

CHAPTER III.

Gen. Taylor leaves Matamoros for Camargo—His departure—Capt. Duncan—Interruption of a dance—Proclamation by order of the government—Grand review—Start for Seralvo.

GEN. TAYLOR and staff left Matamoros for Camargo on the 5th of August, on the steamer Whitesville, on board of which there were few regulars and a part of the regiment of Texan infantry. He had endeared himself to the people of Matamoros, both Mexicans and Americans, and so long as he was in the vicinity, every one felt safe and happy. There was no announcement of his departure, no demonstration made, to signify that the commander-in-chief of the American army was about to change his quarters. He departed while half the people were asleep, and ere the day had fairly dawned and the fact of his departure was known, he was many miles on his journey. To this brave old soldier, the most oppressive thing will ever be, to receive the adieus of his friends and their congratulations upon his success.

"The twelve months' volunteers" now began to pass up the river; Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Maryland, each had its representations.

Capt. Duncan, on the 14th, with a small command, was ordered forward as far as Seralvo, sixty miles above Mier, for the purpose of making a reconnoissance. He moved with great rapidity; and on his second night out, after a forced march of great length, he came in the vicinity of Punta Aguada, a little town containing four hundred inhabitants, and situated half-way between Mier and Seralvo. Capt. Duncan had been informed that this place was a rendezvous for Canales, and that at the very time one of his officers was in the place with a detachment of recruits. Capt. Duncan disposed of his force in such a manner that it surrounded the place and met in the centre of the town without alarming the in-

habitants. Here it was discovered by the lights and music, that a *fundango* was absorbing the faculties of the citizens. In the midst of its excitement, Capt. Duncan and his rangers presented themselves at the different entrances to the room, ordering all to stand. Never, in the history of dancing, was the "fantastic toe" so suddenly shorn of its activity, if we except the great ball at Brussels, that was interrupted by the firing of cannon that announced that Napoleon had reached the field of Waterloo.

No prisoners of importance were found. Capt. Duncan, with the true spirit of a soldier, ordered the music to proceed, and leading off the dance that he had so strangely interrupted, with a partner who displayed his exquisite taste in dark eyes and pretty feet, the thoughtless people resumed their amusements, while Capt. Duncan, ere the morning had fairly dawned, was in quiet possession of Seralvo.

On the 17th of July, Gen. Taylor, according to instructions from the war department at Washington,* issued the following proclamation to the people of Mexico:

A Proclamation by the General commanding the Army of the United States of America to the people of Mexico.

After many years of patient endurance, the United States are at length constrained to acknowledge that a war now exists between our Government and the Government of Mexico. For many years our citizens have been subjected to repeated insults and injuries,

* From House Document, No. 19, 2d session, 29th Congress.

Letter of the Secretary of War to Gen. Taylor.

WAR DEPARTMENT, June 4, 1846.

SIR:—I send herewith a number of copies of a proclamation in the Spanish language, addressed to the people of Mexico, which you are requested to sign, and cause to be circulated in the manner and to the extent you may deem proper. You will use your utmost endeavors to have the pledges and promises therein contained carried out to the fullest extent. There are also sent some copies of the proclamation in the English language. Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. L. MARCY,

Secretary of War.

Brevet Maj. Gen. Z. TAYLOR,

Commanding Army of Occupation, Texas.

our vessels and cargoes have been seized and confiscated, our merchants have been plundered, maimed, imprisoned, without cause and without reparation. At length your Government acknowledged the justice of our claims, and agreed by treaty to make satisfaction, by payment of several millions of dollars; but this treaty has been violated by your rulers, and the stipulated payments have been withheld. Our late effort to terminate all difficulties by peaceful negotiation has been rejected by the Dictator Paredes, and our Minister of Peace, whom your rulers had agreed to receive, has been refused a hearing. He has been treated with indignity and insult, and Paredes has announced that war exists between us. This war, thus first proclaimed by him, has been acknowledged as an existing fact by our President and Congress, with perfect unanimity, and will be prosecuted with vigor and energy, against your army and rulers; but those of the Mexican people who remain neutral will not be molested.

Your Government is in the hands of tyrants and usurpers. They have abolished your State Governments, they have overthrown your Federal Constitution, they have deprived you of the right of suffrage, destroyed the liberty of the press, despoiled you of arms and reduced you to a state of absolute dependence upon the power of a military dictator. Your army and rulers extort from the people by grievous taxation, by forced loans and military seizures, the very money which sustains the usurpers in power. Being disarmed, you were left defenceless, an easy prey to the savage Camanches, who not only destroy your lives and property, but drive into a captivity more horrible than death itself your wives and children. It is your military rulers who have reduced you to this deplorable condition. It is these tyrants, and their corrupt and cruel satellites, gorged with the people's treasure, by whom you are thus impressed and impoverished; some of whom have boldly advocated a monarchical Government, and would place a European prince upon the throne of Mexico. We come to obtain indemnity for the past, and security for the future; we come to overthrow the tyrants who have destroyed your liberties;—but we come to make no war upon the people of Mexico, nor upon

any form of free government they may choose to select for themselves. It is our wish to see you liberated from despots, to drive back the savage Camanches, to prevent the renewal of their assaults, and to compel them to restore to you from captivity your lost wives and children. Your religion, your altars and churches, the property of your churches and citizens, the emblems of your faith and its ministers, shall be protected, and remain inviolate. Hundreds of our army, and hundreds of thousands of our people, are members of the Catholic Church. In every State, and in nearly every city and village of our Union, Catholic churches exist, and the priests perform their holy functions in peace and security, under the sacred guarantee of our Constitution. We come among the people of Mexico as friends and republican brethren, and all who receive us as such shall be protected, whilst all who are seduced into the army of your dictator, shall be treated as enemies. We shall want from you nothing but food for our army, and for this you shall always be paid in cash the full value. It is the settled policy of your tyrants to deceive you in regard to the policy and character of our government and people. These tyrants fear the example of our free institutions, and constantly endeavor to misrepresent our purposes, and inspire you with hatred for your republican brethren of the American Union. Give us but the opportunity to undeceive you, and you will soon learn that all the representations of Paredes were false, and were only made to induce you to consent to the establishment of a despotic government.

In your struggle for liberty with the Spanish monarchy, thousands of our countrymen risked their lives and shed their blood in your defence. Our own Commodore, the gallant Porter, maintained in triumph your flag upon the ocean, and our Government was the first to acknowledge your independence. With pride and pleasure we enrolled your name on the list of independent republics, and sincerely desired that you might in peace and prosperity enjoy all the blessings of a free government. Success on the part of your tyrants against the army of the Union is impossible, but if they could succeed it would only be to enable them to fill your

towns with their soldiers, eating out your substance, and harassing you with still more grievous taxation. Already have they abolished the liberty of the press, as the first step towards that monarchy, which it is their real purpose to proclaim and establish.

Mexicans we must treat as enemies and overthrow the tyrants, who

left of the noble brigade that so promptly responded to Gen. Taylor's call for troops previous to the battles of the "8th and 9th." Gen. Worth's division was ordered to start on the morrow for Seralvo, which was decided upon as a depot for stores, to which point the Volunteer division was to be advanced as fast as possible, so as to join the main army before reaching Monterey.