

to make that diversion at about five o'clock in the morning.

And here I will end this report, commenced at its date, and in another, continue the narrative of the great events which now impend.

I have the honor to be, etc., etc.,

WINFIELD SCOTT.

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

CHAPTER XXXI.

VICTORIES OF CONTRERAS—SAN ANTONIO—CHURUBUSCO.

Report No. 32.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
TACUBAYA, AT THE GATES OF
MEXICO, *August 28, 1847.* }

SIR:

My report, No. 31, commenced in the night of the 19th instant, closed with the operations of the army on that day.

The morning of the 20th opened with one of a series of unsurpassed achievements, all in view of the capital, and to which I shall give the general name—*Battles of Mexico.*

In the night of the 19th, Brigadier-Generals Shields,

P. F. Smith, and Cadwallader, and Colonel Riley, with their brigades, and the 15th Regiment, under Colonel Morgan, detached from Brigadier-General Pierce—found themselves in and about the important position—the village, hamlet or *hacienda*, called indifferently, Contreras, Ansalda, San Geronimo—half a mile nearer to the city than the enemy's intrenched camp, on the same road, toward the factory of Magdalena.

That camp had been, unexpectedly, our formidable point of attack in the afternoon before, and we had now to take it, without the aid of cavalry or artillery, or to throw back our advanced corps upon the direct road from San Augustin to the city, and thence force a passage through San Antonio.

Accordingly, to meet contingencies, Major-General Worth was ordered to leave early in the morning of the 20th, one of his brigades to mask San Antonio, and to march with the other six miles, *via* San Augustin, upon Contreras. A like destination was given to Major-General Quitman and his remaining brigade in San Augustin—replacing, for the moment, the garrison of that important dépôt with Harney's brigade of cavalry, as horse could not pass over the intervening lava, etc., to reach the field of battle.

A diversion for an earlier hour (daylight) had been arranged the night before, according to the suggestion of Brigadier-General P. F. Smith, received through the Engineer, Captain Lee, who conveyed my orders to our troops remaining on the ground, opposite to the enemy's centre—the point for the diversion or a real attack, as circumstances might allow.

Guided by Captain Lee, it proved the latter, under the command of Colonel Ransom of the 9th, having with him that regiment and some companies of three others—the 3d, 12th, and Rifles.

Shields, the senior officer at the hamlet, having arrived in the night, after Smith had arranged with Cadwallader and Riley the plan of attack for the morning, delicately waived interference; but reserved to himself the double task of holding the hamlet with his two regiments (South Carolina and New York Volunteers) against ten times his numbers on the side of the city, including the slopes to his left, and in case the enemy's camp in his rear should be carried, to face about and cut off the flying enemy.

At three o'clock A. M. the great movement commenced on the rear of the enemy's camp, Riley leading, followed successively by Cadwallader's and Smith's

brigades, the latter temporarily under the orders of Major Dimick of the 1st Artillery—the whole force being commanded by Smith, the senior in the general attack, and whose arrangements, skill, and gallantry always challenge the highest admiration.

The march was rendered tedious by the darkness, rain, and mud; but about sunrise, Riley, conducted by Lieutenant Tower, Engineer, had reached an elevation behind the enemy, whence he precipitated his columns; stormed the intrenchments, planted his several colors upon them, and carried the work—all in seventeen minutes.

Conducted by Lieutenant Beauregard, Engineer, and Lieutenant Brooks of Twiggs's Staff—both of whom, like Lieutenant Tower, had, in the night, twice reconnoitred the ground—Cadwallader brought up to the general assault, two of his regiments—the Voltigeurs and the 11th; and at the appointed time Colonel Ransom, with his temporary brigade, conducted by Captain Lee, Engineer, not only made the movement in front, to divert and to distract the enemy, but, after crossing the deep ravine, advanced, and poured into the works and upon the fugitives many volleys from his destructive musketry.

In the mean time Smith's own brigade, under the temporary command of Major Dimick, following the movements of Riley and Cadwallader, discovered, opposite to, and outside of the works, a long line of Mexican cavalry, drawn up as a support. Dimick having at the head of the brigade the company of Sappers and Miners, under Lieutenant G. W. Smith, Engineer, who had conducted the march, was ordered by Brigadier-General Smith to form his line faced to the enemy, and in a charge, against a flank, routed the cavalry.

Shields, too, by the wise disposition of his brigade and gallant activity, contributed much to the general results. He held masses of cavalry and infantry, supported by artillery, in check below him, and captured hundreds, with one general (Mendoza), of those who fled from above.

I doubt whether a more brilliant or decisive victory—taking into view ground, artificial defences, batteries, and the extreme disparity of numbers—without cavalry or artillery on our side—is to be found on record. Including all our corps directed against the intrenched camp, with Shields's brigade at the hamlet, we positively did not number over four thousand five hundred rank and file; and we knew by sight, and since, more

certainly, by many captured documents and letters, that the enemy had actually engaged on the spot seven thousand men, with at least twelve thousand more hovering within sight and striking distance—both on the 19th and 20th. All, not killed or captured, now fled with precipitation.

Thus was the great victory of Contreras achieved; one road to the capital opened; seven hundred of the enemy killed; eight hundred and thirteen prisoners, including, among eighty-eight officers, four generals; besides many colors and standards; twenty-two pieces of brass ordnance—half of large calibre; thousands of small arms and accoutrements; an immense quantity of shot, shells, powder, and cartridges; seven hundred pack mules, many horses, etc., etc.—all in our hands.

It is highly gratifying to find that, by skilful arrangement and rapidity of execution, our loss, in killed and wounded, did not exceed, on the spot, sixty—among the former the brave Captain Charles Hanson, of the 4th Infantry—not more distinguished for gallantry than for modesty, morals, and piety. Lieutenant J. P. Johnstone, 1st Artillery, serving with Magruder's battery, a young officer of the highest promise, was killed the evening before.

One of the most pleasing incidents of the victory is the recapture, in their works, by Captain Drum, 4th Artillery, under Major Gardner, of the two brass 6-pounders, taken from another company of the same regiment, though without the loss of honor, at the glorious battle of Buena Vista—about which guns the whole regiment had mourned for so many long months! Coming up a little later I had the happiness to join in the protracted cheers of the gallant 4th on the joyous event; and, indeed, the whole army sympathizes in its just pride and exultation.

The battle being won before the advancing brigades of Worth's and Quitman's divisions were in sight, both were ordered back to their late positions:—Worth, to attack San Antonio, in front, with his whole force, as soon as approached in the rear by Pillow's and Twiggs's divisions—moving from Contreras, through San Angel and Coyoacan. By carrying San Antonio, we knew that we should open another—a shorter and better road to the capital for our siege and other trains.

Accordingly, the two advanced divisions and Shields brigade marched from Contreras, under the immediate orders of Major-General Pillow, who was now joined by the gallant Brigadier-General Pierce of his division,

personally thrown out of activity, late the evening before, by a severe hurt received from the fall of his horse.

After giving necessary orders on the field, in the midst of prisoners and trophies, and sending instructions to Harney's brigade of cavalry (left at San Augustin) to join me, I personally followed Pillow's command.

Arriving at Coyoacan, two miles by a cross road, from the rear of San Antonio, I first detached Captain Lee, Engineer, with Captain Kearny's troop, 1st Dragoons, supported by the Rifle Regiment, under Major Loring, to reconnoitre that strong point; and next despatched Major-General Pillow, with one of his brigades (Cadwallader's), to make the attack upon it, in concert with Major-General Worth on the opposite side.

At the same time, by another road to the left, Lieutenant Stevens of the Engineers, supported by Lieutenant G. W. Smith's company of sappers and miners, of the same corps, was sent to reconnoitre the strongly fortified church or convent of San Pablo, in the hamlet of Churubusco—one mile off. Twiggs with one of his brigades (Smith's—less the Rifles) and Cap-

tain Taylor's field battery, were ordered to follow and to attack the convent. Major Smith, senior Engineer, was despatched to concert with Twiggs the mode and means of attack, and Twiggs's other brigade (Riley's) I soon ordered up to support him.

Next (but all in ten minutes) I sent Pierce (just able to keep the saddle) with his brigade (Pillow's division), conducted by Captain Lee, Engineer, by a third road a little farther to our left, to attack the enemy's right and rear, in order to favor the movement upon the convent, and to cut off a retreat toward the capital. And finally, Shields, senior brigadier to Pierce, with the New York and South Carolina Volunteers (Quitman's division), was ordered to follow Pierce closely, and to take the command of our left wing. All these movements were made with the utmost alacrity by our gallant troops and commanders.

Finding myself at Coyoacan, from which so many roads conveniently branched, without escort or reserve, I had to advance for safety close upon Twiggs's rear. The battle now raged from the right to the left of our whole line.

Learning on the return of Captain Lee, that Shields in the rear of Churubusco was hard pressed, and in

danger of being outflanked, if not overwhelmed, by greatly superior numbers, I immediately sent under Major Sumner, 2d Dragoons, the Rifles (Twiggs's reserve) and Captain Sibley's troop, 2d Dragoons, then at hand, to support our left, guided by the same engineer.

About an hour earlier, Worth had, by skilful and daring movements upon the front and right, turned and forced San Antonio—its garrison, no doubt, much shaken by our decisive victory at Contreras.

His second brigade (Colonel Clarke's) conducted by Captain Mason, Engineer, assisted by Lieutenant Harcastle, Topographical Engineer, turned to the left, and by a wide sweep came out upon the high road to the capital. At this point the heavy garrison (three thousand men) in retreat was, by Clarke, cut in the centre: one portion, the rear, driven upon Dolores, off to the right, and the other upon Churubusco, in the direct line of our operations. The first brigade (Colonel Garland's), same division, consisting of the 2d Artillery, under Major Galt, the 3d Artillery, under Lieutenant-Colonel Belton, and the 4th Infantry, commanded by Major F. Lee, with Lieutenant-Colonel Duncan's field battery (temporarily) followed in pursuit through the town, taking one general prisoner,

the abandoned guns (five pieces), much ammunition, and other public property.

The forcing of San Antonio was the *second* brilliant event of the day.

Worth's division being soon reunited in hot pursuit, he was joined by Major-General Pillow, who, marching from Coyoacan and discovering that San Antonio had been carried, immediately turned to the left according to my instructions, and, though much impeded by ditches and swamps, hastened to the attack of Churubusco.

The hamlet or scattered houses bearing this name, presented besides the fortified convent, a strong field-work (*tête de pont*) with regular bastions and curtains at the head of a bridge over which the road passes from San Antonio to the capital.

The whole remaining forces of Mexico—some twenty-seven thousand men—cavalry, artillery, and infantry, collected from every quarter—were now in, on the flanks, or within supporting distance of those works, and seemed resolved to make a last and desperate stand; for if beaten here, the feebler defences at the gates of the city—four miles off—could not, as was well known to both parties, delay the victors an hour. [?]

The capital of an ancient empire, now of a great republic; or an early peace, the assailants were resolved to win. Not an American—and we were less than a third of the enemy's numbers—had a doubt as to the result.

The fortified church or convent, hotly pressed by Twiggs, had already held out about an hour, when Worth and Pillow—the latter having with him Cadwallader's brigade—began to manœuvre closely upon the *tête de pont*, with the convent at half gunshot to their left. Garland's brigade (Worth's division), to which had been added the light battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel C. F. Smith, continued to advance in front and under the fire of a long line of infantry off on the left of the bridge; and Clarke of the same division, directed his brigade along the road or close by its side. Two of Pillow's and Cadwallader's regiments, the 11th and 14th, supported and participated in this direct movement: the other (the *voltigeurs*) was left in reserve. Most of these corps—particularly Clarke's brigade—advancing perpendicularly, were made to suffer much by the fire of the *tête de pont*, and they would have suffered greatly more by flank attacks from the convent, but for the pressure of Twiggs on the other side of that work.

This well-combined and daring movement at length reached the principal point of attack, and the formidable *tête de pont* was at once assaulted and carried by the bayonet. Its deep wet ditch was first gallantly crossed by the 8th and 5th Infantry, commanded respectively by Major Waite and Lieutenant-Colonel Martin Scott—followed closely by the 6th Infantry (same brigade), which had been so much exposed on the road—the 11th regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel Graham, and the 14th commanded by Colonel Trousdale, both of Cadwallader's brigade, Pillow's division. About the same time, the enemy in front of Garland, after a hot conflict of an hour and a half gave way, in a retreat toward the capital.

The immediate results of this *third* signal triumph of the day were three field pieces, one hundred and ninety-two prisoners, much ammunition and two colors taken at the *tête de pont*.

Lieutenant I. F. Irons, 1st Artillery, aide-de-camp to Brigadier-General Cadwallader, a young officer of great merit and conspicuous in battle on several previous occasions, received in front of the work, a mortal wound. (Since dead.)

As the concurrent attack upon the convent favored,

physically and morally, the assault upon the *tête de pont*, so reciprocally, no doubt, the fall of the latter contributed to the capture of the former. The two works were only some four hundred and fifty yards apart; and as soon as we were in possession of the *tête de pont*, a captured 4-pounder was turned and fired—first by Captain Larkin Smith, and next by Lieutenant Snelling, both of the 8th Infantry—several times upon the convent. In the same brief interval, Lieutenant-Colonel Duncan (also of Worth's division) gallantly brought two of his guns to bear at a short range from the San Antonio road, upon the principal face of the work and on the tower of the church, which in the obstinate contest, had been often refilled with some of the best sharpshooters of the enemy.

Finally, twenty minutes after the *tête de pont* had been carried by Worth and Pillow, and at the end of a desperate conflict of two hours and a half, the church or convent—the citadel of the strong line of defence along the rivulet of Churubusco—yielded to Twiggs's division, and threw out on all sides signals of surrender. The white flags, however, were not exhibited until the moment when the 3d infantry, under Captain Alexander, had cleared the way by fire and bayonet,

and had entered the work. Captain I. M. Smith and Lieutenant O. L. Shepherd, both of that regiment, with their companies, had the glory of leading the assault. The former received the surrender, and Captain Alexander instantly hung out from the balcony the colors of the gallant 3d. Major Dimick with a part of the 1st Artillery, serving as infantry, entered nearly abreast with the leading troops.

Captain Taylor's field battery, attached to Twiggs's division, opened its effective fire at an early moment upon the outworks of the convent and the tower of its church. Exposed to the severest fire of the enemy, the captain, his officers and men, won universal admiration; but at length much disabled in men and horses, the battery was by superior orders withdrawn from the action, thirty minutes before the surrender of the convent.

Those corps, excepting Taylor's battery, belonged to the brigade of Brigadier-General P. F. Smith, who closely directed the whole attack in front with his habitual coolness and ability; while Riley's brigade—the 2d and 7th Infantry, under Captain T. Morris and Lieutenant-Colonel Plympton respectively—vigorously engaged the right of the work and part of its rear.

At the moment the Rifles, belonging to Smith's, were detached in support of Brigadier-General Shields's on our extreme left, and the 4th Artillery, acting as infantry, under Major Gardner, belonging to Riley's brigade, had been left in charge of the camp, trophies, etc., at Contreras. Twiggs's division at Churubusco had thus been deprived of the services of two of its most gallant and effective regiments.

The immediate results of this victory were:—the capture of seven field pieces, some ammunition, one color, three generals, and one thousand two hundred and sixty-one prisoners, including other officers.

Captains E. A. Capron and M. I. Burke, and Lieutenant S. Hoffman, all of the 1st Artillery, and Captain J. W. Anderson and Lieutenant Thomas Easley, both of the 2d Infantry—five officers of great merit—fell gallantly before this work.

The capture of the enemy's citadel was the *fourth* great achievement of our arms in the same day.

It has been stated that some two hours and a half before, Pierce's, followed closely by the volunteer brigade—both under the command of Brigadier-General Shields—had been despatched to our left to turn the enemy's works;—to prevent the escape of the garrisons and to

oppose the extension of the enemy's numerous corps from the rear upon and around our left.

Considering the inferior numbers of the two brigades, the objects of the movement were difficult to accomplish. Hence the reënforcement (the Rifles, etc.) sent forward a little later.

In a winding march of a mile around to the right, this temporary division found itself on the edge of an open wet meadow, near the road from San Antonio to the capital, and in the presence of some four thousand of the enemy's infantry, a little in rear of Churubusco, on that road. Establishing the right at a strong building, Shields extended his left parallel to the road, to outflank the enemy toward the capital. But the enemy extending his right supported by three thousand cavalry more rapidly (being favored by better ground), in the same direction, Shields concentrated the division about a hamlet and determined to attack in front. The battle was long, hot and varied; but ultimately, success crowned the zeal and gallantry of our troops, ably directed by their distinguished commander, Brigadier-General Shields. The 9th, 12th, and 15th Regiments, under Colonel Ransom, Captain Wood, and Colonel Morgan respectively, of Pierce's brigade (Pil-

low's division), and the New York and South Carolina Volunteers, under Colonels Burnett and Butler, respectively, of Shields's own brigade (Quitman's division), together with the mountain howitzer battery, now under Lieutenant Reno of the Ordnance Corps, all shared in the glory of this action—our *fifth* victory in the same day.

Brigadier-General Pierce, from the hurt of the evening before—under pain and exhaustion—fainted in the action. Several other changes in command occurred on this field. Thus Colonel Morgan being severely wounded, the command of the 15th Infantry devolved on Lieutenant-Colonel Howard; Colonel Burnett receiving a like wound, the command of the New York Volunteers fell to Lieutenant-Colonel Baxter; and, on the fall of the lamented Colonel P. M. Butler—earlier badly wounded, but continuing to lead nobly in the hottest part of the battle—the command of the South Carolina Volunteers devolved—first, on Lieutenant-Colonel Dickinson, who being severely wounded (as before in the siege of Vera Cruz), the regiment ultimately fell under the orders of Major Gladden.

Lieutenants David Adams and W. R. Williams of the same corps; Captain Augustus Quarles and Lieu-

tenant J. B. Goodman of the 15th, and Lieutenant E. Chandler, New York Volunteers—all gallant officers, nobly fell in the same action.

Shields took three hundred and eighty prisoners, including officers; and it cannot be doubted that the rage of the conflict between him and the enemy, just in the rear of the *tête de pont* and the convent, had some influence on the surrender of those formidable defences.

As soon as the *tête de pont* was carried, the greater part of Worth's and Pillow's forces passed that bridge in rapid pursuit of the flying enemy. These distinguished generals, coming up with Brigadier-General Shields, now also victorious, the three continued to press upon the fugitives to within a mile and a half of the capital. Here, Colonel Harney, with a small part of his brigade of cavalry, rapidly passed to the front, and charged the enemy up to the nearest gate.

The cavalry charge was headed by Captain Kearny, of the 1st Dragoons, having in squadron with his own troop, that of Captain McReynolds of the 3d—making the usual escort to general headquarters; but, being early in the day detached for general service, was now under Colonel Harney's orders. The gallant captain not

hearing the *recall*, that had been sounded, dashed up to the San Antonio gate, sabring in his way all who resisted. Of the seven officers of the squadron, Kearny lost his left arm; McReynolds and Lieutenant Lorimer Graham were both severely wounded, and Lieutenant R. S. Ewell, who succeeded to the command of the escort, had two horses killed under him. Major F. D. Mills, of the 15th infantry, a volunteer in this charge, was killed at the gate.

So terminated the series of events which I have but feebly presented. My thanks were freely poured out on the different fields—to the abilities and science of generals and other officers—to the zeal and prowess of all—the rank and file included. But a reward infinitely higher—the applause of a grateful country and Government—will, I cannot doubt, be accorded, in due time, to so much merit of every sort, displayed by this glorious army, which has now overcome all difficulties—distance, climate, ground, fortifications, numbers.

It has in a single day, in many battles, as often defeated thirty-two thousand men; made about three thousand prisoners, including eight generals (two of them ex-presidents) and two hundred and five other officers; killed or wounded four thousand of all ranks

—besides entire corps dispersed and dissolved; captured thirty-seven pieces of ordnance—more than trebling our siege train and field batteries—with a large number of small arms, a full supply of ammunition of every kind, etc., etc.

These great results have overwhelmed the enemy. Our loss amounts to one thousand and fifty-three—*killed*, one hundred and thirty-nine, including sixteen officers; *wounded*, eight hundred and seventy-six, with sixty officers. The greater number of the dead and disabled were of the highest worth. Those under treatment, thanks to our very able medical officers, are generally doing well.

I regret having been obliged, on the 20th, to leave Major-General Quitman, an able commander, with a part of his division—the fine 2d Pennsylvania Volunteers, and the veteran detachment of United States' Marines—at our important dépôt, San Augustin. It was there that I had placed our sick and wounded; the siege, supply, and baggage trains. If these had been lost, the army would have been driven almost to despair; and considering the enemy's very great excess of numbers, and the many approaches to the dépôt, it might well have become, emphatically, *the post of honor*.