

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ENGLISH
SOLDIER IN THE UNITED STATES
ARMY. COMPRISING
OBSERVATIONS AND ADVENTURES
IN THE STATES AND MEXICO**

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Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army. Comprising Observations and Adventures in the States and Mexico by George Ballentine

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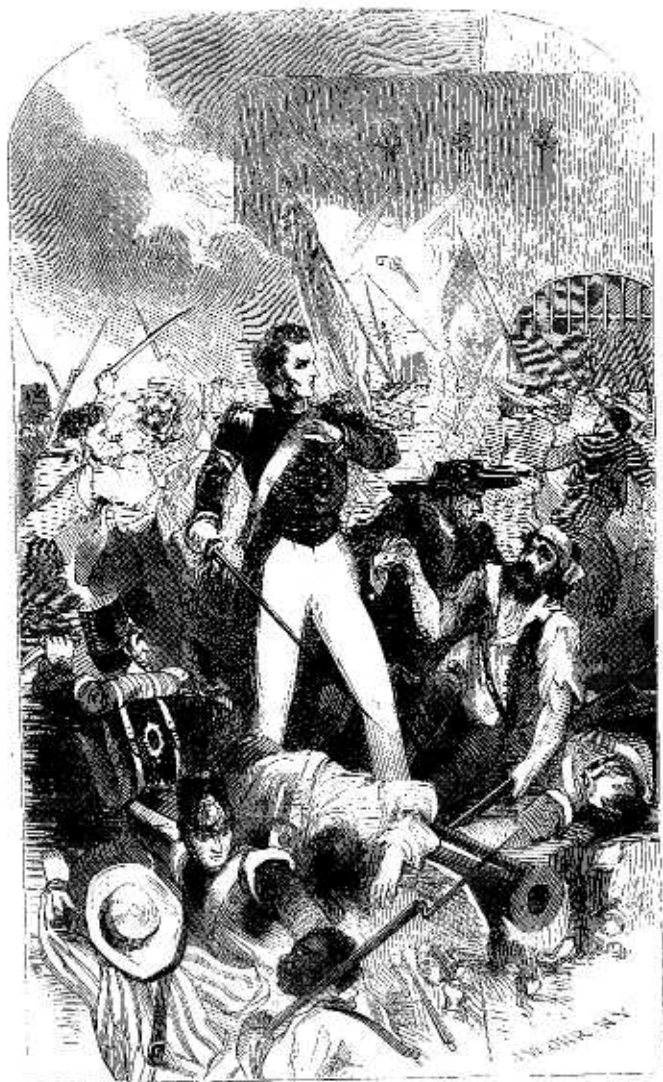
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GEORGE BALLENTINE

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THE SOLDIER IN MEXICO.

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OF AN
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UNITED STATES ARMY.
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STATES AND MEXICO.

NEW YORK:
STRINGER & TOWNSEND, 222 BROADWAY.
1854.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1854,

By STEPHENS AND TOWNSEND,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

American Publishers' Preface.

DURING the discussion in the Senate of the United States, upon the bill to confer additional military rank upon General Winfield Scott, in acknowledgment of his great services to his country, General Shields remarked that no worthy history of the Mexican war had yet been written. The truth of the observation was everywhere felt. What has hitherto appeared on the subject, beyond the official despatches, has more resembled romance than history, being in the main confined to dashing narratives of the personal adventures of roving or belligerent Hotspurs, who knew little and cared less about the discipline and routine of the every-day life of the regular soldier; or on the other hand to eulogistic compilations, prepared for sale, rather than as contri-

butions to history. The writers of both classes have "cast discreetly into shade" whatever would "offend the eye" of the readers they sought to appreciate.

As a partial remedy for the evil complained of by the gallant officer above referred to, the publishers put forth the present volume. If it does not rise to the dignity of history, it at least partakes of that faithfulness of record and clearness of detail which give history its value. The author is manifestly superior to that class of his countrymen ordinarily found in the rank and file of an army, in intelligence, in education, in observation, in descriptive and narrative power, and in candor and liberality of sentiment. Something of foreign misapprehension, possibly some degree of foreign preference or prejudice, may be found in his pages; and it is by no means improbable that some of his criticisms upon men and events may be unjust; but there is throughout the volume an evident desire to be just as well as independent, both in criticism and in narration.

The publishers confidently express the opinion, in which they are confirmed by the verdict of the literary gentlemen to whom the work has been submitted

for supervision, not only that nothing has yet issued from the American press that gives so intelligent and lively a description of the *actualities* of the war in Mexico, but that no work is extant in the English language which presents so interesting a picture of a soldier's life—his round of conversation, his employments, his toils, dangers, and escapes—what he sees and does, and how he does it—as this autobiography. The reader will find it difficult to part company with the author. There is no "fine writing" to pall upon the taste. Everything is told naturally, and everything is described earnestly. The style is nervous yet chaste, and free from the coarseness which too often disfigures a soldier's narrative. Yet there is no sentimentality. The manliness of the true soldier is apparent on every page. The charm of the work is in the impressive distinctness of every picture of place or incident. The reader will feel as though he accompanied the hardy soldier from the moment of his enlistment to that of his discharge; messing with him on Governor's Island, marching with him to join the forces under General Scott, sleeping with him on the mountain side, where the bed is made

softer by putting aside some of the larger stones, circuitously approaching the scene of action, exchanging a repartee or a word of encouragement with a comrade, mingling in the *méléc*, and finally entering the city of Mexico in triumph, and realizing all the peculiarities of its buildings and its people. So vividly is every scene painted that a stranger, with the volume as his guide, might trace the entire route of the American army through Mexico, locate every bivouac, and comprehend every manoeuvre or military movement. The publishers feel assured that this commendation of the volume will be verified by every intelligent reader of its pages.