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## ADVENTURING TO SANTA FE

By ARTHUR WOODWARD

DOWN THE long, hard road they passed, the adventurers to Santa Fé. Hostile Indians waylaid them. Unfriendly Mexican officials looked askance at their pack trains and long lines of white topped wagons. Heavy duties were laid upon the goods they brought. Men feared their ever ready long Kentucky rifles and the hair triggered Missouri tempers. The first men who ventured into Santa Fé were taken prisoners and were held within the confines of the Mexican provinces from 1812 until about 1819-1822. However, no sooner had some of them been released than they returned home to Missouri, outfitted with fresh pack trains and again turned their faces westward. Thenceforth nothing could halt the ceaseless tide of men and wagons, "adventuring to Santa Fé."

Some of these men have left brief journals. The accounts written by Captain William Becknell, M. M. Marmaduke, Robert W. Morris, A. LeGrand and others are fairly well known. Many of these items first appeared in the columns of the *Missouri Intelligencer* and the *St. Louis Enquirer* during the early 1820s. Later, certain of the journals were re-printed by the Missouri Historical Society. There is one item however which seems to have escaped the notice of historians. In itself perhaps it is not important, but as a bit of unique frontier humor it should be known.

The majority of the accounts are serious, matter-of-fact narrations of the hardships encountered, descriptions of the terrain, observations on the inhabitants of New Mexico, etc. The author of the account in question is anonymous but his account of a trip to the "province wherein dwelleth a people called Montezumians" has a certain flavor that will, I am sure, be relished by those whose historical tongues have become accustomed to the bread and meat of the more prosaic narratives.

There are no definite clues to link this Biblical style journal with any of the well known trips. The party apparently started from Boone's Lick in Missouri; but so did many of the outfits that took the westward trail. Hence, any attempt at annotating this humorous "journal" would in my estimation be entirely superfluous.

The account appeared in the *Missouri Intelligencer*, in two parts. The first was published August 5, 1825, p. 2, col. 1; the second section appeared in the issue of August 19, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

### THE BOOK OF THE MULETEERS

#### CHAPTER I

1. And it came to pass in the reign of Ellick the fat, that the dwellers round about Boon's Lick marvelled with one another

2. And said, verily we have corn and oil, and milk and honey, and cattle and horses, and he goats in abundance, but nevertheless we have few pieces of silver.

3. And one of the judges, a father of preemptioners, rose up and said, men and brethren, hearken unto me.

4. And they did hearken.

5. And he said, there lieth over against us a province wherein dwelleth a people called Montezumians.

6. And they go in and out of tabernacles of clay and they be miners and shepherds.

7. And they have among them gold and silver and precious furs and ass colts in abundance and they be moreover a barbarous people and heathen idolators.

8. And he said, men and brethren of the tribe of Benjamin, hearken unto me—and they answered, and said, we do hearken.

9. And he said go ye unto your several places of abode and tarry three days; and on the fourth day rise up early in the morning while it is yet dark, and saddle your asses.

10. And on the fourth day they gathered themselves together as they were wont, every one on his own ass, and came, and stood still over against the habitation of Benjamin, and they said lo! we are come unto thee as thou has bidden.

11. And Benjamin combed his locks, rose up, and came forth to where his ass was tethered by the way side.

12. And he said, men of Boon's Lick, let your loins be girt about & your hearts filled with the oil of gladness, for you are going into a far country.

13. And they answered with one voice, yea, verily, we rejoice exceedingly and marvel not.

14. And moreover they cried out as one man, be ye our centurian & we will do thy bidding; and say unto each of us singly, go, and we will go, come, and we will come.

15. And they were armed every one with weapons of war according to his fashion, and they were valiant men and true, and well skilled in all stratagems and divers cunning devices.

16. But moreover as they journeyed forward in the wilderness the centurian cast about him and said unto his followers, be on your guard, for we are in the land of the *Arapehoes*, the *Camanchies*, and the ungodly *Paducas*.

17. Nevertheless be of good cheer and these heathen shall flee before us everyone to his own city; and they appointed their arms with bear's oil and set a watch round about.

18. And all of the men of Boon's Lick answered and said, we fear not, for we go into the land of promise.

19. And Benjamin raised his voice and spake cheerfully, and said, yea verily, I say unto you as I said before, we seek the gold of ophir and soft furs and ass colts and onyx stones.

20. And when they came unto a deep valley, by the river Arkansas, they stood still and said to the centurian, lo! here is water, let us drink.

21. And he said, yea, eat and drink and make yourselves glad, for ye have journeyed far, else ye may faint by the wayside.

22. And they unmuzzled their mules and their asses, and laid them down; and they drew from their panniers corn cakes, and the flesh of swine and did eat.

23. And when they had finished feasting, they rose up and departed leaving the fragments of the feast strewed round about and the ravens and the magpies came and picked up the remnant.

24. Now when they had journeyed forward three Sabbath day's journey on the river bank, and crossed over the waters thereof, they came to a great desert whereon the grass withered.

25. And it came to pass that they had no water, and they were exceedingly thirsty, so that their tongues were parched and cleaved unto the roofs of their mouths.

26. Now therefore Benjamin the centurian, was sorely vexed, for everyone went his own way in search of a fountain, and they marvelled exceedingly; and they said unto the centurian, why have ye brought us here to perish in a far country?

27. And Benjamin stood up among them and said, why marvel ye, men of Boon's Lick; what seek ye?

28. Wherefore are my locks grey if ye hearken not unto me? Gird your loins about ye, and seek and ye shall find water and precious metals. Why tarry we for the gold to come unto us—let us journey forward unto the land of Montezuma, and straightway silver shall rise up and meet us.

29. And they answered with one accord, and said—as thou listeth so will we demean ourselves.

30. And it came to pass about the seventh hour, at the going down of the sun, that they came unto a pool, and it was brackish.

31. And the captain of the host said unto the men of Boon's Lick, drink ye and give unto your asses likewise.

## CHAPTER II

1. When therefore the caravan of Benjamin had eaten and drank there came among them certain wild oxen.

2. And they essayed to drink from the pool and would not be gainsayed.

3. Then Benjamin and all the men of his tribe rose up, with one accord, and laid hold of his arms, every one his double trigger.

4. And they slew of the wild oxen half a score and the humps upon their backs were as sweet morsels under their tongues.

5. Now therefore they journeyed forward and they tarried not until they compassed the hillocks of sand, and came unto a great plain, whereon herbage did grow.

6. And they set their faces toward the mountains that divided them from the land of Montezuma, and they went forward many Sabbath day's journey.

7. And it came to pass that the Caravan arrived in the midst of a city, and they of the caravan stood still by the way side, and looked round about them, and lo! a people came forth from their tabernacles of clay and their skin was like the skin of Ethiopie.

8. And the dwellers of Santa Fé looked up and beheld

the men of Benjamin, and they were sore afraid because of their habiliments and their harness of war.

9. And they marvelled one with another, and said, what manner of men are these whose skin is like unto the whiteness of a leper?

10. And the elders and the chief men of Santa Fé spake in a strange language, and said whence came ye?

11. And Benjamin answered and said, we be from a far country, from the land of corn and swine's flesh.

12. Now they of the Ethiope skin spake again unto the strangers and said, what seek ye?

13. Then Benjamin the caravan bachi stood forth and said, we come from afar with our asses laden with merchandize and we seek gold and silver, the ox and the ass and all that is within thy gates.

14. Then the men of Santa Fé cried out with one voice, saying, tarry ye, come in and sojourn, and our maidens shall wash your feet and anoint your beards.

15. And they tarried, and did eat of the flesh of the lamb, and of goat's milk, and of barley water.

16. And they spake to one another and said, it is good for us to be here, for we are weary and our lot is cast in pleasant places.

17. Now it came to pass when they had sojourned awhile that there came among them certain money changers and set before them strange coins and said

18. These we will give unto you, yea more for your purple raiment and fine linens and sandals.

19. And the men of Benjamin said, add thereunto from the flocks and herds of your hills four score of ass colts, and mules and jennets a great many.

20. And those of swarthy skin answered them according to all they had spoken and thus did as the men of Benjamin had commanded and rose up and departed.

21. Then they of Benjamin shouted with one accord and cried aloud saying, this is the land of promise—and the land of payment—for we are laden with the gold of Ophir.

22. And it is moreover of greater value than Loan Office, and the sound thereof is like unto sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

23. And the music thereof is like the music of running waters in a great desert when the horse and rider thirsteth with a parched tongue.

24. It maketh the feeble strong, the lame leap, and the aged forget their grey hairs, yea it turneth the hair of the head like the plumage of the raven.

25. It inclineth the maiden to listen unto the word of him that wooth, even the old men and the maidens are made glad thereat.

26. It buildeth up kingdoms and layeth the city and high palaces low.

27. It breaketh the bolts of the prison door—it causeth disease to flee away.

28. Now therefore all the men of Benjamin rose up and set their faces toward the land wherein their kin folk dwelt, every one his saddle upon his own ass.

29. And they rejoiced with exceeding joy that their sojourning in the land of idolators was at an end.

30. And when they came out from amongst the tabernacles of clay, they shook the dust from their feet.

31. Saying, this people is in the gall of bitterness, and the region of vermin.

32. Let us therefore cut off everyone his locks, that they multiply not among us. And they were shorn every one according to his mode.

33. And they did bathe in the pools by the highway at the going down of the sun.

34. And as they journeyed homeward in the wilderness, and in the land of the Arapahoes, the Camanchies and the ungodly Paducas,

35. Certain valiant young men of the tribe of Benjamin watched all night, neither did they close their eyelids.

36. And when Benjamin and his followers had wandered in the wilderness for the space of forty days,

37. And when their beards had waxed long and their raiment was like unto sack cloth overspread with dust and ashes.

38. They came unto a great river whose waters rolled one upon another like a mighty whirlwind.

39. And there stood therein great beams upright in the water like the bowsprits of tall ships.

40. Now therefore when they had gazed on this mighty sheet of angry waters they all cried out with one voice—**MISSOURI! MISSOURI!**

41. And they were exceeding glad, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable.

42. And everyone had many shekels of silver, and mules and ass colts a great company.

43. And all the old men and maidens, and all their kin folk dwellers in Boon's Lick were exceedingly rejoiced thereat.