

CHAPTER II.

War inevitable—General Scott at Washington—Recommends an increase of the Army—Mission of Mr. Slidell—Downfall of Herrera—Departure of Slidell—General Taylor marches from Corpus Christi—Arrives at Point Isabel—In front of Metámoras—Capture of Captain Thornton's party—March of General Taylor to Point Isabel—Battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma—Taylor's Official Report.

WE have traced in the preceding chapter the negotiations of the United States with Mexico and Texas to that point, in which the Mexican Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the Mexican minister at Washington, officially announced that the annexation of Texas to the United States would be considered just cause of war, and the latter had departed from Washington with hostile declarations. That this declaration was believed, and that war would result from that act, the American *Chargé d'Affaires* in Texas (Mr. Donelson) shows in his entire correspondence. In his letter of June 4th, 1845, to the Secretary of State, he declares his full belief that war will occur, although he chose to attribute it to the instigation of the British minister, Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Donelson makes this remarkable announcement:—

"I look upon war with Mexico as inevitable—a war dictated by the British minister here for the purpose of defeating annexation, and intended at all events to deprive both Texas and the United States of all claim to the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, at the

time the right of Texas to the protection of the United States arises under the contingency anticipated by you at the date of your last despatch to me."

The "contingency" here spoken of by the *Chargé*, was stated in Mr. Buchanan's letter of May 23d, 1845, and was simply the acceptance, by Texas, of the conditions of annexation stated in the joint resolution of Congress.

The question of "boundaries" was by that resolution and by all prior negotiations, left open for future discussion. Mr. Buchanan, therefore, cautiously uses the term "state," in reference to the annexation of Texas, and tells Mr. Donelson (23d of May, 1845) that, in the event of annexation, the President will deem it his duty to "employ the army in defending *that state* against the attacks of any foreign power." It was *the state* of Texas, whatever that might be, which, in May, 1845, the President undertook to defend, and not any imaginary boundary, or supposed claim of Texas beyond the Nueces, the Rio Grande, or any other stream.

Under the idea, however, as expressed in his letter of the 4th of June, that war was inevitable, Mr. Donelson asks the government for an army to defend the supposed frontier of Texas, and it is under this requisition that the corps of General Taylor was ordered to Corpus Christi, and became, in another year, the invading army of Mexico! The cause of the war—the manner in which it was to arise and to be carried on, are projected and shadowed out so minutely in the diplomatic correspondence of Messrs. Buchanan and Donelson, as to leave the historian of these events no doubtful points to discuss. If they are not certain and fixed on the map of Time, in vain shall we look for any faithful volume of human transactions.

What was in prospect for the army when arrived in Texas, and its purpose there, is thus stated by Mr. Donelson:—

“Under such circumstances, the officer intended for the command of the United States troops on the Texan frontier may expect to find a large force of the enemy there; and it is suggested whether that officer ought not at once to be selected, and ordered to some near and convenient point for the purpose of communicating with me, and providing the most prompt means of action the moment he is advised of the decision of the Convention of Texas on the terms of union proposed in our joint resolution.”

The requisition of Mr. Donelson was complied with. An express was sent to General Taylor, at Fort Jessup; his troops were ordered into Texas; and Captain Stockton was ordered with a squadron into the Gulf of Mexico; both with the avowed object of repelling the attacks of Mexico,—an anticipated consequence of annexation.¹

During this period General Scott was at Washington, in the diligent performance of his military duties as the commander of the army, without taking any public part in the political discussions of the day.

The commander of the army, even on the peace establishment of the United States, must necessarily carry on an extensive correspondence, and have the oversight of many and various departments of the public service. General Scott found ample scope for his official talents and time, in both the superintendence and the anticipation of the wants and means of the army. At the time General Taylor was despatched to the frontier of Texas, the American army

¹ Mr. Buchanan's letter to Mr. Donelson, dated June 15th, 1845.

was actually of less numerical strength than it had been in any year since 1808! And yet the official documents prove that at that very moment of time the government was in daily expectation of war; and yet the Executive did not ask from Congress an additional regiment, nor did Congress anticipate the need of additional means!¹

General Scott, however, in his annual report upon the state of the army, recommended, what the other departments of the government seem strangely to have overlooked,—a small increase of the army. He pointed out a very easy method of doing this, without raising additional regiments, or even requiring additional officers. During the presidency of Mr. Monroe, and while Mr. Calhoun was Secretary at War, (and, indeed, upon his recommendation,) the plan had been adopted of having *skeleton regiments*, in which all the officers were retained, but the number of privates reduced one-half. The reason for this was very strong. It was that, having all the officers ready, and a skeleton of the regiment, the number of the army might be doubled, in time of emergency, by new enlistments, without the expense of permanent maintenance. Accordingly, the regiments of artillery and infantry had but *forty-two privates* in each company, when the number should have been eighty-four. The Military Academy had furnished a large number of valuable officers, many of whom were attached to the regiments by *brevet*.

General Scott proposed to increase the army, simply by filling up these skeleton companies, and giving em-

¹ The President twice in his Message (December, 1845) alluded to the danger of a war with Mexico; but recommended nothing for the army

ployment to these brevet officers. In his report (November 20th, 1845) he says:

"By adding ten privates to each company of dragoons, now fifty privates each, and twenty privates to each company of artillery and infantry, now forty-two privates each, of the present establishment, we should have a total increase (by this plan) for twenty companies of dragoons, forty of artillery, and eighty of infantry, of twenty-six hundred privates—without the addition of a regiment, or of one non-commissioned officer, musician, or artificer. See *organization (table) of the regular army of the United States*, Army Register. But, in this case, an additional subaltern (second lieutenant) to each company of dragoons and infantry (one hundred) would be necessary. There are, at present, about ninety-five *brevet* second lieutenants (graduates of the Military Academy—strangely called *supernumerary* by act of April 29, 1812, sec. 4) attached to companies, and doing duty with them. These officers would be absorbed, by promotion, should this second plan of augmentation be carried out, and the future supernumerary or brevet second lieutenants (graduates of the Academy) be kept down, for a series of years, to a small number—not more than sufficient to supply three officers constantly on duty with each company, and to give others for staff and detached duties which the progress of the service will, in five or seven years, certainly demand."

This was General Scott's recommendation without looking at the question of war with Mexico; although it now appears from official documents, that the war was then in the contemplation of the cabinet. Had the President recommended, and Congress acceded to even this

small increase of the military force, it may be doubted whether the invasion of Mexico, and the sanguinary battles which followed, would ever have occurred. General Taylor's army would have been increased early in the spring, and the Mexican general would, not improbably, have refrained from an attack, to which he was tempted and invited by the weakness of the American force.

In the autumn previous to this report, but after General Taylor's army were assembled at Corpus Christi, and while war was apparently inevitable, the President again resorted to negotiation by means of an indirect correspondence with Mr. Black, American consul at Mexico. The Mexican government was inquired of,¹ whether they would receive an envoy, "intrusted with full powers to adjust all the questions in dispute between the two governments." The Mexican Minister for Foreign Affairs (Manuel De La Peña Y. Peña) acceded to this proposition, provided the mission was frank and free, without the appearance of coercion—and that the American squadron, then off Vera Cruz, was recalled.² In saying this, and making other statements to the American agents, the Mexican cabinet alleged, that they wished to avoid irritation in the people of Mexico; and in fact, intimated that the existing administration was, as to this point, weak—and feared the appearance of yielding too readily to the wishes of the United States. The Mexican government desired peace; but feared the popular excitement.

The cabinet at Washington immediately appointed Mr.

¹ Mr. Buchanan's Letter to Mr. Black, September 17th, 1845.

² Mr. Peña Y. Peña, (October 18th, 1845,) to Mr. Black.

John Slidell envoy to Mexico. He arrived at Sacrificios on the 29th of November,¹ and hastened to the city of Mexico. At Puebla, he was met by our consul, (Mr. Black,) who informed him that the Mexican government were surprised that the United States had sent an envoy so suddenly—that they were not prepared to receive him—that he was not expected till January—and in fine, that they were afraid his appearance would prove destructive to the government, and thus defeat the intentions of peace.² Mr. Slidell seems not to have understood the obvious position of the Mexican minister, nor to have subjected his impatience, in any degree, to the dictates of prudence. He hurried on, and from the 6th to the 20th of December, but two weeks, addressed three imperative notes to Mr. Peña Y. Peña, demanding the consideration of his credentials, and an answer to his demand. The Mexican administration was in instant danger of dissolution, and desired delay, that they might better secure peace. The effect of Mr. Slidell's imperative haste was, to defeat the peaceful intentions of the Mexican government, and hurry it to an abrupt denial of the American minister. On the 20th of December, twelve days from the date of his first note, Mr. Slidell was officially informed, that the Mexican government could not admit him "to the exercise of the functions of the mission conferred on him by the United States government."³ The ground of the re-

¹ Mr. Black to Mr. Buchanan, December 18th, 1845.

² Mr. Black's Letter to Buchanan, December 18th, 1845. Slidell's Letter to Buchanan, December 17th, 1845.

³ M. Peña Y. Peña's Letter to Slidell, December 20th, 1845.

fusal was, that the American envoy was appointed as a general and ordinary minister—when, in consequence of the interrupted and broken relations between the two nations, he should have been appointed a commissioner to settle the specific differences which were in dispute between the countries. The diplomatic correspondence, however, proves conclusively, that a fear of impending revolution, as a consequence of negotiating with the United States, was hurried to a premature crisis by the untimely importunities of Mr. Slidell. The dreaded revolution took place, and in nine days after, (the 29th of December,) the administration of President Herrera was overthrown. His successor, PAREDES, was a military chief—who, on the 2d January, (1846,) was ushered by the troops into the capital of Mexico. A temporary government was soon formed, of which General Almonte, late minister to the United States, was a leading member.¹

Mr. Slidell retired to Jalapa, where he remained till March, when under instructions from the Department of State, he again made overtures to the Mexican government.² To this new proposition, the Mexican minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Costillo Y. Lanzas) again returned an unequivocal denial.³ He informed the American envoy, that it was the firm intention of the Mexican government to admit only a plenipotentiary from the United States, clothed "with special powers to treat

¹ Slidell to Buchanan, January 14th, 1846.

² Slidell to Costillo Y. Lanzas, March 1st, 1846.

³ Costillo Y. Lanzas to Slidell, March 12th, 1846.

upon the question of Texas, and upon this alone;" and that upon this point its resolve was immutable. When this answer was returned, the reader of history will observe, that General Taylor's troops had already taken position on the Rio Grande, and that their presence there was deemed, in Mexico, a new wrong and injury¹ to that republic.

This letter closed, on the part of Mexico, its diplomatic correspondence with the United States. On the 21st of March, Mr. Costillo Y. Lanzas enclosed to Mr. Slidell his passports from the Mexican territories.

Long before this final refusal of the Mexican government to receive Mr. Slidell, the President of the United States had determined to take the *initial*, and advance his troops to the Rio Grande. On the 20th of January, Mr. Buchanan informed Mr. Slidell, that the President had already ordered the army of Texas to advance and take position on the left bank of the Rio Grande, and a strong fleet to assemble in the Gulf of Mexico.² This was done before the answer of Mr. Peña Y. Peña was known at Washington; and when the Mexican government had earnestly desired that no appearance of coercion should be allowed.

The order, by which the army was moved from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande, was dated January 13th, 1846, before the government had received the correspondence of Slidell with Peña Y. Peña, and before it knew of the overthrow of Herrera, and the accession

¹ General Taylor's Report, March 8th, 1846.

² Buchanan to Slidell, January 20th, 1846.

of Paredes.¹ It suggested to General Taylor the "points opposite Metamoras and Mier, and the vicinity of Laredo," as stations for the American army.²

On the 8th of March, the advance column of the army under Colonel Twiggs commenced its march from Corpus Christi,³ and on the 18th, the whole was concentrated near the banks of the Arroyo Colorado, about thirty miles from Metamoras. Here a party of irregular Mexican cavalry (*rancheros*) appeared on the opposite banks, and signified to the officer making a reconnaissance, that an attempt to pass the river would be an act of hostility.⁴ Notwithstanding this notice, the army crossed the river on the 20th, and on the 25th, established its position at Point Isabel; the buildings of which the Mexican prefect attempted to burn, as he left the place.⁵ On the 28th of March, General Taylor took his position within cannon range of Metamoras.⁶ The Mexican forces in the town commenced preparing batteries to bear on the American camp; and General Taylor also erected batteries to command Metamoras. Such was the position of the parties, when a conference was held between Generals Worth and La Vega as to the objects

¹ Public Documents. Secretary Marcy's Letter to General Taylor, January 13th, 1846.

² These were Mexican towns, in sight of which, and on territory claimed by Mexico, the army was directed to take post.

³ General Taylor's Report, March 8th, 1846.

⁴ General Taylor's Letter, 21st of March, 1846.

⁵ General Taylor's Report, March 25th.

⁶ General Taylor's Report, March 29th. In this letter he states, that a battery of four pieces had been so mounted, as to command the public square of Metamoras.

in advancing the army. The conference was fruitless of any results.

At this time, it was obvious to all intelligent minds that war was unavoidable. The crisis—to which the annexation of Texas clearly pointed—had come. Mr. Slidell had received his final rejection from Mr. Costillo Y. Lanzas, on the 12th of March. On the 8th, (four days before,) the army had marched from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande. It had now arrived in front of Metamoras, where the forces of Mexico were arrayed, and where the declarations of officers, the armament of batteries, and all the paraphernalia of martial display, indicated an instant conflict. Notwithstanding all these plain indications of war, the movements of the administration at home exhibited no symptoms of any thing but unbroken and continued peace. The recommendations of General Scott for an increase of the army were disregarded. The President and Congress moved placidly on, as if neither arms or money, strength or blood were required to secure its easy victory over a weak and effeminate foe. Some preparations had heretofore been deemed necessary by statesmen to meet the exigencies of war, even with very inferior powers. In this instance, there was none. The official returns show that one-half the entire army of the United States was in the corps of General Taylor, while various military posts and forts in the northwest and on the Atlantic, were entirely deprived of their garrisons to make up the forces on the Rio Grande.¹ Even this army was almost totally without the wagons, animals, and drivers necessary for common field transportation. They had to be

¹ Report of General Scott. Public Documents of 1845.

procured in the heart of the country, at places near two thousand miles from the scene of operations.¹ The march of the American army to the Rio Grande—the erection of batteries within gunshot of Metamoras—the appearance of Mexican parties on the Arroyo Colorado—the notice by them that the passage of that stream by the American troops would be considered an act of war—and the concentration of large bodies of Mexican troops, known to have been marched to that vicinity—all announced, by no uncertain indications, that the conflict of war was about to commence, and the annexation of Texas to be followed by its natural and necessary consequences.

On the 24th of April, General Arista assumed the chief command of the army of Mexico. On the same day General Taylor detached a party of 63 dragoons to watch the course of the river above Metamoras. This party, under the command of Captain Thornton, were watched by the Mexicans, and at a point about thirty miles from the American camp, were surprised and attacked. After the loss of sixteen men killed and wounded, they were compelled to surrender to the superior forces of the Mexicans, who in large numbers had surrounded them in a fenced plantation field.² This was the first actual fight of the war, and was received by the Mexicans as an augury favorable, but fallacious in the events which followed, to their success. General Arista, desirous of making a favorable impression, treated his prisoners with distinguished respect and kindness.

¹ See the Letter of Colonel Cross, dated November 23d, 1845, detailing the fact, that the army had no means of field transportation whatever.—Public Doc. 119, 29th Congress.

² Captain Hardee's Report, April 26th, 1846.—Pub. Doc. 119.

Three days after this affair, the camp of Captain Walker's Texan Rangers was surprised, and several killed and wounded.¹ This was between Point Isabel and Metamoras. In the mean while, it was ascertained that a large body of the Mexican army had crossed the river (Rio Grande) above,² and that another corps was about to cross below. General Taylor was convinced that the object of attack was Point Isabel, which had been left in care of a small detachment, and where a large depot of provisions invited the enemy. Leaving an unfinished field-work, under the command of Major Brown, and garrisoned by the 7th infantry, with Lowd's and Bragg's companies of artillery, he marched for Point Isabel on the 1st of May, with his main force, and arrived on the next day.³

The departure of General Taylor with his army, furnished the enemy in Metamoras with the opportunity for a safe attack on Fort Brown. At five in the morning of the 3d of May, a heavy bombardment was commenced from the batteries in Metamoras, and continued at intervals till the 10th, when the gallant defenders of the fort were relieved. In this defence, Major Brown, Captain Hawkins, and Captain Mansfield were greatly distinguished, both for skill and gallantry. The former was killed by a shell, and the defence was vigorously continued by Captain Hawkins. Captain Mansfield was an engineer officer, under whose direction the fort was built, and by whose skilful conduct the defences were increased and strengthened during the siege.³

The siege of Fort Brown was raised by the arrival of

¹ General Taylor's Report, May 3d, 1846. Captain Walker was not present.

² Same.—Pub. Doc. 119.

³ Reports of Major Brown, Captain Hawkins, and General Taylor.

the victorious army of Taylor, which had just fought the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. It appears that General Arista, who was now in command of the Mexican army, had assembled in all about eight thousand men at Metamoras, and being well advised of the strength of the American forces, thought the time had arrived for a decisive blow. The capture of Captain Thornton's party had also emboldened the Mexican troops. Arista saw that Point Isabel, the depot of large quantities of provisions and military munitions, was comparatively defenceless. To take this place would, therefore, both cut off the supplies of Taylor's army, and leave it isolated in the heart of the enemy's country. The plan of Arista was to cross the Rio Grande, get in the rear of General Taylor's army, capture Point Isabel, and then fall on the American army.¹ The plan was judicious, and was only prevented from being carried out, by the accidental information brought to General Taylor by one of Thornton's party—sent in by the Mexican commander!² The rapid return of the army to Point Isabel was a consequence of this information, and the additional fact that the enemy was preparing to cross below. Either the Mexican army was dilatory in its movement, or the body detailed to cross below was unable to form a junction, for the forces of Taylor reached the depot at Isabel without encountering the enemy.

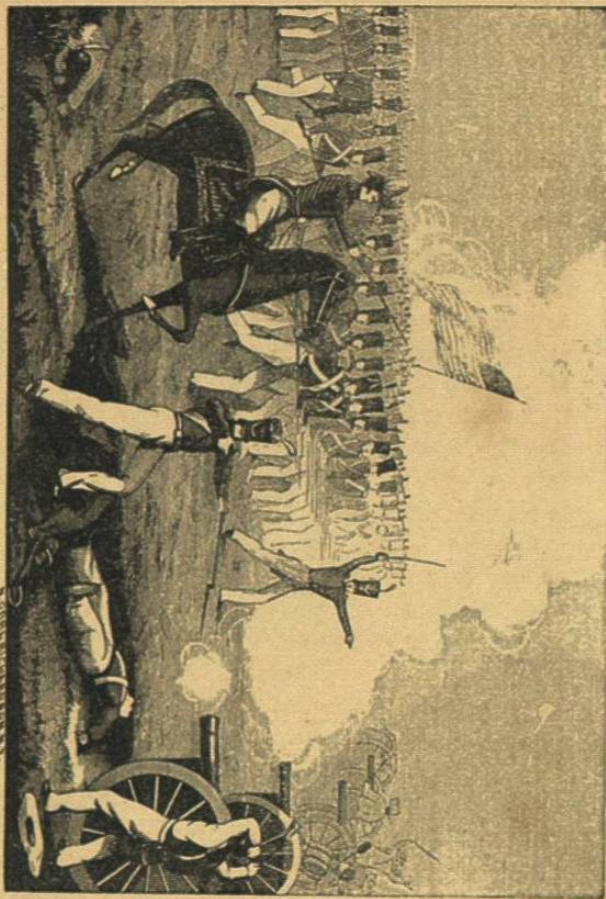
Having obtained the object of his expedition, and garrisoned the depot with new troops, the American general

¹ This is an inference from the facts stated by General Taylor.

² General Taylor states in his letter of May 3d, that in consequence of the deficiency in light troops, he was "kept ignorant" of the enemy's movements.

commenced his return to Fort Brown on the 7th of May, a week after his departure. The army was accompanied by a train of wagons, and encamped at night about seven miles from Isabel. The next day (the 8th) the march was resumed, and at noon the enemy was discovered drawn up in battle array upon a prairie three miles from the Palo Alto. The army was halted, and the men refreshed at a pool. The line was formed in two wings. The right, commanded by Colonel Twiggs, was composed of the 5th Infantry, Colonel McIntosh; 3d Infantry, Captain Morris; 4th Infantry, Major Allen; Ringgold's Light Artillery; two eighteen-pounders under Lt. Churchill; and two squadrons of Dragoons under Captains Ker and May. The left wing, under the command of Lt. Colonel Belknap, was formed by a battalion of Artillery, Colonel Childs, Captain Duncan's Light Artillery, and the 8th Infantry, under Captain Montgomery. The train was left in the rear, protected by a guard.

At two P. M., the army advanced by heads of columns, till the Mexican cannon opened upon them, when they were deployed into line, and Ringgold's Light Artillery on the right, poured forth its rapid and deadly fire on the enemy. The Mexican cavalry, mostly Lancers, were on their left, and were forced back by the destructive discharges of artillery. To remedy this, General Arista ordered Torrejon, general of cavalry, to charge the American right. This he did, but was met by the Flying Artillery, under Lt. Ridgely, and by the 5th Infantry. The Lancers were again driven back. At this period the prairie grass was set on fire, and under cover of its smoke the Americans advanced to the position just occupied by the Mexican cavalry. Again a Mexican division of Lancers



GENERAL TAYLOR AT THE BATTLE OF PALO ALTO.
MAY 8th, 1846.

charged, under the command of Col. Montero,¹ but with as little success. The continuous fire of artillery disordered and drove back the enemy's columns. On the left wing of our army, attacks of the Mexicans were met by Duncan's battery, and by other troops of that division. The combat on our side was chiefly carried on by artillery; and never was there a more complete demonstration of the superior skill and energy of that Arm of service, as conducted by the accomplished graduates of West-Point. He who was the life and leader of the Light Artillery, —MAJOR RINGGOLD—was in this engagement mortally wounded, and died in a few days.

The battle terminated with the possession, by the Americans, of the field, and the retreat during the night of the Mexicans. Arista, dating his despatch, says, "*in sight of the enemy, at night.*" This might be true; but he was in retreat, and took a new position several miles off, at Resaca de la Palma. A ravine here crossed the road, and on either side it was skirted with dense thickets. This ravine was occupied by the Mexican artillery. The position was well chosen; and with troops better skilled in the use of artillery, and with greater energy of body, might have easily been defended.

General Taylor had encamped on the field of battle, from which he did not depart till two p. m. the next day. In two hours, the American army came in sight of the Mexican array. The dispositions of our troops were soon made. A battery of artillery, under Lt. Ridgely, moved up the main road, while the 3d, 4th, and 5th Regiments of Infantry deployed on either flank to support it and act

¹ Arista's Despatch.

as skirmishers. The action commenced by the fire of the Mexican artillery, which was returned by Ridgely's battery and by the infantry on the wings. In this firing, the Mexican cannon were well managed by Generals La Vega and Requena, and the effect began to be severely felt on the American lines. It was necessary to dislodge them; and this duty was assigned to Captain May of the Dragoons. It was here that this officer became so distinguished. The charge was gallantly made. The Dragoons cut through the enemy. The artillerymen were dispersed, and General La Vega taken prisoner. The Dragoons, however, had advanced beyond support, and in turn fell back on the main body. The regiments of infantry now charged the Mexican line, and the battle was soon ended. Their columns, now broken by successive charges, were unable to bear the continued and well-directed fire poured upon them by both infantry and artillery. They fled precipitately from the field, and were rapidly pursued by the American rearguard. The Mexicans lost many prisoners, and ceased not their flight till they either crossed or were overwhelmed in the waters of the Rio Grande. In these engagements neither cowardice nor feebleness was attributed to them. They fought gallantly, behaved well, and were only conquered by that union of physical strength and superior skill, with which some nations are fortunately gifted, by the natural influence of climate and the artificial developments of science.

In these engagements the commander of the American forces, General Zachary Taylor, displayed the utmost coolness and bravery—exposing himself in the most dangerous positions, and encouraging the troops by his heroic example. After the battles were ended, his attention to



GENERAL TAYLOR AT THE BATTLE OF RESACA DE LA PALMA.
MAY 9th, 1846.

the wounded and the dying, whether friend or foe, evinced that sympathy with suffering humanity which is ever inseparable from true courage.

We here insert the official report :

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF OCCUPATION, }
Camp at Palo Alto, Texas, May 9, 1846. }

SIR :—I have the honor to report that I was met near this place yesterday, on my march from Point Isabel, by the Mexican forces, and after an action of about five hours, dislodged them from their position, and encamped upon the field. Our artillery, consisting of two 18-pounders and two light batteries, was the arm chiefly engaged, and to the excellent manner in which it was manoeuvred and served is our success mainly due.

The strength of the enemy is believed to have been about six thousand men, with seven pieces of artillery, and eight hundred cavalry. His loss is probably at least one hundred killed. Our strength did not exceed, all told, twenty-three hundred, while our loss was comparatively trifling—four men killed, three officers and thirty-seven men wounded, several of the latter mortally. I regret to say that Major Ringgold, 3d artillery, and Captain Paige, 4th infantry, are severely wounded. Lieut. Luther, 2d artillery, slightly so.

The enemy has fallen back, and it is believed has repassed the river. I have advanced parties now thrown forward in his direction, and shall move the main body immediately.

In the haste of this first report, I can only say that the officers and men behaved in the most admirable manner throughout the action. I shall have the pleasure of making a more detailed report when those of the different commanders shall be received.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brigadier-general, U. S. A. Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
Camp at Resaca de la Palma, 3 miles from Matamoras, }
10 o'clock, P. M.—May 9, 1846. }

SIR:—I have the honor to report that I marched with the main body of the army at 2 o'clock to-day, having previously thrown forward a body of light infantry into the forest, which covers the Matamoras road. When near the spot where I am now encamped, my advance discovered that a ravine crossing the road had been occupied by the enemy with artillery. I immediately ordered a battery of field artillery to sweep the position, flanking and sustaining it by the 3d, 4th, and 5th regiments, deployed as skirmishers to the right and left. A heavy fire of artillery and of musketry was kept up for some time, until finally the enemy's batteries were carried in succession by a squadron of dragoons and the regiments of infantry that were on the ground. He was soon driven from his position, and pursued by a squadron of dragoons, battalion of artillery, 3d infantry, and a light battery, to the river. Our victory has been complete. Eight pieces of artillery, with a great quantity of ammunition, three standards, and some one hundred prisoners have been taken; among the latter, Gen. La Vega, and several other officers. One general is understood to have been killed. The enemy has recrossed the river, and I am sure will not again molest us on this bank.

The loss of the enemy in killed has been most severe. Our own has been very heavy, and I deeply regret to report that Lieut. Inge, 2d dragoons, Lieut. Cochrane, 4th infantry, and Lieut. Chadbourne, 8th infantry, were killed on the field. Lieut. Col. Payne, 4th artillery, Lieut. Col. McIntosh, Lieut. Dobbins, 3d infantry, Capt. Hooe, and Lieut. Fowler, 5th infantry, and Capt. Montgomery, Lieuts. Gates, Selden, McClay, Burbank and Jordan, 8th infantry, were wounded. The extent of our loss in killed and wounded is not yet ascertained, and is reserved for a more detailed report.

The affair of to-day may be regarded as a proper supplement to the cannonade of yesterday; and the two taken together, exhibit the coolness and gallantry of our officers and men in the most favorable light. All have done their duty, and done it nobly. It will be my pride in a more circumstantial report of both actions, to dwell upon particular instances of individual distinction.

It affords me peculiar pleasure to report that the field-work opposite Matamoras has sustained itself handsomely during a cannonade and bombardment of 168 hours. But the pleasure is alloyed with profound regret at the loss of its heroic and indomitable commander, Major Brown, who died to-day from the effect of a shell. His loss would be a severe one to the service at any time, but to the army under my orders, it is indeed irreparable. One officer and one non-commissioned officer killed, and ten men wounded, comprise all the casualties incident to this severe bombardment.

I inadvertently omitted to mention the capture of a large number of pack mules left in the Mexican camp.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brigadier-general, U. S. Army Commanding.

[ORDERS No. 59.]

1. The commanding general congratulates the army under his command upon the signal success which has crowned its recent operations against the enemy. The coolness and steadiness of the troops during the action of the 8th, and the brilliant impetuosity with which the enemy's position and artillery were carried on the 9th, have displayed the best qualities of the American soldier. To every officer and soldier of his command the general publicly returns his thanks for the noble manner in which they have sustained the honor of the service and of the country. While the main body of the army has been thus actively employed, the gar-

rison left opposite Matamoras has rendered no less distinguished service by sustaining a severe cannonade and bombardment of many successive days. The army and the country, while justly rejoicing in this triumph of our arms, will deplore the loss of many brave officers and men who fell gallantly in the hour of combat.

2. It being necessary for the commanding general to visit Point Isabel on public business, Colonel Twiggs will assume command of the corps of the army near Matamoras, including the garrison of the field-work. He will occupy the former lines of the army, making such dispositions for defence and for the comfort of his command as he may deem advisable. He will hold himself strictly on the defensive until the return of the commanding general.

By order of Brigadier-general Taylor.

W. W. J. BLISS, Act. Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
POINT ISABEL, TEXAS, May 12, 1846. }

SIR:—I am making a hasty visit to this place, for the purpose of having an interview with Commodore Connor, whose squadron is now at anchor off the harbor, and arranging with him a combined movement up the river. I avail myself of the brief time at my command to report that the main body of the army is now occupying its former position opposite Matamoras. The Mexican forces are almost disorganized, and I shall lose no time in investing Matamoras, and opening the navigation of the river.

I regret to report that Major Ringgold died the morning of the 11th inst., of the severe wounds received in the action of Palo Alto. With the exception of Capt. Paige, whose wound is dangerous, the other wounded officers are doing well. In my report of the second engagement, I accidentally omitted the name of Lieut. Dobbins, 3d infantry, among the officers slightly wounded, and desire that the omission may be supplied in the despatch itself. I am under the painful necessity of reporting that Lieut. Blake, topographical engineers, after rendering distinguished service in my staff during the affair

of the 8th inst., accidentally shot himself with a pistol on the following day, and expired before night.

It has been quite impossible as yet to furnish detailed reports of our engagements with the enemy, or even accurate returns of the killed and wounded. Our loss is not far from 3 officers and 40 men killed, and 13 officers and 100 men wounded; while that of the enemy has in all probability exceeded 300 killed; more than 200 have been buried by us on the two fields of battle.

I have exchanged a sufficient number of prisoners to recover the command of Captain Thornton. The wounded prisoners have been sent to Matamoras—the wounded officers on their parole. General La Vega and a few other officers have been sent to New Orleans, having declined a parole, and will be reported to Maj. Gen. Gaines. I am not conversant with the usages of war in such cases, and beg that such provision may be made for these prisoners as may be authorized by law. Our own prisoners have been treated with great kindness by the Mexican officers.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brigadier-general, U. S. A. Commanding.

The RESULT of these battles, however, was fatal. The Mexican republic lost all power, either present or future, of retaining one foot of that vast territorial empire which they once held east of the Rio Grande. The conquerors were tempted, in the flush of victory, to carry their arms beyond that melancholy river;—to seek for glory in conquests;—to find the gratification of dominion in foreign lands;—to indulge the rapacious lust of power;—to leave fields fertile in blessings for others fertile only in blood;—and finally, to make it uncertain whether even the best of Republics can resist the universal tendency of man to build up Empires—by the destruction of Justice.