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MEXICAN WAR LETTERS

Many Interesting Revolutionary, War of 1812, and Civil War Documents and Pamphlets.

Interesting letters, documents, and pamphlets of the Revolution, war of 1812, Mexican war, and civil war are in Part VI. of the late Benson J. Lossing's library of Americana, which will be sold by the Anderson Auction Company on May 27.

Of timely interest are letters written by Gen. Gideon J. Pillow, the distinguished Confederate officer, while he was in the American army during the war with Mexico. The earliest of the letters is dated Tampico, Feb. 28, 1847, and is addressed to his wife. It was written at the time Pillow was just on the point of sailing for Vera Cruz. He was with Gen. Winfield Scott's expedition, which landed at Vera Cruz on March 9. That city capitulated on March 29, 1847. Pillow, who had been appointed Brigadier General in command of Tennessee volunteers in July, 1846, had served for some time with Gen. Zachary Taylor on the Mexican frontier. He subsequently joined Gen. Scott at Vera Cruz and took an active part in its siege Afterward he was one of the Commissioners who received the surrender from the Mexican authorities.

His second letter is dated "Camp Near Vera Cruz, March, '47," and is also addressed to his wife. In it the progress of the bombardment of Vera Cruz is described in detail, particularly with regard to the Castle of San Juan de Ulua.

The next letter, also to his wife, is dated "Camp in rear of Vera Cruz, March 14, 1847." He says:

> Day before yesterday I had three sharp fights with the enemy. It will yet require several days to place our heavy siege artillery to batter down the city walls. My opinion is that when we take this place and move into the interior the Mexican Government will capitulate. Gen. Taylor's late victory will aid to bring about this result.

Pillow thus refers to Taylor's fight with Santa Anna at Buena Vista, where the American army of 5,000 repulsed the Mexican army of 20,000 men, and peace thenceforward was undisturbed in the valley of the Rio Grande. At the battle of Cerro Gordo Pillow commanded the right wing of the American army and was severely wounded. He was promoted to Major General April 13, 1847.

There is a letter from Gen. Pillow's aid "Night of April 18" (1847) to Mrs. Pillow, informing her of her husband's wound at Cerro Gordo. He says:

> The battle of Sierro Gordo came off today, resulting in a complete victory over Santa Anna. Santa Anna himself escaped, but he is now being hotly pursued. The army will move to-morrow towards Galassa. Several officers have been killed and wounded, and it is supposed that Gen. Shields will not survive.

Gen. James Shields did survive, however, and took a prominent part on the Union side in the civil war. He died in June, 1879, and Pillow died in October, 1878. There are in the collection also interesting civil war letters of Pillow. One of them is dated New Madrid, Aug. 7, 1867, and is addressed to his commanding officer, Gen. Leonidas Polk. It was written immediately after the Battle of Athens, Missouri. Pillow says in it that he is apprehensive that a large force will descend on New Madrid, and that he is unprepared. He adds:

> You assured me I should have the support of Hardee's force and Thompson's. I am left without support in an exposed position. You fail to support me, and place your disposable force below here. Unless promptly assured of support I shall take my whole force, abandon this place, and strike into the interior of the country.

In another letter, "Hdqrs., Columbus, Ky., Nov. 26, 1861," addressed to Gen. Jeff Thompson, Pillow says:

> The enemy's movements south have been checked by the advance of Price towards St. Louis. I now want them to come. It will require one good, bloody battle around the Columbus works to satisfy the enemy that he can't take this place.

Among the Revolutionary autographs are no less than twenty-one letters by Gen. Philip Schuyler. One of them, dated Dec. 19, 1775, and addressed to Capt. Varick at Albany, is an exceedingly interesting document, giving a list of British officers, then prisoners of war, and on their way to prison. Included in them were Major John André, who had been captured at St. John's on the Sorel, and Gen. Prescott, who not long before had captured Ethan Allen, and who himself was taken prisoner at Montreal.

In another letter to Varick, dated Stillwater, July 7, 1777. Schuyler says:

> The account we had this morning is confirmed. Our troops retreated from Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, partly by land and partly by water; the latter were followed by the enemy as far as Hillsborough. Send an express to Gen. Nixon to advise him that he and his troops will be much wanted.

Under date of Stillwater, Aug. 12, 1777, Schuyler writes to Gen. Herkimer and the Committee of Tryon County as follows:

> A brigade of Continental Troops under Gen. Learned is on the march to the relief of Fort Schuyler. Let me beg you to exert yourselves to the utmost, and join Gen. Learned. Upon your exertions the safety of our country largely depends.

In a letter to Richard Varick, dated Albany, Sept. 15, 1777, Schuyler says:

> We have not a word of what is done below between Gen. Washington and Sir William Howe. Yesterday I received a letter from France; not a word of war between France and England. I believe America will not receive any aid in that way until it shall be beyond a doubt that the Independency can be maintained.

A letter of Col John Ely, "In the Field, New Baltimore, Fauquier County, Va., Nov. 11, 1862, refers to the battle of Fair Oaks:

> The action began by an attack from the rebel force under Joseph E. Johnston at 1 o'clock P. M. Gen. Casey's front rested on and across the Richmond & York Railroad at the six-mile post from Richmond. Our regiment was at once ordered by Gen. Keyes to the front to support Casey's lines. We got into position by 2 P. M. under a steady fire, but were masked from the enemy by a strip of low bushes; they soon got our range, as we had theirs.

Col. Ely was wounded and retired from the field. He reports in his letter that the Union losses were 3,000 and the Confederate losses 4,250. Gen. Leslie Combs, writing from Frankfort, Ky., Nov. 22, 1861, says:

> I thank you for the information as to the Pillow-Magoffin conspiracy to destroy our magnificent Green River Bridge. I have caused it to be published without giving the name of Pillow's traveling companion. Buckner then resided in Louisville, and on examination of the Galt House books it was found that Magoffin, Hanson, and Brown were there with Pillow on the night of April 29. How many other leading traitors were at other hotels I did not inquire. I had enough to drive the nail through the head devils.

Combs then goes on to criticize President Lincoln's appointments, saying that he has given high military positions to very incompetent persons.

A copy of the Connecticut Courant, Jan. 1774, contains an interesting communication on the destruction of the tea in Boston Harbor. "Last Friday," it reads, "all the Bohea Tea in the Town of Charleston was brought to the Market Place and there destroyed by fire." There is also an account of the fire at Fort George in the council chamber and how Mrs. Patterson threw the Governor's wife, Mrs. Tryon, out of a window and presently followed herself.

A letter from Gov. Isham G. Harris of Tennessee to Gen. Pillow, dated Nashville, May 28, 1861, refers to the establishment of the blockade at Memphis and the difficulty of mustering troops for the service of the Confederate States in that city, though they are ready enough to enlist for service of State, "I am very much embarrassed." Harris says, "with the unreasonable restrictions imposed on the distribution of the 4,000 guns sent us by the Confederate States. If necessity arises we must, of course, use them regardless of restrictions."

In another letter to Gen. Pillow Gov. Harris, under date of June 13, 1861, says that he has reliable information that the Federal Government will not quarter troops in Kentucky, that the Governor of Kentucky pledges himself to preserve neutrality, and that Gen. McClellan claims the right for the Federal Government to march troops over the territory. "I am satisfied," Harris says, "that the Federal Government may attempt to reach Memphis by crossing over to Bird's Point and pass down the river by land on the Missouri and Arkansas side. Investigate the possibility of their reaching Memphis by this route and adopt the best means of preventing it." He then suggests placing 10,000 men at Randolph for this purpose.

In a third letter to Gen. Pillow, dated June 21, 1861, Gen. Harris says: "We should secure Tennessee against the possibility of invasion as soon as it can be done." He also says that he plans to aid the cause of Missouri, and that the line of offensive operations should extend on the west bank of the Mississippi, not to violate the neutrality of Kentucky. He adds that he is much disturbed at the attitude of the Union men in East Tennessee and will have to hold the State troops in case they are wanted there.

A long letter of Gen. W. B. Hazen refers to the Battle of Murfreesboro, July 13, 1862, where he was in command. He says that the most correct account of it can be found in "Gen. Polk's Rebel Report." He also says that the Battle of Chickamauga, Sept. 19-20, 1862, is but little understood. "Gen. Rosencrans's report," he says, "will hardly assist one in making it out." He then gives details not generally known. He also corrects the general impression that Mission Ridge was carried simultaneously at six different points, and describes Sheridan's movements. He also mentions an affair at Pickett's Mills, May 27, 1864, which, he says, was never noticed.

A four-page quarto letter of Washington Irving, Sunnyside, Feb. 10, 1851, is in regard to a portrait by Charles Martin, which Lossing wished to use as an illustration in one of his books. Irving writes that he had tried to satisfy Mr. Putnam with a daguerreotype, but that it would not do, and he had "finally been decoyed into the hands of Mr. Martin." "For my own part," he goes on to say, "I ausure you that my face has been served up so often and in so many different ways as to make me very callous and indifferent in the matter. When I was last at Mr. Martin's he showed me a slight full-length sketch he had made of me, as I sat, from memory. It was touched off skillfully and made a graceful composition."

A highly important document relates to President Lincoln's secret journey to Washington in 1861. It is a manuscript of twenty-seven folio pages by S. M. Felton, President of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad Company, and dated Jan. 15, 1866. Mr. Felton, with the assistance of Allan Pinkerton, the well-known detective, frustrated the plot to assassinate Lincoln in Baltimore on his way to the first inauguration in 1861.

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