

Democratic Banner.

BY MOORE & THOMPSON.

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TERMS.

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POETRY.

STRIVE ON.

Strive on—the ocean never was crossed,
Reaping on the shore;
A nation's freedom never was won
When sloth the banner bore.
Strive on—"tis cowardly shrink
When dangers rise around;
'Tis sweeter far, though linked with pain,
To gain the vantage ground.
Bright names are on the roll of Fame,
Like stars they shine on high;
They may be hid with brighter rays,
But never, never die!
And these were lighted 'mid the gloom
Of low obscurity,
Struggling through years of pain and toil,
And joyless poverty.
But strive—this world's not all a waste,
A wilderness of care;
Green spots are on the field of life,
And flowers blooming fair.
Then strive—but, oh, let Virtue be
The guardian of your aim!
Let pure, unclouded love illumine
The path that leads to fame!

Army Intelligence.

CAMP OF THE CENTRE DIVISION, NEAR PARRAS, STATE OF COAHUILA, MEXICO, Dec. 17, 1846.

To the Editor of the Washington Union:

The numerous correspondents to your paper who are with General Taylor and General Kearney, have kept your readers well advised of all the transactions of the army of occupation, and the army of the west, even to the minutest detail. But the centre division, under Gen. Wool, although it has advanced further into Mexico than either of the other two—has hardly been heard from, since the day it passed the Rio Bravo del Norte.

Fortunately it has not yet been infested with a corps of penny a liners, to write about matters they do not comprehend; to speak of ordinary affairs and incidents with exaggeration; or to hold up men and measures in a highly colored, if not false and often ridiculous light. Probably this column has fewer gentlemen in it who are afflicted with that deplorable malady—*caecothles scribendi*—than any other of the same size ever in the field. Thus far, all have pushed forward in a quiet unpretending manner; and although they have passed through scenes of unusual interest, and discharged manifold and important services, still each, as if by common consent, has patiently waited for the hour of resistance when he may employ his sword as an instrument wherewith to illustrate his conduct, rather than his pen.

The centre division is now within 600 miles of the Pacific ocean. Its march, since it first passed the natural boundary of the two republics, has been a long and excessively arduous one; and I now devote the first leisure hour I have had for a great while to give you a brief and hurried account of some of the events which thus far have marked its progress.

On the 8th of October, the advance of this column, commanded by Gen. Wool in person, and numbering 1,954 aggregate, arrived on the left bank of the Rio Grande, near the Mexican town San Juan Bautista, better known as Presidia. It had been eleven days in traversing the country from San Antonio de Bexar to that point, a distance of 182 miles. A flying-bridge had been constructed by Capt. Fraser, of the engineers, and transported in wagons from San Antonio, for the passage of the river. It was soon put in operation, and by the evening of the 11th, the whole of the command, and the immense train of stores which accompanied it, was safely landed upon the opposite shore. The Rio Grande at that place was found to be 270 yards wide. Its current was exceedingly rapid, and its waters turbid and of a yellowish gray color, like those of the Missouri.

At this point General Wool published an order, in which he defined the course he intended to pursue; that he had not come to make war upon the people or peasantry of the country; but to compel the government of Mexico to render justice to the United States. All, therefore, who did not take up arms against us, but remained quiet and peaceful at their homes, he should not molest or interfere with; either as regarded their persons or their property; and all those who should furnish supplies should be treated kindly, and be liberally paid for what we should receive from them.

The better to protect the ferry established upon the river, and to keep it secure for the troops and supplies to be forwarded by Inspector General Churchill, commanding the rear column, Capt. Fraser was directed to construct a redoubt as a *tele-du-pont* on the right bank; and on the left, a field-work to be defended by two companies. A sufficient force to carry into effect such a purpose being detached from the column, the general pushed on to San Juan Bautista. This town contains two thousand inhabitants—all Mexicans. The buildings are of stone, or burnt bricks, (*adobe*), and, with but little preparation, are capable of being easily defended against a superior force. Not the slightest resistance, however, was offered, although the people are represented as being exceedingly hostile towards us. But

a few weeks before our arrival, three or four companies of dragons are said to have been quartered there, but they had fallen back on the main forces assembled at Monterey. Presidio, like Bexar, Guerrero, &c., was one of the points established early in the settlement of the country for the confinement and labor of state prisoners; and by an edict of the king of Spain, published in 1772, it was created a military post, and made one of the cordons then formed for the protection of the frontier.

The Jesuits erected a large mission within a mile of the city similar to the Alamo—La Purissima Concepcion, San Jose, San Juan, and Espada, near Antonio. It is a massive structure, built entirely of stone, and now fast falling to decay. When we passed it, the wind was howling through its ruined arches, like a voice of mourning for those gone from beneath them never to return. Mitted bishop and cowed monk; yielded nun and timid devotee, have long since passed away, and the grass and wild flowers grow in the deserted corridors, and over the crumbling walls; and flocks of goats herd in the solitary and deserted courts.

The country in the vicinity of this city, we found to be very fertile—especially where it was artificially irrigated. Cotton, sugar, corn, wheat, sweet potatoes, and almost every description of garden vegetables: besides figs, oranges, peaches, and other fruits, were raised with but little labor, and in considerable abundance. We were able to procure a sufficient supply of forage for the use of the command, and at very reasonable rates.

Going from thence westward, the column was obliged to march twenty-six miles without water, when it arrived at the town of San Juan de Nava, situated in the middle of an immense plain, and watered entirely by irrigating ditches, which are said to have their fountains in a range of hills twenty miles to the left of the trace. This town is represented as containing twelve hundred inhabitants, and is built entirely of adobe. Three fourths of the houses were not occupied at all, and were fast becoming untenable. The people with two or three exceptions, were wretchedly poor, and more ignorant, even than the Indians of our plains. The business of the place is the raising of stock, which is tended by herd-men, and driven from point to point upon the prairie, that spreads out almost to the horizon upon every hand. In the immediate vicinity of Nava, there are extensive fields of corn, and there, likewise, a sufficient supply was procured to forage all the animals of the column.

From Presidio to Nava, the whole country is a perfect level. In the time of the Jesuits, it was all highly cultivated; but now there is not a single human habitation between those two places. In the olden times, when it was smiling with plentiful crops of corn and grain, and was culminated by the voices of husbandmen—the lowing of cows—the bleating of numerous flocks—the tinkling of bells, and the noise and hum of life—how beautiful it must have been compared with its present desolation; and how great the contrast from its present solitude! Marks of the irrigating dykes traverse the plain in every direction; and at distant intervals a long, the way side, are seen the ruins of many an ancient granary—once filled with plentiful harvests—but now empty, and fast crumbling back to the level from whence they were reared.

A few miles west of Nava, and to the left of Gen. Wool's trace, there is a beautiful island of timber which the Mexicans call El Arbolada de los Angeles. The Grove of the Angels. It is said to surround a fine spring of water, and is considered by the inhabitants as a sacred place. This is merely mentioned to illustrate the fact, that in this country, as in all others, where the people are ignorant and superstitious, every natural object of beauty or sublimity—whether mountain, plain, grove, or river—is invested with some name wonderfully calculated to call forth both poetic and religious associations.

The next city we visited was San Fernando de Rosas, containing between three and four thousand souls. It is embosomed in an extensive mot of timber, which, from its size, and the character of the trees, we supposed must have been planted when the city itself was first built. A fine stream of clear water, called Arroyo Escondido, (Hidden Creek,) runs on nearly three sides of it, and stretching off on every hand, lies one of the most fertile plains in Mexico. There are two extensive plazas in San Fernando, each surrounded by the residences of the most wealthy citizens, which, although built of stone, and in the Mexican style, have an air of neatness and taste, we had hardly expected to see. The people we found to be very friendly in their feelings towards us, and whatever supplies we required, they furnished with much cheerfulness. When we commenced our line of march the next day, every eye was turned to take one more look on San Fernando—literally the Rosas. And the scene it presented was the quaint dome of its old church surmounted by a cross, and rising above the surrounding foliage, the pure white of its edifices, caught here and there through the dark green trees, and its singular position, like that of an oasis, not in a desert, but on an unhabited waste, was one

of the most picturesque and pleasing we had ever witnessed, and one we shall long love to remember.

Our course now became more southerly, the direction being for the head waters of the Santarita, and a pass through the Sierra de San Jose. We had not proceeded far before the country began to be more sterile and broken; and long ranges of mountains to skirt the horizon, both upon our right hand, and upon our left; while in front, a formidable chain of them presented a barrier which it appeared impossible we should ever be able to pass with our artillery and immensely long train of wagons. However, as we proceeded, the valley after valley opened before us, through which our road wound its way upwards, until at last we attained their very summit. Even were there room enough in this letter for such a purpose, it would be impossible to describe the magnificence of the view then spread out before us. To the west the east we looked down on the widely extended plain over which we had so long been journeying. In the distance the grove of San Fernando was still visible; while at our feet the valley of the Santarita lay like a map, with the winding course of the river distinctly traced upon it by the dark line of foliage that fringes its banks. On either hand the peaks of the range upon which we then stood appeared less and less as they became more removed in perspective, until, in the far off blue, their outlines faded from our sight, and mingled with the faint undulations of the surrounding horizon. While, in the west, the Sierra de Santa Rosa rose up like a huge and battlemented wall, with its serrated crest jutting aloft in strong relief against the clear sky, and its precipitous sides hung about with flocks of white and purple clouds.

The San Jose mountains are clad only with a sparse covering of grass, sprinkled here and there with isolated tufts of sotol, cactus, palmetto, and yucca aloifolia. Their upper stratum is fossiliferous limestone, but below they are reported as being very rich in silver and copper. Many years ago a mine is said to have been opened a few miles to the left of our road, and operations in it were carried on with considerable success; but at length the Camanches became so troublesome, the workmen were obliged to abandon it.

From these mountains we descended through a tortuous gorge to the Llano de San Jose—a broad plain extending with few interruptions to the foot of the Sierra de Santa Rosa, a distance of thirty miles; and our route lay directly across it. Midway this plain, and only three miles apart, we encountered two formidable rivers—the Alamos and Sabinas, which, at their junction, form the Sulado, an affluent of the Rio Bravo from the west, and uniting with it at Guerrero. They were each about forty yards in width, upwards of four feet in depth, and, besides, had a current of almost incredible rapidity. In short they were absolute torrents; to cross which we had neither bridges or boats, nor the means wherewith to construct them; and it was almost a matter of impossibility for horses or mules to maintain their footing in the water, even for a moment. However, by the assistance of ropes and the active exertions of the men, the difficulties they presented were at length overcome, and all the forces, with the cannon, and the ammunition and provision trains, consisting of two hundred heavily laden wagons, had safely passed them both without any material loss or accident.

The direction of our march was then for the city of Santa Rosa, which is situated immediately at the foot of the Sierra of that name. It contains between two and three thousand inhabitants, is likewise built of the same material as the other towns we had passed, and capable of being as easily defended. Many years ago, it was a place of much importance from the rich veins of silver found in its vicinity; but the political dissensions of this unhappy country, prostrating as they did every thing like enterprise, the mines, from not being worked, were allowed to become filled with water, from which they have not yet been entirely cleared. It has been left for an American citizen, named Dr. Long, a resident of Santa Rosa, to undertake their drainage; and he will soon, no doubt, reap an abundant reward for his labors.

The general entered the city with his whole force on the 24th day of October, and without meeting with the slightest opposition from the inhabitants. They in turn likewise furnished all the supplies he required; and, in fact, regarded the approach of his column with feelings of less dread than they would have done, had it been composed of troops of their own nation. Before the centre division left San Antonio de Bexar, Gen. Wool had made every effort to procure accurate information respecting the various routes to Chihuahua. He was assured, that whichever one he should select, he must of necessity pass near or through Santa Rosa; and that from there he might have it in his power to make choice of either of the three following, viz: through Nacimiento del Rio, or head of the river Sabinas; via San Carlos and Alamo; through Puerto de O'bayos, by the way of Cuarto Cienegas and Santa Catarina; or through Monclova and Parras. The whole country between the Sierra de Santa Rosa and Chi-

huahua, as far north as Passo del Norte, and south to Monclova, was represented as consisting of mountains and extensive arid plains, with few inhabitants and no supplies, and destitute, in a great measure, of water. When he reached Santa Rosa, he found these representations confirmed, and that the two first-named roads were altogether impracticable, for precisely those reasons. To a great extent they were nothing but mule trails, over which, so far as he could learn, no wagon had ever passed, and where, too, for distances exceeding ninety miles, not one drop of water was to be found. To attempt to cross an army over such a country by such roads, would, therefore, have been an act of perfect madness; and one which could not for a moment be seriously entertained. He accordingly adopted the only alternative left him, which was to push on to Monclova, and from thence to Parras, where he would strike the great road from Saltillo to Chihuahua, upon which he could without much further difficulty proceed to the latter place.

Our course was therefore changed directly south, through the valley lying between the Sierras Santa Rosa and San Jose. For nearly the whole distance we met with few indications that the country was at all inhabited, save the occasional flocks of sheep and goats tended by solitary *pastors*, and numbering in some instances as high as 20,000. As we proceeded, the barrenness and sterility of the valley increased; the soil being unable to support much else save the countless varieties of the cactus, dwarf musquite, sotol, yucca, and the celebrated *agave Americana*—the century plant of the north, and the *maguay* of Mexico. From the *agave* the people of this country make their national drink—*pulque*; the process of which has been so often described; and this, when distilled, forms a nauseous and intoxicating liquor, called *mescal*.

The mountain scenery surrounding us on every hand we had never before seen equalled; and many was the picture presented to us, when the sight of long ranges and groups of them, with their precipitous sides, now in deep shadow, now standing sharply out in the bright sunlight, would have filled with ecstasy such a painter as Salvator Rosa.

At length we arrived at the Paso de las Hermanas, situated in which is an extensive hacienda, occupied by Senor Miguel Blanco, one of the most influential citizens of Coahuila. He received us with much courtesy, and extended towards the officers the hospitalities of his mansion. Going through this pass, we at once entered into the great valley of Monclova, watered by a river of the same name, and the Rio Nador—each an affluent to the Solado. Our course then lay in a southerly direction across this valley, when we arrived at the city of Monclova itself, and before which Gen. Wool again encamped his column. Where no resistance had been made on the part of the people, no surrender of any city through which he had passed had been demanded by the general; but as the authorities of this place had made a protest against his advance upon it, he determined at once to take formal possession of the town, and, accordingly, on the 3d November entered it with all his forces, and had the national flag displayed from the top of the governor's palace, situated upon the principal plaza. Here it was determined at once to establish a depot, and to collect all the corn and flour from the surrounding country it would be possible to obtain. This would obviate the necessity of depending on their being received by the long, and in a wet season, totally impracticable route from Port La Vacca, or from Camargo, even; to which point direct communication was immediately opened, it being, for land carriages, 408 miles nearer to Monclova than the former place. The general intended to cut loose from any hope of receiving supplies from the east, so long as the least possibility existed of gathering them up in the country, and every exertion was accordingly made to carry such a purpose into effect. It was ascertained that large quantities of wheat and corn had been sent from Monclova and the neighboring town Cienegas, to supply the Mexican army at Monterey, and more recently, at Saltillo; and on the very day we entered the city 10,000 pounds of flour, which was going in that direction, was seized and at once turned into our depot.

General Taylor having sent orders for the centre division not to proceed beyond Monclova until the end of the armistice, or the receipt of other instructions, it was obliged to lay there for the period of twenty seven days. All this time was occupied in perfecting the discipline of the troops, the collection of stores, as before stated, and in making extensive reconnaissances of the surrounding country. During that time, Inspector General Churchill came up with the rear column. By his arrival our train was also enlarged by 100 more wagons, well filled with supplies.

On the 24th of November—the armistice having expired—the whole division, with the exception of a command of men which was left to guard the depot at Monclova, took up its line of march for Parras, 180 miles distant; the general course being nearly southwest. If you will lay before you a Spanish or Mexican map, you will be able to trace our route

through the following places—viz: Canton, Marques, Bajon, La Jova—through the Punta de Estanosa, Punta de Reata—Jara, San Antonio, Yencija, Cienega Grande, Galera, and Ojuelos, on to Parras, at which place we arrived the 5th instant, and are now encamped before the town. Parras is said to contain 6,000 inhabitants. It is built in such a manner, as to render it more difficult of capture than any town we have yet seen in the republic. The streets are exceedingly narrow and crooked; and nearly every one of them has on each side a thick adobe wall, some ten or twelve feet in height. A high range of mountains rises up immediately in the rear of the city, easily to be maintained; while along its entire front, and skirting each of its flanks, are immense vineyards, surrounded, also, by walls of great height and thickness. Its situation is at the foot of the celebrated Bolson de Malpaso, and is about 100 miles from Saltillo, 200 miles from Durango, 300 from San Luis Potosi, 150 from Monterey, and 450 from Chihuahua. It is represented as being near the centre of the best grain growing region in Mexico; the business of the place, however, is the culture of the grape, and large quantities of wine and brandy, of a superior quality, are annually transported on the backs of mules to all the principal towns throughout the country.

This city being the key to Chihuahua, General Wool was anxious to reach it much earlier than he did—and would have done so by nearly a month, had it not been for the armistice, as has already been shown. Once being here he would be at liberty to go with his whole force to that place, or send a detachment to take possession of it; while the rest would be free to co-operate with the army of occupation, or to move on Durango or Zacatecas, as the exigencies of the service should most require. As it was, however, previous to his arrival here, intelligence was received that most of the troops which had assembled in the upper provinces, had fallen back upon the lower, thereby rendering the necessity of the whole division marching in that direction out of the question. And now, the near proximity of Santa Anna, and the great efforts he is making to concentrate and prepare for the field the most formidable army Mexico has ever arrayed against us, imperiously demands that we remain at or near the position we at present occupy, that we may be ready at any moment to form a junction with General Taylor, and perform our part in the most fearful game that has been played for many a year, and one in which we have Santa Anna for an antagonist—but who has yet been able to compute the stakes.

I have already made this letter too long; but before I close it, permit me to say that, for the maintenance of this column, almost every article, whether of ammunition, subsistence or other stores, had to be transported from La Vacca here, a distance of 800 miles. The labor required to procure the necessary wagons, teams, &c., and to organize them into trains, though great in itself, was not to be considered in comparison with that of guarding them through a hostile, and, in a measure, unknown country, and bringing them, without loss, over desolate plains, rapid and almost impassable rivers—over high sierras, and through dangerous defiles, where it was incumbent upon every man not only to exercise the utmost vigilance, but literally to put his shoulder to the wheel. Wherever we went, the necessities of our position urgently demanded that we should be unencumbered with all these things so indispensable to our existence—the success of our enterprise, and what, in any situation, would make us an effective force in despite of the naturally inhospitable barrenness of the country, or the efforts of an active enemy in laying it waste before us. As yet our progress has not been retarded by the firing of a single shot; but our officers and men have labored with a zeal and fidelity which can never be appreciated but by those who have witnessed their efforts, and observed from day to day how many have been the obstacles they have overcome to reach this advanced position. The continued evidences of their energy and perseverance have been sufficient, a side from the other and more weighty considerations of patriotism and desire for distinction, to warrant the belief that the flag of our far-off and beloved country is safe when entrusted to such hands.

[The reader is aware that, since the date of this letter, General Wool's division has marched to the vicinity of Saltillo.—UNION.]

That woman deserves not a husband's generous love, who will not greet him with smiles as he returns from the labors of the day; who will not try to claim him to his home by the sweet enchantment of a cheerful heart.

Mines of lead, copper, silver, and quicksilver have been discovered in California. The quicksilver mine is seventy miles north of Monterey and ten miles from San Jose.

Hypocrisy may for a while deceive the world, but sooner or later it will be detected, and tender the hypocrite as odious to man as he is to God.