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The Mormon Battalion

B. H. Roberts

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Excerpt:
"The Lieutenant-Colonel commanding congratulates the Battalion on their safe arrival on the shores of the Pacific ocean, and the conclusion of their march of over two thousand miles. History will be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry."

So wrote Lieutenant-Colonel P. St. George Cooke in "Order No. I," from "Head Quarters Mormon Battalion, Mission of San Diego", under date of January 30th, 1847. If Col. Cooke is accurate in his statement—and one has a right to assume that he is, since he was a graduate of the United States Military academy of West Point, and hence versed in the history of such military incidents—then the march of this Battalion is a very wonderful performance. For if history might be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry when Col. Cooke wrote his "Order No. I," then certainly no march of infantry since that time has equaled it.

The only other historical marches that are comparable with the Mormon Battalions' march are Xenophon's and Doniphan's, the former in ancient, the latter in modern times.

"Retreat of the Ten Thousand."—Xenophon's march is commonly known as the "Retreat of the Ten [2]Thousand," 401 B. C. The account of the "Retreat" is given in Xenophon's Anabasis. About fourteen thousand Greek soldiers under a Spartan leader named Clearchus entered the service of a Persian prince, Cyrus, surnamed the younger, brother of the then reigning King of Persia, Artaxerxes II. The purpose of Cyrus was to deprive his brother of the throne of Persia, and reign in his stead. The expedition marched through Asia Minor to Cunaxa, near old Babylon, where an army of 900,000 Persians engaged the army of Cyrus, which, with his Greek auxiliaries number but 300,000. The smaller army was really successful in the battle, but a rash attempt on the part of Cyrus to slay his brother during the engagement—in which he himself was killed—changed the fortunes of the day, the expedition ended in failure and hence the retreat of the Greek ten thousand up the valley of the Tigris, through Armenia to Trebizond, a Greek city on the Euxine—our modern Black Sea.

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