

## CHAPTER VIII.

Ordered to New Orleans—Baton Rouge—Col. W. W. S. Bliss—Maj. J. H. Eaton—Maj. R. S. Garnett—Taylor Nominated for President—Return to New Orleans—Ordered to Vicksburg—"Gen." McMacken, the Prince of Landlords—Bishop Polk—Sent to Mobile—Regular Army at East Pascagoula, Miss.—Gen. Twiggs and His Fiancée—Sail for Galveston—Galveston—Houston—Austin—Troops Sent to Establish Posts, now Cities—San Antonio—Death of Gen. Worth—El Paso—Return to San Antonio—New Orleans—Call on Gen. Twiggs—Twiggs and Tree—Sword Presented to Me—Dine at the President's—Death of President Taylor—Fillmore President—Capt. Ringgold, U. S. N.—Ordered to Louisville—Return to Washington—Col. Joseph Taylor—Gen. W. O. Butler—Maj. Gaines—Cincinnati—Salmon P. Chase.

I WAS ordered to report for duty to Col. D. D. Tompkins in New Orleans, and remained there some three months. From that city I was put on duty at Baton Rouge, La., where Gen. Taylor and his family were living at the barracks. Of his staff, Col. Bliss, Maj. Eaton, and Capt. R. S. Garnett were with him. One day I was walking down town with Mrs. Taylor and her daughter Bettie, when a steamer landed, and brought the news of the General's nomination for President. Mrs. Taylor expressed regret that he was nominated; said "he had honors enough;" but added, however, "Since he has become a candidate, I hope he will be elected, and if he be, I will not preside at the White House."

From Baton Rouge I went to New Orleans; thence to Vicksburg, Miss., July 4, 1848, to muster out of service the regiment of Mississippi riflemen commanded by Col. Reuben M. Davis. We lived at the Prentiss House, kept by that prince of landlords, Gen. McMacken, who always "cried" his bill of fare. He said that when he kept a hotel in Jackson, Miss., he was obliged to do so, because so many of the members of the Legislature at that time could not read the printed ones, and he continued it to the day of his death. He was exceedingly pleasing in manners. On one occasion, seeing a gentleman of a commanding presence enter the dining room and seat himself at the table, he welcomed him with: "Good morning, general." "That is not my title, sir." "Ah, excuse me, judge." "Mis-

taken again, sir." "Well, bishop, what will you be helped to?" "Why do you call me bishop?" "Because I am sure that you stand at the head of your profession, whatever it may be." That gentleman was Bishop Leonidas Polk, afterwards a Confederate general.

During the summer and fall there was yellow fever in Mobile and New Orleans; but no one regarded it, except to leave the cities at night if possible; during the day business went on as usual.

On my return to New Orleans I was ordered to Mobile, Ala., to take charge of government property, and to muster out a company of Alabama cavalry. This finished, I was kept there awaiting orders. In the meantime the army from Mexico had returned, and was encamped at East Pascagoula, and in September I was ordered there.

The evening I arrived there was a ball given at the hotel. I met there a young, tall, and pretty lady from Mobile, with whom I was acquainted. She personated the morning star. Leaving the "floor," she took a seat on a sofa beside Gen. Twiggs, and I seated myself on the other side of her. She declined several sets, and I remained talking with her. All the while the General said but a few words. The windows were open, and I felt some one on the gallery pull my hair. I went out to ascertain the meaning of it. Two or three officers came up, and said: "French, don't unpack your trunk; you will be ordered away in the morning. Don't you know that young lady is Gen. Twiggs's fiancée? He is as jealous as a Barbary cock." I mention this because of something hereafter.

I remained in Pascagoula until the army had been sent hither and thither, according to the wants of the service. The last shipment of troops was some cavalry to Galveston, and I followed on after them, last of all, in an old propeller. It so happened, as I was leaving the wharf, that a captain of a vessel had just made an observation of the sun to get the time, and I set my watch by it. When we got out on the gulf a cyclone came on. The ship had no chronometer, and only anthracite coal, which made but little steam. The propeller was now spinning in the air; then motionless when under water. Finally the captain had to run before the wind to the south.

Some days after, when running north, we saw land, and made

observations. I got the longitude from my watch. It said thirty miles from Galveston. The captain said that the land was the mouth of the Sabine river. Two hours after, we saw the shipping in Galveston, proving my observation correct. The wind was still blowing hard. No pilot boat could come out for us. It was a government ship, and I ordered the captain to make the harbor. The trouble was to find the outer buoy. Finally it was discovered, and we got in safely.

Gen. Twiggs had been assigned to the Department of Texas, and I found him in Houston. We remained there a few days; and, when the dragoons started for Austin, Twiggs, his aid, Capt. W. T. H. Brooks, and I took the stage for Austin also. It had been raining all day and all night when we started. From Houston to a small mound on the prairie twenty-five miles on the road the land was all under water, and still it rained. We crossed the Brazos river about noon, and went on in the rain, which continued all night. At 2 A.M. the driver turned out of the road, and down went the coach till the body was on the ground. The driver said that there was a farmhouse about four miles farther on. A horse was unhitched, and Gen. Twiggs was put on it bareback to ride to the house. Two passengers went on foot. I had in a satchel \$5,000 in gold (government funds), which was in the box under the hind seat. Brooks said that he would stay there and guard it, if I would go on and get help. I also mounted a horse and overtook the General. When we reached the house, the farmer got up, had a fire made to dry our clothing, and agreed to send some mules to bring in the coach. The General made so many abusive remarks about Texas and the people that the farmer got mad, and said that the stage might "stay where it was;" but when he was satisfied that the remarks made by Twigg were not personal, he started the servants for the coach. The General and I had to rest in the one bed the best we could.

The coach came up about eight in the morning. The General declared that he would go no farther, but return to New Orleans. Now, the truth was, he wished to go back to meet that young lady. I was told that when she returned to Mobile some of her old and experienced friends persuaded her to marry a younger man, who had long solicited her hand. When the General reached New Orleans he was sadly disappointed; but he

found consolation soon after in marrying the widow of Col. Hunt, late of the United States army.

We left Taylor's (the farmer) the same day, and went on to Plum Creek; and, as it was not fordable, we had to stop with a widow and her two daughters. Her house had only one room, and a cock loft gained by a ladder. The following persons found shelter with the family that night—viz., Maj. Ben McCulloch, Durand and his two sisters, our two passengers, the postmaster, Brooks, myself, and the stage driver—thirteen in number.

After supper was over our hostess lit her cob pipe, and enjoyed her evening smoke, after which she politely offered it to those inclined to indulge. When the time arrived to retire, the old woman had no trouble in disposing of her ten guests. She merely said, "You men can go aloft," and there on the floor we passed the night. It was well that the General remained at Taylor's. The morning dawned clear, but the creek was not fordable until noon. In the course of time the stagecoach reached Austin, where I remained during the winter, furnishing transportation for troops to the frontier; and where they were located are now to be found the cities of Waco, Dallas, Fredericksburg, etc. The sword plants the banner, and a city is built around it.

In the month of February, 1849, I received an order from the Quartermaster General to go to San Antonio and fit out a train to go to El Paso with the troops to be stationed there. For that purpose I bought one thousand one hundred and eighty oxen, and collected about two thousand one hundred and eighty oxen, which were wild mules from Mexico, and I have never had any admiration for that animal in his native state since, for, like his sire as told in the book of Job, "neither regardeth he the crying of the driver."

To-day (November 22, 1894) is my birthday, and I am now six years past the time allotted to man by the psalmist. For this I am truly grateful to Him from whom all blessings flow, and I will henceforth endeavor to walk humbly before him.

I had established my camp on the prairie about nine miles from the city, where there were almost four hundred hired men. In March the cholera made its appearance, and in a malignant form. Some cases occurred in camp, and, as I could not get a physician to go out there, I wrote for Dr. Baker, of Austin, an

elderly man, to come over and take charge of it. On his arrival I furnished him with a mule, and gave him directions to find the camp. Night came on, and no doctor returned. The next morning about nine o'clock he rode up to my office with his umbrella under his arm, his mouth drawn up, the picture of despair. I asked him: "Are many sick in camp?" He shook his head in the negative. He was invited to dismount and come into the office, which he did, and told his grievance. It appears that he found camp, attended to the few sick, and started to return to the city. When he reached the Salado, a small stream a few miles from town that was about ten feet wide, his mule declined to cross the creek; neither would she wet her feet, as the doctor did, and be led over. All attempts were futile. So, worn out, the doctor sought the shelter of a tree, and sat there all night holding in his hands the bride reins. In the morning the animal was still stubborn, and the doctor in despair. No lone sailor on a raft in midocean hailed an approaching sail with more delight than did the doctor a Mexican coming down the road. He made known his trouble to the Mexican, who said: "Si, Señor, me fix him." The man got off his own mule, mounted the doctor's, rode off about fifty yards; then applying whip and spur at every leap, the mule could not stop, but was plunged into the water. He rode quietly across three or four times, and then the doctor had no more trouble. The next trip the doctor was furnished with a pony. He was a kind old gentleman, and went on with us to El Paso as physician.

In May Gen. Worth arrived to take command of the department. A few days after, he died of cholera, and the command devolved on Gen. W. S. Harney.

The expedition to Paso del Norte was under the command of Maj. Jefferson Van Horne, Engineer Officer Col. J. E. Johnston, and the Quartermaster (myself). The object of the expedition was to march a part of the third regiment of infantry to Paso del Norte to garrison that place, and my train was to convey public stores there for their future use and to open a public road to that point now called El Paso. There was no road, not a path, from San Antonio to Paso del Norte. All was an unknown, untrodden extent of plains, hills, and mountains over which perhaps no white man had ever traveled, except two

United States engineers who had ridden over it in returning from New Mexico.

We left San Antonio June 1, 1849, and arrived at El Paso early in September. We remained there nearly a month. At that time El Paso was a town on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande river. There was but *one* building on the Texas side, and that was the Maggoffin's hacienda. Vegetation at El Paso grows very rank, and fruit exceedingly fine. The grape attains a large size, and bunches weighing four pounds were common. I brought with me cacti, in form like an acorn, and so large that the hoops had to be removed from a clothing tierce (a small hogshead) to put a single one inside for transportation.

I pass over all description of the country and incidents of the journey home, because I leave you the original diary, and my report was published by the United States government.\* The oxen and wagons drawn by them were all turned over to the post quartermaster, and I returned with the mule teams only.

Our return to San Antonio was over the Guadalupe mountains, down Delaware Creek to the Horse-head crossing of the Pecos river, thence down that stream to where we crossed it on our way out. There is now a railroad from San Antonio to El Paso, following generally our route, which runs on to the City of Mexico.† Remaining in San Antonio long enough to make out my accounts, I proceeded to New Orleans. I there found Gen. Twiggs in command, and called from courtesy to see him at his headquarters. His aid, Capt. W. T. H. Brooks, who, as I have related, remained in the stage when it sank in the mud, informed me that the general commanding said I must shave off my beard, as a general order to the effect had been issued by the adjutant general. I did not obey, as I was under orders from the quartermaster general to return to Washington, and did not consider myself in his command at all. The next day I was at the general's office unshaved. He made no remarks to me about it then, but some time that day Brooks came to the hotel and ordered me to have my beard cut off. I did not go to the barber. The next day I left New Orleans resolved to beard the adjutant general in his den in Washington. On ar-

\*Senate Document.

†Also to San Francisco, Cal., as was then predicted.

rival there I found the shaving order not enforced, and thus I saved my beard.

As I never met Gen. Twiggs again while I remained in the United States army, I will take my leave of him. He was not a man well beloved by officers or soldiers; he possessed no magnetic power; he was not genial in temper or disposition, and yet he enjoyed a joke, and at times made a pun. He entered the army in 1812. When that war terminated he was a captain. On the reorganization of the army he was retained in service and made a major. Being asked in what battle he gained his promotion, he replied "in the *affair* at *Ghent*," meaning the treaty of peace with Great Britain. There was in the second regiment of dragoons an officer named A. D. Tree, who possessed a frailty from which the General was not exempt. On account of this, complaint was made to the General about Tree. The General sent for Tree and asked him about the matter. His reply was: "You cannot blame me; just as the Twigg is bent, the Tree is inclined." The common influence of example was tacitly acknowledged, his wit appreciated, and he withdrew under words of advice from lips that smiled. When Twigg's native State seceded from the Union, he resigned from the army and entered the service of the Confederate States. His advanced age kept him from active operations in the field. He had left in New Orleans the sword presented to him by the State, together with his silver plate, and it was all seized by Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, United States army, when in command in that city.

While I was absent in Texas, on the 8th of February, 1849, the Governor of the State of New Jersey, in pursuance of a resolution passed February 10, 1847 by the Legislature of that State, directing him to procure swords to be presented to Capt. W. R. Montgomery, Lieut. N. B. Rossell, Fowler Hamilton, and Samuel G. French, of the United States army, for brave and gallant conduct displayed by them in the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Monterey, made the presentation. Richard P. Thompson, of Salem, N. J., acting in my behalf, received the sword for me, and I am sure I will be pardoned for relating some of the proceedings.

Gov. Haines, in his address, was pleased to say in reference to me at Palo Alto:

While the battle was fiercely raging, a body of Mexican lancers made a movement to the right, apparently with a design upon the trains. The Fifth Regiment of Infantry, with two pieces of artillery, were ordered to advance and check them. To form in square to receive the impetuous charge of the horsemen and to repel them, was the well-performed duty of the Fifth Infantry; to scatter them in all directions was the quick work of the battery under First Lieut. Ridgely, assisted by Second Lieut. French.

#### At Palo Alto, and Resaca:

The bearing of Lieuts. French and Hamilton in both these sanguinary engagements was marked for its gallantry and courage, and merits our highest praise. Of the former it is sufficient to say that he served a battery in conjunction with Lieut. Ridgely, and in that duty contributed largely to the success of our arms.

#### At Monterey:

Lieut. French performed deeds of daring worthy of commendation. He was exposed during the attack to imminent perils. Among others, the battery under his command advanced through the blood-stained streets of the well-fortified town in the face of the enemy's artillery and amidst showers of balls from the musketry upon house tops. Of the five who served his gun, four were shot down by his side. These are the battles, and this but a small part of the brave and gallant conduct referred to by the Legislature in their resolution, and for which, in the name of the people of the State, they desire to thank and to honor you. That they have not misjudged is manifested by your subsequent conduct.

In the bloody and desperate conflict of Buena Vista, Lieut. French bore himself with great intrepidity, and was severely wounded. For his gallantry he has been promoted to the rank of captain, and we have to regret that his services in a distant part of the country deprives us of the pleasure of his company here to-day, and requires him to be represented by his friend.

Richard P. Thompson, Esq., on my behalf spoke as follows:

*Sir:* In behalf of Capt. French, to whose patriotic services you have alluded in terms so eloquent and just, I accept with profound gratitude this beautiful sword—the proudest testimonial a brave man could desire from his native State.

It is a soldier's duty to obey with cheerfulness and alacrity the call of his country—his post of honor is on the battle field, amidst the "pride and pomp, and circumstances of war,"—his loftiest ambition to bear that flag to victory that never knew defeat, and to win for himself the approval of his countrymen. When on the bloody fields of Buena Vista, Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Monterey, Lieut. French periled his life for his country, one bright and sunny hope animated his young and gallant spirit, and this day, sir, finds that glorious hope fulfilled. Here, in sight of the battle ground of Trenton; the descendants of heroes are proving to the world how Jerseymen appreciate and reward the heroism of her sons.

To Capt. French, now absent on military duty, the events of this day, sir, shall be faithfully transmitted, and I can well imagine how his manly heart will overflow with gratitude. The perils and privations he endured, the pain and anguish of his wound, will be forgotten in the joy of this event—in the knowledge that the Legislature of his beloved State, with a magnanimity alike honorable to themselves as to him, have placed in his hands this mute but eloquent certificate of brave deeds in his country's service.

In accepting for him this evidence of the regard in which New Jersey holds his bravery, in the presence of her assembled representatives, and of this bright and beautiful array of her mothers, wives, and daughters, I pledge myself to you, sir, her chief Executive Magistrate, that my brave young friend will treasure it as the proudest gift of his life—that its keen and polished blade shall suffer no stain from his dishonor—that in peace he will guard it with a soldier's fidelity, in war defend with it the honor of his country—unsheath it never in an unholy cause—and part with it only when he shall be laid at rest "beneath a soldier's sepulcher."

The inscription on the scabbard reads:

Presented by the State of New Jersey to Lieut. Samuel G. French, of the third Regiment, United States Artillery, for brave and gallant conduct displayed in the battles of Palo Alto, Reseca de la Palma, and Monterey. Subsequently distinguished at Buena Vista, and promoted to the rank of captain.

AEQUM EST MILITEM  
INTREPIDUM  
HONORE  
AFFICERE.

And so my good friend Mr. Thompson relieved me from the embarrassment of returning thanks, publicly, for the sword delivered by the Governor.

While on this subject I will here remark that this sword and the former one were taken from my summer home in Woodbury, N. J., in the absence of the family, and with all personal property and realty sold by the United States marshal at public outcry under the confiscation act of 1862.\* Were the proceeds covered into the treasury?

I arrived in Washington during the winter of 1849-50, and made a report of the expedition that was published by the government as I have stated. The Quartermaster General, or the War Department, kept me all the year 1850 in Washington, or within call, for any special duty required.

\*Until charged, tried, and convicted of treason is confiscation legal?

Soon after my arrival in Washington I was honored with an invitation to dine with the President. I had the pleasure of taking in to dinner Miss Taylor, a young lady from Louisiana. The guests were too many for any general conversation, and nothing of moment occurred.

I was in Philadelphia when the news of the death of the President was received, July 9, 1850. Having been with him in all his battles in Mexico, I was pained to hear of his death, and that I had lost a kind friend. He had lived a soldier's life until elected President, and had never heard the voice of detraction, or his name mentioned except for praise, until he was forced into the political arena.

A lady friend of mine told me that she had a room at the hotel adjoining the General's reception room, and thus involuntarily heard much wrangling about the formation of his cabinet. Delegations of politicians from different States would go so far as to demand that certain men should be members of his cabinet as the price of loyalty to the party and support of his administration. The enemy on the battlefield never perplexed him as did his political *friends* and the pressure for appointment to office. He whose order and every word was obeyed now found himself confronted by the bitterest opposition, which perplexed him in the extreme, and, no doubt, it shortened his days. Brave, honest, pure, sincere, as a soldier he never deviated from the path of duty; and if we consider that the world has limited the fame of a soldier to one single measure, *deeds performed*, by this test his fame is imperishable. His every success was achieved by his daring, steadfast determination to do his duty, and fight the enemy wherever he found him, regardless of all odds. In this respect he might be paralleled with Nelson.

Mr. Fillmore now became President. Soon after this the Gardiner claim was being investigated, and I believe there were six commissioners to be sent to Mexico to examine the *mine*. The President was to name two of these commissioners; the Senate, two; etc. I was informed by the Adjutant General that the President instructed him not to send me on any duty out of the city, as he purposed to name me as one of his commissioners. However, about a month after this, Senator Soule, of Louisiana, came to the department to see me, and I believe my knowledge of the Spanish language did not come up to his expectations;

and, if I remember aright, Lieut. Doubleday was named at his suggestion.

It was about this time that Capt. Ringgold, of the United States navy, asked me urgently to go with him as the artist on an expedition to make a coast survey of Kamchatka, and thence on south. He consulted the Secretary of War, and obtained permission for me to go if he made the application. He spoke of the climate in summer, and said in the fall we would sail for the Sandwich Islands and pass the winter there. The expedition was a tempting one, but other considerations induced me to decline going. Capt. Ringgold was a brother of Maj. Ringgold, who was killed at the battle of Palo Alto.

I think it was during this autumn that I was sent to Louisville, Ky., to purchase horses for the cavalry.

About the middle of December Col. Joseph Taylor, Maj. Gaines, his two daughters, and I took passage on a steamer for Cincinnati. There was much floating ice in the river, and snow began to fall, and it turned very cold. The captain ran into the mouth of the Kentucky river to avoid the heavy drift ice. In the morning we found the steamer fast in frozen ice, and wagons and sleighs came alongside. Gen. W. O. Butler came on board to see Col. Taylor, and, as there was no prospect of the steamer leaving for weeks, arrangements were made for Gen. Butler to send us on to Florence in his common two-horse farm wagon. The next morning the trunks were put in for seats and we started on our journey. The country was covered deep with snow, and the thermometer was fourteen degrees below zero. I walked behind the wagon nearly all the way to keep warm. The driver's hands were nearly frozen, and in crossing an awful ravine the horses were not checked and the wheels on one side would have missed the bridge and all in the wagon been killed had not my trunk fallen out in front and stopped the wagon. Fortunately no damage was done. The driver was to blame for not telling us his hands were half frozen.

It was dark when we reached Florence, and for once fire could not warm me for hours. Next day Col. Taylor bargained for a jumper (sled) to take him and me to Cincinnati. We crossed the river on the ice, and were driven up to the door of the hotel in the jumper. Next day Hon. Salmon P. Chase joined Col. Taylor, and we went on to Washington together.

## CHAPTER IX.

January, 1851, Ordered to El Paso—Capt. Sitgreaves—Sail for Havana—Barnum and Jennie Lind—Sail for New Orleans—By Steamer to Galveston—On the Gulf for Indianola—San Antonio—Report of Expedition—Unprecedented March without Water—Indians—With Gen. Jesup—Hartford Convention—Battles on the Canadian Frontier—Gov. W. P. Duval (Ralph Ringwood)—United States Senators—Clay's Magnetism—His Duel with John Randolph—Lieut. R. F. Stockton, United States Navy, Duel with English Officers at Gibraltar—John Howard Payne—Commodore Van Rensselaer Morgan—My Marriage—Assigned to Fort Smith, Ark.—Trips to Washita, Fort Gibson, and Towson—Choctaws and Cherokees—John Ross—Journey from Fort Smith to Natchez, Miss.—A Misanthrope—Gen. John A. Quitman—Death of Mrs. Roberts—Tender My Resignation—Go to My Plantation—Go to San Antonio—Death of Mrs. French—Sail for Europe—John Brown's Raid.

IN the early part of January, 1851, Gen. Jesup told me that he would have to send me to El Paso again. I suggested that some other officer be ordered on that duty, as I had made the trip once. He said that there had been no rain in Western Texas for over a year; that the report was the troops were out of provisions, and as I had been over the road and knew the country, I must go again; that he would not under such circumstances intrust the expedition to any one else. This was complimentary, to be sure, and I pointed out the difficulties that would be encountered on such a long journey over a now barren country, destitute of water and grass; but told him I would do the best I could to make the expedition a success.

Capt. Lorenzo Sitgreaves, topographical engineer, United States army, was in the city under orders to make a survey of the Gila river, and, as he had to go to El Paso, would accompany the expedition. With him was Dr. S. W. Woodhouse, of Philadelphia, Pa. In due time we went to New York, and sailed for Havana, Cuba.

In Havana at the hotel were P. T. Barnum with Miss Jennie Lind, James G. Bennett and wife. We remained in the city about a week, and then took steamer for New Orleans. Capt. Hartstine, of the United States navy, commanded the steamer. He gave Miss Jennie his stateroom on deck. I was sitting with Miss Jennie in her room when we entered the Mississippi river.