

Mountain Sentinel.

"WE GO WHERE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES POINT THE WAY;—WHEN THEY CEASE TO LEAD, WE CEASE TO FOLLOW."

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MISCELLANEOUS.

The Surprise and Capture of Gen. Valencia.

[We copy the following from "Little's Living Age," a periodical of high standing, published in Boston, and devoted to the publication of what is considered the "cream" of American and foreign literature.]

The surprise and capture of General Valencia, the second officer in rank in the Mexican army, has been most entirely lost sight of, among the brilliant feats of arms which marked the late war with Mexico. To say the least, there was a considerable daring in the enterprise; and the gallant officer who planned and carried it out, together with the men who formed his little command, are entitled to some praise.—Here, less than fifty men rode thirty miles into the enemy's country—captured a general officer from his own guard, four times their number, and carried him in triumph to head quarters, without sustaining any loss.

For some time previous to the coming in of the new year, the celebrated Guerrilla chief, Padre Jarauta, and General Reah, had been infesting the neighborhood of the city of Mexico, and the day before had been seen at a village a few miles out of town, with a force of near five hundred men. Colonel Wynkoop, of the 1st Pennsylvania Volunteers, who had gained a high reputation as a partisan officer, had them closely watched by a trusty spy, and determined to attack them. For this purpose he asked and obtained permission from the commander-in-chief, to head an expedition to go in pursuit of them, and had everything in readiness to leave the city on the evening of the 1st of January, 1848, and, under cover of the darkness, to surprise them while they were asleep. The force he selected was one company of Hays' Texan Rangers, thirty-seven strong, and five officers accompanied him as volunteers for the occasion, making the number all told forty-four, officers and men. I had ridden into the city from San Angel, where my regiment was quartered, in the morning, and, meeting Col. Wynkoop in the street, was invited to accompany him in the expedition, which invitation I accepted, and prepared myself accordingly. The hour appointed for meeting was seven o'clock in the evening; and, on going to the place of rendezvous at that time, I found the whole party assembled, and waiting the arrival of the Colonel. The whole were mounted and well armed—officers and men wearing watch-coats, and twenty-four hours' rations in the haversacks.—Each one had his blanket strapped to the hind part of his saddle, and, in every point fully equipped for a night march. In addition to being armed with a sabre and rifle, each ranger carried one of Col's six-shooters, and most of them had knives in their belts.

The clock on the Cathedral had just sounded the hour of eight, and the patrols were beginning to take their rounds, when we left the rendezvous; and, passing out of the city at the garita of Gaudalope, struck upon the causeway which leads to the town of the same name. We urged our horses into a brisk trot, and in half an hour reached Gaudalope, where to shorten our route, we turned off from the main road, and followed the course of one of the aqueducts which supplies the city with water, and which runs through the low, swampy land, bordering on Lake Texcoco. Our guide, never having travelled across these swamps before, became bewildered in the darkness, and following his directions, we soon found ourselves floundering about in the mud and water of the marshes. Being uncertain which course to take; it was some time before we could extricate ourselves, and were able to reach the high road leading towards Queretero, which here runs in a north-west direction. Being once more on firm ground we urged our horses forward to reach Tlalnepantha, where we expected to find the enemy, and hoped to surprise them before they could hear of our approach. The night was dark, there being no moon, and the stars were partly obscured by heavy clouds, which chased each other across the heavens; the air was cold and chilly, being loaded with vapor from Lake Texcoco, and we shivered, even with our heavy watch coats buttoned tight around us. The Colonel rode a few yards in advance of his command, which followed by twos, and upon every one the strictest silence was enjoined—no sounds were heard but the tread of the horses' feet on the hard road, an occasional jingle of a sabre, or a low whispered command from an officer. The night was too dark to allow us to see distinctly the nature of the country we were passing through, but, as far as we could discover, it appeared like a narrow valley, which widened as we advanced, and bounded on either side by mountains. We followed the course of the aqueduct for at least ten miles, until we had reached the fountain-head from which it received the supply of water. We saw now and then a low thatched hut on the side of the road, but no inhabitants.

A ride of three hours brought us within a mile of the village of Tlalnepantha, where a halt was made for a few moments, to rest the horses and give instructions to the men. Having made the necessary arrangements, we again set out;

and rode leisurely along until we arrived within a short distance of the village, when a charge was ordered, and, with sabres drawn and pistols loosened in the holsters, we rode into it at the top of our speed. We expected every moment to be challenged by the picket guard, and fired upon, but there was no sign of an alarm—the whole town appeared buried in sleep. The road branched off in two directions at the entrance of the village, and some going each way, we met in the public square, and drew up in front of a large establishment which looked like a posada or inn. Patrols were immediately sent into different parts of the town, with instructions to watch the streets, and suffer no one either to come in or go out, while the main body remained in the Plaza. As yet, our approach had not been discovered—everything was quiet—nobody stirring, and, what was somewhat remarkable, but few dogs barked at us as we rode in. The very stillness which prevailed gave us the impression that the enemy were not there. Our guide was acquainted with a trader, who was quickly roused up, and informed of the nature of our visit, and also given to understand it would be much better for him to tell us the whole truth in answer to such questions as might be asked him. He seemed a good deal alarmed, vowed much friendship for the Americans, and signified his willingness to give us all the information he possessed. He told us that Jarauta and Reah, with their command, had left the afternoon before, and gone over to the valley of Toluca, some forty miles to the west, but probably had stopped for the night at a large hacienda on the road side, about ten miles beyond. The information was by no means welcome, and frustrated all our plans, and we feared we should be obliged to return to the army without having accomplished anything. The Mexican was now closely questioned, as to whether he knew of any other party of the enemy in that region of country, whom we might surprise. He seemed reluctant to give any further information, but after applying a few threats, and using other means much more potent in his opinion, he told Col. Wynkoop, that General Valencia was then living at his country house twenty miles from Tlalnepantha, and had a guard of only one hundred and fifty lancers with him.—The news more than compensated for the disappointment in not finding those we were after, and Col. W., at once determined to make a further search for Jarauta and Reah, and, if unsuccessful, to surprise Gen. Valencia, and make him prisoner. We remained a short time at this village, getting information as to the nature of the country and the route we should take, and partaking of refreshments which the friendly Mexican provided for us, and then mounted again.

It was about one o'clock on Sunday morning, January 24, when we rode out of Tlalnepantha, and proceeded on our expedition. We continued on the Queretero road, which here is very level and hard, and planted on each side with a hedge.—In less than two hours we reached the hacienda, which we quickly surrounded, and woke up the inmates, but, much to our regret, found that those for whom we were seeking were not there. Thus far we had been unsuccessful, but now determined to proceed with great caution, and capture Valencia, if it was possible to do so. As soon as the Mexican who was living in this establishment made his appearance, we ordered him to furnish a guide, which he refused to do, until we had shown him a brace of pistols, and gently hinted at the consequences; if he did not comply. This seemed to bring him to his senses, and to make him aware that he was in the hands of those who had the power to enforce a compliance, if necessary. Seeing no way to avoid it, he consented to send one of his peons with us, whom he woke up, and ordered to saddle his horse, and get ready.—From the manner of this man, we were sure we had a treacherous one to deal with and who would betray us, if he had an opportunity; and we, therefore, kept a close watch on him. The peon was so slow getting ready to accompany us, that Col. W. became very impatient; but the master made many excuses, such as, that he could not find his saddle and equipments, that the horse was difficult to manage, &c.—He was evidently detaining us for some particular purpose; we believed he had secretly sent some one to warn Valencia of our approach, and, by delaying us there, give him time to escape; and afterwards all our suspicions proved true.

After waiting some time the peon made his appearance, equipped and mounted, when we again started. The guide was placed between two officers with pistols in hand, we were ordered to shoot him if he made any effort to escape. As it was now verging towards morning, we increased our speed to reach our destination before daylight. We continued on the main road four or five miles when we turned off towards the left, and followed our guide across the open country. Soon after we left the main road, the bells of the neighboring churches and convents began to ring, evidently to alarm the country, and notify Gen. Valencia of the danger. It was now after three o'clock, and we had several miles to ride over an exceedingly rough country, and in many places dangerous. The whole surface, as far as we could see in the dark, ap-

peared to be a bed of rocks, in which paths had been worn by the animals, which from time to time journeyed over it, and in these narrow tracks we had to ride. In the distance, in the south-west, the direction towards which we were going, we could faintly discern mountains when the stars came out from under the clouds. Sometimes we wound along the edge of deep ravines, and then, again, up the sides of hills so steep that our horses could hardly climb them, and we found so many difficulties in our way that it was almost impossible to go faster than a walk. Pushing on as rapidly as we could, we arrived in sight of the hacienda before four o'clock, when we slackened our speed and approached more cautiously. The house is situated on the summit of a hill, and overlooks the rocky country around for some miles.—Being entirely ignorant of the nature of its defences, and the manner in which guards were posted, it was not deemed safe to advance until we had reconnoitered.—For that purpose a trusty ranger was sent forward on foot, with rifle in hand, with directions to approach as near the house as he should deem safe, and obtain all the information about its locality and defence that would be of importance to us. Minutes seemed lengthened into hours while he was gone, during which time we sat on our horses, in a ravine which completely hid us from view from the house. Our spy soon returned, and reported that a deep ditch ran in front of the hacienda, which was crossed by a narrow bridge, but that he could not discover any sentinels on duty. We now rode forward with great caution, until we came to the ditch mentioned by the spy, where another halt was ordered, and arrangements made for the attack. The force was now divided into two parties—one half, under Captain Bennet of the 1st Pennsylvania Volunteers, was ordered to go round by the left, and the other, under Lieutenant Davis of the Massachusetts Volunteers, were to go round by the right. These two officers were completely to encircle the house with their commands, so that no one could enter or leave without being seen, and then to report to Col. Wynkoop, in front of the main entrance. Everything being in readiness, the command was given to charge, when we dashed up the hill and over the bridge at full gallop, and surrounded the house.—One unlucky fellow, in the charge, missed the bridge; both horse and rider went over into the ditch, and were placed horsed-combat. They had been taken by surprise; not a soul was stirring, nor even a faithful dog on the watch, to give warning to his master of the danger that was lurking near.

When the men had been judiciously posted, and every avenue to the building strictly guarded, the officers, who were assembled in front, approaching the main entrance and knocked at the door for admittance. Under a long porch or shed, which extended the whole length of the building, the arrieros or mule drivers were lying fast asleep, which satisfied us that the family were at home, and thus far we were undiscovered. In a few minutes some one came to the door, with a light in his hand, and demanded who we were, and what we wanted. Colonel Wynkoop replied, that we were Americans, and in search of General Valencia, at the same time ordering him to open the door. This he refused to do, until we made demonstrations to break it down, when it was quickly unbarred, and we rushed in. The room we entered was large with low ceiling, and from appearance, was used by the family as a dining room, but the furniture was quite ordinary looking. We found there two gentlemen, one an elderly man, the other quite young, with his left hand in a sling; this latter informed us that he was Colonel Sylva, of the Mexican army, who was wounded and captured at Contreras, and then on his parole of honor. We asked them for General Valencia, but they denied all knowledge of him, and said he was not in the house, having left some days before. Without parleying with them longer, Colonel Wynkoop made arrangements to give the house a thorough search, and, as preliminary, sentinels were stationed at the doors, with orders to shoot any one who should attempt to pass out. By this time some of the family and servants had arisen and came into the room we had taken possession of, and were placed under safe keeping. To judge from their behavior, they expected to be eaten alive, and it was no easy matter to convince them that we were not a set of barbarians. To the writer of this article was assigned the duty of searching the house; and calling to my assistance two old rangers, who were armed to the teeth, we commenced operations. From the large room already mentioned, we passed into a smaller chamber, containing one bed, in which was lying a woman, a la night cap, and from appearance as crazy as a bedlamite. When we approached her, she exhibited the most frightful contortions of countenance, and uttered such horrid noises, that we were not disposed to examine her very closely, but passed on to the next chamber. From what we learned afterwards, there is not much doubt but that this bedlamite woman was none other than General Valencia in disguise. We passed through several rooms, some of which showed evidence of a hasty retreat, while in others the occupants had

just risen, and were putting on their garments, and much frightened at the abrupt intrusion of armed men. In one room, nearly the last we entered, we found three beautiful girls, whose peaceful sleep and pleasant dreams had been suddenly disturbed by our knocking with our sabre scabbards on their door for admittance. When we went in, they were sitting on the foot of the bed, on *deshabille*, bathed in tears, and looking the very pictures of beautiful despair. At first they could do no more than supplicate us by eloquent looks and burning tears, but in a few moments words came to their relief, when in terms that would have moved sterner hearts than ours, they begged for their father's life and their own. Even if we had been blood-thirsty enough to have sought their lives, their supplications would have surely stayed our cruel purpose, for no appeal could go more to the heart than theirs did. And as I looked upon the two stern men who stood beside me—men whose hearts and nerves had never faltered amid the leaden hail—I saw tears of sympathy and pity chasing each other down their furrowed cheeks. They called upon us in the name of the Virgin Mary and all the kindred saints, to spare them. After they had ceased speaking we explained to them, as well as we could, the object of our visit, and assured them that they need be under no alarm, as we would neither hurt nor interfere with them in any manner.—In answer to this, they smiled through their tears and invoked a blessing upon us, from their patron saint of Guadalupe. We occupied a few minutes in searching their room, and then passed on to other parts of the premises. From thence we passed to the out-buildings, all of which we searched with care, looking into every corner that could afford a hiding place for a man. The building was an old-fashioned Spanish house, of stone, only one story high, and surrounded by a high wall; and, as it was impossible for any one to escape, we were sure he was concealed somewhere within, but were unable to find him, and so we reported to Colonel Wynkoop.

While we were searching the premises, some one made an attempt to escape over the wall, but was discovered by one of the sentinels on duty, and fired at; he quickly dropped from the wall into the yard, and let the sword which he had in his hand fall on the outside. Who he was, and whether wounded or not, we could not learn. Although we had assured the family they were in no danger, they were yet in great alarm—the women in tears, and the men too much frightened to think of the least resistance. Having failed in our search, we held a council of war, to determine what course to take, and it was unanimously agreed to remain there until daylight, and then give the place another thorough searching. We found several gentlemen in the house, besides the two already mentioned, and though none of us had ever seen General Valencia, we were not willing to take either of them for him. One proved to be Colonel Arieta, of Valencia's staff, whom we made a prisoner of war; and as the others appeared to be citizens, we did not molest them. When they saw that our search had been unsuccessful, they seemed cheered with a prospect of his escape, and endeavored by a ruse to draw us away from the house. For this purpose, they told us that the General was then staying at a hacienda about three miles off, and one of them offered to show us the way. Colonel Wynkoop ordered an officer and six men to accompany the guide, the main body remaining until their return.—Seeing this feint had not the desired effect, and that we were determined to remain there until he should be given up, they next began to make terms for him, wanting to know in what manner we would treat him if he should be taken. This confirmed us more strongly in the belief that he was in the house, and we felt quite sure of the prize. In the midst of this conference we were interrupted by the entrance of a stout good-looking gentleman, about fifty years of age, who saluted us, and said, in Spanish, "I am General Valencia." Colonel Wynkoop told him he was very happy to have the pleasure of making his acquaintance, and very politely informed him that he must consider himself a prisoner of war. The general assumed a great deal of indignation at the manner of his capture, and said it was contrary to the rules of war to take an officer who was not in the army, but living quietly with his family in the country. To this Colonel Wynkoop replied, that he was very sorry to put him or his family to any inconvenience, but that as he never gave us an opportunity of making his acquaintance on the field of battle, this was the only chance we had to pay our respects to him.

We then informed the general and Colonel Arieta, that we wanted the pleasure of their company to the city of Mexico, and the sooner they were ready to go, the more agreeable it would be to us. While the two officers were preparing for the journey, their family who had become more assured, and found we were not the fierce "northern barbarians" they had taken us to be, placed refreshments before us, which long fasting and hard riding made very welcome—and during this time some of us watched a few moments of sleep. While we were in the house, the guard of Mexican lan-

cers, on a hill near by, had discovered us, and were showing their bravery by blowing their trumpets and kindling up their watch-fires.—They made every demonstration of attack, and we felt almost certain they would not allow us to leave without giving battle; and therefore, to be able to defend ourselves against such a superior force, we concluded to remain until daylight, before we set out on our return. Day was just beginning to break in the east when we assembled our men and mounted—but alas for the belligerent demonstrations of the poor Mexicans—they were all expended in sound, and they allowed us to carry away their general without striking a single blow in his defence. General Valencia and Colonel Arieta were mounted on their horses, and accompanied by a servant. Our route, in returning across the country to the main road, was nearly the same we had travelled the night before, except now and then, under the guidance of the general, we took a near cut, to avoid some of the deep ravines. When the day had fully dawned, we were enabled to see what a rough and rocky surface we had ridden over in the night, and how impossible to have found his place of residence without a guide. Once in the public road, the face of the country assumed a different appearance; on either side were well cultivated fields, and though it was mid-winter, the flowers and trees were in bloom, and the morning air was delightfully soft and balmy. The region of country through which we passed is a very populous one, and, if the people had possessed the proper spirit, they would never have allowed so small a force to carry off one of their most distinguished generals; but as it was, they looked upon the affair without any interest, nor did they know it was their duty to resist. We rode along at our leisure, without the least molestation—stopped at Tlalnepantha to lunch and rest our horses, and then pushed on to Mexico, where we arrived at half-past eleven o'clock the same morning. The prisoners were conducted into the presence of General Scott, who released them on their paroles of honor. General Valencia died soon after.

Only One, and He was a Pirate!

A writer in the April number of Blackwood's Magazine, in speaking of maritime matters, says: "The Americans have only produced one naval hero, and he was a pirate—Paul Jones." The writer appears to be serious, and, we dare say, believes the nonsense which he utters; for if there is anything that the British public are badly posted up in, it is the history of the battles which have been fought between the United States and Great Britain. Not an Englishman in a thousand has ever heard of the battle of New Orleans, although the victory obtained there by General Jackson, entailed upon British valor and British discipline one of the most disgraceful defeats known to civilized warfare. 'Lundy's Lane,' 'Port Erie,' and 'Plattsburgh,' are also places which the memory of John Bull will very seldom plead guilty to. Of our naval victories he is still more obtuse. The only commodore he seems to have any knowledge of is, as we said before, Paul Jones—while the only sea fight which figures conspicuously in his history of the war of 1812, is that which took place between the Chesapeake and the Shannon. To this battle British historians have devoted not only whole chapters, but whole books, while the victory of Perry, on Lake Erie, is boiled down to a paragraph. These facts prove two things. In the first place, the importance which they attach to the conquest of the Chesapeake, shows that the capture of an American frigate was a rarity; while the cowardly manner with which they refer to the victories of Perry and McDonough, shows that they were more afraid of truth than they were of an enemy, and that it is wiser for Great Britain to pocket a disgrace than to refer to it.

To teach a writer to *condense*, we know of no better study than John Bull's history of 'American Naval Battles.' The loss of a fleet is there summed up with fewer words than he once recorded the conquest of a French fishing boat; while the sinking of a frigate in twenty minutes is so much of a trifle that it is only referred to in a note.

The writer to which we have already referred, says that the Americans have only produced one naval hero, and he was pirate—Paul Jones. Let us see how this statement tallies with the truth—

The war broke out in June, 1812. In July, the Essex, Capt. Porter, was attacked by the British ship Allert. The first broadside from the Essex frightened the British crew to the hold, and in eight minutes her flag was struck.

On the 19th of August, the frigate Constitution, Capt. Hull, in thirty-eight minutes conquered the British frigate Guerriere, Capt. Dacres. The loss to the English in killed and wounded was 114. The Americans were only injured to the extent of 14.

On the 18th of October, Capt. Jones, in the sleep-of-war Wasp, captured the Frolic in forty five minutes. In this action, the Americans had to contend against a much superior force. The result of the battle was 89 killed on the Frolic, and only 8 on the Wasp.

On the 25th of October, the frigate United States, Capt. Decatur, encountered and captured the finest frigate in the British navy, the Macedonian, in little over half an hour. English killed, 104. Americans, 11.

On the 12th of December, the frigate Essex, Capt. Porter, took the ship Nocton, of 10 guns, in about five minutes. With the Nocton he also took \$55,000 in specie. Capt. Porter afterwards cruised in the Pacific, where his prizes averaged about two a day. His last act was to fight two British frigates of equal size, for nearly half a day.

On the 29th of December, the Constitution, Capt. Bainbridge, captured the British frigate Java. The combat continued more than three hours, at the expiration of which time she was so knocked to pieces that you could look through her like a piece of gauze. The English lost in this battle 161. The Americans 34. So much for the year 1812.

On the 23d of February, 1813, the United States ship Hornet, Capt. Lawrence, encountered the British ship Peacock. In less than fifteen minutes the Peacock struck her colors, displaying at the same time a signal of distress. The Hornet, in less than a quarter of an hour, having not only conquered the Peacock, but nearly sunk her. In July, 1813, the American brig Argus captured the British brig Pelican. A day or two afterwards, the American brig Enterprise, Lieut. Burrows, took the British brig Doxer, Capt. Blythe. These vessels were of the same class, and showed in a most conclusive manner, the superiority of American gunnery over that of any other power.

In August of this year, the American privateer Decatur, mounting seven guns, and manned with one hundred and three men, fell in with the British schooner Dominica, of sixteen guns and eighty-three men. For two hours the two ships continued manoeuvring and firing, the Decatur seeking to board her antagonist, and she to escape. At length the former was placed in such a position, that a part of her crew passed, upon the bowsprit, into the stern of the latter. The firing on both sides, from cannon and musketry, was now terrible. In a short time the two ships came in contact, broadside to broadside, and then the remainder of the Decatur's crew rushed upon her enemy's deck. Fire arms were thrown aside, and the men fought hand to hand, using cutlasses and throwing shot. Nearly all the officers of the Dominica being killed, her flag was hauled down by the conquerors. Of her crew of eighty-three, sixty were killed or wounded; of that of the Decatur but nineteen. The next day, the latter captured a merchantman, laden with a valuable cargo, and conducted both prizes into the harbor of Charleston.

In December, 1814, the United States frigate Constitution, Capt. Stewart, fought two British frigates at once, and, what is more, whipped them. They were the Levant and Cyane. This naval battle is one of the most glorious on record. So much for ships—let us now come to squadrons.

On the 10th of September, 1813, the American squadron on Lake Erie, under Commodore Perry, fought a British squadron under Capt. Barclay. The battle commenced a little after noon. At 4 o'clock Perry transmitted the following laconic epistle to Gen. Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours—two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop."

On the 6th of September, 1814, the British squadron, commanded by Commodore Downie, appeared off the harbor of Plattsburg, where that of the United States, commanded by Commodore McDonough, lay at anchor, prepared for battle. The former, consisting of sixteen vessels, carried one hundred and two guns, and was manned with eight hundred and fifty men. The battle commenced about 9 o'clock. In two hours and a half the British were a whipped community, every vessel in the squadron having "backed down" or run away.

A London correspondent of the National Intelligencer says:—"On the platform, beneath the lofty transept of the Crystal Palace, was placed a chair of state, in which the Queen took her seat with her usual punctuality, at exactly 12 o'clock. The platform soon became studded with foreigners of every clime, in all sorts of picturesque dresses, not the least conspicuous of whom was a Chinese Mandarin, who moved about with a dignity that showed him to be conscious that on his sole shoulders rested the duty of representing three hundred millions of people." This Mandarin, by the way, was the showman of the Chinese Junk, who passed for the time, as the Chinese Ambassador!

The Boston Atlas states that a lady dressed in Turkish pataoons attracted considerable notice in Tremont row, on Thursday afternoon. The skirt hung as low as the knee.

The Reading Convention will number among its delegates quite a number of editors. Already we have FOXNEY, of the Pennsylvania, BOWMAN, of the Bedford Gazette, WILSON, of the Atlantic Republican, ALEXANDER, of the Clifton Democrat, and likely some others. They will make good delegates.