

LETTER FROM THE ARMY.

BY A VOLUNTEER IN THE ALABAMA ARMY.
[Concluded from last week.]

MATAMOROS.

This city is said to contain ten thousand inhabitants. The streets are laid out at right angles, but generally narrow; the pavement being generally three feet broad. The market is an arcade of considerable size, and very handsome. The plaza or public square is the centre of the city, surrounded principally by public buildings. They have upon one square of the plaza, a fine Church of tremendous size, and when it is completed, will compare with any church in the Union. Most of the inhabitants, particularly the ladies of this country, attend matins or morning prayers. I also attended matins to see all that was to be seen. I must confess that I like this custom, and it seems to me to be promotive of health, piety, and social enjoyment. The senoras or Mexican ladies seem to enjoy themselves most pleasantly; on their return, laughing, talking and flirting their beautiful flowers, and more beautiful fingers, in pleasant salutations: for here the ladies are polite, and if you notice them they always return it with a smile and touch of the fingers to the lips. The ceremonies are such as are usual with Catholics, and need not be described. The river is much swollen at this time, in consequence of which one of their Chief Priests was drowned while bathing in the river. This, together with the destruction of their crops by the inundation, and the late disasters in war, cause the Mexicans to say that they are a doomed nation, and that heaven and earth are combined for their destruction.

The city of Matamoros, like all Mexican towns, would strike any European or American visitor with astonishment; not only at the singular appearance of the inhabitants, but the houses also. All the poorer classes (and they compose nearly the whole population) live in miserable hovels, consisting of cane set upright and tied together with thongs and covered with straw, which is piled up six inches thick, and sheds rain well. You will see one of these hovels by the side of a large stately mansion. The inhabitants generally go half naked, and are between the negro and the Indian, without having the muscular frame of the one or the tall graceful form of the other. The mixture, however, between Spanish and Mexican blood, forms a tolerably decent and interesting class of dressy, showy and intelligent people. You will find the ladies of this class dressed in white and red muslins, lolling in the windows which project into the streets, and are protected by iron bars, and if it were not for their happy and cheerful countenances, as they puff clouds of feathery smoke from their cigarettes, a stranger would suppose the whole city a vast Penitentiary filled with fair convicts.

Sunday is the great day here for show, sports and jollity; and on every Sabbath evening they have theatres, rope-dancing and other buffooneries, all of which I witnessed, although it was Sunday, upon the principle that every man should know the world. The large landed estates in Mexico are called *haciendas*, and are owned by Spanish gentlemen of great wealth, who have immense influence over large tracts of country, as extensive, frequently as one of our counties.

MEXICAN VILLAGE.

is at the lowest point of barbarism; they raise nothing but corn, which they pound in stone mortars, and then bake their fritters or pan-cakes; as we would call them, but in their language they are universally known as *tortillas*—these they dip into a sort of soup which is called *chelo*, composed principally of cayenne pepper, water and a little meat. Pepper of the best description grows wild; and also sweet onions, the best I ever tasted. They have plenty of fine beef, and that is about all they do have worth mentioning.

SLAVERY IN MEXICO.

Mexico says she does not tolerate slavery, but she has a law whose necessity, and no doubt I might add, intentional operation, is to make slaves of the whole inferior population. A landlord has no right to do but make one of these creatures his debtor, no matter whether man or woman, and if they do not pay at the exact moment when it becomes due, they are his slaves until they do; and this, whether through the want of industry or ability being seldom done, they are *de facto et de jure* slaves for life. Some haciendas contain five thousand. A little farm is called a *ranch*, hence the name of those marauding farmers or rancheros, about whose murders and robberies you have heard so much.

The land on the Rio del Norte is as rich as our finest prairie, and is covered with vines, muskett, palmettoes, fruit trees, flowers and grass, all tangled and mingled together in glorious luxury and confusion; and this is what forms a shapereel (pronounced chapperel). This word is equivalent to our thickset, and there is no such thing as a shapereel bush. The muskett bush is the principal component of these thickets, which, as a general fact, is from six to ten feet high, possessing sharp thorns, and the whole appearance of the bush is very similar to haw-thorn, and are all, in fact, of the same species, to wit, *mimosa*. On the Mexican shore of the del Norte, there are vast tracts of land sown in corn. I say sown instead of planted, because such is the fact—the

corn and grass growing together with equal regularity. Neither hoe or plough is ever put into this land, yet the corn, as thick as your fingers, looks tolerable well, and actually produces better grain than three-fourths of land in the piney woods in Pike county, Alabama.

FORT BROWN.

The celebrated Fort Brown opposite Matamoros, contains an area of about one acre or more, popularly speaking, about the size of a horse-lot. The ditch or moat is about twelve feet wide and five deep; the embankment on the inside is ten feet high. This ring is studded all round with cannon big enough for a common sized man to sleep in. The Mexican Fort from which shells were thrown into Fort Brown, is immediately on the opposite bank of the river, which is at this place about as broad as the Alabama. The Fort is nothing more than a sort of mound about fifteen or twenty feet high; of course scooped out in the centre. Its site entirely overlooks Fort Brown, as does the whole of the Mexican fortifications, consisting of a trench half a mile in length, along the elevated bank of the river, and being about thirty or forty feet higher than Gen. Taylor's side. Arista seems to have been so foolish as to suppose Taylor would swim the river and attack Matamoros in front, and in order to its defence, threw up breast works, composed of sand bags. These bags are about two feet long and one foot wide, filled with sand and laid one upon another after the manner of brick, until a wall, five feet high and six broad is formed. Gen. Taylor had the top of his fort covered with sacks filled with sand, which forms an excellent temporary fort of easy construction. You perceive that I deal in particularities instead of generalities throughout. I do this because every body is well informed as to the general matters of which I speak, but few of the minutiae, and since they strike my own mind as being of interest, I conclude they will strike the minds of others also, since all are more or less alike. Upon this principle I will describe the bomb-proofs which saved the lives of those who were in the fort. These bomb-proofs were made on a sudden emergency, and in the following manner: An excavation some six feet deep was made in the ground, and then pork barrels put in so as to make a wall upon each side of the trench, which would be about three feet wide after the barrels were put in. Upon top of these, other pork barrels were placed, and sand to the depth of 4 or 5 feet placed upon the top of them, so that if a shell should burst, it is evident it could injure nothing on the inside. While the bombardment continued, our men fired only a few shots, because they had none to spare for the sake of gasconading like the Mexicans, who kept up an incessant fire day and night to kill one man, Maj. Brown, whose death we all lament. It was not, therefore, necessary that our men should be exposed, and when any of them were, they were watching for the flash of the enemies' guns, and sight being quicker than shot and a scared man about as quick as either, there was plenty of time for the signal to be given; and the men all run into their holes like so many mice about to be grabbed in the midst of fancied security.

THE LATE BATTLE FIELDS.

I was exceedingly anxious to see the battle fields of the eighth and ninth. The first is that of Palo Alto, literally tall tree, but where these tall trees are is yet a matter of exploration and discovery. The Mexicans are, with regard to their trees, as the English are in regard to the river Thames. This first day's battle was fought in a large open prairie, two or three miles across. As you enter it from the shapereel, you see upon the right hand side of the road and about a quarter of a mile distant, three small batteries erected by the enemy in the shape of a half moon, about thirty yards in circuit, and upon a straight line with each other. The object of this was to give our army a raking fire as they passed along the road in front of them and from a half to a quarter of a mile distant—a beautiful shot for grape and canister. But these batteries might have been easily avoided by a small circuit in the prairie, but Gen. Taylor preferred to attack and take them, which Ringgold did with his flying artillery in double quick time, and the enemy were driven about a mile distant across a gentle slope or vale of the prairie. Here they drew up in battle array, and cannon were used upon both sides; and also musketry upon the part of the Mexicans, whose balls could not reach half way. This is again a striking circumstance to show the utter and abandoned stupidity of this people, for they must have either thought their shot would reach, or that by keeping up an incessant firing the Americans would get panic-stricken, either of which propositions men of ordinary intelligence would have known to be absurd. I suspect, however, the true reason was this, their ranks were being thinned every moment, and their commanders found it necessary to keep up this clatter to make them stand firm, upon the same principle that a frightened boy yells as loudly as possible while passing a graveyard at night. For a considerable time our soldiers were standing in line at an "order arms," that is to say perfectly passive, and as they tell me looking on laughing and talking with more than ordinary readiness. I neither doubt their bravery nor the truth of their jesting and appa-

rent merriment, and I doubt as little but what the latter was forced, which was all right enough to keep up the spirits of the men. They say while standing in this position, most of the cannon balls from the enemy fell short, and those that reached the lines generally came hopping, skipping and bounding over the level prairie, and they would open ranks to let them pass through. Occasionally they would come too swift for this and plump out one or two men, whereupon they would remark, "that's a fine shot," &c. They describe the battle array upon both sides as being most beautiful and martial. And who that has a military taste can doubt it? Who that can for a moment forget that the object of all that martial array was carnage; where man was to meet man in the fiendish strife and fight like demons to the death struggle, but must acknowledge that it was grand, nay, a magnificent sight, mingled with terrible yet fascinating sublimity. Thousands of bright bayonets bristling up like a vast field of wheat, and gleaming like meteors in the glancing sun-beams of a southern sun just sinking into the bosom of the vast plain, stretching out level as the ocean as far as the eye can reach. Then the long regular lines of disciplined troops all moving and acting as one man, and dressed in various fantastic uniforms—then the bright brass cannon, squadrons of horse, moving plumes, glittering sabres, rolling drums and streaming colors floating all along these walls of men.—Next to the ocean lashed to a fury by the tempest, I think nothing more beautifully sublime than two hostile armies approaching the deadly conflict. Our men state that the Mexican commander ordered his lines to move their position, when they were raked fore and aft, as a sailor would say, by Ringgold's batteries, and at every discharge their lines were seen to sway like a field of grain to a gust of wind, and the glittering bayonets to fall like swaths of grass before the scythe.—One thing about the bodies of the slain strike the beholder with astonishment, and that is their singular preservation. This is owing to the dryness and purity of this climate. It is now two months since these men were slain, but some of them look perfectly natural enough to be distinguished by their friends. The flesh does not putrify as with us, but dries up to the bone like a mummy. Plenty of Egyptian mummies might be procured here and sold at a cheap rate. I understand some of them have been sent to Barnum's Museum at New York.

The second battle is called Resaca de la Palma. It takes its name from the palm, though I saw none. This battle was fought in the shapereel; and I would here state, once for all, that the shapereel on this battle ground is not one-tenth as dense as it has been uniformly represented. I rode all through it with ease while examining the ground and positions. The muskett bush either grows singly or in small clumps which may be got around with ease. I see not myself how the Mexicans had much, if any advantage of the Americans, after our men got into the shapereel, for it was a bush whacking fight throughout. There are some signs of the late battle to direct the stranger and the curious, as to the positions occupied by each army, such as cartouch-boxes, leather straps, knapsacks, garments riddled with shot and stained with blood. Gen. Vega's (pronounced Veba) battery of five guns was planted upon one side of a drain immediately in the road, and about ten or fifteen feet from it, and on a rise of probably one foot at most.—Great credit is given by the army to Lieutenant Colonel Ridgely, who commanded Ringgold's artillery. When May was ordered to charge, he addressed him with perfect coolness, saying, "Charley, hold on till I draw the enemies' fire," which he did by firing upon Vega and receiving his return. Vega, however, reserved two of his cannon, and commenced reloading the others, when Ridgely told May that then was his chance—and every one knows the sequel; the regular army feel exceedingly proud of their achievement.

GEN. ZACHRY TAYLOR.

Many descriptions of Gen. Taylor's person have been given, all substantially correct. He is very short, only five feet six or seven inches high. I should think he would weigh two hundred pounds.

To-day, one of the volunteers of the Ohio Regiment was buried. I am sorry to say, but since I write to give information of the state of morals, as well as other things in our army, I will remark, that such profanity, jesting and ribaldry, was used by a large portion of these Ohioans, as I should never have looked for nor heard at the burial of a felon just out from the gallows.

The measles has spread throughout our encampment, but does not often prove fatal.

The application of Seneca's remark is peculiarly applicable to us—*levius solet timere qui propius timet*—he fears less who fears more nearly: which is generally true, as our apprehensions of danger are often removed as we advance; and also the proverb of Ovid—*lex fit quod bene fertur omni*—that law becomes light which is cheerfully borne. As for my own part I can say that I have applied these maxims and never felt so cheerful and happy in my life, and enjoyed better health than on this campaign; and the sickness we have is more owing to the

impudence of the men than to their situation. The intention of the army, so far as developed, is to proceed to Monterey as soon as possible, where an engagement is anticipated by the first of September, or thereabouts. At all events, engagement or not, Monterey will be taken in a month. What will then be done must be left for the circumstances to work out the event, and give further directions to our operation. *La temps present est gras de l'avenir*; great events are in the fore-shadowings of the present.

J.—

THE RETURN OF THE WANDERER.—Some years ago, a pious widow, who was reduced to great poverty, had just placed the last smoked herring on her table, to supply her hunger and that of her children when a rap was heard at the door, and a stranger solicited lodging and a morsel of food, saying that he had not tasted bread for 24 hours. The widow did not hesitate, but offered a share to the stranger, saying, "We shall not be forsaken, or suffer deeper for an act of charity."

The traveller drew near the table; but when he saw the scanty fare, filled with astonishment, he said, "And is this all your store? And do you offer a share to one you do not know? Then I never saw charity before. But, madam, do you not wrong your children by giving a part of your last morsel to a stranger?" "Ah," said the widow, weeping, "I have a boy, a darling son, somewhere on the face of the wide world, unless Heaven has taken him away, and I only act towards you as I would that others should act towards him. God, who sent manna from the heaven, can provide for us, as he did for Israel; and how should I grieve if my son should be a wanderer destitute as you, and should find a shelter, even as poor as this, and be turned unrelieved away?"

The widow stopped, and the stranger, springing from his seat, clasped her in his arms. "God, indeed, has provided just such a home for your wandering son, and has given him wealth to reward the goodness of his benefactress. My mother! O my mother!"

It was indeed her long lost son, returned from India. He had chosen this way to surprise his family. But never was surprise more complete or more joyful. He was able to make the family comfortable, which he immediately did; the mother living for some years longer in the enjoyment of plenty.—*Anecdotes of the Family.*

THE BROSAR.—At the time of a great famine, on a cold winter's day, a woman came to a village and began begging for charity. Her clothes were very clean but torn, and patched in many places. The snow was falling fast; her head wrapped in a handkerchief; in one hand she carried a stick, in the other a basket.

From most of the houses she got only a very scanty succor: even some rich persons drove her away with harsh words.

There was but one poor peasant who invited her into his house, where there was a good fire in the grate; and his wife took a cake out of the oven and gave the woman a large slice of it.

The next day every one where this stranger had asked for charity were invited, quite unexpectedly, to sup at the castle. When all the guests were arrived they proceeded to the dining room, where they saw two tables laid out. One was very small, but upon it were many exquisite dishes. The other was large and magnificent, and a great number of plates; but they held out scanty nourishment, such as a piece of half-musty bread, a couple of potatoes, a handful of bran, and some held nothing at all. While the guests were wondering what this meant, the lady of the castle spoke thus: "The beggar who passed through the village was myself: I disguised myself in order to judge for myself of your charity, in this time of need. The two poor people whom you see here, took me in and treated me as best they could. In consequence, they will eat at my table to-day, and I will give them pension."

As to you, regale yourselves with the offerings which you gave me yesterday; and which you see here upon your plate; I repeat to yourselves, while you do honor to the good cheer, that thus you will be treated in the next world."

This story is not fabulous, the heroine of the adventure was called Lady Gray.

THE FIFTY CHAPTERS.—A little Roman Catholic girl in Ireland had committed to memory fifty chapters. It pleased God to bring her to the bed of death. Her comfort in that hour was the reading of the Scriptures; but her parents, being Roman Catholics, wished her to confess to the priest and receive anointing from him. The priest refused to give the absolution, unless the Bible was given up to him. The child stated, that she did not want the absolution, and would not surrender the Bible. Her parents interferred; and the mother thinking her child was lost to eternity unless she complied with the priest's wishes, entreated compliance, but in vain, and the child still refused. At last, the poor ignorant mother stripped down the bed-clothes, and took from her the Bible which she had held on her little breast. The child on finding her Bible gone, simply exclaimed, "Well, I thank God, he cannot take away the fifty chapters I have got by heart!"

GEMS FROM JOHN FLAVEL.

Christ.—What an excellent, lovely one is Christ! Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises like the garden of Eden into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; oh what a fair and excellent thing would that be! And yet it should be less to that fair and well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes and fountains of ten thousand earths.

To be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and sprigs of comfort! and the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you.

Christ is the original and fountain of all the light which is ministerially diffused by men. Ministers are but planets which shine with a borrowed light from the sun.

As when God looks upon the rainbow, which is the sign of the covenant, he remembers the earth in mercy; so when he looks on Christ, he remembers us upon his account.

Oh what a melting consideration is this! that out of his agony comes our victory; out of his condemnation, our justification; out of his pain, our ease; out of his stripes, our healing; out of his curse, our blessing; out of his crown of thorns, our crown of glory; out of his death, our life.

Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies!

FLAVEL ON THE RIBBONS.—The daughter of a woman to whom I had sold as many volumes as she had means to purchase, seeing Flavel's Fountain of life among my books, said, here is a book that I must have. Her mother replied, "You have not the money to pay for it." She paused a moment and said, "I have fifty cents that I intended to give for ribbons for my bonnet. I will give that for the book and do without the ribbons."

I asked a woman if she wished any religious books? She said that she would like some good books, for they had none of their own but a few leaves of the New Testament. "But," said she, "I have a book that I borrowed from one of my neighbors, which if you should read, I know would make you cry." I found that it was the Saints' Rest. On opening it at the title I showed her that it was published by the Society for which I was agent, which recommended all my other books.

A colporteur speaking of a section where spiritual death reigns, and where the congregation were very listless on the Sabbath, says, "They bought books freely, and I think that Baxter and Flavel will do them good. One thing can be said of these old preachers, that cannot be said of their preachers—they never preach to people asleep."

A colporteur in Western New-York states that he visited a village containing three churches and between two and three hundred inhabitants, where there was but one male professor of religion! Infidelity and irreligion abounded to a fearful extent.

He visited a man to whom the minister had given Nelson's Cause and Cure of Infidelity which had led him to renounce his skepticism, and sold him Doddridge's Rise and Progress. Calling upon the family a fortnight after, he found the man and his wife inquiring what they must do to be saved. They had been reading the book, and requested the colporteur to pray with them.

HEATHEN IDEA OF GOD.—While passing down the Hoogly in company with Rev. Mr. Pearce, of Calcutta, on my way to the steamer that was to convey me to Madras, Mr. P. pointed me to the place on the opposite side of the river, where he had spent some time in missionary labour.

"One day, said he, while conversing with a native about the true God, I asked him whom he worshipped. The native answered immediately 'I worship the English.'"

"On being asked why he was so foolish, he replied that the English must be gods, and began to give his reasons. 'Look,' said he, 'at that iron bridge; pointing to one of great dimensions that had just been completed—"who but gods could make such a thing as that?"

"Look also at that iron steamboat," fixing his eyes upon one of immense size that lay in the river, "If Hindoos put iron into the water, it will sink, but the English make it swim like wood, and cause it to go wherever they please. And then see the smoke that rises out of it, and hear the terrible bellowing that it makes. Surely those that make such things must be gods."

Mr. P. endeavored to explain to him the reason of the superiority of the English over the Hindoos, resulting from religion, education, &c., and that under similar circumstances the Hindoos would be able to make the same things which they now looked upon as the work of gods. He could not, however, be persuaded to believe what was told him, and it seemed impossible to lead his dark bewildered mind beyond men and things, to God the Creator of all.—*Ch. Observer.*

Mr. Allison, in his history of Europe, in speaking of the United States, names New England as one of the States of the Union, and adds, that it joins the States of Massachusetts and Connecticut!

THE POOR BOY.—I know I am poor; but I am not ragged, and I will try to be honest. I can go to Sunday School, and there I can get many a tract and penny book, and my teacher says, if I get the knowledge of Christ, I shall be richer than many a man who owns a million of dollars. Yes, I am poor! But not poor enough to steal, or to beg, or to lie.—And I am not near poor enough to sell on Sundays, or to go to grog shops.

What if I am poor? My teacher says the blessed Savior was poor. He says the Apostles were poor. And he says God loves the poor. I will sing a little before I work!

"He that is down need fear no fall;
He that is poor no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide!"

Thank'ye for that, good John Bunyan! They say you were a poor boy yourself once; no better than a tinker. Very well, you are rich enough now, I dare say. I don't see after all, but that I can sing as gaily as if I had a thousand dollars.—Money does not lighten people's hearts. There is aquire Jones; he is rich; but I never heard him sing a hymn in my life. His cheek is paler than mine, and his arm is thinner; and I am sure he can't sleep sounder than I do.

No, I am not so poor either. This fine spring morning, I feel quite rich. The fields and flowers are mine. The red clouds yonder, where the sun is going to rise, are mine. All these robins, and thrushes, and larks, are mine! I never was sick in my life. I have bread and water. What could money buy for me more than this?

I thought I was poor; but I am rich. The birds have no purse or pocket-book; neither have I. They have no pains or aches; neither have I. They have food and drink; so have I. They are cheerful; so am I. They are taken care of by their Creator; so am I.

THE WIFE.—It needs no guilt to break a husband's heart; the absence of content, the mutterings of spleen; the untidy dress and cheerless home; the forbidding scowl and deserted hearth; these, and other nameless neglects, without a crime among them, have harrowed to the quick the heart's core of many a man, and planted there, beyond the reach of cure, the germ of dark despair. Oh! may woman, before that sad night arrives, dwell on the recollections of her youth, and, cherishing the dear idea of that tenuous time, awake and keep alive the promise she then so kindly gave. And, though she may be injured, not the injuring one—the forgotten, not the forgetful wife—a happy allusion to that hour of peace and love—a kindly welcome to a comfortable home—a smile of love to banish hostile words—a kiss of peace to pardon all the past, and the hardest heart that ever locked itself within the breast of selfish man will soften to her charms, and bid her live, as she had hoped, her years in matchless bliss—loved, loving and content—the soothe of the sorrowing hour—the source of comfort, and the spring of joy.—*Chambers' London Journal.*

IS GOD IN THIS HOUSE.—In Greenland, when a stranger knocks at the door, he asks, 'Is God in this house?' And if they answer 'Yes,' he enters. Reader, this little messenger knocks at your door, with the Greenland salutation, Is God in this House? Were you, like Abraham, entertaining an angel unwares, what would be the report he would take back to heaven? Would he find you commanding your children and your household and teaching them the way of the Lord? Would he find an altar in your dwelling? Do you worship God with your children? Is there a church in your house?

THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.—Call home our foreign missionaries and retain the funds that support them, and you stop the life-blood of our churches; but send forth hundreds and thousands more, and persuade the churches to support them, and the spirit of life will flow quick and strong in their members, and give new vigor and efficiency to their efforts for the salvation of our lands from error, sin and ruin.

EARLY RISING.—The difference between rising at six in the morning and eight, in the course of forty years, supposing a man to go to bed at the same time he otherwise would, amounts to twenty-nine thousand hours, or three years one hundred and twenty-one days and sixteen hours, which will afford exactly eight hours a day for ten years; so it is the same as if ten years were added to life—a weighty consideration, in which we could command eight hours a day for the cultivation of our minds or the dispatch of business.

A young woman never looks so interesting, as when at her devotions; a mother never so well as when nursing and admiring her first born; a son never so well as when in the discharge of an act of filial kindness; and a father never better than when he gives proof of his love for the wife of his bosom. So says the N. O. Picayune.

Napoleon said that a handsome woman pleases the eye, but a good woman pleases the heart. The one is a jewel and the other a treasure.

