

CHAPTER V.

ARRIEROS.—Packing the mules.—The march commenced.—Trials of the first day.—Cerralvo.—A storm.—Mustard *per se*.—Orders for continuing the march.—Description of the country.—Marin.—The enemy seen and heard from.—A stampede.—Crossing a stream.—A donkey going down stern foremost.—San Francisco.—The army arrives before Monterey.—Encamps at Santo Domingo.

THERE are two very good roads from Camargo to Monterey, on both of which it was supposed that a sufficiency of water, beef, and corn, could be obtained for the marching force. To avoid any inconvenience, however, and doubtless, for other good reasons, General Taylor decided to advance columns on both routes. The mounted troops were sent up the valley of San Juan *via* China to Marin; while the infantry pursued the more westerly route, by way of Mier and Cerralvo. From Camargo to Cerralvo the army marched by brigades; thence to Marin by divisions. At the last named place the entire force—horse and foot—united, and moved in one column upon Monterey.

On Sunday, September 6th, the 1st brigade (Hamer's) of General Butler's division commenced its march and arrived at Cerralvo, a distance of twenty-five leagues, on the following Thursday. The first day's march was the most weary and painful of the campaign. No soldier of our regiment will ever forget his sufferings on that unhappy day. Hoping to reach the first camping ground before noon, the tents had been struck, baggage packed, and every thing got in readi-

ness at dawn. But it was not until the sun had been up several hours, that the muleteers made their appearance with the animals assigned to our brigade.

The mules of Mexico have always been usefully employed in its domestic commerce, and, indeed, appear to be all-sufficient carriers. Like the camels of Arabia, they are peculiarly adapted to the country and primitive condition of their masters. But to persons, fresh from a land in which all the many wonderful inventions in art and science are made subservient to the wants of man, a pack-mule is almost as great a curiosity as a battering-ram, or any other relic of a barbarous age; and accordingly we contemplated with some interest, the little animals, as unbridled and with most provoking and mulish *nonchalance*, they strayed slowly toward us from their pasture in the chaparral. Each of them was covered from neck to tail with a huge, arching saddle, of itself no light burden, upon which was to be packed a load of from three to four hundred pounds. One of the mules was laded with ropes of hide, to be used in fastening the packs. To another, the most staid and venerable member of the drove, was attached a bell. He enjoyed the honor of leading the train, and of carrying the large, smooth stone, upon which the drivers crush corn for their frugal meals of *pan-de-maize*.

The muleteers were stout, athletic fellows, and the most uncouth, as well, perhaps, as the hardiest class in Mexico; where the mixture of various races has resulted in the production of some strange looking species of the *genus homo*. Their features and those of the rancheros generally, are large, but less prominent than those of our Indians; their lips,

thick; their faces, smooth; and their coarse hair, like their eyes, black. Their frames are short and thick-set, and seem to be made of sinew and muscle. With great ease they endure fatigues which we northmen, even when seasoned to the climate, scarcely equal. A few *tortillas* (cakes made of corn, coarsely bruised by hand, with an infusion of chili and lime) and a gourd of water, will suffice the *arriero* for a day. If a little muscal or a few cigaritas be added to his allowance, he is perfectly contented. He seems to desire no other bed than the bare ground; and if rains overtake him at night, he will shelter himself beneath one of his large semi-cylindrical pack-saddles, the thick wood and leather sides of which, being bullet proof, make an excellent barricade in the common event of an attack by banditti. His dress consists of a short, close-fitting leather jacket, ornamented often with rows of buttons; and wide buckskin or dirty, white-linen trowsers, open and flaring from the ankle to the knee. The foot clothing consists of sandal-shoes, fastened with rough thongs—stockings being a luxury enjoyed only by some of the towns-people. The heavy, hand-made, party-colored blanket, peculiar to the country, is an indispensable article of apparel, and is at all times fastened about the shoulders. In bad weather it is unrolled, the head thrust through the opening in its center, and its ample folds allowed to fall gracefully around the body. This, with the wide-brimmed sombrero, enables the wearer to defy the storm.

Our *arrieros*, as if to make amends for their long delay, proceeded to pack with commendable celerity and skill. Walking rapidly through the camp, they first examined the

amount and character of the baggage. They then divided it into as many heaps as there were mules, each one being a *cargo*, or load; taking care at the same time to place such articles together as would balance well upon the saddle. This accomplished, the mules were brought up to receive their burdens; which were put on by two men working on opposite sides of the animal. The largest articles, bundles of tents, barrels or boxes, were first lashed to the sides of the saddle; then upon those the rest of the load was piled, forming a ridge high above the back, the bulk of the burden being often much greater than the animal beneath it. Each article was securely fastened by cords passing around it, and crossing under the body. The men on either side, bracing their feet against the thick, lower edge of the saddle, and with the rope in their hands, would throw themselves back horizontally, and jerk and pull until the poor mule fairly groaned with the pressure. A few young and restive animals were only made to receive their packs patiently, by the application of a bandage, which the drivers carried for the purpose, to their eyes. The business of packing completed, the sage and distinguished wearer of the bell, carrying a few measures of corn and the primitive mill-stone before mentioned, was led off upon the road. The train obediently followed the well-known sound; while the muleteers walking on flank and rear, urged forward the slow and lazy with their peculiar "*hist! hiss!*"

Thus, after a vexatious detention of many hours, we commenced in the noonday heat, our memorable march. Considering the debility of our men, consequent upon recent

sickness, the inactivity of camp-life, or long confinement on transports, I was prepared to witness much suffering on the route; but owing to the late hour of starting and the scarcity of water, it was distressing and lamentable beyond all expectation. Our route lay through dense chaparral which, being a little higher than our heads, shut out every refreshing breeze; and the dust, which was ankle deep, hung in suffocating clouds over the road. The vertical rays of the sun fell like fiery arrows upon the column, and so heated the burnished metal of our accoutrements, that it could not be held in the naked hand without pain. The heat was indeed almost intolerable, as the parched tongues of all momentarily united in asserting. Even the sable descendants of Ham—the servants of officers—drooped beneath it like blasted blades of corn. Before one third of the day's march was accomplished, our then inexperienced soldiers had consumed all the water in their canteens; the contents of which, at later periods, they learned to make suffice for an entire day. Unfortunately no supply of water had been, placed in the wagons, set apart by General Taylor's order, for its transportation, it having been supposed that the canteens would hold enough for the first short march; and had we been able to start in the early morning, we should perhaps have escaped that arid thirst. Many brief halts were made, and parties sent out on the flanks to seek for water. These were all unsuccessful, and the search but added to the fatigue of the explorers. After the first disappointments, the men marched silently forward, determined to brave the trials of the day with becoming fortitude. For some time, their great and in-

creasing agony was endured with calm resignation. Many, whose scorched throats scarcely granted utterance, endeavored to cheer the weak with hopes of speedy relief, which they, themselves, hardly entertained. Our skillful, sympathizing, and attentive surgeon (Dr. Chamberlyn,) passed to and fro among the ranks, distributing pills, cordials, and other needful tonics, with which a mule, led by the hospital steward, was laded. Thus onward, still onward, with feeble steps, staggered our poor, uncomplaining fellows; all hoping to reach water at every turn or descent of the road, if only in some foul mud-hole.

At length, when about two-thirds of the march had been effected, with much pain and suffering, yet in tolerable order, a solitary rancho was descried a short distance in advance. The foremost troops hastened toward it with exclamations of gladness, for there, indeed, we might hope to find the much desired beverage; to us, truly, the precious *aqua vite*. Ah! deceitful hope! transient pleasure! The house was deserted, and the well contained not "a drop, to moisten life's all gasping springs." Each man as he arrived, hastened to gaze into its hateful depth, as if unwilling to believe the sad report of the first comers: "the well is dry!" What heart-sickening intelligence to those, whose veins seemed swollen with liquid fire; whose dusky skins and mouths were dry and crisp as ashes! Even at this distant period, the recollection of my own sensations causes some slight aridity in the region of the jugular. The acclimatizing fever—as the surgeon termed the fever with which I had long been daily harrassed—had seized me with renewed violence

early in the march; and when we halted at the well, the blood was "boiling like lava within the glowing caverns of the heart." A hundred strange visions floated through the heated brain. Vivid and tantalizing pictures of bubbling springs and limpid streams well known in years long gone by, were again present to the mind. Then the wandering thoughts successively recalled all the horrible scenes of distress arising from thirst, which they had ever contemplated; from the notable case of that certain rich man who, "in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torments," to the latest narrative of shipwrecked mariners casting lots for each other's blood. And when from the crowd around the rancho, there broke forth some expressions of pain and disappointment that could no longer be subdued, the mind reverted to the wanderings of the Israelites, their thirst, and their murmurings against Moses in Rephidim, and to the rock in Horeb smitten by the rod. But the age of miracles was past! 'Twere vain to sigh for that rock and rod, or to expect relief, save by additional exertion. All complaints were soon hushed, and the column again put in motion. For another half hour it continued to drag its slow length along amid a silence that was broken only by the melancholy rattle of empty canteens. Then, when we were not more than a mile or two from water, occurred some touching scenes of human misery. Here and there, the weakest men began to reel from the ranks. Sinking upon the road-side, they declared that their strength was spent, and that they could go no further. Some were still helped forward by their stronger comrades, while others, whom no words of hope or fear could

move, begged to be left to their fate. With these, threats and persuasions were alike ineffectual, such was their indifference to danger under the pressure of present pain. Soon all order was lost. The two regiments composing the brigade were mobbed, and the stragglers from both increased at every step. Had we been attacked at the time by a resolute enemy our troops would inevitably have been cut to pieces. This distressing and discouraging march was lengthened about two miles, for the want of competent guides to direct us to the usual camping-ground, which was near a large pond, and some distance from the main road. In our ignorance of the locality, the leading companies passed it and were compelled to retrace their steps. Upon reaching the water, many noble fellows, after satisfying the cravings of their own thirst, filled their canteens, and hastened back to administer to the wants of their weary and straggling comrades. Not more than half of the column reached the camp before dusk. The remainder came in singly, or in small parties, at various hours of the night, and but two of our regiment were reported "absent, and unaccounted for," at roll-call on the following morning. Those two unfortunate absentees never afterward responded to their names, and their fate has often been to me a matter of anxious interest. It appeared that they had left their company by permission, during a short halt early in the journey, to look for water. Failing to return as soon as expected, their captain supposed that they had wandered back toward Camargo; but they never reported themselves at that post, or elsewhere, so far as we could ascertain.

Such was our first day's march, upon the many painful incidents of which I have forborne to dwell. Much censure was lodged at the time against those who conducted it, but as I think, rather unjustly. Prudence should perhaps have suggested the employment of the wagons allowed for the conveyance of water; but I presume it was supposed that the length of the march (about five leagues) scarcely rendered it necessary. The late hour of starting, the unusual (even for that climate) heat of the day, and the physical debility of many of the soldiers, no human sagacity could have prevented. Under ordinary circumstances, the same men could, and frequently did march with ease, twice the distance in less time.

The second day we suffered less from thirst, and having started early, reached our camp before noon, without much fatigue. The country passed over was level and dry, but, in many parts, well supplied with mesquet wood, and grass. Near our encampment, which was upon the banks of a deep and rocky ravine, one of our soldiers discovered a mineral spring, the water of which nearly resembled that of the Blue Lick, in Kentucky. On the morning of the third day, the men, though still quite foot-sore, took the route with all the cheerfulness of gay and thoughtless youth, and made a good march—more than six leagues—before 11 o'clock, A. M. We ascended the brow of a hill, overlooking Mier, just as the sun pushed his broad disk above the horizon, and poured a flood of rosy light upon the white walls of that pretty and interesting village. We did not enter the place, for our road, the general direction of which had thus far been parallel with the Rio Grande, after bringing us within sight of it,

inclined to the south, and led us into a more hilly and broken region. There, too, the mountains of Cerralvo were first discerned in the misty distance, their airy tops so softly blending with the clouds,

"That the cheated eye
Forgets or which is earth, or which is heaven."

On the fourth day, we encamped by a clear and rapid stream, near Pontaguada, (in which village, *en passant*, we obtained some delicious dried figs;) and on the fifth we entered Cerralvo, thus making as good time as the Regulars who preceded us. It was gratifying to witness the improvement in the health and spirits of the troops as we approached the mountains. The tender feet of many unaccustomed to such laborious exercise, hardened as they progressed, and each day added to their knowledge in the business of campaigning. In the pure streams of the upper country, they washed away their wasting fevers, and before reaching Monterey, were generally in excellent condition for service. Amid subsequent toils and trials, the hardships of the first day's march were sometimes blithely recalled, and often served to assuage the severity of present privations.

Cerralvo is a smiling little town, of about twelve hundred inhabitants, and is built chiefly of white limestone, which is quite abundant in the neighborhood. The houses, as in all the Mexican towns we saw, were of the old Spanish style; with massive walls, flat cement roofs, and a few narrow, barred, and unglazed windows. The thick inside shutters, substituted for sash, exclude both air and light. Though devoid of all architectural beauty, they are not without their

advantages in a warm climate, and are quite comfortable enough for such a people. A sparkling rivulet, fresh from the cool recesses of the mountains, waters the town, and forms, in its passage through some of the gardens, deep, clear, and refreshing baths. One enchanting little spot I frequently visited, where the brook danced and sang through banks of flowers, shaded by luxuriant lemon and fig trees, the interlacing branches of which offered a welcome shade and screen to the bather.

The country around Cerralvo, except on the margins of the streams, appears to be very poor and stony. The stratified limestone lay so near the surface of the hill upon which we encamped, that it was no easy matter to pitch the tents, the pins being broken or blunted in many attempts to drive them. In consequence of this unfortunate geological formation, our canvas was carried away by the first breath of a storm which broke upon us one night during our brief sojourn there. Of all confusions confounded or confounded confusions, but few can exceed that caused in a large camp by high and sudden winds, especially when attended by rain. A squall in the day-time is often sufficiently annoying, but when it occurs at night, when the frail tents are capsized in a twinkling, and the tightened ropes, and flying-pins are made to lash and bruise the prostrate bodies of thousands of sleepers; when, in an instant aroused from profound slumber, loose horses, kicking mules and swearing soldiers, are sent stumbling about among each other, tripping and falling over knapsacks, cooking utensils, and the many articles which the wind has also set in motion; what pen can describe the scene! "The

storm fiends," as the poets aptly term certain imaginary gentlemen in the clouds, must enjoy the fun vastly as they ride by upon the blast. It would go hard with pussy and puffy old Æolus, should he venture to make himself visible within musket range of these ludicrous and vexatious scenes. What new dispositions were made at Cerralvo in our little army, will be known by a perusal of the annexed order:

Orders } *Head-Quarters, Army of Occupation,*
No. 115. } *Cerralvo, September 11, 1846.*

1. As the army may expect to meet resistance in its further advance toward Monterey, it is necessary that the march should be conducted with all proper precautions to meet attack, and to secure the baggage and supplies. From this point, the following will be the order of march until otherwise directed:
2. All the pioneers of the army, consolidated into one party, will march early to-morrow, on the route to Marin, for the purpose of repairing the road, and rendering it practicable for artillery and wagons. The pioneers of each division will be under a subaltern to be specially detailed for the duty, and the whole will be under the command of Captain Craig, 3d infantry, who will report at head-quarters for instructions. This pioneer party will be covered by a squadron of dragoons, and Captain McCulloch's company of rangers. Two officers of topographical engineers, to be detailed by Captain Williams, will accompany the party for the purpose of examining the route. Two wagons will be provided by the quarter-master's department for the transportation of the tools, provisions, and knapsacks of the pioneers.

3. The 1st division will march on the 13th, to be followed on successive days, by the 2d division, and field division of volunteers. The head-quarters will march with the 1st division. Captain Gillespie, with half of his company, will report to Major General Butler; the other half, under the 1st Lieutenant, to Brigadier General Worth. These detachments will be employed for out-posts and videttes, and as expresses between the columns and head-quarters.

4. The subsistence supplies will be divided between the three columns, the senior commissary of each division receiving for the stores, and being charged with their care and management. The senior commissaries of each division will report to Captain Waggaman for this duty.

5. Each division will be followed immediately by its baggage train and supply train, with a strong rear-guard. The ordnance train under Captain Ramsey, will march with the 2d division, between its baggage and supply trains, and will come under the protection of the guards of that division. The medical supplies will, in like manner, march with the 1st division.

6. The roops will take eight days' rations, and forty rounds of ammunition. All surplus arms and accouterments, resulting from casualties on the road, will be deposited with Lieutenant Stewart, left in charge of the depot at this place, who will give certificates of deposit to the company commanders.

7. The wagons appropriated for the transportation of water, will not be required, and will be turned over to the quartermaster's department, for general purposes.

8. Two companies of the Mississippi regiment will be designated for the garrison of this depot. All sick and disabled men, unfit for the march, will be left behind, under charge of a medical officer, to be selected for this duty by the medical director.

By order of Major General TAYLOR,

W. W. S. BLISS,

Assistant Adjutant General.

The small garrison mentioned, in the last section of the foregoing orders, was the only one left on the route. Among the sick and disabled, about one hundred and fifty in number, who remained at this depot, was the captain of one of our German companies. We had one Irish and two German companies in the 1st Ohio regiment. According to Surgeon Chamberlyn's account, the captain, being sick with pleurisy, had swallowed in rather hot haste a quantity of mustard, which had been prescribed as a plaster. Though the condiment thus taken, internally and *per se*, proved as unwholesome as unpalatable, yet it served to season a good joke; and it was even contended by some that it had saved the captain's life, inasmuch as his unlucky mistake prevented him from participating in the battle of Monterey, where his gallant 1st Lieutenant was slain at the head of his company.

On the 15th of September, the field division of volunteers—General Butler's—marched from Cerralvo, and on the 17th reached Marin, where the Regulars awaited our arrival. Nothing of unusual interest occurred between those places. General Torrejon, with about a thousand horse, was constantly in front of our army, but distrusting his own strength,

or intimidated by our steady advance, he made no effort to arrest our progress, and contented himself with destroying property likely to fall into our hands. The road led us over a succession of rough and bare hills, which, with the distressingly hot weather, and the length of our column, increased at Cerralvo by the addition of Quitman's brigade, Webster's battery, and the supply train, rendered our progress tediously slow. The country, as far as Marin, presented a more barren and desolate aspect, though better watered than that previously passed. From the summits of the thorn and cactus-covered ridges over which we marched, the *coup d'œil* was dreary and forbidding in the extreme. Far and near, whichever way we looked, the mountains, hills, and plains were glowing with the scorching heat of summer, a few narrow belts of green foliage showing where the streams yet generously moistened the thirsty earth. The rancheros were mean and scattered, and sometimes we did not see a Mexican during the day's march. On the borders of the stream, we alone found their wretched habitations. The intervening wastes appeared to belong to the banditti, judging from the many crosses erected on the wayside; evidences that the land was guilty of many "an arch deed of piteous massacre." The country is, for the most part, bare of trees. This is its great and ever-prominent characteristic. The fig, olive, orange, and lemon, flourish in some locations, but there are no forests, and a few scattered palmettos alone show their tufted heads above the surrounding masses of chaparral. The traveler from the United States finds himself continually looking around, but in vain, for the magnificent groves which

diversify and adorn the scenery of his native land. In the vicinity of the water-courses, the student of zoology, ornithology, or botany, may perchance find something to interest him; but among the cheerless hills and plains that lie between the streams, there appears neither life nor beauty. The presence of an army, hastening to the conflict, did not materially enliven the dismal landscape. And yet, without pausing to seek its rationale, the idea most frequently present to my mind, when contemplating the country, was *its remarkable suitability as a theater for war*. That desolate district, overhung by unclouded skies and burning suns, seemed to invite belligerent men to strife and carnage, as naturally as does the well-rolled turf, the horse-race, or the ring, the wrestling and boxing match. *Bella, horrida bella!* might rage with all her rampant furies there, undisturbed by a single tender appeal from the genius of civilization. There was the stage and all the scenery for war's bloody drama. Enter armies, and the martial spectacle is complete.

The village of Marin, said to contain a population of one thousand, is picturesquely situated on the edge of an extensive and elevated plateau. It commands a vast prospect in the direction of Monterey, and a charming little valley blooms at its feet. Into this we descended, after marching through the village, and directed our steps toward a silvery stream whose murmuring waters, as we approached it, filled our hearts with delight. With what "luxuriant joy and pleasure unrestrained," did the weary men stack arms upon its grassy banks. For an hour or more after halting, none of the usual camp labors were performed, and all resigned