

[NOTE.—The first sheet of the original of this letter was lost.]

\* \* \* Scott, a man of superior talents in the art of war, as it appears, considering the position of Valencia very advantageous, established a small portion of his troops in a ravine very near our batteries, from whence he could use his muskets to advantage without injury from us, he, Scott, having no artillery. Afterwards, he sent a column, with three light pieces of artillery, to take a position on the heights on the right of Valencia's camp, and another body of troops on the left of Valencia, in order to flank this general. At about 6 o'clock in the morning, (of the 20th of August,) he obtained his object, having troops concealed on both flanks of Valencia, and a very few in front, with a number of wagons, to call the attention of Valencia that way.

The column which, on the previous afternoon, had taken position on the right of Valencia, Scott ordered should get into the rear during the night, and the body of troops that were in front of Valencia the same afternoon were divided, one part of which took the right of Valencia; and, in the mean time, he had sent reinforcements to the body stationed on the left, obliging his soldiers to cross a river half body (up to the waist) deep. In this manner Valencia, during the night, was entirely cut off, and, at 6 o'clock the next morning, he was attacked at the same time in the front, in the rear, and on both flanks. The engagement lasted about two hours, the result of which was that all our artillery was lost, with the entire train, ammunition, and all; a great many killed and wounded, and those who were not made prisoners were entirely dispersed. On the afternoon of the day previous, Valencia, seeing that he was in danger of being flanked, asked assistance of Santa Anna, who ordered him to retire immediately, but he, Valencia, did not retire, probably because he considered victory possible. Valencia did not send for reinforcements once, but several times, on all which occasions he was refused by Santa Anna, and the order to retire was repeated; on account of which, after the unfortunate result of the engagement, Santa Anna ordered this general to be shot for disobedience. Some assure us there is foundation for this order, for Valencia was very obstinate, and thereby caused the loss of the whole army; still, others do not think so, as, having behaved with valor, saves him from all discreditable imputations.

My opinion is that Santa Anna should have sent Valencia reinforcements, and should have procured a victory by any means, and after that chastised him for his disobedience of orders. In this manner he would have rendered an important service to the nation, and it would have been a salutary example for generals-in-chief in future. Scott, having destroyed our best troops, the flower of the army, then proceeded with his forces and attacked the main army immediately afterwards, that is to say, those stationed at San Antonio and Churubusco and Mexicalcingo, thereby effecting, in one single day, the destruction of an army of more than thirty thousand men. This North American general, in a strange country, has

fought us in detail and destroyed our large army, a thing which our general should have done with respect to his army.

It is now 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and the enemy has sent in an intimation allowing 48 hours for the evacuation of this city, so that their (his) troops may occupy it. Our troops, which with great difficulty have been brought together, do not exceed eight or nine thousand men, with which we can do nothing, as they have lost their *morale*.

The companies of Bravo and Independence, with the exception of a few killed, are prisoners. Generals Salas and Gorostiza are prisoners, as also others whose names I do not recollect. As yet, I hear of the death of only General Mehia and of Frontera, colonel of cavalry. It is also said, but not certainly, that Perdigan was killed. I have just been told that Bravo is a prisoner, and also Anaya.

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

J. C.—MY MUCH LOVED AND RESPECTED FRIEND: The enemy made his appearance, on the 12th, near the Peñon, which place they did not appear disposed to attack, it being too well fortified, and they went around by the way of Chalco. On the 16th, they made their appearance at San Augustin Tlalpam, and Valencia immediately took position on the hills of Contreras, near the town of San Angel, with his brilliant division, brought by him from San Luis Potosi, in number 6,000 men, perfectly well equipped, and furnished with 24 pieces of cannon. This was a precaution taken by government, as no one thought that the Americans would take the road from San Augustin to Contreras, as it is over a *pedrigal*. I do not know whether you are acquainted with the road, but even those who go over it on foot encounter a thousand obstacles. [*Pedrigal* means volcanic grounds exceedingly broken, full of sharp stones, rising almost into precipices, and broken into immense chasms.] Part of the Americans went down to the hacienda of Coapa, and Santa Anna thought fit to place troops at San Antonio in order to impede their progress that way. Things remained in this position until Thursday, the 19th, when the Americans, having overcome the obstacles of the *pedrigal*, presented themselves in front of Valencia, who gave them a hard fight, having confidence, owing to the past, in the valor of his troops; but, on the morning of the 20th, about ten minutes after 6, he found himself attacked by the enemy, who destroyed all his division, took all of his artillery, and over twenty thousand dollars he had for the payment of his troops.

This great disaster was increased in the afternoon at about 3, when the Yankees took the well fortified point at Churubusco, causing a great many deaths, and taking a great number of prisoners. You can imagine our state in the capital under such repeated misfortunes; the more so, as all of our troops are dispersed, and we are momentarily expecting an attack upon the capital. We are lost, Mr. J., and, in my opinion, there is no hope of repa-

ration. Some people are spreading the report that Santa Anna is implicated in an intrigue; but this I know is false, and no one has any right to suspect anything of the kind.

Who knows what is to become of us when these men come into the capital?

\* \* \* Very possibly these devils will find some means to intercept this letter, [indeed!] but, as I said to you before, I will see by what stratagem I can send you my letters in future.

B. R.

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

DEAR —: Yesterday was the date of a most bloody battle at the edge of the stony ground of San Angel, and though until yesterday morning victory had declared itself in favor of our arms, yet the enemy, favored by the darkness of the night, and by rain and some corn-fields in that vicinity, found means to place their troops in all directions, taking possession of a height, and yesterday morning they opened the action upon our forces on all sides, from which resulted a dreadful slaughter and a general dispersion, which it was impossible to restrain. General Valencia lost his entire battery, which is now in the hand of the enemy, consisting of twenty-two cannon of large calibre.

In consequence of this affair, there is a want of confidence in all parts, many saying that it was a deliberate surrender; but, according to my opinion, the fault lies in the want of foresight and precaution in our principal officers, who rely too much for success upon numbers, while the enemy neither sleep nor know fear in war.

We have lost Churubusco and more than five thousand men between killed and wounded, without having been able to think how to make the slightest advance—on the contrary, all has been lost. To-day the lines (referring to the garitas) have been reinforced, and the next action will be decisive, placing this capital in the hands of the Yankees, or it will cease to exist.

D. A.

[Extract.]

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

To R. C. C: On Thursday the firing commenced against Valencia's division, and continued until 5, p. m., when the victory appeared to be on our side, &c., [then follows the reverse.]

This can only be a curse of heaven, otherwise it would not have been possible for the enemy to have given us such a severe blow.

MY DEAR PEPITA: After the immense misfortunes which have befallen us, and the thousand fatigues and risks I have gone through,

the hand of providence has saved me, and I reached the capital last evening. Pedro is well, and I have the pleasure of commending him to you. A. J. is well and saved himself. I cannot now write you any more. And it appears there is an armistice of 48 hours, at the end of which I do not know what will occur. I will notify you.

J. M.

MEXICO, 20th August, 1847.

MY DEAR CHULELA: Wishing to relieve you of the fear and anguish so natural on account of the misfortunes that have beset us, I wrote to you and concealed the truth, but now that the danger is all over I will speak the truth, and say that we have been completely routed, losing all of our fortifications in less than six hours. We have only a small portion of our troops left, which will leave the city to-morrow. All personal danger is now at an end, and nothing disturbs us but the sense of our calamities. The spectacle to-day has been distressing, as you can well imagine; to-morrow it will be worse, and I shall shut myself up between four walls to avoid personal danger. I will go to you if the diligence leaves to-morrow, but this is not certain. As we have no more combatants in the city, the entrance of the enemy will be pacific; we shall only have the mortification of seeing around us imperious visitors. We have had enough of misfortune.

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

G. M. & T: Mr. Trist has been recognized as the commissioner of the United States. To-morrow our government will listen to him. If there is prudence observed something may be arranged, and the future—God only knows what it will be. That the enemy should have reached the very gates of the city is not at all strange. It was unavoidable, and conquerors cannot be restrained. The enemy are at Tacubaya, and I will at another time give you a detailed account of Valencia's discomfiture.

(A young lawyer to his father.)

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

DEAR FATHER: The end has proved, in the most unequivocal manner, the correctness of our prophecies. The brigade under Valencia was completely routed between 7 and 8 o'clock yesterday morning, and, in continuation, the same fate befell the brigade of Perez, stationed at Coyoacan, and the troops at Churubusco.

Who is to be punished for these disasters? The public voice ac-

cuses Santa Anna of having been a cold and impassive spectator of the rout of Valencia, whilst his assistance might possibly have decided the battle in our favor. The Yankees surrounded Valencia, and some of them placed themselves between him and Santa Anna, without any interruption from the latter. Some say that Valencia disobeyed the orders of Santa Anna, and Santa Anna was piqued by the disobedience; but this does not lessen the culpability of the rascal who gratifies a private feeling, and thereby jeopardizes the most sacred interests of his country.

The fact is that everything is lost, and the Yankees will be here to-morrow.

J. W.

[Extract.]

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

MY DEAR BROTHER: Antonio and myself are both well, thanks to God. We have received your letter, &c.

We are in a bad way. We lost the battle on the hills of Contreras, and that of Churubusco, and to-morrow or next day the Yankees will be in the capital. The Yankees have lost 4,000 men out of the ten thousand they had, and with 6,000 men they undertake to occupy the capital, which is almost incredible. We still have about 12,000 men, and entertain hopes of final success. Farewell—do not be anxious if we do not write. Remember me to the girls.  
M.

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND: I have before me your esteemed favor of the 16th instant, in answer to which I give you my sincere thanks for your offer of going to Pateo, and with regard to what you say in reference to the business. I cannot accept your first offer, not even were the events less complicated; and with regard to the second, in order that it may not burden you, you will endeavor, notwithstanding the want of communication, to draw on me for one hundred dollars, and do not lose any opportunity in writing to me, in order that I may keep you in funds.

It is exceedingly painful to me to communicate the distressing news of the loss of our capital, and I will endeavor, so far as I have time, to give you a circumstantial account of all that has happened.

In order that we may understand ourselves, it is necessary to give you an idea of the general plan of defence adopted by our generals, or properly, by Santa Anna alone. The principal line, running from north to south, was determined by the fortified points of Peñon, (old,) Mexicalcingo, and the hacienda of San Antonio, and the extremes (flanks) were covered by Valencia's division,

which was moveable from Texcuco on the left to San Angel on the right, at the same time being available for the defence of the line from San Antonio to Chapultepec, whilst Alvarez's division of cavalry was ordered upon the rear of the enemy, in order to complete their destruction in case of a rout. With regard to the fortifications, in order that you may form some idea of them, I will say this: that on the road of Tlapam, (San Augustin,) there were fortifications at San Antonio, a strong fort at Churubusco, and at the bridge. There were some fortifications in the plain of Natividades, about a league from the city, and also at the garita (entrance) of the city, called San Antonio Abad.

Our assembled forces amounted, at the least, to twenty-six thousand men, of all arms, with about seventy pieces of cannon, while those of the enemy hardly reached ten thousand, with forty pieces of artillery, as has been reported. The situation of the enemy was a very difficult one, as they had no money. At Puebla they paid one per cent. for money, and on the road they made purchases by drafts payable in Mexico, after occupation by them.

When the news reached here on the 10th, that the enemy were at Rio Frio, some troops, together with the national guards, left the capital to occupy and strengthen the Peñon, where it is estimated we had about seven thousand men and twenty-five pieces of cannon; Valencia was then at Texcuco with five thousand men and twenty-two pieces of cannon. The enemy came in sight on the 11th, and on the 12th they came within a league of the fortifications of Peñon, without interruption, and having made a reconnoissance, they moved towards Chalco, and we were then certain that the point of attack would be San Antonio. Therefore, it became necessary for Valencia to move rapidly to San Angel, and the larger part of the troops at the Peñon were ordered, with some cannon, to San Antonio and Churubusco.

At these two points, and at the Portalis, there were over ten thousand men, with artillery of various calibres, from four to twenty-five pounders, together with large howitzers. Although Valencia had express orders to avoid a fight with the enemy, still the thunder of his cannon on the 19th, at about 12 o'clock, gave notice that a fight was going on at the pedrigal, (rough volcanic ground,) near San Angel. The fight became very sharp at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and Santa Anna drew some troops from San Antonio and proceeded towards the scene of battle, and joined to his troops on the road the brigades of reserve, composed of the brilliant 11th, and the light battalions. With these forces, which, if they did not exceed, were certainly not less than three thousand men, Santa Anna remained a cold spectator of the battle, although he sent a body of troops to dislodge a portion of the enemy's force in the edge of the woods, near the tower of Padierna, (near Contreras,) which were cutting off Valencia's communications; but while marching with bayonets fixed to execute this order, Santa Anna ordered them to retire. He then ordered two pieces of cannon to be brought up, which arrived at about dusk, and only about eight shots were fired, without effect, as the evening had set in,

At night Santa Anna withdrew his supporting force to San Angel to sleep. The opposing forces, left in the field, lit their fires, and Valencia, in consequence of the heavy rain that fell during the night, ordered a piquet of two hundred horse to retire, which had been posted in a ravine to prevent precisely what afterwards occurred.

[NOTE.—This refers to the night movement of the American troops, which was made along a ravine to the rear of Valencia's camp, by means of which a surprise was effected on the morning of the 20th.]

At the break of day the following morning, Santa Anna notified Valencia not to continue the action, and he sent the auxiliary brigade to the capital, he himself returning to San Antonio, leaving Valencia isolated, who could not then retreat, as he was surrounded by the enemy, who had availed themselves of the night to select their own positions as they pleased. Valencia therefore continued in his position, and met the enemy in a fight, which did not last over ten minutes, as one of the enemy's columns attacked him in the rear, and with impunity took possession of twenty-two pieces of artillery, which were pointing towards the principal body of the enemy in the front. [This assault lasted seventeen minutes by the watch.] This, together with the conduct of Santa Anna, depressed the enthusiasm of our troops, and they were dispersed; and Valencia, it is said, is gone to the south with Alvarez, whose cavalry, it appears, was not able to act, owing to the nature of the ground, although it is said that the day previous the cavalry made a charge upon the enemy. As far as I have been able to ascertain, it appears that the troops which attacked Valencia were not superior to his in numbers; besides, that Valencia had artillery and the choice of a commanding position; consequently during the fight of the afternoon of the 19th the advantages were on our side, and the enemy, we are assured, lost over two thousand men, and we much less. [The American loss, on the contrary, was very trifling, not even fifty men.] The results of this affair depended entirely upon the operations of the enemy, under cover of the night, the natural carelessness of our generals, and of the conduct of Santa Anna.

We are assured that some of Valencia's officers advised him to change his position on the morning of the 20th; but Valencia, determined to carry out his own plans, did not listen to their advice, giving the enemy time to surprise him, by an attack upon his rear.

Every one agrees that the reciprocal conduct of Santa Anna and Valencia can only be explained, by supposing that each wished to have the glory of a triumph; and to revenge, each upon the other, the sense of previous grievances. I can also assure you, that I heard Santa Anna give the order, after he heard of the defeat of Valencia, that he should be shot, wherever he could be found. I give you this news in time, that you may advise his friends.

The action, of which the above is a brief account, although a

partial one, and very costly to the enemy, owing to the number they lost, was still a decisive one, as I shall explain.

Soon after Santa Anna returned to Churubusco he heard the news of the route of Valencia, and, as he thereby lost the only point which could protect San Antonio, he ordered that place to be abandoned; but, without doubt, there was not one among our generals who knew how to direct this difficult operation—not even Santa Anna himself, whose head is not inventive. [Note.—When Valencia's camp was forced, the passage to San Angel was open, and thus San Antonio was turned by its right.]

I had forgotten to tell you, and it is necessary for you to know it, that Coapa was the general head-quarters of the Americans; that is to say, half a league from San Antonio, a place which the enemy occupied with tranquillity, notwithstanding the fire of our heavy artillery.

From Coapa the enemy could easily perceive, without glasses, our movements at San Antonio, and attack us in our retreat.

Well, then, after Santa Anna heard the news of the rout of Valencia, he ordered the troops at San Antonio to retire and sustain Churubusco, and also ordered the brigade which had left San Angel in the morning for Mexico to return and defend the bridge. [Note: There was here a regular *tete de pont*, according to the best principles of fortification.]

The first part of the order was executed at San Antonio, some of the guns there being spiked and abandoned. This movement was observed by the Americans, who had not up to this moment moved from their position; but when they observed our troops retire, and some confusion in our camp, and understood our design, they ordered a column to pass by the way of the pedregal, and cut off our retreat. At the pedregal they met some of the victorious troops from Valencia's camp, passing by San Angel with the same object. Then, although many of our troops, including our best battalions of national guards, wished to engage in battle, there being much enthusiasm among them, still the principal officers in charge of this retreat would not allow them to fire, but urged their retreat by a forced march—the enemy being on their left without firing, which circumstance we cannot understand, as they could have cut up our troops, the Hidalgo and Victoria national guards.

In this manner our forces arrived at Churubusco, from which place their pursuers had to receive the fire of our musketry, and of one or more cannons, which gave our retreating troops time to take breath, and lengthen the distance which separated them from the enemy, by checking the advance of the latter. It would be difficult to make you understand the disorder which characterized this whole retreat. Only a few of the cannon taken from San Antonio were used at the bridge, as the greater part arrived too late; and while some of the retreating troops were going towards Mexico, they were met by others from the city, going out to their assistance. Wagons of ammunition were going in opposite directions, some of which broke down, obstructing the road—people on foot and those on horseback were coming in collision, and many generals were giving contradictory orders, &c., &c.

Whilst this was going on the fight commenced at Churubusco, under the immediate orders of Santa Anna, but as at this place there was no artillery, and no other troops but those of the national guards, (Bravo's and Independence,) the enemy easily cut them to pieces before fresh troops arrived, not even giving us sufficient time to use the artillery brought from San Antonio. Moreover, the fresh troops did not find ammunition in readiness, on account of which the 11th regiment of the line retired to Mexicalcingo, without having engaged in the fight. Finally, my friend, the bridge of Churubusco was lost almost without resistance, and at a great sacrifice. The bridge was lost before the advance of the retreating troops arrived at the garita of Mexico. The passage at the garita was very narrow, owing to the parapets, and made more difficult by a wagon which had been broken down in the road. The bridge once lost, a party of American cavalry, small in number, drove before them a thousand of our horsemen—then drove before them the retreating infantry, and the confusion became general. Under these circumstances, the small garrison at the garita fired rather upon our own men than upon the enemy. This will give you an idea of the disorder which reigned throughout this retreat. However, the enemy's cavalry still advanced up to the very ditches, and one officer, horse and all, jumped into our parapet—another was captured and made prisoner, while we saw two or three of their cavalry fall.

Whilst our troops were running into the city, dispersing in all directions, filled with terror, and crying that the enemy was coming in immediately after them, the enemy halted without the city, and every thing is to-day tranquil on both sides, probably owing to an armistice obtained by the English minister, or rather a capitulation, abandoning the city to the enemy, upon which the English minister and our minister of foreign relations had a talk, at about one o'clock last night.

Congress has been ordered to meet, but it must fail. A great many of the members are absent.

I have only recited what I know from ocular witnesses, separating the credible from the incredible.

I conclude from want of time, and because both the pen and writer are used up.

Good bye, my friend; and I hope that God will not permit you to witness as many misfortunes as your friend.

His Excellency M. O.

L. V.

Don J. P. F:

[After detailing the events, as usual, down to the midst of the fight at Churubusco, the writer goes on to say:]

The cavalry was ordered to make a charge, but these cowards refused to do it—nevertheless the action was well sustained, but

the Yankees advanced their right wing as far as the edge of the river, so that the river only separated us from them—then our infantry in front dispersed, and at their example the fortifications in front [on the road, i. e., the *tête de pont*,] were abandoned, afterwards the right, [i. e., Churubusco,] when it saw itself alone—and then the retreat became a dispersion, the enemy following close upon the rear guard, even to the very ditches of the garita [gate.] At twenty yards from the garita there was an American officer killed, who was about to kill Santa Anna with his sword. This is the history of the battles.

The *morale* of the army has been lost, and all enthusiasm extinguished; nevertheless the enemy has lost about 2,000 men; while we still have 16,000, and if there was a head to these, we could still conquer.

The regiments of Victoria and Hidalgo have dissolved so as not to fight.

An armistice is in discussion, on the basis that the capital shall not be attacked, and that the Yankees will take nothing without paying for it—and they will encamp in the neighborhood. This armistice will serve to collect the dead and arrange a peace. The reflections which these events give rise to are so natural that I omit them. We shall soon see each other, for if peace is made I am going where you are, and no less if the army take Mexico, as I am resolved never to live in a place commanded by them. I will never witness the degradation of the occupation of our capital by the enemy. My blood boils at witnessing so much cowardice, so much inaptitude and infamy, and one must either die, or fly from this country, which is stamped with the seal of Divine reprobation, and God seems to have written against us the words of the feast of Belshazzar. Tears spring from the eyes, and despair seizes the soul, when it is seen that there is only among us a capacity for vice, and that everything is desecrated by a demoralized people. I recommend to you my family. Give my love, &c., &c.

I. U.

(This letter was written by a member of Congress.)

MEXICO, August 21, 1847.

To J. M. & J.—MY DEAR FRIEND: I have none of your esteemed letters to answer, but I take the pen to recite some lamentable events—not lamentable on account of the blood shed, which has been but little considering the number of combatants engaged, but because we have not the shadow of honor left.

The battle commenced about noon on the 19th against Valencia's division, which lasted until 2, p. m., the next day, there being nothing but a continual series of routs and a series of errors committed by our generals and subordinate officers, who were filled with fear, terror, and cowardice, causing a confusion among the soldiery impossible to reduce to order. Even women would have done better.