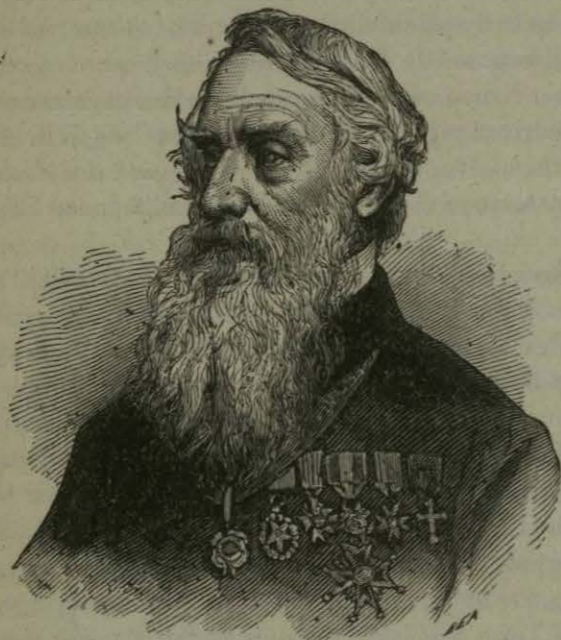


area of two hundred and thirty-seven thousand square miles—a domain more than five times as large as the State of Pennsylvania. It was like annexing an empire. The proposition to admit Texas into the Union was the great question on which the people divided in



PROFESSOR MORSE.

the presidential election of 1844. The annexation was favored by the Democrats and opposed by the Whigs. The parties were equally matched in strength; and the contest surpassed in excitement anything which had been known in American politics. James K. Polk of Tennessee was put forward as the Democratic candidate, while the Whigs chose their favorite leader, Henry Clay. The former was elected, and the hope of the latter to reach the presidency was forever eclipsed. For Vice-President, George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania was chosen.

The convention by which Mr. Polk was nominated was held at Baltimore. On the 29th of May, 1844, the news of the nomination was sent to Washington by THE MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH. It was the first despatch ever so transmitted; and the event marks an era in the history of civilization. The inventor of the telegraph, which has proved so great a blessing to mankind, was Professor Samuel F. B. Morse of Massachusetts. The magnetic principle on which the invention depends had been known since 1774; but Professor Morse was the first to apply that principle for the benefit of men. He began his experiments in 1832: and five years afterward succeeded in obtaining a patent on his invention. Then followed another long delay; and it was not until the last day of the session in 1843 that he procured from Congress an appropriation of thirty thousand dollars. With that appropriation was constructed between Baltimore and Wash-

ington the first telegraphic line in the world. Perhaps no other invention has exercised a more beneficent influence on the welfare and happiness of the human race.

When Congress convened in December of 1844, the proposition to admit Texas into the Union was formally brought forward. During the winter the question was frequently debated; and on the 1st of March—only three days before Tyler's retirement from the presidency—the bill of annexation was adopted. The President immediately gave his assent; and the LONE STAR took its place in the constellation of the States. On the day before the inauguration of Mr. Polk bills for the admission of Florida and Iowa were also signed; but the latter State—the twenty-ninth member of the American Union—was not formally admitted until the following year.

## CHAPTER LVII.

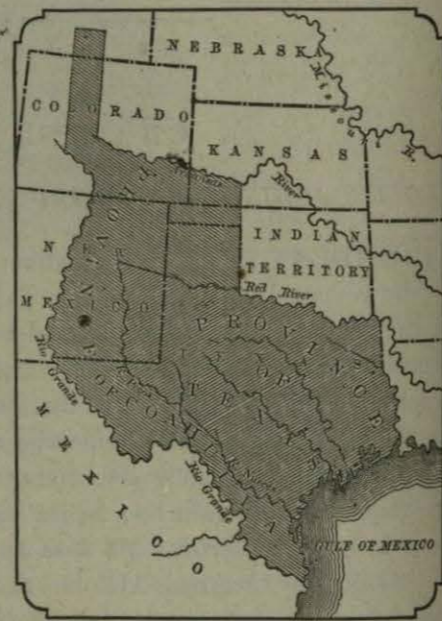
## POLK'S ADMINISTRATION, AND THE MEXICAN WAR, 1845-1849.

PRESIDENT POLK was a native of North Carolina. In boyhood he removed with his father to Tennessee; entered the legislature of the State; and was then elected to Congress, where he served as member or speaker for fourteen years. In 1839 he was chosen governor of Tennessee, and from that position was called, at the early age of forty-nine, to the presidential chair. At the head of the new cabinet was placed James Buchanan of Pennsylvania. It was an office requiring high abilities; for the threatening question with Mexico came at once to a crisis. As soon as the resolution to annex Texas was adopted by Congress, Almonte, the Mexican minister at Washington, demanded his passports and left the country.

On the 4th of July, 1845, the Texan legislature ratified the act of annexation; and the union was completed. Knowing the warlike determination of Mexico, the authorities of Texas sent an immediate and urgent request to the President to despatch an army for their protection. Accordingly, General Zachary Taylor was ordered to march from Camp Jessup, in Western Louisiana, and occupy Texas. The real question at issue between that State and Mexico was concerning boundaries. The foundation of the difficulty had been laid as early as

the Mexican revolution of 1821. By that event Mexico had achieved her independence of Spain, and in reërranging her civil administration had united Coahuila and Texas—the two frontier States east of the Rio Grande—under one provincial government. Such was the condition of affairs at the time of the Texan rebellion of 1836. Texas, being successful in her struggle with Mexico, naturally claimed that her own independence carried with it the independence of Coahuila, and that, therefore, the territory of the latter province became an integral part of the new Texan republic. This theory the joint legislature of Texas and Coahuila made haste to put into statutory form by a resolution of December 19th, 1836. Mexico, however, insisted that Texas only, and not Coahuila, had revolted against her authority, and that, therefore, the latter province, was still rightfully a part of the Mexican dominions. Thus it came to pass that Texas—now a State in the American Union—claimed the Rio Grande as her western limit, while Mexico was determined to have the Nueces as the separating line. The territory between the two rivers was in dispute. The government of the United States made a proposal to settle the controversy by negotiation, but the authorities of Mexico scornfully refused. This refusal was construed by the Americans as a virtual acknowledgment that the Mexicans were in the wrong, and that the Rio Grande might justly be claimed as the boundary. Instructions were accordingly sent to General Taylor to advance his army as near to that river as circumstances would warrant. Under these orders he moved forward to Corpus Christi, at the mouth of the Nueces, established a camp, and by the beginning of November, 1845, had concentrated a force of between four and five thousand men.

In the following January General Taylor was ordered to advance to the Rio Grande. It was known that the Mexican government had resolved not to receive the American ambassador sent thither to ne-



TEXAS AND COAHUILA, 1845.

gotiate a settlement. It had also transpired that an army of Mexicans was gathering in the northern part of the country for the invasion of Texas, or, at any rate, for the occupation of the disputed territory. On the 8th of March the American army began the advance from Corpus Christi to Point Isabel, on the gulf. At that place General Taylor established a dépôt of supplies, and then pressed forward to the Rio Grande. Arriving at the river a few miles above the mouth, he took his station opposite Matamoras and hastily erected a fortress, afterward named Fort Brown.



SCENE OF TAYLOR'S CAMPAIGN, 1846-47.

On the 26th of April, General Arista, who had arrived at Matamoras on the previous day and assumed command of the Mexican forces on the frontier, notified General Taylor that hostilities had begun. On the same day a company of American dragoons, commanded by Captain Thornton, was attacked by a body of Mexicans, east of the Rio Grande, and after losing sixteen men in killed and wounded, was obliged to surrender. This was the first bloodshed of the war. At the same time large bodies of Mexicans—marauders, infantry, and cavalry—crossed the Rio Grande below Fort Brown and threatened the American lines of communication. General Taylor, alarmed lest the Mexicans should make a circuit and capture the stores at Point Isabel, hastened to that place and strengthened the defences. The fort opposite Matamoras was left under the command of Major Brown with a garrison of three hundred men. The withdrawal of the American general with the greater part of his forces was witnessed by the Mexicans in Matamoras, who, mistaking the movement for a retreat inspired by fear, were in great jubilation. *The Republican Monitor*, a Mexican newspaper of Matamoras, published on the following day a flaming editorial, declaring that the cowardly invaders of Mexico had fled like a gang of poltroons to the sea-coast and were using every exertion to get out of the country before the thunderbolt of Mexican vengeance should smite them. Arista himself was confident that the Americans, becoming alarmed at their exposed position, had shrunk from the conflict and that it was only necessary for him to bombard Fort Brown in order to end the war.

As soon as his supplies at Point Isabel were deemed secure, General Taylor set out with a provision-train and an army of more than two thousand men to return to Fort Brown. Meanwhile, the Mexicans to the number of six thousand had crossed the Rio Grande

and taken a strong position at Palo Alto, directly in Taylor's route. At noon on the 8th of May the Americans came in sight and immediately joined battle. After a severe engagement of five hours' duration the Mexicans were driven from the field, with the loss of a hundred men. The American artillery was served with signal effect; while the fighting of the enemy was clumsy and ineffectual. Only four Americans were killed and forty wounded; but among the former was the gallant and much-lamented Major Ringgold of the artillery.

On the following day General Taylor resumed his march in the direction of Fort Brown. When within three miles of that place, he again came upon the Mexicans, who had rallied in full force to dispute his advance. They had selected for their second battle-field a place called Resaca de la Palma. Here an old river-bed, dry and overgrown with cactus, crossed the road leading to the fort. The enemy's artillery was well posted and better served than on the previous day. The American lines were severely galled until the brave Captain May with his regiment of dragoons charged through a storm of grape-shot, rode over the Mexican batteries, sabred the gunners, and captured La Vega, the commanding general. The Mexicans, abandoning their guns and flinging away their accoutrements, fled in a general rout. Before nightfall they had put the Rio Grande between themselves and the invincible Americans. On reaching Fort Brown, General Taylor found that during his absence the place had been constantly bombarded by the guns of Matamoras. But a brave defence had been made, which cost, with other losses and suffering, the life of Major Brown, the commandant. Such was the beginning of a war in which Mexico experienced a long list of humiliating defeats.

When the news of the battles on the Rio Grande was borne through the Union, the war spirit was everywhere aroused. Party dissensions were hushed into silence. The President, in a message to Congress, notified that body that the lawless soldiery of Mexico had shed the blood of American citizens on American soil. On the 11th of May, 1846, Congress promptly responded with a declaration that war already existed by the act of the Mexican government. The President was authorized to accept the services of fifty thousand volunteers, and ten million dollars were placed at his disposal. War meetings were held in all parts of the country, and within a few weeks nearly three hundred thousand men rushed forward to enter the ranks. A grand invasion of Mexico was planned by General Scott. The American forces were organized in three divisions: THE ARMY OF THE WEST, under General Kearney, to cross the Rocky Mountains and conquer the northern Mexican provinces;

THE ARMY OF THE CENTRE, under General Scott as commander-in-chief, to march from the gulf coast into the heart of the enemy's country THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION, commanded by General Taylor, to subdue and hold the districts on the Rio Grande.

The work of mustering the American troops was entrusted to General Wool. By the middle of summer he succeeded in despatching to General Taylor a force of nine thousand men. He then established his camp at San Antonio, Texas, and from that point prepared the gathering recruits for the field. Meanwhile, Taylor had resumed active operations on the Rio Grande. Ten days after the battle of Resaca de la Palma he crossed from Fort Brown and captured Matamoras. Soon afterward he began his march up the right bank of the river and into the interior. The Mexicans, grown wary of their antagonist, fell back and took post at the fortified town of Monterey. To capture that place was the next object of the campaign; but the American army was feeble in numbers, and General Taylor was obliged to tarry near the Rio Grande until the latter part of August. By that time reinforcements had arrived, increasing his numbers to six thousand six hundred. With this force the march against Monterey was begun; and on the 19th of September the town, defended by fully ten thousand troops, under command of Ampudia, was reached and invested.

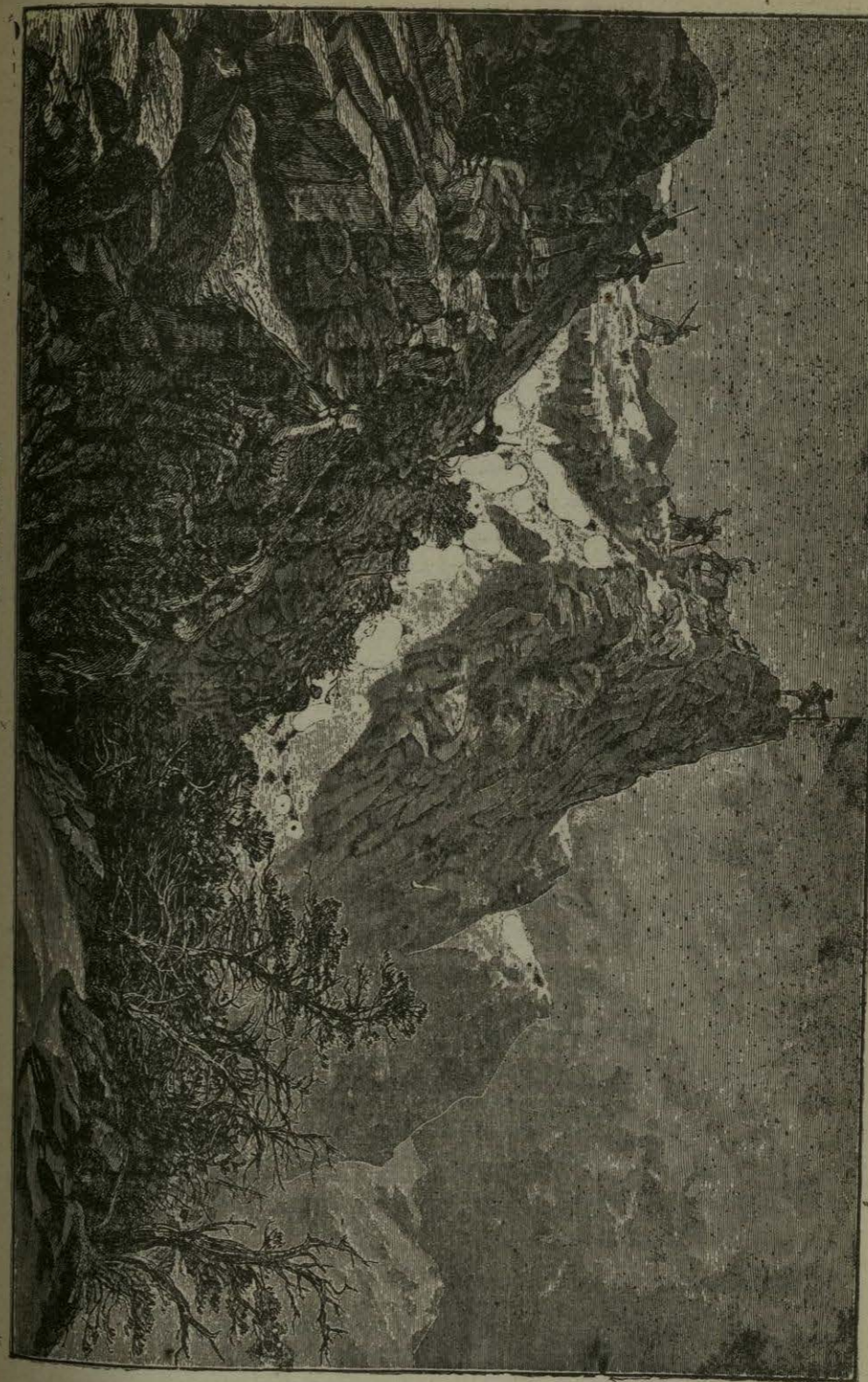
The siege was pressed with great vigor. On the 21st of the month several assaults were made, in which the Americans, led by General Worth, carried the fortified heights in the rear of the town. In that part of the defences only the bishop's palace—a strong building of stone—remained; and this was taken by storm on the following day. On the morning of the 23d the city was successfully assaulted in front by Generals Quitman and Butler. In the face of a tremendous cannonade and an incessant tempest of musket-balls discharged from the house-tops and alleys, the American storming-parties charged resistlessly into the town. They reached the Grand Plaza, or public square. They hoisted the victorious flag of the Union. They turned upon the buildings where the Mexicans were concealed; broke open the doors; charged up dark stairways to the flat roofs of the houses; and drove the terrified enemy to an ignominious surrender. The honors of war were granted to Ampudia, who evacuated the city and retired toward the capital. The storming of Monterey was a signal victory, gained against great superiority of numbers and advantage of position.

After the capitulation General Taylor received notice that overtures of peace were about to be made by the Mexican government. He therefore agreed to an armistice of eight weeks, during which time neither party

should renew hostilities. In reality the Mexicans had no thought of peace. They employed the whole interval in warlike preparations. The famous general Santa Anna was called home from his exile at Havana to take the presidency of the country. In the course of the autumn a Mexican army of twenty thousand men was raised and sent into the field. In the mean time, the armistice had expired; and General Taylor, acting under orders of the War Department, again moved forward. On the 15th of November, the town of Saltillo, seventy miles south-west from Monterey, was captured by the American advance under General Worth. In the following month, Victoria, a city in the province of Tamaulipas, was taken by the command of General Patterson. To that place General Butler advanced from Monterey on the march against Tampico, on the river Panuco. At Victoria, however, he learned that Tampico had already capitulated to Captain Conner, commander of an American flotilla. Meanwhile, General Wool, advancing with strong reinforcements from San Antonio, entered Mexico, and took a position within supporting distance of Monterey. It was at this juncture that General Scott arrived and assumed the command of the American forces.

The Army of the West had not been idle. In June of 1846 General Kearney set out from Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri, for the conquest of New Mexico and California. After a long and wearisome march he reached Santa Fé, and on the 18th of August captured and garrisoned the city. The whole of New Mexico submitted without further resistance. With a body of four hundred dragoons Kearney then continued his march toward the Pacific coast. At the distance of three hundred miles from Santa Fé he was met by the famous Kit Carson, who brought intelligence from the far West that California had already been subdued. Kearney accordingly sent back three-fourths of his forces, and with a party of only a hundred men made his way to the Pacific. On that far-off coast stirring events had happened.

For four years Colonel John C. Fremont had been exploring the country west of the Rocky Mountains. He had hoisted the American flag on the highest peak of the great range, and then directed his route by Salt Lake to Oregon. Turning southward into California, he received despatches informing him of the impending war with Mexico. Determined to strike a blow for his country, he urged the people of California, many of whom were Americans, to declare their independence. The hardy frontiersmen of the Sacramento valley flocked to his standard; and a campaign was at once begun to overthrow the Mexican authority. In several petty engagements the Americans were victorious over greatly superior numbers. Meanwhile, Commodore Sloat, commanding an



FREMONT ON THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

American fleet, had captured the town of Monterey, on the coast, eighty miles south of San Francisco. A few days afterward Commodore Stockton took command of the Pacific squadron and made himself master of San Diego. Hearing of these events, Fremont raised the flag of the United States instead of the flag of California, and joined the naval commanders in a successful movement against Los Angeles, which was taken without opposition. Before the end of summer the whole of the vast province was subdued. In November General Kearney arrived with his company and joined Fremont and Stockton. About a month later the Mexicans rose in rebellion, but were defeated on the 8th of January, 1847, in the decisive battle of San Gabriel, by which the authority of the United States was completely established. A country large enough for an empire had been conquered by a handful of resolute men.

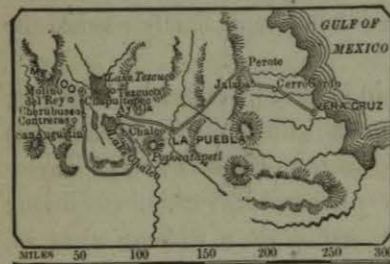
In the mean time, Colonel Doniphan, who had been left by Kearney in command of New Mexico, had made one of the most brilliant movements of the war. With a body of seven hundred fearless men he began a march through the enemy's country from Santa Fé to Saltillo, a distance of more than eight hundred miles. Reaching the Rio Grande on Christmas day, he fought and gained the battle of Bracito; then, crossing the river, captured El Paso, and in two months pressed his way to within twenty miles of Chihuahua. On the banks of Sacramento Creek he met the Mexicans in overwhelming numbers, and on the 28th of February completely routed them. He then marched unopposed into Chihuahua—a city of more than forty thousand inhabitants—and finally reached the division of General Wool in safety.

As soon as General Scott arrived in Mexico he ordered a large part of the Army of Occupation to join him on the gulf for the conquest of the capital. By the withdrawal of these troops from the divisions of Taylor and Wool these officers were left in a very exposed and critical condition; for Santa Anna was rapidly advancing against them with an army of twenty thousand men. To resist this tremendous array General Taylor was able to concentrate at Saltillo a force numbering not more than six thousand; and after putting sufficient garrisons in that town and Monterey, his effective forces amounted to but four thousand eight hundred. With this small but resolute army he marched boldly out to meet the Mexican host. A favorable battle-ground was chosen at Buena Vista, four miles south of Saltillo. Here Taylor posted his troops and awaited the enemy.

On the 22d of February the Mexicans, twenty thousand strong, came pouring through the gorges and over the hills from the direction of San Luis Potosi. Santa Anna demanded a surrender, and was met with

defiance. On the morning of the 23d the battle began with an effort to out-flank the American position on the right; but the attempt was thwarted by the troops of Illinois. A heavy column was then thrown against the centre, only to be shattered and driven back by Captain Washington's artillery. The Mexicans next fell in great force upon the American left flank, where the second regiment of Indianians, acting under a mistaken order, gave way, putting the army in great peril. But the troops of Mississippi and Kentucky were rallied to the breach; the men of Illinois and Indiana came bravely to the support; and again the enemy was hurled back. In the crisis of the battle the Mexicans made a furious and final charge upon Captain Bragg's battery; but the gunners stood at their posts undaunted, and the columns of lancers were scattered with terrible volleys of grape-shot. A charge of American cavalry, though made at the sacrifice of many lives, added to the discomfiture of the foe. Against tremendous odds the field was fairly won. On the night after the battle the Mexicans, having lost nearly two thousand men, made a precipitate retreat. The American loss was also severe, amounting, in killed, wounded and missing, to seven hundred and forty-six. This was the last of General Taylor's battles. He soon afterward returned to the United States, where he was received with great enthusiasm.

On the 9th of March, 1847, General Scott began the last campaign of the war. With a force of twelve thousand men he landed to the south



SCENE OF SCOTT'S CAMPAIGN, 1847.

of Vera Cruz, and in three days the investment of the city was completed. Trenches were opened at the distance of eight hundred yards; and on the morning of the 22d the cannonade was begun. On the water side Vera Cruz was defended by the celebrated castle of San Juan d'Ulloa, erected by Spain in the early part of the seventeenth century, at the cost of four million dollars. For four days an incessant storm of shot and shell from the fleet of Commodore Conner and the land-batteries of Scott was poured upon the doomed castle and town. Life and property were swept into a common ruin. An assault was already planned, when the humbled authorities of the city proposed capitulation. On the night of the 27th terms of surrender were signed, and two days afterward the American flag floated over Vera Cruz.

The route from the gulf to the capital was now open. On the 8th of April General Twiggs, in command of the American advance, set out

on the road to Jalapa. The main division, led by General Scott in person, followed immediately. For several days there was no serious opposition; but on the 12th of the month Twiggs came upon Santa Anna, who, with an army of fifteen thousand men, had taken possession of the heights and rocky pass of Cerro Gordo. The position, though seemingly impregnable, must be carried, or further advance was impossible. On the morning of the 18th the American army was arranged for an assault which, according to all the rules of war, promised only disaster and ruin. But to the troops of the United States nothing now seemed too arduous, no deed too full of peril. Before noonday every position of the Mexicans had been successfully stormed and themselves driven into a precipitate rout. Nearly three thousand prisoners were taken, together with forty-three pieces of bronze artillery, five thousand muskets and accoutrements enough to supply an army. The American loss amounted to four hundred and thirty-one, that of the enemy to fully a thousand. Santa Anna escaped with his life, but left behind his private papers and *wooden leg*.

On the next day the victorious army entered Jalapa. On the 22d the strong castle of Perote, crowning a peak of the Cordilleras, was taken without resistance. Here another park of artillery and a vast amount of warlike stores fell into the hands of the Americans. Turning southward, General Scott next led his army against the ancient and sacred city of Puebla. Though inhabited by eighty thousand people, no defence was made or attempted. The handful of invaders marched unopposed through the gates, and on the 15th of May took up their quarters in the city. The American army was now reduced to five thousand men, and General Scott was obliged to pause until reinforcements could be brought forward from Vera Cruz. Negotiations were again opened in the hope of peace; but the Mexican authorities, stubborn and foolhardy as at the beginning, preferred to fight it out.

By the 7th of August General Scott had received reinforcements, swelling his numbers to nearly eleven thousand. Leaving a small garrison in Puebla, he again began his march upon the capital. The route now lay over the summit of the Cordilleras. At the passes of the mountains resistance had been expected; but the advance was unopposed, and the army swept through to look down on THE VALLEY OF MEXICO. Never before had the American soldiery beheld such a scene. Clear to the horizon stretched a most living landscape of green fields, villages and lakes—a picture too beautiful to be torn with the dread engineering of war.

The army pressed on to Ayotla, only fifteen miles from the capital. Thus far General Scott had followed the great national road from Vera Cruz to Mexico; but now, owing to the many fortifications and danger-

ous passes in front, it was deemed advisable to change the route. From Ayotla, therefore, the army wheeled to the south, around Lake Chalco, and thence westward to San Augustine. From this place it was but ten miles to the capital. The city could be approached only by causeways leading across marshes and the beds of bygone lakes. At the ends of these causeways were massive gates strongly defended. To the left of the line of march were the almost inaccessible positions of Contreras, San Antonio and Molino del Rey. Directly in front, beyond the marshes and closer to the city, were the powerful defences of Churubusco and Chapultepec, the latter a castle of great strength. These various positions were held by Santa Anna with a force of more than thirty thousand Mexicans. That General Scott, with an army not one-third as great in numbers, could take the city seemed an impossibility. But he was resolved to do it.

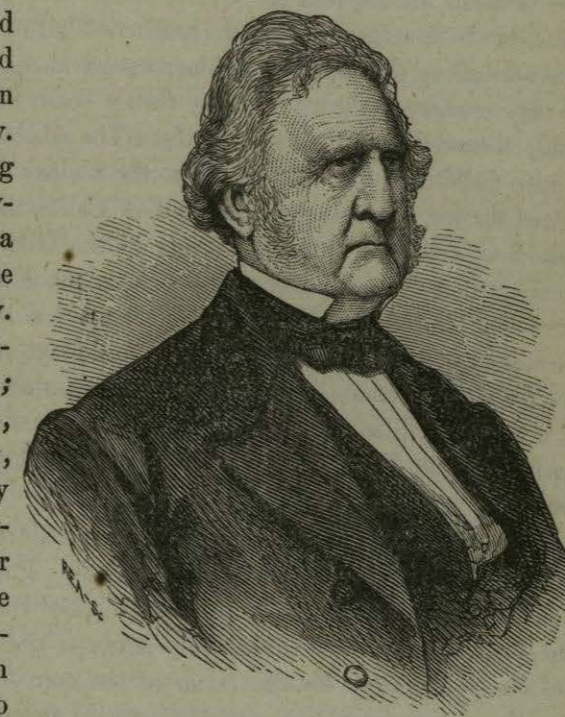
On the 19th of August the divisions of Generals Pillow and Twiggs were ordered to storm the Mexican position at Contreras. About nightfall the line of communications between that place and Santa Anna's reserves was cut, and in the darkness of the following midnight an assaulting column, led by General Persifer F. Smith, moved against the enemy's camp. The attack was made at sunrise, and in seventeen minutes six thousand Mexicans, commanded by General Valencia, were driven in utter rout from their fortifications. The American storming-party numbered less than four thousand. This was the *first* victory of that memorable 20th of August. A few hours afterward General Worth advanced against San Antonio, compelled an evacuation and routed the flying garrison. This was the *second* victory. Almost at the same time General Pillow led a column against one of the heights of Churubusco where the enemy had concentrated in great force. After a terrible assault the position was carried and the Mexicans scattered like chaff. This was the *third* triumph. The division of General Twiggs added a *fourth* victory by storming and holding another height of Churubusco, while the *fifth* and last was achieved by Generals Shields and Pierce, who defeated Santa Anna, coming to reinforce his garrisons. The whole Mexican army was hurled back upon the remaining fortification of Chapultepec.

On the morning after the battles the Mexican authorities sent out a proposition to negotiate. It was only a ruse to gain time, for the terms proposed by them were such as conquerors would have dictated to the vanquished. General Scott, who did not consider his army vanquished, rejected the proposals with scorn, rested his men until the 7th of September, and then renewed hostilities. On the next morning General Worth was ordered to take Molino del Rey and Casa de Mata, the western de-

tences of Chapultepec. These positions were held by fourteen thousand Mexicans; but the Americans, after losing a fourth of their number in the desperate onset, were again victorious. The guns were next brought to bear on Chapultepec itself, and on the 13th of the month that frowning citadel was carried by storm. Through the San Cosme and Belen gates the conquering army swept resistlessly, and at nightfall the soldiers of the Union were in the suburbs of Mexico.

In the darkness of that night Santa Anna and the officers of the government fled from the city; but not until they had turned loose two thousand convicts to fire upon the American army. On the following morning, before day-dawn, forth came a deputation from the city to beg for mercy. This time the messengers were in earnest; but General Scott, weary of trifling, turned them away with contempt. "Forward!" was the order that rang along the American lines at sunrise. The war-worn regiments swept into the beautiful streets of the famous city, and at seven o'clock the flag of the United States floated over the halls of the Montezumas. So ended one of the most brilliant campaigns known in modern history.

On leaving his conquered capital Santa Anna, with his usual treachery, turned about to attack the American hospitals at Puebla. Here about eighteen hundred sick men had been left in charge of Colonel Childs. For several days a gallant resistance was made by the feeble garrison, until General Laue, on his march to the capital, fell upon the besiegers and scattered them. It was the closing stroke of the war—a



GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT.

contest in which the Americans, few in number and in a far-distant, densely-peopled country, had gained every victory.

The military power of Mexico was now completely broken. Santa Anna was a fugitive. It only remained to determine the conditions of peace. In the winter of 1847-48 American ambassadors met the Mexican Congress, in session at Guadalupe Hidalgo, and on the 2d of February a treaty was concluded between the two nations. The compact was ratified by both governments, and on the 4th of the following July President Polk made a proclamation of peace. By the terms of settlement the boundary-line between Mexico and the United States was fixed as follows: The Rio Grande from its mouth to the southern limit of New Mexico; thence westward along the southern and northward along the western boundary of that territory to the river Gila; thence down that river to the Colorado; thence westward to the Pacific. The whole of New Mexico and Upper California was relinquished to the United States. Mexico guaranteed the free navigation of the Gulf of California, and the river Colorado from its mouth to the confluence of the Gila. In consideration of these territorial acquisitions and privileges the United States agreed to surrender all places held by military occupation in Mexico, to pay into the treasury of that country fifteen million dollars, and to assume all debts due from the Mexican government to American citizens, said debts not to exceed three million five hundred thousand dollars. Thus at last was the territory of the United States spread out in one broad belt from ocean to ocean.

In the mean time the troublesome and alarming question of THE OREGON BOUNDARY was finally disposed of. For more than a quarter of a century the territorial limit of the United States on the northwest had been a matter of controversy between the Federal government and Great Britain. By the terms of the convention of 1818 the international line had been carried westward from the northwestern extremity of the Lake of the Woods along the forty-ninth parallel to the crest of the Rocky Mountains; but from that point to the Pacific no agreement could be reached. As early as 1807, and again in 1818 and 1826, the United States had formally claimed the parallel of fifty-four degrees and forty minutes; but this boundary Great Britain refused to accept. By a convention, held in August of 1827, it was agreed by the representatives of the two powers that the territory lying between the forty-ninth parallel—which, according to the English theory, was the true international line—and the parallel of fifty-four degrees and forty minutes should remain open indefinitely and impartially for the joint occupancy of British and American citizens. By this action the

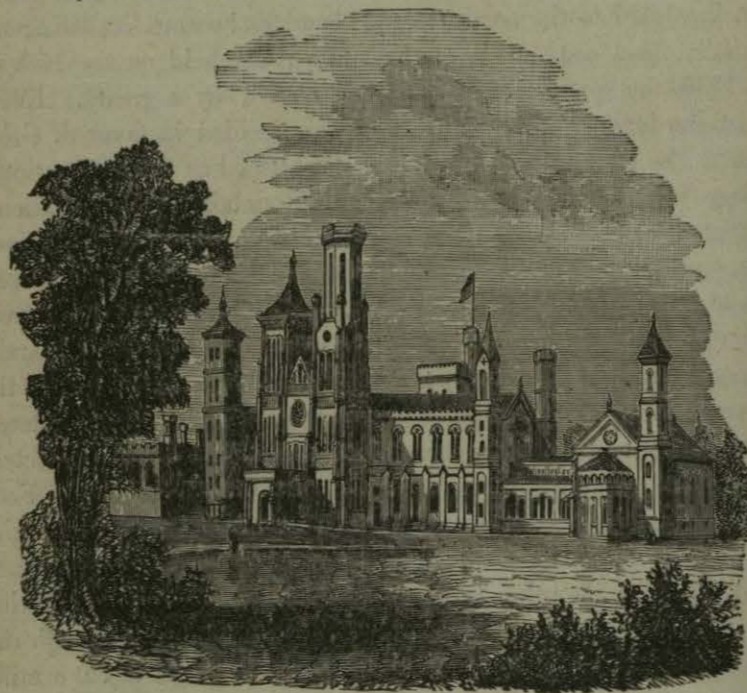
difficulty was postponed for sixteen years; but thoughtful statesmen of both nations became alarmed that a question of such magnitude should remain unsettled, and negotiations were renewed. In 1843 the minister resident of the United States in London again proposed the parallel of fifty-four degrees and forty minutes, but the proposition was rejected. In the next year the British ambassador at Washington again suggested the forty-ninth degree of latitude as the true boundary; but to this the government of the United States refused to accede. Then came the war with Mexico and with it the prospective extension of territory on the southwest. The views of the administration in regard to the northwestern boundary became less stringent; and finally, in a convention of the two powers held on the 15th of June, 1846, the question was definitely settled by a treaty. Every point of the long-standing controversy was decided in favor of Great Britain. The forty-ninth parallel was established as the international boundary from the summit of the Rocky Mountains to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island; thence southerly through the middle of said channel and of Fuca's Straits to the Pacific. Vancouver's Island itself was awarded to Great Britain; and the free navigation of the Columbia River was guaranteed to the Hudson Bay Company and other British subjects on the same conditions as those imposed on citizens of the United States. The treaty was by no means so favorable as might have been expected, and by many it was denounced as actually dishonorable to the Federal government. It is certain that better terms might have been demanded and obtained.\*

A few days after the signing of the treaty of peace with Mexico an event occurred in California which spread excitement through the civilized world. A laborer, employed by Captain Sutter to cut a mill-race on the American fork of the Sacramento River, discovered some pieces of gold in the sand where he was digging. With further search other particles were found. The news spread as if borne on the wind. From all quarters adventurers came flocking. Other explorations led to further revelations of the precious metal. For a while there seemed no end to the discoveries. Straggling gold-hunters sometimes picked up in a few hours the value of five hundred dollars. The intelligence went flying through the States to the Atlantic, and then to the ends

\*Such was the indignation of the opponents of this treaty—especially of the leaders of the Whig party—that the political battle-cry of "Fifty-four Forty or Fight!" became almost as popular a motto as "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights" had been in the War of 1812.



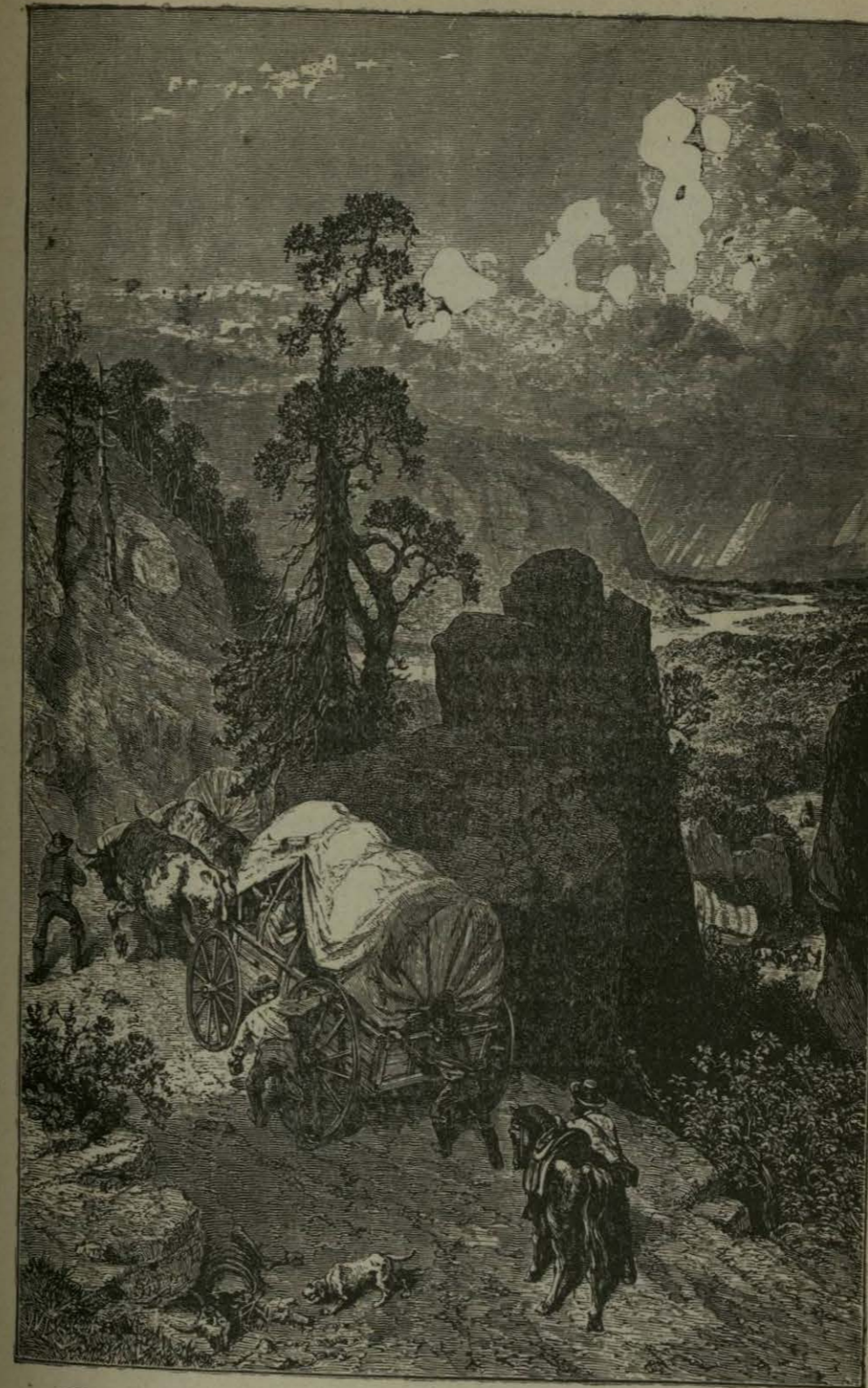
of the world. Men thousands of miles away were crazed with excitement. Workshops were shut up, business houses abandoned, fertile farms left tenantless, offices deserted. Though the overland routes to California were scarcely yet discovered, thousands of our eager adventurers started on the long, long journey. Before the end of 1850 San Francisco had grown from a miserable village of huts to a city of fifteen thousand inhabitants. By the close of 1852 the territory had a population of more than a quarter of a million. The importance of the gold mines of California, whose richness is not yet exhausted, can hardly be overestimated.



THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

In April of 1846, Congress passed an act organizing THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION at Washington City. Twenty-two years previously an eminent English chemist and philanthropist named James Smithson\* had died at Genoa, bequeathing on certain conditions a large sum of money to the United States. In the fall of 1838, by the death of Smithson's nephew, the proceeds of the estate, amounting to five hundred and fifteen thousand dollars, were secured by the

\* Until after his graduation at Oxford in 1786, this remarkable man was known by the name of *James Lewis Macie*. Afterward, of his own accord, he chose the name of his reputed father, Hugh Smithson, duke of Northumberland.



OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA, 1849. (Pass of the Sierras.)

agent of the national government and deposited in the mint. It had been provided in the will that the bequest should be used for the establishment at Washington of an institution *for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men*. To carry out the great design of the testator a plan of organization, prepared by John Quincy Adams, was laid before Congress and after some modifications adopted.

In the act of establishment it was provided that the institution contemplated by Mr. Smithson should be named in his honor "The Smithsonian Institution"; that the same should be under the immediate control of a Board of Regents composed of the President, Vice-President, judges of the Supreme Court, and other principal officers of the government; that the entire Smithsonian fund, amounting with accrued interest to six hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars, should be loaned forever to the United States at six per cent.; that out of the proceeds, together with congressional appropriations and private gifts, buildings should be provided suitable to contain a museum of natural history, a cabinet of minerals, a chemical laboratory, a gallery of art, and a library. Professor Joseph Henry of Princeton College was chosen secretary of the institution, and the plan of organization was speedily and successfully carried out. The result has been the establishment in the United States of one of the most beneficent institutions known in the history of mankind. The Smithsonian *Contributions to Knowledge* already amount to eighteen volumes quarto; and the future is destined to yield still richer results in widening the boundaries of human thought and increasing the happiness of men.

In the first summer of President Polk's administration the country was called to mourn the death of General Jackson. The veteran warrior and statesman lived to the age of seventy-eight, and died at his home, called the Hermitage, in Tennessee. On the 23d of February, 1848, ex-President John Quincy Adams died at the city of Washington. At the time of his decease he was a member of the House of Representatives. He was struck with paralysis in the very seat from which he had so many times electrified the nation with his eloquence.

In 1848 Wisconsin, the last of the five great States formed from the North-western Territory, was admitted into the Union. The new commonwealth came with a population of two hundred and fifty thousand and an area of nearly fifty-four thousand square miles. By establishing the St. Croix instead of the Mississippi as the western boundary of the State, Wisconsin lost a considerable district rightfully belonging to her territory.

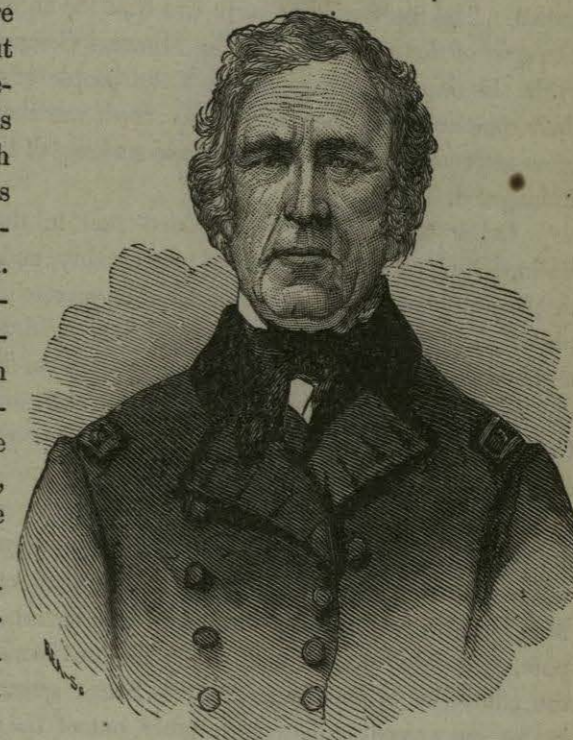
Near the close of Polk's administration an important addition was made to the President's cabinet by the establishment of THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR. To the three original departments of the government, as organized during the administration of Washington, had already been added the offices of Postmaster-General and Secretary of the Navy. The Attorney-General had also come to be recognized as a regular member of the cabinet. With the growth and development of the nation it was found that the duties belonging to the departments of state and the treasury had become so manifold as to require the establishment of a separate office. A certain part of these duties were accordingly detached, and the new "Home Department"—afterwards called Department of the Interior—was constituted by act of Congress. In the beginning of the next administration the new secretaryship was assigned to General Thomas Ewing of Ohio.

Another presidential election was at hand. Three well-known candidates were presented for the suffrages of the people. General Lewis Cass of Michigan was nominated by the Democrats, and General Zachary Taylor by the Whigs. As the candidate of the new Free-Soil party, ex-President Martin Van Buren was put forward. The rise of this new party was traceable to a question concerning the territory acquired by the Mexican War. In 1846 David Wilmot of Pennsylvania brought before Congress a bill to prohibit slavery in all the territory which might be secured by treaty with Mexico. The bill was defeated; but the advocates of the measure, which was called the WILMOT PROVISIO, formed themselves into a party, and in June of 1848 nominated Mr. Van Buren for the presidency. The real contest, however, lay between Generals Cass and Taylor. The position of the two leading parties on the question of slavery in the new territories was as yet not clearly defined, and the election was left to turn on the personal popularity of the candidates. The memory of his recent victories in Mexico made General Taylor the favorite with the people, and he was elected by a large majority. As Vice-President, Millard Fillmore of New York was chosen. So closed the agitated but not inglorious administration of President Polk.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

ADMINISTRATIONS OF TAYLOR AND FILLMORE, 1849-1853.

THE new President was a Virginian by birth, a Kentuckian by breeding, a soldier by profession. In 1808 he left the farm to accept a commission in the army. During the war of 1812 he distinguished himself in the North-west, especially in defending Fort Harrison against the red men. In the Seminole War he bore a conspicuous part, but earned his greatest renown in Mexico. His reputation, though strictly military, was enviable, and his character above reproach. His administration began with a violent agitation on the question of slavery in the territories; California, the El Dorado of the West, was the origin of the dispute.



PRESIDENT TAYLOR.

In his first message President Taylor expressed his sympathy with the Californians, and advised them to form a State government preparatory to admission into the Union. The advice was promptly accepted. A convention of delegates was held at Monterey in September of 1849. A constitution prohibiting slavery was framed, submitted to the people, and adopted with but little opposition. Peter H. Burnet was elected governor of the Territory; members of a general assembly were chosen; and on the 20th of December, 1849, the new government was organized