

the morning. The next morning he found his pony and deer. It is not every where you can find your way to a lost horse by *leaving your game along the road*. We reached camp on the evening of the third day. Return of killed, ten deer, fifty-one geese, four bittern, two sand-hill crane, sixty-nine snipe, eighteen ducks, four curlew, three turkeys, and one panther.

This is a specimen of the success of the many hunting parties who frequently went off for several days, and will give some idea of the abundance and variety of the game.

## CHAPTER VII.

NOVEMBER 1st. The time for which Major Gally's battalion of volunteers were called out having expired, the general has decided upon sending them home. They have conducted themselves with great propriety, and have been indefatigable in their drill. At ten o'clock A.M. they gave the camp a farewell salute. On the 4th they embarked, and were saluted in return.

One can hardly realize that the Corpus Christi before us now is the settlement of scattering houses we saw upon our landing. At the end of November its population was computed at one thousand. The majority of them are grocery keepers and gamblers, who have come here to feed upon the army. Houses appear to have grown in a night. There are all sorts, from a frame covered (from the want of lumber or cash, or both) with common domestic, to a tolerably respectable one, clapboarded and shingled. A theater, of no inconsiderable dimensions, is about being erected,

and a company of actors are anxiously awaiting its completion.

During the latter part of November and the month of December we had the most shocking weather imaginable; either cold "northers" or drenching rains, without intermission. Hast thou, dear reader, ever *felt* a norther? heard tell of one? No. Well, your northern cold is nothing to it. It comes "like a thief in the night," and all but steals your life. You go to bed, weather sultry and warm, bed-clothes disagreeable, tent open; before morning you hear a distant rumbling; the roaring increases—the *norther* comes. For several minutes you hear it careering in its wild course; when it reaches you it issues fresh from the snow-mountains, and with a severity which threatens to prostrate the camp. The change in one's feelings is like an instantaneous transit from the torrid to the frigid zone; blankets are in demand, and no one thinks of living without a good supply on hand. Ice has formed in pails several times, and one morning every tent had an ice covering; the sleet had frozen upon it, and the crackling of the canvas sounded like any thing but music. We were forced to throw up embankments and plant chaparral to the north of our tents, to break the wind. The men, of course, suffer a great deal. The constant dampness and bad water have produced many serious cases of dysentery. The beauty of this climate is decidedly in the summer. I'll venture to say there is no part of the United States cursed with such a variable one in the winter. Oh! Texas, if we have not "fought, bled, and died" for you, we have done as Dick Riker (peace to his ashes) did, "suffered some."

Our encampment presented quite a picturesque ap-



pearance, with the evergreen inclosures. It looked like an encampment among orange groves.

The morning after our coldest night, *cart-loads* of the finest fish and green-turtle were driven on shore at the Nueces reef in a torpid state. *Wagon-loads* were carried off by the men.

For the last month, whenever a day would permit, some kind of a pony-race came off. For short distances, some of the mustangs make quite a respectable show. One race, for three hundred yards, between two cream-colored ponies, was inimitably rich. The first heat was declared lost from foul riding; the parties agreed to run it over. In the next, one pony bolted, and, not at all alarmed by the crowd, cleared two or three piles of rubbish, knocked one man down, threw his rider, ran about fifty yards, stopped, turned round, and snorted, as much as to say, "Beat that, if you can." That pony was hard to beat.

Some who read these pages will remember the fun and merriment produced at the mustang pony-races, and never can forget the "modus operandi" of roping mules to mark them. A Mexican goes into the herd, and dextrously throws the lasso over the one designated, and then all hands bend on and pull him (after great resistance) out of the pen. Just as he goes out, a man at the gate, with consummate skill, throws a lasso, and catches the mule by one of his legs; and then commences the sport. The object now is to throw them to be branded. Sometimes they are cast very easily, and then, again, they resist for several minutes, kicking, jumping, and performing all kinds of gyrations; every motion has something comical and ridiculous about it. Sometimes, when one is down and is branded, instead of flinching the moment the iron sears

him, he lies still for a moment, and then, as if he had forgotten himself, thrashes around, and plays the very devil.

Early last month (October) a party of Mexicans brought in a horse, which was reported to be the celebrated "White Horse of the Prairies," the one so often seen and described by travelers over the southwestern prairies. He was a flea-bitten gray, fourteen hands high, well proportioned, and built a good deal after the pattern of a Conestago No. 2. His head and neck were really beautiful, perfect Arabian; beautiful ears, large nostrils, great breadth of forehead, and a throttle as large as any I have ever seen in a blooded nag. His white main was two feet long. He looked about twenty-five years old. He was driven into a pen with some hundred others, and lassoed. Thus, by an artifice, was entrapped the monarch of the mustangs: no more will he lead the countless herds in their wild scampers of freedom; no more will be seen his noble form, with head up and eye dilated, standing on the prairie-knoll, snuffing danger in the breeze, and dashing off at lightning-speed when it becomes apparent.

Lieutenant-colonel Hoffman, of the 7th Infantry, died on the 26th of November, and Lieutenant Allen, of the Dragoons, on the 6th of December. The former was an old and faithful officer, the latter a graduate of 1846.

The army theater opened on the 8th of January, 1846. It was a capital building, capable of containing some eight hundred persons. The scenes were painted by officers of the army. A very clever company was engaged, and many an otherwise dreary evening was spent by many of us with infinite pleasure within its walls.

Early in February General Taylor received orders



to march to the Rio Grande, and select some eligible and healthy situation on that river for his command. It is idle to discuss the propriety of this move. In annexing Texas to the Union, we were bound to take her as she was. Texas, with her prescribed limits. She claimed to the Rio Grande. The moment the annexation was consummated the Mexican minister demanded his passports, and left the country. War appeared to be inevitable. Our government, anxious to avoid any conflict, took means to ascertain whether an agent would be received, with power to adjust all questions in dispute between the two governments. Having received assurances that such an agent would be received, Mr. Slidell was selected by the president, and immediately dispatched to Mexico. The fleet, at the request of the then President of Mexico, was removed from before Vera Cruz; and there can be little or no doubt that Herrera was sincere in his desire to settle all difficulties in the most amicable manner. At the head of a government as unstable as the winds, his seat was entirely too insecure to retain it, and at the same time act with that dignity, honesty, and firmness so necessary to terminate successfully so delicate a negotiation. Upon the arrival of Mr. Slidell, the Council of Mexico resolved not to receive him. On the 29th of December, 1845, the presidency of Herrera was superseded by that of Paredes, placing an insuperable barrier in the way of negotiation. Hostility to the United States was the countersign and watchword of this military chieftain. Mr. Slidell presented his credentials to the new government, and was again refused reception. Our government left nothing undone which might lead to a peaceable settlement. But what could be expected of a government depending entirely upon the ca-

price of military factions, where the president of to-day was superseded by the successful general to-morrow?

During the latter part of January and February, 1846, reports were daily coming in from the Rio Grande of the concentration of troops upon that river, and that a forward movement would certainly meet with resistance. That was of little consequence to us, *professionally*; our orders were out, and all that was required of us was prompt obedience. Various rumors reached us regarding the state of affairs in Mexico, more especially of the northern states. It was generally believed there was another revolution on foot. General Arista, suspected of good-will to this country, was rendered hostile by being superseded in command of the "Army of the North." It was thought the people of the northern states would rise, throw off the military yoke of Paredes, declare themselves independent, form for themselves a separate and independent government, and elect Arista their governor. The friends of this move dispatched Colonel Carabahal to General Taylor, to prevent, if possible, the advance of our army, fearing it would check the outbreak, and cause the people to be united against us, and thus, for a time, retard their political regeneration. It would be sad to think such would be the effect, for no lover of freedom can refrain from shedding tears to witness the deplorable, degraded state into which the poor Mexican is cast. Ground down by oppressive taxation, subject to the caprices of every military upstart, deprived of all their freedom of thought and action, it is to be feared that, unless the taper of freedom (which is still burning in their bosoms, and occasionally gives us some proofs of its existence by its feeble attempts to kindle the hearts of the people) is carefully



nursed, it will be extinguished forever. It is in the natural course of things that, sooner or later, the northern states will declare themselves independent. Not many years hence there may be another state still further west, begging to be *annexed*; and who shall say the cry will not be responded to, and another star added to the bright ones of Liberty? It is by "annexation" the whole American Continent is bound to be peopled by us; and fate, no doubt, has decreed that, ere long, the anthem of Liberty shall be sung along its length and breadth.

The press of the country estimates our force at four thousand. It is questionable whether we will advance with more than two thousand five hundred bayonets. Colonel Churchill, inspector general, reviewed and inspected the troops just prior to our departure for the Rio Grande.

Owing to the submerged state of the country during December, 1845, and January, 1846, it was thought the march across the country would be impracticable. Fortunately, in February we had delightfully warm weather, and the ground was rapidly dried. The report of two reconnoitering parties, one for some forty miles into the interior, and the other along the shores of Padre Island, as far as Point Isabel, enabled the general to decide upon crossing the country.

During the winter months the most active means were used by the quartermaster's department to collect transportation. We were miserably deficient; wild mules were purchased and broken; and every thing, you may say, had to be created out of nothing. To the exertions of Captain Crosman, but more particularly to the energy and untiring zeal of Colonel T. Cross, were we indebted for the meager supply with

which the army effected its march. Every preparation was made by the general to break up all his depôts at Corpus Christi, and remove them to St. Joseph's Island. At that point the general hospital was established.

Prior to the departure of the army, General Taylor issued a proclamation, which was translated into Spanish, and sent to the Rio Grande for distribution. Its pacific tendency could not fail to produce a good effect. It showed the people we were coming there with the most amicable intentions; determined to respect the civil and religious rights of the inhabitants, and maintain, as far as in us lay, the most friendly relations; politely telling them if they would bring in marketing, they would be paid the best of prices, and saying every thing, in fact, that could possibly conduce to perfect confidence.

We are delighted at the prospects of the march, having become restless and anxious for a change; anticipate no little fun, and all sorts of adventure, upon the route.

The impression gains ground that the reports which have been received here lately, regarding the number of troops concentrating upon the Rio Grande, are greatly magnified, if not totally untrue. Many of us think there is not the remotest prospect of a brush with them. I think it more than probable there are some scattering troops on this side of the river; it is much more probable they will retire upon our advance. I think it is the object of the Mexican government to prove that, at the time of our arrival, they had military possession of the country, believing that this might, in some future negotiation, gain for them no small sum of money.



The army was ordered to move by brigades, and to concentrate at the Colorado River, about sixty miles from the Rio Grande.

And now, dear reader, I hope, if you have had patience to wade through the dull monotony of our sojourn at Corpus Christi, you will be repaid by the perusal of subsequent chapters, detailing events which led to a most momentous period of our national history.

### CHAPTER VIII.

MARCH 8th. We are off for the Rio Grande! Colonel Twiggs, with the 2d Regiment of Dragoons, and Major Samuel Ringgold, with company of Horse Artillery, left at ten this morning; officers and men were in tip-top health and spirits, and all eager to reach our extreme southwest boundary. Old "Davy Branch," the major's trusty and beautiful charger, after gaining laurels on the turf, is equally ready to reap them on the battle-field, under his gallant and accomplished owner.

March 9th. The 1st Brigade, under General Worth, having with him Duncan's battery, took their departure, and were followed on the 10th by the 2d Brigade, under Lieutenant-colonel McIntosh.

March 11th. The 3d Brigade (to which I was attached), under the command of Colonel Whistler, with Bragg's battery, left their old stamping-ground. We were the first to arrive, the last to leave. General Taylor and staff left the same day. Corpus Christi looked perfectly deserted; the field of white canvas was no longer visible; the camp-ground looked like desolation itself; but the bright waters of the bay

looked as sweetly as ever. The army were encamped upon its borders seven months and eleven days.

The day was oppressively hot. As we were quietly marching along, some commotion was created at the head of the column. It was caused by some of the men killing two piccarees (wild hogs); one of them, after being shot, made for the column, and was knocked down by one of the men with the butt of his gun; and a mustang, taking it into his head to be a little restive, relieved himself of his load, a demure-looking camp-woman. After a march of sixteen miles, we encamped on the Nueces.

March 12th. A cold, dreary morning; route over a monotonous, level prairie, called in Texas, from its peculiar appearance, "Hogwallow" Prairie, over which (from its boggy nature) we had great difficulty in getting the train. Our course was nearly west. Owing to the roads being so heavy, we marched only eight miles, and encamped. General Taylor pushed forward to overtake the advance.

March 13th. Our course to-day was southwest, prairie a little higher, with occasional skirts of mesquite and prickly-pear. Crossed the Agua Dulce, a small stream about three miles from our last camp. Marched eleven miles, and encamped at some very extensive water-holes, skirted with heavy timber, called "Los Pintas."

March 14th. Nothing could surpass, this morning, the magnificent mirage seen in the west. Far, far away in the distance appeared ranges of blue mountains, lakes fringed with trees, deep ravines, and farms with cultivated fields. The effect was exceedingly beautiful, and attracted universal attention. In conjunction with this curious scene appeared the phenom-



ena of "converging rays." As the sun rose the fairy scene gradually disappeared, and when the advance sounded naught remained but the interminable vista of level prairies. The delusion was perfect; many unconsciously called the attention of the officers to what they really believed were mountains. It appeared as if created to awaken in some the recollections of their childhood's home. An enthusiastic son of the Old Dominion exclaimed, "Have you ever been in Virginia?" "No!" "Well, there are the Blue Mountains, and many just such a scene has been before me in that dear old state." Our course to-day has been nearly south. The morning was very cold, and, singular to relate, we had quite a heavy white frost. Think of that! frost in this latitude on the 14th of March! The prairie traveled over is much higher and more dry; the road was very hard, and the consequence was, some of the men became rather tender-footed. Saw a herd of antelope, which dashed away to the verge of the horizon, and proudly looked at the passing column. An immense drove of mustangs made their appearance in the distant horizon; their forms, at first indistinct, became more apparent as they galloped toward us to gratify their curiosity. Several of the officers gave them chase, and an animated scene ensued. Mounted on their blooded horses, they soon ran up with them. The mustang can not compare, in either fleetness or endurance, with ours. While halting to "noon" it, one of the officers came galloping into camp, having by his side a very young colt, which he was leading with a rope; when it became known that it was a wee thing, but a few days old, a universal cry was raised against his inhumanity. Another officer jumped on a horse, and carried it in the direction the drove

was last seen, and left it near a pond, and it is to be hoped the mother found it. Captain M.C. killed three piccarees. It is the wild boar, which, in days gone by, furnished so much sport to the followers of the chase. We crossed the San Fernando five miles from our last camp. It is a very small creek, although dignified by the name of river. Quite dry; in the wet season a torrent of water must flow through it: its banks are thickly wooded, the trees interlacing so thickly that the sun's rays scarcely ever fall into its cool and delightful shade. The strip of timber skirting its banks is very narrow. The flowers during to-day's march were gloriously rich; conspicuous above all were the Texan plume, a beautiful scarlet flower, the Mexican poppy, and the indigo. The country decreases in interest, becomes more barren, the scenery tame and monotonous; the only use to which it can be put is grazing, and that is very questionable in the summer season, on account of the great scarcity of water for the stock. We reached San Gertrude about four P.M., and encamped. At this place a depôt had been previously established by Major W. Graham; the water was quite brackish.

Sunday, 15th. "Advance" sounded at sunrise; the prairie higher and more rolling, and filled with gorgeous flowers. The road was very hard, and looked simply, by the passage of the advance brigades, like a well-beaten turnpike. "Taylor's Trail" will never be obliterated. We reached our camp, "Santa Clara Mts," having marched thirteen miles, by twelve M., under a scorching sun. The camp-fires of the 2d Brigade were still burning.

March 16th. The sunrise was truly beautiful and gorgeous. The prairies more rolling, sandy, and bar-



ren, yet filled with flowers. The dust was completely suffocating. Some of the servants discovered a piccarree, and drove it toward the column; it was shot just before it reached us, thereby insuring some nice steaks to the fortunate individual. Crossed the Bobee, a salt stream running through the prairies. Its banks were very high, and composed of rotten limestone. Marched thirteen miles, and encamped at El Pista. This is decidedly one of our prettiest camps. It is surrounded by ponds, in which are quantities of water-fowl. Just before reaching here, the corporal of General Taylor's escort arrived with a dispatch from the general. Colonel Twiggs has met the advance-guard of the enemy about twenty miles this side of the Colorado. We are ordered to leave our ox-teams behind and hasten forward. The news has created an agreeable and delightful excitement; knots of officers are collected over the camp-fire, discussing the chances of a fight; the majority, however, incline to the opinion that it is a false alarm.

March 17th. We were off at early dawn, and all pushed ahead with renewed energy. Emerging from a belt of mesquite, we entered a region of country where the live-oak flourished. To the *eye* the whole country was beautiful; nothing can exceed in beauty the islands and clumps of oak stretching out in every diversity of form over a gently undulating country; but when you come to the *feet* it is a very different matter; it is deep, deep sand, of the heaviest description, and perfectly unproductive, barely supporting a very thin growth of grass. We have entered upon that part of the country laid down as a desert, and which Colonel Benton proposed should be the boundary between Texas and Mexico. It is midway between

the Nueces and the Rio Grande. There is the greatest scarcity of fresh water; but, to tantalize the traveler, he meets with pond after pond of salt water, whose beautiful, clear surface only aggravates without giving relief. One beautiful lake burst upon us in the midst of a level prairie, surrounded by high banks, capped with the Spanish bayonet in full bloom, with numerous water-fowl sporting in its clear waters. It was too tantalizing, for we were all suffering for the want of water. The men suffered a great deal from the heat and dust, and were glad, after a march of twenty miles, to find themselves in camp. Our road lies along the trail over which General Filisola retreated, after the battle of San Jacinto. The terrible suffering of his men is beyond description.

March 18th. Did not march until eight o'clock; delay occasioned by the issuing of subsistence, and shifting provisions from the different teams, so as to leave the oxen behind, and make a forced march. The wind blew very strong, and the day was oppressively hot. By starting so late, the dew was off the sand, and rose in thick clouds, to envelop, blind, and choke us. We had fourteen miles to march to get water, and were forced to halt repeatedly, and the men sat down, with parched mouths, upon the hot sand, with the tropical sun beating on them. The prairie had a few sickly blades of grass upon it; the sand was like hot ashes, and when you stepped upon it you sank up to the ankle. The last two miles I could not but pity the men; many gave out, and lay down by the road-side perfectly exhausted, looking as if they did not care for life. When we perceived the Artillery halted on a hill, we hardly dared believe water was near. An hour after reaching the pond we were again ready for a start. This



desert belt of country was thirty-four miles wide where we crossed it. As soon as we left the pond the face of the country changed; some little grass and patches of mesquite were seen. Encamped three miles beyond the pond. We here learned the cause of the alarm. Lieutenant H., of the Dragoons, was in advance while marching over the section of country included in today's march. He met with some twenty-two mounted Mexicans, supposed to be the advance of a larger force. The officer in command told Lieutenant H. he must not advance. H. replied to them that we were only going to take peaceable possession of the country, but that he would return and report to Colonel Twiggs, and would meet him at three P.M. at the same spot. At the time appointed Colonel Twiggs was represented, but no Mexican officer or soldier was visible.

March 19th. There has been a decided improvement in the country; the amount of wood is increased, and the prairies, surrounded by trees and interspersed with "mots," produce a picturesque and pleasing effect. Stopped to lunch after marching five miles. In a neighboring pond shot some "black-neck avorset," a rare species of plover. Received an express from General Taylor, stating that he was moving on by easy marches, and would expect us to join him on the 21st. Passed many pens in which the Mexicans confine their droves of cattle and horses. Passed a Mexican on his way to Corpus Christi, who says we are sure to have a fight.

March 20th. The face of the country and the nature of the soil have entirely changed; the former has become more level and thickly wooded with mesquite, and the latter, from a sand to a stiff, black clay. It has been one of the most picturesque marches we have

yet enjoyed. It was impossible to divest one's self of the idea that we were marching through a peach orchard. The flowers have again appeared in all their glory, acres of them at a sight. Encamped, after a march of sixteen miles.

March 21st. Quite an exciting day. Had not proceeded more than three miles from camp, when, seeing some horsemen in advance, our good colonel took them for the enemy, halted his command, and made preparations to receive them. It turned out to be an escort to some teams sent back to relieve our loads. We then learned that the Dragoons and 1st and 2d Brigades crossed the Colorado on the 20th. When General Taylor, with his command, reached the bank, some twenty or thirty Mexicans presented themselves, and said that if his force attempted to cross, they would fire upon it; that such were their orders. Their troops were drawn up in order of battle upon the bank; the Mexican bugles sounded for some distance up and down the river, *making out* there was an immense force opposed to us. A fight appeared to be certain, and although our gallant fellows had made up their minds they would have to cross amid a shower of bullets, they were eager to advance. The men were employed cutting down the bank for the passage of the train. General Taylor, standing on the bank, told them that "as soon as he cut down the bank he intended to cross, and that the first Mexican he saw after our men entered the water would be shot." At this there was a regular scampering on their parts. The bank being prepared, the word "*forward!*" was given, and our boys dashed into the river, which at that point was four feet deep. The batteries were drawn up to cover the passage; port-fires lighted. Captain C. F. Smith, with a battalion of



four companies of artillery, was selected as the "forlorn hope." General Worth and staff dashed in ahead of them, and led the way. Previous to the crossing, the adjutant-general of General Mejia, the commanding general at Matamoras, made his appearance, and handed to General Taylor a paper from Mejia, "forbidding his crossing, stating that he would look upon it as a declaration of war," and left, assuring the general he would be opposed, and that a fight was inevitable. No enemy showed themselves; no gun was fired. If they ever intended making a stand against us, here was the spot; they could have done us great damage, and rendered some desperate fighting necessary. The presumption is, there were very few men at the river, and they thought to frighten us away by the sounds of bugles and big threats. Thus ended the famous "crossing of the Colorado." It is a beautiful stream, about one hundred yards broad, with bluff banks some twenty feet high, and bordered, for a depth of two to three miles on each side, with a dense growth of mesquite and prickly-pear (cactus). It is perfectly impenetrable, except in certain places; the water of the river is quite salt, arising from its coursing its way through immense salt plains. We crossed the river, and encamped about four miles beyond, in the vicinity of the other brigades.

March 22d. Sunday, and really a day of rest. The general decided upon awaiting the arrival of the ox teams. It is presumed there are some two thousand troops at Matamoras. General Ampudia (who superseded Arista) is reported to be making rapid marches from the south with five thousand men: he was last heard from at Victoria, and should be at Matamoras about the last of this month. We are, fortu-

nately, ahead of him, and will march and take possession of Point Isabel. The advance of so large a force certainly looks like a conflict, yet I can not believe it. There is a "physique" and "morale" about our "little army" of which they never dreamed; well clad, well fed, and well armed; moving forward with an enthusiasm and "sang froid" which carries victory in their face. I feel more and more convinced that we can successfully contend with an immensely superior force. The order for marching to-morrow is published. Being ignorant of the state of the country, and hearing that Point Isabel was occupied by the enemy, the general changed his original intention of marching direct upon Matamoras, and determined to advance upon the Point. It is necessary to secure it as a base of operations. If it is to be our depôt for supplies, it would be madness to march upon Matamoras without knowing the state of affairs at that place.

March 23d. Our order of march was in four columns, the Dragoons on the right and the 3d Brigade on the left. The arrangement was a very judicious and available one, being able to form line of battle with the least possible delay. The character of the country entirely changed this side of the Colorado; the land is much richer, and the country more picturesque. We passed many fresh-water ponds, in which were innumerable ducks and plover, so tame that you could hardly drive them away; started any number of hares (called jackass rabbits), and had no little amusement in witnessing some animated runs; their speed is wonderful; there are few dogs that can catch them.

March 24th. I do not think I have ever felt a sweeter or fresher morning. The morning star and moon were about setting; the former, even as day broke,  
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looked like a diamond set in the clear, blue sky. The country was beautiful. We marched through a wilderness of mesquite and acacia thickets, fragrant with the blossom of the latter; the grass was rich; the peavine, with its delicate blossom, abundant, and the country sufficiently rolling to relieve the eye. The air from the sea was delightful, and every thing in nature appeared so happy that it was perfectly exhilarating. A Mexican arrived from Point Isabel last night, and reported that the guard stationed there had left for Matamoras, and that all the houses had been burned but one, the owner of which refused to obey the order. Finding no enemy in our rear, the general decided to march toward Matamoras. Emerging from the mesquite after a march of three miles, we came suddenly upon an open prairie, extending, apparently, to the Gulf, with no trees visible. The mirage in the distance was beautiful; singular, too, for it looked as if the prairie was on fire, whereas it was the waves of this peculiarly heated atmosphere. We marched for some distance through a wilderness of wild peas, than which nothing is more nutritious for animals; the mesquite-grass was also very luxuriant. At this point the command was halted, and all the empty wagons started for the Point to obtain subsistence, escorted by the Dragoons. General Taylor accompanied them. General Worth marched the command in the direction of Matamoras, and encamped it within twelve miles of that place. On our march, a man and mule were bitten by a rattle-snake; the country is overrun with them; neither will die, although friend B. thought it all over with his "mula;" he was overheard repeating something about "the fairest being always taken first," when he well knew that *his* was the ugliest "mula" in

the crowd. The arrival of the steam-boats and supplies at Point Isabel were simultaneous with that of the general. He was much gratified. In all his arrangements he has shown great wisdom, and all must admire the firm and energetic manner in which he has advanced. Too much credit can not be given him for the prompt and able manner in which he has carried out the views of the executive. When he arrived at the Point, he was met by a deputation of fifty armed citizens from Matamoras, with some important civil functionary at their head, who presented him a paper protesting against our occupying the country. The general, having no time to discuss the matter, told them very concisely "he would give them an answer at Matamoras." The Point was surveyed with a view to its defense, and a work ordered to be constructed under the superintendence of Captain Sanders of the Engineers. Major Munroe (who, with two companies, had accompanied the transports) was assigned to the command of the post.

On the 25th General Worth moved the camp three miles to Palo Alto, and there awaited the arrival of General Taylor, who, with the Dragoons and staff, arrived on the 27th, and issued his orders to march on the 28th. This part of the country is really beautiful, and I am not surprised the Mexicans are loath to part with it. I think they would have been satisfied with the Colorado as a boundary; for east of it is a desert, west of it a paradise. Our camp-ground at Palo Alto and the neighboring country were certainly very beautiful. Novelty, no doubt, greatly excited our fancy; but it seemed to me I could imagine one of Old England's lawns, which, instead of being clipped close, is broken into an uneven surface by the luxuriant growth



of grass and flowers; instead of the stately oaks and chestnuts, one must imagine, scattered about in the most picturesque confusion, the popinac, a species of acacia (now in full bloom, and scenting the air with its perfume), the ebony, whose leaves are of the darkest, richest green imaginable, and the graceful mesquite; if to these you add glimpses of beautiful prairies, an unclouded sky, and the sweetest, softest breeze, some idea may be formed of our camp at Palo Alto, eight miles from Matamoras.

#### CHAPTER IX.

MARCH 28th. A day not easily forgotten. About eight A.M. we started for Matamoras, or, rather, the Rio Grande. Many believed that before we reached the river we would have a fight. I was, and have been, an unbeliever; however, we were all prepared, and I can not say but some would have liked a "brush" for exercise. The country passed over was really beautiful; such grazing was never seen before. The ground appeared alive with quail, and every water-hole turned out its flock of ducks. As you approach the river the chaparral increases in density. The soil is very rich. If they intended to attack us, numerous points could have been selected where they could have forced us into a bloody fight. Within a mile of the river we came to some settlements; large fields were inclosed by driving in posts and filling up the spaces with brush. The country is a perfect level, and the roads are in capital order. As we approached the bank we passed through a long line of Mexican huts:

stopped at one, and there was a regular rush for *eggs and chickens*; salt grub for a few days gave us an appetite for "*chicken fixins*." The floor of the house was paved with bricks, and covered with beds. Not a dark-eyed lassie made her appearance. On one of the beds a small goat was sleeping, and under every one, and in every corner, a game-cock was tied by the legs. The domestic animals appeared to have "*carte-blanche*" to occupy the parlor with their mistresses. The poor devils at their cottage doors appeared pleased at our arrival, and saluted us as we passed.

We reached the river at 11 o'clock. The far-famed and much-talked-about waters rolled beneath us, and the city of Matamoras rose like a fairy vision before our enraptured eyes. I was so agreeably disappointed, I was inclined to grant it more beauty than it probably possessed. When we arrived some two hundred persons were on the opposite bank. The Mexican colors were flying from the quarters of the commander, General Mejia; from the Place d'Artillerie; and from the quarters of the Sappers and Miners. Those were the prominent places pointed out to us upon our arrival. Two of the advanced guard of the Dragoons, being some distance from the main body, were pounced upon by a body of Mexicans and carried off prisoners to Matamoras; a little bugler-boy was dismounted and his horse taken from him. This seizure caused no little excitement, and we were all ready to take the city at any risk.

General Worth was deputed by General Taylor to open communication with the commander of the Mexican forces, and bear to him an answer to the deputation which visited General T. at Point Isabel. Some time elapsed before the Mexicans would send a boat