

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—Capt. Thornton and Hardee Captured.

**D**URING 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

the camp fire waiting for the bugle to call, and watching the wild geese flying around overhead bewildered by the fires, I held my gun pointing at them, and by some mishap it went off and alarmed the camp; but a goose fell down, nevertheless, near me. The guide, Pedro, said we had sixteen miles to march that day to the next camp. Our line was diverging somewhat inland from the gulf shore, and all the prairie was one green carpet of grass and flowers as far as the eye could reach, when all at once there was a great ocean on our left and not far distant. Officers galloped to Pedro to learn what was the matter, and ere an explanation was had the *mirage* was gone, the ocean was gone, and we were on the lone prairie as before.

The third day we were marching quietly along when an alarm was sounded. To our right and a little to the rear in the horizon was what appeared to be a column of cavalry bearing down on us. As it came nearer and nearer the cry arose: "Wild horses, wild horses!" Our battery was closed up, the advanced company of cavalry moved on, leaving a large opening; the dragoons massed, making an interval for the herd to pass through. On, and on they came and, at full speed, with their long flowing manes and tails, passed through the open space made by the battery and dragoons. There were between two and three hundred. As soon as they passed Capt. May, Lieut. Ridgely, and some other officers were after them on their fine horses with lariat in hand, and after a ride of a mile or more came back each with a young colt. They stayed with our horses several days and then disappeared. When we encamped a pony that I had bought for my servant to ride was bitten on the face by a rattlesnake near the door of our tent. The animal was treated with ammonia and whisky. The next morning his head was so swollen that I left him behind. A servant of the paymaster, when the infantry came along, found the pony and brought it on to the Rio Grande and returned it to my boy.

The infantry marched by brigades at a day's interval. The officers and men being in uniform, wearing caps, had their lips and noses nearly raw from the sun and winds, and could not put a cup of coffee to their lips until it was cold. I wore an immense sombrero, or Mexican straw hat. On the route I was often told: "When Gen. Taylor comes up you will be put in arrest for wearing that hat." The army concentrated near the

Arroyo Colorado, where the general commanding overtook us. I went over to call on him the next morning, and found him in front of his tent sitting on a camp stool eating breakfast. His table was the lid of the mess chest. His nose was white from the peeling off of the skin, and his lips raw. As I came up he saluted me with: "Good morning, lieutenant, good morning; sensible man to wear a hat." So I was commended instead of being censured for making myself comfortable. His coffee was in a tin cup, and his lips so sore that the heat of the tin was painful.

A day or so after this the advance pickets encountered a herd of wild cattle that all ran away except an old bull that showed fight. Hearing shots in advance I galloped, on and found four or five cavalymen around this animal, that looked as if he might be the grandsire of the herd. Every shot fired from the carbines had failed to penetrate the skin. I was armed with my shotgun and a brace of old pistols made in Marseilles, France, that Lieut. U. S. Grant gave me to carry along for him. I fired both these pistols at the enraged animal, and the balls only made the skin red by removing the hair. We now persuaded a dragoon to put himself in front of the beast while I approached within twenty feet of his side, and from my gun fired a ball that penetrated the lungs. Still he pawed the earth and charged the horses, some of which were injured, and inspired new life to all around him while his own was ebbing. At last a dragoon dismounted, cautiously approached, shot him in the forehead, and the already weakened bull fell on his knees and rolled on his side—dead.

This fight was not conducted according to all the rules of the ring at Madrid. We had, however, a dozen picadors and a matadore, and they performed feats of valor without the approving smiles of black-eyed señoras or the applause of the grandees, which in Spain nerves the actors to daring deeds; but there was a compensation, for there were no hisses when one fled from the bull to save his horse, or sought a raking position in the rear to encourage those in front. The lesson I drew from this kind of recreation was that at the next bullfight I would be found among the spectators and not in the arena.

This continued firing by the advance guard caused troops to hasten to the front to ascertain the reason of the tumult, and

when it was reported to Gen. Taylor that according to the rules of Texas, Mexico, and Spain a bull had been found, an amphitheater marked out, and that a real bull fight had taken place; that the noble animal had been slain for amusement, and that his cavalry was not well trained and had been tossed by the bull, he grew irate, and alas! to spoil our little game of recreations away in front, caused an order to be issued forbidding all firing on the march, unless necessitated by the presence of the enemy. Henceforth the bulls, deer, and jack rabbits became friendly with us, and we passed them by in silence.

Nearly every day small armed parties of Mexicans were seen away in advance, and once when we rode to a small pond to water our horses we found a party of Mexican lancers watering theirs also. A few words of salutation passed, when they moved on and disappeared. Once they set the prairie on fire, and we had to drive through the leaping flames with our guns and caissons filled with ammunition.

On the 19th the head of the column was halted and went into camp about three or four miles off the stream called Arroyo Colorado, to wait the arrival or concentration of all the troops, about four thousand in number, and preparation to cross was made by the engineers. On the morning of the 20th, our battery was put in position on the banks of the river where the earth had been cut down for it to cross, and where its fire could command the opposite shore and cover the landing of the infantry. Notice had been given the engineer officer by the Mexicans that the forces on the Mexican shore were under positive orders to fire on any of our troops attempting to cross. Again a like notice was sent to Gen. Taylor, and a proclamation that had been issued by Gen. Mejia a day or two past was handed to him. During this time an awful din was made on the Mexican side by bugle calls away down, and far up the river, and kettle-drums and fife in the woods in front. Our guns were loaded and matches lit when the old General gave the command for the infantry to cross. The head of the columns plunged into the water, holding their cartridge boxes and muskets high, and, landing, deployed at once right and left. Other troops crossed above on the right, and when all moved forward not a Mexican was seen.

On the 24th we arrived at a point on the main road running

from Point Isabel to Matamoras which was ten miles from Point Isabel and a like distance from Matamoras. Gen. Worth was directed to move on toward the Rio Grande near Matamoras with the infantry, while Gen. Taylor, with our battery and the dragoons, went down to meet Maj. Munroe at Point Isabel, where he had established a depot of supplies for the army. On the 26th Gen. Taylor, with his escort of cavalry and artillery, joined the main body under Worth, and on the 28th the army encamped on the river bank opposite Matamoras.

The arrival of Gen. Taylor with his army, quietly taking the position he did, no doubt produced some consternation. Mexican infantry was seen in motion in the city. They had the river picketed and batteries placed to bear on our camp.

The Mexican commander insisted that all was lovely, and that there was no war; that the acts of hostility were little events—little incidents—to make our arrival interesting and pleasant. That the Consul for the United States in Matamoras was free, and a gentleman of leisure, but that Gen. Taylor could not interview him without permission from the Commandante.

Notwithstanding "the distinguished consideration" and affectionate regard expressed in the communications for the Americans, Gen. Taylor concluded to put up some field works or fortifications out of courtesy to those being constructed by the Mexicans. We were in the land of Moab, and the promised land was on the other side. There was the city embowered in green foliage, with tropical plants around the white houses, and there, when the sun was declining, would assemble the female population to see and to be seen, and listen to the music of the various bands. "Dixie" was not then born, the "Bonnie Blue Flag" had not then been waved; and we played "Yankee Doodle" because it made a loud noise, the "Star-Spangled Banner" because it waved over us, "Hail, Columbia" because it was inspiring, and the sweetest airs from the operas for the beautiful señoritas with the rebosas that disclosed the sweet faces they were designed to hide. The music from the other side I cannot recall now, only it rose with a "voluptuous swell" that floated over the water and died away softly in the distance with the breath that made it. And all the while on our side the shore was lined with officers and soldiers enjoying the scene before them—that had a short existence.

"Ampudia has come! Ampudia has come!" was heralded by every Mexican that came into our camp vending the products of the farms. And so it was. He came clothed in modesty, and made a display of it immediately by sending a dispatch on the 12th ordering Gen. Taylor to get out of his camp in twenty-four hours, and not to stop on this side of the Nueces. I do not believe Taylor was much acquainted with fear, because, instead of "folding his tents like the Arabs, and silently stealing away," he had the audacity to remain just where he was until the twenty-four hours had expired, and long after.

About this time Col. Cross, of the quartermaster's department, was murdered by some one and his body thrown in the chaparral. I was with a party of officers that was riding up the river, not expressly in search of Col. Cross's body, some seven or eight days after he was missed, and we observed some vultures resting in an old tree top. I rode in toward them, and saw a blue coat on the ground. It was Col. Cross's, and some of his remains were there. They were afterwards gathered up and cared for properly. One of the parties, a detachment of dragoons, sent in search of Cross's body got into a fight with the Mexicans and Lieut. Porter was killed; and yet there was no war?

And now a greater than Ampudia had arrived, and on the 24th of April Gen. Arista assumed command of the Mexican army now encamped in and around the city, and he informed Taylor that he considered hostilities commenced, and had "let slip the dogs of war." The enemy was now reported to have crossed to our side in large numbers, and parties were sent out to make reconnoissances, one of which was captured by the Mexicans; and Capts. Thornton and Hardee were now prisoners of war.

## CHAPTER V.

Arista and His Cavalry—United States Excited—Two Hundred Thousand Men Offer Their Services—Congress Declares "War Existed by the Acts of the Mexican Republic"—Taylor Marches to Point Isabel—Bombardment of Fort Brown—Capts. May and Walker—Taylor Marches for Matamoras—Battle of Palo Alto—Victory—Arista Falls Back to Resaca—Battle of Resaca—Capture of Enemies' Batteries—Capts. May and Ridgely—Gen. La Vega Captured—His Sword Presented to Taylor—Duncan and Ridgely Pursue the Enemy—I Capture La Vega's Aid—Col. McIntosh—Ride over the Field of Palo Alto—Death of Lieuts. Chadburne and Stevens—We take possession of Matamoras—Gen. Twiggs appointed Governor—Twiggs and Jesus Maria—Arrival of Gens. W. O. Butler, Robert Patterson, Pillow, and others—Promoted to Second Lieutenant—Officers of the Company—March to Camargo—Thence to Monterey—Seralvo—Arrival at Monterey.

AND now Arista, on the part of the Mexican government, having declared that war existed; and some of our forces, both men and officers, having been killed or captured, the pony express carried this news to the city of New Orleans; and as there was no telegraph, it spread all over the country and became magnified like "the three black crows." The apprehension that we were cut off from communicating with home by Arista's army occupying a position between us and Point Isabel was widespread, and impromptu meetings held for volunteers to go to the relief of our army, and thousands responded to the call. Congress was in session, and it promptly declared that "war existed by the acts of the Mexican Republic," and authorized the President to accept into service fifty thousand volunteers. As over two hundred thousand men offered their services, it may be, as Mark Twain once observed, that many persons "persuaded their wives' relations" to avail themselves of this unique occasion to visit the land of the Aztecs, and enjoy balmy breezes under the shade of the acacia, the bamboo, and the pomegranate, with transportation free. In the meantime we were in blissful ignorance that we were in such danger, and did not know it until our friends came to our relief.

When Arista landed a part of his force on our side of the river, it was put in the field under the command of Gen. Torrejon, and, being cavalry, had gained possession of the road lead-