

SKETCH OF CAPTAIN BENJAMIN DAVIESS MOORE.

BY M. J. MOORE.

(Son of Capt. B. D. Moore.)

My father was born at Paris, Kentucky, September 10, 1810. I know little of his boyhood. A few years after his father's death, about 1820, his mother removed to Shelbyville, Illinois, where lived her two sons by a former husband, Captain Matthew Duncan and the Joseph Duncan who was afterward Governor of the State. He received the best education to be had in those days, and at 18 was appointed midshipman in the navy and assigned to duty on board the U. S. ship Erie, David Connor commander. The Erie was soon afterward ordered on a long cruise, touching at Mediterranean ports, spending some time in the West Indies and in the Caribbean Sea. He was at home on leave in 1832, when the news came of the rising and threatened invasion of Black Hawk. Captain Duncan's company, of which my father was made First Lieutenant by exchange from the navy, was among the first to respond to the call of the Governor, and was soon floundering through the mud and swollen streams of the all-but-submerged country. The campaign was a short one, and the old chief was worsted at the battle of Bad Axe.

In 1833, "The U. S. Regiment of Dragoons"—of which Henry Dodge was Colonel, S. W. Kearny, Lieutenant Colonel, and R. B. Mason, Major—was organized by Congress, with Jefferson Davis as Adjutant, my father being First Lieutenant of Co. C. The regiment became the First Dragoons in '36, when the Second Regiment was raised. In '33 the five companies were sent to Fort Gibson, and in '34 on the "Pawnee Expedition," in which one-fourth of the command died of fever. From '36 to '45 there were numerous Indian expeditions, without serious losses, but much severe service, being interchanges between Forts Leavenworth, Gibson, Wayne and Des Moines. In 1839 my father was married to Martha, a daughter of Judge Matthew Hughes of the then recently negotiated Platte Purchase. My mother died in '43 from exposure the previous winter on the march from Fort Gibson to Leavenworth. In May, 1845, General Kearny, with Companies A,

C, F, G and K, left Leavenworth on an expedition to the South Pass, in the Rocky Mountains. They reached Laramie June 14th and South Pass July 6th, returning by Laramie and Bent's Fort to Fort Leavenworth August 24th, having made a march of 2000 miles in 97 days. The officers and men were complimented on the length of the march, rapidity of the movements and small losses, with "pride and pleasure." June 30, 1846, Colonel Kearny was promoted Brigadier General and placed in command of the "Army of the West." Including five companies of Dragoons, there were about 1800 men under his immediate command. After conquering New Mexico, he started from Santa Fe, September 26th, with the five companies of Dragoons for California. I insert here some extracts from a letter dated Santa Fe, N. M., September 16th, addressed to Judge Hughes—the last that was received:

"My Dear Father:—I am sorry I did not know the Express left so soon, that I might have written you a longer letter, but it leaves for the United States in one hour, so you must excuse a short one. * * * The people so far seem to be well pleased with their new government; how long it will continue, time will show. All the Dragoons leave here the 25th with General Kearny for California. It not being practicable for horses, the General has directed the Quartermaster to purchase mules to mount the whole command. * * * We have a march before us of 1300 or 1400 miles, and almost a desert from the beginning to the end of the journey. From all accounts it is a very severe trip on account of the scarcity of water, grass and game. Some say we will never get through, but I know better. The trip has been performed (though not by so large a party) and we can go where Mexicans or Indians can, and can stand as much fatigue, cold, hunger and thirst as they can. * * * General Kearny told me yesterday that he was going to the United States next summer. * * * I told him that if it was probable that my company was to be stationed there (in California) that I would not stay; I would resign. I told him I would not be separated from my children longer than the war continued; that they were a greater consideration to me than a commission of any grade in the army could be. * * *

Affectionately,

B. D. MOORE."

Near Socorro, New Mexico, October 6th, General Kearny's command met Kit Carson bearing an express from Commodore Stockton to Washington, to the effect that "California had surrendered without a blow and that the American flag floated in every port." This news caused General Kearny to reduce radically the personnel of his force. Major Sumner with 250 Dragoons was ordered to retrace his steps, and General Kearny, taking Carson as his guide, with one hundred Dragoons officered by Captain Moore, Captain Johnston and Lieutenants Hammond and Davidson, proceeded October 15th to the head waters of the Mimbres, a tributary of the Gila, which they soon reached and followed to its junction with the Colorado. With the loss of half their mules, they reached Warner's ranch December 3rd. In answer to a note informing Stockton of his coming, Captain Gillespie with 35 men joined General Kearny on the 5th with a note from Commodore Stockton advising him of the proximity of Pico's Californians and suggesting that he "attack and defeat them."

Judge Pearce of Sonoma County, who was a member of Company C, but had been detached as body guard to General Kearny, in his biography (see "History of Sonoma County"), relates the following facts—not, that I am aware, elsewhere accessible:

"After a fatiguing day's journey in the rain, we camped in the mountains about eight or ten miles from the enemy's forces under Pico. After the camp fires were lighted, General Kearny sent Mr. Pearce with his compliments to Captains Moore and Johnston and Lieutenant Hammond, and asked them to a conference on the propriety of reconnoitering the enemy's position that night and attacking him in the morning. Captain Moore opposed, mainly on the ground 'that discovery of our presence would necessarily follow a reconnoissance, and discovery would result in failure to obtain an advantage, as the enemy were well mounted and were, perhaps, the most expert horsemen in the world, and we were for the most part on poor, half-starved and jaded mules; that it would be far better for the whole of us to move and make the attack at once; that by this course we should more than likely get all the horses of the enemy, and to dismount them was to whip them.' The objections of Captain Moore were overruled and Lieutenant Hammond, Sergeant Williams and ten men were forthwith detailed and did reconnoitre the enemy's position.'

Mr. Pearce was present at the conference above mentioned and was present and heard the report of Lieutenant Hammond on his return from the reconnoissance. They had seen Pico's men asleep in some Indian huts, and while talking to an Indian outside of one of the huts the detachment was hailed by a sentinel. As soon as this report was made "boots and saddles" was sounded and the little army advanced.

In a letter from Judge Pearce, written June 18, 1884, to me, he says: "I was near your father during the engagement and saw him remount his horse after his first wound. He was mounted on a fresh horse, was in the very front, and seemed to me to be trying his utmost to do all the fighting himself."

Two years ago in a conversation with Philip Crosthwaite, who was a volunteer in Captain Gillespie's detachment from San Diego, and who it will be remembered captured the only prisoner taken at the battle of San Pasqual, he informed me of some occurrences, a part of which I had heard from other sources, but which I have not seen in any printed account. Crosthwaite knew personally many of Pico's men, and was an eye witness to a part of the event here related:

Andres Pico was not lacking in personal courage, but for some reason 'his heart was not in the fight' at San Pasqual. While his men and the Dragoons under Captain Moore were still engaged, he started away from the field. Captain Moore saw and followed Pico and in a few hundred yards came up with him. Two Californians, Celis and Osuña, drew out of the fight and went in pursuit of them, stopping a few yards away, as they said, 'to see which would win—lance or sabre.' After a few passes Captain Moore's sword was broken off a few inches from the guard. He attempted to draw his pistol from the holster and was lanced by Osuña. Lieutenant Hammond, coming up at this time, in an effort to save Captain Moore was mortally wounded. They were brothers-in-law, and warmly attached to each other. It seems not too much to say, in the words of St. John, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." They lie side by side at Point Loma.



CAPT. BENJAMIN DAVIESS MOORE