

return to the baggage, and in the event of his hearing a heavy firing to join me immediately.

"After making these arrangements, I crossed the swamp in the order stated. On reaching the borders of the hammock, the volunteers and spies received a heavy fire from the enemy, which was returned by them for a short time, when their gallant commander, Colonel Gentry, fell, mortally wounded. They mostly broke; and instead of forming in rear of the regulars, as had been directed, they retired across the swamp to their baggage and horses; nor could they again be brought into action as a body, although efforts were made repeatedly by my staff to induce them to do so.

"The enemy, however, were promptly checked and driven back by the 4th and 6th infantry, which in truth might be said to be a moving battery. The weight of the enemy's fire was principally concentrated on five companies of the 6th infantry, which not only stood firm, but continued to advance until their gallant commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Thompson, and his adjutant, Lieutenant Center, were killed, and every officer, with one exception, as well as most of the non-commissioned officers, including the sergeant-major and four of the orderly sergeants, killed and wounded of those companies, when that portion of the regiment retired to a short distance and were again formed, one of these companies having but four members left untouched.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Foster, with six companies, amounting in all to one hundred and sixty men, gained the hammock in good order, where he was joined by Captain Noel with the two remaining companies of the 6th infantry, and Captain Gentry's volunteers, with a few additional men, continued to drive the enemy for a considerable time, and by a change of front, sepa-

rated his line and continued to drive him until he reached the great lake, Okee-cho-bee, which was in the rear of the enemy's position, and on which their encampment extended for more than a mile. As soon as I was informed that Captain Allen was advancing, I ordered the 1st infantry to move to the left, gain the enemy's right flank, and turn it, which order was executed in the promptest manner possible, and as soon as that regiment got in position, the enemy gave one fire and retreated, being persuaded by the 1st, 4th, and 6th, and some of the volunteers who had joined them, until near night, and until these troops were nearly exhausted, and the enemy driven in all directions.

"The action was a severe one, and continued from half-past twelve until three, P. M., a part of the time very close and severe. We suffered much, having twenty-six killed, and one hundred and twelve wounded, among whom are some of our most valuable officers. The hostiles probably suffered, all things considered, equally with ourselves, they having left ten dead on the ground, besides doubtless, carrying off more, as is customary with them when practicable.

"As soon as the enemy were completely broken, I turned my attention to taking care of the wounded, to facilitate their removal to my baggage, where I ordered an encampment to be formed. I directed Captain Taylor to cross over to the spot and employ every individual whom he might find there in constructing a small footway across the swamp; this, with great exertions, was completed in a short time after dark, when all the dead and wounded were carried over in litters made for the purpose, with one exception, a private of the 4th infantry, who was killed and could not be found.

"And here I trust I may be permitted to say that I



experienced one of the most trying scenes of my life, and he who could have looked on them with indifference, his nerves must have been differently organized from my own. Besides the killed, there lay one hundred and twelve wounded officers and soldiers, who had accompanied me one hundred and forty-five miles, most of the way through an unexplored wilderness, without guides, who had so gallantly beaten the enemy, under my orders, in his strongest position, and who had to be conveyed back, through swamps and hammocks, from whence we set out, without any apparent means of doing so. This service, however, was encountered and overcome, and they have been conveyed thus far, and proceeded on to Tampa Bay on rude litters, constructed with the axe and knife alone, with poles and dry hides—the latter being found in great abundance at the encampment of the hostiles. The litters were carried on the backs of our weak and tottering horses, aided by the residue of the command, with more ease and comfort to the sufferers than I could have supposed, and with as much as they could have been in ambulances of the most improved and modern construction.

"The day after the battle we remained at our encampment, occupied in taking care of the wounded, and in the sad office of interring the dead; also in preparing litters for the removal of the wounded, and collecting, with a portion of the mounted men, the horses and cattle in the vicinity belonging to the enemy, of which we found about one hundred of the former, many of them saddled, and nearly three hundred of the latter.

"We left our encampment on the morning of the 27th, for the Kissimmee, where I had left my heavy baggage, which place we reached about noon on the 28th.

After leaving two companies and a few Indians to garrison the stockade, which I found nearly completed on my return, by that active and vigilant officer, Captain Munroe, 4th artillery, I left the next morning for this place, where I arrived on the 31st, and sent forward the wounded next day to Tampa Bay, with the 4th and 6th infantry, the former to halt at Fort Frazer, remaining here myself with the 1st, in order to make preparations to take the field again as soon as my horses can be recruited, most of which have been sent to Tampa, and my supplies in a sufficient state of forwardness to justify the measure.

"In speaking of the command, I can only say, that so far as the regular troops are concerned, no one could have been more efficiently sustained than I have been, from the commencement of the campaign; and I am certain that they will always be willing and ready to discharge any duty that may be assigned them.

"To Lieutenant-Colonel Davenport, and the officers and soldiers of the First infantry, I feel under many obligations for the manner in which they have, on all occasions, discharged their duty; and although held in reserve, and not brought into battle until near its close, the eagerness it evinced to engage, and the promptness and good order with which they entered the hammock, when the order was given for them to do so, is the best evidence that they would have sustained their own characters, as well as that of the regiment, had it been their fortune to have been placed in the hottest of the battle.

"The Fourth infantry, under their gallant leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Foster, was among the first to gain the hammock, and maintained this position, as well as driving a portion of the enemy before him, until he ar-



rived on the borders of Lake Okee-cho-bee, which was in the rear, and continued the pursuit until near night. Lieutenant-Colonel Foster, who was favorably noticed for his gallantry and good conduct in nearly all the engagements on the Niagara frontier, during the late war with Great Britain, by his several commanders, as well as in the different engagements with the Indians in this territory, never acted a more conspicuous part than in the action of the 25th ult.; he speaks in the highest terms of the conduct of brevet Major Graham, his second in command, as also the officers and soldiers of the Fourth infantry, who were engaged in the action. Captain Allen, with his two mounted companies of the Fourth infantry, sustained his usual character for promptness and efficiency. Lieutenant Hooper, of the Fourth regiment, was wounded through the arm, but continued on the field, at the head of his company, until the termination of the battle.

"I am not sufficiently master of words to express my admiration of the gallantry and steadiness of the officers and soldiers of the Sixth regiment of infantry. It was their fortune to bear the brunt of the battle. The report of the killed and wounded, which accompanies this, is more conclusive evidence of their merits than anything I can say. After five companies of this regiment, against which the enemy directed the most deadly fire, were nearly cut up, there being only four men left uninjured in one of them; and every officer and orderly sergeant of those companies, with one exception, were either killed or wounded; Captain Noel, with the remaining two companies, his own company, "K.," and Crossman's, "B.," commanded by second Lieutenant Woods, which was the left of the regiment, formed on the right of the Fourth infantry, entered

the hammock with that regiment, and continued the fight and the pursuit until its termination. It is due to Captain Andrews and Lieutenant Walker, to say they commanded two of the five companies mentioned above, and they continued to direct them, until they were both severely wounded, and carried from the field; the latter received three separate balls.

"The Missouri volunteers, under the command of Colonel Gentry, and Morgan's spies, who formed the first line, and, of course, were the first engaged, acted as well, or even better, than troops of that description generally do; they received and returned the enemy's fire with spirit, for some time, when they broke and retired, with the exception of Captain Gillam and a few of his company, and Lieutenant Blakey, also with a few men, who joined the regulars, and acted with them, until after the close of the battle, but not until they had suffered severely; the commanding officer of the volunteers, Colonel Gentry, being mortally wounded while leading on his men, and encouraging them to enter the hammock, and come to close quarters with the enemy; his son, an interesting youth, eighteen or nineteen years of age, sergeant-major of the regiment, was severely wounded at the same moment.

"Captain Childs, Lieutenants Rogers and Flanagan, of Gentry's regiment, acting Major Sconce, and Lieutenants Hase and Gordon, of the spies, were wounded, while encouraging their men to a discharge of their duty.

"The volunteers and spies having, as before stated, fallen back to the baggage, could not again be formed and brought up to the hammock in anything like order but a number of them crossed over individually and



aided in conveying the wounded across the swamp to the hammock, among whom were Captain Curd, and several other officers, whose names I do not now recollect.

"To my personal staff, consisting of first Lieutenant J. M. Hill, of the Second, and first Lieutenant George H. Griffin, of the Sixth infantry, the latter aide-de-camp to Major General Gaines, and a volunteer in Florida from his staff, I feel under the greatest obligations for the promptness and efficiency with which they have sustained me throughout the campaign, and more particularly for their good conduct, and the alacrity with which they aided me, and conveyed my orders during the action of the 25th ult.

"Captain Taylor, commissary of subsistence, who was ordered to join General Jesup at Tampa Bay, as chief of the subsistence department, and who was ordered by him to remain with his column until he (General Jesup) joined it, although no command was assigned Captain Taylor, he greatly exerted himself in trying to rally and bring back the volunteers into action, as well as discharging other important duties which were assigned to him during the action.

"Myself, as well as all who witnessed the attention and ability displayed by Surgeon Satterlee, medical director on this side the peninsula, assisted by Assistant-surgeons McLaren and Simpson, of the medical staff of the army, and Doctors Hannah and Cooke, of the Missouri volunteers, in ministering to the wounded, as well as their uniform kindness to them on all occasions, can never cease to be referred to by me but with the most pleasing and grateful recollections.

"The quartermaster's department, under the direction of that efficient officer, Major Brant, and his as

stant, Lieutenant Babbitt, have done everything that could be accomplished to throw forward from Tampa Bay, and keep up supplies of provisions, forage, etc., with the limited means at their disposal. Assistant-commissaries Lieutenants Harrison, stationed at Fort Gardner, and McClure, at Fort Fraser, have fully met my expectations in discharge of the various duties connected with their department, as well as those assigned them in the quartermaster's department.

"This column, in six weeks, penetrated one hundred and fifty miles into the enemy's country, opened roads, and constructed bridges and causeways, when necessary, on the greater portion of the route, established two depots, and the necessary defences for the same, and finally overtook and beat the enemy in his strongest position. The results of which movement and battle have been the capture of thirty of the hostiles, the coming in and surrendering of more than one hundred and fifty Indians and negroes, mostly the former, including the chiefs Ou-la-too-gee, Tus-ta-nug-gee, and other principal men, the capturing and driving out of the country six hundred head of cattle, upwards of one hundred head of horses, besides obtaining a thorough knowledge of the country through which we operated, a greater portion of which was entirely unknown, except to the enemy.

"Colonel Gentry died in a few hours after the battle, much regretted by the army, and will be, doubtless, by all who knew him, as his state did not contain a braver man or a better citizen.

"It is due to his rank and talents, as well as to his long and important services, that I particularly mention Lieutenant Colonel A. R. Thompson, of the Sixth infantry, who fell, in the discharge of his duty, at the



head of his regiment. He was in feeble health, brought on by exposure to this climate during the past summer, refusing to leave the country while his regiment continued in it. Although he received two balls from the fire of the enemy, early in the action, which wounded him severely, yet he appeared to disregard them, and continued to give his orders with the same coolness that he would have done had his regiment been under review, or on any parade duty. Advancing, he received a third ball, which at once deprived him of life. His last words were, "keep steady, men, charge the hammock—remember the regiment to which you belong." I had known Colonel Thompson personally only for a short time, and the more I knew of him the more I wished to know; and had his life been spared, our acquaintance, no doubt, would have ripened into the closest friendship. Under such circumstances, there are few, if any, other than his bereaved wife, mother, and sisters, who more deeply and sincerely lament his loss, or who will longer cherish his memory than myself.

"Captain Van Swearingen, Lieutenant Brooke, and Lieutenant and Adjutant Center, of the same regiment, who fell on that day, had no superiors of their years in service, and, in point of chivalry, ranked among the first in the army or nation; besides their pure and disinterested courage, they possessed other qualifications, which qualified them to fill the highest grades of their profession, which, no doubt, they would have attained and adorned, had their lives been spared. The two former served with me on another arduous and trying campaign, and on every occasion, whether in the camp, on the march, or on the field of battle, discharged their various duties to my entire satisfaction."

The gallantry and good conduct of Colonel Taylor,

in this hard fought and important battle, received the highest commendation of Mr. Poinsett, the Secretary of War, General Macomb, the commander-in-chief of the army, and the country at large. General Macomb issued a general order to the army, upon the occasion of his victory, in which he especially referred to his bravery in the following terms: "To Colonel Taylor and the officers, non-commissioned officers and troops of the regular army, the Secretary of War tenders the thanks of the President of the United States for the discipline and bravery displayed by them on the occasion, as, likewise, to the officers and volunteers of Missouri, who shared in the conflict, and who evinced so much zeal and gallantry in bringing on the action." He also received the brevet rank of Brigadier General, and was given the chief command of the operations in Florida, in consideration of his valuable services, which he retained until the year 1840, having continued four years in that harassing and dangerous service.

Immediately succeeding this victory General Taylor took up his position at Fort Bassinger, in Florida. Here he remained for several months, harassing the enemy, by cutting off their small parties, capturing several of their principal chiefs, and taking their cattle and means of subsistence. On the 8th of February, 1838, an officer of high standing in General Taylor's army, stationed at Fort Bassinger, gave the following account of their operations:

"We (Colonel Taylor's army), have just returned from the everglades. These everglades are, at the northwest, termed wet prairies. They are large wet prairies, or grassy lakes, and of which the Indians know but little, and where they cannot live a month without great suffering



"We saw but few Indians, and they fled rapidly at our approach. We took about sixty horses, and ascertained that their cattle were exhausted. Colonel Taylor has taken about six hundred head. We found on our last excursion but few cattle tracks, and only two cows were taken. The Indians are suffering for food, in all their camps we find they had subsisted on palmetto roots and the cabbage tree, which are never eaten by them except when hard run.

"One hundred and thirty Indians and Negroes have come in since the battle of Okee-cho-bee, and they say many more will come in soon, and that they are tired of the war, and destitute of provisions.

"Florida is generally a poor, sandy country. The southern portion is nearly all prairie, wet and dry alternately. Not more than one tenth, at the utmost, of Florida is fit for cultivation, and I would not give one good township of land in Illinois or Michigan for every foot of land in East Florida.

"The Indian prisoners now admit that they lost twenty in the fight with Colonel Taylor. They had a strong position, and fought well, but were terribly whipped, and have never returned near the ground since."

An anecdote is told of the general while stationed at this fort that is as amusing as it is characteristic. He had a favorite horse which he called "Claybank," a very fine animal, and much attached to his master. But he did not much fancy the musty corn often furnished the troops. The general used to partake of the same fare as his soldiers, and so did Claybank, so far as the corn was concerned, and they were both equally dainty. The general was very fond of hominy, and musty corn made anything but a pleasant diet. He would subject himself to the suspicion of "picking,"

to the prejudice of the soldiers, rather than eat it, when not compelled to. Finding that Claybank understood that business better than he did, he would quietly let him loose amongst the sacks of corn. After smelling very carefully, the sagacious animal would commence gnawing a hole in one that pleased him. The general would patiently watch the manœuvre until he saw that Claybank had made a choice, then calling his servants, he would direct him to have Claybank stabled immediately, for fear he might do mischief; "but," he would say, "as the animal has eaten a hole in the bag, take out a quart or so of the corn and make a dish of hominy. The trick was played for some time, but at last it became known, that whenever Claybank gnawed into a sack, sweet corn was to be found there, and the incident became a standing joke during the war, and it was enjoyed by none more heartily than by the subject of it himself.

After his resignation of this command, he was assigned to that of the First Department of the army, including the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, &c., with his head-quarters at Fort Jessup, in the former State. There he remained in the quiet but vigilant attention to the duties devolving upon him, until his services should be required on a wider and more extended field.

Before accompanying General Taylor to the new theatre, upon which he is to act so glorious a part, and where his brilliant deeds are to stand out so prominently before the world, it may not be inappropriate to refer to one or two circumstances in the history of his operations in Florida, that have been the subjects of some discussion before the public, and have produced a contrariety of opinions in the public mind.



It will have been observed, that in his official account of the battle of Okee-cho-bee, General Taylor took occasion, as truth and the interests of the service required him to do, to refer to the conduct of the Missouri volunteers and spies in that engagement. He could do no less than to report to the War Department the simple fact that these troops fell into disorder and finally fled, after having gallantly attacked the enemy. This he did in as mild terms as he could well employ. But nevertheless, his report gave great offence to the people of Missouri, and General Taylor was unsparingly denounced for his injustice to the volunteers and spies of that State. Amongst other means of expressing their dissatisfaction, Mr. Atchinson, then a member of the State Legislature, and subsequently a member of the United States Senate, made a stringent report on the subject, and also introduced a string of resolutions of a very indignant character, which were appended to it. No definite action was ever had on either, however, and public opinion finally settled down into the belief that facts fully sustained General Taylor, and that if the Missouri volunteers did not evince the same unyielding courage as veteran soldiers, there was much in the circumstances of the case to palliate their conduct, especially as their first charge was made with so much courage and effect.

There is another circumstance in the history of the Florida war, with which General Taylor's name has been associated, that requires a brief reference, and that is the employment of bloodhounds to lead to the hiding places of the Indians. No event of the whole war was so severely criticized and condemned as this act of the administration. It was natural in times of high political excitement, when only the simple fact

was known to the country, without any of the reasons that led to a measure that seemed so repulsive to humanity, or the particular object for which they were employed, that it should have been so. The measure is one that even now, after the passions of men have become calmed, cannot be approved, though there is much to palliate it, and much more to free General Taylor from any charge of inhumanity in advising the employment of these savage agents.

The war had been waged for several years against an invisible enemy, at an expense of many millions of money, and a vast sacrifice of life. Our soldiers were attacked and our best troops shot down at noonday, by a foe that defied all search. After discharging a deadly volley at our soldiers, they would betake themselves to impenetrable thickets, and there lay securely concealed until another opportunity presented of pouncing down upon small parties of troops, and again flee to their hiding places. It was to find these hidden enemies that General Taylor recommended to the department the employment of bloodhounds. He says, in a letter to the Adjutant General of the army, dated July 28, 1838: "I wish it distinctly understood, that my object in employing dogs, is to ascertain where the Indians can be found, not to injure them." If anything were wanted to exempt General Taylor from an implication of cruelty for his agency in the affair, this explicit avowal of his motives will be sufficient. But he has on too many occasions, both before and since, given such evidence of his humane inclinations, that however mistaken any one may be disposed to consider him, no one will do himself and a brave man the injustice to deny him that noble virtue in an eminent degree