

"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty in manner and form as charged in the indictment, and fix his punishment at a restoration of the stolen money and imprisonment at hard labor for the term of nineteen-thousand years."

A murmur of applause arose from the vast crowd of delighted spectators, which soon swelled into a tumult of joyful shouts that suddenly awoke me.—Los Angeles (Cal.) Saturday Post.

#### OTOE COUNTY IN 1831.

We have the pleasure of offering our readers herewith an account of certain adventures of an army officer in this vicinity, seven years before Colonel Kearney and Captain Boone observed the advantages of the later site of Nebraska City, and fifteen years before the old block-house was built. This officer was Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, later of the dragoons; Kearney and Boone were also dragoon officers, it will be remembered. The western frontier posts were garrisoned at first with infantry regiments, replaced afterwards by the dragoon regiment, which was organized in 1833 from the companies of mounted rangers that were formed after the Black Hawk war.

Colonel Cooke is best known as the commander of the Mormon battalion, which was recruited at the present Council Bluffs, from Mormons on their way to Salt Lake, and which formed a part of Colonel Kearney's force with which he invaded California. Besides a report on this expedition, there is a book of Colonel Cooke's extant, from which the following extract is taken. It is entitled "Scenes and Adventures in the Army; or Romance of Military Life." It is an oddly personal book, giving one a good idea of the solitary life that an officer led on the old frontier; it runs from 1827 to 1845, and becomes a kind of "Sentimental Journey" towards the last. It was published in Philadelphia in 1857.

Colonel Cooke, it may be mentioned, speaks of Daniel Boone as "the sire of our worthy captain of dragoons." THE CONSERVATIVE has stated once or twice that Captain Nathan was a grandson of Daniel, and believes this to be the case, as its information comes from a gentleman, Judge J. W. Eaton, who was brought up among the descendants of the Boone family in Missouri.

"In the summer of 1831," says the colonel, who was stationed at that time at Fort Leavenworth, "wishing to extend my knowledge of the country, and weary of inactivity, I obtained leave of absence, in order to accompany an officer of the Indian Department on an official visit to the villages of the Otto and Omaha Indians, and the Old Council Bluff in their vicinity." (Who this official may have been I do not know.

One Henry L. Ellsworth was sent on such an errand in 1833, and the book describing his journey gives the greater part of the existing information concerning the Otoe Indians.)

"The first day we rode but a few miles, our hired man being very drunk, as is usual with these fellows on such occasions, when their services are most needed. He fell from his horse on some tin-cups, and mashed them nearly flat.

Next day we got along more comfortably. Our course lay altogether over prairies, but in view generally of the timber of the river, and always of some small tributary. This night we camped on one of the miry creeks, very difficult to cross, which here abound, indicating a country as rich as it is beautiful. This was about 56 miles above Fort Leavenworth." (Very likely, therefore, Walnut Creek, near Hiawatha.)

"Tuesday, June 14th. We got over the boggy stream by 6 o'clock; after riding about twelve miles over rolling prairie, we suddenly beheld before us the beautiful valley of the Grand Nemehaw; far below us stretched out, a mile and a half in width, the level prairie bottom, studded with numberless flowers of every brilliant color; the margin of the river was fringed and relieved by stately trees; five elks, disturbed by our approach, slowly galloped away along the hillside." They crossed the river on a large tree that had been felled across (showing that white men had been there) and immediately encamped on the bluff to escape an approaching storm; but it rained with such fury that the water rose upon them in the night, and they came near losing their lives in the darkness. The river had risen twenty feet perpendicular by morning, he says; "the cries of drowning fawns were heard the whole forenoon, and many deer swam out in our neighborhood." They were delayed a couple of days, all the creeks being out of their banks.

"17th. Passed three hours in making a third and successful attempt to cross this vile stream"—some branch—"in a new place. Went E. of N., and soon came in sight of the Little Nemehaw River," (near Auburn?) "which in its scenery most strikingly resembles its 'Grand' namesake, though we thought, after wading our horses for a mile through its rich bottom, that it was a 'little' larger.

"This is a beautiful country between the Nemehaws, about 25 miles over; a strip of it, ten miles wide, along the Missouri, has been appropriated as a reserve for the Otto and Omaha half-breeds.

"In two hours we had crossed this stream, in the same manner as the other, and were in motion to the N. W., on a fine prairie ridge, and did not reach 'wood and water' and a suitable camping ground until 9 o'clock at night." This was probably a short distance

northwest of Nebraska City, and they no doubt followed the ridges thence to Ashland, taking the route of the later "Emigrant" or "California" trail.

"18th. Proceeded early a little N. of W., crossing an endless succession of prairie hills, between which were generally gutters filled with clear water, with vertical sides, and so deep that the horses had to leap them. After two hours' rest at noon, we ascended the 'divide' between the waters of the Nemehaws (or Missouri) and the Great Platte River. This, the highest ground between two mighty rivers, is an immense prairie of table land, impressing the senses with the idea of an elevation far greater perhaps than the reality, owing to the extraordinary circumstance of there being no higher object visible—no distant mountain, hill, or inequality, not even a tree, to restore by comparison a juster estimate. I was thus, for the first time, out of sight of woods; far away, in every direction, not even a shrub was to be seen—a green sea waving in the breeze!" Then the colonel quotes poetry and moralizes on the fallen state of the red man. Also he mentions by name the "great American Desert; which," he says further, "caravans of weary pilgrims will soon penetrate, to seek new homes on the Columbia and the Pacific." A singular statement: for is it understood that the Oregon emigration was in sight in 1831?

"June 19. Pursued a W. N. W. course, and in a few hours came in sight of the Great Platte River, and made a halt at the little Saline;" (Salt Creek:) "it is twenty yards wide; a shallow stream, running swiftly over a rocky bottom: the water is brackish. We remounted at 12 o'clock, and following up the course of the river, passed over a low, sandy sterile district. There were many trails leading to the Otto villages. The Indians, moving like the buffalos, in single file, make, like them, deep paths. We passed, in succession, the 'Old Village' and the 'Lower Village,' oppressed by heat and thirst, and somewhat sorrowful that all signs, or absence of signs, indicated that the Indians had all gone on the summer hunt. At sunset we reached the Upper Village, which, accordingly, we found utterly deserted.

"These dwellings of the Indian are more comfortable than the common houses in the frontier states. Around a circular excavation about three feet deep, and forty in diameter, a conical edifice of poles rests upon a strong framework; this is covered three or four feet thick with wattled bushes, etc., and earth—leaving at the apex about 25 feet from the floor, a small opening for light and the escape of smoke; in the centre of the hard dirt floor the fire is made; a stout stick is planted, with an inclination over it, to hold the kettle; around the wall are very comfortable