

Twiggs and Quitman, leaving General Butler in command at Monterey, with a small battalion of Regulars, the 4th Infantry, in the city, and our brigade still in camp at San Domingo.

## CHAPTER VIII.

FALSE reports.—Why and how we went to Saltillo.—The loan of a donkey.—Forced march across the Sierra Madre.—Mountain scenery.—La Rinconada.—The aloe plant.—Los Muertos.—The *tierra templada*.—Bivouac at the Palomas pass.—Conduct of the natives.—A cotton factory.—Scarcity of fuel.—Sufferings of the troops.—Rabbit hunts.—A visit to Saltillo.—Christmas-eve.—Another stampede.—Christmas-day in Saltillo.—Lassoing a team.—Return to Monterey.

THE reader who traces on the map of Mexico, the long line occupied by our troops in the winter of 1846, in distant and small detachments, and then looks at the position of the united Mexican forces at San Luis de Potosi, might perhaps suppose that General Taylor had committed a palpable fault in so dividing his army as to prevent its timely concentration at any threatened point. But when he is informed that there are no practicable passes through the rocky barrier of the Sierra Madre, save at Tula and Rinconada, and that it is impossible to transport artillery through the former; that between San Luis and Saltillo, there is a vast desert, which is of all natural obstacles the most difficult for an army to overcome; he will perceive how the rules of war are governed by the country in which it is waged, and admit that the American arms were in no way compromised by the dispositions which followed the termination of the armistice. Our greatest difficulty was in obtaining reliable information of the enemy's designs, and we were consequently annoyed by many false and vexatious alarms. On the other

hand, General Santa Anna was correctly advised of all our movements by the citizens in our vicinity; and unfortunately by the sad capture and death of Lieutenant Richey at Villa Grande, obtained possession of dispatches which revealed to him Scott's proposed descent upon Vera Cruz, to be preceded by the withdrawal from our line, of the *elite* of Taylor's victorious army. Every one remembers how he profited by this knowledge; how despite the clamors of his own countrymen concerning his inactivity, he remained at San Luis drilling his troops and collecting the necessary material for the campaign, until all our regular and many of our volunteer regiments had joined General Scott upon the coast; and how, when the long anticipated moment arrived, his mighty host rapidly crossed the desert and rolled, like the swelling tide of Fundy, up through the valley of Angostura.

It has been stated in the preceding chapter, that General Taylor marched for Victoria on the 13th of December, leaving the 1st Ohio and the 1st Kentucky regiments, formerly Hamer's brigade, and which after his death had been broken up, in camp near Monterey. The departure of so considerable a portion of our force, and especially of the commander-in-chief, whose presence always seemed sufficient to inspire the weakest corps with confidence, gave room to many vague surmises concerning the enemy, and which soon attained a threatening magnitude. The most important of these, generally known as "Worth's big stampede," caused a commotion that was felt from Saltillo to the Brazos, and brought every battalion several marches up the line. On the night of the 16th of December, General Butler commanding at

Monterey, received a message from General Worth to the effect that Santa Anna designed to take advantage of the diversion of force toward Victoria, to strike a heavy blow at Saltillo; and if successful, then at General Wool's force at Parras. This rumor, caused by some unimportant movement in the enemy's camp which was reported by our spies, obtained color from the advantage it was supposed to promise the Mexicans. General Butler immediately commanded the 1st Ohio and 1st Kentucky regiments, with Captain Webster's howitzer battery, to move by forced marches on Saltillo; and dispatched orders to hasten up troops from the rear. The intelligence also overtook General Taylor at Montemorelos, who immediately turned back with Twiggs' divisions, leaving Quitman's brigade to continue its march eastward. But on his return to Monterey, learning that the expected movement of Mexican troops had not taken place; and that in addition to our brigade, General Wool's column was also hastening to reinforce Worth at Saltillo, he made a rapid countermarch on Victoria.

General Butler's order reached our camp at San Domingo at 2 A. M. on the 17th of December; and as we were expected to be in Monterey at dawn, but few hours were allowed for preparation. We however, "took the instant by the forward top." The men set fire to their huts, hurriedly packed their knapsacks by the light their flames afforded, and then cooked breakfast upon the glowing embers. As there was not a wagon or pack-mule in the camp, and the march was to be a rapid one, the soldiers were required to reduce their baggage to the smallest possible compass. Many articles of

comfort, that had been collected during our long stay at San Domingo, were therefore necessarily abandoned. Yet when the battalion was formed, I was surprised to observe heavy and rudely-constructed bird-cages hanging upon the backs of a few men. These contained birds of the parrot tribe, caught in the grove, and which their owners preferred to carry rather than more useful articles. Though somewhat enervated from long inaction, the troops shrank not from the fatigues in prospect. More tranquil than before the battle of Monterey, they were yet as ready for the encounter, and animated by as good a spirit as could be wished. The reflection too, that the regiment had now attained a degree of discipline which rendered it doubly as formidable as it had previously been, was a source of no little satisfaction to its commanding officer.

Leaving a small guard to attend the sick, and follow with the tents as soon as the means of transportation were supplied, the column cheerfully set forward. Long, and tedious to many, as was our sojourn at San Domingo, yet will its grateful shades resting now upon the graves of many brave comrades, ever be remembered with associations of mingled pleasure and sorrow. It was quite dark when we moved from the grove, but before we reached the city, the sun emerged from the golden portals of the East, shedding a glorious effulgence over the mountain-tops, and which gradually descended upon the trembling shadows of the valley, until the whole scene at length rejoiced in the perfect day. We entered the town without beat of drum, and stacked arms in the plaza, just as a group of priests were hastening

to matins. They paused upon the steps of the cathedral in evident surprise at the sudden appearance of our brigade in marching trim; and their manner went far to satisfy me that General Santa Anna was at that moment calmly reposing at San Luis de Potosi. The conduct of the intelligent and well-informed natives, was a tolerably good index to such matters.

After making such an early start, it would have been possible to reach the Rinconada in one march; but we were unfortunately detained in Monterey several hours in obtaining a supply of ammunition, shoes, etc. It was not until 11 o'clock, and when a thermometer in one of the cool mansions of the city indicated a temperature of ninety degrees, that the column composed of our brigade and Webster's battery, attended by General Butler in person, was ordered to move. In the meanwhile, some of the men in addition to the weight of their equipments, had succeeded in getting "bricks in their caps." Those we would have left as being overladed, but they insisted that they "could march the better, since their knapsacks were now balanced." Judging from the replies that were generally encountered by officers on such occasions, one might reasonably infer that the Mexican *aguadiente*, like the Falstaffian beverage, sherris sack, had a "two-fold virtue in it," making men witty as well as "very hot and valiant." Passing round the hill of the Obispado, we bade adieu to the beautiful and balmy region in which we had long lingered, and entered the gorge so often noticed in previous pages of this narrative; on our right, the Miter mountain, on our left, the Sierra Madre, soaring to the skies. The road for several miles, is closely flanked by mountains, and the scene-

ry most grand and picturesque. The river, which we were often compelled to wade in the course of the day, meanders through the narrow valley and embraces in its graceful arms some spots of rich verdure. The shades of evening closed around us at Santa Catalina; and as many of the men were lagging from fatigue, we determined to halt in the hamlet. An hour afterward, the rear-guard with the stragglers, came up in high glee, driving before them what, from its great size and singular motion, appeared to be a camel or bunch-backed dromedary. On approaching the camp-fires, it was discovered to be a moving mass of knapsacks: but it was not until they were unbuckled and removed one by one, that the motive power was disclosed to the amused spectators, in a diminutive donkey, much jaded and looking quite woe-begone. Had it been one of Ericson's caloric engines, I could scarcely have been more surprised; so utterly disproportionate were the weight and bulk of the burden, to that of the animal.

General Taylor had published an order prohibiting the men from owning riding animals; but the soldiers often *borrowed* them on emergencies like the present. They were always cheerfully restored to the Mexican claimants after a few hours' use. It may be needless to add that the double-jointed and iron-ribbed donkey that brought such a mountain of baggage into Santa Catalina was—a *forced loan*. The ass,—one of the things specially mentioned in the commandment against covetousness,—is almost the commonest species of property among the Mexicans, as among the Israelites. So common and cheap indeed, that no divine or human injunction concerning it was ever much regarded. It was

always,—“nothing but a d—d jackass any how;” and generally received more curses than corn. On the hurried march to Saltillo a number of them were at various times and places pressed into the service. I recollect one occasion when, having ridden unexpectedly to the rear, I surprised a party of soldiers engaged in lifting a donkey bodily over a stone wall that separated his pasture from the road. Though it never displeased me to know that the animals of the enemy were sometimes required to assist our men in bearing “the burden and heat of the day;” yet it was impossible to overlook this singular highway operation, lest the offense, once countenanced by an officer, should be changed “to virtue and to worthiness.” The party being caught *flagrante delicto*, at once took up their arms and resumed the march, leaving the patient and stupid ass dangling across the wall. Calling them back to relieve the animal from that ludicrous attitude, I rode rapidly off, not doubting however, but that they would find it much more convenient to pull him into the road, than to push him back into the field.

With the first glimmering of dawn on the 18th, we left Santa Catalina, and soon afterward began to climb the broad mountain which lies between that village and La Rinconada. It is eight leagues across that dreary and voiceless Sierra; and not one human habitation or drop of water in the whole distance. Though the ascent is gradual, yet so rough was the road and so warm the day, that many of the men enfeebled by sickness or relaxed by previous inaction, suffered greatly from exertion and thirst. No one seemed to bear the fatigue better than a Mexican boy, about twelve years of age.

who (his father having been killed in the battle of Resaca) had attached himself to Captain Hamilton of our regiment.\* It was nearly noon when we arrived, thirsty and panting, at the top of the mountain, where we halted for those who had loitered behind, unable to keep up with the march. The view from the lofty ridge we had gained, was grand beyond example. No trace of verdure could be seen; but in every direction bare and bristling peaks, flashing in the hot sun, met the astonished eye. A single glance, and we were ready to exclaim with the poet,—

"A scene so wide, so wild as this  
Yet so sublime in barrenness,  
Ne'er did my wandering footsteps press."

It was many a weary step from the summit of the mountain to the water at Rinconada; and over a more rocky and precipitous road. Soon after commencing the descent, we met a Mexican driving a few mules, which were laded with apples for the Monterey market. A very poor variety of that fruit is imperfectly grown on the high land around Saltillo; sufficiently hard and knotty to bear transportation in rough hampers lashed upon the backs of mules. The oranges and other fruits of the *tierra caliente*, are brought back in exchange, to the inhabitants of the mountain regions. The startled *arriero* was much rejoiced to find that he would be allowed to pass unmolested; and politely offered us water from a large gourd which he carried; a generous sacrifice,

\* The boy's name was, I understood, Carlos de la Cruz. He was a sprightly youth, a great favorite with the soldiers, and after he had acquired our language was often a useful interpreter. After enduring all the hardships of the campaign, he was brought to Ohio by his excellent patron, Captain Edward Hamilton; and is yet enjoying the favor and protection of that gallant gentleman.

nardly to be expected from one who had such a dry and toilsome path before him. The traveler in Mexico soon learns to estimate highly the precious element with which the Creator has so bountifully blessed our own land, and to appreciate fully the many beautiful allusions to floods, and wells and water-brooks contained in the Bible.

At *La Rinconada*, which is, as its name signifies, "a little corner" or nook, we found a rapid stream of warm water, strongly impregnated with sulphur. It issued from a narrow glen, so gloomy and forbidding in its aspect, that, with the hot brimstone flavor of the water on his tongue, the spectator might readily suppose it the entrance to Hades. In this sequestered spot and hemmed in on three sides by towering mountains, is a single large rancho, built of adobes, and designed, I presume, chiefly for the accommodation of travelers. Scattered over the few acres of arable ground around the house, we saw, for the first time in perfection, that miracle of the vegetable kingdom, the aloe, (*agave Americana*;) and which was to the Aztecs, all that the reindeer is to the Laplanders.\* Though the officers and men generally were active and cheerful, and untiring, throughout the march, in efforts to encourage and assist the

\* The distinguished historian, Prescott, in his "Conquest of Mexico," gives the following account of the various and important uses to which the maguey was applied by the aborigines. To these, the modern Mexicans have added another, by converting it into a hedge plant, for which it is very valuable in the great scarcity of wood for fencing.

"Its bruised leaves afforded a paste from which paper was manufactured; its juice was fermented into an intoxicating beverage, pulque; of which the natives to this day, are exceedingly fond; its leaves further supplied an impenetrable thatch for the more humble dwellings; thread, of which coarse stuffs were made, and strong cords, were drawn from its tough and twisted fibres; pins and needles were made of the thorns at the extremity of its leaves; and the root when properly

weak, it was late in the afternoon before the last feeble and foot-sore soldier limped down to the stream at La Rinconada. Some of the foremost troops had already kindled fires, expecting to pass the night there; but when the rear-guard came in, General Butler determined to push across the next sierra by the famous pass of Los Muertos, and encamp at Agua Caliente. The men were cramped and stiffened by the toilsome march they had already performed; but they at once shouldered their arms and fell into ranks. A few, utterly exhausted, were unable to proceed, and did not overtake the column until the next day.

The road at the Rinconada turns abruptly to the left, and winds for a league up through a narrow gorge, at the head of which the enemy had erected a strong field-work. About half way up, it turns a bold shoulder of the mountain; and for the rest of the distance sweeps round a deep hollow in its bare sides, every foot of which might be commanded by a battery on the summit. The sun had left the valley before us, and the mountains, obscured by the gathering shades of night, loomed up in black and shapeless masses against the sky. The faint light which remained, revealed to us a number of rude crosses that studded the steep ascent.\*

cooked, was converted into a palatable and nutritious food. The agave, in short, was meat, drink, clothing and writing-materials for the Aztec! Surely, never did nature inclose in so compact a form so many of the elements of human comfort and civilization."

\* Los Muertos or "the dead men's" pass, obtains its name from the number of murders committed in that wild and dismal spot. It is customary to mark those scenes of violence with the symbol of the Christian faith. In consequence, as I suppose, of the difficulty of planting crosses in the hard mountain road, those in the pass of Los Muertos were supported by large piles of stones, beneath which, many of our people believed, were the bones of the dead.

Before getting through the pass, we experienced a most unwelcome change of temperature; often so sudden and perceptible when *altitude* regulates the climate, as in Mexico. The cold night-wind flowing through the gorge from the table-lands above, to the warm valleys we had left, was keenly felt; and after our halt benumbed us all. It was quite dark when the weary stragglers reached the bald crest of the mountain; but they were there stimulated to exertion by the blaze of the bivouac fires in advance, and around which were assembled their comrades preparing the evening meal.

We encamped near some hot-springs, of which there are many possessing various mineral properties along the Sierra Madre range. After the cravings of hunger and thirst were appeased, cheerfulness returned even to those who were compelled to undergo the additional fatigue of guard-duty. So true it is, that the soldier in active service is alike heedless of past suffering and indifferent to the future. Thirst was his greatest tormentor in Mexico, but every stream from which he drank seemed to possess the quality of Lethe's waves. Though the day thus spent in crossing the Sierra Madre was one of the most fatiguing of the campaign, it was yet full of interest and excitement; inspired both by the cause of our forced march, and the grand marvellous exhibitions of nature around us.

On the 19th, we had an early *reveille*, and marched before dawn, determined to reach Saltillo in the afternoon, though some of us were far from believing that Santa Anna was hastening, as reported, toward the same point. The road,

now by an easy grade, led us to the table-land of Coahuila, and we soon found ourselves in a vast and elevated plain, which was encompassed by a lofty mountain rampart. At the south-western extremity of the plateau, near the point at which the rocky ranges converge to form the valley of Angostura—in which is the pass of Buena Vista) is the capital of the State, Saltillo. About midday, we met Lieutenant Colonel May with his Dragoons, *en route* for Monterey. He informed us that the report of Santa Anna's advance, had not been confirmed; that there was no necessity for haste; and that General Worth desired us to encamp on a stream two leagues this side of Saltillo, near Canon of Palomas (pass of Pigeons,) by which, it was rumored, a division of the enemy designed to get in rear of the town and cut off our communication with Monterey.\* At this intelligence, we slackened our pace and proceeded leisurely to the spot designated.

The face of the country, over which we marched, was bare, even of chaparral, and was in appearance exceedingly sterile. But the many ranchos and numerous fields gave evidence of a more settled and industrious population than any we had yet seen; the austerity of the climate, unlike the genial temperature of the lower country, rendering systematic labor necessary. In the summer season, the rough aspect of that region is probably much softened, by the green and attractive garniture with which it is decked by Ceres and Pomona.

\* It was through this same "Pigeon Pass," that Minon's cavalry brigade *did* cross two months afterward, viz—on the day preceding the battle of Buena Vista. It is rather remarkable that the rumor should have floated to our ears so long before the movement was executed.

The soil though dry, is generous, and by the simple application of water is made productive. Irrigation therefore, is extensively practiced on those elevated and thirsty plateaus. In the neighborhood in which we encamped, were numerous canals, which, gathering water from the only stream in that part of the country, assisted in fertilizing many a broad acre of the parching plains. As the soil would be utterly worthless for agricultural purposes without the application of water, the poor husbandmen are compelled to pay high rents to the proprietors of the canals as well as to the landlords. We were informed that two crops were gathered from the same land every twelve months, as in the *tierra caliente*; but here one of them was a crop of small grain. Wheat sowed in November, is ready for the sickle in April; and corn is planted immediately after the wheat harvest.

Soon after encamping, we observed that the inhabitants of some *ranchos* not far off, alarmed at the vicinity of the dreaded *voluntarios*, were preparing to abandon their homes. To these we immediately sent assurances of good treatment, and offered a guard for their property if desired. This tranquilized them, and they were soon induced to enter our lines; bringing chickens, eggs, and what was most acceptable, some dried fruit. Some of them were intelligent people, and conversed freely about their government, with which they expressed much discontent.

Between our camp and Saltillo, and located upon the stream before mentioned, was a cotton factory; the only establishment of the kind, I believe, in Northern Mexico. Indeed, notwithstanding the adaptation of large tracts of

Mexican territory to the growth of cotton, and the high tariff policy of the government, there are but few manufactories in any part of the country.\* The most extensive are at Puebla; but none of them are said to be prosperous, though the price of coarse cotton goods (not smuggled) is from thirty to forty cents per yard. The owners of the factory did not appear to be particularly friendly to the United States, whose traders they said were following our armies and filling the Mexican markets with cheap cottons. One of them informed me that the Mexican editors were all for war to the bitter end; and based many hopes upon the peace party in the United States, which was soon expected to *pronounce* against President Polk.

\* I am tempted to quote in this connection,—as explanatory of the causes that have operated against the development of the industrial interests of the country,—part of an excellent article that appeared in the number for May, 1847, of that valuable periodical, "Hunt's Merchants' Magazine." The difficulties encountered in the recent Tehuantepec negotiations, confirm what the writer says concerning the jealousy and opposition of the natives to the enterprise of foreigners.

"Whoever contemplates the map of the world, and reflects upon the course of commerce in relation to the East, from the discoveries of the Portuguese, down to the present day, will naturally fix upon Mexico as that nation of all others best calculated from its frontier to take the lead in commerce. Her geographical position is good; and the eyes of all nations have, since the abandonment of a north-west passage to India, been fastened on the Isthmus, as the great future road for commerce between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Mexico labors, however, under many disadvantages. On the Gulf coast she has not a single good harbor; and the cities are not habitable for foreigners during many months in the year. The land ascends rapidly from the coast to the interior, making the transportation of goods difficult and expensive. But Mexico enjoys also many great advantages. Nature has blessed it with every possible description of mineral and agricultural wealth in profuse abundance: and an industrious people, with an efficient government, would not fail to place it foremost among the nations of the earth. Unfortunately, however, the natives passed under the dominion of proud, indolent, and rapacious Spaniards,—a people essentially anti-industrial and anti-commercial. Down to 1789, Spain continued its barbarian prohibitive policy, allowing only one galleon of 1400 tons to enter Mexico annually with Chinese merchandise; and one, once in three years, from Seville or Cadiz, was chartered by government with

The manufactory was a very substantial structure, two stories high, and built of *adobes*. Its machinery (about forty looms and twelve hundred spindles,) was made in New Jersey. The native operatives seemed sufficiently active and intelligent. A small chapel was erected for their accommodation near the mill, in order, perhaps, that they might lose but little time in paying their devours to the many inferior divinities of the Mexican church, every saint's day prompting to idleness.

European merchandise. In 1790, the trade was thrown open; and private capitalists engaging in it, it soon reached from \$11,000,000 to \$19,000,000. This trade was, however, still burdened with most onerous impositions under four general heads: *first*, on articles of Spanish produce in the markets of Seville or Cadiz; *second*, on shipments for Mexico; *third*, at Vera Cruz; *fourth*, transfer duties at every step from merchant to consumer. Under such arrangements, the trade did not prosper much; but on the breaking out of the civil war, the new government opened the leading ports of commerce. The Spanish merchants withdrew to Cuba and Cadiz, and their places were supplied by British and Americans, who, settling in the interior, supplied the people with goods in exchange for dollars. The jealousy of the natives, who, themselves exceedingly indolent, are instantly enraged at contemplating the prosperity of a diligent foreigner among them, caused an imbecile government to make absurd threats against foreign artificers and traders; and thereby prevented the growth of enterprise in the country. These circumstances conspired to leave Mexico, at the era of the war of independence, in 1822, entirely without those great conservative commercial and industrial interests, without which the military inevitably obtain the mastery and control of affairs. The long war of independence turned all the energy the nation possessed, into a military direction. From 1808 to 1821, the history of the revolution is only that of a sanguinary guerrilla warfare, leading to no results other than destruction to trade and insecurity to property. In 1821, the sudden secession of Iturbide from the royal cause, in favor of liberalism, resulted in his ascending the throne as Emperor Augustin I. From that time down to the present day, the political history of Mexico, has been one rude scene of violence and military anarchy. A turbulent banditti, as faithless in their foreign dealings as they were rapacious, cruel and treacherous in their domestic affairs, have, for twenty-six years, held possession of that unhappy country. Room for enterprise, encouragement to industry, or security for property, there were none. The roads, particularly the splendid way constructed by the merchants of Vera Cruz from that city to the upper county, were suffered to go to decay; not even the injuries they sustained during the war have been repaired. Their antipathy to carriages, and means of transport and communica-



We lay in our position near Saltillo, from the 19th of December until the 1st of January, 1847, suffering much from the inclemency of the season. In the hurry of our departure from San Domingo, much of our camp equipage had been lost, and some of our troops were compelled to dig holes in the ground, in which to shelter themselves from the piercing blasts that nightly swept across the open plain. Fuel was more scarce, in that region, than water; a single wagon-load of wood, brought from a distance of twenty miles, being distributed each day for cooking purposes, among the companies in camp. Many poor inhabitants of that country obtain their subsistence by daily carrying small faggots on their backs to the Saltillo market.

The soldiers off duty, often engaged in such athletic sports, as aided them in resisting the severity of the climate. A

tion, is even more strong than that of the Spaniards. While the government in its enactments and practice, has shown itself far more hostile to commerce than to crime, traffic has been more oppressed than vice, and merchants more rigidly fined than murderers. The repeated revolutions have left those who gain power, no other prospect than to get rich by speculation; and it has become a seemingly well understood system, that those going out of power should empty the treasury, and leave their successors to fill theirs by the most approved system of plunder. The readiest mode of replenishing the treasury and feeding the cupidity of the officers, has been found in the prohibitive tariff system; because, while under pretense of encouraging home manufactures, by keeping foreign goods scarce and high, it made the sale of special privileges to import goods more profitable to the dictator. The higher were the profits to be realized by the merchant, the better price could he pay for the privilege. Hence, although a dishonest government had pledged the custom's revenue to discharge the interest on its debt; by this device of the special privileges, they could still be made available to the officer. A system of low duties would not have admitted such an operation.

"All these causes have operated powerfully against the development of those great conservative industrial and commercial interests, without which there can be no stability of government, no efficient execution of the laws, nor any means of keeping in check those military adventurers, whose turbulence has torn that ill-fated country in internal brawls; and whose non-observance of treaties and plighted faith has involved two nations in the horrors of war."

favorite diversion was rabbit-catching by a circular hunt or "surround." Those animals were neither rare nor shy in that vicinity; and from their unusual size and the extraordinary length of their ears, were designated by the specific term "jackass-rabbits." Some of them are nearly as large as the red fox of the North. Their hair is very long and fine, and it is known that the ancient Mexicans possessed the art of weaving it into a soft and delicate web. Three or four hundred of the men, unarmed, generally united in the hunt, the scene of which was a plain adjoining our camp, covered with sedge and bushes not much higher than the knee. By skillfully and rapidly forming a large circle, the men always inclosed one or more rabbits. Then marching with loud shouts toward the center, and closing the intervals between them as they advanced, no means of escape were left to the terrified and bewildered animals, save by jumping over the heads of the soldiers, which was sometimes successfully attempted.

The day after our arrival, I visited Saltillo on military business and to see the town. It contains some handsome and extensive buildings, and the streets are tolerably well paved. The principal plaza is embellished with shade trees and a fountain, and the whole city is abundantly supplied with good water. The church is a vast and irregular edifice, nearly two hundred and fifty feet in length, and elaborately ornamented within and without. The wall behind the grand altar is about fifty feet high, and all covered with a mass of gilding in raised figures, that dazzled and wearied the eye. A profusion of paintings, statues and wax figures, were dis-

played upon the sides of the building, or grouped around the various shrines, representing the Virgin, our Saviour, and sundry saints, both native and foreign, "our Lady of Guadalupe" having as usual a conspicuous place. To all of these, the artists had given the the dark complexion of the Mexicans, and which pious fraud, it has been remarked, "is intended to flatter the race for the good of their souls." There are no pews in their churches, and an American, even an American Catholic, as he strolls through them, finds it difficult to divest himself of the idea that he is examining a museum or picture-gallery. But when in the performance of some religious ceremony, the priests, in their flowing and picturesque habits, are gathered around the altar, and the broad floor is covered with kneeling worshippers, while the deep tones of the organ fill the ear with sacred melody, the effect is impressive and solemn.

Bleak and comfortless as was our bivouac, I can yet recall some cheerful hours spent there. And what position or circumstance could damp the exuberant spirits of youth, engaged in an exciting campaign in a country so full of curious and novel scenes! We had determined that nothing but the approach of the Mexican army, (in which event, I ween, birds of a stronger wing and fiercer spirit than *doves* would have wheeled in the "canon de Palomas") should prevent us from observing with customary honors the "hallow'd and gracious time" of Christmas. On its sacred eve, the country around us assumed a more cheerful aspect. The people were abroad with songs and music; bonfires and rockets blazed in every direction; the little chapel at the mill was

illuminated, and the sound of bells floated far over the plain. In our camp too, there were some merry little parties. Some of my readers will *perchance* recollect a certain company of jovial friends that assembled at our Assistant Surgeon's tent to discuss a bucket of foaming egg-nog, mixed according to the Old School prescription and administered in no Homeopathic doses; they will remember too, that when in the full enjoyment of their "flowing *tin-cups*," a courier, who had come in hot haste from Saltillo, entered with the intelligence that the Mexican troops were rapidly advancing, and an order for the brigade to be held in readiness to march at a moment's warning;—and how, in the midst of the song and toast, those "merry, merry men" buckled on their swords and hastened to their posts, with the white froth yet upon their mustaches and the red blood bounding gladly in their hearts.

An old Mexican residing in the neighborhood, and whom, for certain reasons, I was inclined to believe, had on that day assured me with many solemn protestations, that Santa Anna's forces were still at San Luis de Potosi. But with the brightening prospect of another glorious "stampede" at least, the men were directed to sleep on their arms. Toward morning as we lay "twixt sleeping and waking" on the hard ground, the faint but unmistakable sound of many distant hoofs was heard; and after the lapse of a few anxious moments we saw advancing across the arid plain, what, in the uncertain light appeared to be a large body of cavalry. They approached slowly and cautiously as if hoping to surprise the camp; and we were just indulging in a little quiet

mirth at the disappointment which awaited them, when the enemy at a closer view were transformed into pack-mules, about five or six hundred in number.

But the excitement caused by the report received on the previous night, was not allowed thus tamely to subside. Early in the forenoon of Christmas-day, a dragoon galloped into camp with a communication from General Butler, who had now assumed command at Saltillo, ordering us to repair to town forthwith. The messenger stated that the game was now afoot beyond doubt; that General Wool's column, which had arrived within a few miles of town, had actually seen and skirmished with the enemy.

We started immediately at a rattling pace and reached Saltillo in an hour. After halting a few moments in the suburbs to dress the ranks, we entered the town with the cadenced step and flying colors. On every side were evidences of excitement and alarm. The garrison (General Worth's division) was under arms; while groups of frightened citizens, whom the appearance of our volunteers was not calculated to pacify, were hurrying to and fro. For several hours we remained in the plaza, awaiting orders. In the meanwhile, a hundred contradictory rumors floated around. Plans of battle there were many; but of retreat, not one. All reports agreed in estimating Santa Anna's army at more than twenty thousand. With General Wool's force, we could have mustered about four thousand effectives, and sixteen pieces of artillery. But a resolute courage animated every breast and each felt that,—“the fewer the men the greater share of honor.” We had expected to pass the night

under arms in the open country toward Buena Vista, a position not then selected for a battle-ground, but at dark, scouts coming in with the intelligence that no enemy was within fifty miles of us at least; we were provided with filthy quarters in town and slept on Christmas-night,—for the first time since leaving the United States,—under a roof.

The next morning, it was satisfactorily ascertained that the Mexican army was still at San Luis, and we marched back to our old position near the Palomas pass. About a week afterward, some regiments long kept in the rear, (the 2d and 3d Indiana and 2d Kentucky,) having arrived to claim places in front, we were ordered to return and garrison Monterey. The men, finding themselves deceived in the prospect of a battle, and disgusted with the privations of their dreary and miserable bivouacs among the mountains, contemplated their return to the cheerful and smiling valleys of Nueva Leon with much pleasure. On New-Year's day, 1847, we set out, attended by a large train of empty wagons going down the line for provisions. At the moment of starting, one of the teams took fright, and dashed off at full speed into the plain skirting the wood. A Mexican who happened to be near, with a *lariat* as usual hanging to his saddle-bow, immediately gave chase. Overtaking the runaways he dexterously threw his lasso over the head of the leading mule, (there were five in the team;) and then by gradually checking and turning his prize in easy circles, as a skillful angler would play a strong fish, finally succeeded in bringing the fugitives back to the starting point, panting and quite sub-

dued. I have never seen the lasso thrown more gracefully or to so good a purpose.

We reached Monterey on the 4th of January, in excellent health, after our forced marches; but sadly deficient in clothing and camp equipage.

## CHAPTER IX.

MONTEREY garrisoned by our regiment.—The battalion of San Patricio.—How the monks of San Francisco diddled us.—A few words about volunteer troops.—Expedition against Vera Cruz.—Arrival of General Scott in Mexico.—His letter to General Taylor.—Its bearer, Lieutenant Richey, killed.—The divisions of Worth, Twiggs and Patterson sent back to the coast.—General Taylor returns to Monterey.—His letter to General Scott.—Scouting parties captured by the enemy.—Taylor joins Wool at Saltillo.—Changes his head-quarters to Agua Nueva.—Reasons for taking that position.—Advance of Santa Anna.—Taylor falls back to Buena Vista.—Sights and sounds at Monterey.—General Urrea moves from Tula upon our line.—He captures Lieutenant Barbour's train.—Besieges Lieutenant Colonel Irvin at Marin.—Attacks Colonel Morgan's battalion.—Glorious news from Buena Vista.

THE months of January and February passed rapidly away. We were comfortably quartered in town, and our old friends of the 1st Kentucky regiment held the citadel. The weather was temperate and serene, and the gardens and environs of the city rejoiced in the gay flowers and blossoms of spring. The citizens, beginning to appreciate the mild and respectful treatment they experienced, evinced a more friendly disposition; and the soldiers preserved a commendable deportment, although their position was not remarkably favorable to discipline. It had been supposed by many, that the volunteers were unfit for garrison duty; and that a life of comparative ease in a populous city would foster and strengthen the spirit of lawlessness and insubordination some of them had displayed. Hence the regular troops had generally occupied the towns, while the volunteers were com-