some, as they said, having come back with mule loads of the dust.

Micajah McGehee.

CALIFORNIANA.

Montgomery and Frémont: New Documents on the Bear Flag Affair.

THERE have lately been put into my hands by the editor of *THE CENTURY* certain original documents of decided importance for the history of the seizure of California. I have been asked to examine these and to summarize a portion of their contents, a thing which I the more readily do because they serve to set in a clearer light than heretofore the honorable conduct of an officer whose part in the seizure of California was a difficult and delicate one, and who himself did his duty so well and so modestly that he has in the past altogether escaped the celebrity that has fallen to the lot of other persons surely not more deserving. This officer, Commander (afterward Rear-Admiral) John B. Montgomery, was in 1846 in command of the United States ship *Portsmouth*. His ship visited California in 1845; returned in October to the southern Mexican coast; was at Mazatlan October 16, 1845, and at Guaymas December 2; and returned again to California, under Sloat's orders, in the spring of 1846. The purpose of her coming was to inquire into the alarming reports that had gone southward concerning the quarrel of March between Frémont and Castro. She reached Monterey towards the end of April, later passing on to San Francisco; and she lay in the harbor of San Francisco until after the raising of the American flag at that port on July 9, a date two days later than the seizure of Monterey. Montgomery's stay at San Francisco thus covered the entire time of the Bear Flag episode. From him Captain Frémont obtained, through Lieutenant Gillespie, supplies to enable him "to continue his explorations" and to accomplish his other peaceful duties during that now famous affair. To him, in fact, Captain Frémont also wrote, as he himself declares in his letter to Senator Benton of July 25, 1846 (see Frémont's "Memoirs," p. 546), "describing to him fully my position and intentions, in order that he might not unwittingly commit himself in

affording me other than such assistance as his instructions would authorize him naturally to offer an officer charged with an important public duty; or, in fine, to any citizen of the United States." To Montgomery also General Vallejo appealed by messenger after the Bear Flag men had made the general their prisoner. From Montgomery Castro demanded an account of what the Bear Flag meant, and of what part the United States Government had therein; and meanwhile the Bear Flag men themselves were begging him for counsel and encouragement; and every officer on board the *Portsmouth* was longing for the coming of Sloat and for the end of this tedious attitude of neutrality. In this trying position Montgomery kept his head, and did his duty with a firmness that the documents before me put in a very clear light. These documents are, (1) extracts from Montgomery's private diary, (2) copies of the official correspondence of the commander, with letters to and from Larkin, Frémont, Castro, Gillespie, and others. Of these letters some have previously been known, through the papers of Consul Larkin, and otherwise. Several are also printed in Frémont's "Memoirs," although the aforesaid letter of Captain Frémont to Montgomery, "describing to him fully my position and intentions," has been, as I believe, heretofore unknown, and furnishes the most characteristic and interesting addition to our previous knowledge that is contained among these papers.

There is space here for only a very brief account of the substance of the extracts from Montgomery's diary. The earlier extracts concern the visit to California in 1845. At Monterey, Montgomery interviewed Consul Larkin, and "learned from him that American interests were perfectly secure, and little probability of their being interrupted in any way unless by a war with Mexico." There was indeed some talk between the two concerning the supposed English designs upon California, and Larkin told Montgomery of a reported subsidy that was to be paid by England to Mexico for