

O God ! who leads the phalanx there,
 Beneath those fearful meteor bars ?
 "OLD ZACK"—"OLD ZACK"—the war-ry rattles,
 Amid those men of iron tread,
 As rung "Old Fritz," in Europe's battles,
 When thus his host great Frederick led !

And where, O where is Aztec ?—where,
 As now the rush of Alleghan
 Resistless tramples to despair
 The ranks of our victorious van ?
 Still charging onward, ever—ever,
 They shatter now our central might,
 Where half our bravest lances shiver,
 Still struggling to maintain the fight

Still struggling, from the carnage dire
 To snatch our patriot chief away—
 Who, crushed by famine, steel and fire,
 Yet claims as his the desperate day ;
 That day whose sinking light is shed
 O'er Buena Vista's field, to tell
 Where round the sleeping and the dead,
 Stalks conquering TAYLOR'S sentinel.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Dark Features of War.—General Taylor's Order.—Letter to Mr Clay and Governor Lincoln.—His private Letter to E. G. W. Butler.—His Reference to the Presidency.—Particulars of the Battle of Buena Vista.—Notice of Clay, Hardin, McKee and Yell.—Anecdotes of General Taylor.—Incidents of the Battle.—Character and Personal Appearance of General Taylor.

ALTHOUGH the triumph of our arms over an enemy four times more numerous than the forces under Taylor, was received with universal enthusiasm by all parties and classes throughout the country, yet it was purchased at a sacrifice of life that filled the land with mourning, and brought desolation and despair to the homes and hearts of hundreds and thousands of wives, and parents, and children, and brothers, and sisters. Many of the noblest spirits of the nation fell a sacrifice on that blood-stained field, and the reflection that so much misery and heart-rending distress was spread over the land with the news that another glorious victory had crowned our arms, moderated the joy, and subdued the feelings which otherwise would have filled every breast. None felt more keenly this dreadful sacrifice to the country than the heroic Taylor himself. Everything that a kind and humane heart could suggest to soothe the afflictions of those whose friends had fallen in the battle, was done. His order to the army upon the result of this victory, and his letter to Mr. Clay,

which are annexed, exhibit this fine trait of his character in its true light.

On the 26th of February, General Taylor issued the following order. It is written in fine taste. It alludes in the most modest terms which he could employ, to the brilliant victory which our troops have won over immense superiority of Mexicans, headed by their most distinguished military leader. It pays due honor to the brave officers and troops who live to receive the gratitude of their country. It pays a brief but affecting tribute to those gallant spirits who have gloriously fallen in the battle, but whose "illustrious example will remain for the benefit and admiration of the army," and as a monument of glory in the eyes of Europe. It treats as delicately as possible all those inexperienced soldiers who ingloriously fled, to whom he administers the warning lesson of seeking to retrieve their reputation by future exertions. It is impossible to read the various descriptions of this remarkable battle, where the skill of the commanding general in seizing his ground and manœuvring his troops, vied with the chivalry of his men, without the deepest emotions.

"1. The commanding general has the grateful task of congratulating the troops upon the brilliant success which attended their arms in the conflicts of the 22nd and 23rd. Confident in the immense superiority of numbers, and stimulated by the presence of a distinguished leader, the Mexican troops were yet repulsed in efforts to force our lines, and finally withdrew with immense loss from the field.

"2. The general would express his obligations to the officers and men engaged, for the cordial support which they rendered throughout the action. It will be his highest pride to bring to the notice of the government

the conspicuous gallantry of different officers and corps whose unwavering steadiness more than once saved the fortunes of the day. He would also express his high satisfaction with the conduct of the small command he left to hold Saltillo. Though not so seriously engaged as their comrades, their services were very important and efficiently rendered. While bestowing this just tribute to the good conduct of the troops, the general deeply regrets to say that there were not a few exceptions. He trusts that those who fled ingloriously to Buena Vista, and even to Saltillo, will seek an opportunity to retrieve their reputation, and to emulate the bravery of their comrades who bore the brunt of the battle, and sustained, against fearful odds, the honor of our flag.

"The exultation of success is checked by the heavy sacrifice of life which it has cost, embracing many officers of high rank and rare merit. While the sympathies of a grateful country will be given to the bereaved families and friends of those who nobly fell, their illustrious example will remain for the benefit and admiration of the army."

Glorious as have been General Taylor's military exploits, they have reflected less real honor upon his name than the humanity he has on all occasions shown, as well for his own soldiers as for the enemy, and the kindness of heart and remarkable delicacy of feeling that characterize all his acts. The following letter of condolence to Mr. Clay on the death of his son, Lieutenant-Colonel Clay, who fell at Buena Vista, is fraught with sentiments warm from the heart, and is conceived in language as beautiful as it is feeling. It has been as it deserved to be, printed in letters of gold.

MY DEAR SIR :—You will no doubt have received

before this can reach you, the deeply distressing intelligence of the death of your son in the battle of Buena Vista. It is with no wish of intruding upon the sanctuary of parental sorrow, and with no hope of administering any consolation to your wounded heart, that I have taken the liberty of addressing you these few lines; but I have felt it a duty which I owe to the memory of the distinguished dead, to pay a willing tribute to his many excellent qualities, and while my feelings are still fresh, to express the desolation which his untimely loss, and that of other kindred spirits, has occasioned.

I had but a casual acquaintance with your son, until he became for a time, a member of my military family, and I can truly say that no one ever won more rapidly upon my regard, or established a more lasting claim to my respect and esteem. Manly and honorable in every impulse, with no feeling but for the honor of the service and of the country, he gave every assurance that in the hour of need I could lean with confidence upon his support. Nor was I disappointed. Under the guidance of himself and the lamented McKee, gallantly did the sons of Kentucky, in the thickest of the strife, uphold the honor of the state and the country.

A grateful people will do justice to the memory of those who fell on that eventful day. But I may be permitted to express the bereavement which I feel in the loss of valued friends. To your son I felt bound by the strongest ties of private regard, and when I miss his familiar face, and those of McKee and Hardin, I can say with truth, that I feel no exultation in our success

With the expression of my deepest and most heartfelt sympathies for your irreparable loss,

I remain,

Your friend,

Z. TAYLOR.

Equally honorable to the illustrious hero of Resaca de la Palma, Monterey and Buena Vista, is the following letter to Ex-Governor Lincoln, of Massachusetts, the life of whose son, like Colonel Clay's, is part of the price paid by the country for the glory won by our arms in Mexico. The letter to which this is an answer, was written immediately upon receipt of the painful tidings of the death of Captain Lincoln, and of course before any certain and responsible information had been received from officers in the army.

The letter is in the soothing and delicate strain that pervades other similar communications from the great and amiable general, showing, that while he has courage for a thousand battles, his noble heart is more deeply touched by the fall of one brave and accomplished officer than by all the triumphs of the war.

SIR:—Your letter of the 4th ult., in relation to the remains and effects of your much lamented son, Captain George Lincoln, has safely reached me. I beg leave to offer my heart-felt sympathies with you in the heavy affliction which has befallen you in the death of this accomplished gentleman. In his fall, you have been bereaved of a son of whom you might be most justly proud, while the army has lost one of its most gallant soldiers. It is hoped, however, that your deep grief will be assuaged in some degree in the proud reflection that he fell nobly upon the field of battle, while gallantly discharging the duties of his profession.

I learn upon inquiry that the body of your son was carefully removed from the field, immediately after his death, and that it was decently interred by itself. Its identity is therefore a matter of certainty. His effects are understood to have been collected with due care, and are now under the direction of General Wool.

I shall take an early occasion to convey your wishes on this subject to that officer, with the request that he will be kind enough to put the remains and effects, carefully prepared for transportation, en route for New York or Boston, by the first safe opportunity, and that he give you, at the same time, due notice thereof

I am, Sir, with great respect,
Your ob't serv't,
Z. TAYLOR

Everything that serves to throw any light upon the character and opinions of a man whose name has recently been rendered illustrious by deeds which find few parallels in the history of the world, or that relates to any of his military achievements, will be read with avidity by the American people. With this view, the following private letter to a friend in Louisiana is given. It will be perceived that he refers to the movement of the people in various parts of the country in favor of his nomination for the presidency, with the delicacy of a truly great mind, and also relates some of the events of the battle of Buena Vista, that have not previously been dwelt upon. He does not profess, however, to give a minute description of the battle; but he presents in a clearer and more authentic shape, the grandeur of the resistance made to the overwhelming

forces of the enemy, and the vastness of the responsibility assumed in giving and maintaining the battle. Stripped of his most effective men, surrounded by armies four times larger than his own, and in the heart of the enemy's country, the gallant old soldier maintained his ground and obtained a victory when even his own officers counselled a retreat. It is dated at Agua Nueva, on the 4th of March, eight days after his decisive victory over the Mexican legions:

MY DEAR GENERAL:—Your very acceptable and interesting letter of the 15th November last, reached me on the 24th of December, while on the march from Monterey to Tampico; but the nature of my duties since then (being most of the time in the saddle,) in addition to other matters, has prevented me from replying to it till the present moment. Be assured, my dear sir, I have not since then lost sight of it or yourself; and I feel highly gratified for the flattering manner in which you have noticed the conduct of the officers and soldiers who marched with me from the Rio Grande to Monterey, and compelled that place to surrender after much hard fighting, as they fully merited the handsome encomiums you have thought proper to bestow on them. For this you have my sincere thanks.

I was aware of the report, as well as statements in a few of the public journals, that it was intended by certain individuals to bring General Butler forward as the successor to Mr. Polk, which gave me no concern, and would not, even had it been the case, which I did not credit, and which had been forgotten. I doubt if the subject would have again crossed my mind, had it not been brought to my notice by you or some one else. I have never heard him or his friends allude to this matter. He (the general), in consequence of his

wound not healing, which gave him so much pain as to render him unfit for duty, left a short time since, by advice of his medical attendant, for New Orleans, where I hope he has arrived in safety, and where I truly hope he will very soon recover so as to be able to take the field once more.

I may observe that I have been also named as a candidate for that high office, the presidency, by a few newspaper editors and others, which has been done without my knowledge, wishes, or consent. This I have assured all who have written me on the subject; assuring them I had no aspirations for that or any other civil office; that my whole energies, mental and physical, were, and had been absorbed in such a way as I thought best calculated to bring this war to a speedy and honorable close, believing it was for the interest of both countries—at any rate so far as ours was concerned; and that president making should be lost sight of until this was accomplished.

I retraced my steps to Monterey, where I arrived towards the latter part of the month of January, and where I expected to remain some time to recruit myself and horses; but a few days after my arrival I received information from the command in my front, at Saltillo, sixty-five miles in the direction of San Luis Potosi from Monterey, that the command—between four and five thousand strong—under General Wool, had become very much alarmed in consequence of about one hundred picked men and horses, belonging to the Kentucky and Arkansas regiments of mounted men, who were sent out towards San Luis to gain intelligence respecting the enemy, and watch their movements, having been taken; being surrounded in the night, and all made prisoners, by a large force of cav-

alry, about fifty miles in advance of Saltillo. So said one of the party who succeeded in making his escape the next night, and getting back to Saltillo; also that the Mexican army was advancing in great numbers towards Saltillo.

These reports induced me to join my advance immediately. Leaving Monterey on the 31st January, I reached Saltillo on the morning of the 2nd February, with a small reinforcement, which increased my force to five thousand, when I lost no time in moving forward and establishing a camp at this place, for the purpose of carrying on a system of instruction, as well as to watch the movements of the enemy, and where I expected to fight him should he move on Saltillo. Here I remained until the 21st, examining the several passes through the mountains—at which time I ascertained that General Santa Anna was advancing and near to hand with an overwhelming force.

Not exactly liking my position, having ascertained that he could gain my rear by two roads on my right and one on my left, and not deeming it prudent to divide my forces, and having apprehensions about my supplies, which were in Saltillo, I determined at once to fall back towards that place about twelve miles, and occupy a strong position between two spurs of a mountain with a narrow valley between them, where at one point the road is so narrow as to permit the passage of only one wagon at a time, with deep gullies running up to the mountains, washed by the rains so as to prevent horses or carriages from passing them without great difficulty. Said position had been closely examined by the topographical engineers, under the eye of General Wool, before my arrival, who deemed it admirably adapted to resist a large army with the small

force which composed our strength. We therefore fell back and occupied it on the evening of the 21st, and at once made the necessary preparations for giving battle.

The next day the enemy made his appearance early in the day, and, after reconnoitring our position for some time, at 2 o'clock, P. M., I received by a staff officer with a flag, a communication from General Santa Anna, requiring me to surrender at discretion; stating that in the event of my doing so we should be well treated; that he had surrounded me with more than twenty thousand men; that resistance was out of the question—and if I attempted it, my command would be put to rout and must be destroyed. In reply, I stated I could not comply with his demand, and he was at liberty to commence operations whenever he was inclined to do so. Soon after this, the action was commenced with his skirmishers on our left, which was promptly met by our left, and continued without intermission, on the side of the mountain, until dark.

In the morning at sunrise he renewed the contest with an overwhelming force—with artillery, infantry and dragoons—which lasted with slight intermissions until dark. A portion of the time the conflict was much the severest I have ever witnessed, particularly towards the latter part of the day, when he (Santa Anna) brought up his reserve, and in spite of every effort on our part, after the greatest exertions I have ever witnessed on both sides, drove us by an immense superiority of numbers for some distance. He had at least five to one at that point against us. Fortunately, at the most critical moment, two pieces of artillery which I had ordered up to support that part of our line, met our exhausted men retreating, when they were brought into battery and opened on the enemy, then

within fifty yards in hot pursuit, with canister and grape, which brought him to a halt and soon compelled him to fall back. In this tremendous contest we lost three pieces of artillery, nearly all the men having been killed or crippled, which put it out of our power to bring them off; nor did I deem it advisable to attempt to regain them.

The enemy made his principal efforts against our flanks. He was handsomely repulsed on our right, but succeeded early in the day in gaining our left, in consequence of the giving way of one of the volunteer regiments, which could not be rallied, with but few exceptions, the greater portion retiring about a mile to a large rancho or farm-house, where our wagons and a portion of our stores were left. These were soon after attacked by the enemy's cavalry, who were repulsed with some loss.

For several hours the fate of the day was extremely doubtful; so much so that I was urged by some of the most experienced officers to fall back and take a new position. This I knew it would never do to attempt with volunteers, and at once declined it. The scene had now become one of the deepest interest. Between the several deep ravines, there were portions of level land from one to four hundred yards in extent, which became alternately points of attack and defence, after our left was turned, by both sides. These extended along and near the base of the mountain for about two miles, and the struggle for them may be very appropriately compared to a game of chess. Night put a stop to the contest, and strange to say, both armies occupied the same positions they did in the morning before the battle commenced. Our artillery did more than wonders.

We lay on our arms all night, as we had done the two previous ones, without fires, there being no wood to be had, and the mercury below the freezing point, ready and expecting to renew the contest the next morning; but we found at daylight the enemy had retreated during the night, leaving his killed and many of his wounded for us to bury and take care of—carrying off everything else, and taking up a position at this place. We did not think it advisable to pursue, not knowing whether he would renew the attack, continue his retreat, or wished to draw us from our strong position; but contented ourselves with watching his movements closely. Finding, on the 26th, he had renewed his retreat, early in the morning of the 27th the army was put in motion for this place, where we arrived about 3 P. M., their rear-guard, consisting of cavalry leaving as our advance got in sight.

I at once determined on harassing his rear; but on examining the state of the men and horses, I found that five days and nights marching, incessant watching, and sixteen hours hard fighting, had so exhausted the first and broken down the latter, it was next to impossible to accomplish anything without rest. We remained quiet here until the 2nd instant, when I pushed a command on the San Luis road to a large plantation called Encarnacion, where we found between two and three hundred wounded in the most wretched condition, besides those they carried with them and left here and on the field. Here we took about ten prisoners, the main part of their army having proceeded on in the direction of San Luis in a very disorganized condition.

On the 22nd the enemy threw in our rear, through the passes of the mountains, two thousand cavalry, and early in the morning of the next day, the 23rd

made demonstrations against Saltillo, and throughout the day. They succeeded at one time in cutting off the communication between the city and battle ground, and making several prisoners, but were driven away by the officer commanding in the city, with two pieces of artillery, covered by about sixty men. They, however, while in possession of the road, prevented a good many from running off to the city, to which place about two hundred of our men had succeeded in getting, previously to the cavalry occupying the road—they, the runaways, reporting that our army was beaten and in full retreat.

The loss on both sides was very great, as you may suppose—enough so on ours to cover the whole country with mourning, for some of the noblest and purest of the land have fallen. We had two hundred and forty killed and five hundred wounded. The enemy has suffered in still greater numbers, but as the dead and wounded are scattered all over the country, it is difficult to ascertain their number. The prisoners who have fallen into our hands, between two and three hundred—enough to exchange for all that have been taken from us,—as well as some medical officers left behind to take care of the wounded, say that their killed and wounded is not less than fifteen hundred, and they say perhaps more.

I hope the greater portion of the good people of the country will be satisfied with what we have done on this occasion. I flatter myself that our compelling a Mexican army of more than twenty thousand men, completely organized and led by their chief magistrate, to retreat, with less than five hundred regulars and about four thousand volunteers, will meet their appro-

val. I had not a single company of regular infantry the whole was taken from me.

I was truly gratified to learn that the chief magistrate of your state had conferred on you the rank of brigadier-general of the militia, and had hoped that the President of the United States would have called you into service as such with the new regiments, and hope he may yet do so, as I need hardly repeat the pleasure it would give me to be associated with you in carrying on this war. The road to the city of Mexico from here is now open, and we only want a few thousand regulars, in addition to the volunteers, to enable us to reach that place. What effect our late battle will have on Santa Anna and the Mexican Congress, time must determine; but I sincerely hope it will lead to peace. One thing is certain; their principal army has become demolished, and it will be very difficult for them to raise and equip another.

I much fear I have spun out this long, and to you uninteresting epistle, beyond your patience even to wade through it; but I have the consolation to know that you are not compelled to read the whole or any part of it. I will conclude by desiring you to present me most respectfully to your excellent lady, as well as to my friend Colonel Nicholas, and accept my sincere wishes for the continued health and prosperity of you and yours through a long life.

With respect and esteem,

Your friend,

Z. TAYLOR.

The loss of officers in General Taylor's gallant division, in the battle of Buena Vista, sixty-five in number, exhibits a proportion and result unparalleled

in any battle on record, which we can now call to mind. General Taylor's effective force was about five thousand rank and file; and allowing one commissioned officer to twenty men, the startling conclusion is arrived at, that our loss of commissioned officers in this sanguinary engagement, amounted to one-fourth of the whole number on the field. If the loss of the rank and file had been proportioned to that of officers, it would exceed one thousand two hundred men. This immense loss of officers indicates the most chivalrous daring on their part. Colonel Clay was a graduate at West Point, where he distinguished himself by every quality demanded by his profession. He was about forty years of age; and was in every way worthy the glorious stock from which he sprung. Accomplished, gentle, generous, and brave, he added to those merits the highest moral qualities, and was regarded by all who knew him with esteem, and by his relatives and friends with the warmest and proudest affection.

Colonel J. J. Hardin was a nephew of Henry Clay, and known throughout the nation as an active and able member of Congress, from Illinois. He declined a re-election from a desire to join the armies of his country; and whether as a civilian or a soldier, won, by his noble qualities, the confidence and esteem of all parties. Colonel Yell was also a member of Congress, representing Arkansas. He was a true patriot, and resigned his seat for the higher privilege of fighting the battles of his country. His letters from the seat of war have excited much attention. Colonel McKee, commanding the regiment to which Mr. Clay was attached, was extensively connected and highly esteemed in Kentucky. His loss will be generally lamented in the west, where he was justly cherished. Captain Lincoln,

of Massachusetts, was of the regular army, and acted in the staff of General Wool at the time of his death. He was breveted for his courage and conduct at Resaca de la Palma, and was an officer of great daring and merit. He was with Taylor in his successful charge upon the Mexicans after the force of General Wool had been thrown into confusion; and was slain by a spent ball.

A writer from Saltillo describes the following scene: The first view that we caught of the enemy was when they had turned the left flank of our lines, and were pursuing the flying infantry and horsemen. Column after column succeeded until they formed a dense mass, numbering something like twelve thousand men. No words can convey to you even a faint idea of their imposing appearance. Their arms, brilliantly burnished, reflected a million of times the dazzling rays of the sun—their rich and gaudy uniforms stood out in bold relief against the soiled and tattered garments of the “suffering volunteers”—their lancers, drawn up in beautiful style, numbering from two to three thousand, and in lines, the beauty of which the most accurate military observer could have found no fault with; and, added to this, that they were, for the time, victors, I assure you we did not look upon them with contempt. But when the quick, sharp ringing of our rifles sounded the death-knell of score after score of them, three hearty Mississippi cheers told full well that no cowardly fear paralyzed that little band. Rushing on, our small force would have scattered the retreating foe in all directions over the death-strewn field, had not our watchful leader, Colonel Davis, perceived that we were about to be surrounded by an overpowering force, and ordered us to retire and rally.

Here an amusing circumstance took place. Major Bradford—who is probably the most impetuously brave officer who ever drew a sword—perceived us retiring, and thought we were defeated. He dismounted from his horse and followed on slowly after us, exclaiming—“*Shoot me! Shoot me!*” Some one called out—

“What the d—l's the matter, major?”

“*Ah, kill me! The Mississippi regiment has run, and I don't want to live another minute!*”

But the gallant major was quickly undeceived, for we soon re-formed, and although our ranks were terribly thinned by the killed and wounded, yet again was heard the deep voice of the noble Davis, “*Forward! Guide centre! March!*” The command was repeated by fifty voices, and with more steadiness and precision than the careless fellows were ever known to evince on a drill, they returned to the bloody contest.

What a contrast the humane conduct of General Taylor presents, when compared with the bloody atrocities of the Mexicans. His kindness to the wounded among his enemies, is equal to that which he manifested towards his soldiers. It occurred that a body of Mexican infantry, about a thousand strong, had become detached from Santa Anna's army, and were being mowed down with terrible slaughter. General Taylor sent Mr. Crittenden with a flag, to say to them if they would surrender he would stop killing them. When Mr. Crittenden got among them, he was taken by them to Santa Anna with his eyes blindfolded. This he remonstrated against without effect. When he was brought to Santa Anna, he was asked his mission. He said he had no message for him; that he was sent to ask a detached force to surrender, to save