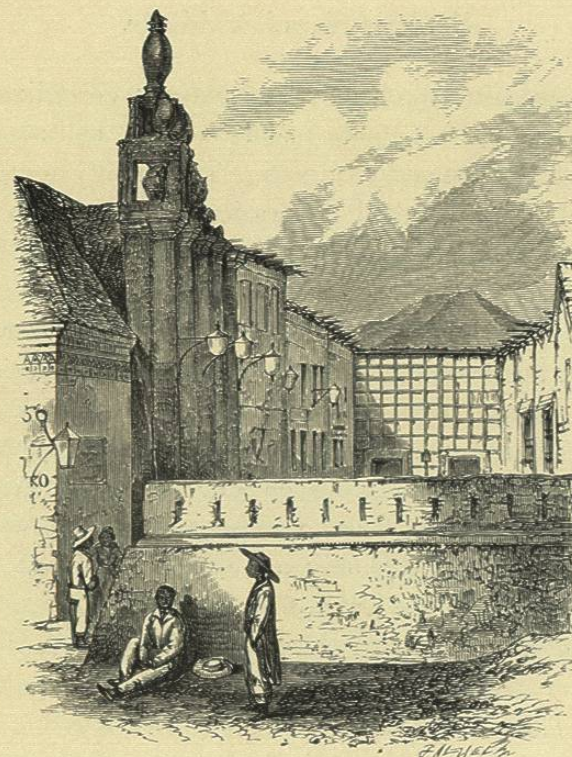


ward bound. Still, there was many a sad face, and I think many a silent adieu whispered in the hearts of weatherbeaten and toil-stained soldiers, to the memory of those whose bones the fortune of war left far from their comrades in a strange soil—De Briant, Cazes, Rawix, and others who had fallen in the front of the battle, whose resting-places ought to be pointed out for many a long day as holding the ashes of men who were a brave enemy, and nobly accomplished their *devoir*. May they rest in peace!



FOR THE LINE OF MARCH.



CALLE DEL TEATRO, ST. LUIS POTOSI.

## CHAPTER XI.

## AN EXODUS.

OUR descent from Saltillo was a small exodus in its way, for there were many Mexicans too compromised by their adherence to the Imperial party, too openly expressed in their opinions as "mochos,"\* to run the chance of Liberal clemency, and remain in

\* "Mochos,"—the slang term used by the Mexicans when alluding to the Imperialists.



the town after the French evacuation; accordingly, they had packed up bag and baggage, and accompanied the General's column. They really were to be pitied, although they occasionally amused us all intensely with the relations of their daily misfortunes. It was impossible to make them comprehend any reason for starting at as early an hour as six in the morning, or why we should halt occasionally on the roadside—even when it rained—to allow the column to close up, and the cup of their misery was overflowing on our arrival at Agua Nueva, after two hours' incessant downpour, when they discovered the only accommodation available for all to be in the leaky, flea-inhabited old church.

We marched with a strong advance-guard of cavalry and light artillery, the long, straggling train of carts and vehicles of every description being protected by a rear-guard of infantry and mountain guns; not that we had much to fear from an attack, for the column of General Jeaningros was always one day's march behind us on the road, and the Liberals were far too busily employed quarrelling with each other, and plundering Monterey and Saltillo, to dream of interrupting the evacuation.

Here, in the north, the country is in a far more unsettled state than near the capital. The Gefe de Guerilla is a very important personage, and soon becomes a rich and influential man. After plying

his trade successfully for a few years, he generally finds himself at the head of some three or four hundred men, and in a position to treat with the Government. Frequently, in former times, he would sell his submission, and retire with his loot and the grade of colonel, or even of general, becoming a "great card" in the capital, and looked upon as an exceedingly clever man, deserving well of his country! Generals and colonels are very common articles throughout Mexico, and it is not always prudent to inquire too curiously into their antecedents, for you may fall upon them in different walks of life; for instance, the commanding officer in Orizaba, in January, 1864, was not above keeping a tienda, in addition to looking after his military duties, and was perfectly ready to serve any customer who wanted a dram of aguardiente, with his own hands!

The distance between Agua Nueva and Encarnacion was too long a day's march for our cumbrous column, so we were obliged to halt at Tanque de la Vaca, one of the most disagreeable sites for a camp possible to imagine. There is not a living being at the present time within thirty miles of the place; formerly there was a small colony of Indians, but the guerillas decided amongst themselves that the spot was a very convenient one to stop couriers and rob diligences from; and, in consequence, the vil-



lagers were turned out, and their huts burnt, nothing now remaining to greet the traveller on his arrival but a large tank full of brackish water, and a plain covered with cacti, thorns, and prickles of every description, leaving no open space large enough to encamp any considerable force upon. Besides, the ground is hard and rocky, tent-pegs are scarcely to be prevailed upon to hold, even after the most superhuman exertions; and when the wind rises, you are smothered with dust. Here we had to huddle up as best we could, with our horses' heads almost in our tent-doors, for the grand object was to economize the room. As to the fugitives following the column, they would indeed have passed a rough night of it, had not General Douay ordered the large hospital tents to be pitched for them, for after sundown the air was bitterly cold and raw, and it frequently rained during the night.

To add to all these drawbacks, there were no wayside fondas where these unfortunate people could procure anything to eat, and, as a last resource, all the various messes were put under a contribution; still, although they did not fare so very badly after all, I fancy the ladies lost a good deal of illusion on the subject of soldiers and the delights of soldiering, and must have ended by wishing themselves anywhere, rather than in the midst of a crowded camp and under canvas.

Thus we retraced our steps by successive marches through Encarnacion and St. Salvador to Salado, along the dusty monotonous plains, covered with cacti, aloes, and yuccas—yuccas, aloes, and cacti,—every here and there the prairie dogs peeping out their heads from their large camps, and wondering what in the world all the noise was about. The country could not possibly have appeared more dreary and waste than it really was—no water, and stifling clouds of white dust enveloping the line of march,—not a living being to be seen between the stations, and the only excitement the occasional rush across the road of a long-legged greyhound-looking hare (popularly known in America as the jackass-hare), or the discovery and slaughter of a stray rattlesnake during a halt. Sometimes, but rarely, a troop of horses belonging to one of the haciendas would stand and stare at us, and then, tossing their heads, would gallop madly off helter-skelter through the brushwood, neighing wildly at the unaccustomed sight of man.

St. Salvador has not even the advantage of being a comparative oasis in this desert, and decidedly it may be marked down as one of the most unfortunate villages on the northern road, for, having been the scene of more than one skirmish between the Liberals and Imperialists, and famous for the "courier-stopping" carried on in its vicinity, it



has, of course, suffered from reprisals by both parties, and now is half deserted. Here we heard that a band of guerillas, under, I think, Bustamente, was close to us in the mountains, and the Commandant de la Hayrie, commanding officer of the Bataillon d'Afrique, begged General Douay to give him leave to surprise them by a night march. In the end, however, nothing was done, for later intelligence arrived, inducing the General to countermand the permission he at first gave for the expedition, for it was not considered politic to exasperate the enemy into possible reprisals upon the inhabitants of the towns now in their power, by ferreting insignificant parties out of an extremely difficult country.

After a long, dusty march from Salado, we arrived, on the second day, at Las Animas, only to find the *noria*\* had been destroyed by the enemy, and that it was utterly out of the question to make a halt; in fact there was barely enough filthily dirty water to be procured for the men's coffee, and watering the horses of the cavalry and artillery was quite out of the question; consequently, after halting for an hour, there were six more weary leagues before us to get to the Puente de Vanegas, the nearest spot on the road where water was to be

\* *Noria*,—a description of well, worked by a large wheel; in this case, the wood-work had been torn down, and thrown into the water.

found. That evening it was about six o'clock when our march was over, and the last hour had to be travelled under a heavy storm of rain and wind, not agreeable after the heat and dust; still, the annoyances of the day were soon forgotten when the water came in view; men and horses made a regular rush for the lake; grievances were over, and the tents pitched, fires got under way, and *bidons* filled almost before dark. I can assure you it was not long before the camp fell asleep that night, and the men for picket duty were really to be pitied.

The next morning we reached the little town of Cedral by a cross-road, leaving Vanegas, where we previously halted on our march to the north, on our right. After breakfast, the General pushed on with the cavalry to Matehuala, the rest of the troops following the day after,—General Jeaningros occupying Vanegas and Cedral as outposts.

I spoke just now of the Commandant de la Hayrie; let me tell you of an expedition he took part in some months previously to this, when commanding at Saltillo. At this period, the garrison of Monterey was composed of Mexican Imperialist troops, and the dissidents had been keeping tolerably quiet for some little time; suddenly they sprang into life again, and advancing in force upon Monterey, compelled the Imperialists to fall back, leaving them in possession of the greater part of the town.



De la Hayrie, on receiving information of this, without any hesitation put a hundred and ten men—all that he could with safety take from Saltillo—into carts, and, in twenty hours, made the twenty-nine leagues, to the relief of the Mexicans, arriving in the environs of the town before the break of day. Here he found the position of affairs very far from satisfactory, the enemy proving to be about 1400 strong, and the Imperialists just on the point of evacuating their position as untenable. Having the great advantage of knowing the town well, he decided on risking a *coup de main*, particularly as the dissidents were said to be busily employed plundering and attempting to levy forced loans on the inhabitants. Leaving his carts and mules in an old fort outside the suburbs—the Obispada,—and profiting by the obscurity of the early morning, he boldly marched in the direction of the Grand Plaza, bayoneting all he met on the road. On arriving there, he surprised and put to flight the enemy's pickets, occupying the position just long enough to seize all the important papers of their leaders; then, having repulsed an attempt made to cut off his retreat by the enemy's cavalry, eventually succeeded in regaining the Obispada. The loss of the French amounted to two men killed, the bodies being brought back, and one officer, Captain Bastidon—the same, you

will remember, who defended Parras, after the affair of Santa Isabel,—wounded in the arm and chest by musket-balls. Bastidon, relying on the Liberals not unearthing him, took refuge in the house of some Imperialists he happened to know upon the line of retreat, and, in the end, was very right to have done so. Escobedo's men were so thoroughly demoralized by this sudden surprise, that he could not succeed in persuading them to attack the Obispada, and, indeed, had quite enough to do to rally his men and hold his position on the plaza, for the inhabitants of the town, taking courage, refused to pay the prestamo, and resisted as much as they were able to do. De la Hayrie remained unmolested for twenty-four hours, and, at last, was fortunate enough to make out the dust of General Jeaningros' column in the distance.\* Sallying forth, for the second time, at the head of his men, he again attacked the Liberals, who, finding themselves taken between two forces, hastened to make good their retreat, and only just in time, for the cavalry of General Jeaningros, under the Commandant Barbue, drove them along in the direction of China, a village on the Matamoros road, inflicting very considerable loss. Had not men and

\* General Jeaningros was on the line of march to Monclova, and, hearing of the state of affairs at Monterey, hurried at once to the assistance of the town.

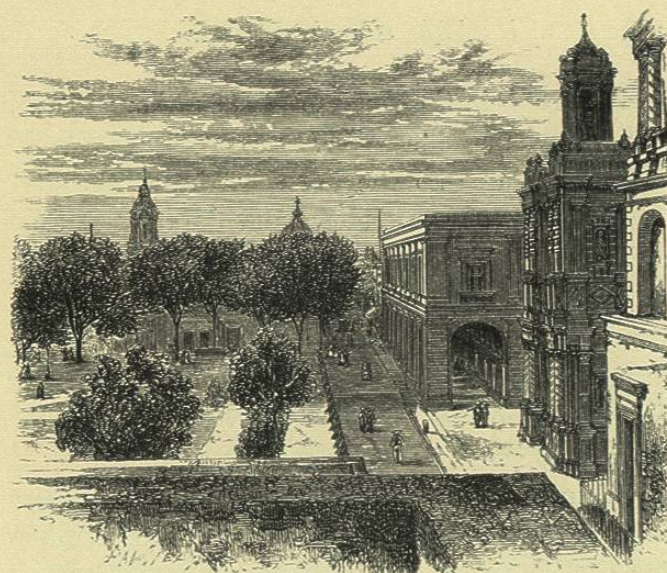


horses been so thoroughly tired out—they had marched forty-eight leagues in sixty hours,—in all probability the Liberal army of the north would have been entirely broken up on that day, and have given no further trouble.

Still the results were excellent. Escobedo lost over sixty men killed, and a great number of wounded and deserters. The *prestige* of the French was immensely increased, and the Mexican Imperialists vastly reassured by the promptness of the affair. It was regarded, and very justly so, as a brilliant success, and due to the skill and energy of De la Hayrie.



WAYSIDE FONDA.



PLAZA AND CATHEDRAL AT ST. LUIS POTOSI.

## CHAPTER XII.

### LA GUERRE AUX ADOBES.

THE Fates appeared resolved that we should not carry away with us any favourable impressions of Matehuala, for no sooner did we enter the town than down came the rain in torrents, and the streets were speedily converted into perfect quagmires of mud. The only place I can recollect as at all equalling it in dirt, bustle, hurrying of troops, and floundering about of guns and waggons, is Pehtang in 1860, some few days after the landing of the French and