

he was whipped," and just stayed there, while *he* was obliged to go back for water, provisions, and forage, and left the field to Taylor. I take this occasion to express my gratification to Santa Anna, even at this late date, for not staying on the field he had won, and I acknowledge his distinguished consideration in permitting me to remain at Saltillo. How vexatious it must have been to Santa Anna in his old age to recall to mind that the ignorance of Gen. Taylor in not knowing he was whipped so changed his destiny, and no doubt he thought how truthful is the line:

"Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise."

We had present 4,691 officers and men, and our loss was: killed, 272; wounded, 388; missing, 6; total, 666. The relative number of wounded to the killed is very remarkable. Usually there are five or more wounded to one killed. The enemy numbered over 20,000 men. Although their reports place their loss at over 4,000, it falls short of the real number.

At dawn on the following morning it was discovered that Santa Anna had retreated to Agua Nueva. Gen. Taylor, with a proper escort, rode to Encantada and sent Col. Bliss to Santa Anna for an exchange of prisoners captured before the battle. This was effected. The wounded Mexicans even from Encarnacion were removed to Saltillo for medical care.

Here we have the achievements of one plain, unpretending practical, common sense man, who was ever observant of duty, and whose declaration was, "I will fight the enemy wherever I find him," summed up in four victories—Palo Alto, Resaca, Monterey, and Buena Vista. Success, ordinarily, is the measure of the greatness of a soldier.

## CHAPTER VII.

Drs. T. C. Madison, U. S. A., and G. M. Provost—Surgical Operation—Courtesy of a Mexican Woman—Leave Saltillo—Paltry Escort—Safe at Monterey—The Rio Grande—Maj. W. W. H. Davis—New Orleans—Gen. Pillow—Col. McIntosh—Bailey Beyton and Sargeant S. Prentiss—Drunk by Absorption—Steamer for Louisville—Racing on the River—Trip to Pittsburg, Pa.—By Canal Boat to Harrisburg—Home—Report to the Adjutant General—Go to Trenton, N. J.—Presentation of a Sword—Go to Washington—John W. Forney's Bargain with Secretary Buchanan—Capt. A. W. Reynolds—Sent to Troy, N. Y.—Gen. Wool—Leave Buffalo—Toledo—To Cincinnati by Canal—Society in Cincinnati—Appointed Captain and Assistant Quartermaster—Start for Washington—Cross the Alleghany Mountains by Stage—Six Commissions in United States Army—Reception by Gen. Jesup—Capt. Rufus Ingalls.

I NOW come back to personal matters. The weather was springlike. The door of my room in Saltillo opened on the street on a level with the pavements, and through it and the windows I could see all the passersby, and it imparted a cheerfulness to the surroundings.

My physician was Thomas C. Madison, United States army, a most estimable gentleman and skillful surgeon. Several consultations were held in my case. They would not cut for the ball because they could not discover where it was. I was becoming emaciated, and felt conscious that I could not live unless the ball was removed. I had now been on the cot over forty days, and I demanded that they should extract the ball, for I could tell them *where* it was. So next day Dr. Madison came, and with him Dr. Grayson M. Prevost. They declined to use the knife, but promised to come on the morrow, and Dr. Madison came alone next morning. No one was present but my servant. I placed my finger over where I was sure the ball was then located, and told him to perform his duty, that I was responsible for the result. In those days there was no anæsthetic known, and surgical instruments were not often made for special purposes. As I predicted, the doctor found the ball. I was watching his face intently, and the moment he touched the ball I saw an expression of delight come over his countenance. Suffice to say, for the want of modern instruments, he cut a gash, or hole, large enough to insert his finger and a large steel hook to get



the ball out. I think the doctor was in a better humor than I was, for I had said bad words to my servant for not holding my foot. I found afterwards it was the tetanus that cramped or contracted the muscles of the leg. In three days I managed to sit on the side of my cot; and some days after, with crutches, I went to the door and looked into the street.

And now I must tell you a little incident. From my cot I could see a Mexican woman who almost every afternoon would sit on her doorstep. She must have been very old, for her hair was as white as snow, her cheeks were bony, and her hands without flesh. She must have sympathized with me, though her enemy in war, for on seeing me at my door she rose from her seat, made a slight courtesy, and soon after sent me a bunch of fresh flowers by a little girl.

“One touch of nature makes the whole world akin.”

Sometime early in April I was informed that I could have an ambulance, with leave to return to the United States and report to the Adjutant General in Washington.

I was furnished with an escort of *two men* on horses and my servant, five in all, to pass through the enemy's country to Monterey, a protection really inadequate. We reached Rinconada late in the day, and my bed was the counter of an abandoned store. The next day we arrived at Monterey safely, and I was made very comfortable by the quartermaster. I remained in the city until a train of wagons left for Camargo for army supplies, and when we started I took one “last, long, lingering” look at the surroundings of the city which had but a few months before been to me so pregnant with exciting events.

The journey to Camargo was devoid of particular interest. I found a government steamer there, and took passage for Point Isabel, or Barzos Santiago. On the trip down the river we saw a great many cattle that, in attempting to get water, had sunk in the mud to perish. Some had only their heads visible; others, a part of their bodies. It was a piteous sight to see the poor beasts, while yet alive, being devoured by buzzards.

When I arrived at Matamoras Capt. W. W. H. Davis came down to the steamer to see me. He was a student with us at Burlington, N. J., and was a general in the United States army during the late war, and is now a resident of Doylestown, Pa.

When in Matamoras he was a member of the staff of Gen. Caleb Cushing. He had retained my mail, and brought it to me on the steamer. Among the letters was one from Hon. Garret D. Wall informing me that the citizens of New Jersey had caused a sword to be made for me, and had placed it in his hands for presentation, at such place and time as would suit my convenience. This was a surprise to me, for no one had informed me of these matters.

On arrival at Point Isabel there were a brig and a steamer ready to sail for New Orleans. I was put on board the brig, but it was so dirty that I could not remain, preferring to risk my life on the old sidewheel steamer James L. Day. As I was taken ashore I met Col. McClung, of Mississippi, also wounded, going on the brig, where he remained. On the steamer were some officers on their way to New Orleans from Gen. Scott's army, and among them was Gen. Gideon J. Pillow, who was wounded slightly at Cerro Gordo. The steamer was unfit for a voyage on the ocean, although the weather was calm and the sea smooth. I amused myself watching from my cot the partition boards slide up and down, caused by the gentle rolling of the vessel. On reaching New Orleans we landed aside of some ship, on which I was placed, put in a chair, hoisted up and run out the yard-arm, and lowered on to the wharf.

I think we arrived in New Orleans about the 18th of May. At the St. Charles I met a number of old friends, army officers and civilians, and among the latter were Col. Bailey Peyton and S. S. Prentiss. In a few days I learned to locomote very well on one leg and my crutches.

Some few days after we arrived in the city a grand illumination and street procession was gotten up to celebrate some victory of our army in Mexico, and late in the afternoon a committee called on me to participate. About 8 p.m. Col. MacIntosh and myself were escorted to a barouche drawn by four white horses, to take our place in the line of procession. The streets were crowded with people. The horses did not like the crowd, the shouts, the music, nor the transparencies, and manifested it by frequently standing upon their hind legs; and had it become necessary to get out of the carriage, I was not able to do so. The Colonel and I were put on exhibition as two “heroes” from the war. The Colonel, as you remember, deserved it, for he was



once pinned to the earth with bayonets and lances. One bayonet went in his mouth and passed through his neck into the earth. I rejoice to say we were returned to our landlord, from whom we had been borrowed, safely. I write this to show you how evanescent these things are. To-day we are the idols of the crowd; to-morrow we pass along the same street unobserved, unheeded, unknown save to friends. So passes away much of the glory of this world.

One evening after tea Col. Peyton and Mr. Prentiss asked me if I was able to join them in a short walk down the street. We had gone but a little way when, passing a door, we heard some one speaking, and loud applause in a hall, the floor of which was on a level with the pavement. Mr. Peyton said: "Let us go in." It proved to be a political meeting called for the purpose of expressing a preference for some one of the prominent men in the Whig party for the presidency. Mr. Hunt, who was speaking, closed his address in a few minutes after we entered. We were close to the door by which we had entered. Some one saw Mr. Prentiss, and called out: "Prentiss!" He turned to gain the street, but the crowd would not let him pass, while "Prentiss! Prentiss!" came from a hundred mouths. He exclaimed to his friend: "Why did we come here?" There was no alternative but to face the standing crowd. He uncovered his head and in a few words excused himself. It was in vain! The cry was everywhere: "Go to the platform!" Getting into a chair that chanced to be near the door, he spoke somewhat as follows, as I recall it after a lapse of near fifty years:

*Mr. Chairman and Friends:* As I was passing along this street with some friends I saw lights in this room and heard loud applause, and we entered to ascertain what was the object of the meeting, and from the closing remarks made by the distinguished gentleman who has just taken his seat I can infer the object of this assemblage.

When a young lady has been robed for a grand ball her maid opens and places on the toilet table before her her jewelry case, that she may select such as will be the most appropriate for the occasion. She takes out the sapphires and arrays them on her person to embellish her charms, but she places them on the table before her. The attendant encircles her swanlike neck with pearls, emblems of her purity, but she has them placed beside the sapphires. They put diamonds in her ears, and the sparkling cross rests on her bosom, flashing incessant lights as it rises and falls with every breath. She surveys them carefully; then has them removed and put aside also. And now rubies, the most costly of stones, are contrasted with her

fair complexion; and at last they too are removed and laid with the others. She surveys them all, contrasts their qualities, and as each would be alike appropriate for the occasion, she stands undecided which is preferable. Now, Mr. Chairman, when I open the *casket of Whig jewels*, and gaze on their varied brilliancy, I am as undecided as the young lady was. They differ in some respects, but each is qualified for the opportunity, and I hesitate which I would commend as most worthy to occupy the presidential chair.

How nicely he evades an expression of preference for any one for the office, and this without offense to any of the aspirants!

While speaking of Mr. Prentiss I will relate to you as best I can a story of his reply to Mr. P., who accused him of intoxication while they were each making the joint canvass for Congress from Mississippi. And I will premise it by stating that P. had the reputation of being a lover of whisky. It was before a large and appreciative audience of Prentiss's friends, and in joint debate that the charge was made. In replying to that Mr. Prentiss said in his rejoinder, as I heard it related:

*Ladies and Gentlemen:* Many of you know me well, you have been present with me at numerous social entertainments, and I acknowledge it is true that I have a taste for the light wines of Italy and the pleasant wines of France. Wines have been the common beverage of mankind on festive occasions from the remotest ages. They impart a genial warmth to my feelings, a glow of tenderness to my heart, awaken my imagination, enlarge my sympathy, and give to music enrapturing charms, until in the fullness of joy I forget the ills of life and love my fellow-men.

I assure you, my friends, I have never been drunk from drinking whisky; but my opponent here is never so happy as when he retires to his room and draws from the closet his demijohn of whisky, throws it over his back, tips it over his shoulder: and no music is so sweet to his ear as the sound of the whisky singing "gurgle, gurgle, gurgle," as it leaps into the cup, save only that other sound of "gargle, gargle, gargle," as he pours it down his capacious throat.

I have told you that I have never been drunk from *drinking* whisky. But by whisky, ah! I remember me now; I was once made drunk, and it happened in this way. Sometime ago I had occasion to attend court in a remote county, sparsely settled, and where there was but little accommodation for the court. I arrived after night and repaired to the house pointed out to me where I could get lodging. The proprietor said his rooms were all full, but there was one room occupied by a lawyer that had a double bed in it, and perhaps he would share it with me. When I was ready to retire the landlord took a tallow candle and conducted me to the room. By the dim light I saw my present opponent in bed asleep, oblivious to sounds. I retired and slept by his side. When morning came



I found myself possessed of a strange feeling; I was dizzy, sick, drunk. Yes, *drunk by absorption!*

When Mr. Prentiss began the great speech he made in New York City a clergyman took his watch from his pocket to note the time; and two hours after, when Mr. Prentiss fell exhausted, this clergyman felt his pocket for his watch. It was gone, and he thought he was robbed, until he discovered his watch open in his left hand. He was so captivated and *en rapport* with the wonderful orator that he was oblivious to time, and stood there in the vast crowd listening to the words as they fell from his lips. Turning to a friend, he exclaimed: "Never tell me that man is not inspired."

I could tell you many things about this remarkable man, but time and other matters forbid. I will say, however, that I believe that *Alexander Hamilton* and *S. S. Prentiss* head the list of all men in the United States who have achieved greatness in early life. Prentiss's oratory burst on the people like a meteor athwart the sky, and ended as suddenly with his early death.

When I left New Orleans the surgeons advised me that I should go by water as far as I could on my journey north, and avoid the shaking of the railroad cars. I took passage on the steamer Chancellor for Louisville, and when we backed out from the levee and headed up the river we saw a steamer—the Belle of the West, I think it was—close behind us, and then the race began. For fifteen hundred miles it was a bitter struggle; first one ahead and then the other, according to the landings made. Now the Belle would be ahead and then our pilot would quit the main channel and by taking the "chutes" come out ahead. Then we would be overtaken and run side by side. Often the two boats ran with their guards touching, allowing the passengers of the two steamers to converse with each other and have a jolly time. On the Belle was a lady with her three daughters, of whom you will hear more hereafter. At Paducah, finding a number of barrels of resin, our captain bought them to use with the wood to increase the steam. So on and on we went, with boilers hissing and volumes of black smoke rolling from the smokestacks or chimneys, forming great clouds that were wafted away by the winds. After five or six days and nights of clanking of the fire doors, ringing of the bells above and below, and the blowing of

whistles, we arrived at Louisville just fifteen minutes behind the Belle.

When I look back on the danger incurred from the explosion of a boiler, I cannot recall to mind one word of protest from any passenger against carrying such a high pressure of steam, or of asking the officers to desist. On the contrary, every one would shout for joy and wave their handkerchiefs on the passing boat.

However reprehensible, those races were common in the palmy days of steamboats on the "Father of Waters."

From Louisville I went to Cincinnati, thence on a small steamer to Pittsburg. Here I took passage on a canal boat for the east. As time was no object to me, I was not impatient of delay, and enjoyed the wild mountain scenery of the Alleghanies, and the pretty views along the blue Juniata; and as chance would have it, among the passengers were the lady (Mrs. J. L. Roberts) and her daughters that were on the Belle of the West, to whom I was presented by the gentleman who came to Pittsburg to meet them. They went by canal because one of them had been injured by having been thrown from their carriage. From this time on they were kind friends of mine, and I recall with delight the many happy days that I subsequently passed at their home on their plantation back of Natchez, Miss.

I reached home in June, and my father and mother welcomed me—whom the newspapers had reported killed in battle—with a joy not unlike that given to him for whom the fattened calf was killed.

I soon reported at the Adjutant General's office, and was given indefinite leave. Returning home, I received a note from a friend in the office of the Quartermaster General soon after, telling me that there were some vacancies in the quartermaster's department, and that if I would return to Washington and report to the department for duty I might be made captain and assistant quartermaster in the regular staff; but I did not go until sometime in July.

I received a letter from Senator G. D. Wall stating that it was the wish of the committee that I should be in Trenton on the fourth of July to receive the sword that was to be presented to me. So I repaired to Burlington, and in company with him and the Rt. Rev. G. W. Doane, bishop of New Jersey, went to Trenton. When the people were leaving the hotel for the public



hall where the presentation was to take place, the Senator sent me the manuscript of his intended remarks. It was too late to write anything in reply, as the carriages were waiting; so we got in and went to the hall. I was very much frightened. There were many on the stage or platform, and among them an officer of the navy in uniform. I had on a citizen's dress.

Mr. Wall made a very appropriate address, and delivered the sword to me. I am sure that I made a very poor reply, and the only good thing was its brevity. But think of it! Wall did not say anything that he had written, but made an extempore speech, much to my surprise. When it was ended Senator W. L. Dayton said to the General: "You made an excellent address." "Well, I have a much better one in my pocket," was his reply. As I was comparatively a stranger to most of the large audience, I think the officer in uniform was taken for me, for when I rose to receive the sword there was a hum of surprise all over the house. I was glad when the presentation was ended. The next thing in order was to dine with the "Society of the Cincinnati," of New Jersey. I was invited to dine with the "Society of the Cincinnati" of Pennsylvania also, but declined. One dinner was ample, and I was not strong.

In a day or two I returned to Washington. I was ordered by Dr. A. S. Wotherspoon to quit all labor, and after he had bandaged my leg he kept me on my back three weeks. It did no good; no adhesion of the parts was made. I was vexed; so I took from my trunk a bottle of I know not what, obtained in New Orleans, only it smelled of turpentine, and injected it into the wound. I got up in the morning to go home, but lo and behold, the bandages were all saturated with blood and the wound inflamed. So, instead of going home, I was put on my back again. However that injection inflamed the sinus in my leg, and when bandaged again all the interior grew together, and in three weeks I was on my crutches, and my toes, or foot, touched the ground for the first time for about six months. So I was permanently cured by accident.

I had made application to the President for the appointment of assistant quartermaster some time in June. Now one day in July, when I was kept in bed by the doctor, a friend of mine, Mr. Nugent, came to my room to impart to me the information that I would not get the appointment because I could not "take

the field," and that it would be given to Lieut. A. W. Reynolds, who was in Philadelphia on recruiting service. Nugent was connected with a newspaper, and was at times an assistant in the office of James Buchanan, Secretary of State, if I remember aright. On that day J. W. Forney, editor of *The Pennsylvanian*, a Democratic paper in Philadelphia, was in the office of Mr. Buchanan, and agreed to throw George M. Dallas, Vice President, overboard and support Mr. Buchanan for the presidency provided certain things were done by him for Mr. Forney. One of these items was that A. W. Reynolds should be appointed assistant quartermaster. I asked Nugent what special service Reynolds had rendered, as he had not been in Mexico at all, to entitle him to promotion. "Why he has always carried his recruits to the polls to vote for Forney's Democratic friends." And thus it was; and on the 5th of August Reynolds was appointed "to take the field." Reynolds was a genial fellow, and "took the field" by remaining in Philadelphia until the spring of 1848, when he went to Matamoras to bring some mules to the States.

Lieut. Derby, alias John Plœnix, alias John P. Squibbob, that prince of humorists, and I had now located ourselves on Fourteenth Street, near Willard's, expecting to have a pleasant time during the coming winter, when one day about the 8th of September a messenger from the War Department brought me a note asking me if I was able to go to the arsenal at Troy, N. Y., to select a six-gun field battery, caissons, harness, etc., all complete, and take it with me, by way of the lakes and canal, to Cincinnati, Ohio.

I replied that I would leave immediately. While at Troy I met Gen. Wool. He had come home from Buena Vista. He had some friends to meet me at a dining, and I remember his pun on a young lady to whom I was presented, "Miss Hart, one of *deer* family." The battery was shipped on a canal boat to Buffalo. I went by train. Stopped in Rochester all night. The next morning, October 16, the ground was covered with snow, which made me apprehensive that the navigation by canal would close in Ohio before I could reach there. When the steamer arrived at Cleveland the water had been let out of the canal, so we went on to Toledo. From there I went on to Cincinnati by passenger boat. I was the only passenger, except local ones



getting on and off along the route. Toledo was no town at all, and the sidewalks were "paved" with gunwales of barge boats, and here and there a plank, and the mud!

I remained in Cincinnati during the months of November and December idle, awaiting orders. There were many parties given, and the society people were pleasant and accomplished. During the day, however, nearly all the men were busy, and I used to say there were but three young men idle in the city—Grosbeck, Febiger, of the navy, and myself.

Early in January, 1848, Senator J. D. Westcott informed me that the President had appointed me captain and assistant quartermaster, and sent my name, among others, to the Senate for confirmation.

The commission is dated January 12, 1848. I had been in the service only four and a half years and had received six commissions—viz., brevet second lieutenant, United States army; second lieutenant, Third Artillery; brevet first lieutenant, United States army; first lieutenant, Third Artillery; brevet captain, United States army; and captain and assistant quartermaster in the general staff of the army, outranking some officers that had been from twelve to eighteen years in service. The brevets were bestowed for "gallant and meritorious services at the battles of Monterey and Buena Vista, Mexico."

When I was informed of the appointment I went up the river to Brownsville, Pa., thence to Cumberland, Md., by stage. The weather was intensely cold. Snow covered the plains and the mountains, and travel had made the roads very smooth and slippery. In going down Laurel Mountain we barely escaped an accident. The stagecoach, when held back, would swing around on the icy incline and go down sideways, and to prevent this the driver gave reins to the horses and we were descending at a gallop, when turning a point we met an eight-mule team that had the inside track, leaving our driver just a possible space to pass. He measured the space and saw the danger instantly, barely missed the hubs of the enormous wagon, and, as he sheered in behind the wagon, our hind wheel on the right threw down the mountain side a quantity of earth, snow, and rocks. There were nine of us in the coach, which gave us the privilege of stopping at night. A member of the Senate from Missouri was opposed to the delay; he must be in Washington, and so the party was

divided. The narrow escape from death settled the matter, for when we got out for supper no one said to the driver: "We will go on to-night."

On arriving in Washington I was ordered to report to Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, Quartermaster General of the army. He received me courteously, but observed in a pleasant manner: "Capt. French, neither you nor Capt. Rufus Ingalls were recommended by me for appointment in my department; you were commissioned over officers that I recommended. Besides, the regulations of the army forbids any officer from becoming a captain and assistant quartermaster until he has been *five years* in service, and neither of you have been in the army five years."

It was suggested to him that experience was a slow but very good teacher; that one of his last appointees had not been in the field, while Capt. Ingalls and I had served nearly two years in Mexico, and from experience had derived some knowledge of the duties of officers of the department which should overbalance length of years of service in garrison at home, and that we should not be condemned before trial.

It is a remarkable fact that Gen. Ingalls was retained, from the beginning to the end of the war, as the chief quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac under its many commanders. It is proof of his great administrative ability.