

ment of Texas Cavalry, is ordered to make a detour to the south, and join at Camargo; and now (August 5th), before leaving Matamoras, and opening upon a new campaign, I will bring up a few neglected matters, and record some reflections which have arisen from our first campaign on the Rio Grande.

Poor Page has, after suffering a thousand deaths, paid the debt of nature. He died on the steamer Missouri, July 12th, near Cairo. He was a warm friend, an agreeable companion, a devoted husband and father, and a good and faithful officer. He rendered much valuable service in the removal of the Creek Indians. It was his good fortune to be in the hottest of the fight at Palo Alto. It was there he received, at the same time with the gallant Ringgold, his mortal wound. Soldier! would that thy spirit had passed, with the rapidity of the cannon's flash, to thy Maker! Would that thy severe sufferings had been spared thee, and thou hadst died on the battle-field, in the arms of victory, with the shout of triumph ringing in thy ears!

Colonel M'Intosh, I am happy to say, has left for the States, and is rapidly recovering. As I had an account of the manner in which he was wounded from his own lips, I must record it, even at the risk of being thought prosy. When his regiment (5th) deployed in the chaparral, he was mounted. He soon found it was necessary for him to dismount and lead his horse. He was in advance, and, to use his own words, as nearly as I can recollect them, "I was making my way as well as I could, when I was suddenly beset by six Mexicans. I was completely taken aback, and had not time to reach my holsters to get my pistols. The rascals pinned me, crossing two bayonets in my mouth, one of which I forced out, but the other the scamp pressed in; I felt

my teeth go, and the exit of the bayonet at the back of my neck. I fell; they left me for dead. About thirty feet off, a soldier was shot. After shooting him, they beat his brains out with a musket. All this time I was *playing possum*, and thinking of the chances of my escape. They gave me several *ominous* looks, but I preserved the character of the animal. They all retired but one, who amused himself rifling the pockets of the soldier. I thought my time had come, when he made a few steps toward me. Something alarmed him, and, much against his inclination, he ran away. After carefully satisfying myself the coast was clear, I ceased playing possum, made my way to the troops, and was led out to the road." I think that was rather a *tight* place for a man advanced in years.

It is a matter of no ordinary pleasure for us to reflect that many, if not the majority, of the Volunteer Regiments are commanded by graduates from West Point. Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, and other states have shown that sound appreciation and respect for the advantages which must arise to their troops by being commanded by officers expressly educated for that purpose. They may rest assured, on the battle-field it will *tell*. Have not the ends of this institution been obtained? Has not the scientific education there acquired been disseminated throughout the country, and upon the first blast of the bugle rendered available—triumphantly so? The *people* have set their seal upon it; the votes of the "bone and sinew" have clearly said, "Your education has fitted you for command—none others will we have; we feel our honor safe in your keeping." Let those scoffers who sneeringly speak of officers who have resigned, forever hold their peace. Where are those officers who have resigned? Are they found

sneaking from service? Are they unmindful of the duty they owe to their country for their education? No! we fearlessly challenge the most evil-disposed to bring charges of want of alacrity in flying to their country's rescue, against those whose military education was received at that most glorious institution. No! here they are in the field, commanding regiments and companies, to which they have been elected by the people. In the case of Colonel Mitchell, of Ohio, it was the intention of the people to run General Hamer for that office. The general's excellent sense showing how much more appropriate the appointment of Mitchell would be, threw his influence into the scale, and insured his election. He accepted the majority of the regiment. Here we see an instance of the most conspicuous man in Ohio acknowledging the superiority of the West Point graduate. The appreciation of the government was not quite so sensitive; for Major Hamer, upon his arrival in Mexico, received his commission as brigadier-general. From this we see the *people* properly appreciate, when their peculiar services are required, the graduates of the Military Academy; and I wish it recorded, that many, if not the majority, of the Volunteers called into service by the Mexican war, were commanded by *graduates from West Point!*

The *army* expects nothing for itself; the day for the appreciation of merit has passed; the door for *political favoritism* is opened into that service, where taint should never enter. The recent preferments in the Rifle Regiment have deprived all of any hope of justice, or chance of promotion, no matter how glorious their deeds. But in all these our disgusts and troubles, there is an infinite satisfaction and pleasure for those who love, and reverence, and hug unto themselves, the

memorials of their boyhood's military days—whose eyes fill with tears, and whose hearts swell with emotion when reflecting upon the happy, happy moments spent at dear old West Point—in the reflection that, spite of every effort to keep the talent and learning there fostered, buried, when the country demanded their services, regiments were promptly brought into the field by men whose first military aspirations were breathed on the plains of West Point.

How magnificently has the Horse Artillery proved its efficiency. After witnessing its destructive effects on the field of the 8th and 9th of May, more particularly on the former, the most skeptical must be convinced it is an arm that throws any amount of strength into an army, and actually makes up in its dreadful efficiency for want of numbers. It needs the fostering care of the government. The companies should have extra men to supply the place of the killed and wounded. The necessity for it was fully exemplified in the late battles, when officers had to dismount and act as gunners, under a heavy fire. The officer has all he can do to direct, without assisting in working his piece.

Reader, have you any idea of the *fighting condition* of the army on the 8th and 9th of May, as regards their officers? In those battles there was *not a field officer who enjoyed his proper command but General Taylor*. One regiment had *all* its field officers absent; its colonel for years laid upon the shelf; its lieutenant-colonel, in the vigor of his life, at this critical juncture, cut down by disease; its major, a gallant soldier, but broken down in constitution; this regiment was commanded by a *captain!* Another had its colonel absent, its lieutenant-colonel enjoying a brigadier's command, its major bed-ridden for years! This regiment was

commanded by a *brevet major*. Another regiment, its colonel and lieutenant-colonel absent, its *major* enjoying a *brigadier's command*: this regiment was commanded by a *captain*, and only *one* captain led his company. A battalion from *four regiments* was commanded by a *captain*—by *brevet a lieutenant-colonel*—*not a field-officer belonging to either was present*. Some of the officers were gallant fellows, necessarily deprived of the chance of glory by sickness; but many were absent, who have not for years, and never will do any more service. Is it fair, is it just, the juniors should be performing *their duty* and reap none of the *advantages*? Is it just they should retain their high rank until death deprives them of it? doing no good, but great harm, to the service; keeping young and active men back in subordinate grades until age crawls upon *them*, and makes *them* likewise inefficient; so that, when promotion comes, they are good for nothing but to carry out and fasten upon the army the old system of broken-down and inefficient officers?

Take another view of the injustice of the case. In a fierce and bloody battle, where are those officers whose *physique* has left them? Some wasting their time at the Springs, in the hope of resuscitating constitutions already broken down by hard and honorable service; others bed-ridden, having given up all hopes of drawing that sword which, in the vigor of their manhood, they wielded with a strong arm and stout heart in the service of their country. Where are the juniors? Coolly and undauntedly standing a cannonade, or storming a battery vomiting forth death at every flash. What gain they by it? Glory! All well enough; but they can not *live* upon glory. Do *they* gain promotion? No! They hazard their lives,

while those who enjoy the rank are absent. They pass through a hopeless struggle, one that holds out no inducement; one that, if the deadly battery is silenced, the guns spiked, the officer performing the gallant deed can exclaim, "*Well, I am safe, but a lieutenant still.*" A *retired list* has become essentially necessary for the well-being and efficiency of the service. The necessity for it is a crying evil; we must have it sooner or later, or the army will degenerate into utter worthlessness by the weight of a mill-stone of old, worn-out, and inefficient officers. This is not written to wound the feelings, or detract from the past services or merits of officers who have "done the state some service." It is a *solemn fact*, and it *can not be denied*. No offense should be taken at it. Every thing, be it animate or inanimate, has its growth, perfection, and decay. You might as well keep the old tree, almost falling from age, which is destroying every thing in its vicinity by the worms and caterpillars it attracts and imparts to others, simply because it shades the play-grounds of our childhood, and at its foot we learned lessons of wisdom: no, the good gardener removes the tree; not, however, without feelings of regret, and in its place plants the young and vigorous sapling, which, in its time, arrives at maturity, and then decays and is replaced by others. But the government, in removing, must provide for them, so that they may live without want to a green and happy old age, "*fighting their battles o'er,*" and feeling proud of the deeds of the youngsters.

While such have been the operations on land, the squadron under Commodore Conner was engaged in the thankless task of blockading the Gulf ports. Previous to the 8th of May, the commodore, feeling there was a certainty of a conflict on land, sailed with his

whole squadron for the Brasos, to offer all the assistance in his power to General Taylor. A command of five hundred marines and sailors were landed on the 8th, under the command of Captain Gregory, to assist in the defense of the fort in case of attack. Another command of five hundred marines and sailors, under Captain Aulick, proceeded up the Rio Grande to act in concert with the expedition of Colonel Wilson against Burita. An unsuccessful attack was made upon the small town of Alvarado on the 8th of August. Shots were exchanged, resulting in no injury on either side. To the great astonishment of a majority of officers, the attempt was abandoned; the reason assigned, the difficulty in crossing the bar, and an approaching storm.

CHAPTER XII.

AUGUST 5th. Colonel Garland's command of four companies of Infantry, and Bragg's battery, took up their line of march for Camargo. Nothing could exceed the miserable condition of the roads: the rain of the previous days had made them ankle-deep in mud. The whole population of the district through which we marched turned out to see us; I must confess we presented but a sorry appearance, even if the fife and drum *did* keep up, with a perfect *vim*, the good old tune of "The girl I left behind me." Owing to the flooded condition of the country, we were forced to make a "detour" of some thirty miles; and, instead of taking our proper course, which was nearly west, we started southeast. The flat land upon which Matamoras is situated was completely inundated, making the

march fatiguing for men and animals. After marching four miles through thick chaparral, we ascended another table or shelf of land which was somewhat less humid. Passed a few indifferently-cultivated ranchos; the soil was very rich, and the growth of mesquite abundant. About seven miles from the city, entered a beautiful oblong prairie; in the center was an extensive slash, filled with every species of plover; a large herd of horses dashing through the water gave animation to the scene. Encamped, after a march of twelve miles, on the borders of a pretty pond; the grazing was capital, and the men refreshed themselves by bathing.

August 6th. Marched at daybreak; the roads, if possible, were heavier than ever, and a drenching shower previous to marching did not improve them. The road for the first six miles continued through a thick growth of mesquite. Some Mexicans we opportunely met informed us that our guide, instead of turning off at the proper road, was taking us toward Linares, the headquarters of the Mexican army. Our small force would have cut a figure at such an introduction! Whether the rascal did it intentionally, I could not understand; but if his face was an index of his intentions, it marked him villain. We know we are right now, for we are following the tracks of Captain Duncan's battery, who preceded us some two weeks. After leaving the Linares road, our course was nearly west, the country becoming higher, and opening into a beautiful prairie, picturesquely dotted with the mesquite, and a beautiful shrub of the acacia species. In the midst of the prairie, we met a Mexican with a cart-load of melons for the Matamoras market; he sold them in a minute, much to *his* delight and *our* refreshment.

Stopped "to noon" at a pond, near which was a mis-