

nades, monuments, and handsome public buildings. The community's front yard is being quite well cared for. But how about the back yard? In many cases where a village's front yard, so to speak, is not badly cared for, the same village's back-yard is shamefully neglected—especially that part of the village visible from the railroad.

Has not the time come when these communities are prepared to take up the problem of making a better presentation of themselves than that which some of them now make to the traveling public of the railroads? The very shrewdness of our people in advertising might be expected to have a salutary influence here. The same town that is evidently sensitive as to its appearance in the eyes of the casual visitor who passes through its main thoroughfares seems to be not at all sensitive to the shabby spectacle it makes of itself to those who approach it, or pass by it, on the railroad.

It is true that this shabbiness is often the result of a reckless use of back-yards by private owners. But there may generally be found some legal means of suppressing nuisances; and if not, the town could often purchase cheaply, and easily

make more respectable to the eye, the ungainly territory. Sometimes the object may be accomplished by moral suasion, by awakening the spirit of emulation, by cultivating local pride, by arousing a proper public spirit.

The trouble now is that holders of real estate along the railroads are apt to make the side of their property next to the tracks a mere dumping-ground. All the waste product of the community is here put out of sight by being thrown *into* the sight of the railroad traveler. It is the region of Carlyle's "shot rubbish." How many little towns turn a dirty face to the stranger, who may never know that they are double-faced and that the one looking on the village green is as clean and pretty as may be!

There is generally some place in every community where the old boot, the rusted stove-pipe, and all other mere relics of past utilities, may serve a useful function; but this place is not the back-yard of the village, which is in reality the front yard of the passenger-car. How many of THE CENTURY'S readers will make a beginning of reform in their own community, and let us know something of the results?



OPEN LETTERS

A Controversy of the Mexican War.

IN that part of General Grant's "Personal Memoirs" which treats of the Mexican War of 1846-48 he declares that it was forced upon Mexico in a manner wholly unjustifiable—that it was a political war, out of which the administration desired to make political capital, but desired at the same time to avoid giving the generals conducting it, who were Whigs, the opportunity of winning fame, which would render them formidable rivals for popular favor. And in his ninth chapter, headed "Political Intrigue," Grant asserts that this purpose was to be effected by exposing both their armies to defeat. Accordingly, he says, when General Taylor, by his early victories, had attracted the attention of the people, and "something had to be done to neutralize his growing popularity," General Scott was sent to take command of the forces in Mexico. And, says General Grant, "it was no doubt supposed that Scott's ambition would lead him to slaughter Taylor, or destroy his chances for the Presidency, and yet it was hoped that he would not make sufficient capital himself to secure the prize." But, lest he should make capital, the following scheme was devised: "Scott," continues General Grant, "had estimated the men and material that would be required to capture Vera Cruz and to march on the capital of the country, two

hundred and sixty miles in the interior. He was promised all he asked, and seemed to have not only the confidence of the President, but his sincere good wishes. The promises were all broken. Only about half the troops were furnished that had been pledged, other war material was withheld, and Scott had scarcely started for Mexico before the President undertook to supersede him," etc. "General Scott had less than twelve thousand men at Vera Cruz. He had been promised by the administration a very much larger force—or claimed that he had, and he was a man of veracity."

A much more extended quotation would be necessary to exhibit the detail and particularity with which General Grant dresses up the charge. And it is one which requires some management to give it any degree of plausibility; for to conquer Mexico (which had to be done, "or the political object would be unachieved"), and at the same time bring disgrace on the generals who did the work, was indeed, as General Grant says, "a most embarrassing problem to solve." When General Scott, after the campaign, complained that the department had not properly supported him, Governor Marcy replied in a few contemptuous sentences which should have set the slander at rest forever. "You seek," said he to Scott, "to create the belief . . . that the government, after preferring you to any other of the gallant generals within the range of its choice, had labored to

frustrate its own plans, to bring defeat on its own armies, and to involve itself in ruin and disgrace, for an object so unimportant in its bearing upon public affairs. A charge so entirely preposterous, so utterly repugnant to all the probabilities of human conduct, calls for no refutation."

General Grant, however, thinks that Scott was expected to expose Taylor to defeat by taking away half his army for the expedition to the City of Mexico, while, by withholding the reinforcements necessary to raise his own force to an effective strength, the administration was to expose Scott to a similar fate.

I was in the War Department with Governor Marcy during his whole term, and was in close relations with him. I held the same position with the secretaries under the next two administrations. I had, therefore, opportunities of knowing facts when they occurred, and of hearing them discussed afterward; but I do not pretend to any knowledge that is not open to all, for everything that was written about the Mexican War by the department or its generals has been printed by Congress. The only advantage I have over the general public is in knowing where, in the hundreds of unindexed volumes, the facts are stated. And I will undertake to establish these propositions:

1. The administration took pains to spread and enhance the fame of all Taylor's victories.

2. If Taylor had chosen, he could have commanded the expedition against the City of Mexico. But he did not approve of it. He advised that we take and hold the line we were going to claim as the boundary. Moreover, General Grant says Taylor "looked upon the enemy as the aggrieved party."

3. The expedition against the City of Mexico was not General Scott's original plan.

He did not approve it until after it had been determined on, and preparations for it were in progress.

4. No promises were ever made to General Scott of any number of men or any quantity of material. Nor did he ever say, unless he whispered it in General Grant's ear, that any such promises were made. All that he wrote has been printed; and though he made many and bitter complaints, he never said that any promises were made or any promises broken. Some of his complaints were shown by Governor Marcy to be void of truth. He surely would not have resorted to fiction, and have omitted facts that would have served his purpose better.

5. The largest force ever named by General Scott for the expedition to the City of Mexico was 20,000 men. General Taylor thought 25,000 would be required. At the close of his victorious campaign, General Scott had under his command 32,156 men. He had discharged nearly 4000 volunteers whose time had expired, and had lost many in the battles around the Mexican capital. He must have had, from first to last, at least 37,000 men—nearly double the number he had named.

6. General Scott was not promised, and did not expect or count upon, any larger force than he had at Vera Cruz. When General Scott was

sent to Mexico, he was not ordered to lead or send an expedition against Vera Cruz and the City of Mexico. He was to do so only if, "on arriving at the theater of action, you shall deem it to be practicable." And that depended upon the amount of force he could take from Taylor's army, which he was expected and told to determine on the spot. If these, added to the regulars which Congress had been requested to authorize, and the volunteers called out under existing laws, would make up a sufficient force to warrant him in undertaking the expedition, it was to go forward; otherwise, not. And of its sufficiency he was to be the judge. When he went to Vera Cruz he took all the troops he could gather for that purpose. He had all Taylor's army under his command, and he did not want more than he took. General Taylor thought Vera Cruz might be taken with 4000 men. General Scott thought, at times, 8000, 10,000, 12,000, 15,000 desirable, because he expected to have to encounter, in landing, a covering army of 20,000 or 30,000 Mexicans on the beach. But in December he wrote Taylor that he would proceed if he could get together 8000. In fact, he took 12,000; and when he landed there was not a Mexican soldier within eighty miles, except the small garrison of Vera Cruz, who wisely kept within their walls, and he lost not a man by any casualty in landing.

7. General Scott made no estimates whatever for the President and the Secretary of the war material he required. He was commanding general, and made his requisitions upon the proper bureaus for what he required, without submitting them to any one. All that he asked was sent him, except shells, and of these many times as many were sent as he had use for. For he made requisition for 80,000 shells; 69,000 were shipped, 40,000 reached him, and he used not 1200. He asked for 50 mortars; all were shipped; 23 reached him; he used 10. He asked for 44 heavy guns; all were shipped; I do not find how many reached him; he used 6. In fact, Vera Cruz did not make the resistance he expected. It fell before all his material reached him.

8. General Scott, in depleting Taylor's army, made ample provision for his safety. This was urged upon him by the War Department, and he did it. Taylor was far in the interior, one hundred and fifty miles beyond the Rio Grande. Scott recommended that he fall back on Monterey till he should be reinforced; but that course did not suit the old hero's notions. He wrote the department that he was still strong enough to hold his own, and proved it by beating Santa Anna in the open field. Scott needs no other evidence that his ambition did not lead him to slaughter Taylor.

All the foregoing facts are stated in official papers, printed in documents 8 and 60 of the House of Representatives, 30th Congress, 1st session.

John D. McPherson.

"An Effort to Rescue Jefferson Davis."

A CORRECTION BY GENERAL WHEELER.

MAJOR H. B. McCLELLAN has sent us a letter, addressed to General Joseph Wheeler, in correction of the statements in his article, "An Effort to