## CHAPTER III.

Death of Hon. A. P. Upshur, Secretary of State—Calhoun Appointed—Treaty of Annexation of Texas—Declaration of the State of Massachusetts—Texas Accepts the Resolution of Annexation—Formation of Army of Occupation—Transferred to Maj. S. Ringgold's Battery of Horse Artillery—Officers Sail for Aransas Pass—The Wicked Captain—Becalmed—Cross Bahama Banks—Key West—Out of Drinking Water—Fare on Board Ship—Storm—Aransas Pass—St. Joseph's Island—Maj. Ringgold's Cook—Embark for Corpus Christi—Game and Fish—Horse Racing—White Horse of the Prairies—Trip to San Antonio—The Town—Incidents of the Trip.

AT this time there was being discussed by the public a matter that was destined soon to put an end to the pleasant life we were leading here.

After the death of Abel P. Upshur, Secretary of State, John C. Calhoun was appointed to fill the vacancy, and the question of the admission of Texas as a State was discussed, and on the 12th of April a treaty of annexation was signed by him; and it was rejected by the Senate of the United States. So bitter was the feeling that, notwithstanding the purchase of Louisiana and Florida [and Alaska since], Massachusetts, through her Legislature, declared that Congress had no right or power to admit a foreign State or Territory into the Union; and that if Texas was admitted it *would not be binding on her*. By this Massachusetts made a declaration which the State could not carry out without *seceding* from the Union, yet she seceded not.

Soon after the inauguration of Mr. Polk as President a resolution for annexation was passed by Congress, and on June 23, 1845, Texas accepted the resolution, and became a State in the Union December 29.

It became evident now, when Texas accepted the resolution, that the government would be obliged to defend the new State from invasion by Mexico, and the army officers were anxious to go to the frontier to defend the boundary of the country. To meet the threats of Mexico, an army of occupation was gradually formed at Corpus Christi. When the order came for Maj. Ringgold's battery of horse artillery to be in readiness to move, and the Adjutant General came over to Fort McHenry to transfer some of Capt. Wall's men to Ringgold's company, I asked Ringgold if he wished me to go with him. Taking me by the hand, he exclaimed, "My dear fellow, yes;" and, turning to the Adjutant General, he asked him to make the transfer and 'twas done, and I made preparations to leave.



The ship Hermann was chartered, and the horses, to the number of one hundred and fifty, were put on board the ship between decks, in temporary stalls, secured by broad canvas bands under their bodies to prevent them from being thrown from their feet by the motion of the vessel. The company officers were Ringgold, Ridgely, Shover, Fremont, and myself. The officers left in the fort were Wall, Tompkins, and Ord. After we left, this company was ordered to California. W. T. Sherman was with it; and they were quiet on the shore of the Pacific during the war. I met Ord once after the war in Washington. His hobby then was the Australian boomerang. He took me to a room, about sixty by forty, to show me how he could throw them to the end of the room and make them come back and fall at his feet. He was studying out some machine to discharge them rapidly and thereby fill the air with scythe blades to cut off the heads of an enemy, and every boomerang that did not strike an enemy was to return to the fort. I could not see why this boomerang, when it returned, would not injure the person that sent it. And thus it is; we all have some hobby on hand, but fortunately most of them are as harmless as Ord's boomerang, except we cannot get off this kind of a horse and rest and sleep as we do from a real horse.

The day came when the cry was heard: "All on board." "Farewell," the parting word of friends, was spoken, the lines cast off, and the ship passed down the Patapsco river to Chesapeake Bay, to the Atlantic. The voyage to Aransas Pass was tedious and not particularly eventful. The captain was a scoundrel and a sinner. I found amusement in going aloft and sitting in the foretop surveying the ocean's wide expanse without intrusion. When we neared the Bahamas we were becalmed nine days, and the wicked captain would lie on his back and curse even his Creator.

I had, as well as the captain, made all the observations for latitude and time, to compare with his. We reached the "Hole in the Wall" about sunset, and I made a sketch of it; passed

Great Stirrup-cay light about 10 P.M. At 2 A.M. the captain and mate came into our cabin, where his chart was on the table, and he tried to impress on the mate that the light ahead was the Florida light; that he had crossed the Gulf Stream and was nearing the Florida coast; and that the ship's course should be changed southerly. I heard this with alarm, for I could not believe it possible that we had passed the "Great Isaacs" and the Straits of Florida. I went on deck at the dawn of day, and saw white sand and rocks that did not appear more than a dozen feet beneath the water. I went forward, found the captain, and asked him if he was not on the Bahama Banks. He denied it. I went immediately and made known the situation to Maj. Ringgold. He appeared to take but little interest in the matter, supposed the ship was all right, etc.

About sunrise he came out, and I called his attention to the shoal water and rocks and the lighthouse on our *starboard* bow. He spoke to the captain about what I told him, and was informed that I was a boy and did not know what I was talking about. The blue line of the deep water was in front of us, and a bark under full sail on the other side of the lighthouse heading south; and as we neared each other our captain took his trumpet and asked, "What ship is that?" and the reply was prompt, "What in h–ll are you doing there?" I turned to the Major and asked him if that answer did not explain the situation. The bark was the Caleb Cushing, bound to New Orleans laden with ice. I believe to-day it was an attempt to wreck the ship, where life was safe, to get the insurance.

As we were nearly out of drinking water, there was a necessity to run into the nearest port for a fresh supply, and the ship put into Key West. What a relief! That miserable captain had fed us on junk meat, boiled dried-apple pudding, and hardtack with weak coffee. I have never eaten any of these dishes since. We remained in Key West one day and night, and sailed the next morning. There we got some West Indies fruit and plenty of limes.

The ship was now provisioned with green turtle, the only meat I saw in the market in the town, and now turtle was substituted for salt beef; and henceforth it was turtle steak, turtle soup (in name only), and turtle at every meal until it became as unpalatable as junk beef. Some days after leaving Key West clouds



from the south-east began to fly over, extremely low, driven by a current just above us. The captain took in sail, leaving only spread the jib, fore-topsail, main topsail, and spanker, and I believe the mainsail. I was sitting in the cabin when all at once tables, chairs, trunks, and everything moveable were shot to the starboard side in a heap. I caught hold of some fixtures, got out the cabin, which was on deck, and clung to the weather shrouds. The ship was nearly on her side. The captain jumped for the halyards, sailors slid down the deck, feet foremost, to let them go. I had been anxious to be in a storm on the ocean, and here was one quite unexpected.

What riveted my attention mainly was the roaring of the tempest through the rigging. The great shrouds vibrated with a sound that made the ship tremble, and every rope and cord shrieked aloud in a different tone according to size, creating a thundering, howling, shrieking roar that impressed me with awe not unlike that I felt *under* the falls of Niagara. I was so fascinated with the music of the tempest that I was oblivious to the thought of danger, until the ship began to rise from her side, and when she rose well on her keel I thought the horses would kick the vessel to pieces.

When we arrived at Aransas Pass the sea was high and the wind strong, and no lighters would venture outside to come to us. The discharging the cargo was tedious, as the horses had to be swung to the yardarms and lowered into the pitching tugs alongside. I had been forty-six days on board ship, and joyous was it to be landed on St. Joseph's Island.

I will make a small digression here, because it will shed some light on matters hereafter, and show that a camp may have some attractions as well as a palace.

Maj. Ringgold carried with him a middle-aged colored servant who had much experience in arranging dinner and supper parties in Baltimore. He cared for nothing save to surprise us with dishes that would have delighted Lucullus. Such pompano, baked red snappers, boiled red fish, delicate soups, turkeys, geese, ducks, and game birds on toast. In pastry he had no superior. Never could we, by money or otherwise, discover how he prepared his sauces. In taste in arranging a table he resembled Ward McAllister, and he was fitted for a "chef" at Delmonico's or the Waldorf.

Ridgely had an old slave servant, and Shover and I colored men hired. They were all true and faithful servants, yet in disregard of instructions they would ride down and find us on the battlefield with a good luncheon. They always wished to go with us when there was a prospect of a fight. So now you can understand how much I rejoiced to leave that villainous captain and ship, and enjoy again the luxury of a clean table.

The terms of annexation proposed by the United States were accepted July 4, 1845, and Gen. Taylor was already at Corpus Christi with a considerable force when we landed on St. Joseph's Island. Consequently our stay on the island was soon terminated by our embarking on a light draft steamer for Corpus Christi. As the water is shoal in front of this place, the steamer was anchored near a mile from shore, and the horses thrown overboard and made to swim to land. Corpus Christi is on the westerly side of the Nueces River, and consequently the United States troops were occupying the disputed territory. I have no date to guide me now, but it must have been about the last of October when we landed on the barren sands of the Bay of Nueces. Here a permanent camp and depot were established, and discipline in the troops commenced.

There was but *one* house in this *town* at that time. It was a canvas town. It was not an unpleasant place to be in. Lieut. John B. Magruder was a good theatrical manager, and under his charge a theater was constructed, and a fair company of actors enlisted. This attracted some professional of the boards, and thus nightly entertainments were provided. The disciples of Isaac Walton had rare sport in the bay and streams; and sportsmen a field for all kind of game. During the winter a cold "norther" prevailed, and thousands of green turtle, pompano, red fish, red snappers, and other of the finny tribe were benumbed and cast on the shores on every side. The number of wild geese that nightly came from the prairies to rest on the waters of the bay was beyond estimate. A few miles up the bay, at sunset, the geese would obscure the sky from zenith to the verge of the horizon, and bewilder the young sportsman, who would always want two or three at a shot instead of one. Ten minutes, usually, would suffice to get as many geese as our horses could carry.

Deer and turkeys were abundant, but on the open prairie would



provokingly move along in front of the hunter just out of range of shot. Jack or English snipe would rise from the marshy places in flocks instead of a brace. There was a bird frequently seen in the roads and paths near camp, always alone, shaped like a game cock, that excited curiosity. Finally it was shot, and is now known as the chaparral cock.

Soldiers found amusement in betting on Mexican ponies trained to stop instantly on the slightest touch of the reins. A line would be marked in the sand on the seashore, and the rider of the pony would take all bets that he could run his pony a hundred yards at full speed and stop him instantly (say) within a foot of the line, and not pass over it; and they generally won the bets.

Many fleet ponies were brought there, and racing was a daily occurrence. On one occasion the officers got up a grand race. Capt. May and Lieut. Randolph Ridgely were to ride the respective horses. When mounted, May's feet nearly reached the ground; and they rode "bareback." It was an exciting race. On they came under whip and spur amidst the crowd shouting wild hurrah. As they crossed the goal, May thoughtlessly checked his pony, and instantly the animal straightened his forelegs and stopped; but May, not having braced himself, went on. Seizing the pony by the neck with both hands, his legs rose in the air, and he made a complete somersault, landing on the ground some twelve or more feet in front of the pony. As he was not injured, the crowd went wild with joy.

A great number of Mexicans would daily visit our camp with horses, or rather ponies, saddles, bridles, blankets, and other horse equipments for sale. I have had a horse and saddle offered for seventy-five dollars, or seventy for the saddle and five for the horse. I bought the best trained hunting pony that I have ever known for fifteen dollars. The owner protested that he was "mucho bueno" for hunting, and so he proved. At full speed he had been trained to stop instantly the moment a motion was made to fire the gun. I once had this pony to go up and rub the side of his head on the wheel of a piece of artillery when being fired rapidly in battle. He loved the smell of gunpowder better than I did. Nearly all the officers bought ponies for themselves or servants to ride. We heard so much about the great snow-white horse of the prairies, with a long flowing tail that

swept the green grass, and a mane below his knees, that I thought it was a phantom horse on the land like the flying Dutchman on the sea. I was mistaken. I heard one day he had been lassoed and sold to the quartermaster of the post, so I went "for to see" him. There he was, chained to the pole of an army wagon. He would kick at every person and animal that ventured near him. I left him kicking at the man who fed him on hay tied on the end of a twenty-foot pole. What became of this emblematic horse I cannot tell.

The desire "to know the world by sight and not by books" was increased. I had seen the Atlantic's deep heaving swells, the tempest in its might on the gulf, the calms on the borders of the tropics, with those never-to-be-forgotten beauties caused by the setting sun behind those wonderful clouds. Every evening as the sun declined, great banks of blue and purple clouds would form, presenting to the eye, without the aid of imagination, the most lovely plains, bold mountain ranges, whose tops were draped in fantastic clouds. Temples that were as gloomy as Egypt's; castles as enchanting as those on the Rhine; chariots with horses; human faces and animals in silhouette; lions in repose and lions rampant; phantasms woven out of clouds by rays of the setting sun; all, all changing in expression and form by the gentle movements of the clouds, fading away in outline into one vast glow of crimson twilight that dissolved into air;

"And like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not track behind."

And now learning that a small train of wagons would soon leave for San Antonio, I obtained a month's leave to visit that city, made memorable by the defense of the Alamo and other tragic events. When the time came to start I met Lieut. W. L. Crittenden, who told me he had a leave and was also going with the train. The expedition was in charge of Capt. N. B. Rossell. When we came to the San Patricio crossing of the Nueces river the train could not cross by reason of the rains. Impatient of delay, I proposed to Crittenden and two gentlemen from Kentucky that we "cut loose" from the train and proceed on our journey. There was with the train a Mr. Campbell, who lived in San Antonio, and he was willing to undertake to pilot us over this unknown, untrodden, pathless country.

At the close of the first day, the guide and I being in advance,



we came to a small, clear, bubbling brook, and he said: "Here we will encamp for the night." So, dismounting, I hitched my pony and went up the stream in quest of turkeys that I heard gobbling. I found them going to roost, and covetous of numbers, I would not shoot one and return as I should have done. I heard the party shouting for me. So, waiting till a number of turkeys were in the tree, I fired both barrels, and only two of the birds fell when I expected double that number. When I went to get the birds, alas! they were on an island and I had to leave them. It was now dark, and as I had crossed to the left bank of the stream I went on down until I supposed I was near the camp, and made a soft halloo! No answer. I then shouted louder and louder; then all was silence. I felt a peculiar crawling sensation running over me, and I think my hair objected to my wearing my hat. I took a survey of the situation. I was alone in an Indian country; it was very dark, and I must not pass over the trail where we crossed the stream. Aided with the light of matches and burning grass I discovered the trail and found my pony hitched where I left him. Mounting him, I followed the trail. After a while I heard far away some one halloo. It was Crittenden returning for me. We met, and I reached camp in no pleasant mood. It was an experience I have only once since undergone, and the sensations of the mind when lost are bewildering.

It was the average estimate of the party that the number of deer that moved to the right and left of our trail was not less than twelve hundred, besides numerous antelope. Out of all this number we never killed one, for we had no rifle, and they would walk off or keep provokingly just out of gunshot. We killed all the turkeys we wanted for food. In four days we reached San Antonio. There were but *four white families* living in the town at that date: Volney Howard, Tom Howard, our guide Campbell, and Mrs. Bradley. Lands were offered us at six cents per acre that commands now over a thousand dollars per acre, and the population is at present fifty thousand.

At the San Pedro Springs, the source of the San Antonio river, where the river in its strength gushes up from the earth, we found Col. Harney encamped with a squadron of dragoons. He had built an observatory from which to obtain a view of the sur-

rounding country. From the top hundreds of deer could be seen quietly grazing on the prairies near by.*

Wild hogs and large wolves infested the chaparral around the hills, and were caught in traps. The country is beautiful to the eye, and the city sleeps in what may be termed a valley, by reason of the low hills on the north and east. To the west the plain extends to the Medina river. Western Texas in the months of March and April is lovely beyond comparison. The green grass

*Col. Harney was annoyed by the number of blackbirds that would feed with the horses, eating the grain; so while the horses were out grazing I asked an officer for a gun to kill some of the birds. He handed me a long single-barreled one with a bore about the size of a half dollar. From the powder flask I put in two charges of powder and shot. The ground was covered with birds. I fired and killed none; the charge was too small. The doctor (I think he was a doctor) said he would load it for me, so I took another shot. This time I thought my arm dislocated at the shoulder. I did not count the number of birds, but the ground was covered with the dead and wounded. I played indifference while meditating revenge for a sore shoulder. Going to the top of the observatory, I saw perhaps a hundred deer grazing close by; so I was taken with a desire to kill one, and again asked the doctor for his gun. He proposed loading it for me. Itold him I preferred doing it myself. I put in three charges of powder, or three drams, and about forty small buckshot, and off I went for a deer. The herd grazed along before me up the slope of a ridge, and passed over it. I crawled on my hands and knees to the crest, and such a sight! A number of single deer were within twenty yards of me. At once I became covetous. Shoot a single deer? No. I wanted four or five (remembering "all things come to those who wait"), so presently five or six were nearly in a line, but more distant; and when I pulled the trigger the gun said "fush," and the smoke came in my face. As I looked over the field I was amazed. There were all the deer standing facing me, their heads high, ears spread out wide, and their large, soft, mild eyes looking at me imploringly; and not alarmed. Probably they had never heard a gun (and I am quite sure they did not hear this one), for the Indians then were armed only with bows and arrows.

I sat down on the green grass and looked at the deer, and felt that experience must be a good teacher. But the days came when I did kill many; but the first one fell dead from a shot from my pistol.

I make mention of these little events that belong to the past to show how great is the change made in a few passing years. Where now is all this game, and where are the Indians? Alike they have disappeared before the advance of avaricious civilization. From San Antonio to Corpus Christi and to El Paso the country was as God made it, unchanged by Indians, and over the plains and on a thousand hills roamed deer, wild turkey, partridges, and the waters swarmed with swan, geese, and ducks unmolested by sportsmen.



is hidden beneath flowers of every color; not flowers here and there, but one unbroken mass, presenting a richness of coloring beyond the art of man; as we ride along there are acres of solid blue, then of white, now of yellow, then pink and purple; then all mixed up of every hue, as I once saw petunias on the lawn at Capo di Monti, in Naples.

My stay in San Antonio depended on the departure of the train. There were a number of army officers waiting the convenience and protection of the wagons. The evening of our departure was notable for an incident illustrating the power of imagination over bodily feeling. Most of the officers had arrived at the camping ground in advance of the wagons, and were sitting under the trees when they came. As the train was passing by Crittenden got up and took from his pocket what was called a pepper box pistol and fired at a tree in a line parallel to the road. Just at that time Lieut. Lafayette McLaws left the train to come where we were, and shouted: "Quit firing, I am shot." As he was not in range, no one regarded what he said, and Crittenden kept on firing the revolver.

When McLaws rode up he had a wild look, and the bosom of his shirt was red with blood. A ball hitting the tree had glanced off at an angle and struck him. He was taken from his horse and the wound examined. There was the hole where the bullet entered the breast, and he was spitting blood; and no surgeon being present he was put in a wagon to be taken back to San Antonio. He was resting on his back on straw and I was by his side. Again he spit some blood. He said: "My days are numbered. My whole chest is filled with blood, and I can feel the blood shaking inside as though I were filled with water." He was satisfied that he would soon die from internal hemorrhage; and perhaps he would, but fortunately it was discovered that the ball had also *hit his index finger*, that he had unknowingly sucked it in his mouth, and this was the blood he was spitting up. I therefore got out the wagon and left him. On arrival in San Antonio the wound was probed by a surgeon and the ball discovered near the spine. It was a glancing shot that pressing against the skin followed the line of least resistance until arrested by the spine. He soon recovered and came back to Corpus Christi.

On the way back, when we struck the Nueces river we discovered that the timber was a *turkey roost*. As the train was going

only three miles farther on to camp, a young man, son of Col. McIntosh, and I agreed to remain there until dark and kill some turkeys. McIntosh selected a tree under the bank near the river; I fastened my pony to a bush on the plain and sat under the bank in the woods on the second bottom. About sunset great flocks of turkeys began to appear until the plains were alive with them. They were disturbed by my pony being tied there. As it grew dark they came into the trees or woods, flock after flock, in such numbers that they bent the limbs and fell to the ground all around me. I made seven shots, shooting only at the head as they were so near me. I picked up six fine gobblers (I would shoot no hens), and, staggering under the load, reached my pony. I threw the turkeys down and mounting my pony rode to McIntosh. McIntosh had fired both barrels, and had one turkey. He had stopped without any other ammunition. Accompanying me back to where my game was, we tied the turkeys and put them over the necks of our horses and went into camp. I have no doubt that more than a thousand turkeys flew into that timber to roost; they were on the ground all around me, and they could have been killed with a walking stick. I do not believe they had ever heard a gun fired before. By the stupidity of not protecting game by proper laws it has all disappeared long since. Indians obtained rifles and ammunition from traders, and the deer were killed solely for their skins; and the wild members of the Legislature looked on and said: "Let the boys hunt whenever they please; the country and all it contains belongs to them." It is now justly held that all game belongs to the State and becomes the property of the individual only as permitted by law, and after it is killed.

## CHAPTER IV.

President of Mexico Resigns, and Paredes Is Elected—Mexican Troops Concentrating at Matamoras—Taylor Marches to the Rio Grande—Rattlesnakes—Mirage—Wild Horses—Taylor Concentrates His Troops at Arroyo, Colo.—Bull Fight—Mexicans Flee—Taylor Goes to Point Isabel—Join Gen. Worth—Field Works—Arrival of Gen. Ampudia—Orders Taylor to Leave—Taylor Declines—Col. Cross Murdered—Lieut. Porter Killed—Gen. Arista Arrives—Declares Hostilities Commenced—Capts. Thornton and Hardee Captured.

DURING the winter the friendly Mexicans who came to the camp would tell us of the preparations their government was making for war.

At the close of December, 1845, Herrera was forced to resign the presidency of Mexico, and Paredes was elected in his place; and detachments of troops began to move north, concentrating at Matamoras, on the Rio Grande, and the aspect of affairs looked quite belligerent. On the 22d of February, 1846, a depot of supplies was established by our troops at Santa Gertrudes, some forty miles in advance on the route to Matamoras. On the 7th of March the tents of our company were struck preparatory to a move, and the day following the line of march for the Rio Grande commenced.

The advance troops were a brigade of cavalry and Ringgold's battery of horse artillery. To be more minute, the order of march was: a company of cavalry, then our battery, then the main body of cavalry. As you can get all important matters from history, I shall allude only to what history generally omits, and relate minor affairs or scenes behind history, like that unknown behind the stage. The first night out we encamped at a beautiful place covered with blue flowers like the hyacinth. It was pleasant to look at, an enchanting scene that would have been drowsy and dreamlike from the fragrance of the flowers had we not discovered nearly every man grazing his horse carrying a small pole with which he was killing rattlesnakes. That night I slept on the ground and dreamed a great centipede was crawling over me, and I awoke with a great scream, like Dudu, from her sleep.

We had breakfast at daylight, and while we were sitting by