



Engraved by J. C. Smith, 1850

Wm. Walker

THE
WAR IN NICARAGUA

GEN'L WILLIAM WALKER

With a Foreword by
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and vessels employed on the coasts of Central America," to offer protection to any British subjects who might be detained and compelled to bear arms against their will. In accordance with his instructions, Capt. Cockburn demanded a list of all the men at Punta Arenas, and required them to be paraded in his presence, that he might read to them the orders of Capt. Erskine. The men were accordingly drawn up on the beach, and Cockburn read to them the order of Erskine. The concluding sentences of the order were: "Should any of the party in question claim protection as British subjects, and their claims appear to you to be well founded, you will acquaint the officer commanding, that these men must be permitted to withdraw from their present position; and you will (in the event of his acquiescence) either give these men a passage to Greytown, or take them on board Her Majesty's ship under your command, to await my decision as to their disposal, as they may desire. In the event of the aforesaid officer resisting such a course as I have pointed out, you will inform him that, in the first place, no person whatever under his command will be permitted to leave their present position, to proceed up the river or elsewhere, until my demands shall be complied with; and, secondly, that I will adopt such measures to enforce the rights of British subjects as I may think best adapted to the purpose." Ten men claimed and received protection under the order of Erskine, and were taken from the point in Cockburn's boat. The instructions of Her Majesty's government must have been indeed stringent, when they induced honorable officers to degrade themselves to the work of inciting men to desert a cause they

had voluntarily embraced; for Cockburn, not satisfied with reading Erskine's orders, had also advised the whole of Lockridge's command of the dangers they ran in attacking the large force the Costa Ricans had concentrated on the river.

Thus the demoralization of Lockridge's men was commenced before they left Punta Arenas. The Americans—at least the good men among them—were, of course, indignant at the course the British pursued; but all the Europeans were more or less affected by this English interference. Nor is it in the nature of men long to respect those claiming authority over them, when they see such persons humbled by the actions of others. Hence it was all-important for Lockridge to get beyond the reach of British interference. Not only was he daily losing men by the policy the British practised; but the effectiveness of those remaining with him was constantly diminished. Finally the small steamer was got ready for going up the river, and Lockridge moved his whole force to a point several miles below the mouth of the Serapaqui.

On the morning of the 4th of February the Texas again arrived from New-Orleans at San Juan del Norte, having aboard H. T. Titus, known in Kansas as Col. Titus, in charge of about one hundred and eighty men. Many of the persons with Titus had been his companions in Kansas, and probably most of them were made of better stuff than their leader. But his swaggering air had imposed on many people; and the contest in which he was said to have been engaged, gave him a sort of newspaper notoriety, thus making his name familiar as the

leader of the "border ruffians." Lockridge organized Titus and his men in a separate body, and soon a jealousy rather than rivalry sprang up between the new-comers and those acting under Anderson. Attached to the command of the latter was Capt. Doubleday, formerly of the Nicaraguan service; and several others who were yet in the service, acted under Anderson's orders. All of Titus' men were entirely new to the country.

Soon after Titus arrived, Lockridge, by a sharp skirmish, got possession of Cody's Point, a piece of high ground just opposite the mouth of the Serapaqui; and Wheat thence opened a cannonade on the defences the Costa Ricans had built on the opposite side of the San Juan river. But the fire of Wheat's guns was not of such a character as to make a serious impression on the enemy; and it was only after Col. Anderson had crossed the river and succeeded in harassing the Costa Rican flank and rear with riflemen, that the Americans drove the enemy from the Serapaqui, and got possession of both sides of the river. The Costa Ricans left behind a number of killed and wounded, besides two guns, some small-arms and ammunition, and a supply of military clothing. A yet more important portion of the articles captured were certain letters from General Mora detailing the condition of his force on the San Juan, and urging the necessity for fresh troops, in order to hold his position on the river.

The Costa Ricans were driven from the mouth of the Serapaqui on the morning of the 13th of February; and the next day Titus, with some hundred and forty men, ascended the river on the little steamer Rescue with the view of attacking Castillo. Anderson was placed in

charge of Hipp's Point; and the contest between him and Titus, as to rank, had increased the disorganization and disorder already existing in Lockridge's command. Desertions were frequent, and were, of course, encouraged by the protection and assistance the English gave to the deserters. The heavy rains made camp life disagreeable, and its duties arduous; and much labor was necessary in order to protect the men from the weather. Thus the movements were impeded; and much care was necessary to keep the ammunition in a state fit for use. Numbers were sick with fever; but considering the exposure and fatigues to which the men were subjected, their health was not bad.

On the other hand the difficulties of the Costa Ricans were not slight. After getting possession of the San Juan end of the lake, Mora had communicated with the Allies at Masaya; and movements were undertaken which will be more particularly described hereafter. Suffice it to say here, that these movements entailed heavy draughts on the force Mora held on the river; and in addition to this the Costa Ricans coming from the high lands about San José, suffered much with fever when they reached the low country on the San Juan. Thus by the necessities of the Allies for troops in the western part of Nicaragua, and by the effects of disease in the force occupying the river, the garrison at Castillo was reduced to a trifling figure; and when Titus appeared before the fort Cauty, an Englishman commanding at Castillo, had, according to some, twenty-five, and according to others, fifty men.

When Titus landed near the fort of Castillo Viejo, he

found the houses of the village in flames, and the small steamer Machuca also rapidly burning. He succeeded, however, in cutting loose the steamer J. N. Scott, and although her machinery was somewhat damaged, it was easily repaired in the course of two or three days' work. Soon after he appeared at Castillo, Titus sent to Cauty a demand to surrender the fort; and the reply was a proposal for an armistice of twenty-four hours, with a promise of surrender in case the garrison were not relieved by the expiration of that time. Strange to say the proposal of Cauty was accepted; and it was not difficult for him to send a courier to Fort San Carlos with news of his position. Of course, before the armistice expired, reinforcements for Cauty were landed a short distance above the fort; and on the appearance of the fresh Costa Ricans, Titus retreated in great disorder and confusion. The retreat was made before the number of the relieving party was even approximately ascertained; and the fact, that the Americans were able to escape without any protection to their rear, shows the enemy did not arrive with much force.

After the Americans withdrew, or rather fled, from Castillo, they halted at San Carlos Island, a few miles below the fort. On this island Lockridge threw up some works for defence from the enemy, and also built, with much labor, sheds for protection from the weather. The repulse at Castillo, shameful in its character, added to the demoralization of the whole command on the river, and desertions accordingly increased. Such, too, was the feeling against Titus that he gave up his command and left for San Juan del Norte, with the inten-

tion of going by Panama to Rivas. When he arrived at San Juan del Norte his insulting language to one of the British officers led to his arrest and detention for a few hours. At the same time Titus was arrested the steamer Rescue was detained; but she was soon released when the U. S. sloop of war Saratoga was seen coming into port. This single fact shows how different might have been the conduct of the British naval forces had there been a few United States vessels stationed off San Juan del Norte.

In the latter part of February Walker sent an aide, Major Baldwin, from Rivas by Panama, to Lockridge, confirming the latter in his command on the river, and also informing him of the importance of early communication either around or across the lake. The orders sent to Lockridge were, if he found it impossible to take Castillo and San Carlos without great sacrifice, to cut a road from the river either to Chontales or the southern shore of the lake, and march by land to Rivas. The cause of these orders will hereafter appear; and it is sufficient here to say, that one chief reason for Walker's holding Rivas was, the apprehension that Lockridge, reaching the Meridional department, might be placed in an awkward position by finding the town in the possession of the Allies. Baldwin arrived at San Juan del Norte about the middle of March, and nearly at the same time with some hundred and thirty fresh men, principally from Mobile and Texas, and directed respectively by Major W. C. Capers and Captain Marcellus French.

With this reinforcement under Capers and French,

Lockridge's numbers had been so reduced by desertion and sickness, that his effective force scarcely reached four hundred. The men, however, were for the most part of excellent quality, and in other hands might have accomplished much. French's command particularly was, by general consent, composed of fine materials. But these men arrived too late; and they met on the river bands which had been disorganized by bad conduct and ill fortune. Lockridge, however, determined to make another effort to get possession of Castillo Viejo; and with this purpose he prepared nearly his whole command for an attack on the fort.

Landing his force a short distance below Castillo and out of sight of the enemy, he led his men by a trail through the woods to a position near an elevation, known as Nelson's Hill. This elevation commands the fort, and the Costa Ricans having entrenched it were occupying the summit. Along the sides of the hill they had cut some trees and formed a sort of chevaux-de-frise; and by clearing away the undergrowth for some distance around the summit, they had made the approach difficult and dangerous. After reconnoitring the position of the enemy, Lockridge deemed it imprudent to hazard an attack; and calling the principal officers together and asking their opinions, he received the concurrence of all as to the expediency of retiring without engaging the enemy. The resolution was wise, for defeat would almost inevitably have been the result of an attempt on the Costa Rican defences. The opportune moment for taking Castillo had been lost through the incapacity of Titus, and with a month to prepare for a

second attack, the enemy had not been idle. Even if the Costa Ricans had been less strongly posted, the moral condition of Lockridge's force was not such as to warrant ordering them on any hazardous service.

After Lockridge retired from Castillo the men began to discuss plans for the future, and all appear to have agreed on the propriety of abandoning the river. It was clear that the effort to re-open the Transit had entirely failed, and the leader of the enterprise drawing up the men informed them that he proposed to try to reach Rivas by the Isthmus of Panama, and called on all who wished to follow him to step from the ranks. Near a hundred persons agreed to take this course; and the remainder of the men were deprived of their arms and virtually discharged. Then the disarmed men sought means to reach the mouth of the river. Not waiting for the steamer they took the boats they could put their hands on, and some floated on logs to the harbor of San Juan del Norte. The panic-stricken crowd thought the Costa Ricans were hot in pursuit; and each over-anxious for his own safety added to the fright of his fellows.

The men who had agreed to go with Lockridge to Rivas descended the river more leisurely than the fugitives; but ill luck pursued them to the last. On the way to San Juan del Norte, the steamer J. N. Scott was blown up, and several of those proposing to go to Panama were killed and others were painfully and dangerously scalded. This accident entirely discouraged the men who yet adhered to Lockridge, and forthwith the idea of crossing the New-Granadian Isthmus was abandoned by them. It was an absurd plan at any rate; for

they had been humbled in their conflict with the Americans. He also alluded to the efforts made to seduce the troops from their allegiance to the flag, by representing their chief as selfish and ungrateful. It was, he said, an insult to Americans to suppose, that they served a chief; they served a cause and not a man; and when the Allies asked, what reward they had received or what thanks had been bestowed for the sufferings at Rivas, at Masaya, and at Granada, they recalled names that should fill the souls of soldiers with devotion and enthusiasm to the cause in which they were engaged. The address was brief; but it had an effect on those who heard it, and for several days the spirit of the garrison was better than it had been.

On the 13th, Caycee, with his Rangers, went to San Juan for the purpose of bringing to Rivas the letters and papers brought by the Sierra Nevada from Panama. Titus was a passenger on the steamer, and had been intrusted, so Lockridge afterward said, with the official report of events on the river; but Walker did not get this report until many days after Titus' arrival at Rivas, and then in the shape of duplicates by the next vessel with mails from San Juan del Norte. Hence, for some time, the chief information as to affairs on the San Juan was derived from Titus, and this, as may be readily imagined, was of very inaccurate character. This person, Titus, had not been at Rivas long, before his reports were regarded as wholly worthless; for, during the sickness of one of Walker's aides, Titus was requested to act, for the time, on the staff of the general-in-chief. The first duty on which he was sent, required him to approach a point

where the Allies and Americans were in presence of each other; and Titus, not venturing within range of the enemy's fire, received a statement from a soldier and brought it to headquarters as a report of facts. A moment after Titus' return, Henningsen rode up, and reported to Walker a state of facts entirely the reverse of Titus' report. Of course, the services of Titus were immediately dispensed with.

From the first, Walker placed no confidence in the statements of Titus about affairs on the river. No commission was given to Titus; on the contrary, when he requested to be sent to the United States with authority to act for Nicaragua, his application was refused. Although possessed of some plausibility, he could lead only superficial observers astray as to his real character. He had too much the air of the bully, to gain credit for either honesty or firmness of purpose. His future conduct will hereafter be related; and from it may be learned something of the man who, when he left New-Orleans, boasted that in not many days the San Juan river would be open to the Americans.

At two o'clock on the morning of the 16th, Walker marched for San Jorge, with about 400 effective men, two iron six-pounders, one twelve-pound howitzer, and four small mortars. Henningsen accompanied the force with the view of directing the operations of the artillery. The force of the enemy had been swelled to upward of 2,000 men, by fresh troops from Guatemala and Costa Rica; and only the day before a body of 400 or 500 had been carried on the lake steamer from Tortugas, about ten leagues south of Virgin Bay, to the camp at San

attempted to address them; but Hooff, drawing his pistol, warned the fellows off under peril of their lives. Then, indignant at the Allies for permitting such an insult as the approach of deserters to officers bearing a flag of truce, Hooff and Brady returned to Rivas without waiting longer the arrival of Lieut. Huston. Soon after, however, Lieut. Huston entered the town, accompanied by a corporal of marines.

Immediately after Lieut. Huston entered the Nicaraguan camp, he was told to forbid his corporal to speak with the soldiers about facts or events at San Juan del Sur. In spite of this injunction the marine told the most exaggerated stories about the number of men the Allies had at San Juan, and about their strength generally. Lieut. Huston remained in Rivas during the night of the 23d, and he frequently expressed his surprise at the cheerful and confident aspect of affairs in the place. Before leaving with the women, he informed Walker that Commander Davis had ordered him to say any communications he had to make to Macdonald, the agent of the Transit contractors at San Juan, should be faithfully delivered. Walker replied, "he did not desire to write to Macdonald"; but added that Lieut. Huston might say to Commander Davis—and as a communication for Macdonald—"he considered his position at Rivas impregnable to the force at the disposal of the enemy so long as his provisions lasted; if Lockridge did not join him in Rivas by the time his commissary stores were exhausted, he would abandon the place and join the force on the San Juan; and he considered himself wholly able to carry out such a movement." Macdonald

afterward told Walker that he never received this message. From this fact, it would appear that Davis' offer was a mere effort to entrap Walker into writing something which might seem to justify the former in the course he afterward took.

On the morning of the 24th the women and children left Rivas in charge of Lieut. Huston and under the protection of the United States flag. Among them were several ladies who had encountered the dangers and privations of the camp with a courage and fortitude which might have made many of the men blush. Their departure was a great relief to Walker, as it removed one of the most serious obstacles to a movement from Rivas; and it was reasonable to suppose that their absence would inspire new spirit and resolution into the troops thus relieved of an anxious burden. Far from this, however, desertions, which had almost ceased since the 11th, re-commenced after the 24th; and by the 26th Johnson and Titus and Bostwick had disappeared from Rivas. Late in the afternoon of that day it was reported to Walker that Bell, commanding at Santa Ursula, had not been seen for several hours; and when he did reappear, his orders in regard to the change of the sentries' post, were suspicious. He was ordered to headquarters; but soon after the aid communicated the order, Bell mounted his mule, and riding hastily past the sentries, fled to the Allied camp.

But while Americans were thus proving false to themselves and false to their countrymen, the native Nicaraguans in Rivas were giving an example of fidelity and fortitude worthy the race which had been naturalized in