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From the N. O. Picayune, of 16th Inst.

The Prisoners of Encarnacion. Delightful Narrative of the Capture, Adventures, Sufferings, etc., of Major Gaines and his Party in Mexico.

The schooner Home, Capt. Kinney, arrived here yesterday morning from Tampico, bringing over eight of the American prisoners who have been so long and so toilsomely detained in Mexico. The names of these men are A. W. Halesman, W. P. DeNormandie, Wm. Funk, Jno. Thomas, Jm. A. Scott, Robert S. Cockrill, Jno. Swigert and Wm. Russell. The last named belonged to the Arkansas Cavalry, the others to the regiments from Kentucky. They left the city of Mexico on the 5th of June, with their prisoners, it being understood that their destination was Tampico. They marched with a small escort in charge of a colonel and two or three officers. On the 17th they reached Huejutla, where they were turned over as prisoners to Gen. Garay, in command of that town, where several hundred troops were stationed. The prisoners were treated with much kindness, and they had before met with. They were informed by him that he had no orders to dispose of them, and that although he presumed it was the purpose of the Government to send them on to Tampico he had no instructions to that effect. The prisoners were here furnished with twenty-five cents daily for their expenses. This money General Garay appears to have raised by contributions among the town's people. After waiting here some days, seeing no prospect of release, and fearing lest events at the capital might induce the Government to change its intention of forwarding them to Tampico, they determined to effect their escape. They attempted this in small parties of five or six at one time, two at another and five at another. Seven in all left on the 27th. The first five were all retaken and carried back to Huejutla, but one of them again escaped and with the other seven reached Tampico. They marched principally by night and were from four to six or seven days on the route.

After their arrival at Tampico, news reached them by a Mexican, that about thirty of the men had also attempted to escape, that twenty-five of them had been retaken, and three others shot in the pursuit. These were the reports in Tampico, but no information does not place implicit confidence in them. He has little expectation that Col. De Russ's expedition will prove of any avail in procuring the release of the other prisoners. He thinks it certainly will fail, if the intention be to rescue them by force. The movement of the column will inevitably be reported to General Garay in advance, and if he does not feel himself strong enough to receive an attack, he can very readily send off the prisoners further into the interior. The fate of these men is greatly to be deplored, and we cannot but think there has been remissness on the part of General Scott in not obtaining their release. With a number of Mexican officers in our power, we would have brought that Government to a sense of its obligations to our prisoners, by hanging up some of their own to the first tree.

From the Delta of the same date we obtain the following very interesting narrative of the capture of Major Gaines and his party:

In a very gratifying interview with Mr. Swigert, one of those young men who have escaped many interesting particulars of the capture, sufferings, trials and adventures of Major Gaines's party. To relate all the interesting and romantic incidents, so modestly and briefly detailed to us by this brave young Kentuckian, would swell our narrative quite beyond the compass of our paper. We trust that the task of snatching from oblivion and handing down to posterity a faithful record of the stirring incidents connected with the capture and march of this party, will be assumed and discharged by some of the very capable officers or soldiers who participated in these eventful scenes. The genius of Colonel M. Clay would no doubt do full justice to the subject, and we ardently hope he may soon be in a situation to fulfil the hopes of his country in that regard.

The principal events of the capture of Major Gaines and his party are well known to our readers. These officers, with three companies of Kentucky and Arkansas Cavalry, were out on a scouting party. It was thought that there were small bodies of the enemy's cavalry prowling about the country, but no one had the slightest apprehension that a large force could be near General Wood's camp. Major Gaines having joined Maj. Barland at a Rancho near Encarnacion, the two commands went into quarters for the night, after posting sentinels some distance in advance and on the top of the house in which they were encamped. That night

the officers, who, tired by a very long march, had laid down to sleep, were several times aroused by the alarms of the sentinel, who declared that he saw an armed Mexican approaching the Rancho. But the sentinels on the top of the house declared they could see nothing, and the man who gave the alarm was treated as a raving maniac and dreaming individual. The officers thereupon retired again to their blankets, but had scarcely fallen asleep when they were aroused by another alarm from the sentinel, who declared that he had again seen an armed Mexican, and had pulled trigger on him, but his gun being wet, the cap did not explode. Other alarms were also given by other sentinels picked some distance from the Rancho. The night was now passing fast. It was very dark and misty. The officers bestirred themselves, and, arousing the men, prepared to meet an attack, thinking that the enemy consisted of a force of four or five hundred, which Major Gaines had already been in pursuit of, and which he considered about equal to his own.

Our men were all collected on the top of the Rancho, with their guns ready for action, full of courage and zeal, and warily desirous of a handsome brush with the enemy. The moral broke slowly. They hung heavily around them, and although they could hear very plainly the approach of horsemen, they could see nothing. At last the light began to break through the mist, immediately in their front, and the faint outline of a strong body of armed horsemen was perceptible at the distance. And as the mist rolled and gathered up into huge clouds, and gently ascended towards the neighboring heights, it revealed, with most painful distinctness, a whole Regiment of splendidly equipped Mexican Lancers drawn up in line of battle, and occupying a commanding position within three hundred yards of the Rancho occupied by Major Gaines's party.

Unhappily surveying and counting the strong force before them, our men prepared for action, crying out "Oh there are only six hundred!—it's a fair fight and we'll see it out!" But, stop! Look on the right as the mist leaves that side of the Rancho, there is another regiment just as strong as that in front.

"Well," cried a stalwart Kentuckian, who kept all the while a bright eye on his long rifle, "this is coming it rather strong the thing looks serious, most decidedly; but I reckon, we can lick a thousand Greasers, and throw in two hundred for good measure." "Can't we," was the unanimous cry of the party.

"But, oh cracker," cried the tall sergeant, "there's more of the varmints." And there sure enough on their left was another regiment about six hundred strong, whose bright helmets, flaming pennons and showy uniforms, flashed out conspicuously in the dark horizon. And there too, just a few hundred yards in their rear, was still another regiment. Thus was this small party of seventy-three Americans entirely surrounded by a Mexican force of about three thousand cavalry, the finest in the country and commanded by one of their best officers.

Undismayed, our men prepared for action, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Never did men go more calmly and easily to work than this little Spartan band, as with many a careless jest and with the most imperturbable sang froid, they reloaded and recapped their rifles, looked to their cartridges, boxes, led the edge of their bowie knives, and glanced a proud defiance at their legion foe.

In the mean time the enemy preserved the most perfect military order, and presented a display of martial magnificence, such as our men had never before witnessed. Their officers covered with gold, and splendidly mounted and caparisoned, rode in front, whilst their bugles blew the Mexican charge, and made the hills around resound with their loud and echoing blasts.

Major Gaines ordered his bugler to respond to their cheering flourish, by blowing with all his might, the American charge, and directed the men to follow up the blast with three loud cheers. The order was cheerfully and heartily obeyed. The Mexicans, who were advancing upon the Rancho, were so awed by the loud yells and terrific huzzas of our boys, that they halted, and looked at our little band in mute terror and astonishment that so small a party could make such a tremendous noise. "Give them three more," cried out Capt. Cassius M. Clay, and the huzzas were prolonged to the full complement until they made the welkin ring for miles around, and so frightened the Mexicans that their general, to prevent his men from running away, had to order his line brass band to strike up the Polka, and to wheel his men into column and put them on the march. In open order and with military precision the Mexicans marched around the Rancho to the line of the Casoverinos, and seemed, like the cat with its little victim, to be sporting with their captive before they destroyed him.

An officer with an interpreter and white flag, was sent to Major Gaines to demand his unconditional surrender. "Never," replied this gallant American. "Then no quarter will be given," remarked the Mexican. "Very well," exclaimed Captain Clay, "remember the Alamo; before we surrender on such terms, more than five hundred of your yellow-bellied scoundrels shall be left to bleach on yonder plains." This remark, the interpreter did a think he could do full justice to in the translation, and he left the officer to guess at its meaning, which however was no difficult task, as the Captain accompanied his declaration

with very emphatic and impressive gesticulation. It was finally agreed that Major Gaines should have an interview with Gen. Minon. From him the Major received very courteous treatment, and was assured that in surrendering himself and his party they would be treated with all the consideration of prisoners of war.

Major Gaines, on communicating the result of his interview with Gen. Minon to his officers, took a vote whether they should fight or surrender, and Capt. Clay and Danby and Lieut. Davison were for fighting, and Major Gaines and Barland were for surrendering. What they were parading with the Mexicans, Major Gaines observed that their men were approaching near to the Rancho. He immediately ordered his men to fire on the Mexicans if they approached a foot nearer, and told his officers he should not continue the party until their men fell back to their original position, which they did in very quick order when a few rifles were levelled in their direction. They finally, Capt. Clay going to Major Gaines and Barland, agreed to surrender, on the most honorable terms as prisoners of war, the officers to retain their private property and side arms. They delayed the surrender, however, as long as possible, with the expectation of being reinforced from Gen. Wood's camp. It was an express condition in the capitulation that the Mexican guide, who had been forced by Major Gaines to act in that capacity, should have a trial, and if he was acquitted, should be released. The Mexicans at first objected to this, but Capt. Clay said he would fire the word to surrender, and the unfortunate guide without assurances of his safety. As soon as he was surrendered, the faithful Mexican immediately fled the poor fellow. The prisoners were then marched, without any load of water, for thirty or forty miles on the road to San Luis, under an escort of thirty soldiers. Major Gaines having been allowed to ride, selected a blooded mare belonging to Sergeant Payne.

Sergeant Henry, whose name is familiar to all who have read the stirring history of Texas warfare and adventure, and who accompanied Major Gaines as an interpreter, had rendered himself extremely useful on the occasion of their capture by his coolness, sagacity, and knowledge of the Mexican language and character. Capt. Henry was very anxious for a fight, and strongly dissuaded Major Gaines from surrendering. He told the men to count their bullets, and if they had one for every two Mexicans it was a fair game and he would go it. He also cautioned them to hit the Mexicans below the waist, that they might frighten the others by their possible, and to give them as much misery as possible. One of the Mexican officers, recognizing him, cried out in Spanish, "I shall have the pleasure of your company to the city of Mexico, Capt. Henry." "Excuse me, señor, I generally choose my own company," replied the cool and comely Captain.

It was the second day after their capture, and near the town of Salado, famous in Mexican history as the place of the decimation of the Mer prisoners, that Major Gaines' high-spirited mare showing considerable restlessness, he requested Capt. Henry, who is a famous rider of the Jack Horse school, to "mount her and take off the wind-sail of her spirit." The captain did so, and riding up to Capt. Clay, carelessly remarked, "Clay, I am going to make a bar." The Mexican commandant, half suspecting his designs, placed additional forces at the head and rear of the column of lancers within which the prisoners were placed, and rode himself by the side of Henry, who would pace up and down the line, cracking jokes with the boys, and firing up the spirit of the mare by various ingenious manoeuvres. At last, Henry, seeing a favorable opportunity, plunged his spurs deep into the sides of the noble blood, and rushing against and knocking down three or four of the mustangs with their lances, started off in full view of the whole party, at a rate of speed equal to the best time that Boston or Fashion ever made. After him rushed a dozen well mounted lancers, who firing their escopetas at him, started off in close pursuit. But it was no race at all—the Kentucky blood was too much for the mustang. The lancers were soon distanced, and the last view they got of Henry, he was riding up a steep mountain, waving his white handkerchief, and crying out in a voice which echoed afar off through the valley, "Adios, señores—adios, señores!"

Our readers may fancy the intense excitement which this scene produced among the prisoners, and will, no doubt, excuse them for so forgetting their situation as to give three loud cheers as they saw the gallant Henry leaving his pursuers far behind, and safely placed beyond their reach. The subsequent adventures and sufferings of Henry are well known to our readers. After many narrow escapes from the enemy, and starvation, and after losing his noble mare, Henry arrived safely in our camp, and gave the first authentic intelligence of the capture of Major Gaines and his party.

After the escape of Henry, the prisoners were closely guarded, and proceeded on their journey to San Luis. They had an easy fare before they met Gen. Santa Anna on his way to Agua Nueva, to attack Gen. Taylor. The General was in a large and showy carriage drawn by six beautiful mules, and escorted by a battalion of lancers most splendidly uniformed and mounted. As the prisoners passed,

his carriage was stopped, the horses drew up, and at the request of Santa Anna, Major Gaines was introduced to him. The wily Mexican was all smiles and courtly grace. He expressed his regret to find the Major and his party in their unfortunate situation, but promised them the most kindly treatment, and hoped that they would soon be exchanged, and would be able to rejoin their friends. The manners of the Mexican general were certainly very fine and prepossessing, but the prisoners would have been better satisfied with some more substantial proof of his kindly disposition. The contrast between the prisoners and the magnificent retinue of Santa Anna, formed a picture which would have taxed the highest powers of a Marlin or a David. Two ill-dressed, ragged, unarmored prisoners, with their stalwart frames and bald and manly countenances, without shoes or hats, and motley without coats, stood with erect and unflinching front before the array of the elegantly accoutred and well armed hussars, mounted on choice steeds with their long spears and heavy sabres. Indeed there was not one of those proud but unfortunate representatives of the Anglo-American race who would not have given all his prospects in life to have had one chance with his unerring rifle and deadly bowie knife against the serried ranks of those belted and be-whiskered hussars. But this interview was soon terminated, and Santa Anna and his retinue resumed their journey, and proceeded onward with great rapidity.

The prisoners passed for several days large bodies of Mexican soldiers, who seemed to be pushing on towards the Sierra Madre with great rapidity. They were in a fine condition, well equipped and supplied with all the necessary supplies. As they passed the prisoners, many of the soldiers would inspect them by gesture, indicating that their throats were to be cut, or that they were to be hung up. The only reply our boys made to these cowardly movements of the right thumb applied to the apex of their nasal appendage, and a hint that Old Zerk would give them a dose which would make them lope on the other side of their faces. At night the prisoners were encamped with some of the divisions of the Mexican army, and from the soldiers they learned what were Santa Anna's designs. He had intercepted, they said, letters of Gen. Scott, showing that Gen. Taylor's army was reduced to a few thousand ill-disciplined troops, and that the whole valley of the Rio Grande was without an adequate force to protect it. Santa Anna had determined to push on, annihilate Taylor, recapture Saltillo, Monterey, Camargo, and the whole valley of the Rio Grande, possess himself of the immense supplies of our army, then push on to Corpus Christi, and thence proceed to the valley of the Mississippi and lay waste that whole vast country. Certainly this design was worthy of the Napoleon of the West. It was very wrong in Old Zerk to interfere with such a magnificent scheme. He should have allowed the Mexicans to come over here, when we could have caught them all alive and put them to some more useful and profitable undertaking than fighting Americans. Clearing our swamps would be a much easier and more beneficial employment for Mexicans than fighting such battles as those of Buena Vista and Cerro Gordo.

Such however were the confident expectations of the Mexicans, of the officers, even those of intelligence and information as well as of the common soldiers. No wonder with such hopes that they marched so rapidly, and bore so patiently the many trials and sufferings to which they were subjected in this unparalleled march. In the rear of the Mexican army, the prisoners met Capt. Riley, with his company of soldiers from the American army. He had already eighty or ninety men, who constituted the main artillery force of the army, and he was picking up more every day. He made a great effort to persuade some of the prisoners to join him, promising them as much land and money as they wanted, and declaring that it was impossible for Gen. Taylor to resist Santa Anna's army, which was thirty thousand strong, and that the whole spot of the valley of the Rio Grande would be divided among the troops. It is unnecessary to say that the traitor's proposals were received by our volunteers with scorn and contempt. The prisoners were much gratified to hear sometime afterwards in the Carcel San Jago, that Captain Riley's company was cut all to pieces and but twenty ever returned to the city of Mexico. This twenty, together with other American deserters, who had escaped from our army at Tampico, and Vera Cruz, behaved so disorderly and ungrateful in their habits that they were ordered out of the city, and on their way, were attacked by a large Mexican force and all put to the sword.

On the first of March the prisoners arrived within nine miles of the city of Mexico, when the Colonel in command of the guard received orders to retain them at the place where he then was until the revolution, which was then raging in the city, had abated. But the revolution continuing longer than was expected, the prisoners were marched into the city on the night of the 5th March, and were lodged in the secure prison fortress of San Jago. Here they found themselves in the society of all the principal malefactors and convicts of Mexico, and a more rascally, filthy and villainous set were never before congregated. Their impertinent and disgusting behavior soon rendered it necessary that our

boys should give them a little discipline. Several of them were well flogged; by the Americans, and quite a league sprung up in consequence, which, reaching the ears of the good natured, pot-bellied old Governor, he came down one morning after one of the rows between the convicts and the Americans, and proceeded very deliberately, with many grunts, much perspiration, and a face full of wisdom and sagacity, to draw a chalk line across the floor of the prison, assigning the Americans one side and the convicts the other. And as he completed his sage and ingenious scheme for preserving the peace, the jolly old fellow chuckled very heartily over his wisdom, and left the prison with a very contented and self-satisfied air.

The revolution in the city still continued. There was a most terrific din of cannon and small arms, drums beating, bugles blowing, cavalry charging, &c. The prisoners thought, from the commotion apparent among the people, and from the immense consumption of gunpowder that seemed to be going on, that a very fierce and destructive battle was raging in the city. Great was their astonishment to hear from an Englishman, who visited them that it was all sound and fury, signifying nothing; that the revolutionary parties kept two or three miles apart, and fired their guns at random down the streets. No persons were injured but those who had gone to pass along the streets. The little boys would watch the cannon brigades they went booming along on the streets, and when they were spent, and began to roll slowly, would run and pick them up and set them to the opposite party.

For fifteen days did this fierce revolutionary rage in the city. The parties would rise early in the morning and while it was cool and pleasant would fire away at each other, very comfortably retiring for their coffee and lunch. In the heat of the day they would suspend operations altogether, but at dark they would begin the battle with great ferocity, and fight the whole night long.

Proposals were made by both of the parties to our prisoners to release them if they would fight on their side. The Mexicans had heard of the skill of our riflemen, and they believed that it was only necessary for the prisoners to join either party, to secure its success in the strife then going on in the city. But our boys preferred looking on, like the old woman in the fight between her husband and the bear, and earning a copper which whistled.

In the midst of the revolution the first news of the battle of Buena Vista reached the city. There was a great congregate of bells, and much rejoicing on account of the joyful tidings. Bad news travel fast, and the prisoners were soon informed by Mexicans of the total rout and capture of Gen. Taylor's whole army, the death of Gen. Butler, and several of our most distinguished officers. Although but little disposed to rely on Mexican stories, there was such an air of probability about this report that the prisoners were forced to give it some credence, and were overwhelmed with grief and mortification by the disastrous result. But soon other stories were circulated, conflicting statements were given, all tending to throw doubt upon the story of Santa Anna's splendid triumph. At last the hurried despatch of the Mexican General was received, and the notes of rejoicing in the city subsided most perceptibly. A copy of this despatch was thrown down by means of a twine string, from the room where the officers were confined to the main court yard, where the men were and was eagerly and joyously perused by them. It was evident that Gen. Santa Anna had sustained a decided repulse, and the prisoners could not restrain their expectations, but gave it about in three loud cheers, which startled the inmates of the prison, and brought the Governor down upon them, in the greatest terror and perturbation.

On the next day, however, the spirits of the Mexicans were somewhat restored by the arrival of the trophies of the battle of Buena Vista. The three title emblems of Lt. O'Brien, one of which, by the bye, had been captured from the Mexicans by the Texans, and the colors of the Indiana regiment, together with a few markers were brought into the city in a triumphal car, and were received with great parade by the people.

The whole story, however, of the bloody fight of Buena Vista was soon as familiar to the prisoners as a "rice cold tale." Their only regret was their unfortunate exclusion from the honors and laurels of that glorious victory. The party of Major Gaines and Barland had been joined by that of Capt. Brady, and also by the party of Lieutenant Barbour and Quartermaster Smith, who were taken by Urrea, between Monterey and Camargo, making the whole number of the American prisoners in the Carcel one hundred and seventy.

Although the men suffered considerably from the want of exercise and bad diet, their health was generally good, and but one man died of their whole number since they were captured. After they had been in prison three months, the prisoners were told that they had been exchanged and would be sent to Tampico. Their officers however, were not allowed to see them, but they were told they would join them in a few days.

On the 5th of June, the men were supplied with shoes, and in the night they were marched out of their gloomy prison, and through the gates of the city. They were then put in charge of a colonel and twenty lancers, and proceeded on their journey towards Tampico. The country

through which they passed for four or five days was most beautiful and highly cultivated. The dark foliage of the evergreens, the luscious fruit, the opening crops, the springs of cool water, gushing from the mountain side, the myriads of richly colored and variegated birds, the delightful variety of mountains and valleys rendered the journey of the long imprisoned Americans one of great interest and pleasure.

They were well treated by the officer who conducted them, and generally by the people of the towns through which they passed. There are, however, some exceptions to this remark. At the large mining town at Rio del Monte, the people assaulted the prisoners with stones, and would have murdered them, if the English residents had not interfered and protected them. For this generous and humane conduct of the English, the prisoners express their great gratitude and thankfulness. After a long journey of two hundred miles, the prisoners arrived at the town of Huajuquila, where they were received very kindly by Gen. Garay, and were allowed 25 cents a day for their support. This money was raised by a forced contribution from the people. General Garay, however, did not consider that he was authorized to send them on to Tampico with such a guard as he had under his command. He was apprehensive that the people near Tampico were so enraged against the Americans, that they would attack them, and if they were, and being a man of honor, he did not wish to be connected with such a disgraceful deed. He therefore dismissed the prisoners some weeks, but getting restless and impatient, several of them escaped out of the town and proceeded on their way to Tampico. The five who arrived here at the Home, got sick and passed into Tampico. Four others, who escaped in the night, were retaken and carried back to Huajuquila. One of the same party, and two others of another party, also arrived at Tampico. The five who are now in our city, started from Huajuquila in the night, armed with their jack-knives and one case knife among the five. They had to travel chiefly at night, and avoided all the towns and ranches. On one occasion, however, in attempting to go around a town of some size, they took up a ravine, and suddenly found themselves in the very centre of it. They assumed, however, a very easy and indifferent carriage, and passed by the Guard house where there were several soldiers lounging about. The soldier on guard cried out "who goes there?" in Spanish, but the men carelessly answering "amigos, amigos," kept on their course and got safely out of the town.

After many trials and sufferings, the prisoners at last arrived within sight of Tampico. The ecstatic joy which filled their hearts, as they saw the noble banner of our Union, with its broad stripes and bright stars, waving from the lofty flag staff of Tampico, can be better imagined than described.

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