

passports and left the republic. In the meantime, I have been ordered to occupy the country up to the left bank of the Rio Grande, until the boundary shall be definitely settled. In carrying out these instructions I have carefully abstained from all acts of hostility, obeying, in this regard, not only the letter of my instructions, but the plain dictates of justice and humanity.

"The instructions under which I am acting will not permit me to retrograde from the position I now occupy. In view of the relations between our respective governments, and the individual suffering which may result, I regret the alternative which you offer; but, at the same time, wish it understood that I shall by no means avoid such alternative, leaving the responsibility with those who rashly commence hostilities. In conclusion, you will permit me to give the assurance, that on my part, the laws and customs of war among civilized nations shall be carefully observed."

General Worth was appointed to open communications with General Mejia, and bear to him this answer to General Ampudia's summons. Mejia at first declined to receive either General Worth or General Taylor's communication. He, however, finally consented to receive the latter, and sent General La Vega to meet Worth. The interview terminated in nothing decisive, except the return of two dragoons who had been captured by the Mexicans, while in advance of the main body of the army.

Matters having been brought nearly to a crisis, by the refusal of General Taylor to obey the summons of Ampudia, to withdraw his forces within twenty-four hours to the left bank of the Nueces, the Second regiment of the American troops was on the 13th removed

out of the reach of the shot from the Mexican batteries, while the Third, and Duncan's and Bragg's companies of flying artillery occupied the field works. The river was also blockaded, and all communications and supplies thereby cut off with this city. Four days after, Lieutenants Porter and Dobbins, with a party of ten men, were sent in pursuit of Colonel Cross, Deputy Quartermaster General, whom it was subsequently ascertained, was murdered on the 10th of April by the Mexicans, while he was taking a ride near the American camp. While in the performance of this duty the party fell in, on the 18th, with one hundred and fifty Mexicans, whom they fired upon and put to flight, and took possession of their camp, equipage and horses. But they were attacked by night, on their return to camp, by a large party of Mexicans, and Lieutenant Porter, a brave and gallant young officer, and son of the late Commodore Porter, was killed.

Upon ascertaining that the Rio Grande had been blockaded, Ampudia addressed a strong remonstrance to General Taylor against the measure. He informed Taylor that from various sources worthy of confidence, "I have learned that some vessels bound for the mouth of the river, have not been able to effect an entrance into that port, in consequence of your orders that they should be conducted to Brazos Santiago. The cargo of one of them is composed in great part, and of the other entirely of provisions, which the contractors charged with providing for the army under my orders had procured to fulfil the obligations of their contracts. You have taken possession of these provisions by force, and against the will of the proprietors, one of whom is vice consul of her Catholic Majesty, and the other of her Britannic Majesty; and whose rights, in place of

being rigorously respected, as was proffered, and as was to be hoped from the observance of the principles which govern among civilized nations, have, on the contrary, been violated in the most extraordinary manner opposed to the guarantee and respect due to private property.

"Nothing can have authorized you in such a course. The commerce of nations is not suspended or interrupted except in consequence of a solemn declaration of blockade, communicated and established in the form prescribed by international law. Nevertheless, you have infringed these rules: and, by an act which can never be viewed favorably to the United States government, have hindered the entrance to a Mexican port, of vessels bound to it, under the confidence that commerce would not be interrupted. My duties do not allow me to consent to this new species of hostility, and they constrain me to require of you, not only that the vessels taken by force to Brazos Santiago shall be at liberty to return to the mouth of the river, but the restoration of all the provisions which, besides belonging to private contractors, were destined for the troops on this frontier. I consider it useless to inculcate the justice of this demand, and the results which may follow an unlooked-for refusal.

"I have also understood that two Mexicans, carried down in a boat by the current of the river near one of the advanced posts of your camp, were detained, after being fired upon, and that they are still kept and treated as prisoners. The individuals in question do not belong to the army, and this circumstance exempts them from the laws of war. I therefore hope that you will place them absolutely at liberty, as I cannot be persuaded that you pretend to extend to persons not military the

consequences of an invasion, which without employing this means of rigor against unarmed citizens, is marked in itself with the seal of universal reprobation."

This remonstrance of the Mexican commander, seems to have made but little impression upon General Taylor; and his reply to it is so much to the point, so happily conceived, and so elegantly expressed, that it deserves careful attention. After acknowledging the receipt of Ampudia's communication, Taylor expresses his surprise that the Mexican general should complain, after all that had passed since the arrival of the American army on the Rio Grande, of a measure which is no other than a natural result of the state of war, so much insisted on by the Mexican authorities as actually existing. He then proceeds to recall to his mind circumstances that would show, in his opinion, that the state of war insisted upon by Mexico, had not been sought by the American army, but had been forced upon it, and that the exercise of the rights incident to such state, could not be a subject of complaint.

"On breaking up my camp at Corpus Christi," he continues, "and moving forward with the army under my orders, to occupy the left bank of the Rio Bravo, it was my earnest desire to execute my instructions in a pacific manner; to observe the utmost regard for the personal rights of all citizens residing on the left bank of the river, and to take care that the religion and customs of the people should suffer no violation. With this view, and to quiet the minds of the inhabitants, I issued orders to the army enjoining a strict observance of the rights and interests of all Mexicans residing on the river, and caused said orders to be translated into Spanish, and circulated in the several towns on the Bravo. These orders announced the spirit in which

we proposed to occupy the country, and I am proud to say that up to this moment the same spirit has controlled the operations of the army. On reaching the Arroyo Colorado, I was informed by a Mexican officer that the order in question had been received at Matamoras; but was told at the same time, that if I attempted to cross the river, it would be regarded as a declaration of war. Again, on my march to Frontone, I was met by a deputation of the civil authorities of Matamoras protesting against my occupation of a portion of the department of Tamaulipas, and declaring that if the army was not at once withdrawn, war would result. While this communication was in my hands, it was discovered that the village of Frontone had been set on fire and abandoned. I viewed this as a direct act of war, and informed the deputation that their communication would be answered by me when opposite Matamoras, which was done in respectful terms. On reaching the river I dispatched an officer high in rank, to convey to the commanding general in Matamoras, the expression of my desire for amicable relations, and my willingness to leave open to the use of the citizens of Matamoras the port of Brazos Santiago, until the question of boundary should be definitely settled. This officer received for reply, from the officer selected to confer with him, that my advance to the Rio Bravo was considered as a veritable act of war, and he was absolutely refused an interview with the American consul, in itself an act incompatible with a state of peace.

"Notwithstanding these repeated assurances on the part of the Mexican authorities, and notwithstanding the most obviously hostile preparations on the right bank of the river, accompanied by a rigid non-inter-

course, I carefully abstained from any act of hostility—determined that the onus of producing an actual state of hostilities should not rest with me. Our relations remained in this state until I had the honor to receive your note of the 12th instant, in which you denounce war as the alternative of my remaining in this position. As I could not under my instructions, recede from my position, I accepted the alternative you offered me, and made all my dispositions to meet it suitably. But, still willing to adopt milder measures before proceeding to others, I contented myself in the first instance with ordering a blockade of the mouth of the Rio Bravo, by the naval forces under my orders—a proceeding perfectly consonant with the state of war so often declared to exist, and which you acknowledged in your note of the 16th instant, relative to the late Colonel Cross. If this measure seem oppressive, I wish it borne in mind that it has been forced upon me by the course you have seen fit to adopt. I have reported this blockade to my government, and shall not remove it until I receive instructions to that effect, unless indeed you desire an armistice pending the final settlement of the question between the governments, or until war shall be formally declared by either, in which case I shall cheerfully open the river. In regard to the consequences you mention as resulting from a refusal to remove the blockade, I beg you to understand that I am prepared for them, be they what they may.

"In regard to the particular vessels referred to in your communication, I have the honor to advise you that, in pursuance of my orders, two American schooners, bound for Matamoras, were warned off on the 17th instant when near the mouth of the river, and put to

sea, returning probably to New Orleans. They were not seized, or their cargoes disturbed in any way, nor have they been in the harbor of Brazos Santiago to my knowledge. A Mexican schooner, understood to be the "Juniata," was in or off that harbor when my instructions to block the river were issued, but was driven to sea in a gale, since which time I have had no report concerning her. Since the receipt of your communication, I have learned that two persons, sent to the mouth of the river to procure information respecting this vessel, proceeded thence to Brazos Santiago, when they were taken up and detained by the officer in command, until my orders could be received. I shall order their immediate release. A letter from one of them to the Spanish vice consul is respectfully transmitted herewith.

"In relation to the Mexicans said to have drifted down the river in a boat, and to be prisoners at this time in my camp, I have the pleasure to inform you that no such persons have been taken prisoners, or are now detained by my authority. The boat in question was carried down empty by the current of the river, and drifted ashore near one of our pickets, and was secured by the guard. Some time afterwards an attempt was made to recover the boat under the cover of the darkness; the individuals concerned were hailed by the guard, and, failing to answer, were fired upon as a matter of course. What became of them is not known, as no trace of them could be discovered on the following morning. The officer of the Mexican guard directly opposite was informed next day that the boat would be returned on proper application to me, and I have now only to repeat that assurance.

"In conclusion, I take leave to state that I consider

the tone of your communication highly exceptionable, where you stigmatize the movement of the army under my orders as 'marked with the seal of universal reprobation.' You must be aware that such language is not respectful in itself, either to me or my government; and while I observe in my own correspondence the courtesy due to your high position, and to the magnitude of the interests with which we are respectively charged, I shall expect the same in return."

In the meantime, matters were rapidly ripening for an open resort to arms, and everything indicated too surely that the Mexicans were only waiting for the most favorable time to strike a blow at our army that should annihilate it, and rid themselves of such unwelcome neighbors. They did not rely alone on the power of their arms to accomplish that object. They resorted to the less dangerous expedient of attempting to corrupt the fidelity of the American soldiers, and of inducing them to desert, by the most tempting offers of lands and promotions. Addresses were issued to them containing these flattering propositions, which they always found means to have introduced into General Taylor's camp. One of these papers, signed by Arista, who had superseded Ampudia in the command of the Mexican forces, and which will be found below, most artfully appeals to the cupidity and prejudices of those soldiers not native citizens of the United States.

"HEADQUARTERS AT MATAMORAS, }
April 26, 1846.

"SOLDIERS!—You have enlisted in time of peace to serve in that army for a specific term; but your obligation never implied that you were bound to violate the laws of God, and the most sacred rights of friends! The United States government, contrary to the wishes

of a majority of all honest and honorable Americans has ordered you to take *forcible* possession of the territory of a *friendly* neighbor, who has never given her consent to such occupation. In other words, while there exists a treaty of peace and commerce between Mexico and the United States, the United States, presuming on her strength and prosperity, and on our supposed imbecility and cowardice, attempts to make you the blind instruments of her unholy and mad ambition, and *force* you to appear as the hateful robbers of our dear homes, and the unprovoked violators of our dearest feelings as men and patriots. Such villany and outrage, I know, is perfectly repugnant to the noble sentiments of any gentleman, and it is base and foul to rush you on to certain death, in order to aggrandize a few lawless individuals, in defiance of the laws of God and man!

"It is to no purpose if they tell you, that the law of the annexation of Texas justifies your occupation of the Rio Bravo del Norte; for by this act they rob us of a great part of *Tamaulipas, Coahuili, Chihuahua, and New Mexico*; and it is barbarous to send a handful of men on such an errand against a powerful and warlike nation. Besides, the most of you are Europeans, and we are the *declared friends* of a majority of the nations of *Europe*. The North Americans are ambitious, overbearing, and insolent as a nation, and they will only make use of you as vile tools to carry out their abominable plans of pillage and rapine.

"I warn you in the name of justice, honor, and your own interests and self-respect, to abandon their desperate and unholy cause, and become *peaceful Mexican citizens*. I guarantee you, in such case, a half section of land, or three hundred and twenty acres, to settle

upon, gratis. Be wise, then, and just, and honorable, and take no part in murdering us who have no unkind feelings for you. Lands shall be given to officers, sergeants, and corporals, according to rank, privates receiving three hundred and twenty acres, as stated.

"If in time of action you wish to espouse our cause, throw away your arms and run to us, and we will embrace you as true friends and Christians. It is not decent nor prudent to say more. But should any of you render important service to Mexico, you shall be accordingly considered and preferred."

~~It has already been stated that~~ General Taylor had established a depot of provisions, arms, and munitions of war at Point Isabel. On the 24th of April, information was received by him that twenty-five hundred Mexicans had crossed the Rio Grande, part above and part below his camp, and cutting off all communication between Fort Brown and Point Isabel. Captain Ker's squadron of dragoons was immediately ordered to reconnoitre the country between the two positions, and Captain Thornton was dispatched above the Fort for the same purpose. ~~The latter proceeded up the river for about twenty miles, when his Mexican guide refused to proceed any further, alleging as his reason that the country was filled with Mexican troops.~~ Captain Thornton proceeded to move on, however, until he came to a farm-house and plantation, which were entirely surrounded by a thick chapparal fence. ~~He~~ ^{he} entered the plantation with his squadron in single file, and while making inquiries at the house he was completely surrounded and taken by surprise by a Mexican force of several hundred infantry and cavalry, under the command of General Torrejon. Captain Thornton charged upon the Mexican cavalry in gallant style, and

drove them back. But the infantry, from every quarter of the chapparal, poured in a destructive fire upon his command, and prevented them from reaching the opening by which they had entered. Thornton, however, succeeded in clearing the chaparral hedge and making his escape, though his noble charger was severely wounded in the act of making this extraordinary leap. His followers were less fortunate in the attempt. They immediately rallied under Captain Hardee, upon whom the command now devolved, and endeavored to escape from the snare in which they had become so fatally entangled, by escaping to the Mexican side of the river. But here they again failed, the banks of the stream being impassable. All retreat being thus rendered impossible, Captain Hardee expressed his willingness to surrender, on condition that the Mexican commander would guarantee to him and his men the treatment to which prisoners of war are entitled amongst civilized nations, and he declared their determination to sell their lives as dearly as possible, if such terms should be refused. This assurance, however, was readily given, when the Americans surrendered themselves prisoners of war, and were taken to Matamoras. This remarkable victory of three or four hundred Mexicans over twenty-five Americans, was received with unbounded delight by the Mexican army, and filled their imaginations with numerous future triumphs over the American arms. Upon the receipt of the tidings, General Arista issued the following glowing congratulatory letter to General Torrejon:—

"This has been a day of rejoicing to all the Division of the North, it having this day been known of the triumph achieved by the brigade which your excellency so worthily commands. The rejoiced country will

doubtless celebrate this preliminary of glorious deeds that her happy sons will in future present to her. Your excellency will communicate to your brave soldiers that I have seen with the greatest pleasure their valiant behavior, and that I await for the detailed dispatch to elevate it to the knowledge of the supreme government, so that the nation may learn the triumph of your arms."

Captain Thornton succeeded in reaching the American camp within five miles, after almost miraculously escaping a perfect shower of Mexican bullets, while fleeing through their lines, when he was captured and taken to Matamoras. He remained there for some time, but was finally given up. In this encounter Lieutenant G. T. Mason was killed.

Captain Ker, with his detachment, after having reconnoitered the country between Fort Frown and the mouth of the Rio Grande, returned, without having fallen in with the enemy. On the 28th, however, Captain Walker, of the Texas Rangers, who was at Point Isabel, attempted a reconnoissance of the route towards General Taylor's headquarters, but was driven back with some loss, having encountered a force of fifteen hundred men. The next day he made a successful attempt to convey a message from Major Munroe, in command at Point Isabel, to General Taylor.