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BY MOORE & THOMPSON.

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THE BANNER

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Scenes in Matamoras.

From the N. Y. Spirit of the Times.—By an officer in the U. S. Army.

MATAMORAS, May 22, 1846.

Dear P.—In my last I predicted that my next would be dated at Matamoras.—So it is, although our camp is on the outskirts of the city. On the 17th the General had decided that we should move to the point selected for crossing the river and commence operations against the city. We struck our tents early that morning. Our unusual stir and activity was seen by the enemy, and no doubt attributed to the right cause. We were all anxiously waiting the order to move, when we were informed a party had sounded, and that a deputation from Gen. Arista had crossed to see Gen. Taylor. Gen. Ricardo was at the head of it; Arista proposed to enter into an armistice, until they could hear from Mexico, not doubting the boundary would now be settled. Gen. T. said "no, that he had offered them one, some time since; had evinced the most friendly feeling; that they would not agree to it when his army was weak, and now, that reinforcements had arrived, he would dictate his own terms." Ricardo wished to know if the General intended taking Matamoras? He said "yes." R. offered to surrender all the public property, ammunition, &c. if he would not cross. The General said "no, that he must have Matamoras if he had to batter it down, and said that now he was prepared to do it. He told him to tell Gen. Arista that these and these only were his terms. That the city must capitulate, all public property, ammunition, provisions, &c. must be given up, and that then the army might march out and retire."

The deputation then retired to get Gen. Arista's answer, which was to be communicated at 3 P. M. In the meantime the army marched and encamped three miles off, at the point selected for crossing.—Gen. T. told Ricardo that Gen. Ampudia had written him, that the war should be conducted agreeably to the usage of civilized nations. That in the last battle the enemy had stripped our dead and mutilated their bodies. R. replied "that the women who followed the army and the Rancheros did it, and that they could not control them." Our brave old General replied, "I am coming over and I'll control them for you."

During the evening active preparations were made for crossing the troops. No reply was given to the General's proposition. The country people commenced crossing to us, and reported that the army had deserted the city and retired. On the morning of the 18th confirmation was received of the reported flight of Arista and his army. The scare was still working. Early in the morning the dragoons, the light companies of the different battalions, Ridley's (late the lamented Ringgold's) artillery, and the 5th infantry were crossed.

I regret to record that in crossing, Lieutenant Stevens of the 2d dragoons was drowned. He was a fine young officer, much beloved by his regiment, and his death threw a gloom over the camp. For what singular destinies are we reserved, and how certainly and irresistibly one has to advance and fulfil his fate! He was among those gallant fellows who stared death in the face, in the late brilliant charge of Capt. May, at the battle of Resaca de la Palma. With balls scattering around him in every direction his life was spared, only to be delivered up in a few days in the waters of the Bravo.

The General decided upon crossing the rest of us at the upper ferry of the city. As we approached the ferry we saw our boys in possession of the Fort, and rapidly engaged in preparing to run up our flag. Just as we reached the bank, Capt. Kerr of the 2d Dragoons, ran it up; it floated gracefully in the breeze, and proudly waved over Mexico. The men of the advance, sent up three hearty cheers to welcome the flag of their country! Perhaps, Mr. "Spirit," those cheers were somewhat of a rope stretched across the river, and three boats manned by Mexicans, ready to transport us. We had the felicity of being ferried across by the enemy! As we landed, the companies formed and awaited the arrival of the others. When the whole of the 3d Regt. was formed, it moved off to the right to the tune of "Yankee Doodle!" Did you ever hear it, Mr. "Spirit?" I reckon you never did, in a foreign land, just conquered, by good, honest, hard blows!—If you did, you never heard such an honest cheer as arose from the gallant fellows (on the opposite bank) when the drum and fife gave us that air, which fills, at all times, an American's breast with the purest patriotism! All was excitement, and every one boiling over with "amor patrio!" It was a proud day for the American Army. Citizens in any number came down to see us. Many of them, who, ten days ago would have cut our throats, were now apparently our warmest friends, shook our hands heartily and cried lustily, "Amigo!"

We here saw some signs of the hurry in which Arista had left. As we landed near the fort, boxes of destroyed ammunition presented themselves and it was rumored, and has since been confirmed, that two pieces of cannon were thrown into the river. The army left during the day and night of the 17th, most precipitately, taking with them as it appears, 11 pieces of Artillery, and anything but a large supply of ammunition. Our victory is more complete than we had claimed credit for. The citizens say that Arista had not over 3,000 men with him. What has become of the remainder of the 7,000? The bloody battles of the 8th and 9th, and the "whirlpools of the Rio Bravo" can tell the tale.

Our Brigade encamped within half a mile of the city. We had indulged the hope of being quartered in it, but our worthy General saw fit to direct otherwise.—Women, they say, are all curiosity, but if they ever felt more than we had to see that city, I say God help them. We had encamped but a short time, before a party of us rode up, to gratify the consuming passion. Never had I been more disappointed—never did distance more thoroughly "lend enchantment to the view." The Matamoras as seen from Fort Brown is not the Matamoras that we hold. As it may be interesting to you, I will try to give you some idea of the city.

I first rode up the plaza, which is quite a large square surrounded by china trees. The houses surrounding the square are of brick or stone, the lower parts used as stores, or offices, and the second story as dwellings. They have the appearance of defensive works. Streets diverge from the plaza, and are again crossed by others.—The Cathedral occupies a large space of one side of the square, and is an unfinished mass of masonry. Directly opposite to the Cathedral is the Prison. Properly situated, "the poison and the antidote." There are a great many stores and quite a large market house, which I am told is well supplied.

I went to visit the different hospitals.—They are filled with the wounded and dying. The stench that arose from them for the want of police, was disgusting. "You could tell at a glance the wounded of Palo Alto or Le Resaca de la Palma. The latter were mostly bullet wounds, whereas the amputated limbs told of the cannon's fearful execution in the former.—Beside one fellow, a beautiful girl of 17 was seated keeping off the flies. She was his wife. In another corner, a family group, the mother and her children, were seated by their wounded father. One bright eyed little girl quite took my fancy, and my heart bled to think that such early she should be introduced to so much wretchedness. On one bed was a corpse; on another was one dying, holding in his hand the grape shot that had passed thro' his breast. He showed it to us with a sad countenance. I left the hospital shocked with the horrors of war. The army have left their wounded comrades with very little attention to their wants.

I then rode all round the city. As you leave the Plaza the houses become more detached, with yards around them; some with flowers and other pretty shrubs to ornament them. As a whole, it is certainly the meanest looking and filthiest city I have ever seen.

Col. Twiggs has had the especial charge of the city, as far as the discovery and the collection of the public property is concerned. The General has declined interfering with the municipal authorities. The worthy Colonel has a way of his own, in throwing his mantle of protection and find-outiveness over all, and Mr. Prefect has often felt the effects of it. He has carried on his examination with the greatest energy and success. He has discovered several pieces of small ordnance, all kinds of munitions of war, in the greatest abundance, an immense number of muskets, the greatest quantity of tobacco and cigars, a large quantity of corn and lumber. A great deal of the powder and different kinds of ammunition had been thrown into the wells. The Prefect testified no great willingness to make discoveries or disclosures, but the Colonel was too much for him. The quantity of munitions of war collected here is immense; our seizure cannot amount in value to less than \$175,000. I put that down as the least. The greatest quantity of cigars, tobacco, and cigarratos were seized. The Government enjoys the monopoly of the sale of tobacco; an immense revenue is derived from it. You may imagine how great it is, when they sell the plain leaf at six cents per ounce.

These munitions of war have been collecting here since Santa Anna's invasion of Texas. Large quantities of anchors were discovered, intended to be used in anchoring boats and bridges, upon which to cross their armies, upon their advance into Texas. They have brought them to rather a bad market. This Northern army must be completely broken up; I do not think they can supply themselves short of Vera Cruz or Mexico. There will be no more fighting at present, you may rest assured. We have left such marks upon them that they cannot soon forget us.

I cannot but again repeat, that we all feel proud that this has been the work of

the Army proper. We were all well aware of the undeserved remarks that had been made in reference to us by some portions of the press, and we only asked for an opportunity, small as we were, to prove to our country that she had a safe anchor in our small but gallant force. By far the great majority of the officers were graduates of the Military Academy; all did their duty and many distinguished themselves by their skill and thorough knowledge of their profession—all arises from their instruction received at that best of military institutions, the West Point Academy. In the hour of our country's danger, she will always prove her usefulness, and her graduates will show to their country and the world, that the money expended in the education of so talented a corps of officers has not been thrown away. Richly will she be repaid for every cent expended. Our Alma Mater may be proud of her sons; conspicuously have they shown themselves soldiers, upon the field of battle. Away heretofore with opposition to an institution that reflects credit upon our country, and turns forth into the world, yearly, a class of young gentlemen fitted for any station in life.

I have paid a visit to the city, spite of its filth. In company with Lieut. S. I called upon Mr. B.—an American merchant; he was very polite, and offered to go with us and show us the town. This day being a church day, the municipal regulations make it a fine of \$25 to open your store; Mr. B.—told us that had we not been in possession of the town, his doors would have been closed. We first went to the City Prison. It is a building of very thick walls, with a large interior area, along which were the prison rooms. The filth and stench about it was disgusting. There were very few prisoners.—In the second story of one of the magazines of arms, is the Hall of Justice. It is a room occupying the whole depth of the building. At the lower end is a railing enclosing the seats for the Judges and the jury; in the centre of the enclosure was a large table covered with red cloth, with three arm-chairs for the judges, and one opposite for the clerk; directly over the judges' seat was, suspended in a frame, the arms of Mexico; on each side, along the walls, were six seats, covered with rich crimson velvet for the jury. We were told that we were in the "holy of holies," and that if we had entered in this manner, this legal sanctuary, two weeks ago death would have been the least of our sufferings.

Some of our officers told us they had seen a magnificent Spanish saddle, valued at \$400. We took the liberty of going to see it and the gentlemanly owner politely asked us up into his parlor and gave us a peep at it. The pommel and cantle were of solid silver. It was richly worked with silver in every part. The gentleman had a very comfortable house. Three large rooms running along in front of the house opened into each other. They were neatly furnished; paintings and a piano gave evidence of taste and refinement.—Their areas and thick walls take my eye; they must make their houses deliciously cool.

We then went to the unfinished Cathedral, a room of which has been fitted up in which to perform their religious ceremonies. We were fortunate in finding the door-keeper, who kindly showed us in. However, there is no such thing as refusing us anything—"might gives right." The furniture around the altar was very neat, though not as costly as I had been led to suppose. From reading the account of those at Mexico. No diamond and pearl pendants of "Our Lady of Guadalupe." The painting of the Virgin Mary was very good; my admiration of it pleased our clericone, as he said it was his property.

I could tell you of many nice things, but my letter is spinning out monstrously long [we wish it was twice as long] and if I was not "Officer of the Day," I think I should have cut it short long since; but, as I have to set up, here's a little more.

On the 19th Col. Garland was sent out with the dragoons and the two companies of Rangers, to follow up and observe the course of the retreating army. He returned this evening, having been sixty miles from here; about twenty-seven miles hence he fell in with a party and attacked them at 10 o'clock at night. Two of his men (Rangers) were wounded. He killed two of the enemy, wounded two, and took 20 men and two women prisoners, and captured their baggage. He followed the enemy for sixty miles. His force was small and not intended for hostile operations.—The enemy the first day appear to have been in great confusion; but after that they organized and conducted their march in perfect order. They have 11 pieces of artillery with them. How much it is to be regretted that we were not strong enough to have given immediate pursuit; a thousand cavalry would have been above price. Gen. Arista is still at their head, and they are on their way to Monterey.

This afternoon Gen. Taylor very properly divided his captured cigars among his command, and such a happy set of smoking dogs you never saw, and all at the expense of the enemy! There was something very comfortable and consoling in the thought. No men have better earned a smoking indulgence, by smoking work.

None of the volunteers have as yet joined the main army. Gen. Smith is daily expected with a large number of them from Barita, of which place we hold possession. From all accounts "the cry is still they come!" I fear, for their gratification, the fighting is all over. If all tales be true, there will be enough here to overrun the whole country. I do not know the intended movements of the General: I presume he will take all the towns upon the river, if he does not advance into the interior.

I saw to-day something I have never seen or heard of before; it was a horned spider! It was a regular spider, with a kind of a shell, if I may so term it, upon its back—broadest farthest from the body, of a bright yellow color, with four horns, two small and near the body, and two larger at the farthest extremity. The horns resembled those upon the horned frog. Did you ever see a spider of that kind before? ["Not as we know,"] but we have seen a horned frog.

The army are all in excellent health and spirits—ready to "no on die!"

Yours, truly, G** de L**.

P. S.: Davy Brown, the gallant Ringgold's war-horse, has followed his master. He was shot to relieve him from his misery.

GEN. SCOTT.

We copy the following portion of the correspondence between the War Department and General Scott. It will be seen by his message that the President, of his own accord, without solicitation from any one, conferred upon Gen. Scott the command of the army on the Rio Grande, and the reinforcements of volunteers about being raised.—The letter of the General is really an extraordinary production:

To the Senate of the United States:

I communicate herewith a report from the Secretary of War, transmitting the correspondence called for by the resolution of the Senate of the 5th inst., with Gen. Edmund P. Gaines and Gen. Winfield Scott of the army of the U. S. States.

The report of the Secretary of War, and the accompanying correspondence with General Gaines, contain all the information in my possession in relation to calls for "volunteers or militia into the service of the United States" "by an officer of the army," without legal "authority therefor," and of the "measures which have been adopted" "in relation to such officer or troops so called into service."

In addition to the information contained in the report of the Secretary of War, and the accompanying correspondence with Major General Scott of the United States Army, upon the subject of his taking the command of the army of occupation on the frontier of Texas—I state, that on the same day on which I approved and signed the act of the 13th of May, 1846, entitled "An act providing for the prosecution of the existing war between the United States and the republic of Mexico," I communicated to Gen. Scott, through the Secretary of War, and also in a personal interview with that officer, my desire that he should take command of the army on the Rio Grande, and of the volunteer forces, which I informed him, it was my intention forthwith to call out to march to that frontier, to be employed in the prosecution of the war against Mexico. The tender of the command to General Scott was voluntary on my part, and was made without any request or intimation on the subject from him. It was made in consideration of his rank as commander-in-chief of the army. My communications with General Scott assigning him the command were verbal, first through the Secretary of War, and afterwards in person. No written order was deemed to be necessary. Gen. Scott assented to assume the command, and on the following day I had another interview with him and the Secretary of War, in relation to the number and apportionment among the several States, of the volunteer forces to be called out for immediate service; the forces which were to be organized and held in readiness subject to a further call should it be necessary, and other military preparations and movements to be made with a view to the vigorous prosecution of the war. It was distinctly settled and was well understood by Gen. Scott that he was to command the army in the war against Mexico, and so continued to be settled and understood, without any other intention on my part, until the Secretary of War submitted to me the letter of Gen. Scott addressed to him under date of the 21st of May, 1846, a copy of which is herewith communicated. The character of that letter, made it proper in my judgment, to change my determination in regard to the command of the army; and the Secretary of War by my direction, in his letter of the 26th of May, 1846, a copy of which is also herewith communicated, for the reasons therein assigned, informed General Scott that he was relieved from the command of the army destined to prosecute the war against Mexico, and that he would remain in the discharge of his duties at Washington.—The command of the army on the frontier of Mexico has since been assigned to Gen. Taylor with his brevet rank of major-general recently conferred upon him.

JAMES K. POLK.
Washington, June 8, 1846.

Head Quarters of the Army,

Washington, May 21, 1846.

Sir: I have received no orders as yet assigning me to the immediate command of the army about to be raised to conquer a peace with Mexico; but I have been told to hold myself in readiness for that service. From that moment I have occupied myself, incessantly, with the vast preliminary arrangements which can only be made advantageously at this place, through the respective chiefs of the general staff—the adjutant general, quarter-master general, commissary general of subsistence, chief of ordnance, and surgeon general. I have been much occupied also in the distribution of the quotas of volunteers needed among the several States; in apportioning the horse to the foot; in the study of the routes of march and water conveyances for the several bodies of troops to the best points in the frontiers of Mexico; in the study of the northern interior, and the southern routes of that republic; in looking to the means of transportation on the Rio Grande, to and beyond that river; in determining the depots of all sorts on this side, &c.

As these matters are respectively settled, orders and instructions have been, or will be given to the chiefs of the general staff at this place, and the routes of march and water conveyances, together with the depots for supplies of every description, are finally to be communicated to the unknown commanders of volunteers whose services are to be accepted.

In the midst of these multitudinous and indispensable occupations I have learned from you that much impatience is already felt, perhaps in high quarters, that I have not already put myself in route for the Rio Grande; and now, with fourteen hours a day of preliminary work remaining on my hands for many days, I find myself compelled to stop that necessary work to guard myself against, perhaps, utter condemnation in the quarters alluded to. I am too old a soldier, and have had too much special experience, not to feel the infinite importance of securing myself against danger (ill-will or pre-emption) in my rear before advancing upon the public enemy.

Not an advantageous step can be taken in a forward march without the confidence that all is well behind. If insecure in that quarter, no general can put his whole heart and mind into the work to be done in front. I am, therefore, not a little alarmed, nay, crippled in my energies, by the knowledge of the impatience in question, and I beg to say I fear no other danger.

My intentions have been, after making all preliminary arrangements here, to pass down the Ohio and Mississippi, to see, or to assure myself by correspondence, that the volunteers, on whom we are mostly to rely in the prosecution of the existing war, are rapidly assembling for the service; to learn the probable time of their readiness to advance upon Mexico; to ascertain if their supplies of every kind are in place, or are likely to be in place in sufficient time; to hasten one and the other; to harmonize the movements of volunteers, and to modify their routes (if necessary) so that all, or at least a sufficient number, shall arrive at the indicated points in the Mexican frontier at the best periods, and as far as practicable, about the same time. All that I have but sketched I deem to be not only useful to success, but indispensable. As a soldier I make this assertion without the fear of contradiction from any honest and candid soldier.

Against the *ad captandum* condemnation of all other persons, whoever may be designated for the high command in question, there can be no reliance (in his absence) other than the active, candid, and steady support of his government. If I cannot have that sure basis to rest upon, it will be infinitely better for the country (not to speak of my personal security) that some other commander of the new army against Mexico should be selected. No matter who he may be, he shall, at least, be judged and supported by me, in this office and every where else, as I would desire, if personally in that command, to be myself judged and supported.

My explicit meaning is, that I do not desire to place myself in the most perilous of all positions—a fire upon my rear from Washington, and the fire in front from the Mexicans.

It was distinctly admitted, & laid down as a basis, in the interviews I had the honor to hold with the President and yourself on the subject, that a special army of some thirty thousand troops, regulars, & twelve months' volunteers, would be necessary for the march against, and the conquest of a peace with Mexico. I adhere to that opinion. It is foreseen, with tolerable certainty, that we shall not have in many months, more than seven thousand, (if quite so many) regulars, applicable to that service. The remaining numbers are to be made up in volunteer horse and foot. I suppose of these, taken together, about 17,000 have been actually called for.—There is yet good time I think to make the addition suggested in one of the tables I had the honor to submit last night.

The question follows: By what time can an army of about 30,000, as above, be brought to act from the different points agreed upon in the interviews alluded to, upon Mexico?

More than half of the 7,000 regulars remain to be recruited. I hope they may be