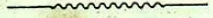


were the complete history of their chivalric struggle on that day written, posterity would be proud to award them a share of glory not inferior to any corps who were battling with them.



ARMY SCENES IN MEXICO.

THE name of Mexico has long been associated with nothing but scenes of bloodshed and misery. Now and then, a passing remark is made, on the beauty of her scenery, or the splendor of her climate; but this is soon forgotten, or, perhaps, overlooked in the eager appetite after the news of battle. But, to the contemplative mind, the one that is glad to remove from the sickening din where man is spilling the life-blood which may never be gathered, Mexico is replete with wonder and instruction. Like Spain, she is the country of romantic associations, and her history is a tale of mournful interest.

In the mother-country, the marbled fountains, and deep-tangled gardens of the Alhambra, tell of a high-spirited and enlightened people, who have passed away from the places that will never know them again; and in Mexico, the same sad mementoes, the same lonely and deserted structures, guard in stately grandeur the tombs of a race, better than their conquerors. The once haughty Spaniard is now degraded and pusillanimous; while the poor Indian, whose empire he wrested in the hurry for wealth, although moving as a slave among the

palaces of his ancestors, is his superior in every thing but rank; and, as the Moors still fondly dream of recapturing their terrestrial Eden, so do the descendants of Montezuma; and, under a skillful leader, who would dare affirm that they could not burst their fetters, and revel once more in the halls of Aztec?

A prospect on one of the plains of Mexico, is a sublime and subduing sight. Often the ground is as level as a floor for many miles, and covered with high grass, which waves backward and forward like the undulations of the ocean. Far in the distance, high trees vary the scene, and farther still the mountains seem to rear their round heavy summits into the clouds—and, over all, the sun beams with that yellow, mellowed softness, so peculiar in southern regions. Buffaloes, jackals, and prairie-dogs infest the plains, and add a strange, *unhuman* appearance to the landscape. But that which particularly arrests the attention of the traveller, and assures him that he is far from home, is the innumerable variety of birds and insects, glittering with every tinge of beauty, and filling the air with their ceaseless humming. No country is richer in natural history than Mexico, and among her specimens are thousands unknown to other portions of the world.

There are some ruins in Mexico of buildings established by the Spaniards, which are rarely mentioned.—Of these are the stations of the Jesuit priests, soon after the conquest, which are scattered, in different numbers, through every State of the Republic. Several are on the Rio del Norte, and were subjects of frequent remark among the American soldiers, whenever observed.—

There is something sad connected with the sight of their mouldering domes and battlements, half concealed by coarse grass and chapparal. On them the missionaries bestowed their wealth and labor, fondly hoping that the rude and scattered tribes would flock to them as to a home. They adorned the walls with the most expensive sculpture, and painted the figure of a weeping virgin—their motto in every undertaking—upon the high battlements which overlooked the inland. Inside were spacious apartments, adorned with paintings and statues, and resounding with the sweet chantings of pious nuns; while surrounding every building were blooming gardens, traversed by paths and canals, and variegated with all that could rivet the attention, or charm the senses. Here the preacher erected his cross, and day after day taught the wondering Indian of another and better land, where the groves were even greener, and the streams clearer than in Aztec. Little did they imagine that in less than two centuries the descendants of their pupils would return to their degraded state, and that the romantic buildings, which towered like stars in the wilderness, and to establish which they had left home and relatives, and crossed an unknown ocean, would be mouldering in unvisited solitudes, and hear no sound save the batten of the jackal and vulture!

The most extensive of these settlements on the Rio Grande, is the one called St. Joseph's. Its grand court is about two hundred yards square, and the principal chapel is one hundred and five feet long, and thirty feet wide. The wing, containing the cells for the nuns, is about one hundred and fifty feet long, by fifty-seven in

width: the height of the principal dome is eighty feet. The court is surrounded by old buildings, sufficient for the accommodation of one hundred families, while the base of the wings is divided into small cells, built with great strength. All the battlements and towers are covered with the prickly pear, growing to the height of six feet above the walls, and with grass and mosquito wood, the common growth of the country, among which the bells lay scattered and broken, some in the court-yard and others in the cupola.

The main front of the building, opposite what was once the grand entrance, is adorned with a richness of statuary and architecture, so far superior to any thing of its class among the religious edifices of our country, that it strikes an American with awe and admiration. Besides many marble statues of full size, representing Christ, the Saints, and the Virgin, there are also plaster images of small dimensions, in an arch round the entrance, illustrating remarkable events in the history of Christ and the Apostles, and arranged in groups, each of which is surrounded by well preserved wreaths of *fleur de lis*. The entire exterior of these vast buildings, as well as the roofs, domes and parapets, have been painted in imitation of mosaic work, portions of which are not yet defaced. In a small chapel in the basement, which is still locked, are three statues, in a standing position, well preserved, and under the direct superintendence of the present keepers of the property. One of these represents the Saviour, with his side bleeding, hands and feet pierced, and crowned with thorns; one is the Virgin, and the third the representation of some Saint.

The principal material of these edifices is rock and a kind of cement, which in its mouldering condition has the appearance of old lava. The sills of the doorways and the caps of many of the pillars, are of ponderous dimensions, and like the door-posts are of marble.

A strong evidence of most extensive labor in the establishment of these missions, is to be found in the canals which have been dug to irrigate, with the waters of the San Antonio river, large tracts of country, extending over leagues of land. In some places this plan of irrigation seems to indicate that in former years the drought rendered agriculture and horticulture unavailable without much artificial aid, and it proves too, as well as does the completion of such vast edifices, that the labor of large numbers of the aborigines must have been employed by the missionary priests and their associates in the work.

The dates of the completion of these edifices range along from the beginning to the middle of the last century, which makes some of them more and some less than one hundred years old; so that although they are not of a very remote antiquity, yet the desolations of frequent war, and the corrosive nature of the climate, together with the rapid growth of wood and vegetation peculiar to the soil, gives to them the appearance of very ancient ruins. To say the least they are much older in appearance than any buildings of the United States, excepting, perhaps, the old Spanish cathedral at New Orleans, and the old Scandinavian fort at Newport, R. I.

Many of these stations of the interior have been destroyed by the Indian tribes, or during the long wars which have desolated Mexico; others are completely

overgrown by rank vegetation; but enough remain to attest their former splendor, as well as the labor and zeal of the men who could muster courage to leave their own country, and found a home for themselves and their fellow men, in the boundless wilderness.

Besides these Jesuit buildings, there are on the San Antonio river ruins of the little town of Goliad, which, like Moscow, was fired by the retreating inhabitants, when attacked by the revolutionists in the Texan war. Unlike the missions, no grass waves above its battlements; the walls are bare and black, and on the ground charred fragments are heaped upon each other in wild confusion. The history of the city is a sad one, and as the wandering antiquary beholds for the first time its relics, he can scarcely realize that it was once the abode of song and happiness and merriment. On that dark and terrible night when a thrilling voice rolled along its sleeping streets, that the *avengers were coming*, each rushed from his couch, fled to the church, tore the gold and silver from the altars, flung burning torches among the draperies, and departed for ever. All night the flames tossed, and foamed, and roared, until the country beneath their lurid glare shone as brightly as day; and when the sun arose upon the scene, Goliad was a mass of smouldering ruins.

Humorous scenes often take place among the American soldiers in Mexico, who are not accustomed to the climate and productions. The greatest enemy they have, not even excepting the Mexicans, seems to be *musquitoes*. Not the frail, merry little nonentity of the north, that lulls us to sleep with his midsummer night's

song, and around whose feathered head, and web-like limbs, even children gather with admiration. No. Compared to the southern article, "these are but as *grasshoppers*." At the noise of *his* trumpet-like coming man and beast fly in terror, and the conquerors of Mexico relax from their haughty bearing. The diseases of the climate, brain fever, miasma, every foe to hygiene, compared to this vampire, are harmless. During the day, while the sun is withering nature, he basks in the ooze and bushes of the rivers, gathering strength; and when evening arrives, and men rush from their smothered retreat to enjoy the mountain breeze, he rouses to meet them. On comes the troop, their name being legion, sweeping in whizzing clouds like the African simoom; but woe to the wretch who would consider them as such, and fall upon his face. The cattle rush to the water at their approach, and the wild animals sink into the depths of the forest. All night long the *pseudo-sleeper* tosses and writhes beneath his shield-like covering, while his brain throbs with heat and suppressed breathing; but he dare not remove it. Above him are the mosquitoes, marching and countermarching with lean figures, and drawn weapons, ready at the slightest opportunity for the charge; and as the dense columns of reinforcements pour through every aperture, he can console himself only by picturing to his imagination the cool breezes and refreshing waters without, and by fixing his memory on *home*.

An officer in the American army has given so excellent a description of the pleasures of soldiering, that we cannot resist the pleasure of transcribing it, with such little alterations as style or subject may require.

'This country is distinguished above all other particulars, by its myriads of crawling, flying, stinging, and biting things. Every object has a spider on it. We are killing them all day in our tents. We never dare to draw on a boot, nor put on a hat or garment, without narrowly searching for some poisonous reptile or insect crouching in the folds; and it is wonderful that we are not stung twenty times a day. Yesterday morning, while standing up at breakfast, (we never sit at meals in consequence of wanting the wherewithal to make a seat,) I felt some strange thing crawling up my leg about the knee. It did not take me long to seize it with my hand, and to disrobe. Looking into the leg of my drawers, I beheld a villanous-looking black and yellow creature, with a long bony tail. I called my mess to look at it, when Dr. Hoxey, who has been before in this reptile country, pronounced it a Mexican scorpion; and told me, for my comfort, that it was as poisonous as a rattlesnake. No doubt when I clinched him with my hand, he struck *out* at my clothes, instead of *in* at my flesh. Thinks I to myself, there's an escape. Besides these, we have mosquitoes, centipedes, hordes of flies, and every thing else that crawls, flies, bites, or makes a noise. A gang of locusts have domiciled themselves in our camp, keeping up a clatter all night; which is seconded by the music of frogs, and the barking of prairie-dogs. A few nights since, a panther came smelling up to the lines of our sentries. All these small nuisances are universally pronounced in camp as death to one's patriotic emotions; and a hard fight with the enemy, followed by a riddance of this pestilent country,

would be hailed by the whole regiment as a consummation of almost too much happiness. But here we are to stay, fighting insects and vermin, without any prospect of finding their masters, for whose special and appropriate use Nature seems to have formed them. Some few of our officers profess to be enamoured of this country. The air near the sea-coast is certainly fine, and one is at a loss to account for the sickness; but aside from that, I would willingly forego the possession of all the rich acres that I have seen, to get back from this land of half-breed Indians, and full-breed bugs.'

A predominant feature in the Mexican character is superstition, that invariable accompaniment of ignorance and bigotry. This throws a kind of solemnity around their demeanor, which on some occasions, and especially in certain localities, amounts to gloom or sadness. The Mexican regards his priest with an awe amounting to idolatry; and believes him capable of working miracles, raising the dead, and arranging the destinies of the departed. Round every church and every monastery and every mouldering building, a halo is thrown, which, like a contagion, withers and enslaves the mind. Amid all the antiquities of his country, the venerable pyramids, sculptured palaces, and extended lines of massive walls and battlements, crumbling in the darkness and solitude of the forests, he feels nothing but a gloomy dread of devils or wandering spirits, the same which prompted his ancestors to destroy the noble monuments of Aztec science. Talk to him of the past, or draw an inference from it to apply to his own condition, and he shakes his head in ignorance and displeasure—such thoughts are

above his comprehension. Even the common occurrences and most necessary operations of life—such as planting, journeying, &c., are made the subject of religious instruction and anxiety; and the soul that moves all society, to which all others are but automatons, is the priesthood.

The religious orders have ever fostered this feeling, and used every exertion to maintain their unhallowed supremacy. Along every road, and upon the sides and tops of mountains, the traveller beholds small crosses, before which every Mexican must bow in passing; and it is no uncommon sight to observe groups of men, women, and children, on their knees before one of these crucifixes. Sometimes a solitary penitent is there, with long black tresses floating on the wind, and eyes capable of witching the astonished beholder; and yet she inspires sadness, for we feel that the part enclosed in that beautiful frame, and which might sparkle with glorious effulgence, is a subdued and broken thing, condemned to perpetual slavery. The effects of this superstition pervade every condition of life, and render the Mexicans indolent, servile, and dependent; so that the country, which, under able and enlightened influences, might become what Old Spain once was, is now a national albino, an infant credulous and cowering under the unprincipled management of her nursery-like rulers.

Another characteristic of the Mexican is dishonesty. This is so prevalent among the lower classes, that they have made a virtue of necessity, and consider thieving as an honorable employment. No *ranchero* ever permitted a proper opportunity to escape him. Travellers

who have no money nor jewels, are eased of their superabundant clothing, and ladies very frequently receive the same kind civilities. Even the foreign consuls when officially engaged are obliged to be continually on the alert; and the happy merchant, as he trudges across the valley with his silver-laden mules, is frequently disburdened, in an unaccountably short space of time, from the anxieties of riches. The civil wars of Mexico have afforded rich harvests for these transactions; and government itself, anxious to monopolize so lucrative an employment, has swept estate and fortune from many of the grandees, at the same time administering the healing reflection, that a true patriot delights to benefit his country.

A group of Mexican Indians, released from daily toil, and enjoying the pleasures of gossip in the refreshing evening breeze, is a sight grotesque and relieving. The great dread of these beings is hard work; and once loosened from this, they fling aside all care, and riot in uncontrolled enjoyment. The appearance of a laboring Indian is a great preventive of seriousness. His mouth is wide, his hair long and uncombed, and his dress open both for addition and variation. On the countenance there is a peculiar leer, between a grin and a laugh, which, with his other accomplishments, tends powerfully to throw a reflective cast on the countenance of the beholder. And when, with all these advantages in full play, he rises to thrum on a broken guitar, the star of every evening assembly, the beholder has before him a concentration of every thing ludicrous and ridiculous.

The dance of these people is however graceful, and

their inexhaustible humor makes these nightly frolics a source of passionate pleasure. The Indian is a far happier being than his master; he never reflects; never thinks of the future; never hopes for a change of lot. His father was a slave—so is he; his child will be one. Hence he is not troubled with the choice of a profession. Freedom to him means having a lighter skin and constantly fighting; and its real character, its power to renovate and ennoble him, is as incomprehensible as the idea of Deity to an Australian. He is a mournful comment on oppression—the blasted relic of a powerful empire.

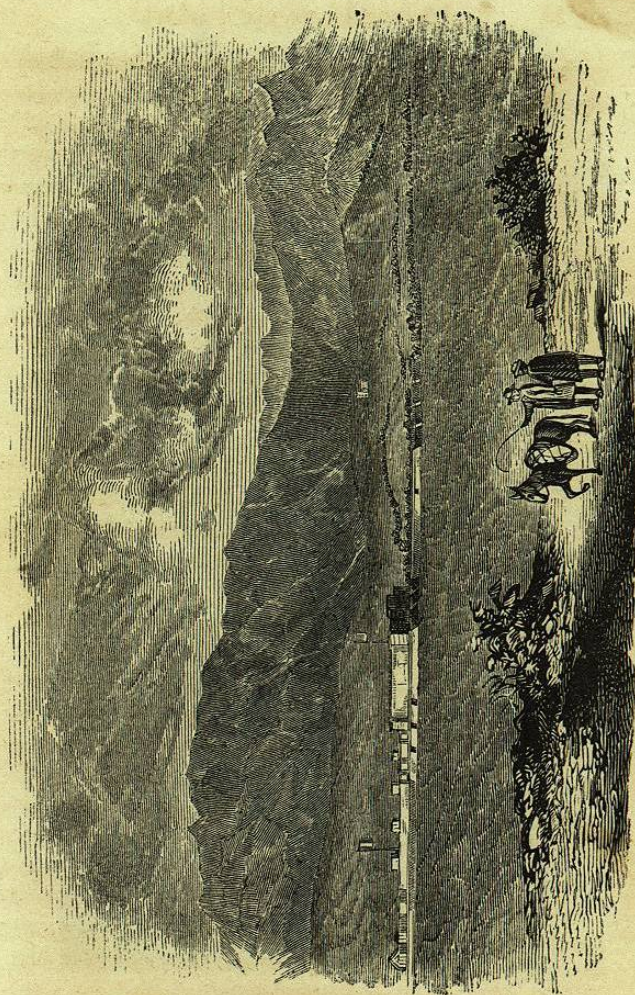
The Mexican cavalry, either in parade or on the field of battle, present a stirring spectacle. One of their most singular weapons is the long lance, similar to that used by the knights of romance; and indeed, their whole appearance is not unlike those famous warriors. Their horses are gayly caparisoned, spirited, and under perfect control; and when five or six thousand are sweeping along in one dense wave, with helmets and lances glittering in the sun, and the whole enveloped in thick volumes of dust, the display is grand. In the civil and revolutionary wars, the cavalry has always been the arm most relied upon; and the most obstinate fighting at Buena Vista, performed by the Mexicans, was by the lancers.

Altogether, Mexico presents a singular spectacle. She is a nation without government; she exists without the qualifications to do so; and is at present in open war with a power against whom she has never been able to stand in battle, and who, but for the climate, could in one

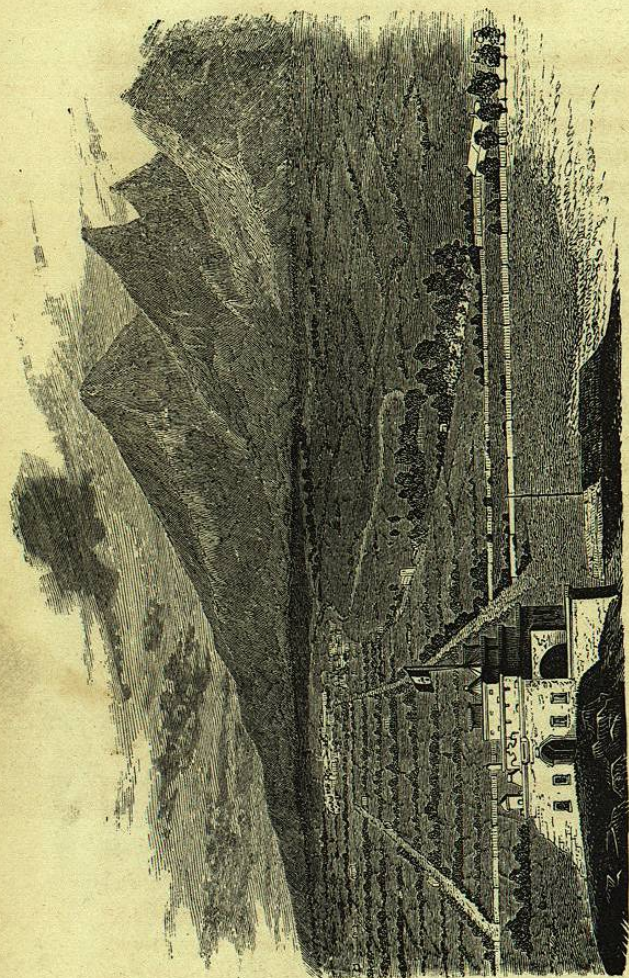
campaign annihilate her; yet against all these difficulties she perseveres with a courage worthy of success, and that courage may give the historian abundance of future labor. Mexico is not yet conquered; but even should she be, it seems difficult to suppose that her people would submit with tameness to the dominion of foreigners.

THE CITY OF MONTEREY.

MONTEREY is one of the strongest cities of the Western continent. This distinction it owes not so much to the nature of its position, as to the extent and construction of its walls and other defences. The walls are of immense thickness, and constructed of a species of stone very difficult to split; and it has eight large redoubts, mounting many guns, and provided with loop-holes for musketry. There are also large stone buildings, built expressly for defence, and each dwelling house is surmounted in front with a parapet, which in case of assault forms a breastwork of about three feet high. From this soldier or citizen can severely annoy an assailing army, with perfect security to themselves. During the siege by General Taylor, each house was also bored for musketry, so that the American troops were not only exposed to direct and cross fires from the batteries at every corner, but also to a galling range of musketry, which raked their flanks throughout every street.



View of the Citadel, Bishop's Palace and Independence Hill, Monterey.



Monterey, from the Bishop's Palace.

The houses of Monterey are built of white stone, are square in shape, and in height rarely exceed two stories. The walls are very thick, and altogether, the aspect of the city is strange to an inhabitant of the North. The architecture is strictly Moorish, and many of the houses are crumbling with age. The city covers a large area, but it is destitute of the compactness of those in the sister republics. In the centre is a large square called La Plaza, and round this the houses are large, numerous, and regular. This is the business quarter; the stores of Spaniards, Englishmen, Americans, Germans, Dutchmen, and Frenchmen, are here ranged side by side; and during the business hours of the day a Babel of dialects bewilders the wondering uninitiated. As we recede from this place the buildings are smaller in size and separated from each other; until toward the walls, the whole presents the appearance of a widely scattered village. The houses have dwindled into small huts, surrounded by extensive fields, and connected with the *municipal* region by small lanes. This has one great advantage—it renders the city healthy—the greatest of all blessings in a Mexican city. Many of the gardens are also beautiful; and amid the long hedges and tall chapparal, Monterey has her scenes of evening enjoyment, equal to any in the villages of Mexico.

The inhabitants of Monterey present the usual Mexican character, except that they seem to be less sprightly than those of the other cities. They are sociable to strangers, and generally very hospitable; but indolent in habits, and filthy in appearance. Both men and women are fond of dancing, and this, with conversation,

forms their chief amusement. Throughout the day the time is generally spent in sleeping or lounging; but in the evening parties meet together for dance and song, according to the immemorial custom of all Spaniards. These parties are often made the occasions of great festivity, especially on important holidays.

GRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.

BY AN EYEWITNESS.*

Camp at Buena Vista, Feb. 24, 1847.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—On the morning of the 22d, intelligence reached General Taylor, at his camp on the hill overlooking Saltillo from the south, that Santa Anna, whose presence in our vicinity had been reported for several days, was advancing upon our main body, stationed near the rancho Sancho Juan de Buena Vista, about seven miles from Saltillo. The general immediately moved forward with May's squadron of dragoons, Sherman's and Bragg's batteries of artillery, and the Mississippi regiment of riflemen, under Colonel Davis, and arrived at the position which he had selected for awaiting the attack of the enemy, about eleven o'clock. The time and the place, the hour and the man, seemed to promise a glorious celebration of the day. It was the

* A correspondent of the New Orleans Tropic.

22d of February, the anniversary of that day on which the God of battles gave to freedom its noblest champion, to patriotism its purest model, to America a preserver, and to the world the nearest realization of human perfection—for panegyric sinks before the name of Washington.

The morning was bright and beautiful. Not a cloud floated athwart the firmament, or dimmed the azure of the sky, and the flood of golden radiance, which gilded the mountain tops and poured over the valleys, wrought light and shade into a thousand fantastic forms. A soft breeze swept down from the mountains, rolling into graceful undulation the banner of the Republic, which was proudly streaming from the flag-staff of the fort, and from the towers and battlements of Saltillo. The omens were all in our favor.

In the choice of his position, General Taylor had exhibited the same comprehensive sagacity and masterly *coup d'œil* which characterized his dispositions at Resaca de la Palma, and which crowned triumphantly all his operations amid the blazing lines of Monterey. The mountains rise on either side of an irregular and broken valley, about three miles in width, dotted over with hills and ridges, and scarred with broad and winding ravines. The main road lies along the course of an arroyo, the bed of which is now so deep as to form an almost impassable barrier, while the other side is bounded by precipitous elevations, stretching perpendicularly towards the mountains, and separated by broad gullies, until they mingle into one at the base of the principal range. On the right of the narrowest point of the roadway, a battalion of the