

# INCIDENTS

OF A

## CAMPAIGN IN MEXICO.

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*July.*—We left the New Albany wharf, July 11th, 1846, at one o'clock A. M., and are now winding our way to New Orleans, on the noble steamer Uncle Sam, *en route* to the wars in Mexico. I am wholly unable to describe my thoughts and emotions, at leaving my native home, with its endearing associations, and embarking upon a venturesome career of fatigue, privation, and danger. I stood upon the hurricane deck, and could see by the moonlight crowds of my fellow townsmen upon the bank, and in the intervals of the cannon's roar, returned their encouraging cheers. As we glided down, the last objects that met my lingering gaze, were the white dresses and floating handkerchiefs of our fair friends. How few of us may return to receive their welcome!

I am becoming more and more impressed with the aristocracy of office. Those who hold commissions have the best pay, the best fare, and all the honor. The private performs the work, endures the privation, and when the toils and sufferings of the campaign are over, forgetfulness folds him gracefully in her capacious mantle. The cabin has been reserved for the staff and commissioned officers, while the non-commissioned and privates enjoy decks the best way they can. I now realize that when one takes up arms voluntarily in defence of his country's institutions, he forfeits his claim to gentility, thereby rendering himself liable to all kinds of cold, cheerless inattention. Under a full appreciation of this fact, one of my companions and myself applied to the Captain of the steamer for a cabin passage. He granted our request, with the Colonel's consent, and by paying extra ten dollars, we were permitted to occupy the

last remaining room, and enjoy the very great privilege of sitting at the same table with our titled superiors.

There are five companies on board, and all appear in good spirits. They are following the bent of their several inclinations. At a table above me is a group of "Greys" busily engaged in signing resolutions indicative of their disapprobation of the course of Gov. Whitcomb and his advisers, in officering and forming our regiments. I will not here try to show how all our plans have been frustrated, nor speak of the many discouraging circumstances under which we go away; suffice to say, I willingly signed the resolutions, which will be sent home for publication. I pause to listen to a song in which Prof. Goff appears to lead.

How pleasing are the impressions made upon the mind by a beautiful landscape, when advantageously seen and properly appreciated. We have just passed three islands lying almost side by side, thereby giving great width to the river. They are indeed beautiful. Viewed in the distance they appear like three huge tufts of grass.

12th.—Our noble craft is now ploughing the bosom of the "Great Father of Waters." There is something truly sublime in beholding a mighty river moving on in its course, defying every resistance, and bearing silently on towards the ocean. There is a tiresomeness in the scenery upon the banks of this noble stream, when compared with the diversified character of that found upon either side of the beautiful Ohio.

It is remarked generally by those among us, accustomed to travelling, that a more orderly set of men they have never seen than the volunteers from Indiana. The Greys attract much attention by their jokes and animation. They lead in the dance, and three of their number take the front rank in music. Goff with his guitar, Tuley with his violin, and Matthews with his vocal accompaniments, constitute a musical trio, possessing power to cheer the soldier's saddest hour. I have formed quite an agreeable acquaintance with the clerks of the boat, who manifest much interest in my future welfare. We have just passed the mouth of the Arkansas river, and I do not remember to have seen a single farmhouse for a distance of many miles, that indicates competency or convenience.

17th.—After a most delightful trip of five days we arrived at the great City of the South, and are now encamped on the "Battle

Ground" of the memorable 8th of January. We are almost deluged in water and mud, as it has rained almost every day since we left home. Having pitched our tents, several of us not particularly delighted with our new quarters, sought more congenial lodgings in the city, where we have remained ever since, but shall rendezvous and proceed to camp in the morning. In relation to my visit to the city, I shall not particularize except to say, that I delivered a letter of introduction kindly given me by a friend, and was joyfully recognized and received.

18th.—In pursuance of appointment, several of us met next morning at the Lower Market, negotiated with some Spaniards to take us in their sail-boat to the encampment, and were soon under way. Having arrived, we were forced to wade from the river to our tents, nearly to the knees in mud and water. We were truly in a sorry plight.

Some of the more enterprising in camp have greatly improved their condition, by laying cordwood in the bottom of their tents. Our condition is rendered more insupportable from the fact that the "Barracks" are so short a distance from us, presenting so much of comfort. We truly envy the regulars.

On the afternoon of the same day we received orders to strike tents and prepare for embarkation, which we joyfully obeyed. About midnight five companies were economically stowed under the hatches of the ship Gov. Davis. Our vessel, together with the Partheon, also containing Indiana troops, was soon towed onward to the Gulf.

19th.—We entered the Gulf next morning, and started upon our course with a fair wind, which, however, was of short duration. It soon commenced raining, and while I write, head winds impede our progress. Sea sickness and low spirits prevail. I have not yet been affected by the former, but am by no means realizing the pleasure trip, which some of my friends anticipated. If they could spend a night in the hold of this crowded vessel, they would not dream of citron groves or perfumed bowers.

20th.—In view of bettering my condition last night, I sought new lodgings by climbing up under the seat of an inverted yawl, where I slept, or tried to sleep; for the seat was short, narrow and hard,

as my bones can testify. It was also dark and stormy. The wind, rain, thunder, lightning, and creaking of the ship, as she heaved and surged through the billows, filled my mind with fear and anxiety, and kept me the whole night clinging to my narrow perching place. The sky is now clear, and wind fair, and the whole face of nature changed. We are gracefully gliding through the white spray, as it glitters in the sunbeams. The gorgeously tinted clouds are reflected upon the waves, in all the colors of the rainbow. This is the first time I have enjoyed a scene at sea, or fully realized being out sight of land. The undulating motion of the vessel, instead of making me sick, produces real pleasure. How exhilarating to feel ourselves riding up, up, and down, down with such regularity, fanned by the breezes that whistle through the sails!

21st.—Last evening was spent in organizing a debating club from the soldier fragments of the Caleopean Society, together with several new members. Grave and powerful speeches were made, and the question "Should the pay of volunteers be increased?" was discussed in a masterly manner. Arguments on both sides were unanswerable, and consequently unanswered. But as the exercises were got up more for amusement than improvement, they closed at an early hour, with a musical finale by the trio performers, who, with the captain of the ship, and others were convened upon the quarter-deck. We then stretched ourselves upon the deck, where we slept undisturbed, save when in the way of the sailors managing the ship.

This morning there appeared to be a general depression of spirits among the Greys. Complaints were heard from many who before had not been known to murmur. Our quarters between decks are truly unenviable, and the heat and stench almost insupportable. We had a fine treat to-day for dinner. The captain of the Greys had the good fortune to capture a young shark. It was very acceptably served up in the form of chowder. The wind is rather more favorable than it has yet been, but our progress is still slow, and it is the general opinion, it will be several days before we arrive at Point Isabel. Another and myself spent a portion of the afternoon upon the quarter deck reading plays from Shakspeare, after which we were all richly entertained in listening to the glowing descriptions of Napoleon and his marshals by Headley.

22*d.*—We have now fair wind, and are making fine speed. This morning the reading party was broken up by the fantastic gambols of a shoal of porpoises. This was quite an incident, and was hailed with much pleasure by the ennui-burdened passengers. At noon we found by the altitude, that we were but six hours sail from Galveston, and but half way to our destination. The captain says if the wind continues favorable, we shall, however, reach there in two days. I have felt gloomy and low spirited all day; owing, I suppose, to our uncomfortable situation.

23*d.*—This has been a miserable day. I do not think I ever spent one more unhappily. In fact, ever since I have been aboard this ship, I have had the blues most supremely. The crowd, the confusion, the dirt, the continual heaving of the vessel, and the dismal wo-begone countenances, of companions, are well calculated to fill the mind with reckless despondency.

24*th.*—We are now lying at anchor five miles from Brazos Santiago. About 8 o'clock, last night we witnessed the affecting sight of a burial at sea. It was indeed a thrilling scene. The moon and stars shone in all their brilliancy, as if indifferent to human woes. The body of the dead wrapped in his blanket—the soldier's winding-sheet—was brought upon deck. A few words of consolation to friends composed the ceremony, and the body was lowered into the quiet deep, food for the "hyenas of the ocean." I never shall forget the foreboding pause of the vessel, or the awful splash of the corse as it fell into its watery grave. With sad emotions awakened in my bosom, I lay down upon the quarter-deck, and was ruminating upon the blighted hopes of this unfortunate youth, when I was aroused by an approaching storm. I sought shelter in the hold, but the crowd, the heat, the stench and the groanings of the sick, rendering it almost insupportable, I soon went aloft, preferring death by drowning to suffocation. The rain had ceased, but having lost my blanket, I was forced to take the wet deck and make the best of it. We shall have to remain on the vessel anchored in the offing, until conveyed ashore by steamers, to procure which the general and staff have just started in a long boat.

It is grateful, under any circumstances, to have friends, but how much additional pleasure it gives to find them among strangers. To find one here and there, who can sympathize with us in misfor-

tune, and feel interested in our welfare, when we least expect it, is calculated to give us better views of humanity. My thoughts were directed to this subject by the kindness of one of the mates of the ship. One day, when I was sitting in a rather musing mood, he introduced himself by familiarly accosting me with "Frank, how goes it?" After some conversation on matters of present interest, he inquired how I came to volunteer. I explained to him some of the causes. Among others I told him the "Spencer Greys" was an independent company formed several years ago, and chiefly composed of young men of New Albany. They had attracted much attention by the splendor of their uniform, their prompt and accurate movements in the drill, and their superior skill in target firing. They had won many prizes from neighboring companies, and thereby gained a celebrity, as possessing all the requisite qualifications to meet the foe, providing courage, that essential quality in a soldier, was not wanting. The call went forth for volunteers, and the inquiry was naturally made, "Where are the Greys?" To say nothing of the many motives that may prompt, pride to sustain the reputation already gained was sufficient for most of us. Our company was filled up, and we reported ourselves in readiness to the governor, and were duly accepted. Here my new friend was called to supper, and upon declining to accompany him, he kindly insisted I should receive a package of finely flavored cigars, upon which I can regale luxuriously.

25th.—We are still waiting in the most painful suspense and anxiety, for transportation ashore. For my own part I have made up my mind to bear everything like a philosopher. I entered upon this campaign, expecting to meet with privation and suffering; and judging from the past I am likely to realize my expectations. But trifling officers, and our very unpleasant situation on this filthy ship, are distresses that most of us overlooked in our calculation. Hereafter I am resolved to take everything easy, and complain as little as possible. Surfeited with bacon and hard mouldy bread, and in consideration of the frequent invitations from the mate to eat with him, I went to the steward, and negotiated for one dollar a day to take my meals at the table of the ship. After dinner I was beckoned to the lower cabin by my friend the mate, where he brought forth a rare collation, upon which we feasted like epicures. He opened his chest and showed me many curiosities from China, Java, and other

foreign countries. He also furnished a list of clothing, handkerchiefs, paper, pencils, and lastly his hammock, and begged me to take freely anything that would contribute to my comfort, as it would give him great pleasure to share with me. I declined receiving anything upon the ground that I was well provided, and could not carry his hammock, upon the comforts of which he so fully expatiated. I did, however, accept a superior cedar pencil, and warmly thanked him for his kind offers. He tells me he is a native of Boston, and a brother of Thayres, who is interested in the Boston and Liverpool line of steamers.

26th.—We are spending another Lord's day in a heathenish manner. There are very few among us who spend the day differently from other days. We have not yet heard from our officers. Most of us have ceased to make calculations upon the future. How strangely is man subject to fluctuation of feeling!—with what suddenness the mind can fly from pleasure to pain! Last night I realized this in its fullest sense. I was seated astern luxuriating under the influence of a fine cigar, (thanks to my new friend,) and for the first time witnessed a clear sunset at sea. It was one of the most glorious scenes I ever beheld. The whole western sky was illuminated with the most gorgeous colors. The refulgent sun slowly sinking into the liquid blue until nearly immersed, sank at once, and a dark mist shot upward in his pathway to the clouds, which still retained their variegated tints. The whole scene was sublimely beautiful, and filled me with a joyful enthusiasm. The sea breeze, and the graceful rocking of the ship contributed to the effect. At such a moment how sweet is the thought of home, and the pleasures we long to share with loved ones left behind! These alluring reflections led me at length to a vein of melancholy, and produced a complete reaction in my whole feelings, which harmonized well with the changed and threatening aspect of the gathering clouds. We have just been thrown into a state of intense excitement by the arrival of a steamer which has taken three of our companies. The rest will remain till morning.

27th.—According to arrangement, the steamer arrived this morning, to transport us to the island. During the bustle of transfer, we were attracted to the stern of the ship, where the sailors had caught a shark, on a hook baited with bacon. Soon a great crowd

was collected, many climbing over the bulwarks and among the rigging to witness the captured fish. He was at length harpooned and shot, but was so large we could not conveniently bring it on board. Just as we were leaving the ship an affray took place between the steward and one of our men, which was soon participated in by the mates, and many of our party. Several blows passed, pistols were presented, and for a time serious consequences were feared, but the trouble was soon settled, when the mate understood the circumstances of the case. It appeared that one of our men and an officer claimed the same piece of ice, each one persisting in having bought it of the steward, to whom it was at last left to decide. He declared in favor of the officer and gave our man the lie, &c. Then came the knocks. But as I said before, everything was soon adjusted, and we separated with perfect good feeling. As we shoved off the mates and crew (steward excepted) leaned over the bulwarks, and gave us three hearty cheers. We landed at Brazos Santiago about noon, having had several hard thumps as we passed the reefs.

28th.—Yesterday about dark we pitched our tents, and ate our suppers, after which many of us proceeded to the beach, and enjoyed the luxury of sea-bathing. The convenience here for this refreshing operation cannot be surpassed. We waded out on the reefs and turning our faces to the shore, received the angry surges upon our backs, or facing them again could see one after another coming at regular distances, roaring like a cataract fall, and with foam and spray, dashing onward, like a white plumed army rushing to the charge. In regular succession they swept over our heads. We were all highly delighted with the novelty of the scene, which may be enjoyed, but not described. After rising this morning, the first thing was to repeat the exercises of last night, which greatly refreshed us, and sharpened our appetites for the morning meal. The scorching rays of the sun came down upon us “doubly distilled and highly concentrated;” the effects of which are, however, greatly counteracted by the sea-breeze. The thermometer stood yesterday at 90°.

The island is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide, and very prolific in oysters, clams, crabs and fish. It may be compared to a sand bar occasionally diversified by little mounds, which are moved about by the storms that visit it. I am told that not long ago several families were destroyed by one of these dreadful tempests. One of our



officers, when walking along the beach the other day, unconsciously trod upon the exposed body of a man partially decayed, that two weeks ago was buried six feet in the sand. I am informed that the 1st Indiana regiment will leave for the Rio Grande in two days. If this be the case, our stay here will not be long. There are about 5000 troops here, most of whom will leave before us. We are in fine health and spirits, and continually congratulating ourselves, upon our escape from the detested ship.

31st.—I have spent the last two days in running about, and in writing letters to my friends, one of which I shall here embody in my journal, as it contains all that has transpired since my last date :

“ Having already delayed too long, in hopes of sending you some news, I will commence at once, as your facilities for obtaining the truth are not much better than mine. There are so many conflicting rumors continually floating about the camp, and orders arriving daily purporting to be from Gen. Taylor, that we are getting to believe nothing, and to make as few calculations upon the future as possible. I shall therefore send you nothing in the news line that I don't think correct.

“ The 1st and 3d Indiana regiments left yesterday for the Rio Grande, the mouth of which is eight miles down the beach. From thence they will be taken by steamboats up the river. We expect to start on to-morrow. Some say we will stop at Barita, and others at the head-quarters opposite Matamoras.

“ I am sitting upon the sand and writing this, while some of the boys are cooking, others washing, and some enjoying the luxury of a sea bath, hunting shells, oysters, &c. We would all present a novel appearance, could you see us now. I sometimes almost lose my own identity. The sudden change of occupation and associations affects us all.

“ The health of the company is good, and all are making the best of everything. We have but two or three sick, and they are recovering, except one, and he is very low. He has been prevailed upon to accept a discharge, and will return home in the first vessel. He is a good fellow, and all of us regret to part with him.

“ General Lane has just returned from an interview with General Taylor, bearing orders for us to leave in the morning. Another election in our regiment for Colonel will take place this evening, and, if possible, I will send you the result.