

△ THE DISCOVERY △

OF

NEBRASKA.

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BY

JAMES W. SAVAGE.

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The Discovery of Nebraska.

WE are apt to look upon Nebraska as a young state; young in its geological formation, in its political existence and in its historical records. For descriptions of its soil, its climate, its fruits or its inhabitants, few have sought to look further back than the commencement of the present century, and the published memorials of its history prior to the advent of the French trappers and traders have been thought too meagre to serve as a basis for any exact account. But hidden away in the lumber rooms of wealthy Spanish and French families, and piled on the shelves of national libraries in Paris, Madrid and Mexico, are hosts of letters, journals and reports which are gradually emerging from their seclusion and undergoing the scrutiny of acute and practised eyes. The documents recently edited by M. Margry, in Paris, and now in course of publication by the United States Government, throw a flood of light upon early French discoveries and explorations in the West. And when the vast libraries of

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all the nations which took part in those adventurous travels shall give up their dead treasures, we have reason to hope that we shall be able to add many years to the authentic history of our state.

I purpose to collect and present, this evening, a few of the reasons we have for believing that four score years before the pilgrims landed on the venerable shores of Massachusetts; sixty-eight years before Hudson discovered the ancient and beautiful river which still bears his name; sixty-six years before John Smith, with his cockney colonists, sailed up a summer stream which they named after James the First of England, and commenced the settlement of what was afterwards to be Virginia; twenty-three years before Shakspeare was born; when Queen Elizabeth was a little girl, and Charles the Fifth sat upon the united throne of Germany and Spain, Nebraska was discovered; the peculiarities of her soil and climate noted, her fruits and productions described, and her inhabitants and animals depicted. If the arguments and citations in support of this theory shall prove more dull and prosaic than the custom of recent times requires the popular lecture to be, I shall still be able to indulge a hope that among those whose nativity or residence has caused them to entertain a peculiar affection for this state, and especially among those whose pursuits have led them to understand and appreciate the

value of historical studies, the intrinsic interest and importance of my topic may prove some excuse for the bald narration of facts to which I shall be obliged to subject your patience.

There is hardly any expedition of modern times, around which hangs so much of the glamour of romantic mystery, as that undertaken about the middle of the sixteenth century for the purpose of discovering the seven cities of the buffalo and the land of Quivera. Although at least four contemporaneous narratives of this remarkable march have reached us, it is singular that hardly any two recent writers agree either in the location of the seven cities or the ultimate terminus of the journey. The cities of Cibola have been placed by different investigators at the ruins now called Zuni, in New Mexico, at a point about one hundred miles east of that spot, and on the Rio del Chaco, about an equal distance to the north. The country called Quivera is still more rich in its variety of locations. The vicinity of Guaymas on the Gulf of California, the ruins now called Gran Quivera in New Mexico, different points in Colorado and the region of Baxter Springs in Kansas, are but a few of the spots suggested for this forgotten land. I shall endeavor to show that none of these answer the conditions of the narratives to which I have alluded, and that the land of Quivera was situated in what is now the state of Nebraska.

It is true that the only discovery of our state, which can be regarded in any sense as permanent, that which was followed by the usual horde of adventurers, traders and explorers, dates from a long subsequent period. The city of St. Louis was established in the year 1764, and in the preceding summer its founder, Laclede Liguist, visited the Missouri. Gradually the advancing wave of commerce crept up that river, until it reached the most powerful and mighty of the savage nations of that day, the proud, wealthy, populous and pugnacious tribe of the Omahas, with their famous chief *Wash-ing-guh-sah-ba*, or the Blackbird, whose prowess Irving has celebrated, and whose lineal descendants still exercise, on a little reservation, hereditary rule over the docile handful to which that great nation is reduced.

We catch an earlier glimpse of this region from one who had enlisted in the service of God instead of the service of Mammon. There was found a few years since, in the archives of St. Mary's College in Montreal, the identical map which Father Marquette prepared of his voyage down the Mississippi, executed by his own hand, and bearing all the marks of authenticity. Upon this map, drawn in the year of our Lord 1673, appears the territory which now forms the state of Nebraska, delineated with remarkable accuracy. The general course of the Missouri is given to a point far north of this latitude; the Platte

River is laid down in almost its exact position, and among the Indian tribes which he enumerates as scattered about this region, we find such names as Panas, Mahas, Otontantes, which it is not difficult to translate into Pawnees, Omahas, and perhaps Otoes. It is not without a thrill of interest that a Nebraskan can look upon the frail and discolored parchment upon which, for the first time in the history of the world, these words were written.

So full and accurate is this new-found map that, had we not the word of Father Marquette to the contrary, it would not be difficult to believe that during his journey he personally visited the Platte River. It was a dream of his, which, had his young life been spared, would probably have been realized. But here we will let the good father speak for himself. He is describing his descent of the Mississippi. The Pekitanoui River, of which he speaks, is the Missouri.

“We descend, following the course of the river
 “towards the other called Pekitanoui, which empties
 “into the Mississippi, coming from the northwest,
 “of which I shall have something considerable to
 “say after what I have remarked of this river. * *

“As we were discoursing, sailing gently down a
 “still, clear water, we heard the noise of a rapid into
 “which we were about to plunge. I have never seen
 “anything more frightful: a mass of large trees,

“with roots and branches entire, real floating islands
 “came rushing from the mouth of the river Peki-
 “tanoui with such impetuosity that we could not
 “venture across without serious risk. The agitation
 “was so great that the water was all muddy, and
 “could not get clear.

“Pekitanoui is a considerable river, which, coming
 “from very far in the northwest, empties into the
 “Mississippi. Many Indian towns are ranged along
 “this river, and I hope by its means to make the
 “discovery of the Red or California Sea.

“We judged by the direction the Mississippi takes
 “that if it keeps on the same course it has its mouth
 “in the gulf of Mexico: it would be very advanta-
 “geous to find that which leads to the south sea to-
 “wards California; and this, as I said, I hope to
 “find by Pekitanoui; following the account which
 “the Indians have given me, for from them I learn
 “that advancing up this river for five or six days,
 “you come to a beautiful prairie twenty or thirty
 “leagues long, which you must cross to the north-
 “west. It terminates at another little river on which
 “you can embark, it not being difficult to transport
 “canoes over so beautiful a country as that prairie.
 “This second river runs southwest for ten or fifteen
 “leagues, after which it enters a small lake, which is
 “the source of another deep river running to the
 “west, where it empties into the sea. I have hardly

“any doubt that this is the Red Sea, and I do not
“despair of one day making the discovery, if God
“does me this favor and grants me health, in order
“to be able to publish the gospel to all the nations
“of this New World who have so long been plunged
“in heathen darkness.”

The brave and pious heart was not to be cheered by the discoveries he had hoped for; the great highway to the California Sea was to be travelled in far later days and by another race than his; still, as his earnest voice comes down to us through the centuries, we can see that in spite of all the mistakes into which his untutored geographers led him, he made a shrewd guess at the future pathway of commerce.

But now let us turn again from the humble and unpretending labors of this member of the society of Jesus, and gaze upon a more gorgeous spectacle. Let us look back three centuries and a half to the province of Mexico, or, as it was then called, New Spain. For the bare prairies of Illinois and the rocky shores of the lakes we have the luxuriance of tropic vegetation; for the holy vestments of a Catholic priest we have the burnished armor and the dancing plumes of a Spanish cavalier; for the low splash of the paddle and the ripple of a bark canoe we have the noisy clank of steel, the neighing of horses, the shouting of captains and the heavy tread of mighty cavalcades. It is nineteen years after the

conquest of Mexico by Cortes, that brilliant and heartless commander, of whose ambition, avarice, treachery and cruelty, says an old chronicler of the time,* "God will have kept a better account than we have." Sometimes feared, sometimes hated and always distrusted in his lifetime and by his own countrymen, more than one Spanish officer was sent out while he still remained in Mexico, to watch his career and check his unbridled extravagance. Of these, was one Nunez de Guzman, a rival and an enemy of Cortes, who governed the northern portion of Mexico, and who burned to excel the dethroned captain in the brilliancy of his discoveries and the magnitude of his conquests. "The life of the Spanish discoverers," says Prescott, "was one long day-dream. Illusion after illusion chased one another like the bubbles which the child throws off from his pipe, as bright as beautiful, and as empty. They lived in a world of enchantment."

Among the slaves of this governor was a Texas Indian, who had, perhaps, cunning enough to perceive that his own success lay in ministering to his master's ambition, and ingenuity enough to concoct a tale, partly true, doubtless, which should excite his curiosity and inflame his lust for gold. Be that as it may, he came to his master one day with this strange and startling revelation. His father, he

* Las Casas.

said, had been a merchant, and traded far to the north, carrying with him for barter the rich plumage of tropic birds, and receiving in exchange vast quantities of gold and silver. When a youth, he added, he had sometimes accompanied his father on these excursions, and they had visited seven cities, which might compare in wealth, population and magnificence with the city of Mexico itself; that whole streets blazed with the shops of gold and silversmiths, and that those metals were so common as to be held in slight esteem; that rare and precious stones abounded, and that the inhabitants were gorgeously attired in rich stuffs and lived in all the ease and luxury that wealth could bestow.

Whether this Texan (the first of whom we have any record) had really a recollection of cities which seemed to his inexperienced childhood as magnificent and grand as the dreams of the avaricious Spaniard; whether he sought to ingratiate himself with his taskmasters by stories which he knew they would seriously incline to hear, or whether thus early in the history of the country he had acquired the prevailing Western habit of exaggeration, particularly where gold and silver mines are the subject of discourse, we can only guess; but the sequel will show that his gorgeous palaces and brilliant workshops were but the fictitious creations of a lively imagination, or the dim remembrance of an old tradition.

This was the origin of the story of the mysterious "seven cities of Cibola," which, with their vague and visionary splendor, excited the curiosity and inflamed the avarice of the Spanish conquerors for so many years. Efforts were made to reach them, but the mountain ranges and the desert plains guarded their secret faithfully, and the cities for nearly a decade remained known only through the romantic exaggerations of the Texas serf.

But Spanish interest in this fabulous region was revived by a story of hardship and toil which has rarely been equalled in the history of adventure. In the year 1536, four wayfarers, half naked, worn with toil, spent with hunger, thirst, heat, cold, shipwrecks, storms, battles and disease, reached the city of Mexico from the sierras and sandy plains of the North. They were a Spaniard named Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions, one of them a Moor called Estevanico or Stephen. Eight years before, they had landed with some four hundred companions on the peninsula of Florida for the purpose of exploring that unknown country. Hostile tribes, starvation and toil had done their work so thoroughly that of the four hundred only this perishing sample remained. They had traversed the whole continent, had been the first of civilized beings to gaze upon "a great river coming from the north," which was afterwards to be called the Mississippi,

had penetrated the northwest through parts of Kansas and Colorado, and thence turning southwardly had made their way through New Mexico and Arizona to friends and countrymen.

They too had their marvellous tales of opulence and pomp to tell. During their wanderings west of the Mississippi, they had heard of rich and populous cities, with lofty dwellings and shops glittering with gold and silver and precious stones, of a people living in affluence, partially civilized, acquainted with the arts and inhabiting a fertile and beautiful country.

Straightway a small force under the leadership of Marcos de Niza, a Franciscan monk, and guided by Stephen the Moor, was sent out to discover and report upon these mysterious cities, and pave the way for Spanish colonization. Friar Marcos, the commander, was of a credulous and yielding disposition, and he allowed the Moor to push forward ahead of the main body, so that he reached the seven cities while the friar was hardly half way there. Stephen had forgotten the hardships and trials of his eight years of wandering, and the favors heaped upon him by the people whom he was now coming to despoil. But he remembered well their gentleness and their treasures. Presuming upon the former, he robbed them of the latter with an unsparing hand. The mild and pacific natives bore these indignities with

a patience and forbearance well calculated to excite the scorn of a Christian people; but when the libidinous Moor, swollen with pride and power and success, attempted to lay his unhallowed hands upon their wives and daughters, they found it more difficult to excuse his irregularities. So they killed him, and sent his companions back upon the road they had come. These, flying from the scene of their atrocities, met Marcos de Niza about two hundred miles away, and communicated to him their doleful story. The holy father declares that, notwithstanding the consternation their tale produced, he pursued his course, and approached so near the seven cities that from an eminence hard by he could look down upon their lofty roofs shining in the sun, and see the evidences of wealth upon every hand. But the private soldiers of the expedition strongly intimated that the fate of Stephen the Moor so far cooled his courage and moderated his ambition, that he forthwith made his way with considerable precipitation back to the place whence he had started. All agreed, however, that the seven cities of Cibola did, in truth, exist, and that the tales told of their richness and grandeur were so far from being mere figments of the imagination that they fell short of the reality. Of course, another and more powerful expedition was decided upon. For its command the viceroy of Mexico nominated Francisco Vasquez de Coronado,

who had succeeded Nunez de Guzman in the government of the northern province.

Coronado was a Spanish cavalier, born in the city of Salamanca, where he had received a good education, and had improved the advantages which wealth and gentle birth naturally confer. Intrepid, ambitious, of pleasing and ingratiating manners, skilled in all manly and martial exercises, he would have come down to us as a model of the brave, adventurous, avaricious and cruel commanders of his age, but for a superstitious belief in evil omens and unlucky signs, which sometimes prevented him from seizing hold of success even when it was fairly within his grasp.

In his youthful days Coronado had made the acquaintance of an Arabian sage, who, after long study and travel in the East, where he had collected the knowledge and experience of ages, had taken up his abode in the classic and congenial city of Salamanca. This spare and wrinkled devotee of science possessed great skill in the kindred pursuits of astrology and necromancy, to which he added the marvellous gift of divination. To him the young Spaniard applied with a request that the mystery of his future life might be revealed to him.

After consulting his sacred parchments, and communing with the supernatural beings who had deigned to impart to him their wisdom, the astrologer at an

appointed time received Coronado in his retreat, fragrant with incense and covered with mathematical diagrams and cabalistic characters. The stars in their courses, he said, and the mystic intelligences, who reveal future events to mortals, had foretold that the fiery young student should one day become the omnipotent lord of a great and distant country; but the portents thenceforward were gloomy and sinister—a fall from a horse would imperil his life. We shall see in the sequel what effect this prediction had upon the early settlement of our state.

Coming to Mexico while still in the vigorous strength of early manhood, our hero was fortunate enough to win the affections of a daughter of one of the Spanish dignitaries who had been sent out to take part in the government of that province. Estrada had been the royal treasurer and in charge of the finances. For a time even, while the charges against Cortes were a subject of investigation, the reins of government had devolved upon him. He appears to have been a man of small mind, but arrogant and dictatorial, as small minds are apt to be; and not averse to using his office as a source of wealth, as small minds have done before and since his time. This pompous old grandee had, like Polonius and Jephthah—

“One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.”

We catch but a glimpse here and there, through these dry and musty old chronicles, of the sweet face of Beatrix d'Estrada, but we see enough of her to know that she was beautiful and accomplished, graceful in person, refined in mind, and as different from her father as Jessica from Shylock. And so when she and Coronado met, we behold again the picture which belongs to no age or time—

“ Old and yet ever new, and simple and beautiful always;
Love, immortal and young in the endless succession of
lovers.”

Marriage did not cool the ardor of the ambitious young warrior. He remained passionately fond of his handsome wife during the whole of his stirring and adventurous career; and her wealth and station served to elevate him above the position in which his own good qualities would have placed him.

Early in the spring of 1540 the expedition of Coronado, composed of three hundred Spaniards and some eight hundred natives, set forth from their rendezvous with bright anticipations and sanguine hopes. These were somewhat dimmed and dampened by the hardships of the way, for the country was rough, mountainous and desert; and now and then, notwithstanding the marvels of the seven cities which they expected to see at the end of their route, distrust and homesickness overmastered their curiosity. Once a soldier rushing in to Coronado, in a

well-counterfeited agony of apprehension and terror, declared that while he was bathing in a mountain stream, the Devil in his proper shape (for in those days they had not lost belief in a personal devil) had tempted him, saying, "Kill your general, and you shall marry donna Beatrix, his beautiful wife, and I will endow you with boundless wealth." This was touching the general in two tender points, his superstition and his uxoriousness; so to prevent the fulfillment of the devil's desire, he ordered that the honest and sorely tempted soldier should remain at Culiacan, which was the precise object for which the cunning rogue had invented the story.

But when at last, after a tedious and toilsome march, the long expected seven cities of Cibola were reached, the whole army, as the old chronicler tells us, broke out into maledictions against Friar Marcos de Niza, who had so deceived them. "God grant," he charitably adds, "that he may feel none of them." His highly-colored tales had all proved false. There were farms in Mexico better than Cibola; the seven cities were seven hamlets, the houses were small, gold was not found, the minerals were of but little value, and in short, the puissant realms and populous cities which he had promised, the metals, the gems and the rich stuffs of which he had boasted in all his discourses, had faded like an insubstantial pageant into thin air.

But the fitting out of the expedition had cost too much money, and its starting had been heralded with too much boasting to allow it to come thus speedily to an ignoble end. Were there not other cities, Coronado began to inquire, which it would be profitable to visit? The natives, always ready to lend to the Spaniards a helping hand out of their country, were not slow to answer this question in the affirmative. Two hundred and fifty miles to the eastward, they said, was a rich, peaceful and populous province, where their desires for wealth and their ambition for power might be gratified to the fullest extent. Thither Coronado led his little army, reaching a point which even to this day is readily identified by its natural characteristics and by its ruined cities and villages with the country which is now the eastern portion of the territory of New Mexico, watered by the Rio Grande and the Pecos, and not far south of the city of Santa Fe.

The welcome which the gentle and kindly natives of this region gave to their invaders was so cordial and sincere that it seems sometimes, to weak and sentimental humanitarians of the present day, almost unfair and ungenerous for the Spaniards to plunder and kill them afterwards. But those old warriors were made of stern and unrelenting stuff. They were met by the inhabitants of the peaceful villages with warm demonstrations of friendship, great store

of victuals, large quantities of stuffs and the blue turquoise of the country; they were serenaded with the quaint music of their drums and flutes. "Sometimes," says one of the historians of the march, "they sought to touch my garments and called me Hayota, which, in their language, signifieth a man come from Heaven."

As a recompense for these hospitable attentions, the Spaniards, who had been instructed by the viceroy of Mexico to "let these people understand that there was a God in heaven and an emperor on earth," first imprisoned several of their chief men on some frivolous pretext, and then by way of diversion burned one of their villages. These things, says the chronicler, caused some dissatisfaction, which was not diminished by a requisition of the general for cloth enough to furnish new suits for his entire army. Winter was just coming on, and the poor natives begged for a little time to comply with this demand, so that it might not bear too severely upon them, but they were pressed so hard that they were forced to give up their own scanty garments to complete the desired tale. If the soldiers who accompanied the collectors were not content with the clothing supplied to them, and saw an Indian who had something better, they forced an immediate exchange, without troubling themselves about the rank or condition of those whom they despoiled. Such con-

duct, it is gravely added, irritated the natives exceedingly.

But they bore these wrongs and indignities with submission, if not in silence, till the last and crowning insult was added to them. This ignorant and barbarous people had among their peculiarities a strong and exclusive love for their wives; and so jealous were they, after their experience with the dissolute Moor, of the rude eyes of the Spanish soldiery, that they carefully concealed their females, immuring them in such strict seclusion that Coronado complained, after a long residence at Cibola, that of their females he had only been able to see two grey and withered old women. It chanced one day that an officer, whose name even the soldier who tells the story is ashamed to hand down to its deserved infamy, saw peeping from an upper window the bright and curious eyes of a comely woman. Dismounting from his horse, he strode into the apartment, from which outcries and shrieks of agony were presently heard. The wronged husband and chiefs of the village waited upon Coronado, and with humbleness and in sadness presented their complaint. The troops and retainers of the camp were paraded, but the simple minded Indian failed to recognize the assailant; probably, it is hinted, because he had changed his garments. The animal he rode, however, was pointed out and positively iden-

tified, but its owner being called upon, boldly denied the charge. "Perhaps," we are told, "the Indian was mistaken, but at any rate he was obliged to return without having obtained justice."

The next morning the natives of the village were in arms and rebellion. Barricading their houses with logs, and secure behind their battlements of stone the cowardly rascals kept their foes at bay with flights of arrows for two days; and it was not until the Spaniards had managed to dig under the walls and set fire to the town that they were obliged to surrender. Even then, smoked as they were, they would not submit until the Spanish officers had promised them quarter, whereupon they laid down their weapons. Being secured and guarded, it was concluded, notwithstanding their surrender, to burn them alive by way of setting an example to other refractory villages. But when the prisoners saw the preparations for their burning, they seized the billets of wood collected for the ante-mortem cremation, and made so stout a defence with them, that it became necessary for the Spanish cavalry to ride in among them sword in hand. As the slaughter took place in an open, level plain, not many of the natives escaped; but the few who were fortunate enough to do so, did great injury to the Spaniards by reporting that they disregarded the usages of warfare and violated truces.

As the winter was an uncommonly severe one,

snow falling to a great depth, and ice sealing up the rivers, the Spaniards expressed a willingness to overlook all that had passed, and to grant a full pardon and safe conduct to all who would come in and submit to the invaders; but the Indians responded that it would be useless to make treaties with people who did not keep faith, and unwise to surrender to an enemy which burned its prisoners of war. So siege was laid to another village. Here, however, the inhabitants were better prepared for defence, and for fifty days stubbornly resisted the most daring and gallant attacks. But deprived of water they suffered untold and terrible agonies. The falls of snow within their courtyards were soon exhausted. They tried to dig a well, but its sides caved in and buried the workmen. So, with a forlorn courage which, if they were not copper colored, might excite our sympathy, they built a great fire, into which they cast their mantles, feathers, turquoises and all their little stores of finery, that the strangers might not possess them; made a desperate sortie with their women and children in the midst; and not one escaped the edge of the sword, the hoofs of the horses or the cold waves of the Rio Grande. Most of them the Spaniards mercifully slew; the wounded were spared to become slaves.

Thus this simple, loving, virtuous people, who had greeted Coronado with the perfume of flowers and

the soft music of their flutes, came to understand that there was a God in heaven and an emperor on earth.

Not unfrequently has it happened in the history of the world, that when the need of a nation is the sorest, a saviour rises up among them; and thus it was with the unhappy and oppressed natives of these valleys. One of their number, willing to sacrifice his life for the salvation of the rest, suddenly appeared before Coronado with much mystery in his movements and a pretended hostility to the natives. His description of rich countries and large cities, remote from the secluded valley of the Pecos, surpassed all previous revelations. He came, he said, from a land far to the northeast, where there was a river seven miles in width. Within its depths were fish as large as horses. Upon its broad bosom floated canoes which carried twenty oarsmen on each side; and huge vessels with sails, which bore upon their prow a golden eagle, and on the poop a sumptuous dais, whereupon their lords were wont to seat themselves beneath a canopy of cloth of gold. That every day the monarch of this favored region, named Tatarrax, long-bearded, gray-haired and rich, took his noon-day sleep in a garden of roses, under a huge spreading tree, to the branches of which were suspended innumerable golden bells, which sounded in exquisite harmony when shaken by the wind; that this

king prayed by means of a string of beads, and worshipped a cross of gold and the image of a woman, the queen of heaven; that throughout the land the commonest utensils were of wrought silver, and the bowls, plates and porringers of beaten gold. This land of plenty, he said, was the great kingdom of Quivera, and thither he waited to conduct his white friends whenever they should be pleased to accompany him. He talked with so much assurance and sustained their rude tests of cross-examination so well, that Coronado's oft-shaken faith was again established. It is true there were not wanting suspicions of the integrity of this new found friend. It was evident that he had some secret communication with the natives. One soldier, to whom ablution was probably a forgotten luxury, declared that he had seen him with his face in a washbasin full of water, talking with the devil. Still his disclosures were so specific, and their truth so desirable, that it was determined (all necessary precautions having been taken that he should not escape) to trust to his guidance.

So, on the 5th day of May, in the year 1541, Coronado and his army quitted the valleys they had pacified and Christianized so thoroughly, crossed the Pecos River and soon entered upon the treeless and pathless prairies of what is now the Indian territory and the state of Kansas. Through mighty plains

and sandy heaths, smooth and wearisome and bare of wood, so that they made great heaps of buffalo dung to guide them on their return, and in spite of all their precautions were constantly losing stragglers from the camp, they made their way for eight hundred miles northeastwardly to the banks of a considerable river, which could have been no other than the Arkansas.

Each one, says Castaneda, a credulous, honest, sincere and pious private soldier, who has, with others, told us the story of this march, was charged to measure the daily progress made by counting his steps. The picture which we can fancy to ourselves of this dusty band plodding its way through the long summer days over the Kansas prairies, grim, silent and arithmetical, has something in it of the ludicrous as well as the pathetic. Still, our adventurers were enabled to enliven their dreary computations by an occasional indulgence in their favorite pastime of robbery. Once finding a village with an enormous quantity of skins, they cleaned it out so completely that in a quarter of an hour there was not one to be found. The Indians, we are told, tried in vain to save them, and the women and children wept, for they had believed that the Spaniards would not take their skins, and that they would be content with blessing them as Cabeza de Vaca and his companions had done when they had passed that way.

The suspicions, which had from the first attached to their guide, had been spreading and increasing in intensity. It was noticed that when they met with the wandering nomads of the plains, if the Turk, as they called him,* was the first to converse with them, they confirmed all his stories, and pointed to the eastward as the true course; while if communication was prevented, the tribes knew nothing of the riches and splendor of the land of Quivera, and insisted that that country lay to the north and not to the east.

Coronado therefore seeing that the Turk had deceived him, that provisions began to fail, and that, except the meat of the buffalo, there was no prospect of obtaining more in the country round about, convoked his captains and lieutenants in a council of war, to determine upon their future course. It was there decided that the general, with thirty of his bravest and best mounted men and six foot soldiers, should proceed northward in search of Quivera, while the main army should return to the vicinity of the Pecos River. The soldiers protested with many supplications against this separation, but Coronado was inflexible, and he started north with guides which he had taken from the roving Indians of the plains, and the unhappy Turk securely bound;

* From a fancied resemblance to the people of that nation, some say, though it seems more probable that it was a name given to him after the discovery of his faithlessness.

while the army, after slaughtering great numbers of the buffalo for their sustenance, set out upon their homeward route.

Northward then, from the Arkansas River, for many weary and anxious hours, the little band which accompanied the adventurous general pursued its way over the Kansas plains. July had come, the days were long and hot, and the sultry nights crept over the primeval prairie, seeming to rise like a shadowy and threatening spectre out of the grass. But stout hearts and good horses brought them at last to the southern boundary of Nebraska. And here along the Platte River they found the long sought kingdom of Quivera; here was Tatarrax, the hoary headed old ruler of the land. But alas for the vanity of human expectations! the only precious metal they saw was a copper plate hanging to the old chief's breast, by which he set great store; there were no musical bells, no gilded eagle, no silver dishes, no rosary, no image of the Virgin, no cross, no crown. In the midst of his disappointment, Coronado took a melancholy pleasure in hanging the Turk who had so egregiously misguided him; and that barbaric Curtius, after boldly avowing that he knew of no gold, that he had brought the invaders into the wilderness to perish with hunger and hardship, and that he had done this to rid the peaceful dwellers in the Rio Grande and Pecos valleys of

their hated presence, met his fate with a stoicism which the Spaniards called despair and remorse.

Here, then, upon the southern boundary of this state, at a point not yet easily ascertainable, but doubtless between Gage County on the east and Furnas on the west, Coronado set foot upon the soil of Nebraska, and here, busied with observations and explorations, he remained for twenty-five days.

I have already adverted to the fact that this location of the northern terminus of his march has not met with universal acceptation. The arguments, however, in support of the theory seem to me unanswerable.* Let us briefly examine them.

It is unimportant for the purpose of our investigation whether we fix the site of the cities of Cibola at Zuni with General Simpson, at Acoma with Emory and Abert or on the Chaco with Mr. Morgan. The last place visited by Coronado, before he emerged from the mountains to the plains, was Cicuye, which is described as a well-fortified village, with houses of four stories, in a narrow valley between pine clad mountains and near a stream well stocked with fish. These features point so unmistakably to what is now known as old Pecos, on the river of the same name,

* The view I have taken of Coronado's march was suggested by Mr. Gallatin, and has been supported by General Simpson. See the latter's excellent paper on this subject in the Smithsonian Report for 1869. I think, however, that the General has placed the northernmost point reached much too far to the eastward.

that no one can visit those desolate and melancholy ruins and remain unconvinced. The four stories may even now be distinguished by the careful observer; the place is still admirably fortified both by nature and art against any assault not aided by artillery; it is apparently completely hemmed in by mountains, and among the stone hatchets, hammers, arrow-heads and bits of turquoise, which the curious may still find there, are not unfrequently to be seen the grooved stones which the Indians used as sinkers for their fishing nets. Some, however, have founded an objection upon the statement of Castaneda that after leaving that place, the army did not reach the Cicuye River which flowed near Cicuye and took its name from that place, until the fourth day; and General Simpson, though he thinks that no other place than Pecos "in so many respects suits the conditions of the problem," is inclined to get over the difficulty by supposing that the river referred to was the Gallinas, which it might require four days to reach. With the utmost deference, however, to the opinion of so learned and skillful an explorer, I venture to suggest that it is unnecessary to suppose that four days were occupied in the march to the crossing. Supposing Coronado to have left Pecos near the close of the first day (by no means an unusual time for the commencement of a long expedition) and to have reached the crossing on the morn-

ing of the fourth, then but little more than two days would have been occupied on the way. Now, although the Pecos River flows very near the Pecos village it is, in fact, not visible from that place, and by the old Santa Fe trail it is twenty-two miles to the ford at San Miguel. The railroad crosses five or six miles below the trail, and there is still another crossing some ten miles beyond at Anton Chico. Inasmuch as to reach the nearest of these points, through the difficult country about Pecos, might well have consumed two days, it seems to me that the paragraph in question confirms, instead of opposing, his views. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that as the evident object of the Turk was to lead the troops as far to the eastward as possible, he would, if practicable, take them to some lower point than San Miguel on the Santa Fe trail. There seem, therefore, to be conclusive grounds for believing that Cicuye and Pecos are identical.

From Cicuye the main body marched about seven hundred miles northeastwardly to a considerable river. As all the narratives of the expedition concur in bearing testimony to this fact, there is no escape from it except by the exercise of an unreasoning disbelief. After making all possible allowances for deviations from a direct line and the shortened steps of tired soldiers, it is impossible to believe that this stream could have been anything south of the Ar-

kansas. The distance by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway from Pecos to Newton, Kansas, is five hundred and ninety-three miles. By the Santa Fe trail it is probably about the same. That the main body of the army reached a spot as far north as that, cannot certainly be a violent presumption.

From the point where he left his army, Coronado must have proceeded in a direction west of north. "They had diverged too much towards Florida," says Castaneda. The time occupied in the march by the detachment is uncertain; Castaneda gives it as forty-eight days, while Coronado says in one place that it was forty, and in another forty-two days. Taking the lowest of these numbers, and conceding that it includes also the twenty-five days spent by the general in exploring Quivera, and there was ample time to reach the Platte or the Republican River.

But again, we have the positive declaration of Coronado that he gained the southern boundary of this state. "I have reached," says he in his report to the viceroy, Don Antonio de Mendoza, "the fortieth parallel of latitude." It is a fair rule for historical investigators to take as absolutely true the statements of eye witnesses of a transaction, unless there should be something contradicting their testimony or impeaching their veracity. In this instance not only is there nothing affecting the credibility of Coronado's assertion, but on the contrary it is sustained by nu-

merous corroborating circumstances. Among the latter are the descriptions of the soil, the flora and fauna of the land of Quivera, which might now serve for a report of the resources of Nebraska.

“The inhabitants,” says Coronado in his dispatch already alluded to, “are good hunters, cultivate corn, “and exhibit a friendly disposition. They said that “two months would not suffice to visit them entirely. “In the whole extent of the province, I have seen “but twenty-five villages, and these are built of straw. “The natives have recognized your majesty, and are “submissive to the puissance of their veritable lord. “The men are large and the women well formed. “The soil is the best which it is possible to see for “all kinds of Spanish fruits. Besides being strong “and black, it is very well watered by creeks, foun- “tains and rivers. Here I found plums, such as I “have seen in Spain, walnuts and excellent ripe “grapes.”

Jaramillo, one of his lieutenants, writing some years after the expedition, says of it: “The country “has a fine appearance, such as I have not seen ex- “celled in France, Spain, Italy or in any of the “countries which I have visited in the service of his “majesty. It is not a country of mountains, there “being but hillocks and plains, with streams of ex- “cellent water. It afforded me entire satisfaction. I “judge that it must be quite fertile and well suited

“to the cultivation of all sorts of fruits. For a graz-
 “ing country experience proves that it is admirably
 “adapted; when we consider that herds of bisons and
 “other wild animals, vast as the imagination can con-
 “ceive, find sustenance there. I noticed a kind of
 “plum of excellent flavor, something like those of
 “Spain, the stems and blue flowers of a sort of wild
 “flax, sumach along the margins of the streams, like
 “the sumach of Spain, and palatable wild grapes.”

Castaneda enumerates among the fruits, plums, grapes, walnuts, a kind of false wheat, pennyroyal, wild marjoram and flax.

Gomara, another chronicler, says, “Quivera is on
 “the fortieth parallel of latitude. It is a temperate
 “country, and hath very good waters and much
 “grass, plums, mulberries, nuts, melons and grapes
 “which ripen very well. There is no cotton and
 “they apparel themselves with bison hides and deer
 “skins.”

It is interesting to compare with these dry cata-
 logues, some extracts from Prof. Aughey's recently
 printed “Sketches of the Physical Geography and
 Geology of Nebraska.” He says: “There are three
 “type species of plums in the state, namely, *Prunus*
 “*Americana*, *P. chicasa* and *P. pumila*. Of these
 “there is an almost endless number of varieties, the
 “plums being common in almost every county, es-
 “pecially along the water courses, and bordering the

“belts of timber. These plum groves in spring time
 “present a vast sea of flowers, whose fragrance is
 “wafted for miles, and whose beauty attracts every
 “eye.”

“Two species of grapes, with a great number of
 “hybrids and varieties, abound in Nebraska. It is
 “hard to realize without seeing it, with what luxuri-
 “ance the vine grows in this state, Some of the
 “timber belts are almost impassible from the number
 “and length of the vines which form a network from
 “tree to tree. Straggling vines are sometimes found
 “far out on the prairie, where, deprived of any other
 “support, they creep along the ground and over weeds
 “and grass.”

“Along the bluffs of the Missouri and some of its
 “tributaries, the red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) abounds.
 “Sometimes it reaches the dimensions of a small tree.”

“Though nuts are not always classed with fruits, it
 “seems proper in this place to mention the few that
 “abound in Nebraska. First in the list is the nut
 “of the noble black walnut (*Juglans nigra*).”

“Nebraska is remarkable, among other things, for
 “its wild grasses. They constitute everywhere the
 “covering of the prairies. Even where old breaking
 “is left untilled, the grasses vie with the weeds for
 “possession, and often in a few years are victorious.
 “Every close observer, passing through the state in
 “summer, must notice the great number of species

“and their vigorous growth. I have in my collection 149 species of grasses that are native to the state.

“The smooth sumach (*Rhus glabra*) is common in Nebraska, and the dwarf sumach (*R. Copallina*) and the fragrant sumach (*R. aromatica*) are sometimes found.”

Coincidences so remarkable as these, certainly strongly support, if they do not firmly establish, the theory for which I contend.

Upon this march, for the first time, civilized eyes looked upon those two familiar denizens of the plains, the prairie dog and the buffalo. The description of the latter is graphic and quaint.

“These oxen are of the bigness and color of our bulls, but their horns are not so great. They have a great bunch upon their foreshoulders, and more hair on their fore part than on their hinder part, and it is like wool. They have, as it were, a horse mane upon their back bone, and much hair and very long from their knees downward. They have great tufts of hair hanging down from their foreheads, and it seemeth that they have beards because of the great store of hair hanging down at their chins and throats. The males have very long tails, and a great knob or flock at the end, so that in some respects they resemble the lion, and in some other the camel. They push with their horns,

“they run, they overtake and kill a horse when they
 “are in their rage and anger. Finally, it is a foul
 “and fierce beast of countenance and form of body.
 “The horses fled from them, either because of their
 “deformed shape or else because they had never
 “seen them. Their masters have no other riches
 “nor substance; of them they eat, they drink, they
 “apparel, they shoe themselves; and of their hides
 “they make many things, as houses, shoes, apparel
 “and ropes; of their bones they make bodkins, of
 “their sinews and hair, thread; of their horns, maws
 “and bladders, vessels; of their dung, fire, and
 “of their calves’ skins budgets, wherein they draw
 “and keep water. To be short, they make so many
 “things of them so they have need of, or as many
 “as suffice them in the use of this life.”

Here, too, is a description, the accuracy of which
 some of us may perhaps recognize. “One evening
 “there came up a terrible storm of wind and of hail,
 “which left in the camp hailstones as large as por-
 “ringers and even larger. They fell thick as rain
 “drops, and in some spots the ground was covered
 “with them to the depth of eight or ten inches. The
 “storm caused, says one, many tears, weakness and
 “vows. The horses broke their reins, some were even
 “blown down the banks of the ravine, the tents were
 “torn, and every dish in camp broken.” The last
 was a great loss, for from the natives they could

steal nothing, not even calabashes, the inhabitants living on half cooked or raw meat which needed no plates.

Our explorers heard of other countries and tribes further on, and especially of a great river to the eastward of them, which they conjectured must be the river of the Holy Ghost, which De Soto discovered, and which was undoubtedly the Missouri; but they had despaired of finding gold, and so, in August, Coronado, reaching as I think the Platte River, caused a cross to be erected, upon whose base was carved the inscription, "Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, general of an expedition reached this place." Thereupon he set his face southward, rejoined his army and went into winter quarters with the timid and submissive people who had learned from his sharp sword the doctrines of Christianity. He purposed, or at least he pretended that he purposed, to return in the spring and renew his explorations in Quivera, "but," says the pious soldier Castaneda, "that was not to take place. God has reserved these explorations for others. To us he gives only the right to boast that we were the first to make the discovery. His will be done." When the spring opened, Coronado had a fall from his horse which caused severe injuries, and, recalling the predictions of the astrologer of Salamanca, his superstitious fears were so wrought upon that his only desire was to breathe his

last in the arms of his beloved wife. But the soldiers who hated to return and longed to settle on the fertile prairies of Quivera, loudly complained that his sickness was in great part counterfeited, and that it was in truth only the fair wife that drew him homeward from his duty. Fifty years afterward, Bacon, perhaps with Coronado's failure in his mind, wrote, "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to Fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises whether of virtue or of mischief." But whatever the cause, Coronado returned to Mexico, was ill received by the viceroy, who had spent more than half a million of dollars on the expedition,* lost his reputation and his government, and so with Donna Beatrix, his beautiful wife, passes out of our sight forever.

One of the discoverers of Quivera, however, lingers within our gaze for a short time longer. A Franciscan friar, John of Padilla, burned to teach these natives the doctrines of Christ in a more humane fashion than they had hitherto been inculcated; and earnest in his desire to save souls, announced his intention of returning to Quivera as a missionary. He had all the sincere faith, the dauntless courage and the lively enthusiasm of his class; and he would have echoed the pious sentiments of one of his brethren in the new world, whose devout aspirations, after a

* Three-score thousand pesos of gold, says Gomara.

concealment of more than two hundred years, have just been brought to light. "America," says the good father,* "is a school where one learns perfectly to "seek nothing but God, to desire nothing but God, "to have his whole thoughts upon God, and to rely "only upon the paternal providence of God. To live "among the missions of the new world is to live in "the bosom of the Almighty, and to breathe only "the air of his divine conduct. How fragrant this "atmosphere! How fine the holy horrors of these "forests! What lights in the thick darkness of this "barbarism! The joy of having baptized one sav- "age, who, dying soon after, may go straight to "heaven, surpasses all which one can imagine of joy "in this world. He who has once tasted the sweet- "ness of Jesus Christ, prefers it to all the empires of "the earth. America is not without its sufferings. "One is sometimes tortured by so many pains, wasted "by such rude labors, environed by so great perils, "and so abandoned by human aid, that he finds but "God alone. But to lose all to find God is a profit- "able loss, a holy usury. One never encounters the "cross, the clouds and the thorns, but he finds Jesus "in the midst of them."

Actuated by pious considerations like these, Padilla, with a few followers, returned to Nebraska, taking with him horses, mules, sheep, fowls and the

* Pere Claude Allouez.

necessary dresses and ornaments for the celebration of the mass. He was not long in finding the reward he sought. Either to possess themselves of his humble chattels, or because they resented his determination to preach to a tribe with which they were at war, the natives soon bestowed upon him the crown of martyrdom; his companions betook themselves to more civilized regions, and the darkness of barbarism again for more than two hundred years settled down over the land of Quivera.

Near the margin of the Pecos River, in a little crevice between the rocks, and among bones gnawed by the wolves, there were found, some ten or twelve years since, the helmet, gorget and breastplate of a Spanish soldier. Straying perhaps from his companions, perhaps wounded in a skirmish, perhaps sick and forsaken, he had crawled to this rude refuge; and far from the fragrant gardens of Seville, and the gay vineyards of Malaga, had died alone. The camp fires of Quivera were consumed more than three centuries ago; the bones of the profane Moor and the self-devoted Turk have bleached in the sunshine and decayed; the seven cities of Cibola have vanished; the cross of Coronado has mouldered into dust, and these rusted relics are all that remain of that march through the desert and the discovery of Nebraska.

NOTE.—The student of Spanish conquests in America will, of course, understand that the suggestion that this armor belonged to a soldier of Coronado's expedition is merely fanciful. It is, however, by no means, an impossible surmise; though it must be admitted that defensive armor was used in America against the rude missiles of the natives, long after the use of gunpowder had banished it from European warfare.

Since the delivery of this lecture, an antique stirrup, of the exact shape and character of those used for centuries by Moorish horsemen, has been found near the Republican, at a spot about seven miles north of Riverton, in Franklin County. It was buried so deep in the ground as to preclude the idea that it had been covered by natural causes, and its presence there may afford a curious subject of conjecture.

It is worthy of note, also, that the engineers of the new branch of the Union Pacific Railway, now building northward along one of the forks of the Loup, report numerous ancient mounds along their route, and many evidences of once populous cities. Specimens of the ancient pottery, with the shards of which the ground is thickly strewn, are almost identical with those still to be found at Pecos and other cities in New Mexico. This fact is peculiarly interesting in view of one of the statements of the Turk, just before his execution, to the exasperated Spaniards, that the cities to which he was conducting them, "were still beyond."



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