

grassy bottom, which afforded us a pleasant camp. In the deep seclusion of these little streams, we found always an abundant pasturage, and a wild luxuriance of plants and trees. Aspens and pines were the prevailing timber; on the creeks, oak was frequent; but the narrow-leaved cotton-wood, (*populus angustifolia*), of unusually large size, and seven or eight feet in circumference, was the principal tree. With these were mingled a variety of shrubby trees, which aided to make the ravines almost impenetrable.

After several days' laborious travelling, we succeeded in extricating ourselves from the mountains, and on the morning of the 28th encamped immediately at their foot, on a handsome tributary to the Arkansas river. In the afternoon we descended the stream, winding our way along the bottoms, which were densely wooded with oak, and in the evening encamped near the main river. Continuing the next day our road along the Arkansas, and meeting on the way a war party of Arapahoe Indians, (who had recently been committing some outrages at Bent's fort, killing stock and driving off horses,) we arrived before sunset at the Pueblo, near the mouth of the *Fontaine-qui-bouit* river, where we had the pleasure to find a number of our old acquaintances. The little settlement appeared in a thriving condition; and in the interval of our absence another had been established on the river, some thirty miles above.

June 30.—Our cavalcade moved rapidly down the Arkansas, along the broad road which follows the river, and on the 1st of July we arrived at Bent's fort, about 70 miles below the mouth of the *Fontaine-qui-bouit*. As we emerged into view from the groves on the river, we were saluted with a display of the national flag and repeated discharges from the guns of the fort, where we were received by Mr. George Bent with a cordial welcome and a friendly hospitality, in the enjoyment of which we spent several very agreeable days. We were now in the region where our mountaineers were accustomed to live; and all the dangers and difficulties of the road being considered past, four of them, including Carson and Walker, remained at the fort.

On the 5th we resumed our journey down the Arkansas, travelling along a broad wagon road, and encamped about twenty miles below the fort. On the way we met a very large village of Sioux and Cheyenne Indians, who, with the Arapahoes, were returning from the crossing of the Arkansas, where they had been to meet the Kioway and Comanche Indians. A few days previous they had massacred a party of fifteen Delawares, whom they had discovered in a

fort on the Smoky Hill river, losing in the affair several of their own people. They were desirous that we should bear a pacific message to the Delawares on the frontier, from whom they expected retaliation; and we passed through them without any difficulty or delay. Dispersed over the plain in scattered bodies of horsemen, and family groups of women and children, with dog trains carrying baggage, and long lines of pack horses, their appearance was picturesque and imposing.

Agreeably to your instructions, which required me to complete, as far as practicable, our examinations of the Kansas, I left at this encampment the Arkansas river, taking a northeasterly direction across the elevated dividing grounds which separate that river from the waters of the Platte. On the 7th we crossed a large stream, about forty yards wide, and one or two feet deep, flowing with a lively current on a sandy bed. The discolored and muddy appearance of the water indicated that it proceeded from recent rains; and we are inclined to consider this a branch of the Smoky Hill river, although, possibly, it may be the Pawnee fork of the Arkansas. Beyond this stream we travelled over high and level prairies, halting at small ponds and holes of water, and using for our fires the *bois de vache*, the country being without timber. On the evening of the 8th we encamped in a cotton-wood grove on the banks of a sandy stream bed, where there was water in holes sufficient for the camp. Here several hollows, or dry creeks with sandy beds, met together, forming the head of a stream which afterwards proved to be the Smoky Hill fork of the Kansas river.

The next morning, as we were leaving our encampment, a number of Arapahoe Indians were discovered. They belonged to a war party which had scattered over the prairie in returning from an expedition against the Pawnees.

As we travelled down the valley, water gathered rapidly in the sandy bed from many little tributaries; and at evening it had become a handsome stream, fifty to eighty feet in width, with a lively current in small channels, the water being principally dispersed among quicksands.

Gradually enlarging, in a few days' march it became a river eighty yards in breadth, wooded with occasional groves of cotton-wood. Our road was generally over level uplands bordering the river, which were closely covered with a sward of buffalo grass.

On the 10th we entered again the buffalo range, where we had found these animals so abundant on our outward journey, and halted for a day among numerous herds, in