

trying to be foremost in the flight. The road was literally blocked up, and while many perished by their own guns, it was almost impossible to fire on the mass from the danger of killing our own men. Some fled up the ravine on the left, or on the right, and many of these were slain by turning their own guns on them. Towards the city, the rifles and 2d infantry led off the pursuit. Seeing that a large crowd of fugitives were jammed up in a pass in the road, some of the men ran through the corn-field, and by thus heading them off and firing down upon them, about thirty men took over five hundred prisoners, nearly a hundred of them officers."¹

In the mean time, the enemy (who previous to the assault were ignorant of the American forces in the ravine) had commenced a heavy fire on Shields' brigade in the hamlet. This, however, ceased when the charge was made by Riley. Shields then ordered his brigade, composed of the New York and South Carolina regiments, into the road, to cut off the retreat of such of Valencia's corps as passed that way. In this they succeeded. Large parties of the enemy were met by the fire of these regiments, and either scattered through the fields or made prisoners. At this point on the road three hundred and sixty-five were taken, of whom twenty-five were officers, and among the latter was General Nicholas Mendoza.²

The victory of CONTRERAS³ was brilliant and decisive.

trampled down the infantry in their flight, and completed our defeat."—
SALAS' *Official Report*, August 28th, 1847.

¹ Letter of an officer in the New York Courier.

² Official Report of General Shields.

³ Official Report of General Scott.

The aggregate loss of the enemy was seven hundred killed, about one thousand wounded, eight hundred and thirteen prisoners, of whom eighty-eight were officers, (including four generals,) twenty-two pieces of brass cannon, seven hundred pack-mules, and an immense number of small-arms, shot, shells, and ammunition. But the most important loss, to an experienced military eye, was that of one of the strong positions by which the roads to Mexico were commanded, and in consequence of which San Antonio was turned, and Churubusco attacked in flank. It was only two miles from the point where Shields captured Mendoza to San Angel, and but three miles (by good roads) from the last point (by Coyhoacan) to Churubusco. On these roads the American troops rushed in pursuit of the flying enemy, till they united with Worth's corps in the storm of the church and *tête du pont* at the last place.

Among the generals taken, were SALAS, MENDOZA, GARCIA, and GUADALUPE. The two former appear to have been men of talent, while of General Valencia, their commander, nothing was then heard; and he seems to have been either wanting in skill and courage, or to have been so overwhelmed with his misfortune, as to be unwilling to make his appearance.¹ By a private correspondence² between him and Santa Anna, it seems that the latter had directed him, on the 17th or 18th, (previous to the arrival of the army in front of the fortifications,) to abandon his post at San Angel, (probably the fortification,)

¹ Official Report of General Salas.

² Private intercepted correspondence between Valencia and Santa Anna, dated the 18th and 19th of August.

which Valencia, on the 18th, gave reasons why he should not obey; and on the 19th Santa Anna yields, but doubts the propriety of Valencia maintaining his post. Both appear to have been wrong in a military point of view. The heights of Contreras were a proper point to defend, but batteries should have been placed on two or three other eminences; and, above all, the commander should never have allowed a storming party to get into a ravine, within gunshot, without being known. Such a fact argues gross negligence.

One of the striking events of the day, was the recapture of the identical pieces of artillery taken at Buena Vista by the Mexicans. This circumstance is thus related by the commander-in-chief:¹

"One of the most pleasing incidents of the victory is the recapture, in the works, by Captain Drum, 4th artillery, under Major Gardner, of the two brass six-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 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."²

¹ General Scott's Official Report.

² In connection with this circumstance, it is proper to say that Captain O'Brien, who commanded the battery to which these guns were attached at Buena Vista, requested a court of inquiry, which was held in March, 1847. The court found the fact, that he was the last man who left the pieces, the others having been all killed and wounded. Their opinion was thus given:

The strength of the two armies in this engagement, may be thus stated. Including the brigade of Shields, placed in the hamlet, and which we have shown to have done most effective service, the American troops amounted to about four thousand five hundred; while the corps of Valencia and Mendoza were seven thousand, and at least twelve thousand were on the same road. If we deduct Shields' brigade, as keeping in check the main body of Mexicans, it is probable the actual battle was fought by three thousand five hundred on our side, against seven thousand Mexicans in fortified intrenchments. The discrepancy in numbers was not so great as in some other actions; but, on the other hand, the military dispositions were admirable, and the battle was won before it was fought.

We must now follow the army in its bloody march through and over the intrenchments of Churubusco. At 8 A. M., or two hours from its commencement, the fight of Contreras may be said to have been completed; the

OPINION.

"The court is unanimously of the opinion that the conduct of Captain O'Brien, during the whole time, was bold and intrepid, and deserving of the highest commendation. The firm stand made by him in the afternoon, by which he sacrificed his whole section, contributed largely to the success of the day, if it did not save us from disaster."

II. The proceedings of the court, in the above case, having been submitted to and examined by the commanding general, are by him fully approved.

III. The court of inquiry, of which Brevet Colonel W. G. Belknap, 8th infantry, is president, is hereby dissolved.

(Signed)

By order of Maj. Gen. Taylor.
W. W. S. BLISS, Asst. Adj. Gen

greater part of the time being occupied in pursuit of the broken and scattered remnants of Valencia's division—Valencia himself having disappeared.

Churubusco is really about four miles from the heights of Contreras, in a direct line east; but the road goes northeast to San Angel, and then forks southeast, so that the distance by the road is about six miles. This point was defended by General Rincon, (as we have before said,) with the regiments of Independencia and Bravo—reinforced largely on the morning of the 20th.¹ The retreating bodies of men, who had occupied Antonia, and the fragments left from Contreras, were concentrated in and about Churubusco, where they arrived but little before the advancing and attacking regiments of Scott. That morning, the commander of artillery, Don Martin Corraera, arrived, bringing six pieces of cannon, which were placed in battery on the road to Coyhoacan, and in the centre of a field-work, erected around the hacienda, which was at the commencement of the causeway leading to the western gate of the city, and had to be passed before getting on the road. This hacienda consisted of an enclosure of stone walls—inside of which, was a stone building higher than these walls; and above all, a stone church, higher than the rest. The outside walls were pierced with two ranges of embrasures, and high enough to command the surrounding country, and fire plungingly upon those approaching to the assault.² The church and the hacienda were surrounded by this outside field-work. About

¹ General Rincon's Official Despatch, dated August 26th.

² Letter of an officer, in the New York Courier.

three hundred yards in the rear, and a little to the east, was the *tête du pont*, at the intersection of the causeway, or principal road with a canal or river. By passing along the causeway, the church and field-work would be left a little on the west side, and the troops would be first arrested by the *tête du pont*. This was the case with Worth's division.

On the morning of the 20th, about 8 A. M., when it was fully ascertained that the enemy (now defeated at *Contreras*) was in full retreat towards the great causeway road from San Antonia to Mexico, the two brigades (one of Worth's and one of Quitman's) which had been ordered to make a diversion in front of *Contreras*, were ordered back to their respective divisions. Quitman was directed with his remaining brigade (Shields' being now under the direction of General Twiggs, on the road from San Angel) to garrison San Augustine, the general depot of the army, and the loss of which could not be risked.¹ The division of Worth was ordered to proceed to the attack of San Antonia, and when that was carried, to march on and rejoin the other divisions in the attack of the defences of Churubusco. Accordingly, the brigades of Clarke and Garland (Worth's) proceeded to the attack of Antonia. This post, left unsupported by the line of troops, now driven from *Contreras*, and with comparatively open ground about it, could be turned. Accordingly, Colonel Clarke's brigade, conducted by Captain Mason of the engineers, and Lieutenant Hardcastle of the topographical corps, turned the enemy's right, by a sweep to the left, and came out on the high road

¹ Scott's Official Report, No. 32, August 28th.

to Mexico. In the mean time, the garrison had retreated, and were now cut in the centre by the advancing column of Clarke. One-half were driven off towards the east, and the other part on the causeway towards Churubusco. The brigade of Garland advancing in front, now occupied the evacuated hamlet—capturing the artillery in its batteries. These brigades were soon united, and rushed on in hot pursuit.¹

The grand movement of the day now commenced—the march of the united army (Quitman's 2d brigade excepted) on the fortified post of Churubusco. This was made in two columns—the division of Worth from San Antonia in front, and the divisions of Twiggs and Pillow, with the brigade of Shields from Coyhoacan; to which point they had pursued the remains of the Mexican army,—routed at *Contreras*, and followed through San Angel. This naturally resolved the battle into *two* distinct actions on the same field, and so clearly connected, as to be within half cannon-shot at the centres of contest. These were respectively, the *tête du pont*, attacked by the first column under Worth, and the fortified church and hacienda, attacked by the column of Twiggs and Pillow. Let us first follow Worth's attack.

It had got to be about 1 P. M., when the different divisions from the south and west were united, not in line, (nor together,) but within the same circuit of attack.² At the same time, the garrisons of Churubusco, (strongly reinforced,) the brigade of Perez, at Portalis, the broken corps from San Angel, and the principal divisions of

¹ Scott's Official Report.

² Letter in the New York Courier

Santa Anna's army were all prepared for battle, having concentrated in and about Churubusco. The division of Twiggs had commenced the attack on the fortified church about an hour, amidst an incessant roll of fire, when Worth, with Cadwallader's brigade, (Pillow's division,) commenced manœuvring on the tête du pont. The other fortification attacked by Twiggs, was just half-gunshot to the left, and but for the attack on it, would have poured a destructive fire on Worth. Both were attacked simultaneously—and thus the fire of Pablo de Churubusco was in a measure diverted. The brigade of Colonel Garland, with Smith's light battalion, moved along a little to the right of the road, directly up to the tête du pont. They advanced under the fire of a long line of infantry. Clarke's brigade marched at the same time, directly on the road; and this again was supported by the 11th and 14th regiments, (Cadwallader's,) and the whole moved steadily up under a tremendous discharge of both small-arms and cannon. Most of these corps, advancing perpendicularly, suffered greatly from the fire of batteries at the bridge-head.¹ At length, the line in front of Garland's column gave way, and made a rapid retreat to Mexico. The tête du pont was reached by Clarke's—its deep ditch was crossed by the 5th and 8th infantry—the parapets stormed—and one of the most formidable defences of Mexico crowned by its capture, the third action of the memorable 20th of August.

In the meanwhile, a yet more active, bloody, and eventful action took place to the left of Worth's line, in the attack on what may be called the Citadel of Churu-

¹ Scott's Official Report.

busco, the fortification at the hacienda, before described. Scott, who on the 19th had been posted on an eminence in front of Contreras, and on that night gave directions for the early storm of Contreras—had this morning given (amidst the trophies of the field) his orders for the forward movement of Worth, and now (in the forenoon) joined General Pillow's division in its march to Coyhoacan. Here, just one mile west of Churubusco, at a point made convenient by several cross-roads, he made the arrangements for the day. Cadwallader's brigade was detached (as we have seen) to reinforce Worth at Antonia. Twiggs's division was ordered (except the rifles) to attack the citadel, San Pablo, in front. Pierce's brigade first, and soon after Shields', were directed to take a road which led to the rear of Churubusco, to divert the troops under Santa Anna, and threaten his right and rear; with a view also, should the attack in front succeed, to cut off the retreat of the Mexican forces to the city. General Shields commanded this corps, which was directed in its course by Captain Lee, of the engineers.¹ These dispositions were rapidly made, and as quickly executed. The troops moved regularly and gallantly into their places, and the battle of Churubusco was commenced, which, for three hours was vigorously maintained amidst the raging of all the elements, which mingle their terrible voices and their crimson banners on the battle-field. The veteran regiments of Smith and Riley quailed not amidst the whirlwind of fire, and the storm of balls which rolled from the well-directed guns of San Pablo in front; while far to the left, the gallant

¹ Scott's Official Report

volunteers of Carolina and New York, were rapidly filling their untimely, though glorious graves! Here, the Mexican general, Rincon, ably defended his post. There, the masses of Santa Anna poured themselves on the division of Shields! A lurid canopy of sulphurous smoke rose over the heads of the combatants, and, far over the ancient plains of Mexico, rolled the roar of cannon and the crash of arms—that awful music, which makes the song of battle, the prelude of death, and the voice of angry nations. One might imagine the fierce spirit of Guatimozin hovering exultant over the plain, where the Celt and the Saxon, the enemies of his race, poured out in mortal conflict, (as if in just retribution,) their blood and their lives, over the graves of his fathers.

In the centre of the batteries of San Pablo was placed the company of St. Patrick's, formed out of deserters from the American army.¹ These men fought desperately and skilfully, causing the deaths of many of the assailants, and delaying the capture of the post. An officer of the rifles thus describes the scene:² "The firing was most tremendous; in fact, one continued roll while the combat lasted. The enemy, from their elevated position, could readily see our men, who were unable to get a clear view from their position. Three of the pieces were manned by the 'deserters,' a body of about one hundred who had deserted from the ranks of our army during the war. They were enrolled in two companies, commanded by a deserter,³

¹ Report of General Rincon, who says that the battalion of Bravo and the companies of St. Patrick were stationed in the front batteries.

² Letter in the New York Courier.

³ This man's name is Thomas Riley, a deserter from the 3d infantry.



CHARGE AT CHURUBUSCO

and were better uniformed and disciplined than the rest of the army. These men fought most desperately; and are said not only to have shot down several of our officers whom they knew, but to have pulled down the white flag of surrender no less than three times."

It was now two hours and a half from the commencement of the battle by the division of Twiggs, when the *tête du pont* gave way before the storming parties of Worth. The enemy were driven out at the point of the bayonet, and the larger part of Worth's and Pillow's divisions crossed the bridge and followed in vigorous pursuit. Captain Larkin Smith and Lieutenant Snelling of the 8th infantry, however, seized upon a field-piece and fired upon the church, or citadel. The furious battle at that point still continued; but in half an hour more—just three hours from the commencement—the citadel (San Pablo) was entered, sword in hand, by two companies of the 3d infantry under Captains Alexander and J. M. Smith, with Lieutenant Shepler. At the same moment the white flag had been exhibited, and Captain Alexander received the surrender, and hoisted on the balcony the flags of the gallant 3d infantry. A *fourth* time, in one day, had the eagle of victory perched upon her favorite standard. The bold bird of war seemed to rejoice with exultant flight in the career of the conquering Saxon!

But the dead and the dying were not yet to be left to the stillness of advancing night. Far to the left the tide of war still rolled its angry waves. The brigades of Pierce and Shields, supported by the rifles, had encountered, to the rear of the works of Churubusco, four thousand Mexican infantry supported by three thousand cavalry. Hotly and furiously did the battle rage in this

quarter. Regiment after regiment, the 9th, 12th, 15th infantry, with Ransom, Wood, and Morgan, came up to the charge. Here were covered with glory and with blood the chivalry of Carolina, the bold soldiers of New York! Here Pierce, fainting with pain, was taken from the field; here the brave Butler fell; and here, a *fifth* time on the same extraordinary day, the banner of the Anglo-American waved over troops triumphantly victorious! The Spanish-Aztecs retreated from the bloody scene of their defeat, leaving hundreds of their bravest prisoners, and hundreds more to mingle their dust with the undistinguished dead, to be remembered no more. Over the dead and over the long causeway the fugitives are pursued by the gallant dragoons, and it was not till at the very gates of Mexico that the impulsive Captain Kearney reined in his horse.¹

In the citadel (church) of Churubusco the brave Generals Rincon and Anaya,² (provisional president,) with hundreds of others, were taken prisoners. Thus had the army of Scott at Contreras, Antonia, the Tête du Pont, Churubusco, and in the field, five times in one glorious day, defeated the enemy in sight of the capital of Mexico, in that wonderful valley where, three hundred years before, Cortez had overwhelmed the Aztecs with the invincibles of Spain. History, the Kaleidescope of humanity, is again exhibiting strange and various and mysterious events. The northman had come from the dark forests of the Danube and the Elbe to overwhelm

¹ Orders had been dispatched to recall the dragoons, but they did not receive them; and Kearney lost his arm, and stopped only at the gates of Mexico.

² General Anaya has since been elected president.

the Roman in the English isles; again he embarks on the waters of the Atlantic and penetrates the woods of the western continent, builds republics, renews the glory of civilization, and now sends the chariots of war to overwhelm in conquest the descendants of those very invincibles whom Cortez had victoriously led from the Gulf of Mexico to the palace of the Montezumas. Is there no ministry of retribution in this—no angel of fate unfolding the cycles of providence?

Scott, now at Churubusco, turns with a glad spirit and grateful heart to the troops, and rejoices with them in the martial glory of their country. The old soldiers seize his hand; there is silence, and the old commander pours forth "in eloquent and patriotic words the commendation of their gallant conduct."¹

An officer, who was present, says: "During this thrilling scene, I looked up to a balcony of the church that had been so bravely defended. It was filled by Mexican prisoners. Among them General Rincon, a venerable old soldier, was leaning forward, his countenance glowing and his eyes sparkling with every manifestation of delight. I verily believe that the old veteran, with the spirit of a true soldier, upon beholding a victorious general so greeted by the brave men he had just led to victory, forgot for a moment his own position, that he was defeated and a prisoner; and saw and thought only of the enthusiasm by which he was surrounded."²

First. Let us now examine the *results* of this great day in American military annals. Let us review in brief

¹ Letter in the Journal of Commerce.

² Letter in the Journal of Commerce.

the actions of the day and the defences overcome. 1st. There were, as we have said, five distinct actions, although the last three were fought as parts of one great battle. There were, 1, The storm of Contreras; 2, The capture of Antonia; 3, The storm of the tête du pont; 4, The battle and assault of the church and outworks of Churubusco; 5, The action in the rear of Churubusco with the right wing of Santa Anna's corps. These last three were parts of one drama, but distinct in the skill, the action, and the relative effects. The tête du pont was about four hundred yards from the fortified church of Churubusco; and the field in which Pierce and Shields were engaged, nearly a mile in rear of both. There is no doubt the fierce attack on the church (citadel) aided the divisions of Worth in their assault on the tête du pont; and there is no doubt, either, that the fall of the latter determined, in a great measure, the fall of the former.

2d. The next point of interest is the relative proportions of either army in numbers and position. It must be remembered here, that the American army were in the heart of an enemy's country, and were *assailing fortified positions*. These facts may be fairly said to have doubled the real strength of the Mexican army. At *Contreras* the relative numbers, *actually in fight*, were—Americans, three thousand five hundred—Mexicans, seven thousand: in field, *supporting*, all counted, four thousand five hundred Americans—nineteen thousand Mexicans: at *Churubusco*, in all parts of the field, nine thousand Americans—thirty thousand Mexicans. There is no doubt that the actual garrison of the fortified church, under General Rincon, was comparatively small, and that those who defended the mere batteries of the tête du pont were not very

numerous; but behind these, and especially behind the tête du pont, were long lines of infantry and cavalry, amounting, taken in all, to nearly thirty thousand.

3d. The third point is the strength of the batteries and defences. The following is a statement of these:¹

	BATTERIES.	INFANTRY	
		GUNS.	BREASTWORKS.
Contreras.....	1	22	0
San Antonia.....	7	24	2
Churubusco.....	2	15	0
	—	—	—
Total.....	10	61	2

At the tête du pont of Churubusco, a canal, or river, passed behind, over which was a bridge. This was the field-defence of Santa Anna's army, which lay behind; and certainly any one who will examine the positions and defences of the Mexicans at Churubusco must pronounce them very strong, well chosen, and well defended, in regard to the fortified points.

Second. What were the results in respect to the enemy? These positions, which commanded the main roads to Mexico in that direction, were all taken; the causeways were laid open to the very gates of the city; and the vast *materiel* arrayed for its defence destroyed or captured.

At the end of this great day in war, Scott, while the troops were yet pursuing, proceeded on to Tacubaya; but on the way was met with propositions for peace. After

¹ Taken from a statement made by Captain Lee.

making his reply, he proceeded to Tacubaya, near the strong castle of Chapultepec. The guns from the castle were silent, and the headquarters of the American army were soon safely established in the palace of the archbishop, a huge pile of buildings, surrounded with beautiful gardens. Before him, in full view, rose the domes and spires of the famed city, environed by beautiful lakes, and the richest natural scenery. He was at the gates of the "Halls of the Montezumas," with an army flushed with victory, and impatient to be led to the assault. But neither the glory of military renown, nor the rich treasures which have been dug from the mines of Mexico, could dazzle the eye of the patriot soldier, or swerve him from the obligations to humanity.

Before the carnage of another battle, he must make one final effort to stay the iron arm of destruction, and reclaim warring nations to the paths of peace. Hence his beautiful letter, expressing the Christian sentiment, "Enough blood has been shed in this unnatural war." When the echoes of the cannon shall have died away, and the clangor of arms shall have ceased—when the steeled warrior shall have gone to his rest, and the conqueror and the vanquished shall lie down together—Christianity will weave her unfading chaplet for the soldier who has ever been true to her highest obligations and benign requirements.¹

¹ The following are the results of the battles of the 20th :—

American loss—killed, wounded, and missing, 1,053.

Mexican loss—3,500 prisoners; 1,500 killed, wounded, and missing; 37 pieces artillery captured; small-arms, ammunition, and equipments for an army.

CHAPTER XIII.

Peace Negotiations.—President Polk's Commission.—Mexican Conditions.—American Ultimatum.—Failure of Negotiations.—Scott's Notice to Santa Anna.—Trial and Execution of the Deserters.—Description of Chapultepec.—Of Molino del Rey.—Mexican Defences.—March of Worth.—Strength of his Corps.—Battle of Molino del Rey.—Mexican Loss.—Evacuation of Molino del Rey.—Preparations for the Attack of Chapultepec.—Erection of Batteries.—Storm of Chapultepec.—Action of the 13th.—Capture of Mexico.—Entrance into the City.—Scott's Address to the Soldiers.—Insurrection of the Leperos.—Appearance of the City.

In the last chapter we recorded the memorable events of the 20th of August, 1847, in the valley of Mexico,—events unequalled in their extraordinary character and their dramatic interest by any preceding part of the military history of America. Kearney had hardly been recalled from his adventurous charge to the gates of Mexico, when the shades of evening gathered round the bloody field of Churubusco. The battle had passed, and the vale lay as silent as the lonely bodies of the slain. Passed away are all the rolling thunders of the red artillery, and quenched their fires as the silent and quenched volcanoes of the snow-crowned Popocatepetl, rearing its cold head upon the distant horizon. Nature sleeps, and the dead sleep, and the weary soldier sleeps, while the sentry and the stars keep watch together. But though the fires of volcanoes may sleep, and the artillery may cease to flash, the events of time and providence will never sleep.