

wagon to load, and the next instant rising to fire at any Mexican in sight, no matter how distant. Much excited, he continued his animated *fusillade* long after the troops had ceased firing. Whenever he dropped to charge his pistol, the driver of his war-chariot, who sat upon his mule, shaking with laughter, was engaged in selecting the next *victim*, and at which the *terrible piece of ordnance* was leveled as soon as loaded.

Another amusing scene occurred about this time. A teamster who had escaped from the massacre at Ramas,—and who was a driver in our train also,—had been suddenly set upon by a couple of Lancers; and failing in his attempt to give “leg-bail,” he had darted head foremost into a cluster of chaparral about twenty feet in diameter. Into this the enemy were unable to force their horses; and being afraid to dismount, contented themselves with riding around the thicket and thrusting their long lances at the fugitive. Our driver, now on his hands and knees, and dodging from side to side like a wounded partridge in a brush-heap, succeeded by dint of hard scratching, in eluding all the blows aimed at him. The Lancers, alarmed at the proximity of some of our troops, finally rode off; when the teamster, venturing cautiously from his friendly cover, fled to the escort, with clothes torn to shreds and hands and face badly lacerated by the thorns. Overjoyed at his narrow escape and regarding himself as one returned almost from the dead, he gave utterance to his delight and attracted attention by some lusty cheers *for himself*. Jumping into the air and swinging the remnant of an old straw-hat exultingly around his head, he shouted,—

“Hurrah for Bill Robbins! Hurrah for Bill Robbins! run over by Lancers two times, and a living agin!”

But there were some incidents connected with the affair at Cerralvo of a different character, that interested more seriously the hearts of those present, and with one of which I propose to detain the reader. The Mr. R——, of whom mention is made at the beginning of this chapter, happened, at the commencement of the fight to be near the front of the train, while his friend and family were riding in a wagon far away toward the rear. He at once made a desperate effort to join them, but after a fierce hand to hand conflict in which he killed one of the enemy, was forced to abandon the attempt and unite with our force in front, then hotly engaged. Covered with blood and bathed in tears, the gray-haired old man approached the commanding officer, and in a voice tremulous with wild excitement stated the position of his family and implored assistance. It was not the moment for a consolatory conversation, yet sympathizing deeply with his sudden and great grief, the commander briefly assured him that he should have our arms, as he already had our sympathies, at the earliest possible moment; that in order to be able to aid him effectually we must first secure ourselves; and suggested that his wife and children were probably safe with the rear-guard. And so it proved. Their wagon had been attacked with others, and R——’s friend had been killed before the eyes of the family. But the women and children, supplicating mercy in the Spanish language, with which from their long residence in Durango, they were familiar, had been spared and suffered to join Captain Keneally’s party in the



rear. The old man,—husband and father,—being agitated with a thousand fears for his loved ones, could think of nothing but their fate; and throughout the action stood by the commanding officer, occasionally taking hold of his stirrup and looking mutely and imploringly up into his face, as if to remind him of his promise. Doubtless each moment seemed an age to the one. I know that duty and the tenderest feelings of our nature were making wild war in the breast of the other.

The enemy, it will be observed, being all mounted and acquainted with the ground, had been enabled with their superior numbers to dash almost simultaneously upon all parts of the train. A heavy column had briskly charged the rear-guard, but meeting with a determined resistance had been compelled to retire with loss and in disorder. They then formed in force, between the two divisions of our detachment with the view of preventing a junction. From the time of the arrival of Captain Howe's company in front, we had been greatly concerned for the safety of the company and artillery left in the rear. Lieutenants Fyffe and Moore, acting staff-officers, had both gallantly volunteered to bear any communication to Captain Keneally. But the commander, believing from the mutual confidence which existed between that officer and himself, that the Captain needed no encouragement to do his duty; and would count with certainty upon our aid when the proper moment arrived,—declined to risk the lives of his staff unnecessarily. He did not believe that there was a company in the 1st Ohio regiment, which, under the circumstances could be induced to

lay down their arms and surrender that piece of artillery, contrary to his orders and the interests of the whole detachment. Company A, certainly was not one to withdraw from danger and thereby involve their comrades in greater peril.

The Mexican force in our front having been repulsed, and now disposed to content themselves with random volleys of escopetts from a distance, Captain Bradley was ordered to march with eighty men, to the rear; unite his force with Captain Keneally's and bring up the wagons collected there. Just as Captain Bradley was about to set out, Captain Keneally himself—cheerful and sprightly as usual—rode up on a gaily caparisoned Mexican horse. He stated that his company was surrounded, and that he had received under cover of a flag the following communication, which was written with a lead pencil on a mammoth sheet of foolscap.

“The Colonel Langberg, offers to all the *soldiers*, life and security, if you surrender yourself.

(Signed) “EMELIO LANGBERG, *Foreign Officer.*”

Captain Keneally also stated that upon receiving the note he had requested an interview with Colonel Langberg; that he had found him with a large force under General Romaro, occupying an intermediate point of the road; and that Langberg, who spoke our language fluently, had remarked to him that further resistance would be useless as the Mexican force amounted to sixteen hundred men *and three generals.*\* Keneally next inquired, if the remainder of the detachment

\* I have no doubt but that this statement of the strength of the Mexican force at Cerralvo is nearly correct. We were afterward informed by citizens of the town, that all Urrea's troops, both regulars and rancheros, had been concentrated there, as a suitable point for their operations; it being about equi-distant from our posts



had been captured? To this interrogatory, Langberg truthfully replied in the negative; a circumstance from which I am disposed to infer that he is a soldier of more honor than many of those with whom he has associated himself. Captain Keneally then demanded permission to consult his commander, which was immediately granted and a horse placed at his disposal. The enemy also cheerfully agreed to a truce of *one hour*, during which time he had proposed, doubtless, to practice some of his perfidious arts. The men, who seemed to guess at once, the purport of Captain Keneally's message and the contents of the paper he delivered, swelled with silent indignation at the bare idea of a capitulation. But one however, ventured to make a remark, and that *sotto voce*. "Boys,"—said he to those next him in the line,— "boys, how would we look cracking *pandy-mice* in Urrea's camp to-night?"\*

The commander of the escort, not intending to be duped by the wily foe, became, after hearing Keneally's report, doubly solicitous to concentrate his force without further loss of time. The captain was forthwith sent back with a suitable reply to the enemy, and a word of encouragement to his own company. Immediately upon the heels of Keneally was dispatched Captain Bradley with the force previously designated: so that if the Mexicans had calculated upon

at Monterey and Camargo. The generals so vauntingly alluded to, were Urrea, the commander-in-chief, Romaro and Canales. But generals are as plentiful in Mexico, as Colonels in the snaky counties of Virginia.

\* The reader will perceive the *kernel* of this remark, when he is informed that the Mexican soldiers, who are their own commissaries, subsist chiefly on "*pan-de-maiz*,"—corn bread,—which they make from corn coarsely bruised or *cracked* upon flat stones.

having an hour's truce in which to spread their nets, "they reckoned without their host." Captain Bradley possessed an intrepid spirit, united with a rare combination of prudence and promptness, which, I take occasion to remark, rendered him eminently worthy of this dangerous and honorable distinction. Captain Keneally having notified Colonel Langberg of the termination of the truce, courteously advised him to move his troops, as they were in a dangerous position and might get hurt if they persisted in remaining. Upon rejoining his company, he was informed by Lieutenant McCarter commanding the artillery, that during his absence some squadrons of the enemy had moved to a new position within short range of the piece. These were immediately fired upon. Bradley, who had advanced rapidly on the main road, was enabled at almost the same moment to pour the whole weight of his fire upon other bodies of cavalry, who, taken by surprise at these sudden offensive movements on our part, gave way on all sides and suffered the rear-guard to be re-inforced. Among the foremost in Captain Bradley's command, marched the gallant old New Englander,—R\*\*\*, who had learned from Keneally the melancholy fate of his friend, and the joyful tidings of the safety of his wife and children. His meeting with these, after such sanguinary scenes as all of them had witnessed, I leave to the imagination of the kindly affectioned reader. The now united commands of Captains Keneally and Bradley, had but little difficulty in bringing up the remainder of the train: and thus, in less than two hours after the first attack, we had the satisfaction of seeing our little force again concentrated, and with



a loss of but two soldiers, fifteen drivers and about forty wagons. The Mexican loss we had no means of ascertaining, but the people of Cerralvo, subsequently informed us that it amounted to between forty and fifty killed and wounded. It was General Urrea's last appearance in that theater, from which we argue that he at least, did not think attacking trains a very profitable business *in the long run*; or agree with the Mexican historian that—"a guerrilla war would have ruined the enemy and given success to the Republic."

It should be stated that before the junction of our troops was effected,—indeed but a few minutes after the departure of Captain Bradley,—General Urrea commanding in our front, sent a flag toward us, which Major Coffee volunteered to meet midway, as it was not desirable that any of the enemy should be allowed to inspect closely our force and position. Its bearer, who did not speak English very intelligibly, was understood to inquire why we had violated a truce by firing on the general-in-chief. This strange inquiry, *strange*, because the truce was construed by us as extending only to the rear-guard, served to show that General Urrea, though more distant from the scene of contract than ourselves, was cognizant of it before we were; and strengthened our suspicion that some preconcerted scheme was about to be put in execution; and which was thwarted by our promptness in reinforcing the rear-guard. The demand for a surrender was also iterated, but the envoy was given to understand that General Urrea had failed to convince us of its necessity; and that as his object in these parleys was evi-

dently to gain time and information, we would not regard or hesitate to fire upon the next flag he presumed to send.

After the arrival of the rear-guard, a few more shots were exchanged with the enemy, but he finally gave up the contest and withdrew from the field. It was beginning to get dusk, but the commander of the escort determined to make an effort to reach the town, in the direction of which the Mexicans had retired. The wagons closed in mass, covered several acres of ground, and though empty of aught save curses, with which they had been pretty heavily laded, especially since the attack, embarrassed our operations greatly. On the four sides of the park, were posted in as many divisions all our available force, including the miscellaneous command of Mr. Crittenden. In this order we resumed our march. But the bushes skirting the road so impeded the progress of the train, that, after many short detentions, we were compelled by the darkness to halt outside the town. It was supposed, too, from the sounding of bugles in advance, and the movements of the enemy, dimly discerned in the faint starlight, that preparations were being made to dispute our entrance; and it was therefore deemed best to await the morning before making the attack. Strong picket-guards were thrown out, and the men were ordered to lie down in their places and sleep on their arms. Many of the poor fellows were too much fatigued with the exertions of the day, either to eat or sleep; but a feeling of contentment and a sober joy pervaded the whole command, arising from the consciousness that they had done their duty and were an overmatch for the enemy. During the night General Urrea



evacuated the town and marched southward into Tamaulipas; nor was our line of communication afterward interrupted, save by the *indigenous* robber bands.

Early the next morning, 8th of March, we took possession of Cerralvo; after having been met in the suburbs by some deputies of the citizens, who, governed by their fears rather than their inclinations, greeted us cordially and proffered every service needful. These humble characters on the previous day had doubtless been cheek-by-jowl with Urrea. But the *ayuntamiento* of Cerralvo are not singular in the amiable faculty of accomodating themselves to the power that happens to be in the ascendant. Learning from two wounded Americans whom we found in the town, that they had been kindly treated by the citizens,—the Alcalde was notified that in return for his humanity, and a liberal supply of beef and corn during our stay, we would extend to himself and people our protection and “distinguished consideration.” Notwithstanding these friendly demonstrations at Cerralvo, we did not relax our usual vigilance, and took up a strong position in the town. The same day, the commanding officer dispatched a Mexican courier to General Urrea, with some details of the battle of Buena Vista; and requesting him to release Lieutenant Barbour’s party and other Americans then in his hands, upon the assurance that General Taylor would promptly reciprocate the act by giving liberty to an equal number of prisoners. The messenger returned on the following day, with the intelligence that Urrea had retreated toward Victoria; and that despairing of success in any effort to overtake him with his poor *mustang*, he had aban-

doned the chase. Though the man had been promised, in the event of his success, that his brother, then our prisoner, should be released; yet there were many who placed no confidence in his report. Among those whose minds were filled with the belief that the enemy yet lingered in the vicinity with some ulterior designs upon our train, were the teamsters. On the 9th, the commander of the detachment issued an order for the companies and wagons to be got ready for resuming the march in the direction of Camargo. He was soon informed by the chief wagon-master, that the teamsters positively and unanimously refused to drive. This unexpected *reversé* of Jehu involved us in a dilemma, for which, so far as I am informed, neither Mars nor Marcy had made any special provision: the oracles of the god and Secretary of War, being alike ominously silent concerning teamsters. They were not enlisted men, or considered subject to martial law. Beholding in perspective a fate as dreadful as that already encountered by some of their comrades, the little subordination that had heretofore prevailed among them was now lost in an appalling sense of danger.

The commanding officer, not being altogether satisfied himself, that the enemy had abandoned the road; and knowing that in the event of another sudden attack by such a force, more lives and wagons must be lost, was not disposed to resort to any extreme measures to compel obedience. He was free to admit too, that the unarmed drivers had some reason to dread an enemy who had proved so unsparing to them: and in this connection it may be remarked that in Langberg’s note, life and security were offered to the *soldiers* alone.



But being anxious that the important dispatches from Buena Vista should not be delayed, he next concluded to divide his force,—to leave one-half at Cerralvo in charge of the train, and march with the other to Camargo. He stated to Major Coffee and Mr. Crittenden the embarrassments of our position, arising from the temper and conduct of the drivers; and informed his officers of the plan proposed. To this it was replied among other things, that there was a scarcity of cartridges,—but ten or twelve rounds remaining for the muskets and a less number for the artillery;—and that if the enemy had not retreated toward Victoria, and should be tempted by a division of our force to invest Cerralvo, as he had besieged Marin; a failure of ammunition or of supplies from the surrounding country would be fatal to the party left with the wagons. After calmly weighing all the difficulties that surrounded him, the commanding officer finally decided to await the arrival of a force under Colonel Curtis, supposed to be on the march from Camargo; and in the meantime dispatched a messenger to Major Crossman, the quarter-master at that post, requesting the provision of supplies on the route. The messenger who was a Mexican smuggler, familiar with the frontier, returned in a few hours and stated that he had encountered some of Canales' men; but as he had fortunately refused to take a written message, they had released him after searching his clothes and saddle for papers. He however, stated his belief that it was possible to get through by making a circuit to the north-west, crossing the Rio Grande and descending to Camargo on the Texan bank. This he immediately undertook to do, in com-

pany with a volunteer; whom he shaved, painted and disguised as a Mexican with a skill that proved him an adept in such matters. The second attempt was successful, and we afterward found our march greatly facilitated by the satisfactory arrangements that Major Crossman had promptly made for supplying the train on the road.

We were detained at Cerralvo four days, at the end of which time Colonel Curtis arrived with a column of more than twelve hundred men; comprising his own, the 3d Ohio, regiment, four companies of the new Virginia regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel Randolph,—a squadron of regular dragoons under Lieutenant-Colonel Fauntleroy,—four pieces of artillery; and a corps of Texan Horse, lately called into service. Some of the fugitives from our train had met him at Mier, with the usual report in such cases, that our detachment was cut to pieces. On receiving this intelligence, Lieutenant-Colonel McCook of the 3d Ohio regiment, had proposed a rapid advance to Cerralvo with the cavalry alone. But his wishes were not acceded to, and the whole force in hourly expectation of an attack continued to advance by slow marches. The same misrepresentations of our fate reached General Taylor,—then at Monterey;—who, in the absence of any official report of the circumstances, though fresh from his glorious victory over Santa Anna, immediately started on a bush-whacking hunt after such small game as Urrea. That wily gentleman however, hastened to burrow in the Tula pass, from which he did not again emerge during the campaign.

After obtaining from Curtis' command some needful sup-



plies; and thirty Texan Rangers, to be employed as scouts and flankers, we continued our march, and arrived at Camargo without further interruption on the 15th of the month. At that post we met Colonel Mitchell, Lieutenant-Colonel Weller, Surgeon Chamberlyn and other officers of our regiment who had just arrived from the United States. The town of Camargo we found much changed since our former visit in August of the previous year. It had been *fortified* too,—(as the reader, *peradventure*, knows,) but in such a bungling manner, as to expose a certain one of Mr. Polk's generals to the *suspicion* of incompetency. An extensive and well-constructed field-work had been built on the west bank of the Rio San Juan (opposite the town) by the 2d Ohio regiment, and named in honor of the officer who superintended it—"Fort Major Wall."

On the 20th of March, five days after our arrival at Camargo, we again entered upon the dry and weary road to Monterey; with a train of one hundred loaded wagons, and a force augmented to five hundred men, by the addition of some companies of the Virginia regiment; a company of United States Dragoons; and a company of Texan Rangers under the famous "*Mustang*" Gray;—the whole column commanded by Colonel Mitchell, whose wound was sufficiently healed to enable him to take the saddle. Nothing worthy of notice occurred during our journey until our arrival, on Sunday, the 28th of March, at the scene of the massacre between Ramas and Marin, already described. There Captain Gray and his Rangers separated from the command, for the purpose, as was said, of obtaining forage.

The column pursued its march a few miles farther, and encamped for the night at the stream near Marin. I was informed that one of the Texans had recognized a brother among the decaying remains of mortality in the valley, and with tears of grief and rage, had insisted upon avenging his death in the blood of the first Mexicans they encountered. The departure of the Rangers therefore, seemed to bode evil to the neighboring rancheros; for human vengeance,—especially Texan vengeance of the *Gray species*,—armed with power, is seldom over nice in the exercise of it.

We saw nothing more of them until dark, when they rode into camp laded with forage, and driving a couple of terrified old Mexicans before them; both so covered and hung about with flapping and complaining fowls, as to resemble in no small degree their ferocious ancestors, when clad in their gorgeous panoplies of "plumage" or feather-mail. The fright which evidently possessed the old men, was most lamentable; and they hastened in anxious silence to leave the camp as soon as relieved of their burdens. Little did we suppose that they were going home to weep over the dead bodies of relatives and friends. Nor was it until after our arrival at Monterey that we learned that twenty-four men, comprising nearly the entire male population of a village, about eight miles from our camp, had been put to death.\*

\* This massacre gave rise to an interesting correspondence between General Mora Y. Villamil (commanding the nearest Mexican garrison, at San Luis de Potosi) and General Taylor, in which the latter displayed his usual candor and ability; as will be perceived in the following extract from his letter:

"But as you have thought proper, in communicating the instructions of your government, to address me somewhat at length on the manner in which the war has been prosecuted on my part, I embrace this opportunity to make a few remarks



Various opinions were expressed at Monterey, about this sanguinary and merciless transaction. Many justified it by the wanton cruelties inflicted upon our countrymen near Ramas, in which some of these same Mexicans were probably engaged; and for which outrages the rancheros certainly had no apology whatever. Others thought it necessary as a warning and example to the people, whom we had so long in vain endeavored to conciliate, and whom we could only intimidate by some such sudden and heavy blow. Some excused it as the result of a wild storm of passion; by the long rankling injuries of the Texans, or by the border code of "blood for blood." It forms one of the darkest passages in the history of the campaign; and in fact, can not be justified on the score of necessity of any kind. I would fain blot it out from these memoirs; and it is alluded to here chiefly because as an officer of that detachment, I desire to exculpate my own regiment from any participation in the atrocious

on that subject. The outrages to which you have specifically referred became known to me soon after their occurrence, and I can assure you that neither yourself nor the president of the republic could have felt deeper regret than myself on those occasions. Every means in my power, within the operation of our laws, were employed, but in most cases in vain, to identify and punish the delinquents. I can not suppose you so badly informed as to believe that such atrocities were committed with my connivance or consent; or that they furnish a fair example of the mode in which the war has been conducted in this part of Mexico. They were in truth unfortunate exceptions, caused by circumstances beyond my control. It is proper to inform you that, from the moment the American army first entered the territory of Mexico, it has sustained losses of individual officers and soldiers, who have been murdered by Mexicans, sometimes almost within sight of its own camp. I do not recall these facts for the purpose of justifying, in any degree, the practice of retaliation; for my government is at any rate "civilized enough" to draw the distinction between the lowest acts of individuals and the general policy which governs the operations of an army; but you have chosen to institute a comparison between our respective governments in their mode of waging war, which can not pass unnoticed. In this connection let it be remembered that Mexican troops have given to the world the example of killing wounded men upon the field of battle."

deed; which future historians, in the absence of all evidence to the contrary, might perhaps charge to the entire escort. Let the perpetrators, whoever they may be, vindicate their own conduct. The Rangers denied plumply having been concerned in it; but of that, the reader can now judge as well as myself. General Taylor made every effort to discover the offenders, but without success,—the Mexican witnesses failing to come forward to identify them; being afraid that they might incur a similar fate. The whole truth of the case will probably remain locked up in the cells of flinty and guilty hearts, until that day when the omniscient God who witnessed it, "shall come with righteousness to judge the world and the people with equity."