

CHAPTER XXIX.

BATTLE OF CERRO GORDO, JALAPA, PEROTE AND PUEBLA
—HALTS—VISIT TO CHOLULA.

FORTUNATELY, the frequency of the gales, called *north-ers*, had kept off the *vomito*, as an epidemic, though a few cases had occurred in the city; but, unfortunately, the want of road-power—horses and mules—detained the body of the army at Vera Cruz from its capture, March 29, till toward the middle of April.

Some wagons and harness came first, and by the 8th, we hitched up a train sufficient to put Brigadier-General Twiggs's division, composed of brigades under Colonels Harney and Riley, with Major Talcott's light battery, all regulars, in march for the interior. Major-General Patterson, commanding a division of three

volunteer brigades, under Brigadier-Generals Pillow, Quitman, and Shields, was next supplied with partial means of transportation, and followed Twiggs. Draft animals and wagons continued to arrive slowly (more of the latter than the former), but never in sufficient numbers. Hence a siege train of six pieces only, four of which were heavy, was fitted for the road, and hence Worth's division of regulars was detained until the 16th. Each division and detachment of troops had instructions to take, in wagons, subsistence for men equal to six days, and oats for horses equal to three, besides the usual number of cooked rations for men in haversacks.

Those supplies were deemed indispensable to take the corps to Jalapa, a productive region, abounding in many articles of food as well as in mules, which we so much needed for the remaining wagons at Vera Cruz. Some hundreds of these animals were purchased, and sent below to bring up ammunition, medicines, hospital stores, clothing, and some bacon, there being but little in the country, and fresh beef not always to be had. But this is anticipating.

Hearing that Twiggs, supported by Patterson, found himself confronted at Plan del Rio, some fifty miles in the interior, by a strong body of the enemy,

and that both divisions were desirous of my presence, I left Vera Cruz on the 12th of April, with a small escort of cavalry under Captain Philip Kearny (who fell in 1862, a distinguished major-general), and hastened to the front. Major-General Patterson, though quite sick, had assumed the command on joining Twiggs, in order to prohibit any aggressive movement before my arrival, according to the universal wish of the troops. No commander was ever received with heartier cheers—the certain presage of the victories that followed.

The two advanced divisions lay in the valley of the Plan del Rio, and the body of the enemy about three miles off, on the heights of Cerro Gordo. Reconnaissances were pushed in search of some practicable route, other than the winding, zig-zag road, among the spurs of mountains, with heavy batteries at every turn. The reconanissances were conducted with vigor under Captain Lee, at the head of a body of pioneers, and at the end of the third day, a passable way for light batteries was accomplished—without alarming the enemy—giving the possibility of turning the extreme left of his line of defences, and capturing his whole army, except the reserve that lay a mile or two higher up the road.

Santa Anna said, after the event, that he had not believed a goat could have approached him in that direction. Hence the surprise and results were the greater.

The time for aggression being at hand, I—in order to insure harmony by letting all commanders know what each was expected to execute—issued this prophetic order:

GENERAL ORDERS, }
No. 111. }

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
PLAN DEL RIO, April 17, 1847.

The enemy's whole line of intrenchments and batteries will be attacked in front, and at the same time turned, early in the day to-morrow—probably before ten o'clock A. M.

The second (Twiggs's) division of regulars is already advanced within easy turning distance toward the enemy's left. That division has instructions to move forward before daylight to-morrow, and take up position across the national road in the enemy's rear, so as to cut off a retreat toward Jalapa. It may be reinforced to-day, if unexpectedly attacked in force, by regiments—one or two—taken from Shields's brigade of volunteers. If not, the two volunteer regiments will

march for that purpose at daylight to-morrow morning, under Brigadier-General Shields, who will report to Brigadier-General Twiggs on getting up with him, or to the general-in-chief, if he be in advance.

The remaining regiment of that volunteer brigade will receive instructions in the course of this day.

The first division of regulars (Worth's) will follow the movement against the enemy's left at sunrise to-morrow morning.

As already arranged, Brigadier-General Pillow's brigade will march at six o'clock to-morrow morning, along the route he has carefully reconnoitred, and stand ready, as soon as he hears the report of arms on our right, or sooner, if circumstances should favor him, to pierce the enemy's line of batteries at such point—the nearer to the river the better—as he may select. Once in the rear of that line, he will turn to the right or left, or both, and attack the batteries in reverse, or, if abandoned, he will pursue the enemy with vigor until further orders.

Wall's field battery and the cavalry will be held in reserve on the national road, a little out of view and range of the enemy's batteries. They will take up that position at nine o'clock in the morning.

The enemy's batteries being carried or abandoned, all our divisions and corps will pursue with vigor.

This pursuit may be continued many miles, until stopped by darkness or fortified positions, toward Jalapa. Consequently, the body of the army will not return to this encampment; but be followed, to-morrow afternoon or early the next morning, by the baggage trains of the several corps. For this purpose, the feebler officers and men of each corps will be left to guard its camp and effects, and to load up the latter in the wagons of the corps. A commander of the present encampment will be designated in the course of this day.

As soon as it shall be known that the enemy's works have been carried, or that the general pursuit has been commenced, one wagon for each regiment and battery, and one for the cavalry, will follow the movement, to receive, under the direction of medical officers, the wounded and disabled, who will be brought back to this place for treatment in general hospital.

The surgeon-general will organize this important service, and designate that hospital as well as the medical officers to be left at it.

Every man who marches out to attack or pursue

the enemy will take the usual allowance of ammunition, and subsistence for at least two days.

By command of Major-General Scott.

H. L. SCOTT,

A. A.-General.

HEADQUARTES OF THE ARMY, PLAN
DEL RIO, FIFTY MILES FROM
VERA CRUZ, April 19, 1847.

SIR :

The plan of attack, sketched in General Orders No. 111, herewith, was finely executed by this gallant army before two o'clock P. M., yesterday. We are quite embarrassed with the results of victory—prisoners of war, heavy ordnance, field batteries, small arms, and accoutrements. About 3,000 men laid down their arms, with the usual proportion of field and company officers, besides five generals, several of them of great distinction—Pinson, Jarrero, La Vega, Noriega, and Obando. A sixth general, Vasquez, was killed in defending the battery (tower) in the rear of the line of defence, the capture of which gave us those glorious results.

Our loss, though comparatively small in numbers,

has been serious. Brigadier-General Shields, a commander of activity, zeal, and talent, is, I fear, if not dead, mortally wounded. He is some five miles from me at the moment. The field of operations covered many miles, broken by mountains and deep chasms, and I have not a report as yet from any division or brigade. Twiggs's division, followed by Shields's (now Colonel Baker's) brigade, are now at or near Jalapa, and Worth's division is in route thither; all pursuing, with good results, as I learn, that part of the Mexican army, perhaps six or seven thousand men, that fled before our right had carried the tower, and gained the Jalapa road. Pillow's brigade alone is near me at this depot of wounded, sick, and prisoners, and I have time only to give from him the names of First Lieutenant F. B. Nelson, and Second Lieutenant C. G. Gill, both of the 2d Tennessee Foot (Haskell's regiment), among the killed; and in the brigade, one hundred and six of all ranks killed or wounded. Among the latter, the gallant Brigadier-General himself has a smart wound in the arm, but not disabled, and Major R. Farqueson, 2d Tennessee; Captain H. F. Murray, Second Lieutenant G. T. Sutherland, First Lieutenant W. P. Hale (Adjutant), all of the same regiment,

severely, and First Lieutenant W. Yearwood, mortally wounded. And I know, from personal observation on the ground, that First Lieutenant Ewell, of the Rifles, if not now dead, was mortally wounded in entering, sword in hand, the intrenchments around the captured tower. Second Lieutenant Derby, Topographical Engineers, I also saw, at the same place, severely wounded, and Captain Patten, 2d United States' Infantry, lost his right hand. Major Sumner, 2d United States' Dragoons, was slightly wounded the day before, and Captain Johnston, Topographical Engineers (now Lieutenant-Colonel of infantry), was very severely wounded, some days earlier, while reconnoitring. I must not omit to add that Captain Mason and Second Lieutenant Davis, both of the Rifles, were among the very severely wounded in storming the same tower. I estimate our total loss in killed and wounded may be about two hundred and fifty, and that of the enemy three hundred and fifty. In the pursuit toward Jalapa (twenty-five miles hence), I learn we have added much to the enemy's loss in prisoners, killed, and wounded. In fact, I suppose his retreating army to be nearly disorganized; and hence my haste to follow, in an hour or two, to profit by events.

In this hurried and imperfect report I must not omit to say that Brigadier-General Twiggs, in passing the mountain range beyond Cerro Gordo, crowned with the tower, detached from his division, as I suggested the day before, a strong force to carry that height, which commanded the Jalapa road at the foot, and could not fail, if carried, to cut off the whole or any part of the enemy's forces from a retreat in any direction. A portion of the 1st Artillery, under the often distinguished Brevet Colonel Childs, the 3d Infantry, under Captain Alexander, the 7th Infantry, under Lieutenant-Colonel Plympton, and the Rifles, under Major Loring, all under the temporary command of Colonel Harney, 2d Dragoons, during the confinement to his bed of Brevet Brigadier-General P. F. Smith, composed that detachment. The style of execution, which I had the pleasure to witness, was most brilliant and decisive. The brigade ascended the long and difficult slope of Cerro Gordo, without shelter, and under the tremendous fire of artillery and musketry, with the utmost steadiness, reached the breastworks, drove the enemy from them, planted the colors of the 1st Artillery, 3d and 7th Infantry—the enemy's flag

still flying—and after some minutes of sharp firing, finished the conquest with the bayonet.

It is a most pleasing duty to say that the highest praise is due to Harney, Childs, Plympton, Loring, Alexander, their gallant officers and men, for this brilliant service, independent of the great results which soon followed.

Worth's division of regulars coming up at this time, he detached Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel C. F. Smith, with his light battalion, to support the assault, but not in time. The general, reaching the tower a few minutes before me, and observing a white flag displayed from the nearest portion of the enemy toward the batteries below, sent out Colonels Harney and Childs to hold a parley. The surrender followed in an hour or two.

Major-General Patterson left a sickbed to share in the dangers and fatigues of the day; and after the surrender went forward to command the advanced forces toward Jalapa.

Brigadier-General Pillow and his brigade twice assaulted with great daring the enemy's line of batteries on our left; and, though without success, they contributed much to distract and dismay their immediate opponents.

President Santa Anna, with Generals Canalizo and Ampudia, and some six or eight thousand men, escaped toward Jalapa just before Cerro Gordo was carried, and before Twiggs's division reached the national road above.

I have determined to parole the prisoners—officers and men—as I have not the means of feeding them here beyond to-day, and cannot afford to detach a heavy body of horse and foot, with wagons, to accompany them to Vera Cruz. Our baggage train, though increasing, is not yet half large enough to give an assured progress to this army. Besides, a greater number of prisoners would probably escape from the escort in the long and deep sandy road without subsistence—ten to one—than we shall find again out of the same body of men in the ranks opposed to us. Not one of the Vera Cruz prisoners is believed to have been in the lines of Cerro Gordo. Some six of the officers, highest in rank, refuse to give their paroles, except to go to Vera Cruz, and thence, perhaps, to the United States.

The small arms and their accoutrements, being of no value to our army here or at home, I have ordered them to be destroyed; for we have not the means of transporting them. I am also somewhat embarrassed

with the — pieces of artillery—all bronze—which we have captured. It would take a brigade and half the mules of this army to transport them fifty miles. A field battery I shall take for service with the army; but the heavy metal must be collected and left here for the present. We have our own siege-train and the proper carriages with us.

Being much occupied with the prisoners and all the details of a forward movement, besides looking to the supplies which are to follow from Vera Cruz, I have time to add no more—intending to be at Jalapa early to-morrow. We shall not probably again meet with serious opposition this side of Perote—certainly not, unless delayed by the want of the means of transportation.

I have the honor to remain, sir, with high respect,
your most obedient servant,

WINFIELD SCOTT.

P. S.—I invite attention to the accompanying letter to President Santa Anna, taken in his carriage yesterday; also to his proclamation, issued on hearing that we had captured Vera Cruz, etc., in which he says: "If the enemy advance one step more, the national

independence will be buried in the abyss of the past." We have taken that step.

W. S.

I make a second postscript, to say there is some hope, I am happy to learn, that General Shields may survive his wounds.

One of the principal motives for paroling the prisoners of war is to diminish the resistance of other garrisons in our march.

W. S.

HON. WM. L. MARCY, *Secretary of War.*

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, {
JALAPA, April 23, 1847. }

SIR:

In forwarding the reports of commanders which detail the operations of their several corps against the Mexican lines at Cerro Gordo, I shall present, in continuation of my former report, but an outline of the affair, and while adopting heartily their commendations of the ardor and efficiency of individuals, I shall mention by name only those who figure prominently,

or, from position, could not be included in those sub-reports.

The field sketch herewith, indicates the positions of the two armies. The *tierra caliente*, or low level, terminates at *Plan del Rio*, the site of the American camp, from which the road ascends immediately in a long circuit among lofty hills, whose commanding points had all been fortified and garrisoned by the enemy. His right, intrenched, rested on a precipice overhanging an impassable ravine that forms the bed of the stream; and his intrenchments extended continuously to the road, on which was placed a formidable battery. On the other side, the lofty and difficult height of Cerro Gordo commanded the approaches in all directions. The main body of the Mexican army was encamped on level ground, with a battery of five pieces, half a mile in rear of that height toward Jalapa.

Resolving, if possible, to turn the enemy's left, and attack in rear, while menacing or engaging his front, I caused daily reconnaissances to be pushed, with the view of finding a route for a force to debouch on the Jalapa road and cut off retreat.

The reconnaissance begun by Lieutenant Beauregard, was continued by Captain Lee, Engineers, and a

road made along difficult slopes and over chasms—out of the enemy's view, though reached by his fire when discovered—until, arriving at the Mexican lines, further reconnaissance became impossible without an action. The desired point of debouchure, the Jalapa road, was not therefore reached, though believed to be within easy distance; and to gain that point, it now became necessary to carry the height of Cerro Gordo. The dispositions in my plan of battle—general orders No. 111, heretofore enclosed—were accordingly made.

Twiggs's division, reenforced by Shields's brigade of volunteers, was thrown into position on the 17th, and was, of necessity, drawn into action in taking up the ground for its bivouac and the opposing height for our heavy battery. It will be seen that many of our officers and men were killed or wounded in this sharp combat—handsomely commenced by a company of the 7th Infantry under Brevet First Lieutenant Gardner, who is highly praised by all his commanders for signal services. Colonel Harney coming up with the rifle regiment and 1st Artillery (also parts of his brigade) brushed away the enemy and occupied the height—on which, in the night, was placed a battery of one 24-pounder and two 24-pound howitzers, under the super-

intendence of Captain Lee, Engineers, and Lieutenant Hagner, Ordnance. These guns opened next morning, and were served with effect by Captain Steptoe and Lieutenant Brown, 3d Artillery, Lieutenant Hagner (Ordnance), and Lieutenant Seymour, 1st Artillery.

The same night, with extreme toil and difficulty, under the superintendence of Lieutenant Tower, Engineer, and Lieutenant Laidley, Ordnance, an eight-inch howitzer was put in position across the river and opposite to the enemy's right battery. A detachment of four companies, under Major Burnham, New York Volunteers, performed this creditable service, which enabled Lieutenant Ripley, 2d Artillery, in charge of the piece, to open a timely fire in that quarter.

Early on the 18th, the columns moved to the general attack, and our success was speedy and decisive. Pillow's brigade, assaulting the right of the intrenchments, although compelled to retire, had the effect I have heretofore stated. Twiggs's division, storming the strong and vital point of Cerro Gordo, pierced the centre, gained command of all of the intrenchments, and cut them off from support. As our infantry (Colonel Riley's brigade) pushed on against the main body of the enemy, the guns of their own fort were

rapidly turned to play on that force (under the immediate command of General Santa Anna), who fled in confusion. Shields's brigade, bravely assaulting the left, carried the rear battery (five guns) on the Jalapa road, and aided materially in completing the rout of the enemy.

The part taken by the remainder of our forces, held in reserve to support and pursue, has already been noticed.

The moment the fate of the day was decided, the cavalry, and Taylor's, and Wall's field batteries were pushed on toward Jalapa in advance of the pursuing columns of infantry—Twiggs's division and the Brigade of Shields (now under Colonel Baker)—and Major-General Patterson was sent to take command of them. In the hot pursuit many Mexicans were captured or slain before our men and horses were exhausted by the heat and distance.

The rout proves to have been complete—the retreating army, except a small body of cavalry, being dispersed and utterly disorganized. The immediate consequences have been our possession of this important city, the abandonment of the works and artillery at La Hoya, the next formidable pass between Vera Cruz and

the capital, and the prompt occupation by Worth's division of the fortress of Perote (second only to San Juan de Ulloa), with its extensive armament of sixty-six guns and mortars, and its large supplies of *matériel*. To General Worth's report, annexed, I refer for details.

I have heretofore endeavored to do justice to the skill and courage with which the attack on the height of Cerro Gordo was directed and executed, naming the regiments most distinguished, and their commanders, under the lead of Colonel Harney. Lieutenant G. W. Smith led the engineer company as part of the storming force, and is noticed with distinction.

The reports of this assault make favorable mention of many in which I can well concur, having witnessed the daring advance and perfect steadiness of the whole. Beside those already named, Lieutenant Brooks, 3d Infantry; Lieutenant Macdonald, 2d Dragoons; Lieutenant Vandorn, 7th Infantry—all acting staff officers—Captain Magruder, 1st Artillery, and Lieutenant Gardner, 7th Infantry, seem to have won especial praise.

Colonel Riley's brigade and Talcott's rocket and howitzer battery, were engaged on and about the heights, and bore an active part.

The brigade so gallantly led by General Shields, and, after his fall, by Colonel Baker, deserves high commendation for its fine behavior and success. Colonels Foreman and Burnett, and Major Harris, commanded the regiments; Lieutenant Hammond, 3d Artillery, and Lieutenant Davis, Illinois Volunteers, constituted the brigade staff. These operations, hid from my view by intervening hills, were not fully known when my first report was hastily written.

Brigadier-General Twiggs, who was in the immediate command of all the advanced forces, has earned high credit by his judgment, spirit, and energy.

The conduct of Colonels Campbell, Haskell, and Wynkoop, commanding the regiments of Pillow's brigade, is reported in terms of strong approbation by Major-General Patterson. I recommend for a commission, Quartermaster-Sergeant Henry, of the 7th Infantry (already known to the army for intrepidity on former occasions), who hauled down the national standard of the Mexican fort.

In expressing my indebtedness for able assistance to Lieutenant-Colonel Hitchcock, Acting Inspector-General, to Majors Smith and Turnbull, the respective Chiefs of Engineers and Topographical Engineers—

to their Assistants, Lieutenants Mason, Beauregard, Stevens, Tower, G. W. Smith, McClellan, Engineers, and Lieutenants Derby and Hardecastle, Topographical Engineers—to Captain Allen, Chief Quartermaster, and Lieutenant Blair, Chief Commissary—and to Lieutenants Hagner and Laidley, Ordnance—all actively employed—I am compelled to make special mention of the services of Captain R. E. Lee, Engineer. This officer, greatly distinguished at the siege of Vera Cruz, was again indefatigable, during these operations, in reconnaissances as daring as laborious, and of the utmost value. Nor was he less conspicuous in planting batteries, and in conducting columns to their stations under the heavy fire of the enemy.

My personal staff, Lieutenants Scott, Williams, and Lay, and Major Van Buren, who volunteered for the occasion, gave me zealous and efficient assistance.

Our whole force present, in action and in reserve, was eight thousand five hundred; the enemy is estimated at twelve thousand, or more. About three thousand prisoners, four or five thousand stands of arms, and forty-three pieces of artillery were taken. By the accompanying return, I regret to find our loss more severe than at first supposed, amounting in the two

days to thirty-three officers and three hundred and ninety-eight men—in all four hundred and thirty-one, of whom sixty-three were killed. The enemy's loss is computed to be from one thousand to one thousand two hundred.

I am happy in communicating strong hopes of the recovery of the gallant General Shields, who is so much improved as to have been brought to this place.

Appended to this report are the following papers:

A.—General return by name of killed and wounded.

B.—Copies of report of Lieutenant-Colonel Hitchcock, Acting Inspector-General (of prisoners taken) and accompanying papers.

C.—Report of Brigadier-General Twiggs, and sub-reports.

D.—Report of Major-General Patterson, and reports of brigade commanders.

E.—Copy of report of Brigadier-General Worth, announcing the occupation by his division of the castle and town of Perote, without opposition with an inventory of ordnance there found.

I have the honor to remain, sir, with high respect,
your most obedient servant,

WINFIELD SCOTT.

HON. WM. L. MARCY, *Secretary of War.*

This terrible blow following closely on the captures of the preceding month, threw the Mexicans into consternation. Jalapa was abandoned, and I pushed Worth's division forward to tread on the heels of the fugitives and increase the panic.

Approaching Perote, its formidable castle also opened its gates without firing a gun, and the same division took quiet possession of the great city of Puebla. But here the career of conquest was arrested for a time.

I had been obliged to lessen the strength of a diminutive army by leaving respectable garrisons of regulars, in Vera Cruz and the Castle of San Juan de Ulloa. And now at Jalapa, without having received any reinforcements, it became necessary to discharge some four thousand volunteers whose respective terms of service were about to expire. They gave notice that they would continue with me to the last day, but would then certainly demand discharges and the means of transportation homeward. As any delay might throw them upon the yellow fever, at Vera Cruz, the discharges were given at once.

We were delayed nearly a month at Jalapa waiting for a partial supply of necessaries from Vera Cruz by the second and third trips of our feeble trains, and with

a faint hope of reinforcements. Not a company came. At length, toward the end of May, I marched, with the reserve, to join the advanced division (Worth's) at Puebla—leaving a strong garrison at Jalapa, under Colonel Childs, to keep the line of communication open with Vera Cruz as long as possible. Indeed, at that time, I had not entirely lost the hope of receiving new regiments of regulars and volunteers in numbers sufficient to maintain our communications with the ocean and home throughout the campaign by means of garrisons at the National Bridge, Perote, Puebla, and Rio Frio, as well as at Vera Cruz and Jalapa.

Waiting for reinforcements, the halt, at Puebla, was protracted and irksome. The Benton intrigue had so disgusted a majority of the two houses of Congress, that the bill authorizing the ten new regiments of regulars lingered from the beginning of December down to the 11th of February—the Administration having sunk too low to hasten its passage a day in advance of the usual sluggish forms of legislation.

In the mean time, the army at Puebla was not inactive. All the corps, amounting to about five thousand effective men, were daily put through their manœuvres and evolutions. We were also kept on the alert by