

obscurity. We cannot tell whether this was congenial to his feelings or not; but be this as it may, he knew how to "bide his time," and the want of such knowledge destroys the prospects and usefulness of many a really great man.

How many of our most gifted public servants, impatient of delay, have endeavored to control destiny itself, and create the events upon which their advancement depended. How many bright spirits have been shrouded in darkness, before they have reached even mid-day career. General Taylor, fortunate in his philosophy as in his temperament, permitted events to take their course, tranquil in retirement, and calm even when forgotten. But all at once he develops the qualities of a great general. In the most critical situations his judgment foresees what his valor wins. No matter what may be the difficulties around him, he meets and overcomes them all. In strategy as well as hand to hand, he evinces superior skill, and when the nation almost gives him up for lost, again and again he sends back to it intelligence that he has conquered. In no page of our history do we find recorded four such hard fought battles, fought at such fearful odds, as those which have placed such laurels on the brow of General Taylor, and the brave troops under his command. The country is astonished to find it possesses such a man!

CHAPTER IX.

General Taylor at Monterey—Punishment of Banditti—Lawlessness of Texan Rangers—Expedition against Huejutla—General Taylor's Force—Letter to Mr. Marcy—Departure from Mexico—Attachment of his Soldiers—His Reception in the United States—His Political Opinions—Presidential Question.

AFTER the dreadful defeat of the Mexicans at Buena Vista, the army under Santa Anna precipitately fell back upon San Luis Potosi, claiming, in the mean time, the honor of a triumphant victory over General Taylor, but making no further attempt to molest the American forces in that quarter. General Taylor retired to his camp at Monterey, where he was compelled to remain, and repose upon the laurels he had won. He was too much crippled by the severe losses he had suffered at Buena Vista, weakened as his forces had previously been by the large drafts made upon them to strengthen the line of operations on the Capital of Mexico by the way of Vera Cruz, to deem it safe to attempt to march upon the Capital from the Rio Grande. But he kept a vigilant eye upon the movements of the marauding parties of the enemy who were hovering in his vicinity, under the command of Generals Urrea and Canales, who had learned sufficient wisdom from former experience not to attempt to molest the lion in his lair, or to venture within the

reach of one who had proved so prompt and able to punish their presumption.

The ranchos between Meir and Monterey had long been the resort of armed bands of the enemy who had obstructed General Taylor's line of communication. He found it necessary, therefore, to his own safety, to give orders for destroying these means of annoyance. They were accordingly laid waste, and an indemnity required of the local Mexican authorities for all the property destroyed by these marauding parties. These rigid measures secured his wagon trains in a great degree from future attacks. Occasional attempts were made, however, upon his trains by the banditti, when they were not well guarded and the prospect of plunder was sufficiently tempting. But by the prompt and energetic measures adopted by General Taylor, comparative security was obtained and the enemy effectually subdued in that quarter.

While General Taylor was encamped at Monterey thus guarding the interests of his country, General Villamil, who succeeded in the command at San Luis Potosi upon the return of Santa Anna to Mexico, addressed to him, in reply to the requisition for indemnity already referred to, a communication couched in the most offensive and even insulting language. He desired to know of General Taylor whether his intentions were to prosecute the war in conformity to the laws of nations, and as wars were conducted by civilized countries, or as barbarous tribes carry it on amongst themselves. He also very ostentatiously demanded satisfaction for several acts of violence and outrage that had been perpetrated by a portion of the Texan Rangers, under the command of Colonel Hays, and threatened to retaliate upon the Americans, should

a prompt compliance with his demands be neglected. General Taylor peremptorily declined to give a direct reply to this inquiry of General Villamil, alleging as the ground of his refusal, that it was grossly insulting to himself personally as well as to his Government. He assured the Mexican general that "every possible effort had been made to discover the perpetrators of these outrages, in order to bring them to trial and punishment, but without success." In regard to the important threat of retaliation, he treated it with contempt, and stated that he was ready for any course of policy the Mexican authorities might decide to adopt. It was with pain, he said, that he found himself under the necessity of addressing General Villamil in a manner to which he was so little accustomed. But he had been provoked to do so by the object and manner of the communication, which was objectionable, in his estimation, as well in its insinuations as in its tone. With respect to the implied threat of retaliation, he begged General Villamil to understand that he held it at its true worth, and that he was at all times prepared to act accordingly, whatever might be the policy or mode of carrying on the war, which the Mexican Government or its generals might think it proper to adopt.

During the ensuing summer, General Taylor found himself unable to control the lawlessness of the Rangers; and so many unprovoked outrages were committed, the authors of which could very rarely be ascertained, that, as an act of justice to himself and to his country, he ordered a number of the more turbulent and refractory among them to be summarily dismissed from the service, regarding them as being wholly unworthy to belong to the American army. Collisions,

growing out of these outrages, frequently took place, but the departments of Tamaulipas and New Leon, with this exception, were generally quiet. The active operations of the war were carried on upon a different theatre, and General Taylor remained strictly on the defensive.

Thus General Taylor remained at Monterey until November, 1847, faithfully and vigilantly watching and protecting the interests and honor of his country; maintaining his previous conquests, and keeping in subjection the turbulent bands of the enemy, who were seeking every opportunity to murder and plunder small parties of Americans, and feebly guarded wagon trains, especially when accompanied with American traders with articles of merchandise. He was able to engage in no enterprise commensurate with his former brilliant achievements, from causes already adverted to. Necessity, therefore, doomed him to comparative inactivity while the campaign was carried on in another quarter under the command of General Scott.

An expedition against Huejutla, however, was ordered to be fitted out, which left Tampico in July, under the command of Colonel DeRussey. Learning that a large body of Mexicans lay in ambush at a narrow gorge, when but a few miles from his destination, and meeting with unexpected resistance from the enemy, he deemed it advisable to retreat, which he did in good order, though not without the loss of twenty-eight in killed, wounded and missing. The loss of the enemy was very severe, being about two hundred in killed and wounded.

"In the expectation of being ordered to advance into the interior, General Taylor directed a camp of instruction to be formed at Mier, early in the summer, in

order to have his troops ready for active duty in the field. The camp was organized by General Hopping, who was placed in command of the upper district on the Rio Grande—Colonel Davenport, of the 1st infantry, being assigned to the lower district. Colonel Belknap, of the 8th infantry, was ordered to take the immediate charge of the camp, but before it had fairly gone into operation, General Taylor received orders to detach a large portion of his troops to reinforce the column under General Scott. The brilliant results which had attended the operations of the General-in-chief on the line of the National Road, and the necessity of opening his communications with the sea-coast, rendered it as necessary as it was advisable to strengthen his column without delay. Several new volunteer regiments had previously joined General Taylor, together with three regiments of infantry raised under the ten regiment bill, and a part of the 3d dragoons.

"Instructions were received by General Taylor, in August, to send all his disposable troops to Vera Cruz; and in accordance therewith, General Cushing, with his brigade, consisting of the 13th infantry, Colonel Echols, and the Massachusetts volunteers, Colonel Wright; and General Lane, with the 4th Ohio, Colonel Brough, and 4th Indiana, Colonel Gorman, forming the brigade under his command; together with five companies of Texan rangers, under Colonel Hays, were ordered to embark forthwith from the Rio Grande. General Marshall was also directed to join General Scott, with two regiments of Kentucky volunteers, recently enrolled, and on their way to Vera Cruz.

"After the departure of these troops, General Taylor had about 6,000 men under his command, including ten companies of regular dragoons, belonging to different

regiments, and nine companies of regular artillery, also belonging to different regiments, serving with batteries, or garrisoning the forts on the Rio Grande. Besides the regular cavalry, there were five companies of Texan horse, and four companies of mounted volunteers from different States. The 10th infantry, Colonel Temple, was ordered to garrison Matamoras and Camargo. Colonel Butler, with the companies of the 3d dragoons, was also stationed on the Rio Grande. Colonel Tibbatts garrisoned Monterey with six companies of the 16th infantry, and the remaining four companies of his regiment occupied Seralvo. Lieutenant Colonel Fauntleroy, with his squadron of the 2d dragoons, and the battery of Lieutenant Colonel Bragg, were stationed at General Taylor's camp at Walnut Springs. At Buena Vista and Saltillo, were the Virginia and North Carolina regiments, under Colonels Hamtranck and Paine, and the 2d Mississippi rifles, Colonel R. Davis, with the heavy battery of Captain Prentiss, the light battery of Captain Deas, and several companies of regular and volunteer cavalry, all under the orders of General Wool."

The idea of marching upon the Mexican capital from the line of the Sierra Madre, having now been definitely abandoned for the more feasible plan of carrying on operations through Vera Cruz, General Taylor, seeing no hope of his again being engaged in active service during the war, began to grow restless under the inactive life he was compelled to lead. Believing, therefore, that his further services for the present could be dispensed with, and finding that his private affairs were severely suffering by his long absence from his native country, he asked permission of the government to return to the United States. This request

being complied with, General Taylor made all necessary arrangements for taking a final leave of his associates in arms in Mexico.

Before following the victorious General to the United States, however, and recording his brilliant reception there, it may not be out of place here to refer to some of the embarrassments under which General Taylor had labored, in consequence of the inexplicable coolness and want of confidence with which he had been treated by his government, almost ever since he crossed the Rio Grande. The censure he received from the Administration, for granting to the enemy, at the capture of Monterey, terms which they were pleased to designate as too lenient, in not requiring an unconditional capitulation, was looked upon with surprise in the United States, and pronounced by all parties as unjust and undeserved. It was not strange, therefore, that General Taylor should have deeply felt this rebuke nor that he should have sought an opportunity to explain the motives which influenced his conduct in agreeing to the terms of capitulation which were made the occasion for this censure. If he had appealed from the Administration to the public, he would have been justified in the eyes of the American people, however wide a departure it may have been from the rules and regulations of the army. But he did not resort to this remedy for the injustice that had been done him. He was content to explain his motives for the comparatively liberal terms he had conceded to the enemy, to his old military friend, General E. P. Gaines. This he did in the freedom of a private and confidential correspondence, yet entirely avoiding all discourtesy to the Administration. It found its way, however, into the public press, and was made the justification for

reviving an obsolete army regulation, designed to prohibit officers and soldiers in the United States service from writing letters for publication, detailing the movements of our army, in time of war. This was understood to be designed as a still further censure upon General Taylor; and this impression was confirmed by the consideration, that a slip containing the letter to General Gaines was forwarded to him by the President together with the order reviving the army regulation in question. This implied, if not direct, censure for an act so unobjectionable in itself as writing a private letter of the character of the one to General Gaines, drew from General Taylor the following characteristic reply to Honorable Wm. L. Marcy, Secretary of War, which was transmitted to the United States House of Representatives, in accordance with a resolution of that body, calling upon the President for the correspondence. The letter is written in that bold, manly, and independent tone, and vigor of style, for which all his correspondence is so remarkable. It displays a consciousness of rectitude, and an honesty and purity of purpose, which, aside from its unanswerable defence of his conduct, must carry conviction to every candid mind. It is dated Head Quarters, Army of Occupation, Agua Nueva, March 3d, 1847, but was not published until the February ensuing, and is as follows:

"I have the honor to receive your communication of January 27, enclosing a newspaper slip, and expressing the regret of the Department that the letter copied on that slip, and which was addressed by myself to Major Gen. Gaines, should have been published. Although your letter does not convey the direct censure of the Department and the President; yet, when it was

taken in connection with the revival of the paragraph in the regulations of 1825, touching the publication of private letters concerning operations in the field, I am not permitted to doubt that I have become a subject of Executive disapprobation. To any expression of it coming with the authority of the President, I am bound by my duty and by respect for his high office, patiently to submit; but lest my silence should be construed into a tacit admission of the grounds and conclusions set forth in your communication, I deem it a duty which I owe to myself, to submit a few remarks in reply.

"I shall be pardoned for speaking plainly. In the first place, the published letter bears upon its face the most conclusive evidence that it was intended only for private perusal, and not at all for publication. It was published without my knowledge and contrary to my wishes. Surely, I need not say that I am not in the habit of writing for the newspapers. The letter was a familiar one, written to an old military friend, with whom I have been for many years interchanging opinions on professional subjects. That he should think proper, under any circumstances, to publish it, could not have been foreseen by me. In the absence of proof that the publication was made without my knowledge, I may be permitted to say, the quotation of your letter of the 650th paragraph of the superseded regulations of 1825, in which the terms 'mischievous and disgraceful' are employed to characterize certain letters or reports, conveys, though not openly, a measure of rebuke, which to say the least, is rather harsh, and which many think not warranted by the premises.

"Again, I have carefully examined the letter in question, and I do not admit that it is obnoxious to

he objections urged in your communication. I see nothing in it which, under the same circumstances, I would not write again. To suppose that it will give the enemy valuable information touching our posts or respective line of operations, is to know very little of the Mexican sources of information, or of their extraordinary sagacity and facilities in keeping constantly apprized of our movements. As to my particular views in regard to the general policy to be pursued towards Mexico, I perceive from the public journals that they are shared by many distinguished statesmen; also, in part, by conspicuous officers of the navy, the publication of whose opinions is not, perhaps, obstructed by any regulations of the department. It is difficult, then, to imagine how the diffusion of mine can render any peculiar aid to the enemy, or especially disincline him to enter into negotiations for peace.

"In conclusion, I would say, it has given me great pain to be brought into the position in which I now find myself in regard to the department of war, and the government. It has not been of my own seeking. To the extent of my abilities and the means placed at my disposal, I have sought faithfully to serve the country, by carrying out the rules and instructions of the Executive; but it cannot be concealed, that since the capitulation of Monterey, the confidence of the department, and, I too much fear, of the President, has been gradually withdrawing, and my consideration and usefulness correspondingly diminished. The apparent determination of the department to place me in an attitude antagonistical to the government, has an apt illustration in the well-known fable of *Æsop*. I ask no favor, and I shrink from no responsibility, while entrusted with the command in this quarter. I shall continue

to devote all my energies to the public good, looking for my reward to the conscientiousness of pure motives, and to the final verdict of impartial history."

Having obtained leave from his government to return to the United States, General Taylor, early in November took his departure from Monterey. His separation from his brothers in arms—from those who had shared with him so many hardships and dangers, and whose brilliant achievements had reflected so much glory upon themselves and their country, was deeply interesting and affecting. Soldiers as well as officers shared equally in the feelings of regret which he himself experienced upon relinquishing his command of the noble little army whose gallantry had filled the world with its fame.

He had, from the day he took command of the army of occupation until the final and most glorious of his military achievements at Buena Vista, shared every privation and participated in every danger, with the common soldier. He required no service from them that he was not willing to participate in, and had proved to them by his whole life that he never lost sight of their interests, nor ever wantonly disregarded their feelings. By this constant paternal solicitude for their welfare, so far as the nature of the service and the interests of the country would permit, he had warmly attached to him every soldier as well as every officer under his command, and had inspired so much confidence by his disinterested acts of kindness, his coolness, self-possession and firmness under all circumstances, that his final separation from them was more like that of a kind parent taking leave of his family, than a great and successful general bidding farewell

The same feeling of attachment and regret on the part of the army, and of warm sympathy on the part of General Taylor, were shown upon his arrival at Matamoras, where there were still stationed a detachment of American forces. He remained at this post a day or two previous to his final withdrawal from his command in Mexico, during which time he reviewed the troops there, and issued such orders and made such preparations as the exigencies of the case and the safety of his conquests seemed to require. After making these necessary arrangements he took his departure for the United States, and arrived at his residence in Baton Rouge towards the last of November, 1847.

There are few military chiefs, perhaps none, in any age or any country, with the exception of THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY, who had acquired so deep a hold upon the hearts of his soldiers as General Taylor had upon those whom it was his happy fortune to command, in his brilliant campaign against Mexico. In thus uniting all hearts to him in the midst of the necessarily rigorous discipline of the camp during an active campaign in the heart of an enemy's country, he displayed no less the characteristics of a great general, than he did by his consummate skill, his remarkable prudence, his great bravery and astonishing coolness and self-reliance in the hour of danger. Indeed, his success as a commander resulted as much from the implicit confidence and deep-rooted attachment he was so wonderful for inspiring amongst his troops, as it did from his own great talents. Though with mere military skill and ability, he might have exacted strict obedience from his soldiers, and under the force of a rigid discipline, they might have fought bravely and obstinately, yet without the confidence and esteem which he never

failed to inspire, they never would have shown the same cheerful promptness to die rather than yield, at his command.

Upon General Taylor's arrival in the United States, he was everywhere received with the most remarkable popular demonstrations that ever before greeted an American commander, since the days of Washington. His grateful countrymen, wherever he made his appearance, were assembled in immense multitudes, to welcome his return, and to evince their gratitude for his brilliant services, as well as to attest the high respect his private virtues and his lofty bearing as a man, no less than as a general, had inspired. Public bodies, too, as well as the people at large, vied with each other in doing honor to the hero of Mexico. Invitations from town, city and State authorities, were showered upon him from every quarter, pressing him to visit their States. With the modesty and refined taste which had so distinguished his whole life, however, he declined all, or nearly all, these intended civilities, preferring the comparative seclusion and pleasures of his own quiet home, to all the honors that had been so liberally tendered him.

New Orleans was made an exception to this studied determination to avoid all public receptions and display, and there he was received with the most enthusiastic demonstration, by a public procession, bonfires, and other evidences of popular feeling. At a casual visit to Pas Christian, too, he was received by a public welcome and address. On this occasion, he replied in a neat and feeling speech, which does so much honor to his heart that an extract is here given :

"Sir, I find myself overwhelmed with emotions that defy expression on this occasion. In tendering to me

the hospitalities of the residents of Pas Christian, permanent as well as temporary, you have been pleased to allude in flattering terms to my career in Mexico. I lay no claim to praise for the success which crowned my exertions in the trying and sanguinary struggles in which it was my lot to be engaged, between the forces under my command and the common enemy of my country. I but tried to discharge my duty to that country, whose servant I was proud to be. Sir, the manner in which you have alluded to my brothers in arms, on both lines of our army, has filled my heart with gratitude, and my eyes with tears. It was not due to me that the enemy with which I contended was vanquished, but to the brave soldiers that stood by and sustained me in times of peril. To them belongs the glory, and to them I frankly yield all claim to the laurels that adorn their brows.

"Sir, I feel sensibly the kindness and honor done me this night; and while I cannot command language suitable to express my emotions, I beg to thank you and my friends around me for such a flattering manifestation."

With the exception of an occasional visit to New Orleans, on business connected with his long-neglected private affairs, he confined himself closely to Baton Rouge. Here he seemed to be as little disturbed by the enthusiasm his name had excited throughout the Union, and the renown which his achievements had won him throughout Europe, as the most indifferent spectator. General Taylor of course was not insensible to these evidences of the admiration and respect of his countrymen. He would have been more or less than human if he were. But they did not unsettle his well-regulated and thoroughly disciplined mind. He was none

the less grateful for them, because he did not permit them to turn him aside from that course of strict propriety and manly bearing which had been so admirable and striking a feature of his character during his forty years of public life. He was the same plain, unassuming, dignified gentleman, now that the land rung with his praises, that he was when his name, but a few months before, was scarcely known beyond the limits of his own State. In this, too, he displayed the elements of a great and noble mind. But General Taylor was not destined long to remain in retirement.

Immediately after the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, his name began to be mentioned in connection with the Presidential question, in different parts of the Union, and as early as the June or July following those brilliant victories, he was formally nominated for the Presidency by a meeting of the people, irrespective of party politics, held at Newark, New Jersey. This movement was soon imitated by the people in other sections of the country; and as the splendor of his subsequent achievements at Monterey and Buena Vista reached the United States, they became more general. Nearly or quite up to the time of his departure from Mexico, these nominations had been tendered him almost indiscriminately by Whigs, Democrats, and Independents. Though it was well understood by the intimate personal friends of General Taylor that his political predilections were moderately but decidedly Whig, yet, from the nature of his profession, he had necessarily become so little identified with either of the parties of the country, that his views upon the various questions of national policy which divided the people, were comparatively but very little known to the American people at large. It is not singular