



## CHAPTER XI.

Strength of the Army.—Reinforcements.—Divisions of the Army.—March from Puebla.—Hospitals of Puebla.—Volcano of Popocatepetl.—Pass of Rio Frio.—View of Mexico.—Valley of Mexico.—Lakes.—Inundations.—Topography of the Valley.—Position of the Army on the 13th of August.—Reconnaissance of the Rifles.—El Penon.—Mexicalcingo.—Turning of Lake Chalco.—March to San Augustine.—Skirmish at Buena Vista.—Concentration.—Position of the Army on the 18th.

WE have already said that Scott's army in Puebla, on the 1st day of June, 1847, did not exceed five thousand effectives,—that is, capable of marching and fighting. From Vera Cruz to Puebla, the road had been strewn with the sick, or languishing—the convalescent invalids, or the wounded,—who had been left in depots or were in the moveable hospitals of the army. Here we should recollect, and consider carefully, the wide and important difference which exists between a mere detachment of an army, or light division moving rapidly through a country for temporary purposes, and a regularly organized army, equipped to remain in the midst of a hostile nation, and, therefore, obliged to supply all its own wants. The former being small, and moving rapidly for a short time, either has no sick and wounded, or depends upon transporting them in wagons or leaving them to the private kindness of the inhabitants of the country. On the other hand, a regularly organized army, subsisting in the heart of an enemy's country, must provide itself with

hospitals and depots, either moveable or stationary; and must there leave all the provisions, guards, men, and equipments, which are necessary to maintain these depots, and secure their safety and comfort. If these are stationary in towns, (as they should be,) then garrisons must be left with them. If moveable, from camp to camp, they require a large number of wagons, a numerous body of teamsters, and a yet more numerous body of attendants. In either case, it is not too high an estimate to say, that an invading army, advanced within the territory of a hostile country, requires at least one-fourth of its original number to be enrolled as *non-combatants*. A part of these will be sick, a part wounded, and a large part engaged as attendants, convoys, or garrisons. If Scott had left Jalapa, then, with eight thousand effective men, he could not have had more than six thousand with which to leave Puebla. But far worse than this was the actual fact. The inhospitable climate of Mexico did not cease its ravages with the lowlands of the coast. The record of disease in the army has never been fully unfolded. In the more unhealthy positions on the Rio Grande, at Vera Cruz, Tampico, Perote,<sup>1</sup> and many other places—even at Puebla—disease pursued the troops, and in the space of one year hurried thousands to the grave. Hundreds and thousands of the volunteer regiments also disappeared from the army, from the effects of disease, which caused their discharge, from voluntary absences, and from being cut off in small parties. Nor was this all. Desertions

<sup>1</sup> The names were recently published of no less than seven hundred men, who died in a few months at Perote.

from the regular army were frequent. No less than seventeen hundred were reported in a little more than a year.<sup>1</sup>

Such were the causes which rapidly diminished the number of effective troops in the field; but which could not be properly estimated by those who looked only to the muster-rolls at Washington.

Three different bodies of reinforcements had left Vera Cruz for Puebla, and reached there in time for the march on Mexico. With these, and the garrison of Jalapa, the army of Scott, in the beginning of August, may be thus enumerated:

ARMY ON THE 6TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1847.

Scott's forces at Puebla, (including all),	7,000
Cadwallader's Brigade,	1,400
Pillow's " "	1,800
Pierce's Corps " "	2,409
Garrison of Puebla, under Colonel Childs	1,400
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Total arrived at Puebla,	14,009
Deduct from this, Garrison of Puebla,	} 3,261
with the sick in hospitals,	
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Total marched from Puebla,	10,738

Nor was the want of men the only difficulty with the troops, in preparing for its march. Although the government (Congress) had, in the aggregate, provided amply for the troops; yet the difficulty of transmitting funds to distant posts, in a foreign country, without the

<sup>1</sup> Their names were recorded in the Police Gazette.

aid of mercantile arrangements, was so great, that the officers of the different departments, and of the line, were frequently much embarrassed for funds. The merchants of Puebla, and of Mexico generally, deal almost altogether with England and France. They were willing to buy drafts on those countries, but not on our own. The consequence was, that the officers of the quartermaster's and commissary's departments, had often to get money discounted at a heavy rate, for the purchase of such supplies, in the country, as were needed at the moment.

The following paragraph is from a letter written on the 6th of August, at Puebla :

"General Pierce came up to-day with his command, bringing eighty-five thousand dollars *in drafts*, but not one cent in money. The disappointment and vexation, both of the general-in-chief, and the quartermaster's and commissary's departments, is great in the extreme, and how they are to get along, is with them an unsolved problem. The paymaster's department is no better off; and the only way officers can get along to provide themselves with the necessaries of life, is to first procure a draft on one of the cities of our Union from the paymaster, and then have it shaved at the rate of twenty-five or thirty per cent. from its face. This is but a faint and imperfect sketch of the *financial operations* of our army."<sup>1</sup>

This was a consequence of one of the errors of the campaign,—not on the part of the army, or its commander, but in the War Department. This error was,

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the St. Louis Republican.

in leaving the army *too weak to maintain its communications*. It is a rule of common sense, not less than of the military art, that at every step made by the army, it should leave such defences and depots in its rear, that there may always be a direct communication with its source of supply at home. When the army of Scott had arrived at Jalapa, the volunteer corps enrolled in May and June, 1846, began to disappear. Their places were not supplied till months afterwards. Thus the army moved on towards Mexico, without being able to keep open its communications. In fact, many places, such as the National Bridge, which it was important to defend, were abandoned. The army was too weak to move forward and leave garrisons behind. The consequence of this condition of things was an inconvenient derangement in the transmission of funds. Specie could only be carried safely with the large trains; while drafts on the government treasuries in the towns of the United States were at a discount in Mexico. Such was the state of the military chest, when it was determined to march from Puebla to Mexico.

On the 5th of August a council of war was held, at which the heads of the different divisions and brigades were present; among whom were Major-Generals Worth, Quitman, and Pillow, with Brigadiers Twiggs, Shields, and Cadwallader. General Pierce did not arrive till next day. The general-in-chief (Scott) then laid down distinctly the plan of operations, the routes, and the mode, by which he proposed to reach, attack, and capture the city of Mexico and its defences. Subsequent events proved how ably and clearly these dispositions were made.

We have said that Scott left Puebla with 10,738 men,<sup>1</sup> and that 3,261 were left in garrison and in hospitals. Of the last, the largest part were in the hospital, where were at one time no less than nineteen hundred sick! Of these, seven hundred found their graves at Puebla. Leaving this large body of sick with a very moderate garrison, under Col. Childs, the army commenced its march for the valley of Mexico on the 7th of August.

The army, under the directions of the general-in-chief, was arranged in four divisions, with a cavalry brigade. The divisions comprehended a large number of regiments, but their numbers were reduced one-half. Some of them were the mere skeletons of what they should be, under the regular organization.

The divisions were very nearly as follows:

Cavalry Brigade,	}	1st Dragoons, Capt. Kearney,	} Parts.
Col. Harney.		2d do. Major Sumner,	
		3d do. Capt. McReynolds,	

1st Division, Gen. Worth.	}	1st Brigade,	}	2d Regiment Artillery.
		Col. Garland.		3d do. do.
2d Division, Gen. Twiggs.	}	1st Brigade, Gen. Smith.	}	4th do. Infantry.
				Duncan's Field Battery.
		2d Brigade, Col. Riley.	}	5th Infantry.
				6th do.
		7th do.		
		8th do.		

1st Division, Gen. Worth.	}	1st Brigade, Gen. Smith.	}	Rifle Regiment.
				1st Artillery.
2d Division, Gen. Twiggs.	}	1st Brigade, Gen. Smith.	}	3d Infantry.
				Taylor's Battery.
		2d Brigade, Col. Riley.	}	4th Artillery.
				1st Infantry.
		7th do.		

<sup>1</sup> Scott's Official Report, No. 34.

3d Division, Gen. Pillow.	}	1st Brigade, Gen. Cadwallader.	}	Voltigeurs.
				11th Infantry.
4th Division, Gen. Quitman.	}	2d Brigade, Gen. Pierce.	}	14th do.
				9th Infantry.
		1st Brigade, Gen. Shields.	}	12th do.
				15th do.
2d Brigade.	}	S. Carolina Volunteers.		
		N. York Volunteers.		
		2d Penn. do.		
		Detachment of U. S. Mar.		

This organization apparently gives twenty regiments, and parts of five others. Had these regiments been full, up to their legal number, they would have contained twenty thousand men, a regiment, when completely organized, having a thousand. The whole army, however, contained but little more than half that number. The regiments, therefore, averaged but five hundred, and, in fact, some of them had but three hundred.

In order that the different corps should not be thrown together, and that the troops might move easily, the divisions took up their line of march on different days, but in such a manner that they might reinforce each other at four hours' notice. As it was known that there was no large Mexican army immediately in front, no evil could arise from this mode of march.

Accordingly on the 7th the second division, under General Twiggs, commenced its march, preceded by the brigade of cavalry under Harney. On the 8th, Quitman's division of volunteers moved; on the 9th the first division, under Worth; on the 10th the third division, under Pillow.<sup>1</sup> General Scott, the commander, joined and continued with the leading division.

<sup>2</sup> Scott's Official Report, No. 31, August 19th, 1847.

The army was now under full way, marching on to that singular capital of that singular nation, whose ancient and whose modern civilization has made a phenomenon in the history of society. The fragments of mutation and revolution lay scattered in its path—all was new and strange; yet, unmoved by these associations, and undiverted by these novelties, it marched steadily on to fulfil what was apparently the decree of destiny.

The road on which the troops marched was the great stage-travelled route from Vera Cruz to Mexico, through Puebla. The route travelled by Cortez, in his conquest, after diverging to the right a little south of Perote, here crossed the modern road and passed to the left through Cholula, and round the base of Popocatepetl, and finally rejoined the present road, near Lake Chalco. Cortez, no doubt, pursued the common way at that time, especially as Cholula was then a magnificent city. The modern road has been made to suit the modern relations of society and the new growth of towns. Nearly at right angles to the road from Vera Cruz, and west of the range of the Cordilleras, lies the road from Mexico to Acapulco on the Pacific. Near the city of Mexico, are the lakes of Chalco and Xachimilco. On this road to Acapulco is the village of San Augustine, at which the American army ultimately arrived, previous to the battles of Mexico.

On the morning of the 7th, Twiggs' division passed out of Puebla, and took its way through a beautiful, rolling country, where gardens supplied the city with fruits and vegetables. The road was ascending, and crossed, before it entered the city of Mexico, the Anahuac range of the Cordilleras, the most magnificent portion of that chain of mountains which extends from Cape Horn

to the Arctic—and from whose sky-crested summits the eye of fancy might extend its uninterrupted vision from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and call up, in bright and long array, the nations, the arts, and the triumphs of victorious science, to be spread over all this continent, in the ages of the deep and distant future! Many miles to the left arose the snow-topped Popocatepetl, whose venerable summit was eighteen thousand feet in the air; three thousand feet above the point where ice and snow dwell in perpetual congelation! A little further, arose the twin summit of Iztac-cithuail, whose icy top looks over the earth in the same cold and isolated glory. Thirty miles from the road, as these were, yet in the clear atmosphere of this elevated plain they seemed near by, and their snows chilled the air. Thus amidst the ruins of Cholula and Tlascalala, on either side, and in full view of these volcanic monuments to the grandeur of nature, the army marched on. The road gradually ascended through mountain scenery, which seemed to besit rather the north of New England than the region of the tropics. Thick woods would now and then cover the hills, while here and there little lakes were interspersed in deep valleys. The thirst of the soldier was relieved by the coldness of their waters, and his weariness was almost forgotten in the beauty and sublimity of surrounding nature. At length, on the third day, they reached the pass of Rio Frio. They left Puebla, seven thousand two hundred feet above the ocean, and were now ten thousand one hundred and twenty; having gradually ascended three thousand feet in forty-eight miles, and arrived in the midst of the Anahuac range of the Cordilleras, at a point forty-five miles distant from

the city of Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Rio Frio, says an officer, is "a little stream pouring down from the Snow mountains, of icy coldness and crystal purity."<sup>2</sup> The mountains from which it runs are composed of porphyritic rocks, and their highest summits, like that of Popocatepetl, are ancient volcanoes.

At this point the army had anticipated resistance, and the position was favorable to defence. Being in the midst of the mountains, they here closed down on both sides of the road, so as completely to overhang and enfilade it. Signs of preparation were, indeed, found in temporary parapets, and timber felled. The intention, however, of defending this point had been abandoned. It was supposed that General Valencia, who commanded the division of the north, was stationed here. If so, he had retreated towards the capital.

A march of a few miles further, and the army passed over the highest crest of the mountains; and one of the most splendid scenes of the world opened upon the eyes of the weary soldiers.

It is thus described by an officer of the Rifles.<sup>3</sup>

"When all were pretty nearly worn out, a sudden turn in the road brought to our view a sight which none can ever forget. The whole vast plain of Mexico was before us. The coldness of the air, which was most sensibly felt at this great height—our fatigue and danger, were forgotten, and our eyes were the only sense that thought of enjoyment. Mexico, with its lofty steeples

<sup>1</sup> Stealey's Map of the Roads from Vera Cruz to Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to the New York Courier, dated August 31st.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to the New York Courier.

and its checkered domes—its bright reality, and its former fame—its modern splendor, and its ancient magnificence, was before us; while around on every side its thousand lakes seemed like silver stars on a velvet mantle."

With this description we may compare another by an English officer, who seems to have been equally enraptured with the same view. "From an eminence, (says Captain Lyon,) we came suddenly in sight of the great valley of Mexico, with its beautiful city appearing in the centre, surrounded by diverging shady paséos, bright fields, and picturesque haciendas. The great lake Tezcuco lay immediately beyond it, shaded by a low floating cloud of exhalations from its surface, which hid from our view the bases of the volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Iztac-cithuatl—while their snowy summits, brightly glowing beneath the direct rays of the sun, which but partially illumined the plains, gave a delightfully novel appearance to the whole scene before me. I was, however, at this distance, disappointed as to the size of Mexico; but its lively whiteness and freedom from smoke—the magnitude of the churches, and the extreme regularity of its structure, gave it an appearance which can never be seen in a European city, and declare it unique—perhaps unequalled in its kind."<sup>1</sup>

Thus suddenly did the army burst upon this extraordinary view—a view as remarkable for its historical associations, as for the grandeur of its natural elements,—a scene too, which must forever connect this army with

<sup>1</sup> Captain Lyon's Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico.

the memory of the past, and the developments of the future.

There must have been some, also, in that martial array, who turned their thoughts from the scenes of war, to contemplate here some of the most singular features of the natural world. The valley of Mexico is one of the most extraordinary regions of the earth. It is a basin enclosed by a wall of porphyritic mountains. Its length, north and south, is about sixty miles, and its breadth (east and west) about forty miles.<sup>1</sup> It is really formed by a separation (south of the city of Mexico) of the great chain of the Cordilleras into two chains—one bending east and the other west, which again unite north of the city. The result of this conformation is to leave a basin, surrounded by the walls of the mountain. In this basin, "all the water furnished by the surrounding Cordilleras is collected. No stream issues from it excepting the brook of Tequisquiae, which joins the Rio de Tula. The lakes rise by stages, in proportion to their distance from its centre, or in other words, from the site of the capital. Next to the lake of Tezcuco, Mexico is the least elevated point of the valley; the Plaza Mayor, or Great Square, being only one foot and one inch higher than the mean level of this lake, which is eleven and three-fourths feet lower than that of San Christobal. Zumpongo, which is the most northern, is  $29\frac{2}{5}\frac{1}{5}$  inches higher than the surface of Tezcuco; while that of Chalco, at the southern extremity, is only  $3\frac{6}{5}\frac{2}{5}$  feet more elevated than the Great Square of Mexico."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Stealey's Maps of the Roads from Vera Cruz to Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Humboldt's New Spain.

In consequence of this peculiarity, the city has, for a long series of ages, been exposed to inundations. Five immense floods have occurred since the Spanish invasion. Immense works have been constructed at different times to avoid this danger. One of these is the great cut, planned by Enrico Martinez, which connects the Rio de Suautillon with the Rio Tula, and thus carries off the lake of Zumpongo.<sup>1</sup> Around the same lake are stone dikes. In the south, dikes and sluices have been formed round Lakes Chalco and Xochimilco, by which they are prevented from overflowing. By means like these, the city of Mexico is prevented from inundation, and is no longer, as it seems to have been in the time of Cortez, an island in a lake. The character of the country remains unchanged—and it is yet a marshy valley, in a basin of the Cordilleras, spotted with lakes and filled with volcanic remains. On some of the causeways, there is still a continuous body of water for miles from the city—while on others, the ground is marshy, but sometimes cultivated.

On the 10th, the division of Twiggs encamped at the base of the mountain,<sup>2</sup> and at this, the enemy's scouts began to be seen on all sides. On the 11th, this division reached Ayotla, only fifteen miles by the National Road from Mexico, and waited for the other divisions to come up.

At this point, a survey of the valley of Mexico showed

<sup>1</sup> This was thought, by Humboldt, to be one of the most gigantic hydraulic operations executed by man. Its length is 67,537 feet, the greatest depth 197, and its greatest breadth 361.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to the New York Courier.

the lake of Tezcuco directly in front of the road; and at the lower end, and about half way to Mexico, (seven miles,) on the left of the road, is El Penon, a fortified mountain. Directly west of that, at the upper end of Lake Xochimilco, and about five miles south of Mexico, is Mexicalcingo, another fortified point. Directly south and west of Ayotla, lies the lake of Chalco, and the lake of Xochimilco. Entirely west of these again, and running from the city of Mexico, nearly at right angles with the National Road, lies the road to Acapulco, leading west from Mexico to the Pacific. On this last road lies San Augustine, the general depot of the army in its subsequent operations. Between San Augustine and the city of Mexico, and on or near the Acapulco road, lie in succession, San Antonia, Contreras, and Churubusco, points where successive engagements took place. CONTRERAS is about four miles nearly northwest of San Augustine, on a road leading through San Angel to the Tacubaya causeway. CHURUBUSCO is on the Acapulco road, near a canal, at the crossing of which was a *tête du pont*, (bridge-head.)

A rapid *coup d'œil* (birds-eye view) of the topography of the valley, and the position of the army on the 13th of August, will show Twiggs's division at Ayotla, east of Lake Chalco; Worth's division near the village of Chalco, at the south end of the lake, and the divisions of Pillow and Quitman intermediate. In front, the great lake of Tezcuco, and on the left, Lake Chalco. The city of Mexico lay on the side of Lake Tezcuco, and fifteen miles, by the road from Ayotla, approached through the lakes and marshes by great causeways.

An attentive examination shows, that on the south and

west, there are three great roads which respectively enter Mexico by causeways. The *first*, is the Vera Cruz or National Road, on which the army now was, and which passed by El Penon, immediately in front, and for miles on a narrow causeway, built on the shoals of the lake. The *second* was the Acapulco road, which lay directly across Lake Chalco, from where the army now was, and proceeded through San Augustine and San Antonia, by a causeway to the city. The *third* was the Toluca road, passing into Mexico by the Tacubaya causeway, still further to the west.

The problem now presented to the commander-in-chief was, by which of these roads shall the army attempt its passage into the city? The solution of this question required a close *reconnaissance*, and an accurate survey, if possible, of the position and defences of the enemy.

On the 12th of August, the Rifle regiment, with three companies of cavalry, were pushed forward to reconnoitre *El Penon*.<sup>1</sup> This work was successfully performed, and the work pronounced impracticable, without immense loss, which the commander of the army thought unnecessary to the object. The reconnoitring party (rifles and dragoons) continued their search to the left, in order to find a way of easier approach to the city. At about five miles from Mexico, they were arrested by coming suddenly upon five strong batteries commanding the road. This was the post of Mexicalcingo, before described, at the head of Lake Xochimilco. The party (composed of about four hundred men) soon counter-

<sup>1</sup> Letter of an officer to the New York Courier.



marched, and found El Penon, with its bristling batteries, immediately between them and the camp of General Twiggs. For some unknown reason, they were not attacked; and after a rapid march, arrived in camp about midnight. General Scott pronounced this "the boldest reconnaissance of the war."

*El Penon*, which had been thus reconnoitred, is a rocky hill, which "completely enfilades and commands the National Road, and had been fortified and repaired with the greatest care by Santa Anna. One side was inaccessible by nature, the rest had been made so by art. Batteries, in all mounting fifty-one guns of different calibres, had been placed on its sides, and a deep ditch, twenty-four feet wide and ten feet deep, had been cut, connecting the parts already surrounded by marshes."<sup>1</sup> From the Penon to the city, was a causeway, surrounded by water. This position could not be turned, and therefore must be carried by assault. Against this, General Scott decided on grounds of humanity.

In his report of the 19th of August, 1847, he thus writes:

"This mound, close to the National Road, commands the principal approach to the city from the east. No doubt it might have been carried, but at a great and disproportionate loss, and I was anxious to spare the lives of this gallant army for a general battle, which I knew we had to win before capturing the city, or obtaining the great object of the campaign—a just and honorable peace."

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the New York Courier.

Of the pass, by Mexicalcingo, the general writes, and thus discloses the plan which was ultimately adopted.

"It might have been easy (masking the Penon) to force the passage; but on the other side of the bridge we should have found ourselves, four miles from this road, on a narrow causeway, flanked to the right and left by water, or boggy grounds. These difficulties closely viewed, threw me back upon the project long entertained, of turning the strong eastern defences of the city, by passing around south of Lakes Chalco and Xochimilco, at the foot of the hills and mountains, so as to reach San Augustine, and hence to manœuvre on hard, though much broken ground, to the south and southwest of the capital, which had been more or less under our view since the 10th inst."<sup>1</sup>

El Penon, being on the common and only good road from Puebla to Mexico, and being likewise an almost impregnable position, General Santa Anna had judged correctly and wisely in placing there his principal fortification. The fortress of Mexicalcingo, being likewise a strong one, and, if taken, leaving the American army on a narrow causeway, easily defensible, the Mexican general had apparently provided for every possible passage between the Lake Chalco and the Lake Tezcoco. This was the only way in which there was a regular and tolerable road from Puebla to Mexico. On this the American army had advanced, and the vanguard had actually reached Ayotla, several miles in front of the south end of Chalco. The measures of the Mexican general were,

<sup>1</sup> General Scott's Official Report, No. 31, dated August 19th.

therefore, judiciously taken, and at this time promised, if any defence could avail, to be successful.

The real question in military science at this time was, could the Lake Chalco be turned? If it could, did the new route present a better or safer way? The reconnaissances made, and the information of scouts, determined the fact that a passage existed round the south end of Lake Chalco which might be made practicable, and by which the army would be brought on to the Acapulco road, and advance to the city on a route less defended, and affording greater advantages in fighting. This route, if practicable, Scott had contemplated taking, and now at once put the army in motion for that purpose.

The order of march was reversed, and Worth's division, which was in the rear at Chalco, was now in advance, marching round the south end of Lake Chalco, and cutting their way to San Augustine. On the 15th the several divisions took up their line of march, and Worth's corps proceeded steadily on to the fortified position of San Antonia. "The road lay along the base of a high range of mountains, at times crossing rocky spurs of the mountains, or along the margin of the lake, on very narrow causeways very much cut up. The hills on the left were often precipitous, and a few sharpshooters might have annoyed us exceedingly by their fire, and a few enterprising men might have blocked up the road completely by rolling down rocks, and yet they attempted it but once; a few shot soon dislodged them, and two or three hours' work cleared the road."<sup>1</sup>

On the 17th the head of General Worth's division

<sup>1</sup> Letter from an officer, published in the Washington Union.

reached San Augustine, and in a few hours after the other divisions were within striking distance. The march round the lake to San Augustine was twenty-seven miles, by a route deemed by the Mexicans impracticable; and on the 18th all the several corps were in position in the neighborhood of that post.<sup>1</sup>

Twiggs's division left Ayotla on the 16th with the train, the brigade of General Smith forming the rearguard. As the train was passing the little village of *Buena Vista* a Mexican division appeared in sight, attempting to cross the road and cut the train off. Here a skirmish ensued, which is thus described by an officer:

"On our left were large fields of half-grown barley, through which was seen advancing, in splendid order, the enemy's column. It was the most splendid sight I had ever seen. The yellow cloaks, red caps and jackets of the lancers, and the bright blue and white uniforms of the infantry, were most beautifully contrasted with the green of the barley-field. Our line of battle was soon formed, and we deployed through the grain to turn their left and cut them off from the mountains. A few shots, however, from the battery, soon showed them that they were observed, and countermarching in haste, they left their dead on the field. Thus ended our fight at Buena Vista. That night we stayed at Chalco."<sup>2</sup>

The train continued to move on, by roads over which it was almost impossible to drag the wagons. On the 18th it arrived in sight of the main army, which had now taken possession of San Augustine.

<sup>1</sup> Scott's Official Report, dated the 19th.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from an officer, in the New York Courier.

The army was now concentrated, the different divisions in sight of one another, and the arrangements made for final operations. On the 13th it was on the Puebla road on the east side of Lake Chalco, advancing on El Penon. On the 18th it was on the Acapulco road, near San Augustine, nine miles from the city of Mexico. The change was made in good order, and the ground to operate on was far better, and the defences in front less. The city of the Spanish-Aztecs was now within the grasp of the arms of the United States, predestined, in the convictions of the people, to be invincible wherever they should be carried. A conviction like this, existing in ages past, alike in the minds of Roman, Mohammedan, and Puritan, often makes the destiny which it affirms and courts. Asserted in the cause of liberty and justice, it would subdue a world to the civilization of Christianity. In any other cause, its predestined glory may fade before a darker fate.

## CHAPTER XII.

Mexican Line of Defence.—Position of the American and Mexican Armies.—Action of the 19th.—Position in the Hamlet of Contreras.—Position of General Scott.—Arrangements for the Battle.—Distribution of the American and Mexican Forces.—Battle of Contreras.—Rout of the Mexicans.—Surrender of Mexican Generals.—Recapture of the Buena Vista Guns.—Scott's Arrangements.—Evacuation of San Antonio.—Storm of the Tête du Pont.—Battle of Churubusco.—Defeat of the Mexicans.—Loss.—Truce.

THE Mexican plan of defence for the city of Mexico seems to have contemplated two lines of defence—an exterior and interior one. The exterior was composed of a line of forts and fortified eminences. The strongest was EL PENON, on the National Road, completely commanding it, near the edge of Lake Tezcucó. This fortress, as we have already stated, was pronounced impracticable without immense loss. It contained fifty-one guns, disposed in several different batteries, with infantry breastworks, and the whole surrounded by a deep ditch connecting the marshes and waters about it. The next fort of this class was at MEXICALCINGO, at the upper end of Lake Xochimilco, and commanding a narrow causeway to the city. This, also, was defended with batteries and infantry breastworks. The next position was the BRIDGE OF CHURUBUSCO, a *tête du pont* at the crossing of a canal, armed also with cannon, on the Acapulco road. The next, but to the west, and front of this, was the HILL OF CONTRERAS, thoroughly armed with batteries and breast-