

CHAPTER XX.—1848.

GENERAL SCOTT VISITS US—"A PORTION OF THE COUNTRY'S HISTORY"—HIS POLITENESS AND CHIVALRY—"WAR IS HELL" IN A MANNER ANTEDATED—CAPTURING GENERAL SCOTT WITH HIS OWN SWORD—"WAITING FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT"—JAMES K. POLK VISITS US—HIS ANCESTRY—DESERTING HIM TO GREET A SERVANT—HIS KINDNESS AND CONSIDERATION.

IN 1848, General Winfield Scott came to see us. He was said to be a magnificent looking man—over six feet in height, and well proportioned; and at sixty-two, was in the fulness of his fame; for he had, only a few months before, entered the City of Mexico in triumph.

His career had been so splendid that we felt as if a portion of the country's history were about to walk in upon us.

He had commenced life at Petersburg, Va., which afterwards became historical in Grant's memorable siege; he had practiced law at twen-

Asking the General Some Questions.

ty-two, become tired of it at twenty-four, entered the army as a captain of light artillery, and remained in it ever since. He had been one of the heroes of 1812, and was the most prominent figure of the Mexican War, which had just closed.

The General arrived a little earlier than the hour named for his reception, and I was sent down to the parlor to entertain him during the time he was waiting. I did not flatter myself that anything I might say would be of very much interest to so distinguished a man—one who had probably met many of the most illustrious statesmen and soldiers and scholars of the world; but he was quite pleasant, and insisted upon it that he was having a wonderfully good time. Of course his politeness and chivalry had much to do with his saying so, but if that was the only reason, he was a wonderfully good actor; for we fell to talking as if we had known each other a long time. Perhaps after the fatigues and anxieties of the campaign, a quiet visit with a simple girl had a restful effect upon him; but whatever the cause, he was so communicative, that I felt like asking him all sorts of questions that I would not have dared to do an hour before.

"How did it seem, when you really found yourself in the halls of the Montezumas, Gen-

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

eral?" I asked, referring, of course, to his conquest of Mexico. "Didn't you feel like shouting?"

"No," he replied: "I felt like falling on my knees and thanking God for the victory. War is a terrible thing—demoralizing in all its immediate effects. Would to God it were not sometimes necessary, in order to accomplish results!"

He paused, and I could somehow feel that he was thoughtfully looking into the distance with the eyes of memory—scanning once more, perhaps, "The red sand of the battlefield, with bloody corpses strewn."

When, many years after this, I heard that General Sherman said, "War is hell", I thought of my conversation that day with Scott, just from his glorious victories. He was not so epigrammatic as his illustrious successor, but he meant the same thing.

At the time General Scott and I were having our conversation, Sherman was an unknown adjutant in California, only twenty-eight years old. Neither he nor the hero of Lundy's Lane perhaps had any idea that in thirteen more short years, there would be a gigantic war in this country, the like of which had never been known!

I lost my dinner by the interview (the Gen-

Capturing General Scott.

eral had had his lunch and would eat nothing), but felt well repaid, in the fact of having enjoyed a tête-a-tête with the greatest general America had thus far produced since the Revolution.

A little madcap adventure occurred after we were seated on the stage, at which I often laugh, and wonder at my own temerity. There were by this time several public men of the city, who had gathered in to see what was going on, and among them an alderman, whom I had met before, and who had the regular aldermanic love for a joke. He whispered to me, and suggested that I pull General Scott's sword from the scabbard, and hold it up over his head in regular Damocletian style. "I will guide your hand to its hilt," he said, "and you can do the rest." More like a school-girl of fourteen than a staid lady teacher in her twenties, I drew the sword suddenly from its scabbard, held it over his head, and on the impulse of the moment exclaimed, "General Scott, you are my prisoner!"

I was startled at what I had done, and apprehensive of what might follow at the alderman's odd and ill-timed joke, but was immediately relieved in mind, when the grim old warrior laughed good-naturedly, and replied, "I surrender at discretion. I always do, to the

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

ladies. Now let me show you how to wield it." Which he did, guiding my arm with his huge soldierly hand. It was a simple incident, but one for a woman to remember as long as she lived.

After the exercises were over, he said, playfully:

"Well, Miss Fanny, I suppose that the next I hear, some one will have picked you up and run off with you."

I replied, thoughtlessly:

"Oh, no, Mr. General! *I'm* going to wait for the next President!"

I said this forgetting that he had already been talked-about as a candidate for the office; and my cheeks must have suddenly assumed a fiery red color when the fact occurred to me. But the General was safe, so far as any of us poor spinsters were concerned: he had thirty-one years before married the beautiful and accomplished Miss Mayo, of Richmond, had always been noted as a very chivalrous and devoted husband, and Mrs. Scott was still in excellent health. She was, however, not destined to grace the parlors of the White House as the first lady of the land; the General ran for President on the Whig ticket a few years later, and, much to my sorrow, was defeated.

President Polk twice gave us calls at our

Escorting the President.

Institution in New York, once with his staff: and we felt very much acquainted with him. He was reserved in manner, if not austere: but evidently possessed the most genial of natures. His kindly disposition was proved, through the following little incident:

Having been requested to show him some of the more interesting departments of the Institution, I was conducting him through one of the halls, when there came to our ears the voice of one of our old domestics, who had been away from us for some time, and had, evidently, just returned.

With my usual impulsiveness, I asked the President to excuse me a moment, while I ran back and greeted the dear old servant, whom I very much loved, on account of many kindnesses she had shown me at times I needed them most.

Returning to him, I made many apologies for the seeming rudeness, explained the matter as well as I could, and with burning cheeks, begged his pardon. His reply was soothing and reassuring, and convinced me that under his quiet exterior, was a sympathetic and generous nature. "I am glad you went back, little girl," he said: "it shows that you have a kind heart, and a due appreciation of real worth."

Of course everything was read up and talked

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

up in our school, concerning the different people of distinction who visited us: and President Polk's ancestry was ventilated from "way back." When we found that the original family in Ireland was named "Pollock", we immediately wondered whether he was not some relation to Robert Pollok, author of "The Course of Time"—which we had heard read with great interest. Our genealogical enthusiasm was, ere long, somewhat dampened by one of the teachers' discovering that the distinguished Robert was a Scotchman, and spelled his name without a "c." I have since learned, however, that there are Scotch-Irishmen and Irish-Scotchmen; and that names are occasionally modified in other countries, as well as our own, on their way through the generations.

CHAPTER XXI.—1848-1850.

NAPOLEON'S FAITHFUL MARSHAL, BERTRAND—
A POEM OF WELCOME—HOW HE WATCHED
BONAPARTE'S LIFE EBB AWAY—LAURA BRIDG-
MAN, AND HER SWEETNESS OF MAGNETISM—
JENNY LIND COMES AND SINGS TO THE BLIND
STUDENTS—HER GENEROSITY—THE GREAT
AND ONLY BARNUM—ALICE CARY—A POEM
FROM FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

GENERAL HENRI GRATIEN BERTRAND, on his trip to this country, made a visit to our Institution at about this time. We were all very much interested in him, because he was one of the few surviving men who knew and were near the person of Napoleon Bonaparte, during a large portion of his career.

Bertrand was one of the bravest and most faithful of the "Little Corporal's" aids, and in any ordinary war or series of wars, would have shone forth preeminent. But it took more-than-giants to do that in the vast Napoleonic conflicts, and Bertrand never ranked among the Neys, the Murats, and the McDonalds.