

## CHAPTER V.

Government Plan to invade Northern Mexico.—Assemblage of Troops at Fort Leavenworth.—Kearney's March to Santa Fé.—Nature of the Country.—Retreat of the Mexicans.—Arrival at Santa Fé.—Kearney's Proclamation.—Kearney departs for California.—Wool's Expedition.—Assemblage of the Troops at San Antonio.—The Object of the Expedition.—March to Monclova; to Penas.—Wool joins Worth at Saltillo. Taylor's March to Victoria.

WHILE General Taylor was crossing the Rio Grande, and directing his columns towards Central Mexico, the cabinet at Washington sent two other columns against the northern provinces, under the command, respectively, of Generals Kearney and Wool. The movements of these corps, if less important in a military point of view, were vastly more extensive in their geographical scope and relations. It was their fortune to traverse magnificent plains, perform rapid and, in modern history, unprecedented marches, and conquer to the dominion of the United States lands unmeasured and almost uninhabited.

The origin of these expeditions seems to have been an idea entertained by the administration, that the States of New Mexico,—Chihuahua, Durango, and others in the upper portion of Mexico,—stood ready to declare themselves independent, and that, by this movement, they would be at once detached from the central government. It was stated by some letter-writers, who professed acquaintance with that country, that those States were ready

to form a separate and independent republic. One writer even went so far as to declare that the Mexicans themselves, in these provinces, would form an army to march against the central government! With such views, the war department organized a corps, called the Army of the West,<sup>1</sup> which was intended to conquer New Mexico by marching into Santa Fé. This place, though very unimportant as a town, was a point of concentration for the extensive trade which flowed through it from Chihuahua on the southwest and St. Louis on the northeast. Vast as were the plains and uninhabited regions through which this trade was carried on, it had grown, within a few years, to be one of great importance in magnitude and value. On the 16th of May, 1846, at the very time Congress recognised the existence of the war, a company of Mexican traders arrived at St. Louis, through Santa Fé, from Chihuahua, with no less than three hundred and fifty thousand dollars in specie, to expend for wares and merchandise in the United States. The annual trade from Santa Fé with St. Louis, Pittsburg, and Philadelphia, was supposed to be, in amount, from one to two millions of dollars. That trade has been cut off by the events of the war.

The forces which were to compose the Army of the West,—almost wholly of Volunteers,—commenced assembling at Fort Leavenworth early in June, 1846. Col. Kearney received his orders in May,<sup>2</sup> and the Missouri Volunteers were mustered into service before the end of June, and on the 30th of June the entire force had departed. The corps of Kearney was composed thus:—

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. Emory's Journal.

<sup>2</sup> Niles's Register, 70, p. 223

Colonel Price's Regiment,	-	-	800 men.
“ Doniphan's “	-	-	800 “
Major Clarke's Battalion,	-	-	400 “
Sumner's Dragoons,	-	-	200 “
Mormon Battalion,	-	-	500 “
Total force,	-	-	<u>2,700</u> “

A large part of this force were mounted men, accompanied, however, by a regiment of infantry, a body of artillery, and a train of wagons. The point of departure was Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri river, and the point to be reached (Santa Fé) was one thousand miles distant. For a greater part of that distance, from the Missouri to Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, the road lay over vast plains, which had for ages been the pasturage of the buffalo, or the hunting-ground of the Indian. Short dry grass, or sometimes barren ground, with skirts of trees in the valleys of the streams, made nearly the whole landscape; while occasionally a buffalo in the distance, a prairie-wolf in the trail, or the carcass of some unfortunate horse given to the wild birds or wilder beasts, gave variety to this desolate scene. Bent's Fort, the lonely plantation of Mr. Bonny, and the meeting of a party of traders, were the only signs of civilization. Beyond the Arkansas, and on the head-waters of the Cimarron and Canadian rivers, the country grows mountainous, and the pine, spruce, and other evergreens begin to give verdure to the summits. In passing a dividing ridge of these streams, the army was charmed with one of those splendid mountain-scenes which frequently occur in extraordinary sublimity on the spurs of the Cordilleras. It was the passage of the Raton, a branch of the great Aztec

mountains, which made the eastern ridge of the Rio Grande. By barometrical observations, the summit was 7000 feet in height. Towards the northwest, the lofty top of Pike's peak was visible, and around it other peaks whose white limestone cliffs looked like snow-banks in the sunbeams. Above, the rocky tops of the Raton rose in perpendicular ledges, and assumed the form of castles in the air, while all around nature exhibited a wide landscape of wild, various, and beautiful appearances.<sup>1</sup>

Such scenery in this desolate region was, however, uncommon. The weary soldier had to pass many a day's journey without water for his thirst, or grass for his beast. For twenty miles, in some cases, no spring was to be found. An eye-witness relates, that in going from the valley of the Canadian, a traveller might pass a good day's journey without meeting with either wood, water, or grass. Such was the unfruitful and uninviting country through which it was deemed necessary to march an army of the United States for the conquest of Mexico!

On the 3d of August Kearney left Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, and in ten days approached the Mexican settlements. Governor Armijo had previously received intimations of his approach, and, according to the accounts of traders, had gathered from the adjacent provinces a formidable force. On the 16th of August he marched out of Santa Fé, and took post at a remarkably strong position. It was an eminence commanding a defile of not more than forty feet in width, through which lay the road to Santa Fé. Such a position, with good troops, might be deemed almost impregnable. Such was not the result.

<sup>1</sup> Lt. Emory's Journal.—Niles's Register, 71, p. 138

Governor Armijo held a council of war. His second in command, and other officers, advised him against defence. The advice was followed. The Mexican army retreated, and Armijo left the province for Chihuahua with a hundred dragoons. In the mean while Kearney had arrived at San Miguel, and assured the alarmed alcaldes, padres, and other influential persons, that he should protect them in their persons, property, religion, and liberty. On the 18th of August he passed through the same defile the Mexicans had just left undefended, and in a few hours entered Santa Fé. Marching with his troops to the palace, or governor's house, Kearney hoisted the standard of the Union, and firing a salute of cannon said, "There, my guns proclaim that the flag of the United States floats over the capital."<sup>1</sup> On the next day (Aug. 19th) the general addressed the people, proclaimed that the American army came to establish free government, offered the people protection, and absolved them from their allegiance to their former government!

Thus in about fifty days an army (which had been collected in less than a month) had traversed nearly a thousand miles of uninhabited wastes, and proclaimed the conquest of New Mexico, containing a surface of eighty thousand square miles, though inhabited by only eighty thousand people. Considered as a march for both infantry and artillery, this was a remarkable achievement. The result was, however, as unsatisfactory to the performers as it was fruitless of military results. Santa Fé offered neither the splendor nor pleasures of a rich and voluptuous city. It was a poor town, badly built, inhabited by a half-

<sup>1</sup> Journal of an officer.—Niles, 71, p. 83.

civilized people, in the midst of a barren and uninhabited country. One of the travellers in this expedition thus writes:—"This is the most miserable country I have ever seen. The houses the people live in are built of mud, one story high, and have no flooring. They sleep on the ground, and have neither beds, tables, nor chairs."<sup>2</sup>

This account probably refers to the mass of the people, and not the richer class. The mud spoken of is unburnt brick. When the American officers visited the church, they found it without seats, except one long bench for the chief men.<sup>3</sup>

A few villages and well-cultivated fields lay within a few miles of Santa Fé, and the banks of the Rio Grande below occasionally presented a town. But, for the most part, a country without resources, and a people without civilization, were the tempting prospect which New Mexico offered to her Anglo-Saxon invaders.

On the 31st of August, two weeks after his arrival at Santa Fé, Kearney organized an expedition of nine hundred men to scour the banks of the Rio Grande below. This work was done without a combat, and without any other result than the march.

In the mean while General Kearney, acting, as he declared, by authority and under the instructions of the executive administration of the United States, assumed to direct the civil affairs of New Mexico, and even to declare the assent of the American nation to the incorporation of New Mexico with the United States, and to absolve its citizens from all allegiance to the Mexican government!<sup>4</sup>

Niles, 71, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of an officer, pp. 91, 92;—of Niles 71.

<sup>3</sup> Kearney's Proclamation may be found in the appendix to Young's History of Mexico.

These occurrences are so remarkable in American constitutional history, that they have attracted no small attention from the gravest and most intelligent minds. The first in this series of novel proceedings in military history took place at the town of San Miguel, a few miles from Santa Fé, on the 16th of August. Summoning the alcalde and the people of the village into his presence, the commander of the American army informed them that they were absolved from all allegiance to the Mexican government, and that the alcalde must swear allegiance to the United States! After some demur, that officer complied, on condition that his religion was protected. The oath was then administered in this form:—"You swear that you will bear true allegiance to the government of the United States of America, and that you will defend her against all her enemies and opposers, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

On the 22d of August, in Santa Fé, General Kearney issued a proclamation, entitled, "From the Army of the West to the Inhabitants of New Mexico."<sup>1</sup> This proclamation was so extraordinary, that some paragraphs may be noted for the very novel ideas they brought before the minds of the American people. In this he first announces his intention to hold the department, with its "original boundaries, (on both sides the Del Norte,) as a part of the United States; and under the name of the Territory of New Mexico."

He next informs the people that "it is the wish and intention of the United States to provide for New Mexico a free government, with the least possible delay, similar

<sup>1</sup> Idem.

to those in the United States; and the people of New Mexico will then be called upon to exercise the rights of freemen in electing their own representatives to the territorial legislature."

The most extraordinary passage of this proclamation is the following:—

"The undersigned hereby absolves all persons residing within the boundary of New Mexico from further allegiance to the republic of Mexico, and hereby claims them as citizens of the United States. Those who remain quiet and peaceable will be considered as good citizens, and receive protection; those who are found in arms, or instigating others against the United States, will be considered as traitors, and treated accordingly."

Neither the Constitution of the United States nor the people by act of Congress, or by vote, had provided any means or expressed any wish for the annexation of New Mexico. The laws of nations were equally silent as to any mode by which the allegiance of a citizen can be absolved by any act of a military commander. Nor had the laws of the United States provided any way by which a foreign citizen could become a citizen of the United States, except by naturalization. The conquest of New Mexico has opened, therefore, a new field for legal investigation, as well as a new chapter in constitutional history.

One month after these proceedings, (on the 25th of September,) when the sparse population of that country seemed quiet, and the army found no other motives for activity than such as the amusements of Santa Fé afforded, General Kearney left that place, and with four hundred dragoons departed for California. He took the old Coppermine route, down the Rio Grande to Sorotto, and thence

to the Pacific. On the 20th of October, three hundred miles west of Santa Fé, he was informed by a returning party that Fremont had already taken possession of California. He then sent Major Sumner back with the largest part of the dragoons, and taking only one hundred with himself, pursued, with this small force, the daring enterprise of crossing the deserts and mountains of Western America in the cold season.

Thus was effected the conquest of the province of New Mexico by the troops of the United States: bloodless in its achievement, and fruitless of any immediate results, but illustrating the energy of the American people in the collection and movement of troops, and the celerity with which the great western plains may be traversed by military forces.

At the same time that the cabinet at Washington formed the plan of moving a column on Santa Fé, they also organized another against the Central States of Mexico. This was called the "Army of the Centre," and was directed to march on Chihuahua, the capital of the province of that name, and supposed to be the centre of much of the Mexican strength and wealth. The object of this expedition, like that of Kearney, was to detach the northern and northwestern from the central government of Mexico, and thus induce that government to make peace by cutting off its resources.

The "Army of the Centre" was placed under the command of Brigadier-general John E. Wool, one of the small but gallant band who, by their heroic stand upon the heights of Queenstown, had, even in defeat, shed lustre upon the American arms, and acquired a lasting distinction for themselves. This army was thus composed:—

## OFFICERS OF THE STAFF.

General John E. Wool—Commander.  
Colonel Churchill—Inspector-general.  
Captain Cross—Quartermaster.  
Captain W. D. Fraser—Engineer.

## REGULAR TROOPS.

5 companies U. S. Dragoons—Col. Harney,	300 men.
1 company Artillery—Captain Washington,	100 "
2 companies U. S. 6th Infantry—Capt. Bonnevill,	100 "

## VOLUNTEERS.

1 regiment of Arkansas Cavalry—Col. Yell,	750 "
2 regiments of Illinois Infantry—Col. Hardin,	1,600 "
1 company Kentucky Cavalry—Capt. Williams,	90 "
Total forces	2,940 "

These troops were directed by the War Department to assemble at Antonio de Bexar, on the river Antonio, and thence proceed to Chihuahua by Presidio Rio Grande. At the time the orders for their assembling were given, these troops were in different parts of the United States, remote from each other and remote from the point of rendezvous. Their marches, and the celerity and exactness of their movement and assembling, are among the remarkable incidents of the war with Mexico. The Illinois regiments proceeded by water, in steamboats, down the Mississippi, and by the Gulf of Mexico to Lavaca on Matagorda Bay. Here they commenced their march to San Antonio.

The Illinois regiments arrived at Pallida Creek, twelve miles from Lavaca, on the 7th of August, and on the 11th commenced their march to Antonio de Bexar. The route to Antonio was through a dry prairie, crossing the head-streams of the Antonio and the river Guadalupe, along whose banks alone the thirsty and tired soldier might expect to find water and shade. A writer, who was a member of the Illinois troops, thus speaks of this tedious march: "Heat—heat—heat; rain—rain—rain; mud—mud—mud, intermingled with spots of sand and gravel, form the principal features of the route from Lavacca to San Antonio. Loaded wagons of course move slowly over the roads, and our troops were moreover scourged on the route by the mumps and the measles."<sup>1</sup>

These regiments arrived at Antonio de Bexar (the place of rendezvous) before the 1st of September: so did all the corps who were to assemble there. The movement of these bodies was quite remarkable. Captain Washington with the regular artillery had gone from Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, two thousand miles, and arrived on the 31st of August. Major Bonneville made eight hundred miles in six weeks with the infantry, and arrived on the 27th of August. Colonel Yell, with the Arkansas cavalry, arrived from Washington, Arkansas, on the 28th. Thus, after these immense marches, did the troops of Wool's army concentrate, with remarkable precision, at the place of rendezvous, prepared to march into the territories of Mexico.

The extent of these marches and the extreme barrenness of the country through which the route lay, after

<sup>1</sup> "Rondenac" to the National Intelligencer.—Niles's Register, 71, p. 90.

leaving the Mississippi, made this expedition one of great expense and difficulty in its transportation. The real *baseline* upon which an army operates, is that which contains the *depots of subsistence*. In this instance, as throughout the war with Mexico, those depots were on the Mississippi river and the cities of the Atlantic coast. The same writer whom we have quoted says, "Forage and subsistence for the entire army are derived from New York, Baltimore, and New Orleans. The transportation by water, therefore, exceeds thousands of miles, while the total of land transportation may be found among the hundreds. The bare cost of bringing a bushel of corn from Lavaca to this place (Antonio) is \$1.20, and other supplies in proportion." This fact at once illustrates the expense which invariably attends the march of an army through barren countries.

Assembled at Antonio, the army was now ready to commence its march against Chihuahua. But with what *object*? The declared object was to aid in establishing the independence of the northern States, and thus act against the central government of Mexico. But was this a probable result? The same writer already quoted pertinently asks, "Are the people of the United States pursuing a war of conquest, of propagandism, or of necessity? Do they hope to convert provinces to their political faith by sending forth among them an armed soldiery to quicken their conclusions, and give energy to their admiration? Are they desirous, by a grand military display, to exhibit to the Mexicans the vast superiority of their free institutions over their more humble neighbors? Do they hope, by a series of marches and counter-marches, by glittering bayonets and flashing sabres, by waving banners and the

clangor of martial music, to intimidate a people too proud to work and almost too poor to be pitied? Do they wish, by a lavish expenditure of public funds, to bribe a whole nation to throw off its allegiance? Are we to plant our flags at Presidio Rio Grande,—beat our drums at San Fernando, Santa Rosa, and Monclova,—carry the tramp of our war-steeds through Baria, Saledo, San Carlos, and Chericotti, and let the thunders of our artillery roll within the walls of Chihuahua merely to demonstrate the military prowess of a great nation, and the inherent energies of a free people? So far as can be seen or known at present, these are the sole objects of the expedition, conceived in folly, and which has already cost millions of the national treasury, although it has not yet passed the threshold."<sup>1</sup>

The language of this writer, although strong, was prophetic. The expedition pursued the route, and was attended with no other results than those which these questions indicate. Early in September, the division of Wool took up its line of march from San Antonio for the Presidio Rio Grande, passing, in most of the distance, over the same dry and uninviting plains as those which the Illinois Regiments had passed from Lavaca to San Antonio. Crossing the Rio Grande at the Presidio, General Wool and his corps pushed on by long and wearisome marches to the village of Santa Rosa. Here it was discovered that the geographical knowledge of the War Department was by no means equal to its martial energies. Looking to the west for the road to Chihuahua the army beheld in front the lofty mountain-range of the Sierra

<sup>1</sup> Letter of "Rondenac" to the National Intelligencer.

Gorda, lifting their summits four thousand feet above the level of the plains! The officer of Topographical Engineers in vain looks for a single defile through which the army may pass to the west.<sup>1</sup> It is compelled to turn south towards Saltillo. On the 29th of October, six weeks after leaving the Rio Grande, it reaches Monclova, one of the principal towns of Coahuila. Here the troops were received in a friendly manner, the Prefect contenting himself simply with a protest against the occupation of the Mexican country. For a month the army continued to enjoy the Mexican hospitalities as if no hostilities interrupted the harmony of the respective nations. The soldiers of Wool's corps acted as the armed watchmen of Coahuila. The robber and the savage alike fled from the drum-beat of the guard and the echoes of the bugle. The discipline of the army was equal to its energy; and the inhabitants around slept peacefully while the conquering invader unfurled his flag along the base of the Sierra Gorda.

At length General Wool, writing to General Taylor, inquired—"What is to be gained by going to Chihuahua?" General Taylor, then about to occupy the state of Tamaulipas by marching to Victoria, replied, that he (Wool) should abandon the expedition to Chihuahua, and advance with his column to Parras, a place still further to the south, and not very distant from Saltillo. Here the army remained for a short time, till, in the month of December, it joined the division of Worth, in the town of Saltillo. The object of the enterprise,—the conquest of Chihuahua,

Report of Captain Hughes, of the Topographical Corps, February, 1847.

—had previously been abandoned; but this division, which had so far been employed only in marches, was soon to appear, under the able Wool and the veteran Taylor, victorious on the bloody and memorable field of Buena Vista.<sup>1</sup>

The march of Wool, like that of Kearney, was remarkable for the steadiness and celerity with which new troops, of all the different arms, traversed vast deserts uninhabited, and unsupplied, except by provisions brought from the interior of the United States. By the route pursued it was seven hundred miles from San Antonio de Bexar to Saltillo, and this distance, deducting the period at Monclova and Parras, was performed in about six weeks.

General Wool arrived just in time at Saltillo to meet the intentions of General Taylor, and prepare for the events which followed.

The commander on the Rio Grande had proceeded with a large body of troops to meet another corps, under General Patterson, marching from Matamoras to occupy Victoria, the capital of the state of Tamaulipas. At Montemorlos, sixty-eight miles from Monterey, Taylor was informed that Santa Anna was about to move on Saltillo, with a view to attack Worth. This recalled him, with the regulars, to Monterey. Generals Patterson and Quitman proceeded to Victoria, and ultimately to Tampico, where they made a portion of the army of Scott, and took part in the brilliant and successful siege and capture of Vera Cruz.

<sup>1</sup> The Illinois Regiments, the Arkansas Regiment, and Washington's Artillery, were in the battle of Buena Vista, and constituted one-third of Taylor's army.

## CHAPTER VI.

Expedition of Captain Fremont.—Arrives at Monterey, California.—Suspicions of Governor de Castro.—Fremont takes position.—Returns by Oregon.—Returns again to Monterey.—Is threatened by De Castro.—Declares War.—Capture of Mexicans.—Sails from Monterey to Diego.—Capture of the City of Angels.—Conquest of California.—Object of the Government.—Marcy's Letter to Stevenson.—Marcy's Orders to Kearney.—Scott's Orders.—Insurrection in New Mexico.—Murder of Bent.—Battle of Canada.—Battle of Pueblo de Taos.—Insurrection in California.—March of Doniphan.—Battle of Brozitos.—Capture of El Paso.—Battle of Sacramento.—Capture of Chihuahua.—March to Saltillo.—Arrival at New Orleans.—March of Gilpin to the Rocky Mountains.

IN the autumn of 1845, Captain Fremont, of the Topographical Corps of Engineers, set out with an armed party of men, prepared for hunting and Indian warfare, to cross the mountains and penetrate the interior of California. This officer had been greatly distinguished in a previous expedition for bold enterprise, scientific attainments, and interesting researches amidst the wilderness of Rocky Mountains. The ostensible object of his present journey was to seek a new route to Oregon, further south than the one heretofore travelled by emigrants, and to seek also scientific discoveries amidst these unknown and undescribed regions of the west. His well-known love of science, and his hitherto scrupulous conduct, afford strong presumption that such was the real purpose of his mission.

He pursued his journey, undisturbed by any extraordinary events, till, on the 29th of January, 1846, he ar-