

arms were engaged, without being able to aid them in the struggle, they were left in comparative quiet by the Mexicans during the memorable two days, and had time to repair the damages done to the fort by the bombardment to which they had so long been subject; and, accordingly, on the morning of the 9th, their first act was to raise the national flag. The history of the events during the action are resumed from "Our Army on the Rio Grande." On the 8th, continues this work, the halyards had become unriggered, at a time when the firing from the enemy was too intense to establish them, the staff at that time being outside of the fort. To meet this difficulty, the regimental colors were raised on a temporary substitute, erected on the parapets. An officer of the Seventh succeeded in lowering the topmast of the staff, and rigging the halyards. While engaged in this patriotic duty, the enemy opened on him from all their batteries, with round shot and shell, amidst which he coolly labored for fifteen or twenty minutes. Finding he was not strong enough to elevate the topmast to its proper place, he lashed it in its position, and gave the stars and stripes to the breeze.

At 10 o'clock, a sergeant and ten men went out, and set fire to the rancho, known by Arista's dispatches as the *Fanques del Raminero*, the buildings of which had been successively occupied by our own and the enemy's pickets. This act brought forth a heavy discharge of shell, canister, and round shot, which continued at intervals for about four hours.

Major Brown, since his wound had lingered on, his friends bestowing on him every attention that the circumstances would admit: he bore his sufferings with the greatest fortitude, and whenever he spoke, he urged

the men to do their duty, and never surrender the fort. It was necessary that he should be placed in one of the bomb-proofs, to protect him from the missiles of the enemy: the weather was exceedingly warm, and the air in the bomb-proof necessarily close; this circumstance perhaps, joined with the aggravated nature of his wounds, hastened his death. He gradually sunk, and at two o'clock peacefully breathed his last. At the time of his death, everything around the fort was perfectly still; the soldiers around the dying man seemed scarcely to breathe, lest they should intrude upon his parting spirit; nor was the silence broken, until Ridgeley opened his batteries upon *Resaca de la Palma*.

No language can describe the intense interest with which the raging battle was listened to: each man was at his post, and every booming gun called forth an almost agonizing interest to learn its nationality and effects. Meanwhile the bombardment opened simultaneously with the firing on the field, and continued to increase with unprecedented severity; but it was not to the batteries of the Mexicans that attention was directed. Our eighteen-pounders were occasionally fired, to let General Taylor know that all was still well in the fort. The firing on the battle-field was now growing less and less powerful, and the discharges were becoming irregular. "They have charged on the guns!" shouted one of the officers; another, and another was silenced. "They have carried them!" shouted another in uncontrollable ecstasy. All cannonading ceased; volleys of musketry were next heard, then all was still. How eloquently the silence spoke of the hand-to-hand conflict, and how the blood in the hearts of these brave men went and came, from excitement to be engaged



in it! The victorious result of our arms was now almost certain. General Taylor and his brave men would either conquer or die. No bells were now ringing in Matamoras, and the noisy music, that was wont to belabor the air, had been silenced since the evening of the 8th. This, to the heroes of the fort, was full of meaning, and the tale was soon told. At a little before six, a confused rush of cavalry and straggling infantry towards the Rio Grande, announced the victory of the Americans, at sight of which, an officer of the Seventh jumped upon the parapet, beside the regimental flag-staff, and gave three cheers, which were responded to so loudly and heartily by all in the fort, that they silenced the enemy's batteries, for from that moment they ceased firing. The news had reached Matamoras that to Mexico the day was lost.

The distance from Resaca de la Palma to the river, is about four miles. Beyond the battle-ground the road forks, leading to both the upper and lower ferries, between which is situated Fort Brown. The country here is more broken, and the chapparal of stronger and denser growth than in the interior. Into these intricate thickets a majority of the Mexicans fled after the rout became general; hundreds and thousands of troops here buried themselves, waiting for the veil of night to aid them in their escape. Along the road, however, great numbers swept, "fear lending them wings." In this flight the slightly wounded infantry fell exhausted; norses that had been shot, but able to maintain their feet until put at full speed, rolled on the earth, carrying their riders with them. The soldiers stripped themselves of every encumbrance; they threw away their muskets, cartridge-boxes, their military cloaks, with everything calculated to retard their speed, plainly mark-

ing their route by the abandoned articles. Squadrons of cavalry, finding their movements impeded by the infantry, rode over, without scruple, those whom the fate of war had spared. Our troops pursued; but their arms lost their force when directed against troops of defenceless beings, or individuals fleeing before a victorious foe.

One of the "eighteens" in the fort was now turned towards the upper ferry, sending a shower of grape among the fleeing hundreds. As our pursuing columns debouched from the chapparal that surrounds Fort Brown, and saw the flag of our country still waving in triumph from its ramparts, they raised to the glory of its defenders, a shout that made the welkin ring, and it was sent back from the fort until cheer answering cheer, reverberated along the valley of the Rio Grande. The want of a sufficient number of dragoons made it impossible immediately to extend our lines so as to cut off the enemy's retreat, and General Taylor, deficient in means to cross the river with rapidity and force, had made no previous arrangements to attempt so desirable a consummation of his victory. With the approach of night all offensive measures on our part ceased.

A part of our pursuing troops, including May's command, having drunk of the water of the Rio Grande, fell back to the battle-ground, where they, with the main army, bivouacked for the night. Duncan's and Ridgeley's commands, Lieutenant-Colonel Childs' battalion, Captain Ker's dragoons, together with Captain C. F. Smith's command, bivouacked on the banks of the river, many upon the same ground they had left nine days before.

Throughout both battles, the Mexicans had kept up



a constant communication with Matamoras by means of a secret crossing above the upper ferry. By this they had sent over their wounded, and brought over their reinforcements as the contest thickened. They forced the poor wretches into sacks slung across the backs of mules, and thus the agony of their wounds increasing at every step, they were conveyed to that city they had hoped to enter so proudly as victors.

When Captain May made his charge, many of the soldiers in the rear of the Mexican army abandoned their ranks and fled; and the rancheros, who had hung about as vultures waiting for prey, finding that our train was not likely to fall into their hands, rushed into the camp of their own countrymen, robbed it of whatever loose valuables they could find, then scattered over the country and disappeared. Colonel Curasco, the "bull-dog," so called, of the Mexican army, was the first officer that fled. Early in the contest he crossed to the east of the Rio Grande, and secreted himself in the suburbs of the town. After our troops charged, and took the batteries, General Ampudia also sought safety in flight, and was the first man that appeared in Matamoras after the defeat of the army. Mad with terror, and exhausted by his narrow escape from being drowned while crossing the river, he entered the *Plaza*, and circled it several times unconscious of what he was doing, until his senses were recalled by his wondering countrymen, who learned Arista's total defeat, as Ampudia exclaimed, "All is lost!"

At their secret crossing the Mexicans had but one flat, which was entirely insufficient for the numbers who now, in terror, sought the river. While the flat swarmed with infantry, the cavalry would charge, and,

filling the flat, drive the wretches who had occupied it into the river. The water was covered with the miserable beings who, confused and desperate, plunged about in the waves, calling on God to help them, or venting their impotent maledictions upon those who had forced them to a watery grave. They sunk by scores, clutching each other in the agonies of death; and the "mad river" fairly boiled with the expiring breath of those who had sunken under its dark wave!

In the midst of the panic Father Leary arrived at the bank, and by his presence restored order, in a certain degree, among the fugitives. He took his place on the flat, already crowded with troops. It was about shoving off, when down the bank swept a flying column of cavalry. Goaded by their riders, the steeds madly leaped into the boats, crushing to death scores of their victims, and driving the remainder into the river; the holy father raised his crucifix above his head, muttered an ejaculatory prayer, and disappeared with the mass of his fellow-beings under the waves.

Nothing could exceed the consternation that reigned in Matamoras on the night of the 9th. Between four and five thousand lawless soldiers were wandering, panic struck, about the streets. The chagrined and discomfited officers, formed into cabals, and speculated upon the causes of their inglorious defeat. Meanwhile, Ampudia was endeavoring to prove his own bravery by secretly denouncing Arista, and declaring, that, had he been commander-in-chief, he would have swept the Americans from off the face of the earth.

The night was made hideous by the constant arrival of the wounded in sacks; many yelled like fiends, as the rough carriage, and contracted form, started afresh their bleeding wounds; others were found dead in their



sacks, having been drowned while crossing the river on swimming mules. The women of the city rushed to the ball-rooms, and tore down the festoons prepared for the great festival, to be given in honor of their victorious arms. They tore off and stamped upon their gay apparel, and mingled their cries of wild despair with those of the wounded.

The more substantial citizens hurriedly gathered together their effects and fled into the country; many of these fell by the hands of unorganized troops, and their property was divided among the murderers. Hundreds of soldiers were scattered over the country who pillaged all within their reach, and attacked the defenceless that came in their way. Social, civil, and military order were scattered to the winds,—dark crime, and unbridled passion rioted in the confusion that followed this terrible defeat.

General Taylor's first care, after having the wounds of the living, both American and Mexican, properly attended to, was to perform the last sad rites for the dead of the two armies. His humanity to the enemy on the occasion reflects even more honor upon him than his coolness, courage and skill in battle. The same care was shown by him in every instance, for the suffering Mexican as for the American soldier. In the retreat the Mexican generals left all their dead and most of their wounded on the field of battle, either from confidence in the humane character of General Taylor, or out of a naturally cruel disposition; probably from a mingling of both considerations. They did not rely in vain upon the American commander.

Soon after the engagement an exchange of prisoners had been proposed by General Arista, to which General Taylor cheerfully assented. The American pris-

oners at Matamoras were, accordingly, taken across the river on the 11th, and exchanged, man for man, for Mexican prisoners of the same rank. Amongst the Americans exchanged, were Captains Thornton and Hardee, and Lieutenant Lane. On the morning of the same day General Taylor started for Point Isabel, for the purpose of securing a communication with Commodore Conner. Immediately upon his arrival at Point Isabel, they had an interview which is thus humorously described in the work so often before quoted:—

The singular simplicity that marks General Taylor's personal appearance and habits, has become a subject of universal fame. It is curious that a soldier, so eminent in all the qualities of discipline, should be so citizen-looking in his own appearance. Commodore Conner, on the contrary, is an officer that is not only strict in his dress, but has an extra nicety about it. He appears in full and splendid uniform on all public occasions, being the exact contrast, in this particular, of General Taylor.

At the proper time, Commodore Conner sent word to General Taylor, that he would come on shore to pay him a visit of ceremony. This put "Old Rough and Ready" into a tremendous excitement. If Commodore Conner had quietly come up to his tent, and given him a sailor's grip, and sat down on a camp-chest, and talked over matters in an old-fashioned way, General Taylor would have been prepared; but to have the most carefully dressed officer in our navy, commanding the finest fleet, come in full uniform—surrounded by all the glittering pomp of splendid equipments—to pay a visit of ceremony, was more than General Taylor had, without some effort, nerve to go through with; but, ever equal to all emergencies, he determined to compliment Com-



Commodore Conner, and through him the navy, *by appearing in full uniform*, a thing his officers, associated with him for years, had never witnessed.

In the meanwhile, Commodore Conner was cogitating over the most proper way to compliment General Taylor. Having heard of his peculiar disregard of military dress, he concluded he would make the visit in a manner comporting to General Taylor's habits, and consequently equipped himself in plain white drilling, and, unattended, came ashore.

The moment General Taylor heard that Commodore Conner had landed, he abandoned some heavy work he was personally attending to about the camp, and precipitately rushed into his tent, delved at the bottom of an old chest, and pulled out a uniform coat, that had peacefully slumbered for years in undisturbed quietude, slipped himself into it, in his haste fastening it so that one side of the standing collar was three button-holes above the other, and sat himself down as uncomfortably as can well be imagined. With quiet step, and unattended, Commodore Conner presented himself at General Taylor's tent. The noble representatives of the army and navy shook hands, both in exceeding astonishment at each other's personal appearance.

The wags of the army say that the above contains the only *authentic* account of General Taylor's ever being "headed," and that since that time, he has taken to linen roundabouts of the largest dimensions with more pertinacity than ever.

## CHAPTER VI.

Barita Captured.—Surrender of Matamoras.—General Taylor in Matamoras.—A Treacherous Mexican Official.—Pursuit of Arista's Army.—Some of the Horrors of War.—Sad End to Dreams of Mexican Glory.—General Taylor Reinforced.—His March to Monterey, and arrival there.—Strength of the City.—The Preparations for its defence.—Attacked by the Americans.—Stormed.—Capitulation and Terms.—Gallant Conduct of the American Officers and Soldiers.—Comparative Strength of the two Forces.—American Loss in the Attack.

HAVING arranged with Commodore Conner the plan of an attack on Barita, a small village near the mouth of the Rio Grande, a force consisting of four companies of United States troops, under Lieutenant-Colonel Wilson, First infantry, two companies of Louisiana volunteers, under Captains Stockton and Tobin, and one company of Alabama volunteers, under General Desha, were detached to capture that place. On the 15th of May, the command landed at Brazos and immediately took up their march, a portion of Commodore Conner's fleet co-operating with the land-force. There being no resistance on the part of the Mexicans, the place was taken possession of by the American troops. The inhabitants fled in affright, leaving everything at the mercy of the captors, upon their first approach. The town contains a custom-house, but was only important as a resting place for such of our forces as were destined for Matamoras.