

MEXICAN VETERANS.

Speech of General James Shields in the United States Senate.

The young soldiers who read "THE TRIBUNE" will be pleased, and the old ones delighted, to read the speech of this old soldier on the bill granting pensions to his comrades and their widows:

Mr. SHIELDS. Mr. President, I thank the Senate for giving me an opportunity to speak a few words in this place in favor of my old comrades of the Mexican war. My words shall be very brief indeed. They will be nothing more than an earnest appeal to this body to pass the resolution just read, and when the bill returns to the Senate that the resolution calls for, to pass that bill also, and then, in my opinion, this body will have done generous justice to the soldiers of the Mexican war.

The soldiers of the last war have been treated by Congress with justice, and, in my opinion, with very commendable liberality. The soldiers of the Mexican war have not been so treated. Those soldiers served their country, and have received nothing in the way of generosity at the hands of the Congress of the United States. I wonder not at seeing the services of young soldiers handsomely rewarded; but the wonder is at seeing the services of old soldiers almost forgotten. They complain that Congress has neglected to listen to their appeals. In my opinion, sir, after all, Congress is not so much in fault. I think the fault principally lies upon the Bureau of Pensions. That bureau, by some process of calculation utterly unintelligible to ordinary intellects, or at least to an intellect like my own, has reported to Congress a larger army of Mexican volunteers alive to-day than ever stood on Mexican soil with arms in their hands at one time during the whole period of the Mexican war. No wonder Congress has hesitated to make provision, after such a report as that. The only wonder is that any intelligent Congress could place implicit confidence in such a report. For my part, I do not place implicit confidence in bureau estimates. I have seen too many of them to place great reliance on them. It is said that the famous Dr. Johnson, when asked if he believed in the existence of ghosts, said, "Ghosts I do not believe in, because I have seen too many of them." [Laughter.] So, Mr. President, I say in regard to bureau estimates.

There have been many attempts to obtain returns of the survivors of the Mexican war from every State in this Union, and the returns which have been obtained by the associations concerned are as accurate as any returns can in all probability be in such a case; and what are these returns? That in the whole Union at this day there are not eleven thousand Mexican veterans alive. I need no report from any bureau to enlighten my mind on a point like this.

I cannot call the death-roll of the American Army that served in Mexico; but, sir, I can, and if the Senate permits me I will call the death-roll of all the general officers that served in that army in Mexico: Scott, Taylor, Wool, Worth, Twiggs, Kearney, Quitman, Pillow, Pierce, Cushing, Cadwalader—all gone; all dead. I, the youngest of them all, am left to make this appeal to Congress—to make it with heart and voice—to do something; to do it speedily; to do it before they are all gone. Sir, if it is not done speedily, if it is deferred to a few sessions longer, it will come too late; for then the action of Congress will not come to cheer living men, but will fall on silent graves.

Sir, do not talk to me of exaggerated estimates by the bureau. I can give figures of my own. One of the regiments of my brigade, a regiment from the State of my friend near me, [Mr. BUTLER,] when it landed in Mexico, mustered eleven hundred gallant boys. When the war was closed, when the city of Mexico was taken, that regiment mustered what? Two hundred and twenty-three men. Only two hundred and twenty-three men of that gallant regiment were left to carry the Palmetto flag back to the old State of South Carolina; and how many men of the two hundred and twenty-three are now left? Just eight. A delegate has come up from there to attend a meeting in Baltimore, and he is here to-day, and perhaps hears me now, and he tells me there are only eight men of that whole regiment now left alive. Sir, you may go over the States, and I have been over many of them, and of the men I knew in Mexico and who fought in the battles there, I cannot find one man living to-day out of every twenty or thirty. This illustrates the way Congress has been imposed upon.

Sir, I need not talk of the history of the Mexican war in this Senate. You are all familiar with it, although I must say that there is no history of that war that does even half justice. Neither need I talk of the army that conquered Mexico, but I can say in one word that no nation upon this globe need be ashamed of such an army. I say here to-day—I say it because it is due to that army—I say it because it is due to the American character, that no government ever sent an army into a foreign country better, braver, nobler than the army America sent to Mexico. Why, sir, from the first shot fired on the Rio Grande to the last shot fired at the city of Mexico, that army never suffered a single defeat, never lost a battle, never met a repulse, never surrendered a detachment, never even suffered an accidental disaster. Where can you find anything like that?

But some men may say, "You had only Mexicans to fight?" Yes, very true, we had only Mexicans to fight, and we had plenty of them to fight. But ask the soldiers of France, and they are as brave soldiers as can be found in Europe—ask them their experience of these despised Mexicans, and they will tell you frankly that in all Europe there is no peasantry that is less afraid of death than these very Mexicans. I ought perhaps to except the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons, and the Germans also; but I tell you the Mexicans stand killing as well as any people on God's earth, and they had plenty of it when we were there. [Laughter.]

Sir, if this Government ever undertakes to walk over Mexico again with the expectation of having the same result, they will find themselves much disappointed. I assure you that it is my opinion, without saying one word against the American Army now, that if the soldiers of the American Army were just such soldiers as first starved and then killed the Cheyennes on a recent occasion, they will never get to the halls of the Montezumas, except as prisoners of war. That is my opinion.

Sir, that little army that is now gone except a few broken remnants, was as conspicuous for its humanity as for its distinguished bravery. I undertake to say here to-day that Mexican life, Mexican property, family relations

all over Mexico were as well protected during the American occupation as they had ever been before or have been since. I say further, and I say it on the honor of a man, that no army ever invaded a foreign country that committed so few offenses as the army that operated in Mexico, and I am not sure but that the men committed fewer offenses than the same number of men living in civil life now in the United States of America. If you ask me why, I will tell you. It was, first, discipline; and, second, not speaking of the commanding officers, who were the best America could furnish, (not including myself, of course, but speaking of the rank and file,) they were simple, honest, brave, manly, generous, and humane. It is said there are about ten thousand of them still left, and I say here now, and I will thank any man to correct me if I am mistaken, that I do not think in all America you will find one of them in the penitentiary. They would die before they would commit a crime. Some of them may die in the poor-house, but you may take my word for it, no soldier of this nation who ever fought in the battles of Mexico will ever die the inmate of an American penitentiary.

If the Senate will bear with me, I will justify the truth of this assertion by a reference, a brief reference, to the campaign.

In the fall of 1846 a Missouri regiment nine hundred strong, under Colonel Doniphan, took its departure for Mexico. That regiment executed a march of some two thousand miles; deserts were crossed and arid plains; they passed through the *Jornada del Muerto*, the journey of death, as it was called, passed the Rio Grande at El Paso, found opposition of every kind before them, entered and captured the city of Chihuahua, and in all that march never committed a single crime, and never met with a single defeat. Ought men of that kind to be forgotten? Any government that forgets such men is not a government to encourage national heroism of any kind. But the public are better acquainted with what occurred on the Rio Grande. I can hardly find in history a spectacle more interesting and more romantic, than my old friend, Zachary Taylor, "old Rough and Ready," standing there at the head of three or four thousand men, confronting a whole nation of ten millions. That campaign commenced at Palo Alto, and commenced brilliantly, and it ended at Buena Vista, and you all know it ended there in a blaze of glory. Sir, I reckon Buena Vista as one of those battles that will always stand foremost in history.

Then look at the other campaign beginning at Vera Cruz under Winfield Scott. The capture of that city is as splendid as any military achievement. The Gibraltar of Mexico was taken by a little American army, with a less loss of life on the part of the assailants than was ever suffered in any assault. This was owing to the skill and consummate genius of the commander, the excellence of our engineers, and the splendid management of American artillery at that time.

Then there was Cerro Gordo. I have some reminiscences of that and I shall not forget them. There was a natural fortress defended by the Mexicans. That natural position is the strongest perhaps in Mexico itself. The strength of that position was great in itself, besides the strength of the Mexican army defending it, and they were nearly double the strength of the American army assailing it. It was as fine a position as could be. And yet Cerro Gordo was carried with a small sacrifice of life, which to the military men of that day all over the world was a matter of astonishment. Sir, in my humble opinion, Cerro Gordo ranks with and is only second to the battle of New Orleans under old Andrew Jackson.

But I will not delay the Senate; I will not abuse its courtesy. On the 10th day of August, 1847, ten thousand men crossed the mountains and entered the romantic valley of Mexico. It was an adventurous movement. That army abandoned its communications, its supplies, its very possibility of re-enforcement. That was its condition, and yet isolated as it was, small in numbers as it was, it fought the battle and gained the victory at Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and on the 13th day of September, 1847, it stood before the ramparts of Mexico; and how many men stood before those ramparts, all told? Six thousand six hundred men on the 13th day of September, 1847, crossed those ramparts, captured the city, a city containing two hundred thousand inhabitants, and defended by thirty thousand disciplined soldiers. Give me any other instance of the kind in history. Why, sir, the army was hardly sufficient to police the city after they captured it. When I myself stand here and look back at that, it looks even to me more like fable than reality. I shall never forget the insignificant appearance we cut when we got into the great plaza of the city of Mexico. Happily, though, they thought we were only the advance guard of some tremendous army. I recollect an old English *militaire* who was there, and after he looked at the little band he said, "Is this the army?" "Yes." "Well," said he, "all I have to say is this, you Americans are not only the bravest people I ever heard of, but the most audacious people on God's earth to come here with such an army as that!"

Then, sir, think of the acquisitions that have been secured to this country by that army. They are not to be estimated now, they are not calculable at this time. The future only can estimate the value of the acquisitions resulting from that war, a territory sufficient to make an empire, certainly large enough to make another independent country, with unsurpassed mineral wealth, mines of gold and silver that have changed the monetary condition of the world. Why, sir, the world was struck with astonishment a year or two ago at the idea that this our territory acquired from Mexico was about to deluge the whole world with an inundation of silver. I wish to God the American Congress would turn a little stream of that flood in the direction of our Mexican war veterans. I am very sure we could stand under the deluge.

Now, sir, one advantage—not to speak of the harvest of glory which we foolishly thought we had reaped at that time, but a harvest, as I say, of real, substantial advantage—in addition to the territory and mineral there, is this, and future ages will consider it, and that is, the command of the great Pacific Ocean, the greatest ocean upon this globe, which will remain in our control "to the last syllable of recorded time," if America shall last so long.

Sir, the remnant of that army, the army which did so much for this country, speak as it were through me to-day, hold up their hands in supplication to this body and this Congress and say, "Give us a little of that we helped to secure for our country; give us a small pittance before we leave the world; give us a pittance to help us on the downward path of life to old age; give us something to assist us in our last days when we are marching to that field from which no warrior ever has yet returned victorious, and never will.

Sir, I thank the Senate for the kind attention which has been bestowed on me and for the courtesy of permitting me to make such a speech as this; and were it not that it might look like taking advantage of that courtesy, I would move now that the resolution be taken up and passed and sent to the committee, in order to have the bill reported speedily.

Recent Postoffice Rulings.

Western Postal Review.

Pocket knives are unmailable.

It is the duty of a mail carrier to receive mail matter properly prepaid and inclosed in United States stamped envelopes, when one mile or more from a postoffice.

A paper printed in one county and published in another cannot be sent to subscribers residing in both counties.

A mark calling attention to some particular paragraph in a newspaper does not subject it to any additional postage.

Crayon drawings are subject to letter rates of postage, the same as any other matter produced by pen or pencil.

The postal law prohibits the exchange of postage stamps of one denomination for those of other denominations.

Some part of a publication must be printed in the county wherein the claimed office of publication is located, to enable the same to be sent free to subscribers residing in said county. (See ruling No. 3.)

There is no law excluding postal cards from the mails because of notices of indebtedness being printed or written thereon, but no indecent language, terms or epithets will be allowed in such notices.

All letters having one full-rate prepaid must be forwarded. Second and third class matter must be fully prepaid.

When a newspaper has been refused by the party addressed it is simply the duty of the postmaster to notify the publisher that such is the case, after which, if the paper continues to arrive in the mails, he should place with other waste paper, to be sold at the end of the quarter.

The postal law forbids the renting of boxes in postoffice, to two families or firms.

A printed business card may be mailed at third class rates, provided it has no writing upon it other than the address.

Regular newspapers cannot be admitted to the mails at pound rates when a handbill or circular is inclosed.

A publication not entitled to be sent in the mails at bound rates cannot be sent as an "exchange" at the pound rates.

Postmasters to other than letter-carrier officers are obliged to distribute local (country) newspapers, intended for regular subscribers, from the boxes or general delivery of their postoffice free of charge; provided the same are properly dried, folded and addressed.

A postmaster cannot use the postoffice boxes as a medium to advertise his business without fully prepaying all postage, the same as anyone else would be required to do.

The postoffice department rules that no postoffice shall be kept in a bar room or a room directly connected therewith, nor must any mail be opened or delivered in any such room.

Letters passing through the mails can not lawfully be opened by any officers of the law for the purpose of detecting criminals.

The postoffice department is not responsible for matter lost in the mails.

It is no part of a postmaster's business to inquire of a person receiving newspapers, prepaid at pound rates, whether they are subscribers or not, nor is there any restriction in the number a person may receive, except in the case of free country newspapers.

Magnificence of Ancient Rome.

If anything more were wanted to give us an idea of Roman magnificence, we would turn our eyes from public monuments, demoralizing games, and grand processions; we would forget the statues in brass and marble which outnumbered the living inhabitants, so numerous that one hundred thousand have been recovered and still embellish Italy, and would descend into the lower sphere of material life—to those things which attest luxury and taste of ornaments, dresses, sumptuous living, and rich furniture. The art of working metals and cutting precious stones surpassed anything known at the present day. In the decoration of houses, in social entertainments, in crockery, the Romans were remarkable. The mosaics, signet rings, cameos, bracelets, bronzes, chains, vases, couches, banqueting-tables, chariots, colored glass, gilding, mirrors, mattresses, cosmetics, perfumes, hair dyes, silk robes—all attest great elegance and beauty. The table of Thugra root and Delian bronze were as expensive as side-boards of Spanish walnut, so much admired in recent great exhibitions. Wood and ivory were carved as exquisitely as in Japan or China. Mirrors were made of polished silver. Glass cutters could imitate the colors of precious stones so well that the Portland vase, from the tomb of Alexander Severus, was long considered a genuine sardonyx. Brass could be hardened so as to cut stone and jewels. The palace of Nero glittered with gold and jewels. His beds were of silver, and his tables of gold. Tiberius gave a million of sesterces for a picture for his dining-room. A banquet dish of Drusillus weighed five hundred pounds of silver. The cup of Drusus was of gold. Tunics were embroidered with the figures of various animals. Sandals were garnished with precious stones. Paulina wore jewels when she paid visits, valued at eight hundred thousand dollars. Drinking cups were engraved with scenes from the poets. Libraries were adorned with busts and presses of rare woods. Sofas were inlaid with tortoise shell, and covered with gorgeous purple. The Roman grandees rode in gilded chariots, bathed in marble baths, dined from crystal cups, slept on beds of down, reclined on luxurious couches, wore embroidered robes, and were adorned with precious jewels. They ransacked the earth and the seas for rare dishes for their banquets, and ornamented their houses with carpets from Babylon, onyx cups from Bythia, marble from Numidia, bronzes from Corinth, statues from Athens—whatever, in short, was precious or rare or curious, in the most distant countries. The luxuries of the bath almost surpassed belief; and on the walls were magnificent frescoes and paintings, exhibiting an inexhaustible productiveness in landscape and mythological scenes, executed in lively colors.

But these were not all. The most amazing wealth and the loftiest taste went hand in hand. There were citizen nobles who owned whole provinces; even Paula could call a whole city her own. Rich senators, in some cases, were proprietors of two hundred thousand slaves. Their incomes were five thousand dollars per day, when gold and silver were worth four times as much as they are now.