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PERSONAL NARRATIVE
OF
EXPLORATIONS AND INCIDENTS

IN
TEXAS, NEW MEXICO, CALIFORNIA, SONORA,
AND CHIHUAHUA,

CONNECTED WITH
THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION,
DURING THE YEARS 1850, '51, '52, AND '53.

BY
JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT,
UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER DURING THAT PERIOD.

IN TWO VOLUMES, WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

AT THE COCO-MARICOPA AND PIMO VILLAGES.

Journey to the River Salinas—Its rich bottom-lands—Large stream—Pimo Indians—Ruined buildings—Mounds—Broken pottery—Traces of irrigating canals—Ancient population probably large—Return towards the Pimo villages—Are taken for Apaches—Arrival at camp—Arrival of Lieutenant Whipple—Survey of the Gila completed—Trade reopened with the Coco-Maricopas—Presents—Tribe of Cawenas—Remove to the Pimo villages—Cola Azul and the Pimos—Traffic with them—Conference—Giving presents—Arrival of Mexican traders—Return of Lieutenant Paige with the escort—Leave the villages.

July 3d. In order to make the most of my time while waiting the arrival of Lieutenant Whipple and party, I determined to take a short trip up the river Salinas, as far as the "Casas Grandes," or ancient remains said to be there. I asked a couple of Maricopas to go with me as guides, and offered them a red flannel shirt each for their services. They wished two others to accompany them, if I would take them on the same terms. Finding that I consented so readily, they parleyed a while, and then demanded for each a shirt, six yards of cotton, and sundry small articles, without which they declared they would not go. Francisco, the interpreter, was their spokesman, and I have no doubt urged them to make this demand. I

refused to accede to it, and told them that Francisco and one other would answer my purpose, as first proposed.

At six o'clock this morning we set off, the party consisting of Dr. Webb, Messrs. Thurber, Pratt, Seaton, Force, Leroux, and myself, with attendants. Lieutenant Paige, with six soldiers, also accompanied us, that officer wishing to examine the opposite bank of the Gila, as well as the lands contiguous to the Salinas, with a view of establishing a military post in the vicinity of the Pimo villages. After crossing the bed of the Gila we pursued a westerly course about eight miles to the point of a range of mountains, near which we struck the bottom-lands. We now inclined more to the north, and in about eight miles struck the Salinas, about twelve miles from its mouth, where we stopped to let the animals rest and feed. The bottom, which we crossed diagonally, is from three to four miles wide. The river we found to be from eighty to one hundred and twenty feet wide, from two to three feet deep, and both rapid and clear. In these respects it is totally different from the Gila, which, for the two hundred miles we had traversed its banks, was sluggish and muddy, a character which I think it assumes after passing the mountainous region and entering one with alluvial banks. The water is perfectly sweet, and neither brackish nor salt, as would be inferred from the name. We saw from the banks many fish in its clear waters, and caught several of the same species as those taken in the Gila. The margin of the river on both sides, for a width of three hundred feet, consists of sand and gravel, brought down by freshets when

the stream overflows its banks; and from the appearance of the drift-wood lodged in the trees and bushes, it must at times be much swollen, and run with great rapidity. The second terrace or bottom-land, varies from one to four miles in width, and is exceedingly rich. As it is but little elevated above the river, it could be irrigated with ease. At present it is covered with shrubs and mezquit trees, while along the immediate margin of the stream large cotton-wood trees grow. Near by we saw the remains of several Indian wigwams, some of which seemed to have been but recently occupied. Francisco told us they were used by his people and the Pimos when they came here to fish. He also told us that two years before, when the cholera appeared among them, they abandoned their dwellings on the Gila and came here to escape the pestilence.

Owing to the intense heat, we lay by until five o'clock, and again pursued our journey up the river until dark, when, finding a little patch of poor grass, we thought best to stop for the night. Supper was got, and a good meal made from our fish. As we brought no tents, we prepared our beds on the sand.

We had not long been in when we saw a body of twelve or fifteen Indians on the river making for our camp. At first some alarm was felt, until Francisco told us that they were Pimos. They proved to be a party which had been engaged in hunting and fishing. They were a jolly set of young men, dancing and singing while they remained with us. I told them we would like a few fish for breakfast, if they would bring them in. With this encouragement, they took leave

of us, promising to fetch us some in the morning. But instead of waiting till the morning, they returned to the camp about midnight, aroused the whole party with their noise, and wished to strike a bargain at once for their fish, a pile of which, certainly enough to last a week, they had brought us. There was no getting rid of them without making a purchase, which I accordingly did, when they left, and permitted us to get a few hours' more sleep.

July 4th, 1852. Left camp at half-past four, A. M., determined not to wait for breakfast, but make the most of our time while it was cool; for it would be impossible to travel, or rather be attended with great inconvenience, during the heat of the day. We continued our course due east up the river, towards some singular piles of rocks with fantastic tops, appearing like works of art. For some time we all imagined these rocks to be the ruined buildings of which we were in search—the “houses of Montezuma,” as our Indian friends called them. We passed over the edge of a mountain, at the base of which the river ran, and then came to a wide and open plain, stretching some twenty-five or thirty miles eastwardly and southwardly. Entering this, we attempted to cross the bottom, which was so thickly overgrown with weeds and bushes that we could not penetrate it. We tried in vain to get through, but finding ourselves scattered, and fearing we should lose sight of each other, we retraced our steps along the margin of the hill, until we passed the jungle. The bottom now became more open, and five or six miles further brought us to the plateau. On our way we saw many traces of ancient