

the authorities within the city an opportunity and a motive (the safety of the capital) for making a peace. He did precisely what he designed; he marched from Puebla in four columns, with the interval of a day's march between each two columns, and arrived himself, being with the leading column, at Ayotla, before the peñon, on the 11th of August.

While the rear was coming up, he reconnoitred the Peñon and country around, and satisfied himself of the practicability of a march by the way of Chalco to San Augustin. As the rear columns came up they were directed towards Chalco, and taking up that route himself, the general went to San Augustin, 15 or 17 miles—the road, as the letters will show, being deemed impracticable by the Mexicans—arriving there on the 17th of August, being then 12 miles from the capital, and in front of the fortifications of San Antonio, which are about two and a half or three miles from San Augustin. These fortifications were threatened by a division, while the general, on the 19th, ordered a force to open a road in order to turn them to the left. This force had to pass what, in the letters, is called a *pedrigal*, i. e., a surface of volcanic scoria, broken into every possible form, presenting sharp stones and deep fissures, exceedingly difficult for the passage of infantry, and impassable for that of cavalry, except by a single road, in front of which, and perfectly commanding it, General Valencia had established an entrenched camp on elevated ground, which camp he occupied with his division of 5,000 men from San Luis Potosi, every where in the letters spoken of as the "flower" of the Mexican army. He had twenty-three pieces of superb artillery, and was covered by a large body of cavalry. There was firing from and upon this entrenched camp during the afternoon of the 19th of August, but no serious demonstration was made upon it that day, the time being employed by the engineers in looking at the position and studying the grounds around it; so that the Mexicans, both in the camp and in the city, imagined they had gained a victory, merely because our army had not yet defeated them. The bells in the city were rung for joy, and General Valencia distributed honors among the leading officers of his camp as the shades of evening left him in security within his lines.

During the night of the 19th, a body of our troops passed along a ravine under cover of a night made doubly dark by a heavy rain, and in the morning they had gained the rear of the entrenched camp, into which they plunged headlong before the astonished Mexicans had time to put themselves in position for defence. The assault was commenced and completed in the short period of seventeen minutes, though our troops were engaged during an hour or two in picking up the scattered fragments of the proud "division of the north"—Valencia himself disappearing altogether. Several names are applied to this entrenched camp, (San Geronimo, Padernas, Magdalena, &c.) but it is generally called Contreras, and it is about 5 or 6 miles from San Augustin to the left of the San Antonio road. Passing by Contreras our troops, before mid-day, were in full march by San Angel and Coyoacan towards Churubusco, where

the Mexicans were in force in a church or convent strongly fortified. About five or six hundred yards beyond this convent, the road by San Angel, &c., comes into that of San Antonio at a point where, by a bridge, the San Antonio road or causeway crosses a small stream or canal, called the Churubusco river. This bridge was defended by a perfectly constructed, scientific *tete de pont*, the defences here and at the convent forming a system mutually supporting each other.

No time was to be lost; and at a few minutes before 1, p. m., our troops were pushed forward to the attack of the fortified convent, where the firing became very severe with both artillery and small arms. There had been some firing at San Antonio on the 18th, and again on the 19th; but on the 20th, after the defeat of the enemy at Contreras, General Santa Anna saw that our troops, by the way of San Angel, would soon be in the rear of his fortified position at San Antonio, and he therefore ordered that place to be abandoned, directing some few of the guns, which there was no time to remove, to be spiked; but the American division in front, by passing a column to the left, had already turned the position and succeeded in cutting the line of the retreating troops, which were also attacked along the causeway itself by another portion of the division, and thus the Mexican force at San Antonio was broken, and in a great part dispersed or taken prisoners, only a few reaching the *tete de pont*—the American division now passing down to the attack of that place, while the attack upon the convent of Churubusco was going on. At about half past 1, p. m., the Mexicans were in force at the church or convent, and at the *tete de pont*, and had, besides, an immense body of infantry to their left (our right) along and behind the Churubusco river, nearly at right angles to the San Antonio causeway; they had also another body of infantry and a immense body of cavalry extending along the causeway itself from the *tete de pont* towards the city. The American general being on the San Angel road, in front of Churubusco, directed the whole of the operations, which soon after 1, p. m., became general, extending throughout the entire Mexican army. He directed columns to support the main attack in front, and other columns to the right to support the San Antonio division, in the attack upon the *tete de pont* and the extensive line of infantry along the Churubusco river; other columns again, to the left, in order to turn both the convent and the *tete de pont*, in which operation the enemy's force along the causeway beyond the *tete de pont* was engaged. The battle now raged at all points and in all directions, wherever the enemy was found in position, and continued without intercession during a period of nearly three hours, when the convent and *tete de pont* were both carried, and the enemy was driven from the river and the causeway, and compelled to fly in consternation towards the city, entering it by the gate of San Antonio in confusion and dismay, followed by a considerable body of our troops at least a mile and a half beyond the *tete de pont*, while a body of cavalry pushed the pursuit into the very gate itself, about a mile and a half still further, not hearing

or heeding the *recall* which had been sounded from the rear. This cavalry charge is frequently referred to in the following letters, and no doubt amazed the Mexicans to an extraordinary degree, both by its boldness and by the little loss attending its successful retirement to the main army, which had halted near a place called, in the letters, *Portalis*. The American force, at about 4, p. m., was in the entire possession of all the outer defences of the city, on the San Antonio causeway, and could have entered the city that evening without serious difficulty. But the general had accomplished exactly what he had designed before he left Puebla. He therefore halted the troops, and after giving necessary instructions, returned by the San Antonio road to San Augustin, arriving there about dusk in the evening, having been the whole day in the saddle, directing the important operations briefly recited above.

In the evening he was visited by some Englishmen from the city, for what purpose is not precisely known—but the next morning the general, starting on the San Antonio road, turned to the left, and was met at Coyoacan, near Churubusco, by a deputation from the Mexican government, under a flag, proposing some terms which, whatever they were, were instantly rejected; and the general sent by the deputation a paper he had himself prepared, offering to grant an armistice on certain conditions, the first being that the Mexican government should appoint commissioners to receive and consider the propositions of the American government to be presented by an American commissioner, then at the head-quarters of the American army. This communication being sent, the general, with one division of his army, continued on to Tacubaya, about six miles from Coyoacan, and entered that village, as stated at the commencement of this preface.

The proposal of the American general was agreed to by General Santa Anna, and on the 24th of August, the ratifications of an armistice were duly exchanged.

Commissioners met to treat of peace, and this is an important point in the history of the events before the Mexican capital. The army, one is disposed to think, had accomplished its mission. It had brought commissioners together to treat of peace, after the governments of both countries had declared that a peace was desired that should be honorable to both nations. But peace was not made.

It is proper to say that the general-in-chief had no power confided to him by his government authorizing him to act as a commissioner in concluding a treaty of peace—he was sent to this country as a military man exclusively. He, therefore, is in no manner responsible for the failure of the negotiations, which nevertheless he has all the merit of having brought about, after the events of the 20th of August.

It is equally proper to say, in justice to the talented and experienced gentleman selected by the government of the United States, and sent to the head-quarters of Major General Scott as the commissioner to treat for peace, was trammelled by the instructions of the government, in so much that it will remain a prob-

lem as to whether more enlarged powers would not have enabled him to have made a treaty "honorable to both nations."

The ultimatum of our commissioner was handed to the Mexican commissioners early in September, about the 2d of the month, and very soon afterwards reports began to reach the general, and accumulated very rapidly, that the Mexicans were engaged, in violation of the articles of the armistice, in fortifying the city, especially at night. On the 6th, the Mexican commissioners, it was expected, would give their answer to the propositions of our commissioners, and they did so, refusing to accept them. Simultaneously with this, the general sent a paper to General Santa Anna, declaring that, as the articles of the armistice had been violated by the Mexican authorities, he felt at liberty to terminate the armistice at his pleasure, but would allow until the next day at noon for explanations. Up to 11 o'clock of the 7th of September, the general had not only made no reconnoissance, but had ordered the engineers to make none, in strict compliance with the armistice.

Soon after 12, m., on the 7th September, the general rode to the heights of Tacubaya, over against Chapultepec, where a building was pointed out to him, a few hundred yards from the base of the Chapultepec hill, which was said to be a foundry in full operation, casting cannon from bells removed from the churches in the city. As he rode away from the place of observation he remarked that he would, the next morning, destroy the foundry, so as to prevent the enemy from making any more cannon, and would then at his leisure lay down his plan for a final attack upon the city.

The battle of the 8th of September, called the battle of the Molino del Rey, was the result of this determination, this being the name of the building pointed out as the foundry. The enemy, anticipating an attack in that direction, had moved out, on the 7th, a very large force, said by some prisoners taken on the 8th to be 8,000 men, besides a thousand within the works at Chapultepec. This force was covered by buildings and entrenchments extending full a mile in length, its left being at the Molino del Rey, near some woods at the base of the Chapultepec hill, while its right was within a strongly built hacienda, of stone, as usual.

Early in the morning of the 8th, the attack was made by a division of our troops, and the fight was continued rather more than an hour and a half, when the enemy was driven from his entire line, with the loss, besides killed, of many prisoners, and of several pieces of field artillery, all he ventured to bring into that engagement.

As the enemy supposed this attack was intended to lead the way to Chapultepec, and as Chapultepec was not assailed, the opinion in the city was quite decided that we had sustained a defeat, although we had in fact most completely accomplished the only object in view. Our loss in the fight was very great, and although something like the means of casting cannon had been found and destroyed, although we had taken many prisoners (several hundreds) and several pieces of artillery, still, we believe the army would much rather have dispensed with the glories of that day, as it was

accompanied with unusual sorrow and mourning for many of its noblest spirits.

The general then began his preparations for a final attack. He ordered a depot of sick and wounded, of captured artillery, &c., including prisoners, to be established at a small village called Mixcoac, to the right of Tacubaya, through which he had passed in coming from Coyoacan; and in front of this village, at a place called Piedad, he posted a division to threaten the city in that direction. Immediately there was seen an immense number of laborers busily engaged, night and day, in fortifying the causeways, by which the city was accessible from the Piedad. It was wonderful to see the activity with which they worked.

At the end of three or four days the fortifications in that direction seemed very complete, and lined with artillery and men.

It was evident that the enemy looked upon that as the contemplated place of attack, and for this very reason, perhaps, the general made his arrangements to attack, not there on the right, but at Chapultepec on his left, but still he kept up a show of attack from the Piedad. On the morning of the 12th of September the firing commenced from three or four batteries upon Chapultepec, but no show of force was made, and the enemy thought it a feint, keeping his principal force in the direction of the Piedad. The firing continued all day on both sides with very little effect.

It was resumed the next morning, and continued about two hours, when it ceased, by order of the general, the cessation being the signal or time determined for the advance of two assaulting parties of 250 men each, supported by strong columns, the artillery resuming its fire as soon as the movement was in full operation, and in about an hour the heights were ascended by our troops, and the scaling ladders being placed against the walls, our intrepid officers and soldiers passed over into the main work, driving the enemy either out of the work altogether, or into buildings where they surrendered at discretion. The enemy, during the night of the 12th, had sent additional force to defend Chapultepec, though evidently at a loss to know where the real attack was to be made. The defence, however, was desperate, the fight being maintained at a multitude of points in the woods near the hill, at batteries and breastworks at the base of the hill, and from various points and different positions on the sides of the hill. This fight was, on the whole, one of the most remarkable that has occurred during the war.

But I design merely an outline. As the military school was at that place, the superintendent, professors, and students, became prisoners of war, with a large body of other officers and men, including the celebrated veteran General Bravo.

Chapultepec having fallen, our troops were directed in two columns along two causeways, one leading directly to the city, and the other to the left, to intersect the San Cosme causeway, and now the fight was resumed inch by inch upon each route, but the infantry of the enemy was driven, and his batteries taken in rapid succession along a distance, upon each causeway, of more than a mile and a half, and at night both columns had made a lodgement within the gates of the capital.

Our force at Piedad was not occupied on either of the two days. A field battery opened its fire upon the enemy, and movements were made as if to attack in that direction, thus occupying the enemy, already strongly in the belief that the real attack was to be there, but after Chapultepec was taken, and our forces had nearly penetrated the city, the force was withdrawn from Piedad, and sent to the support of one of the attacking columns in the city. The deeds of valor by our troops on this day, as on previous occasions, deserve to be recorded by a Tacitus, or a Livy, or a Thucydides, and therefore we do not attempt it.

The general, after directing in person the entire operations of the day, giving the most minute and exact instructions for every movement, finally returned, after dark, to Tacubaya, where he was called upon in the night, towards morning, by a deputation from the city council, with information that General Santa Anna had left the city and withdrawn the army, and they desired the general to give them some assurances or conditions before entering the city. This he declined doing, telling them, in substance, that he would agree to no conditions until he should first go into the city, and then only to such as should be self-imposed, but that his course would be such as the dignity and honor of the United States required.

At nine o'clock on the morning of the 14th of September, the general dismounted within the court of the national palace, and ascending the broad flight of stairs to the saloons above, sat down and wrote a brief order, announcing his occupation of the capital of Mexico.

[Extract.]

SAN ANTONIO, August 19.

Yesterday we commenced firing upon the enemy with our cannon, and killed some men and horses. To-day, up to 12, m., we have fired but few shots, and the enemy are retreating, with the object, I suppose, of going to Tacubaya by the way of Pedrigal, [Contreras.] They have a long distance to march, and I do not know what will become of them in their unfortunate situation. Every day is a loss to them and a gain to us. The struggle will be severe but favorable to us, as the measures we have taken are very good, and they will not this time laugh in their beard, as they have on former occasions.

DN. P. J.

The following letter is from a member of the Mexican Congress, and is marked *private*:

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND: I have before me your welcome letter of the 10th instant, in which, among other things, you are pleased to