

signed in Mexico, which could not have been intended to meet the exigencies of ports on the Pacific, and at the conference which ensued, the Mexicans, in return for relinquishing the alcobala, demanded the privilege of collecting duties levied upon the coasting trade—it seemed a bagatelle that we might easily have conceded, for it was absolutely necessary that some means should be granted for their support. The commissioners, however, were not able to arrange the matter, and both parties separated in dudgeon. Anaya retired to the Presidio, the alcobala continued, and the merchants were extremely disappointed at the rupture; for having a large amount of goods destined for Durango and the adjoining provinces, which had already passed our customs, they were unwilling to risk the transit before some positive arrangement had been established between the two parties.

These official misunderstandings, however, did not prevent constant visits of the Mexican officers and their families to the port—a few of them were pleasant, conversible, intelligent gentlemen, but generally speaking, they were dirty, ill-bred persons, without moral principle, and the greatest liars in existence, and they invariably taxed one another with being cowards. On entering Mazatlan, they were obliged to register their names and report the time of departure. We were occasionally amused when they assured us they found great difficulty in the search for their *amantes*, and had not been received with the same ardor of affection that so long an absence would have justified.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DURING the period of our occupation of Mazatlan, the remaining ships of the squadron had not been idle along the neighboring shores of the gulf. The Port of Guaymas, on the Main, had been closely guarded by a sloop of war; and notwithstanding the immense superiority of force, under the Mexican General, Campuzano—of five hundred regular troops—he had been at all times beaten, whenever attempting any demonstrations upon the town—on one occasion with the loss of twenty killed and forty wounded;—affairs which sufficiently damped their ardor, and warned them to keep beyond the reach of their invaders.

The Peninsula, also, had been the theatre of more serious struggles; and as the events attending their history were in themselves characterised by the utmost gallantry, reflecting the highest degree of praise upon the actors, who bore their plumes most bravely; and as they were, in fact, the only affairs of importance, which may be considered as shedding a ray of glory upon our arms, during the naval operations on the Mexican coast, I may be excused for relating them more in detail.

It may be recollected, that prior to the departure of the squadron from Lower California, through urgent solicitations made by the respectable inhabitants, a small detachment of

marines, under command of Lieut. Charles Heywood, U. S. N., had been deputed to occupy the little town of San José.

As I have before mentioned, the settlement is situated in a narrow valley, about a league at its greatest width on the gulf, and is rapidly wedged in, as it falls back into the interior, by converging walls of lofty barren mountains. It is fertilized by a swift little stream of pure water, which, in pleasing contrast to the parched arid hills around, brightens the landscape with many green patches of cultivated fields, fruits, and foliage. In the bosom of this little vale, upon a slight eminence, two miles from the bay, reposes the Mission—a village of some five hundred inhabitants—having a broad avenue running entirely through it, in a parallel line with the stream. At the upper end was a square adobie building, protected in the rear, by an abrupt descent to the base of the plain, and the front facing and looking down upon the whole length of the main street. This was designated as the Cuartel. On the right, and opposite angle, stood another commodious dwelling, behind which a high wall enclosed a small court-yard: it was owned by an American, Mr. Mott, of Mazatlan, and occupied by his agent, Mr. Eugene Gillespie—who as an amateur in the trying events that ensued, well won the guerdon of a brave and loyal gentleman.

Immediately upon landing, on the 9th November, 1847, these two buildings were taken possession of, and the American flag was displayed. The Cuartel was found to be in a very dilapidated condition, and to prevent the walls and roof from falling, cross-beams and pillars were used to prop the decayed timbers, while numbers of useless windows and doorways were closed up with masonry, leaving the main entrance and another portal in the

rear, where a platform was laid for more convenient traversings of a cannon.

The low parapet which invariably surmounts the flat roofs or *azoteas* of Spanish houses, was raised sufficiently to afford a breast-high protection, and the walls were pierced at the commanding points, with loop-holes for musketry: this, with a trench between the two buildings, constituted the defences.

The garrison numbered twenty-five, including the Commander and his four subordinates. This force, however, was swelled, in a numerical sense, by about twenty friendly natives, who, in seeking protection under the pledges conveyed in our proclamations, had timidly volunteered their services, in case of assault. Still, they were of but little effective aid, and, with their families, only served to reduce the provisions and uselessly waste the limited supply of ammunition with which the garrison had been furnished. The gun, too, was an unwieldy nine-pounder ship's carronade, mounted upon a clumsy slide, without wheels for easy transportation, or any of the conveniences necessary for manœuvring on land. It was planted in front of the Cuartel, to sweep the avenue with its fire. The force was divided between the two positions, and with but forty rounds of ball cartridges in the cartouche boxes, the little band calmly held their ground.

The Californian partisans who had enrolled themselves for guerrilla warfare on the Peninsula, were composed of mongrel bodies of deserters and disbanded soldiers from the Main, together with divers Yachi Indians, and other disaffected vagabonds, who, having nothing to lose, and anxious for plunder, either from their own countrymen or their enemies, were indifferent by what means it was to be obtained.

This force amounted in the aggregate to more than six hundred

mounted men, tolerably well equipped with weapons, and commanded by Pineda, Mexia, Moreno, Angulo, and Mejares. The last-named individual had been former Captain of the port of Mazatlan. He was a man of activity and desperate courage, for which last quality, at a later day, he paid the penalty with his life.

The passions of these guerrillas had been violently inflamed by the persuasions and advice administered by a shrewd Mexican priest, named Gabriel Gonzales, who, fearing probably a loss of clerical influence among the native population, and inheriting, with all his race, a natural antipathy to the march of the Anglo-Saxon, consequent upon the secession of the territory, made unceasing efforts by every means in his power to have a strong blow struck for its salvation. He partially succeeded.

The original scheme of the Mexican leaders was, in the first instance, to have made a concentrated attack upon the town of La Paz, at the time in possession of a company of the New York regiment, under Lt. Colonel Burton; but perceiving the weakness of the force to contend against, in the small garrison of San José, and deeming it an easy prey, they divided their force, and with the moiety resolved upon its destruction.

Hardly had the squadron disappeared below the horizon from San José, before reports came flying thick and fast, that a serious attack was contemplated. These rumors only infused renewed energy in the preparations for defence and resistance, nor was the garrison kept long in suspense.

On the morning of the 19th, ten days after the sailing of the ships of war, a small cavalcade, bearing a banner of truce, entered the village, and by a blast of trumpets demanded a parley. Possibly, to give additional weight to the summons, clouds of dust

were beheld rolling down the valley, and strong squadrons of cavalry scouring the roads and underwood, in advance of their main body. The effect was not realized. The flag of truce was met by an equal number from the Cuartel, and a missive received, demanding, under the high appeal of *Dios Patria y Libertad*, an immediate surrender, under penalty of the horrors of annihilation by a greatly superior force. The reply was prompt and decisive: the American commander regretting his inability to comply with the summons, and declaring his intention to defend his flag against all odds.

Negotiations being thus courteously terminated, the guerrillas, nearly two hundred strong, skirted the suburbs, and took up a position on the right of the American quarters, behind the church, on an elevation, three hundred and fifty yards distant, laterally commanding the town; it was called La Lomita.

During the afternoon the Mexican eagle and tricolor was unfurled, and with cheers and pealing bugles, they opened a fire from a six-pounder and musketry, continuing the work until dark. The shot, however, did but little damage to the soft adobie walls, save fracturing cornices or boring fresh apertures for loop holes; nor was it judged prudent to return their salutes but rarely, inasmuch as the carronade of the Cuartel could not, without much difficulty, be brought to bear upon the enemies' hill, and the limited supply of ammunition rendered it advisable to await closer quarters with the small arms.

As night closed around the valley, there was a cessation of firing; the garrison remaining under arms momentarily anticipating a more vigorous attack; nor were they disappointed. By ten o'clock the besiegers had cautiously crept within close proximity to the occupied buildings, and with a field piece in the main

street, began a simultaneous assault from all directions, front and rear. Showers of bullets flew into every hole and aperture of the Cuartel, whilst determined efforts were made to gain a lodgment in the opposite house: but they were severally repulsed with loss, and not an ounce of lead was thrown away, or powder idly burned without a definite object. Three of the garrison only, were wounded.

A hot but ineffective fire was kept up by the assailants during the night, but at daylight the force was withdrawn again to the camp at La Lomita. All the following day the garrison were encircled by the guerrillas, who maintained a brisk fire of musketry from behind the walls and parapets of adjoining dwellings. The disparity of numbers was too great to risk the chances of dislodging them at the point of the bayonet.

With the night the garrison were still under arms at their posts. The plan of the guerrillas was to have stormed the front of the Cuartel with forty picked men, under cover of three field pieces, receive the discharge from the nine-pounder, rush in, and capture it, whilst other bodies, provided with bars and ladders, were to scale the *azoteas*, and then pour in a destructive fire on the occupants below. In the end, these matured calculations were defeated: nevertheless, the positions were well chosen, and the Mexicans in readiness for the assault. Just before midnight the garrison sentinels challenged: the hail was immediately answered by trumpets sounding a charge, and a heavy fire from guns and small arms; at the same instant, Mejares, the commandant of artillery, with four of his followers, in leading the forlorn hope, were riddled by rifle balls from the besieged, whilst another in striving to bear away the body of his comrade, fell mortally wounded on the same bloody heap. Deprived of the animating exam-

ple of their leader, the storming parties faltered, thus disconcerting the entire movement, and they returned to their encampment without attempting further demonstrations that night. Eight newly made graves was the sole glory reaped in this abortive struggle.

Meanwhile a series of vigorous attacks had already been commenced upon the command at La Paz, but was repulsed by a stouter resistance than was anticipated; equally unprepared for the gallant conduct of the little band at San José, and depressed by the loss of their leader, the guerrilla chiefs ordered their partisans to again unite in the north, for a combined movement upon La Paz—as had been originally intended.

This course of action was considerably hastened, on the morning of the 21st, by the appearance of two large vessels in the offing; eventually proving to be the whale ships "Magnolia" and "Edward," of New Bedford—Captains Simmons and Barker—who learning from a launch, near Cape San Lucas, the state of affairs in San José, without a thought to their own interests, resolved to do the utmost for the garrison. Standing boldly into the bay, dropping anchor, discharging a cannon, and taking in sails together, they succeeded completely in deceiving the guerrillas, who were posted in strength on the beach to oppose a landing; and who, under the belief that the ships were either men-of-war or transports, fell back to their camp, and shortly after retreated up the valley; not, however, without giving a parting volley to the Cuartel, which was courteously returned by Mr. Gillespie, who knocked a trooper from his saddle by a rifle-bullet.

On being informed of the straightened situation of their countrymen, these bold captains, with their brave crews, armed themselves with muskets, lances, spades, and harpoons from their

ships, and sixty in number at once landed, and marched to the Cuartel. The provisions and ammunition of the garrison had been nearly exhausted, and these resolute whale-men instantly brought on shore a quantity of bread—all the powder they possessed, and even parted with hand and deep sea leads to mould into bullets! Not contented with this, they formed into companies—were drilled—and evinced an enthusiasm to do good battle for those they had so generously and disinterestedly succored. Not only were these gallant deeds undertaken without solicitation, but they nobly gave food and raiment to many of the timid peasantry received on board their ships. If any more admirable patriotism can be shown than this, let it be inscribed in grateful remembrance, with the names of Simmons and Barker!

A few days later a government transport and corvette arrived: the garrison was supplied with two more carronade guns, and an abundance of ammunition and provisions. The quarters were considerably strengthened, and an adobie bastion, with four embrasures raised in front of the Cuartel. The force was also increased by ten marines, and sixteen men whose terms of service had not quite expired; many of whom were invalids, and were thus merely a make-weight upon those they had been detailed to assist.

For a month all remained quiet in the vicinity—the guerrillas had fallen back upon La Paz. Reports, however, gave every indication that another and more serious attack was contemplated upon San José; but, notwithstanding this state of affairs, and the events which had transpired, the commander of the corvette saw no further cause for alarm, and being homeward-bound, sailed for the United States. The bold whalers had also long since

departed—although not until their services had been no more required—and at length the bay was once more deserted.

No longer deterred by the men-of-war, the guerrillas, having been baffled in their demonstrations upon La Paz, again resolved to attempt the reduction of San José, with such an overwhelming force as to place the result beyond a doubt. Accordingly, breaking up their camp, with three hundred cavalry, they entered the lower valley on the 15th of January. For a week they were posted within a league of the village, whilst detached portions were employed driving off cattle and horses, destroying the crops, and intercepting all communication with the interior. On the 21st, a small schooner anchored in the bay, having some articles for the garrison. The following morning, the sea road appearing free from the enemy, two officers and five men, well armed and mounted, started to communicate with the vessel. On gaining the beach, they were surrounded by an ambuscade of one hundred and fifty guerrillas, and taken prisoners. Shortly afterwards, they were carried up the valley: with pain and anxiety, their friends saw them from the Cuartel, without the means of affording them relief. Emboldened by this success, which was indeed a bitter loss to the little garrison, the guerrillas contracted their lines, and each day found them nearer the town. Again the besieged and the native residents, with their families, were obliged to keep closely within their quarters. Step by step the enemy after gaining the main avenue, pierced the buildings on either hand, and cutting trenches across the transverse lanes, they succeeded in forcing a passage, entirely concealed from view, until they gained complete possession of the town. And in an adobie house, within fifty yards of the American battery, the walls,

already three feet in thickness, were increased by planting stakes inside, which were filled up with hard timber and sand; and such was its strength, that twelve-pound shot, fired at forty yards, made no perceptible impression: from the azotea of this entrenchment the Mexican flag floated in defiance.

Besides these annoyances, almost every dwelling in the street was loopholed, occupied and protected by heavy angular barricades of pickets and earth, making safe points for the use of musketry, while the church and surrounding eminences were strongly guarded.

During these operations the garrison had not been merely spectators. They made a number of sorties, with the loss of but one man killed, and succeeded in saving a small quantity of rice. But by the 10th of February, the guerrillas had entire possession of the town, and from front, sides and rear of the Cuartel, they were enabled to throw a raking fire. From that time forth, the fusillade was incessant; the least exposure of person being made the target for a simultaneous discharge of fifty bullets; and from long practice they were found well skilled in handling their weapons—pouring the lead in at every aperture.

On the afternoon of the 11th, the garrison had to lament the death of the second in command, Passed Midshipman Tenant McLenahan. While engaged at his duties on the azotea, amid a shower of deadly missiles, he was struck down by a bullet in the throat, and fell with one hand clasping the flagstaff that upheld the colors he had so intrepidly defended. He was a young officer of undaunted resolution, courageous and energetic. He expired two hours after being wounded, and was buried in rear of the Cuartel, while the sharp whistling of bullets and reports of cannon

echoed over his untimely grave—a fitting requiem for the noble spirit that had taken its flight.*

The commander and a single officer were now all that remained. The whole garrison numbered but sixty, including sick, wounded, and twenty of the enrolled natives; the buildings were crowded to excess with women and children; they were to be fed; provisions were becoming scarce; bread was entirely gone, and naught remained, save a few days' salt meat on half an allowance. In addition to the want of these necessaries, the assailants had cut off the access to the stream in rear of the Cuartel, or at least so enveloped the outlets and approaches to the pools—by screens of sand and barricades of pickets—as to make it a matter of almost certain death to seek water, either by day or night. There was no other course to pursue than the arduous task of digging a well within the walls. This, by the most untiring exertions, was finally accomplished, by boring thirty feet through the solid rock.

In such an emergency, surrounded by nearly ten times their numbers, less undaunted spirits might reasonably have succumbed to the perils of a seige that was hourly becoming more straitened. But the beleagured little garrison, though a small band, were true to themselves. There were neither murmurs nor thoughts of surrender—they still vigilantly guarded the defences—with but limited rest or food—while the bullets and shot of the besiegers flew in by the loop-holes, or plunged through the walls. Yet there was no finching—ever on the alert—for hours and hours they watched the enemy, and wo betide the adventurous guerrilla, who, becoming rash from fancied security, exposed an inch of flesh! the leaden

* On an eminence overlooking the bay, a small white railing and tablet mark the spot where the remains of poor McLenahan were subsequently buried, with the honors of war.

messenger from some deadly carbine gave sad warning to his comrades.

It was evidently the intention of the guerrillas to starve the garrison into submission, who had already sustained a close siege of more than four weeks, resisted many determined assaults, and made a number of successful sorties. Yet their position had become eminently critical, and without speedy relief, their well-defended flag would have to be hauled down. It did not hang upon the simple results devolving upon capture. They felt no greater uneasiness on that score than commonly falls to the lot of the vanquished in civilized warfare. But the innocent inhabitants, who had sought refuge under the inducements held forth by our proclamations, and who trustingly relied upon American arms to shield them from the inevitable fate to which they were to be devoted by those whose vindictive hate and malice they had provoked—and whose *gritos*—cries—resounded from every housetop, singling out by name, with bitter taunts and revilings, those most obnoxious, and the doom in store for their apostacy—were the causes that still nerved the hearts of their defenders.

Joyfully, on the evening of the 14th of February, the garrison beheld a ship of war sail into the bay, and though apprehensive that the opposition would be too great to admit of a landing, yet at daylight the following morning an hundred of the crew disembarked, and soon after, the musketry from the Mexicans opened upon them. The odds were four to one; but steadily the seamen rushed on, pouring in their fire, and fighting their way, pace by pace, until met by a party from the Cuartel, when the guerrillas retreated, with a loss of fifteen killed and thirty-five wounded. Thus was the little band relieved, their wants attended to, and the sick and wounded cared for. The enemy, baffled in their

enterprise, and deterred by the presence of the corvette, deserted the valley for the interior.

A month later, Captain Steele, of the New York volunteers, with thirty mounted men, left La Paz, and after a flying march of sixty miles, reached San Antonio, when, dashing into the plaza, they put the garrison to flight; rescued the party captured at San José, and returned to their post, with the loss of but one man killed—having performed the entire distance of one hundred and thirty miles within thirty hours! Such gallant little forays need no comment. The prisoners had been treated with extreme kindness, and although moved from place to place, never experienced the slightest insult or injury.

Early in April, Lt. Col. Burton's command being reinforced by another company from the upper territory, with one hundred and fifty of the volunteers, moved towards the interior; while seventy-five seamen and marines left San José to form a junction at San Antonio. Before the bodies united, Lt. Col. Burton, with his troops, came up with the guerrillas, three hundred and fifty strong, at Todos Santos, and after a severe action, totally defeated them, taking many prisoners and their leaders. By the close of the month, the town of San José was occupied by Captain Naglee, of the volunteers, and the naval force was withdrawn.

Thus ended the war on the peninsula of California.