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MILITARY ESCORTS ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL

FRED S. PERRINE

Without doubt the romance of the Santa Fe Trail appeals to a great many readers who are interested in the days of the pioneer, and the settlement of the great Southwest.

Covering a period of practically three decades; the history of the Santa Fe Trail is replete with Indian attacks and hair-raising adventures.

The first military escort furnished the Santa Fe trade by the federal government, was in 1829, when four companies of the 6th Infantry, under the command of Major Bennett Riley, left Jefferson Barracks, Mo., May 5, 1829, to protect a caravan of about 79 men and 38 wagons. Riley's command had 20 wagons laden with flour, and 4 ox-carts with camp equipment.

The best contemporary account we have of affairs on the Santa Fe Trail is Gregg's "Commerce of the Prairies," Early Western Travels Series, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Gregg states as follows, Vol. xix, p. 187:

"This escort under Major Riley, and one composed of about sixty dragoons, commanded by Captain Wharton, in 1834, constituted the only government protection ever afforded to the Santa Fe trade until 1843, when large escorts under Captain Cook accompanied two different caravans as far as the Arkansas river," but on p. 107, Vol. xx, he contradicts himself as follows:

"We had just reached the extreme edge of the far famed, 'Cross Timbers' when we were gratified by the arrival of forty dragoons, under the command of Lieut. Bowman, who had orders to accompany us to the supposed boundaries of the United States." This was in 1839, and Gregg's caravan, this year, did not follow the regular route to Santa Fe, but left Van Buren, Arkansas, crossing the

Arkansas River, striking westerly toward the North fork of the Canadian, which they struck near its confluence with the Canadian. Thence westerly along the north bank of the Canadian to Santa Fe, which was practically due west from Van Buren.

Of the first military escort, under Major Riley we have his official report, dated Cantonment Leavenworth, Nov. 22, 1829. This report was published in *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, Vol. ix, pp. 277-280, but in a garbled condition. Efforts are now being made to ascertain if the original manuscript report of Major Riley, together with the communications mentioned in his report, are still extant in the records of the War Department.

The report of Major Riley, as published in *American State Papers*, above mentioned, will be included in this article, with remarks and notations, and in case the original reports and communications are located, they will be embodied in a later article.

Between 1829 and 1834, there are no *government* records showing that United States troops were used as escorts on the Santa Fe Trail, although the following appears in the *St. Louis Republican*, under date of April 23, 1832:*

“Many of our enterprising young men have already left, and others are preparing to take their departure for Santa Fe. The upper country will also send out an unusual number of traders. They are to rendezvous at the round prairie, near the Missouri line, on the 15th of next month; when they will be escorted as far as the boundary between the U. States and New Spain, *by a detachment of the U. S. Army.*”

Other than Gregg's "Commerce of the Prairies," Niles "Weekly Register," and the contemporary files of the *St. Louis newspapers*, give the most information of the doings along the Santa Fe Trail. Many papers of the time protested against the furnishing of military escorts to the

* Bancroft in "History of Arizona and New Mexico," p. 335, note 36, states: "Chas. Bent is named as capt. of a caravan of 93 wagons in '33, escorted by a company of rangers:" giving as his authority Niles' Register xlv, 374.

trade on account of the expense; and the traders banded themselves together for their mutual protection against the Indians.

The next military escort furnished the Santa Fe trade was that of Company A, United States Dragoons, under the command of Captain Clifton Wharton, in 1834. Captain Wharton's report, which has never been published, has been unearthed through the efforts of Hon. Chas. L. McNary, senior senator from Oregon, Mr. Grant Foreman, and the writer of this article. This report of Captain Wharton will be taken up after the Riley report.

Between the years 1834 and 1843, a hiatus exists, at least as far as government records are concerned, relative to military escorts on the Santa Fe Trail.

There is no government record of the escort furnished Gregg's expedition in 1839, under the command of Lieutenant James Monroe Bowman, and as far as the writer has been able to ascertain, Gregg is the only one who makes any mention of it.

The next record of United States troops escorting Santa Fe caravans, is furnished by Gregg, who states: "Large escorts under Captain Cook* accompanied two different caravans, as far as the Arkansas river."

The writer of this article is under many obligations to Hon. Chas. L. McNary, U. S. Senator from Oregon, Mr. Grant Foreman of Muskogee, Okla., and Miss Stella M. Drumm, of the Missouri Historical Society, and hereby heartily acknowledges the same.

Report of four Companies of Sixth regiment of the United States Infantry which left Jefferson Barracks on the 5th of May 1829, under the command of Brevet Major Riley,¹ of the United States army, for the protection of the trade of Santa Fe.

* This was Philip St. George Cooke, whose experiences during the escort of the caravans referred to, are found in his "Scenes and Adventures in the Army," now out of print, and not easily available. A brief resume of this book will follow the report of Captain Wharton.

1. Bennett Riley, born in Maryland, was appointed ensign in the Rifles, Jan. 19, 1813. After serving through several grades, Captain of the 5th Inf., June 1,

Cantonment Leavenworth, November 22, 1829.

Sir: I have the honor to report my arrival here with the United States troops I have the honor to command, on the 8th of this month, all well, and in good spirits, but rather thinly clad for the season. The command left this place on the 3d of June, and the opposite side of the river on the 4th. The reason for my crossing the river and going to the other side I have already stated in my communications to the department that is, from the information I could get, that it was the best side; but on my return I found that the people had given me wrong information of the road. However, we had little or no trouble except with the oxen, they being of different ages, some old and some young, and not used to be put together, and the teamsters not accustomed to drive them. All these things combined troubled us a little, but after five or six days we had no trouble. Nothing occurred worthy of notice until the 11th, when a cart, which had been purchased by the assistant quartermaster, Lee,² broke down, and on examining it we found that the inside of the hubs was entirely decayed, and the boxes had become so loose that it could not be repaired on the prairie.

I directed my assistant quarter-master, Lieutenant Brooke,³ to have it left behind, rather than lose time by calling a board or trying to repair it. On the same day we fell in with the company of traders, at a place called

1821. Shortly after was transferred to the 6th Inf., and after that he served in the 4th and 2nd Inf., until he was appointed Colonel of the 1st Inf., on Jan. 31, 1850. He served through the Seminole and the Mexican Wars, and died June 9, 1853.

2. Francis Lee, born in Pa., a West Point graduate. Served in the 7th, 4th and 6th Inf., and on Oct. 18, 1855, was appointed Colonel of the 2nd Inf. Served through the Mexican War, and was brevetted for gallant and meritorious conduct in this conflict. He died Jan. 19, 1859.

3. Francis J. Brooke, was born in Virginia, graduated from West Point, class of 1826, served first in the 6th Inf., then in the 7th Inf., appointed First Lieutenant of the 6th Inf., on May 6, 1835, and was killed in a battle with the Seminole Indians at Okeechobee, Fla., December 25, 1837.

Round Grove,⁴ consisting of about 79 men and 38 wagons, which we took under our protection, and on the 12th left the Grove. (Please to see, per journal, the arrivals, and departures, and progress of each day.)

On the 20th we left Council Grove.⁵ After going some miles we found a piece of bark stuck up in the road, that had written on it, "The Kansas have been attacked a few days since by the Pawnee Picks, and one of them has been killed." We saw several of their camps as we passed along, but after this we saw but one, which we took to be the camp of some other nation of Indians, and concluded that they had gone back; but on our return we learned that they had pushed ahead and waited for me at Cow Creek,⁶ the place where we saw the last Indian camp, where they had stayed two or three days, and then, being out of provisions, had crossed the Arkansas lower down than where we struck it, and had gone low down on the Semirone,⁷ so that we missed them altogether.

I had followed your instructions inviting the Kansas, Ioways, and Shawnese, to accompany the expedition without pay or rations, but to have my protection on their hunts, but received no answer from either of them; if I had, I should have sent a runner ahead to inform them that my command was at hand. In a few days after that we lost six horses belonging to individuals, and some of the

4. Also called Lone Elm, and The Glen. On the head waters of Cedar Creek, between Olathe and Gardner, Kan., about 35 miles from Independence. Farnham, in his "Travels in the Great Western Prairies" calls this Elm Grove. This point was on the Oregon Trail as well as the Santa Fe Trail.

5. Council Grove, now seat of Morris County, Kan., an important stop on the Santa Fe Trail. Here the traders met, organized, elected officers, etc., also here were generally secured timber for axles, wagon tongues, etc., as no serviceable timber was to be obtained further west. For a description of this place see "Thwaites' Early Western Travels," Vol. xix, p. 201, also xxviii, p. 63.

6. Distance from Independence, according to Gregg, about 249 miles. Was similar in character to the Little Arkansas, with high banks and miry bottom. Flows from Barton County, southeast across Rice County, Kan. Hutchinson, Kan., is at its confluence with the Arkansas. The Santa Fe Trail crossed the headwaters of several of its tributaries.

7. Cimarron River, also called Semirone, Salt Fork of the Arkansas, Red Fork, Grand Saline, etc., was at most times entirely dry, water flowing under the sand except in times of freshets. From the Arkansas to the Cimarron was the most dreaded part of the entire trail.

traders reported that they had seen signs of Indians, which determined me to abandon the idea of sending an express after we should have left Turkey Creek,⁸ which you will see was for the good of the service. On the 9th of July we arrived at Chouteau's island⁹ where the traders determined to cross the river. The next day I received the enclosed communications, marked A and B. The next day, the 11th, I delivered them the enclosed copy of a letter to the governor of Santa Fé, marked C, and received the enclosed communication, marked D. The communication marked D, I thought was requisite, in order that I should know where and when they were to meet us. They crossed the river on the 10th, and on the 11th I went across to see them, and at about one o'clock they started.

I had given them my views and advice of the manner they should proceed, and they promised to adhere to it, but it was soon forgotten. I told them that they must stick together, and not leave their wagons more than one hundred yards, without they sent out a party to hunt, but it had no effect; for at about half-past six of the same evening an express arrived from them, stating that Mr. Lamme,¹⁰ a merchant from Liberty,¹¹ was killed, and they were only

8. Branch of the Little Arkansas in McPherson County, Kan., and about 212 miles from Independence, according to Gregg. There were two or three Turkey Creeks in this vicinity, viz; Little Turkey, Big Turkey, and Running Turkey.

9. Chouteau's Island was at the upper ford of the Arkansas River, just above the present town of Hartland, Kearny Co., Kan., according to Thwaites' "Early Western Travels," Vol. xix, p. 185; while Coues, in Pike's Expedition Vol ii, p. 440 states: "Most of the older maps mark hereabout the large island in the Arkansas called Chouteau's, somewhat W. of the 101st Meridian, and apparently near Deerfield," and he further states as follows, in the "Journal of Jacob Fowler," p. 32: "Chouteau's, whose name was long borne by a large island in this vicinity, not easy to locate exactly. If there has been but one of this name, Chouteau's Island had floated a good many miles up and down the river, at least in books I have sought on the subject. Inman locates it near Cimarron, Kansas, p. 42, at the mouth of Big Sandy Creek, Colo., on p. 75; and his map agrees with the latter position."

10. Samuel Craig Lamme, a merchant of Franklin, Mo., who had recently come thither from Harrison County, Ky. (Thwaites' "Early Western Travels," xix, p. 186.)

11. Liberty, Mo., the county seat of Clay County, was settled in 1822, but up to 1826 had only about a dozen houses; it was incorporated in 1829. During the Mormon troubles in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, Liberty rose to prominence. The town is set back about six miles from the river, on the high salubrious uplands. Liberty Landing on the river, was, in the days of the Santa Fe trade, of considerable importance. (Thwaites' "Early Western Travels," Vol. xxii, p. 249.)

six miles off, and the Indians were all around them, and if I did not go to their assistance that they expected to be all killed and scalped. I could not hesitate, but struck my tents immediately and commenced crossing; but, unfortunately for my oxen, the river had risen about two feet during the day, so that we had some difficulty in getting across, but eventually succeeded. I reached them with the first division, composed of companies A and B, with the six-pounder and ammunition wagon, at about eleven o'clock at night, and the second division, under the command of Captain Wickliffe," in about an hour after, with companies F and H, and the rest of the baggage and wagons. We found them in a very dangerous situation, surrounded by very high sand hills, with deep ravines running in every direction; so that, I think, if they had been attacked by any other enemy but the Indians of that country they must have been all killed and scalped; but fortunately for them, in the midst of misfortune, the Indians run off after having killed and scalped Mr. Lamme. As soon as I arrived I selected the best position I could, and remained under arms all night, but saw no Indians.

At reveille some of the traders gave an alarm, and said that they saw the Indians in great numbers, but we could see nothing of them. They expressed a wish that I would go further with them. I consented to travel with them two days, or until they should reach the Semirone; they appeared to be very well satisfied, and after burying Mr. Lamme, about ten o'clock a. m. we took up our line of march. The next day, the 13th, we reached a little creek, where there was good grass and water, which was very fortunate for us, for thirteen yokes of oxen had given out on that day. We rested in the 14th, and the traders stayed with us, when in the evening I received the enclosed communication, marked E, and I herewith enclose a copy of my answer to all their communications. We parted on the

12. William N. Wickliffe was born in Kentucky, and his military service was confined to the 6th Inf., in which he rose to a Captaincy, Feb. 15, 1826. He resigned July 31, 1837.

next day and I arrived at Chauteau's island on the 16th, after a fatiguing march of five days since we left the river. We encamped on the Mexican side for six or eight days, during which time we found it necessary to have the oxen unyoked and herded in good grass. We re-crossed at the expiration of the time above named and encamped a little above, opposite Chauteau's island. The position was as good as we could get at that point. The above was a little too near, but we had to encamp there for the purpose of giving our cattle a chance of gaining strength and spirits, there being good grass and wood there. We remained quiet until the 31st of July, when four discharged soldiers, Simmons, Fry, Colvin, and Gordon, started for the settlements. They, had, a few days previous, asked my advice about going in. I told them that they ought not to think of such a thing, for that I had given up sending expresses, and that was a proof of the danger but they added that they were citizens, and to do as they pleased; but if they wished to stay they should have something to eat. All this had no effect; they wanted to go.

I wrote to the department and told you everything, and added at the bottom that it was very doubtful if you ever got the letter. At night of that day three of them only got back to camp, and I think it very doubtful, if it had not been for a hunting party under the command of Lieutenant Searight,¹³ whether any of them would have got back or not. They stated that they had not gone more than eight or ten miles when they discovered about thirty Indians riding across the river. They landed and soon galloped up to them, when one of the men made a sign of peace, which they returned, and the parties shook hands. Then the Indians made signs for them to go across the river, which they declined, and started on their journey, the Indians still making signs for them to cross the river.

13. Joseph Dondaldson Searight, was born in Maryland, and appointed to West Point from Pennsylvania. He graduated in the class of 1822, and served in the 4th and 6th Inf., in which latter regiment he rose to a Captaincy, Dec. 25, 1837. He resigned from the Army November 7, 1845, and died Jan. 22, 1885.

George Gordon looked back and said they were all friends, and that he would go and shake hands with them again; the others told him not, but in the act of shaking hands with them a second time, he was killed by another Indian with a gun. The other three immediately took off their packs and prepared to defend themselves. The Indians began to ride round and cut capers on their horses; the three men fired one at a time at them, and retreated towards my camp, and met Lieutenant Searight's party. They said they killed one of the Indians.

The next day, 1st August, I sent Captain Wickliffe, with about forty or fifty men and one of the discharged men, in search of the body of Gordon, and he returned in the evening without effecting his object. The man that went with him was so alarmed that he could not find the place. On the 3d, in the morning, I determined to make another search, and if possible to find and bury the bones of the man who had been killed. Accordingly, I ordered Lieutenant Isard,¹⁴ acting adjutant, to take charge of a party of forty men, and the two other discharged men, to proceed, search for, and bury the bones if he could find them. Whilst he was absent with his company, between one and two o'clock p. m., the Indians made a desperate charge on horseback on our cattle and their guard, which was about four or five hundred yards from our camp. It was a perfect level; there was nothing to obstruct the advance of anything, or prevent us from seeing at the first onset. I immediately ordered light company B., that was armed with rifles and commanded by Captain Pentland,¹⁵ to advance and skirmish with the enemy until I could form

14. James Farley Izard, born in Pennsylvania, and from the same state was appointed to West Point, graduating in the class of 1824. He served in the 2nd Inf., and on March 4, 1833, received a commission of first Lieutenant in the Dragoon Regiment. He died March 5, 1836, from wounds received on Feb. 28, 1836, in action with the Seminole Indians at Camp Izard, Fla.

15. Joseph Pentland, born in Pennsylvania, appointed to West Point from the same state, graduating in the class of 1818. He served only in the 6th Inf., receiving his appointment as Captain, October 31, 1827, and was dismissed from the Army, April 22, 1830. Died in 1833.

the line, thinking at the time that they intended a general attack. Lieutenant Cooke,¹⁶ with his guard, was ordered to that point, for the cattle guard was in great danger; but the promptness of the movement checked the charge of the enemy. They had, however, wounded Samuel Arrison, a private in grenadier company A, 6th regiment. He was brought in by some of light company B, and died of his wounds a few hours after. These wounds were nine in number. In the meantime I had formed company H, commanded by Lieutenant Waters,¹⁷ and company F, commanded by Captain Wickliffe, and marched them forward at double quick time towards the thickest of the enemy; and when about one hundred and fifty yards fired a volley. At that moment I discovered that the Indians were around my camp. Lieutenant Searight was playing away with the six-pounder with good effect, and changing his position as circumstances required. I gave the command of the two companies to Captain Wickliffe, and went to the right flank, where I directed grenadier company A, commanded by Lieutenant Van Swearingen,¹⁸ to protect it, which was promptly executed. In the meantime, Captain Wickliffe, with great presence of mind, had crossed his company to the island to protect the rear, and opened a fire on the enemy. The Indians, seeing that we were well guarded on every side, began to gallop around and to move off. Our cattle and horses had taken fright at the first onset, but a great part of them had been stopped by the company in the rear. On the right flank there were about twenty, and very few Indians about them. I thought probably they

16. Philip St. George Cooke, a Virginian, graduated from West Point in 1823. He served successively in the 6th Inf., the Dragoon Regt, 2nd Dragoons, and 2nd Cav. Served in the Mexican War, and through the Civil War. Was brevetted twice for gallant and meritorious conduct, and retired a Major General by brevet, October 29, 1873. Died March 20 1895.

17. George Washington Waters of Massachusetts, graduated from West Point in 1819. Served only in the 6th Inf., where he rose to the rank of Captain. Resigned April 30, 1837, and died March 14, 1846.

18. Joseph Van Swearingen, of Maryland, also graduated from West Point in 1819, served in the 1st and later in the 6th Inf., in which latter regiment he rose to the rank of Captain. He was killed December 25, 1837, in battle with the Seminole Indians at Okeechobee, Fla.

might be saved. I directed Lieutenant Van Swearingen with his company to advance, and if possible to recover them; after he had got some distance from camp, and knowing that he had a good bugler with him, I ordered my bugler to sound double quick, he did, and Lieutenant Van Swearingen's bugler mistook the call, and the company returned without the cattle. By this time the enemy was retiring after a loss of eight killed and one wounded. Our loss, one man wounded, who died in a few hours after, fifty-four oxen, ten public horses, ten private horses, and a few public mules. Think what our feelings must have been to see them going off with our cattle and horses, when if we had been mounted, we could have beaten them to pieces; but we were obliged to content ourselves with whipping them from our camp. We did not get any of the killed or wounded, but we saw the next day where they had dragged them off. They have said since that our fire from the big gun killed five or six. Lieutenant Brooke, my assistant quartermaster and commissary, seeing that there was very little to do in the staff, shouldered his rifle, marched out with the companies, and fought with them. The pitching of our tents was according to regulations, so that they formed a square. The cannon was in front of company A, on the right flank; company F, in the rear; companies B and H on the left flank. Lieutenant Brooke very promptly marched his guard to its proper place in front, after he, with his guard, had assisted in charging the first onset of the enemy. I have never seen officers and men more anxious to have a good fight. Every officer seemed to vie with each other who should do most for his country. After all was over I had the men formed and gave them an extra gill, and signified my satisfaction at their conduct. The Indians were about three hundred strong, well mounted, and with guns, bows, and spears; and our force about one hundred and thirty or forty. Lieutenant Izard being absent with his command, about forty men. The nation or nations we could not tell, but I have reason to believe that there

was a part of the Camanchies, Arapahoes, and Hiaways, as one of my men's tin pans was found with some of these three nations that attacked the traders on their return, as also King's powder horn, that was recognized by some of my men when they showed things they had taken from the men killed in battle. We moved down the river in three or four days after this affair. On the 10th Corporal Astor came to us and informed us that he and Nation had been sent with an express, and that on the 23d July they were attacked by about fifteen Indians, who succeeded in getting the mail and horses and wounding them both, Nation dangerously, by a spear in the breast, and him slightly in the wrist by an arrow. He reported that Nation then laid sick with his wound, about ten miles off, and that he had been wandering about since the attack of the 23d in hopes of finding us. He also stated that they had fed on snakes and frogs a great part of the time. He says that somewhere about the Council Grove they saw some Indians who showed them something of hostility, but did not attack them. I immediately ordered a company of forty men, and Lieutenant Swearingen to command them, and to take a cart and bring in Nation. He returned at about nine or ten o'clock at night with him; he was very low; he reports that his joy, at seeing the party, was beyond expression; he shed tears, and tried to make a noise, but was unable in consequence of his weakness. The next day, 11th August, between 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning, we saw some Indians about two miles and a half from the camp, walking in and out of a ravine; and, after a little, saw some leading horses. They would sometimes come up the river and then go down again. It was evident that they wanted to decoy us from our camp. I had sent three or four men across the river a little above our camp, to lay under the bank, about four or five hundred yards, for the purpose of killing buffalo, which I had done every day since we had been at this camp with a great deal of success. On the appearance of the Indians I had the recall sounded,

and they returned and reported that they had killed three buffaloes. The Indians having disappeared, about one or two o'clock, I directed a party of sixteen men, an officer, and a non-commissioned officer to be detailed, and to take with them a wagon and team and bring in the buffaloes that had been killed. Shortly after Captain Pentland reported to me that he had been detailed to go on the command; I directed him to take bugler King, of company A with him to show him where the buffaloes laid, as he was one of the party which assisted in killing them; which, with the teamster, made the party twenty in number. I gave him instructions, stating that he had seen the Indians in the morning, and that he must keep his party together and not be dispersed; that in case he was attacked he must fight the enemy, and that I should support him in a very short time; but added again, "keep your party on the alert;" but, instead of that, as soon as he had crossed the river, King saw a buffalo crossing to the river, and obtained Captain Pentland's permission to leave the party and try to get a shot at him. In the meantime our camp was attacked by about one hundred and fifty Indians. I had the command turned out and formed as before, of one company on each side of the square. They did not, however, come within musket shot.

Lieutenant Searight had commenced a fire with the 6-pounder with some effect. I had told Captain Wickliffe that if he heard a fire on the other side of the river he, with his company, must move to support Captain Pentland. The enemy having gathered to the left flank of the C. P. was moved to that point. Captain Wickliffe marched in the direction of Captain Pentland's party. When he approached the river he discovered that the party had crossed to a sand bank near the side of the river, and understood by one of the party that belonged to the company that King had been killed. On my hearing that King was killed, and that Captain Pentland had retreated across the river, I despatched my adjutant, Lieutenant Izard, to direct

Captain Wickliffe to cross the river and secure the body, thinking that they had in the skirmish no time to take his scalp, and also directed Captain Pentland, with his party, to support him. As Captain Wickliffe crossed the river he was fired at by about fifteen or twenty Indians, and he returned the fire from his company. He then saw the wagon and team running down the river. He directed Captain Pentland to recover the body of King and he would with his company recover his wagon and team, after exchanging several fires with the enemy. In the meantime Captain Pentland had recovered the body and brought it into camp. On the first fire of Captain Wickliffe, I directed company B, under the command of Lieutenant Sevier,¹⁹ (his captain being on detached service and his lieutenants on guard,) to support Captain Wickliffe, which he did, and reached the point of support in about four or five minutes. Captain Wickliffe seeing that the enemy had dispersed, had the buffaloes cut up and brought into camp. It is said by the men, and I believe, that there was not more than fifteen or twenty Indians on that side of the river, and as soon as they were discovered in pursuit, Captain Pentland ordered his party to retreat. There are two instances in this report in support of my opinion, that in the case of the discharged soldiers, when four were attacked by thirty, and they got off safe, after they showed resistance, and the case of Arter Nation, two attacked by fifteen, and when a show of resistance was made they went off. The way Nation was killed was in shaking hands with them, and in the act of giving tobacco. I am thus particular to show the government that I have done the best in my power, and that my arrangements in this case were as good as they could be, but unfortunately they were not carried into effect as they will be seen in the report. The loss on both sides was

19. Robert Sevier, of Tennessee, a member of the West Point class of 1824, served only in the 6th Inf., being appointed First Lieutenant August 10, 1836, and serving as regimental Adjutant till his resignation on October 31, 1837. He died May 16, 1879.

equal in number. Mathew King, a bugler in grenadier company A, 6th regiment; one Indian killed by the 6-pounder under the direction of Lieutenant Searight.

After the enemy had dispersed I directed Captain Pentland to hand in a written report; he did, and I have the honor to enclose it, marked K. He says he was attacked. I venture to assert that he was not fired on by the enemy, neither did he fire at them; then how could it be called an attack. They killed King about two or three hundred yards from the party, it is said. He says in his report that there were forty-six or fifty Indians. Admit there were in the name of God, cannot twenty Americans whip fifty Indians? I answer yes, that they can whip one hundred such as we came in contact with in that country.

After this we kept moving every day to get grass and to find buffalo, which we had the good fortune to find plenty to have supplied five hundred men. It was not fat, but our men fattened on it. They had as much as they could eat the whole time, and half ration of flour and salt. Nothing of moment occurred from the 11th of August until the 11th of October, except the death of Nation, which took place a few days after he arrived. The last of September and first of October we were engaged in overhauling our wagons and carts. By a board of officers they have condemned five wagons and three carts, which they say are entirely unfit for service. There being no purchasers, according to the regulations, I ordered them to be burned, and the iron cached in a safe place, which was done. You will see by the enclosed, marked D, that we meant to wait until the 10th of October, but we staid a day longer, and did not move until the 11th. Early in the morning of the 11th, the moment this transportation having been put in as good order as it could be in at that place, with fifteen day's full rations of pork, beans, salt, vinegar, soap, candles, and about twenty-eight days of flour and bread, with about thirty-two of dried buffalo meat, which I had ordered the company to save during the time we were lying still.

On my arrival at Chateau's island, on the 9th of July, I had directed the company to lay by fifteen days full rations, in order that, if at any time we were obliged to abandon the expedition, we should have plenty to eat. Shortly after our departure on the 11th we received an express from the traders, stating that they were only one days march from us, and they had a Spanish escort with them, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Viscarra.²⁰ I ordered a halt, pitched my tents, and waited for their arrival, which was on the next day, the 12th. When the colonel got nearly across the river, I had my line formed parallel to it, and received him with presented arms. I had sent my adjutant, on his landing, to escort him down to the line. After he had passed I dismissed the battalion, and received and welcomed him to the territory of the United States, and invited him and the secretary of state of Santa Fé to my tent, where we exchanged civilities and he left us awhile to see the pitching of his camp. That evening he visited some of the officers, and appeared to be pleased. The next day I had a short battalion drill, and after a company of light infantry drill. I was very anxious to show the character of the American troops, and, from his and the secretary's appearance, I succeeded. In the evening he had his troops formed, and invited me and my officers to accompany him. He took us down the line, they at present arms, and fired several time with a brass 4-pounder which he had. After that we went with him to his marquee, and partook of an excellent cup of chocolate and other refreshments. During that day I had shown him everything about my camp. He was particularly pleased with the cannon, the carriage, and implements, which were entirely different from his. He looked at it several times.

20. Lieut.-Col. José Antonio Viscarra was *jefe militar* of New Mexico from October, 1822, to February, 1825, and also *jefe político* from November, 1822, to September, 1823. He was again appointed to the military command about August, 1829, and served till the summer of 1833. See the quarterly, *Old Santa Fe* , I, 275 and index. Further data on Viscarra, given by Cooke, (*Scenes and Adventures in the Army* , pp. 34-88,) are quoted freely in Twitchell, *Leading Facts of N. M. Hist.* , II, 21-26.

He said he was very sorry that we did not come into Santa Fé. The secretary handed me the enclosed document (G) from the governor, in answer to mine of the 10th of July. The other that he alludes to was a letter of introduction to him by Mr. Bent.²¹ The documents marked H, P, T, are the returns and statements of his force, and of the caravan which he had under his command. The next morning (13th) we parted, he for Santa Fé, and I for this place, not without mutual professions of friendship, and hopes of seeing each other in the Spanish country next year. The caravan I received from the detachment amounted to about two hundred thousand dollars worth, probably of different kinds. One Spanish family, eight or ten other Spaniards, who were punished by their laws for having been born in old Spain, all of which, in my humble opinion, would have been destroyed and the people killed if it had not been for the Mexican escort. They were attacked, as it was, near the Semirone spring on their return, but the colonel, with his troops and Indians beat them off. He lost one captain and two privates killed of his command. The traders say that they killed eight Indians; but there are several stories about it. It is hard to know which to believe, but it is certain that they killed some. We travelled on with them under our protection until we parted, which was at the Little Arkansas.²² On the fifth or sixth day after we started our oxen began to fail, and we were obliged to leave some on the road every day until we got in. I cannot account for it, unless it was that hard night's drive across the Arkansas, or after the attack of the 3d of August, for we had to keep them yoked and tied to the wagon wheels every night until our return; and another thing is, that we had to diminish the extent of range from necessity. In fact, it was impossible to protect them any distance from camp.

21. This was undoubtedly Colonel Charles Bent, who was appointed first American governor in New Mexico, in 1846.

22. The place where the Santa Fe Trail crossed the Little Arkansas, was below Little River, in Rice County Kan., and was estimated by Gregg to be about 229 miles from Independence. Though narrow its steep banks and miry bottom made crossing bad. Wichita, Kan., is at its mouth.

We only got in with twenty-four yokes, and most of them could not have drawn another day. Our strong ground for the above reasons being correct is, that I let Mr. Bent have a yoke on the 10th of July, (that was not in those hard times) and he writes in that he went through to Santa Fé better than the mules; and he had sent them back to me in good order, but they were stolen or strayed in the mountains. I let Mr. Bent have them to try whether oxen in future, if we could get them, would answer, they are so much cheaper. One team of three yokes of oxen will not cost more than two mules. On the 8th of November, at night, got to the end of our journey at Cantonment Leavenworth.

I have the honor to be, with great respect and esteem, your obedient and humble servant.

B. RILEY, *Major United States Army commanding.*
Brigadier General Leavenworth.

From the above report of Major Riley, several conclusions may be drawn.

It is safe to assume, that had the traders carried out his instructions with regard to keeping a keen lookout, keeping together, in a country which they knew to be dangerous, there would, in all probability, have been no attack by the Indians. But the opportunity was too good to be lost on the part of the hostiles. The fact that the traders had left their escort behind them on the other side of the Arkansas River, and advancing as they evidently were in a loose formation, they were an easy prey to any band of hostiles in the vicinity.

Major Riley had given good advice, but was it heeded?

The fight of August 11th., would undoubtedly not have occurred except for the disregard of orders given Captain Pentland by Major Riley.

Between the lines of the report of this day's occur-

rence, can be read Major Riley's implication of cowardice on the part of Captain Pentland. Riley was undoubtedly a good officer, and a brave one, and one cannot but admire his vehemence in this matter.

According to Heitman's Historical Register, from which I have secured the records of the various officers mentioned in this article, Captain Pentland was dismissed from the Army April 22, 1830, probably as a direct result of this report.

(to be continued)