

SOME UNPUBLISHED HISTORY
OF THE SOUTHWEST
CHAPTER VIII.
AN OLD DIARY FOUND IN MEXICO

(Continued)

Written by MRS. GRANVILLE OURY
and annotated by
COLONEL C. C. SMITH, U. S. Army Retired

September 20th, Wednesday. Three months today since we left San Antonio. The mules have been pulling through deep sand, on a dead level road, camped last night without water and very poor grass, hitched up at midnight and started. One of the Americans assisted Addy to harness, and such a time as they had, getting "Rabbit's" bridle straightened. Road still level and occasionally very muddy. I coiled up on the seat and went to sleep. After a while Addy declared positively that it was impossible for him to keep awake any longer, going at this pace, the slowest imaginable walk. (He has lost a great deal of sleep, has been constantly busy and never free from headache.) So, I made him lie down and I wrapped myself in a blanket and drove for about two hours, that is, I held the reins. The mules work well, but oh, how dreary, how lonely, away off in this God forsaken part of the universe, poking along in the pitchy darkness, in a savage land and at the mercy of strangers, with whom you cannot communicate your slightest want. My brother, my only help and protection, well nigh prostrated and threatened with illness; my husband—where? Fortunately, at eight we found an arroyo full of rain water, else we must have gone much farther and used salt water. Poor grass which, with the night travel and the long intervals without water, is beginning to tell fearfully on our mules.

This morning Don Ramon sent a very fine fat fore leg of mutton to us and four slices of delicious water melon, which we relished greatly. The officers speak of going ahead tonight, but one of the Americans has just advised us not to go with them as they are not armed, and he has no confidence in them anyway.

September 22nd, Friday. Left camp yesterday at three and camped last night at eight. Neither grass nor water. During the afternoon we travelled through a "heavy sand hill" and to lighten the load as much as possible, both walked the greater part of the time, but, it becoming necessary to drive out of the road and around some impassable places, I was compelled to get in and drive. I have never in my life conceived of travelling under such adverse and trying circumstances, and often almost despair of ever getting through alive.

We spent a sleepless night, knowing that we were to start at one o'clock, and fearing that the Liberal officers, in taking their depar-

ture at ten, might inadvertently appropriate some of our mules, we forced ourselves to keep awake and watch their movements. They have no scruples.

Only those who have had experience in this mode of travelling can realize the discomforts. Think of being roused up night after night, after a short, uneasy and disturbed sleep, drowsy, tired, and in the dark, having to fumble around and get your blankets, bedding, etc., all folded up and stored in place, the harness (which will get tangled in spite of all precaution) straightened and the mules collected and hitched up. But my greatest sympathy is for the poor, tired, hungry mules.

Well, we were ready in time, as we had not retired at all. After starting I took the first nap and then enveloped myself in a blanket (cold) and drove about two hours and a half. In the meantime, I broke the whip stock, and as it is necessary to jog "Rabbit's" memory occasionally (he is willing and pulls well, but being afflicted with unusual shortness of limbs, cannot possibly keep pace with the long legged sorrel, who must be constantly checked to prevent his pulling the whole load) and it had to be mended. So I held the reins between my knees, loosened the whip last from the broken stock with my teeth, notched a place in the stock with a broken blade of a pen knife, and succeeded in tying the lash on again, the mules were moving steadily on and the darkness could be felt.

I had dropped considerably behind the train, not a wagon in sight, could not distinguish the road, and running over some mesquite bushes I began to feel rather nervous—Addy asleep and my imagination pictured an Indian lurking behind every bush. Ugh! However, I did not scream but courageously whipped up the mules and in a short time overtook the train. We halted at daylight. No grass, no water. The water in our kegs, from the salt arroyo, was certainly the most unpalatable I ever tasted.

After breakfast, the herders drove the animals about four or five miles to water and grass. They took our kegs to fill, but not returning 'til three, I suffered for water, the other nauseating me. I was not well and the heat was intense. Six slices of watermelon sent by Don Ramon were most acceptable. We cooked bread and mutton, and as soon as the water came made coffee and ate in haste, started and drove 'til ten, part of the time through sand knee deep and the road badly washed; wagons continually stalling, which calls out the most unearthly yells, screams, hallowing, etc., to be heard for miles, accompanied with unceasing cracking of whips. There was a little grass where we stopped, but no water. Started again at twelve.

Addy drove an hour and a half and becoming too sleepy to sit up, I relieved him. At two we reached the deepest sand I ever saw, from two 'til daylight we did not get over one-quarter of a mile. The two ambulances stood stock still, while the teamsters in front of us were whooping, hallowing, slashing, whipping, yelling hideously, in

a monstrous effort to move their wagons. At last, by hitching all the mules (300) to four wagons, they pulled them one mile. In the meantime I dozed off and on awaking, found the whip and lines on the ground, and that Don Ramon was preparing to start. Day was just beginning to dawn, so I roused Addy who got out and reconnoitred. The remaining wagons were still in the road and in trying to pass them we ran into one. Some Mexicans assisted us to back the ambulance and push it up on the side of the hill and we succeeded in pulling through to camp, or rather to a stopping place. An ocean of sand, not a tree, bush, blade of grass nor drop of water. Addy made bread, I the coffee and both broiled meat. The skillet sinks down in the deep loose sand and deadens the coals. The Mexicans took the mules back and by seven brought up the other wagons. They then packed the flour on the back of the mules and drove them six miles to water and grass.

The prospect of getting away from this place is gloomy. The officers have all gone except one (Mr. Bennett, who has neither horse nor arms and rides in a wagon). He tells me that they will not start before tomorrow night, as the load must all be first carried over on the mules. It is doubtful if our mules in their present condition will be able to pull the ambulance through, but we cannot stay here. We have scarcely water sufficient for drinking today, none for cooking, and I dare not think of washing my face and then, it is inhuman to keep the poor, hungry mules standing here all night without a morsel to eat. Surely I have endured trials enough during the past few days to expiate every sin I could ever commit in the course of a long life, and now, my anxiety about Addy is becoming unendurable. He suffers constantly with a severe pain in his head and seems threatened with fever or some illness.

The nights are cold and during two-thirds of the day the heat is so intense that we are literally roasted. The sun blazes upon us without mercy, not a breath of air stirring and today, the glare from the white sand is blinding me. I am the only person awake in camp. Don Ramon sent me another shoulder of mutton this morning. Our flour has just given out and I dislike to call on him, but I am compelled to do so, for I fear he will not allow me to pay for it, and instead of five days, we are told it will likely be twelve before we reach El Paso.

October 1st, Sunday morning—Mesilla, New Mexico. Well, here I am, within the pales of civilization once more, most comfortably installed in the home of warm friends and ardent admirers of my husband, Colonel Jones* and his estimable family, but I must first go back and give a hurried account of the past eight days.

Note: *As delegate to the Confederate Congress from Arizona in 1862, Mr. Oury recommended this gentleman for Governor of Arizona. He (Jones) was later arrested by Genl. Carleton, commanding the California Volunteers, whose coming had driven the Confederates out of Arizona and New Mexico. Carleton called Jones a "nuisance of the first magnitude."

Each hour was fought with its weight of danger, adventure and interest, which I now regret not writing in its proper time, as my mind is so full of fresher and more pleasant memories now, that I will be unable to recall much.

On the evening of the 22nd, I consulted Don Ramon as to the propriety of our going ahead alone, and he did not think it advisable, but thought there was not a great deal of danger. We concluded then to attempt it and intended going that night to the Springs (six miles) but the mules were not brought in 'til late. It rained hard all night and we hoped to get over the road before any of the wagons started, but alas! "the best laid schemes," etc. To our utter dismay, we awoke to find our sorrel mule missing, and we felt completely disheartened, never expecting to see him again. At about eight, a Mexican brought him and we started. Don Ramon* refused to sell us flour, but offered us all we wished. We accepted only a few pounds. I ransacked my trunks and found some nice little presents for his wife and daughter, which I gave him at parting. Two exquisitely fine Pineapple handkerchiefs, a bottle of fine cologne and a gold breast pin.

Five wagons had preceded us and the road was considerably cut up. However, Addy walked the whole distance and we had no special trouble. But, such a road is not to be found outside of Mexico. The wagons sunk in the loose sand to the hubs, with no load. We stopped where there was tolerably good grass, and water standing in the road, and spent a busy day. I washed and scoured all the dishes, cooking utensils, etc., overhauled and rearranged the ambulance, and then made some real nice biscuit (my first effort), helped Addy grease the wagon. He attended to the mules, brought water, toasted coffee, cooked "frijoles." Just as we were preparing to start a "burro" train passed and we learned that they were to camp at the Spring. Gratifying news to me, for I should have suffered with terror if we had been alone. As we drove along through an entirely unknown country, not certain even of being in the right road, I felt wretchedly uncomfortable and nervous. About dark I felt greatly relieved when we came to their camp. They had seen Mr. Oury and our party at "Janos" and seemed disposed to be kind. They were camped at an old mission** near the springs and had sent their animals off some distance to graze. We rather reluctantly trusted our mules to their keeping, but promised the herder \$1.00 for their delivery in the morning (a small fortune to one of his class), and he brought them in on time. We made an

Note: *Don Ramon was the son-in-law of Senor Zuloaga, the owner of the wagon-train Mrs. Oury traveled with from Comalitos to El Paso.

**I wish Mrs. Oury had found out and given the name of this mission, for these old piles often reveal important bits of history.

early start, during the day five or six of the Mexicans passed us going in. Aside from this we were entirely alone and I afterwards learned that we had run a great risk, the road being constantly infested with Indians and but a few days previous several depredations and one murder had been committed near. We were blissfully ignorant and once I went alone to the bed of a deep, ugly ravine (just such a place as they select for an ambush) to reconnoiter and ascertain, if it could be crossed with the wagon; was far out of sight of Addy. We traveled steadily all day and the mules became very tired and hungry. Reached El Paso in the evening and being unacquainted with the topography of the place, I began to fear, we should never reach the "Plaza." At last, just as we drove into the "plaza," one of the American officers who had arrived the day before, came running to see us and said he had told Mr. John Gillett of our coming and had been requested to watch for us and direct us immediately to his house.

At this juncture, John Gillett came dashing up, on his way out to meet us, took us to his home and we were kindly received. They had rented a house and settled in El Paso. "Ben" was delighted to see us (our former driver) and during our stay rendered Addy every assistance with the mules. "Robert" had come over to watch for us, and Mrs. Gillock, who had settled in Franklin,* came over next morning and spent the day. At night we had calls from old Spanish friends of Mr. Oury's. Tuesday we crossed the river and spent the day with Mrs. Gillock, in Texas, in the United States. So near my old home and yet so far. Mrs. Gillett treated us to an excellent dinner. In the afternoon Capt. Lent, an ex-federal officer, (volunteer) called to see me. He represented himself as an acquaintance and friend of William Oury and my husband. Very soon he broached the subject of our late Civil War, to which I protested, suggesting that all circumstances considered, I deemed it imprudent and unadvisable to discuss this, to me, very tender and sacred topic. Also informed him that he was the first enemy of "our cause" that I had yet had the misfortune to look upon and that he must not stir up the bottled wrath, that I had never had an opportunity of venting before. Withal, he spurred me on and submitted most amiably to "the benefit" I showered upon him from my long charged battery. He insisted upon our going to hear the band play on the Plaza in the evening and the moment I made my appearance, the band struck up "Dixie." For a moment all the old joy and pride I used to feel upon hearing this loved air, was revived, when, like a flash, the true state of things came to me, the dreadful calamity that had befallen our beloved South, that I was standing upon *Federal soil* and listening to our glorious National air being played by a Federal

Note: *This was at that time the American name for El Paso or that part of it where the Americans lived, to distinguish it from the part where the Mexicans lived.

band*—perhaps as an insult to my feelings. All the fire of my soul was aroused. I trembled with rage. My emotions so overcame me, that poor Addy feared a scene. Capt. Lent came up bowing and smiling graciously, saying, "Mrs. Oury, I ordered Dixie to be played expressly for you," to which I replied as calmly as possible under the circumstances, "Will you be so kind as to explain to me your motive in doing so in order that I may understand whether I am indebted to you for an intended and mistaken kindness, or for a premeditated insult and malicious desire to harrow my feelings?" He strongly assured me that he had been actuated only by the kindest motives and had supposed that I would be greatly pleased. I did not spare him, for my temper was at the boiling point and he would insist upon my talking. So a gentleman standing near said afterwards that he "never saw a Yankee get such a scouring in all his life."

The second piece they favored me with was "Maryland, My Maryland," and then Capt. Lent desired me to name anything I would like to hear. I suggested "Secession Polka" as they seemed to have appropriated all our Rebel airs. They played several pieces as a compliment to me and invited me to come at any time and they were at my service. Capt. Lent desired to come over and call, where there would be no restraint upon me (in Mexico), claimed to be a warm friend and admirer of my husband's and was to call the day I left. Addy had a little quarrel with the authorities about taking the oath and since hearing of many of their acts, I am surprised that they did not arrest and throw us both in prison. The officer was very overbearing, arrogant (a little brief authority) and insolent and several said Addy was the first person who had stood up for his rights and resented his insolence. If we had known the truth, we need not have asked for a passport. There is no martial law in Mesilla and we could have passed unmolested through the lines. The next day I was quite sick and retired early in the evening and soon after Mr. John Gillett came home and sent in word that he had found a gentleman who was going to Mesilla the next day and that we must be ready to start at daylight. We were up at daylight, but the mules were to feed, the ambulance to load, etc., and although we made every effort possible, we unavoidably detained the gentleman considerably. At last we got off, and after driving two miles Addy discovered that he had left his "passport," so he borrowed Mr. Maston's pony and rode back, while Mr. Maston drove the ambulance forward over a wretched piece of road. It was a most agreeable surprise to me to find myself in the society of not only a perfect gentleman, but a strong "Rebel" and an extrava-

Note: *I am inclined to believe that this was the band of the 50th California Inf., which had not yet been mustered out of the Federal service. Col. Geo. W. Bowie, 5th Cal. Inf., was at that time commanding at Franklin (El Paso), Texas, and the 5th Cal. Inf. was the regiment in which my father went to the Civil War, though he was soon appointed Capt. and Asst. Q. M. And at the time Mrs. Oury arrived in El Paso he was stationed in Tucson, Arizona.

gant admirer of my husband's, whom he had never met but had learned to love him through his many friends. I really enjoyed his conversation and felt as though I had met an old friend.

The sun was shining fiercely and he and Addy rode and drove alternately. We stopped in a little town and he ordered dinner for us and fodder for the mules. At five we started, Mr. Maston insisted upon my testing the superior gaits and qualities of his beautiful little Shetland pony, a great pet and favorite, he tells me, with all the ladies. So, to gratify him I mounted dear little "Fanny" on a McLellan's saddle, sans habit, hat, etc., riding paraphernalia, and was so charmed with her swift but easy motion, that I dismounted at the next town, twelve miles, instead of a ten minutes lope as I expected. However, in the end it proved to be a dear ride, for it was the indirect cause of my losing a large washing of clothes. While in El Paso, I ransacked my trunks and gave out to be washed every garment that was wrinkled or had been worn an hour during our sojourn in San Antonio, the shirts and all the undergarments were of the finest linen "French made," some fine French calico dresses, towels, etc. Mr. Gillett called for the clothes at daylight the morning we left and they were delivered to me dripping wet. While nooning I spread them all on the bushes and dried them. They were tied in a large linen sheet and thrown in the ambulance on top of my mattress, and I found to my dismay when we halted at night that Addy had neglected to fasten down the curtains and that the clothes had jolted out and were gone. Mr. M. had ridden his servant's horse and the Mexican rode with Addy in the ambulance.

We stopped for the night and bought feed for the mules. I slept in the ambulance. Addy shared his nice wool mattress with Mr. Maston who had expected to go to Mesilla in one day and was delayed on our account. We rose early, breakfasted on hot coffee and cold biscuit and started. Mr. Maston* drove most of the time as there was some bad road and the river being swollen, the crossing was dangerous. He was extremely kind, whole-souled, big-hearted and a gentleman of the old school, begged us to call on him for any assistance we needed, etc.

Arriving at Mesilla, he mounted the swift-footed "Fanny" and piloted us to the house of Col. Jones, found Mrs. Jones busy in the kitchen and told her he had brought her some company. She supposed it was his mother and came to the door expecting at least to meet an acquaintance. When he introduced me as Mrs. Granville Oury, her astonishment was indescribable. She could hardly credit so improbable a statement, but my identity once established, she received me with the most marked kindness and cordiality and plied me with a thousand questions regarding my husband. Col. Jones was absent

Note: *A few years later Mr. Maston was killed by Apaches at Pinos Altos. New Mexico.

and upon his return at night his surprise seemed even greater than his wife's. "Where is Grant?" was his first question. He says he dreamed of him all night and would gladly give \$500 to see him. The whole family seemed devotedly attached to Mr. Oury and talked of nothing else. Col. Jones is very handsome, intelligent, agreeable, a devoted husband and father. Mrs. Jones is a perfect specimen of a Virginia lady, and is a model housewife, does most of her own cooking and enjoys the enviable reputation of having few equals in this line. Her biscuits are simply delicious, and such coffee, such cream, butter, indeed their table was burdened beneath every luxury to be found in this country. They have a splendid garden and grow the finest tomatoes I ever saw, cabbage, potatoes, beets, everything. Also a flower garden and a fruit orchard. Live in a spacious house, nicely finished and well furnished. Not a comfort or convenience lacking. What a change from the mud hovels and dirt floors of "Janos." Here every room is handsomely carpeted and a genuine atmosphere pervades the whole house. They are so kind, that if my husband was only with me, or if I even knew whether he was alive or dead, I could enjoy my stay immensely.

Willie is a large, fine looking boy of seventeen, with intelligence and vim enough for a man of twenty-five. Ida is a lovely, frail little creature of four, the pet and idol of her parents who have buried many of their precious treasures and cling to this one with a despairing tenderness. Judge Hackney, a much esteemed friend, lives with them, and like many here, who have never seen Mr. Oury, from his friends have learned to love and admire him, and he too is very kind to us. I hear Mr. Oury's virtues and noble qualities sung hourly by many tongues. Several of his old friends have called, among them Mr. De Ryder, also Mr. Riggs, the principal merchant here. On the evening of the first day Charley Brown* called and offered any assistance we needed, informed me that he would start in one week to Tucson and would gladly take charge of us through.

Note: *Whether this is the famous Charley Brown of Tucson, the proprietor of Congress Hall, a large saloon and gambling house—of Tucson—I do not know, but am inclined to think he is the same. He was a friend of both Wm. and Granville Oury.

(To be continued)