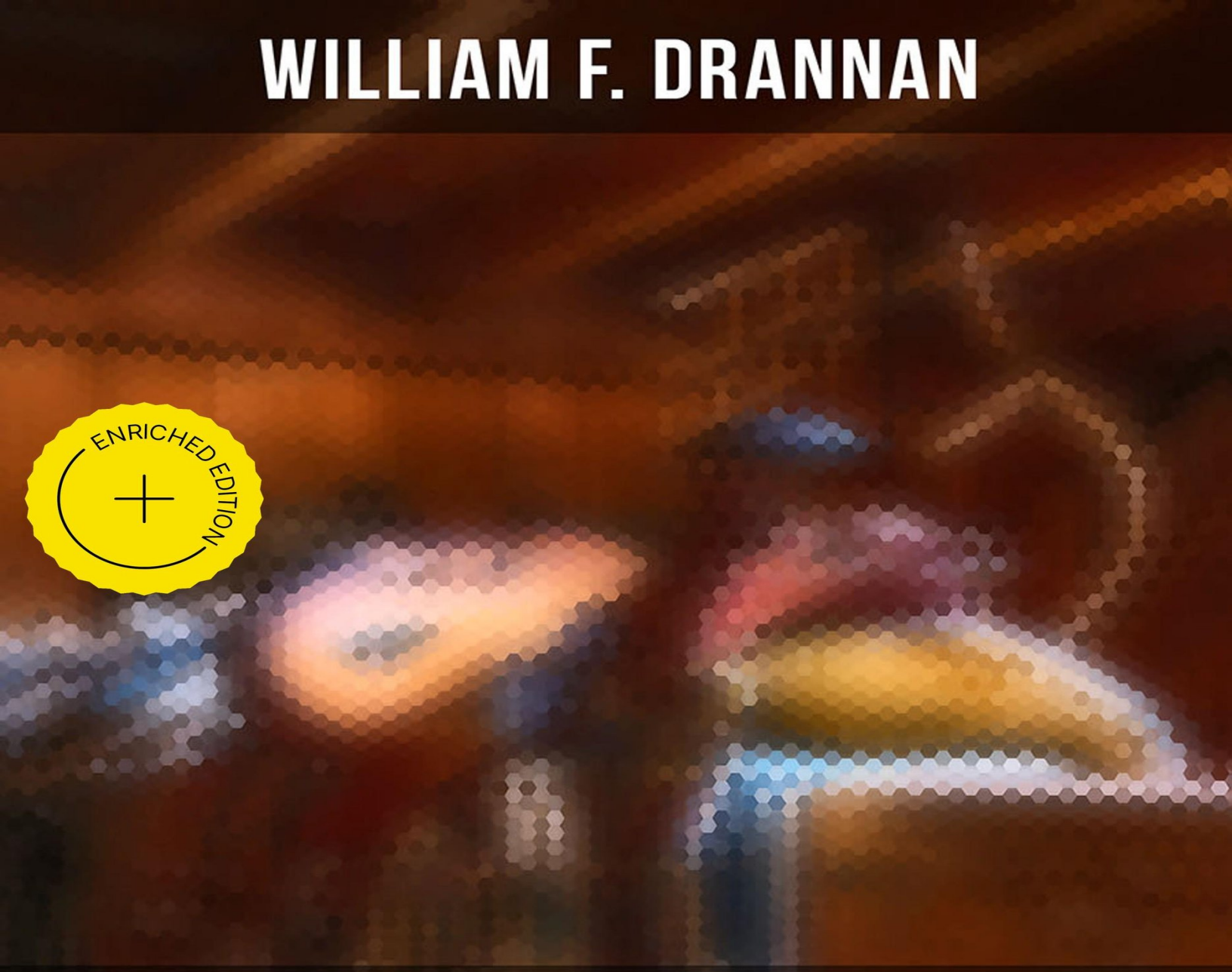
WILLIAM F. DRANNAN



AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CAPTAIN W.F. DRANNAN, CHIEF OF SCOUTS

William F. Drannan

Autobiography of Captain W.F. Drannan, Chief of Scouts

Enriched edition.

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PREFACE

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The kindly interest with which the public has received my first book, "Thirty-one Years on the Plains and in the Mountains," has tempted me into writing this second little volume, in which I have tried to portray that part of my earlier life which was spent in piloting emigrant and government trains across the Western Plains, when "Plains" meant wilderness, with nothing to encounter but wild animals, and wilder, hostile Indian tribes. When every step forward might have spelt disaster, and deadly danger was likely to lurk behind each bush or thicket that was passed.

The tales put down here are tales of true occurrences,—not fiction. They are tales that were lived through by throbbing hearts of men and women, who were all bent upon the one, same purpose:—to plow onward, onward, through danger and death, till their goal, the "land of gold," was reached, and if the kind reader will receive them and judge them as such, the purpose of this little book will be amply and generously fulfilled.

W.F.D.

CHAPTER I.

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At the age of fifteen I found myself in St. Louis, Mo., probably five hundred miles from my childhood home, with one dollar and a half in money in my pocket. I did not know one person in that whole city, and no one knew me. After I had wandered about the city a few days, trying to find something to do to get a living, I chanced to meet what proved to be the very best that could have happened to me. I met Kit Carson[1], the world's most famous frontiersman, the man to whom not half the credit has been given that was his due.

The time I met him, Kit Carson was preparing to go west on a trading expedition with the Indians. When I say "going west" I mean far beyond civilization. He proposed that I join him, and I, in my eagerness for adventures in the wild, consented readily.

When we left St. Louis, we traveled in a straight western direction, or as near west as possible[1q]. Fifty-eight years ago Missouri was a sparsely settled country, and we often traveled ten and sometimes fifteen miles without seeing a house or a single person.

We left Springfield at the south of us and passed out of the State of Missouri at Fort Scott, and by doing so we left civilization behind, for from Fort Scott to the Pacific coast was but very little known, and was inhabited entirely by hostile tribes of Indians.

A great portion of the country between Fort Scott and the Rocky

Mountains that we traveled over on that journey was a wild, barren
waste, and we never imagined it would be inhabited by anything but wild
Indians, Buffalo, and Coyotes.

We traveled up the Neosha river to its source, and I remember one incident in particular. We were getting ready to camp for the night when Carson saw a band of Indians coming directly towards us. They were mounted on horses and were riding very slowly and had their horses packed with Buffalo meat.

With the exception of Carson we were all scared, thinking the Indians were coming to take our scalps. As they came nearer our camp Carson said, "Boys, we are going to have a feast".

On the way out Carson had taught me to call him "Uncle Kit." So I said,
"Uncle Kit, are you going to kill an Indian and cook him for supper?"

He laughed and answered, "No, Willie, not quite as bad as that. Besides, I don't think we are hungry enough to eat an Indian, if we had one cooked by a French cook; but what will be better, to my taste at least, the Indians are bringing us some Buffalo meat for our supper," and sure enough they proved to be friendly.

They were a portion of the Caw tribe[5], which was friendly with the whites at that time. They had been on a hunt, and had been successful in getting all the game they wanted. When they rode up to our camp they surrounded Carson every one of them, trying to shake his hand first. Not

being acquainted with the ways of the Indians, the rest of us did not understand what this meant, and we got our guns with the intention of protecting him from danger, but seeing what we were about to do, Carson sang out to us, "Hold on, boys. These are our friends," and as soon, as they were done shaking hands with him Carson said something to them in a language I did not understand, and they came and offered their hands to shake with us. The boys and myself with the rest stood and gazed at the performance in amazement, not knowing what to do or say. These were the first wild Indians we boys had ever seen. As soon as the hand shaking was over, Carson asked me to give him my knife which I carried in my belt. He had given the knife to me when we left St. Louis. I presume Carson had a hundred just such knives as this one was in his pack, but he could not take the time then to get one out. For my knife he traded a yearling Buffalo, and there was meat enough to feed his whole crew three or four days. That was the first Indian "Pow-wow" that I had ever seen or heard of either.

The Indians ate supper with us, and after that they danced "the Peace Dance" after smoking the Pipe of Peace with Uncle Kit. The smoking and dancing lasted perhaps an hour, and then the Indians mounted their horses and sped away to their own village.

I was with Carson off and on about twelve years, but I never saw him appear to enjoy himself better than he did that night. After the Indians had gone, Uncle Kit imitated each one of us as he said we looked when the Indians first appeared in sight. He had some in the act of running and others trying to hide behind the horse, and he said that if

the ground had been loose we would have tried to dig a hole to crawl into. One of the party he described as sitting on his pack with his mouth wide open, and he said he could not decide whether the man wanted to swallow an Indian or a Buffalo.

The next morning we pulled out from there, crossing the divide between this stream and the Arkansas. Just before we struck the Arkansas river, we struck the Santa-Fe trail[2]. This trail led from St-Joe on the Missouri river to Santa-Fe, New Mexico, by the way of Bent's Fort[3], as it was called then. Bent's Fort was only a Trading Station, owned by Bent and Robedoux. These two men at that time handled all the furs that were trapped from the head of the North Platte to the head of the Arkansas; the Santa-Fe trail, as it was then called, was the only route leading to that part of the country.

After traveling up the Arkansas river some distance, above what is known as Big Bend, we struck the Buffalo Country, and I presume it was a week that we were never out of the sight of Buffalos. I remember we camped on the bank of the river just above Pawne Rock that night; the next morning we were up early and had our breakfast, as we calculated to make a big drive that day. Carson had been telling us how many days it would take us to make Bent's Fort, and we wanted to get there before the Fourth of July. Just as we had got our animals packed and every thing in readiness to start, a herd of Buffalo commenced crossing the river about a half a mile above our camp. The reader will understand that the Buffalo always cross the river where it is shallow, their instinct teaching them that where the water is shallow, there is a rock bottom, and in crossing these

places they avoid quicksand. This was the only crossing in fifteen miles up or down the river. We did not get to move for twenty-four hours[2q]. It seems unreasonable to tell the number of Buffalo that crossed the river in those twenty-four hours. After crossing the river a half a mile at the north of the ford, they struck the foot hill; and one could see nothing but a moving, black mass, as far as the eye could see.

I do not remember how long we were going from there to Bent's Fort, but we got there on the second of July, 1847, and every white man that was within three hundred miles was there, which were just sixteen. At this present time, I presume there are two or three hundred thousand within the same distance from Bent's Fort, and that is only fifty-eight years ago! In view of the great change that has taken place in the last half century, what will the next half century bring? The reader must remember that the increase must be three to one to what it was at that time.

After staying at Bent's Fort eight days we pulled out for "Taos," Carson's home. He remained at Taos, which is in New Mexico, until early in the fall, about the first of October, which is early autumn in New Mexico; then we started for our trapping ground, which was on the head of the Arkansas river, where Beaver was as numerous as rats are around a wharf.

We were very successful that winter in trapping. It was all new to me, I had never seen a Beaver, or a Beaver trap. Deer, Elk, and Bison, which is a species of Buffalo, was as plentiful in that country at that time as cattle is now on the ranch. I really believe that I have seen more deer in one day

than there is in the whole State of Colorado at the present time.

In the autumn, just before the snow commences to fall, the deer leave the high mountains, and seek the valleys, and also the Elk and Bison; no game stays in the high mountains but the Mountain Sheep, and he is very peculiar in his habits. He invariably follows the bluffs of streams. In winter and summer, his food is mostly moss, which he picks from the rocks; he eats but very little grass. But there is no better meat than the mountain sheep. In the fall, the spring lambs will weigh from seventy-five to a hundred pounds, and are very fat and as tender as a chicken; but this species of game is almost extinct in the United States; I have not killed one in ten years.

We stayed in our camp at the head of the Arkansas river until sometime in April, then we pulled out for Bent's Fort to dispose of our pelts. We staid at the Fort three days. The day we left the Fort, we met a runner from Col. Freemont[4] with a letter for Carson. Freemont wanted Carson to bring a certain amount of supplies to his camp and then to act as a guide across the mountains to Monterey, California. The particulars of the contract between Freemont and Carson I never knew, but I know this much, that when we got to Freemont's camp, we found the hardest looking set of men that I ever saw. They had been shut up in camp all winter, and the majority of them had the scurvy, which was brought on by want of exercise and no vegetable food. The most of the supplies we took him were potatoes and onions, and as soon as we arrived in camp the men did not wait to unpack

the animals, but would walk up to an animal and tear a hole in a sack and eat the stuff raw the same as if it was apples.

In a few days the men commenced to improve in looks and health. Uncle Kit had them to exercise some every day, and in a short time we were on the road for the Pacific Coast. We had no trouble until we crossed the Main Divide of the Rocky Mountains. It was on a stream called the "Blue," one of the tributaries of the Colorado river.

We were now in the Ute Indian country, and at this time they were considered one of the most hostile tribes in the west. Of course there was no one in the company that knew what the Ute Indians were but Kit Carson. When we stopped at noon that day Carson told us as we sat eating our luncheon that we were now in the Ute country, and every one of us must keep a look out for himself. He said, "Now, boys, don't any one of you get a hundred yards away from the rest of the company, for the Utes are like flees liable to jump on you at any time or place."

That afternoon we ran on a great deal of Indian sign, from the fact that game was plentiful all over the country, and at this time of the year the Indians were on their spring hunt. When we camped for the night, we camped on a small stream where there was but very little timber and no underbrush at all. As soon as the company was settled for the night, Carson and I mounted our horses and took a circle of perhaps a mile or two around the camp. This was to ascertain whether there were any Indians in camp near us. We saw no Indians. We returned to camp thinking we would have no trouble that night, but about sundown, while we were eating supper, all at once their war whoop burst upon

us, and fifteen or more Utes came dashing down the hill on their horses. Every man sprang for his gun, in order to give them as warm a reception as possible; nearly every man tried to reach his horse before the Indians got to us, for at that time a man without a horse would have been in a bad fix, for there were no extra horses in the company.

I think this must have been the first time these Utes had ever heard a gun fired, from the fact that as soon as we commenced firing at them, and that was before they could reach us with their arrows, they turned and left as fast as they had come. Consequently we lost no men or horses. We killed five Indians and captured three horses.

When the Indians were out of sight, Carson laughed and said, "Boys, that was the easiest won battle I have ever had with the Indians, and it was not our good marksmanship that done it either, for if every shot we fired had taken effect, there would not have been half Indians enough to go around. It was the report of our guns that scared them away."

It was figured up that night how many shots were fired, and they amounted to two hundred. Carson said, "Boys, if we get into another fight with the Indians, for God's sake don't throw away your powder and lead in that shape again, for before you reach Monterey, powder and lead will be worth something, as the Red skins are as thick as grass-hoppers in August."

Of course this was the first skirmish these men had ever had with the
Indians, and they were too excited to know what they were doing.

About six years ago I met a man whose name was Labor. He was the last survivor of that company, with the exception of myself, and he told me how he felt when the yelling Red skins burst upon us. Said he, "I don't think I could have hit an Indian if he had been as big as the side of a horse, for I was shaking worse than I would if I had had the third-day Ague. Not only shaking, but I was cold all over, and I dreamed all night of seeing all kinds of Indians."

The next day we were traveling on the back bone of a little ridge. There was no timber except a few scattering Juniper trees. We were now in Arizona, and water was very scarce. The reader will understand that Carson invariably rode from fifty to one hundred yards ahead of the command, and I always rode at his side.

I presume it was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon when
Col. Freemont called out to Carson, "How far are you going tonight?"

Carson studied a minute and answered, "I think, in seven or eight miles we will find good water and a plenty of grass."

A few minutes after this Freemont said, "Say, Carson, why not go to that lake there and camp? There is plenty of grass and water," at the same time pointing to the south. Carson raised his head and looked at the point indicated. Then he said, "Col. there is no water or grass there." Freemont replied, "Damn it, look. Can't you see it?" at the same time pointing in the direction of what he supposed to be the lake. Carson checked his horse until Freemont came up near him and then said, "Col., spot this place by these little Juniper trees, and we will come back here tomorrow

morning, and if you can see a lake there then I will admit that I don't know anything about this country."

Freemont was out of humor all the evening. He had nothing to say to any person.

The next morning after breakfast was over and the herder had driven in the horses Carson said, "Now Colonel, let's go and see that lake."

Under the circumstances Freemont could not say "no." I think five of us besides Carson and Freemont went back. When we came to the place where the little Juniper trees were, Freemont's face showed that he was badly whipped, for sure enough there was no lake there; he had seen what is called a mirage.

I have seen almost everything in mirage form, but what causes this Atmospheric optical illusion has never been explained to my satisfaction. Some men say it is imagination, but I do not think it is so.

On our way back to camp a man by name of Cummings was riding by my side.

He made the remark in an undertone, "I am sorry this thing happened."

I asked him, "Why?" In reply he said, "Colonel Freemont won't get over

this in many a day, for Carson has shown him that he can be mistaken."

We laid over at this camp until the next day as this was good water and exceptionally good grass. Nothing interfered with us until we struck the Colorado river. Here we met quite a band of Umer Indians. Without any exception they were the worst-looking human beings that I have ever seen in my

life. A large majority of them were as naked as they were when they were born. Their hair in many instances looked as if it never had been straightened out. They lived mostly on pine nuts. The nuts grow on a low, scrubby tree, a species of Pine, and in gathering the nuts they covered their hands with gum which is as sticky as tar and rubbed it on their bodies and in their hair. The reader may imagine the effect; I am satisfied that many of these Indians had never seen a white man before they saw us. Very few of them had bows and arrows; they caught fish. How they caught them I never knew, but I often saw the squaws carrying fish.

When we reached the Colorado river we stayed two days making rafts to cross the river on. The last day we were there, laying on the bank of the river, I presume there came five hundred of these Indians within fifty yards of our camp. Most of them laid down under the trees. One of our men shot a bird that was in a tree close by, and I never heard such shouting or saw such running as these Indians did when the gun cracked. This convinced me that we were the first white men they had ever seen, and this the first time they had heard the report of a gun. This incident occurred in forty-eight, which was fifty-eight years ago. I have seen more or less of these Indians from that time until now, and these Indians as a tribe have made less progress than any other Indians in the west. Even after the railroad was put through that part of the country, they had to be forced to cover themselves with clothes.

After crossing the Colorado river we came into the Ute country, but we traveled several days without seeing any of this tribe. About five days after we crossed the Colorado

river, we came on to a big band of Sighewash Indians. The tribe was just coming together, after a winter's trapping and hunting. At this time the Sigh washes were a powerful tribe, but not hostile to the whites.

We camped near their village that night. After supper Carson and I went over to this village, at the same time taking a lot of butcher knives and cheap jewelry with us that he had brought along to trade with the Indians. When we got into their camp, Carson inquired where the chief's wigwam, was. The Indians could all speak Spanish; therefore we had no trouble in finding the chief. When we went into the chief's wigwam, after shaking hands with the old chief and his squaw, Carson pulled some of the jewelry out of his pocket and told the chief that he wanted to trade for furs. The old chief stepped to the entrance of the wigwam and made a peculiar noise between a whistle and a hollo, and in a few minutes there were hundreds of Indians there, both bucks and squaws.

The old chief made a little talk to them that I did not understand; he then turned to Carson and said, "Indian heap like white man."

Carson then spoke out loud so they could all hear him, at the same time holding up some jewelry in one hand and a butcher knife in the other, telling them that he wanted to trade these things for their furs.

The Indians answered, it seemed to me by the hundreds, saying, "Iyah oyah iyah," which means "All right." Carson then told them to bring their furs over to his camp the next morning, and he would then trade with them. He was speaking in Spanish all this time. On our way back to our

camp Carson said to me, "Now Willie, if I trade for those furs in the morning I want you and the other two boys to take the furs and go back to Taos; I know that you will have a long and lonesome trip, but I will try and get three or four of these Indians to go with you back to the head of the Blue, and be very careful, and when you make a camp always put out all of your fire as soon as you get your meal cooked. Then the Indians can not see your camp."

The next morning we were up and had an early breakfast. By that time the squaws had commenced coming in with their furs. Uncle Kit took a pack of jewelry and knives and got off to one side where the Indians could get all around him. In a very short time I think there must have been a hundred squaws there with their furs.

They brought from one to a dozen Beaver skins each, and then the Bucks began coming in and then the trading began. Carson would hold up a finger ring or a knife and call out in Spanish, "I'll give this for so many Beaver skins!"

It really was amusing to see the Indians run over each other to see who should get the ring or knife first.

This trading did not last over half an hour because Carson's stock of goods was exhausted. Carson then said to the Indians, "No more trade no more knives, no more rings, all gone."

Of course a great many of the Indians were disappointed, but they soon left us. As soon as they were gone Freemont came to Carson and said, "What in the name of common sense are you going to do with all those furs?"

Uncle Kit said, "Col., I'm going to send them to Taos, and later on they will go to Bent's Fort." The Col. said, "Yes, but

by whom will you send them to Taos?" Carson replied, "By Willie, John and the Mexican boy."

The Col. said, "Don't you think you are taking a great many chances?" "Oh, no, not at all. Willie here is getting to be quite a mountaineer. Besides, I am going to get some of these Indians to go with the boys as far as the head of the Blue, and when they get there they are, comparatively speaking, out of danger."

He then said, "Colonel, we will lay over here today, and that will give me a chance to pack my furs and get the boys ready to start in the morning."

We then went to work baling the hides; by noon we had them all baled. After dinner Carson and I went over to the Indian camp. We went directly to the Chief's wigwam. When the Indians saw us coming they all rushed up to us. I presume they thought we had come to trade with them again. Uncle Kit then told the Chief that he wanted eight Indian men to go with us boys to the head of the Blue River. At the same time he sat down and marked on the ground each stream and mountain that he wanted us to travel over. He told them that he would give each one of them one butcher knife and two rings, and said they must not camp with the Utes.

I think there were at least twenty Indians that wanted to go. Carson then turned to the Chief and told him in Spanish to pick out eight good Indians to go with us, and told him just what time we wanted to start in the morning. We then went back to our camp and commenced making arrangements for our journey to Taos.

Carson and I were sitting down talking that afternoon when Col. Freemont came and sat beside us and said to Uncle Kit, "Say, Kit, ain't you taking desperate chances with these boys?"

This surprised me, for I had never heard him address Carson as Kit before in all the time I had known him.

Carson laughed and answered, "Not in the least; for they have got a good escort to go with them." Then he explained to Freemont that he had hired some Indians to go with us through the entire hostile country, telling him that the boys were just as safe with those Indians as they would be with the command, and more safe, for the Indians would protect them, thinking they would get his trade by so doing. Uncle Kit then explained to him that the Sighewashes were known to all the tribes on the coast and were on good terms with them all, and therefore there was no danger whatever in sending the boys through the Indian country. The Col. answered, "Of course, you know best; I admit that you know the nature of the Indian thoroughly, but I must say that I shall be uneasy until I hear from the boys again."

Uncle Kit said, "Wait until tomorrow morning, and I will convince you that I am right."

The next morning we were up early and had breakfast, and before we had our animals half packed the old chief and hundreds of the Indians were there. Those that the chief had selected to accompany us were on horse back, and the others had come to bid us farewell, and that was one of the times I was tired shaking hands.

When we were about ready to mount our horses and had shaken hands with Uncle Kit and the balance of the

company, the Indians made a rush for us. Both bucks and squaws shouted, "Ideose, ideose," which means, "good bye, good bye," and every one trying to shake our hands at once, and of all the noise I ever heard, this was the worst. After this racket had been going on some fifteen or twenty minutes, I turned and saw Uncle Kit and Col. Freemont standing on a big log laughing like they would split their sides. Finally Uncle Kit motioned for me to mount my horse. I mounted and the other boys followed suit, and when we started of all the noise that ever was made this beat any I ever heard in all my life. At the same time the Indians were waving their hands at us.

As soon as we left the crowd of Indians Uncle Kit and Col. Freemont joined us. The Col. said to me, "Willie, this is one of the times you have had your hand well shaken, I really felt sorry for you, but I didn't see how I could assist you, and I am in hopes you will not get such a shaking up in a good while. Now, my boy, be very careful, and try and get through safe and sound, and when we come along back next fall, we will all go to St. Louis together."

Uncle Kit told me to not let the Indians turn back until we crossed the divide at the head of Blue river. He said, "Then you will be out of the Ute country, and all danger to you will be over, but do not put too much confidence in these Indians although I think they are reliable and will do just as I have told them to do. But I want you to be on the lookout all the time yourself. I know there will be no danger in the daytime, and when night comes be sure and put your fire out before it gets dark, and when you get to Taos rest up a few days, and then hunt up Jim Bridger or Jim Beckwith, and

they will advise you what to do. It may be that I will get home myself, in which case you will not need their advice."

We now bid them "good bye" and started on what would be called now a long, tedious and dangerous journey, but at that time we thought nothing of it.

How long a time it took us to make this trip I do not remember. The Indians traveled in the lead the most of the time. When near the middle of the afternoon, I would ask them in Spanish how far they were going tonight, and they would tell me the number of hours it would take to go but seemed not to understand the distance by miles. The Indians showed more judgment in selecting the camping ground than I expected they would.

In a few days we were in the Ute country, and we saw plenty of Indian sign every day. I think it was on one of the tributaries of the Green river we were traveling along one afternoon, we came in sight of a band of Ute Indians. They were in camp. We were in about a half a mile of them when we first saw them; they were directly to the north of us, and they discovered us at the same time we saw them. As soon as the Sighewashes saw the Utes they stopped, and two of the Sighewashes rode back to us and said in Spanish, "We go see Utes," and they rode over to the Ute camp. Probably they were gone a half hour or more, when they returned, and we surely watched every move the Utes made till the Sighewashes came back to us. When they came back they were laughing and said to us, "Utes heap good." Then I was satisfied that we were in no danger.

We traveled on some five or six miles when we came to a nice little stream of water where there was fine grass. I said

to the boys, "We'll camp here. Now you boys unpack the animals and take them out to grass, and I will go and kill some meat for supper."

I picked up my gun and started; I didn't go over a quarter of a mile till I saw four Bison cows, and they all had calves with them. I crawled up in shooting distance and killed one of the calves. At the crack of my gun the cows ran away. I commenced dressing the calf and here came four of my Sighewash Indians running to me, and when they saw what I had killed, I believe they were the happiest mortals that I ever saw.

As soon as I got the insides out I told them to pick up the calf and we would go to camp. Some of them picked up the carcass and others picked up the entrails. I told them we did not want the entrails. One of the Indians spoke up and said, "Heap good, all same good meat". I finally persuaded them to leave the insides alone.

When we got back to camp, the boys had a good fire, and it was not long before we had plenty of meat around the fire, and I never saw Indians eat as they did that night. After they had been eating about an hour, Jonnie West said to me, "Will, you will have to go and kill more meat, or we won't have any for breakfast."

We soon turned in for the night and left the Indians still cooking. In the morning we were surprised to see the amount of meat they had got away with. What they ate that night would have been plenty for the same number of white men three or four days. The nature of the Indian is to eat when he has the chance and when he hasn't he goes without and never complains.

For the next three days we traveled through a country well supplied with game, especially Elk, Deer, and black bear. It was now late in the summer and all game was in a fine condition, it was no unusual thing to see from twenty five to a hundred Elk in a band. I have never seen since that time so many Elk with so large horns as I saw on that trip, which convinced me that there had been no white hunters through that part of the country before.

In traveling along there were times we were not out of sight of deer for hours; consequently we never killed our game for supper until we went into camp, and as a rule, the boys always picked me to get the meat while they took care of the horses. I remember one evening I was just getting ready to start out on my hunt. I asked the boys what kind of meat they wanted for supper. Jonnie West said, "Give us something new." Well, I answered, "How will a cub bear do?" They all answered, "That is just what we want." That moment I turned my eyes to the south, and on a ridge not more than three hundred yards from camp, I saw three bears eating sarvis berries. I was not long in getting into gun shot of them. There was the old mother bear and two cubs. I had to wait several minutes before I could get a good sight on the one I wanted, as they were in the brush and I wanted a sure shot. I fired and broke his neck; he had hardly done kicking before Jonnie West and some of the Indians were there. We made quick work getting the meat to camp and around the fire cooking, and it was as fine a piece of meat as I ever ate.

The next morning we bid the Indians good bye, but before they left us one of them stooped down and with a

finger marked out the route we should take, thinking we did not know the country we must pass over, and strange to say, the route this wild Indian marked out in the sand was accurate in every particular. He made dots for the places where we should camp and a little mark for a stream of water, then little piles of sand for mountains, some large and some small, according to the size of the mountain we were to cross. After he had finished his work, I examined the diagram and I found he had marked out every place where we should camp.

From there to the head of the Arkansas river, I called Jonnie West and asked him to look at it. He examined it at every point and said, "This beats any thing I ever saw or heard tell of; with this to guide us, we could not get lost if we tried to."

We were now ready to start. Jonnie said to me, "Well, I feel we owe this
Indian something. How many butcher knives have you?"

I said, "I have two." "Alright, I will give him this finger ring and you give him one of your knives."

We did so, and I think he was the proudest Indian I ever saw; he jumped up and shouted, "Hy-you-scu-scum, white man," which meant "Good white man."

The Indians all shook hands with us and then mounted their horses and were gone. We now pulled out on our long and dangerous trip to Taos, New Mexico, and strange to say, we never missed a camping ground that the Indians had marked out for us, until we reached the head of the Arkansas river, and the beauty of it was, we had good grass

these would likely include native species such as cutthroat or other trout types prized for their flavor.

28 The Sink of the Humboldt (Humboldt Sink) is the terminal basin where the Humboldt River evaporates in northwestern Nevada, forming marshes or a dry lakebed depending on season and flow; it was a notable landmark on overland emigrant routes.

29 The Ute are a Native American people historically based in what is now Colorado, Utah, and surrounding areas; nineteenth-century travel accounts often refer to ‘Ute country’ for regions they inhabited or frequented.

30 Green River refers to a major river in the Rocky Mountain region (and to settlements near it) traversed by emigrants; reaching ‘Green River’ in this narrative denotes a known waypoint in present-day Wyoming/Utah on the overland route to California.

31 The mention of ‘Kit’ almost certainly alludes to a person known by that nickname—most commonly Kit Carson (c.1809–1868), the well-known mountain man and guide—though the passage gives only the given name and does not explicitly provide a surname.

32 Refers to land traditionally used by the Ute people, a Native American tribe indigenous to parts of present-day Utah, Colorado and surrounding regions; in 19th-century accounts it commonly denotes territory in the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain area.

33 Scalped (to 'scalp') describes the removal of the scalp and hair from a killed person as a wartime trophy; historical sources document its occurrence among some Native American groups and others during frontier conflicts, though practices and meanings varied by time and community.

34 A 'war bonnet' is a feathered headdress, often made with eagle feathers, historically associated with honor and leadership among several Plains Indigenous groups; it was traditionally a ceremonial or warrior's emblem rather than everyday dress.

35 A 19th-century Anglo-American phrase used here to describe a Native conception of an afterlife for hunters and warriors; Indigenous beliefs about the afterlife varied widely, and this wording reflects contemporary settler description rather than a single uniform Indigenous doctrine.

36 Truckee Meadows is a broad valley area along the Truckee River where Reno, Nevada, now stands; in the 19th century it was open sage-brush and grassland used for grazing and hunting.

37 Nickname used in the text for Kit Carson (Christopher 'Kit' Carson, 1809–1868), a well-known 19th-century American frontiersman, guide, and trader who was active in the Southwest and on the Santa Fe Trail.

38 Presented in the narrative as the military officer commanding the government escort for a wagon train; the text does not provide full personal details, so his precise historical identity is not specified here.

39 Refers to the Cache la Poudre River in northern Colorado; the French name is often translated as 'hide the powder' and the river was a known landmark in 19th-century travel and trade routes.

40 A ford (shallow river crossing) on the Arkansas River in Colorado used by travelers on the Santa Fe Trail; the name also gave rise to a nearby settlement in later years.

41 A Native American people of the Southern Plains who were historically dominant across parts of present-day Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Colorado in the 18th and 19th centuries; the term here refers to that tribal nation and its warriors.

42 A 19th-century English phrase used in accounts to refer to certain Plains tribes' concept of an afterlife or hunting-oriented paradise; it is a translator's rendering rather than a single Indigenous term.

43 Refers to John M. Chivington, a U.S. militia officer active in Colorado in the mid-19th century; historically he later led a Colorado militia force and is associated with the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre (a well-documented event).

44 Likely refers to William Bent (1799–1869), a prominent American trader and co-founder of the Bent, St. Vrain & Company who operated the well-known frontier trading post and acted as a local intermediary with Plains tribes.

45 A Native American people of the Southern Plains who in the 18th–19th centuries ranged across parts of what are now Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, eastern New Mexico and southeastern Colorado and were noted for their horse culture and resistance to Anglo expansion.

46 A ceremonial practice among many Plains tribes involving the communal smoking of a special pipe (often called a "peace pipe" or calumet) to mark treaties, friendship or solemn agreements; specific rituals and meanings varied by tribe and occasion.

47 A city in north-central Texas founded around a U.S. Army outpost in 1849; during the mid-19th century it functioned as a frontier military and supply center for settlers and militia operations.

48 Abbreviation of 'Captain', a title indicating the leader of the company in the narrative; on the 19th-century frontier this could denote a commissioned officer, a militia or volunteer leader, or an informal rank among civilians.

49 A historical English term used to refer to Native American women; it is now widely regarded as derogatory and offensive and is avoided in contemporary usage.

50 An English collective term for several related Native American groups (for example, Chiricahua and Western Apache) whose traditional territories were in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico; they were involved in numerous mid- to late-19th-century conflicts with settlers and U.S. forces.

51 A sticky resin or sap obtained from fir (and related conifer) trees that frontier people applied topically as a traditional liniment for wounds and sores; its use reflects folk and medicinal practices of the period rather than modern clinical treatment.

52 An enclosed pen or fenced area used to hold or manage livestock such as horses or cattle; the word comes from Spanish and was widely used on ranches and frontier settlements in the 19th-century American West.

53 A tether made by braiding horsehair (or sometimes hide) used to lead, tie, or control horses; composition and construction varied by region and maker, but such ropes were commonly used on the plains.

54 A prominent mountain in Colorado's Front Range (summit roughly 14,000–14,200 ft), named for explorer Zebulon Pike; by 1859 its name was widely used in connection with the regional gold rush often called the Pikes Peak Gold Rush.