

BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.

On the 5th of February, General Taylor, having heard reports of the advancement of Santa Anna with a large force, moved his head quarters eighteen miles south of Saltillo, to Agua Nueva. By the 8th all of his army excepting Major Warren's command, which was left at Saltillo, concentrated at that point. The forces consisted of two companies of the 1st Dragoons, under Captain Steen; two companies 2d Dragoons, under Brevet Lieutenant-colonel May; Bragg's and Sherman's batteries, 3d Artillery; Washington's battery, 4th Artillery; one regiment Arkansas cavalry, under Colonel Yell; one regiment of Kentucky cavalry, under Colonel Marshall; 2d Kentucky foot under Colonel M'Kee; 1st Regiment Mississippi Rifles, under Colonel Davis; 3d Indiana, under Colonel Lane; 1st Illinois, under Colonel Hardin; 2d Illinois, under Colonel Bissell; and two companies of Texas volunteers, one commanded by Captain Conner, the other a spy company, commanded by the celebrated Captain (now Major) M'Cullough, in all amounting to three hundred and thirty-four officers, and four thousand four hundred and twenty-five men.

It was evident that there must be a terrible conflict and General Taylor selected a pass two miles in advance of Buena Vista, as his position. There was a valley about three miles broad, with irregular surface, containing occasionally hills and ravines, and was surrounded by high

mountains. The road passed by the side of a deep arroyo, which was impassable. On the right side of the road, there were great gullies which it was impossible to cross, extending to the mountains. On the left of the road were steep ascents to the tops of the spurs of the mountain and there was formed a plain, suitable for a battle field. The choice of this place showed much skill and good judgment in the General. By the 21st of Feb. our forces were stationed at this position. Col. Yell was left, with some cavalry to cover the removal of the stores and were driven in by the enemy. Our men secured most of the stores and burned the remainder. General Taylor went to Saltillo immediately, to make arrangements for its defence, leaving Gen. Wool to command the army. Our forces prepared for the advance of the enemy. Capt. Washington's battery was so placed as to command the road. The 1st and 2d Illinois regiments containing sixteen hundred strong, and the 2d Kentucky regiment, occupied crests of ridges in the rear and to the left. Near the base of the mountain at the extreme left, stood the Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry. The Indiana Brigade under General Lane, the Mississippi Riflemen, the two squadrons of dragoons, and Sherman's and Bragg's batteries were held in reserve.

On the morning of the 22nd the enemy approached, and General Taylor returned immediately to camp. Tremendous clouds of dust announced the advance of the enemy, who arrived in position, with immense masses, between 10 and 11 A. M. All was silence, waiting for the attack, when a white flag was brought into our camp, by Surgeon-general Lindberger, with the following message from Santa Anna:

"You are surrounded by twenty thousand men, and cannot in any human probability avoid suffering a route, and

being cut to pieces with your troops; but as you deserve consideration and particular esteem, I wish to save you from a catastrophe, and for that purpose give you this notice in order that you may surrender at discretion, under the assurance that you will be treated with the consideration belonging to the Mexican character, to which end you will be granted an hour's time to make up your mind, to commence from the moment when my flag of truce arrives in your camp.

"With this view, I assure you of my particular consideration.

"God and Liberty." Camp at Encantada, February 22d, 1847.

"ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA.

"To Gen. Z. Taylor, comm'g the forces of the United States."

Old Rough and Ready answered thus:

"Headquarters, Army of Occupation, }
Near Buena Vista, Feb. 22, 1847. }

"Sir,—In reply to your note of this date, summoning me to surrender my force at discretion, I beg leave to say that I decline acceding to your request. With high respect, I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant, Z. TAYLOR,

"Maj. Gen. U. S. Army, commanding,

"Senor Gen. D. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, }
Commander-in-chief, La Encantada." }

Several hours passed before any attack was made. The columns of the enemy's rear could be seen moving up. There was a slight demonstration of our right and a section of Bragg's battery, supported by the 2d Kentucky foot, were detached to that point. They bivouacked for the night. Near evening, the light troops of the enemy commenced upon our left, consisting of detachments of Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry dismounted, and a battalion of Indiana

Riflemen, under Major Gorman and all commanded by Colonel Marshall. Some shells were thrown into this part of our line, by the enemy without effect. This skirmishing was continued until after dark, with slight loss on our side. Three pieces of Washington's battery under Capt. O'Brien, took position to the left. Here the troops rested during the night on their arms.

General Taylor proceeded to Saltillo with the Mississippi regiment and squadron of 2nd dragoons, and while there about fifteen hundred Mexicans under General Minon had advanced into the valley, by a pass through the mountains, and were seen in the rear of the city. They were designed to harass us and cut off our retreat. There were in the city, four companies of Illinois volunteers under Major Warren of the first regiment. There was a field-work commanding the approaches and was garrisoned by Capt. Webster's company with two twenty-four pound howitzers. Two companies of Mississippi riflemen, under Capt. Rodgers with one field-piece under Capt. Shower, defended the train.

Jan. 22nd, during the night, the enemy stationed a large force of light troops upon the side of the mountain, to outflank our left.

On the morning of the 23rd, the action was renewed at this point. Col. Marshall with his riflemen, re-enforced by three companies of Illinois volunteers, under Major Trail, stood firm and did considerable execution with their sure rifles. At 8 o'clock a large column of the enemy moved up the road and threatened our centre, but Washington's energetic battery kept them back. The enemy could do nothing on account of the nature of the ground, where they stood; but our left being on an extensive plain, Santa Anna thought that he could outflank us. Large bodies of the enemy passed up the ravines under cover of the ridges, and concentrated near our left. The 2d Indiana

and 2 Illinois regiments formed the extreme left of our line and the former supported O'Brien's three pieces of artillery. The commander on the left was Brigadier-general Lane. O'Brien was ordered to advance towards the enemy with his guns. The fight was now very severe upon the enemy; but they poured upon our men volleys of grape and canister. The action was so warm that the Indiana regiment broke, not being able to stand against such a fire, and left the artillery unprotected. Thus Capt. O'Brien was obliged to retire leaving one of his pieces, at which every man and horse was either killed or wounded. The cowardly Indiana regiment could not be rallied, though Major Dix, Paymaster U. S. Army, induced a few to return and join, together with their Colonel Bowles, the Mississippi regiment. They were very useful during the remainder of the day. Our left giving way, encouraged the enemy, and large masses of them pressed forward and forced our light troops on the side of the mountain, to retire, and many of them could not be rallied until they reached the depot at Buena Vista. The 2nd Illinois regiment, to which a section of Sherman's battery was attached, were driven before the enemy.

The Mexican Infantry and cavalry poured in so rapidly that our rear was in danger. Thus far evidently, every move went against us. But General Taylor now arrived and took a commanding position on the elevated plateau. His presence was enough to animate our troops. The Mississippi regiment, under Davis, was ordered to the left, and came in contact, immediately with large portions of the enemy, who had turned our flank.

The struggle was severe, but in favor of our troops. The 2nd Kentucky, under Col. McKee, with a section of artillery under Bragg, had been ordered to support our left. These with a part of the 1st Illinois under Col. Hardin

were now fiercely engaged with the enemy, and recovered to some extent, the lost ground.

The batteries of Bragg and Sherman were very effective in the columns of the enemy, and especially those who were in our rear. The Mississippi regiment exhibited great bravery, sustaining the attacks of the enemy without flinching. The 3rd Indiana, under Colonel Lane, and a piece of artillery under Colonel Kilburn, finally moved to their aid. The Mexican infantry and cavalry repeatedly advanced with the most determined impetuosity, intending to force our line, but they were received so firmly and warmly that they were glad to fall back. Our artillery made awful havoc. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel May commanded the regular cavalry, and Captain Pike's of the Arkansas cavalry. May, with the Kentucky and Arkansas cavalry, under Colonels Marshall and Yell, were directed to keep in check the masses that had gained our rear. The enemy still were determined at all hazards, to break our left. Our forces were pouring upon the enemy a terrific fire from different sections and pieces, under O'Brien, Bragg, Sherman, Thomas, Kilburn, Reynolds, French and Bryan, forming a long line. The thick columns of the enemy were made to stagger, fearful inroads were made in their ranks, and they were finally, after many desperate struggles, obliged to give way. Their success was short, and their shouts of triumph were soon at an end. Just as they began to give way a little, Lieutenant Rucker, with his squadron of 1st dragoons, was ordered to dash in among them, which was done with great effect.

It was feared that the portion of the enemy in our rear might attack the train at Buena Vista, and Col. May, with his command, and two pieces of artillery under Lieutenant Reynolds, was ordered to that place. But, before they arrived, the Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry had met the ene-

my and repulsed them. They broke in two columns, one escaped by the ranch, and received a destructive fire from the fugitive forces of a part of Major Trail's and Gorman's command, whom Major Munroe had reorganized. The other column of the enemy gained the mountain, but received a terrible fire from the pieces under, Lieutenant Reynolds.

Colonel Yell was killed, in the charge, at Buena Vista, at the head of his regiment. Adjutant Vaughn, also, of the Kentucky cavalry fell in that engagement.

A part of the Arkansas and Indiana troops, and Col. May, with his command, kept in check the enemy's right. They were crowded in vast numbers in ravines, and our guns made horrid work with them. Those who had gained our rear were now in the greatest danger. Santa Anna perceived it and in his deceptive and cowardly manner, sent a white flag into our camp, and asked General Taylor "what he wanted." Taylor immediately ordered the firing to cease, and sent General Wool, with a white flag, to answer the message. No consultation could be had, as the Mexicans kept on firing. Santa Anna had gained time for his forces to reach their lines and he cared no more for the truce. This was barbarous enough in the Mexican General. While the enemy were retreating, they were severely handled by our artillery.

The cavalry under General Minon, were in the road between the battle ground and Saltillo, and it was feared that they would fall upon the city. Capt. Webster fired upon them from the redoubt, and they moved towards Buena Vista. Capt. Shover, with some volunteers and a piece of artillery, accompanied by a piece of Webster's battery, under Lieut. Donaldson, aided by Capt. Wheeler, with his Illinois volunteers, drove the enemy into the ravines, leading to the lower valley. The enemy endeavored to charge

once or twice, but were driven back every time in confusion. Firing had now nearly ceased; but one struggle more was to come. Santa Anna, being reinforced by cavalry, under cover of artillery, charged our line in a most desperate manner, by horse and foot. Great masses came rushing on, and poured among us a deadly fire. The 2nd Kentucky, 1st Illinois, and O'Brien, with two pieces, received the severest part of the attack. The infantry supporting O'Brien's piece was routed and their piece left in the hands of the enemy.

Our batteries, however, finally turned the tide. Their fire was so firm, precise and awful, that the enemy could not resist, and fell back in disorder. Harden and McKee, charged the enemy with great bravery and impetuosity. They fled, but seeing the few pursuing, turned suddenly and came up in vast numbers. There was dreadful carnage on both sides. We had but a mere handful compared with the enemy, and our men were again routed, and it seemed that we must be beaten. Brent and Whiting of Washington's battery covered their retreat.

General Taylor looked on calmly and unmoved, while the balls were flying all around him.

Bragg's battery had now reached the place of attack. Bragg told his Captain to unlimber the piece and wait till the enemy had arrived nearly to the muzzle. They rushed on certain that they should conquer us; but the battery opened and poured into their masses a plenty of grape. They staggered at the first fire, and the second opened streets through them and the third volley entirely dispersed them and they fled in dismay. Our loss was heavy in this last struggle.

In this desperate conflict, Colonels Hardin and McKee, and Lieutenant-Colonel Clay, fell at the head of their regiments. Our artillery turned the tide of battle three times

during the day. It was now ten hours that the battle had been raging. The enemy did not make another attempt to force our lines, and our troops, weary, dropped upon the battle ground to seek rest to prepare them for the morrow; among the dead and dying, without any fires to warm their benumbed limbs. The wounded were removed to Saltillo and our men prepared for an attack in the morning; but the enemy retired very early to Agua Nueva, leaving many of their dead and dying. Brigadier-general Marshall made a forced march for Rinconada to reinforce our troops there; but he was too late to participate in the action.

In the battle of Buena Vista, we had two hundred and sixty-seven killed, four hundred and fifty-six wounded, and twenty-three missing. The enemy must have lost two thousand. There were five hundred of their dead left upon the field. We had twenty-eight officers killed and forty-one wounded.

What an awful responsibility rests upon somebody for shoring so many innocent persons into the presence of their Judge!

The names of the officers killed and wounded are the following:

General Staff: killed, Captain George Lincoln, Assistant Adjutant General; wounded, H. W. Benham, 1st Lieutenant Engineers; F. S. Bryan, brevet 2d Lieutenant Topographical engineers. 1st Regiment of dragoons: wounded, Captain E. Steen. 2d regiment of dragoons: wounded, Brevet Lieutenant-colonel C. A. May. 3d Regiment Artillery: wounded, Lieutenant S. G. French. 4th Artillery: wounded, 1st Lieutenant J. P. O'Brien. Mississippi Rifles: killed, 1st Lieutenant R. L. Moore, 2d Lieut. F. McNulty; wounded, Colonel Davis, Captains Sharp and Stockaw, 1st Lieutenants Corwin and Posey. 1st

Regiment Illinois: killed, Colonel Hardin, Captain Zabris-
kie, and 1st Lieutenant Houghton. 2d Regiment Illinois;
killed, Captain Woodward, Lieutenants Rountree, Fletcher
Ferguson, Robbins, Steel, Kelly, Bartleson, Atherton, and
Price; wounded, Captains Coffee and Baker, Lieutenants
Picket, Engleman, West, and Whiteside. Texas volunteers;
killed, 1st Lieutenant Campbell, 2d Lieutenant Leonhard;
wounded, Captain Connor. Indiana volunteers: Brigade
Staff; Brigadier-general Lane. 2d Indiana: killed, Cap-
tains Kinder and Walker, and Lieutenant Parr; wounded,
Captains Sanderson and Osborn, Lieutenants Cayce, Davis,
Pennington, Lewis, Moore, and Epperson. 3d Indiana
killed, Captain Taggart; wounded, Major Gorman, Cap-
tains Sleep and Conover. 2d Kentucky foot; killed,
Colonel McKee, Lieutenant-Colonel Clay, and Captain
Willis; wounded, Lieutenants Barber and Napier. Arkan-
sas Cavalry: killed, Colonel Yell, Captain Porter; wounded,
Lieutenant Reader.

A large portion of officers fell showing their unconquer-
able bravery. It was a battle of artillery. General Taylor
said,—

"The services of the light artillery, always conspicuous,
were more than usually distinguished. Moving rapidly over
the roughest ground, it was always in action at the right
place and at the right time, and its well-directed fire dealt
destruction in the masses of the enemy."

The General was necessarily much exposed. Two balls
passed through his clothes. Our forces consisted of five
thousand, and but four hundred and fifty-three of them were
regulars. We were not able to follow up our success for
the want of more men.

On the 26th General Taylor issued the following order:

Headquarters, Army of Occupation,
Buena Vista, Feb. 26, 1847.

Order No. 12.

1. The commanding general has the grateful task of congratulating the troops upon the brilliant success which attended their arms in the conflict of the 22nd and 23rd. Confident in the immense superiority of numbers, and stimulated by the presence of a distinguished leader, the Mexican troops were yet repulsed in every effort to force our lines, and finally withdrew with immense loss from the field.

11. The general would express his obligations to the men and officers engaged for the cordial support which they rendered throughout the action. It will be his highest pride to bring to the notice of the government the conspicuous gallantry of particular officers and corps, whose unwavering steadiness more than once saved the fortunes of the day. He would also express his high satisfaction with the small command left at Saltillo. Though not so seriously engaged as their comrades, their services were very important, and efficiently rendered. While bestowing this just tribute to the good conduct of the troops, the general deeply regrets to say that there were not a few exceptions. He trusts that those who fled ingloriously to Buena Vista, and even to Saltillo, will seek an opportunity to retrieve their reputation and to emulate the bravery of their comrades who bore the brunt of the battle, and sustained, against fearful odds, the honor of the flag.

III. The exultation of success is checked by the heavy sacrifice of life which it has cost, embracing many officers of high rank and rare merit. While the sympathy of a grateful country will be given to the bereaved families and

friends of those who nobly fell, their illustrious example will remain for the benefit and admiration of the army.

By order, Major-general TAYLOR.

Signed, W. W. S. BLISS,
Assistant Adjutant-general.

This order will be read at the head of every company.

By order:
Signed, W. W. S. BLISS.

It was found that the enemy were retiring towards San Luis Potosi.

Our forces returned to Agua Nueva on the 27th. The road was strewn with dead and wounded Mexicans, and their army seemed to be in a perfect state of disorganization.

Had it not been for the astonishing bravery of our men, in this battle, (5000 against 21,000,) we must have been overwhelmed.

General Urea, with about 8000 cavalry, had cut off all communication between Camargo and Monterey, previous to the battle of Buena Vista. A train of waggons, escorted by thirty men, was attacked and captured Feb. 24th, at Ramos. The wagons were burned and the teamsters dreadfully mutilated and their bodies cast into the flames.

March 7th, Major Giddings, in charge of a train of one hundred and fifty waggons, was attacked near Ceralvo. After a severe struggle, the enemy was repulsed, but we lost fifteen teamsters, two privates of Ohio volunteers, and fifty wagons.

General Taylor returned to Monterey early in March and pursued Urea, for a while and drove him over the mountains. In April six thousand volunteers were called out by government to re-enforce the army. General

Taylor was to receive enough of them, to make, with what he had, about ten thousand men.

After this, nothing of much interest occurred in northern Mexico. The theatre of war was changed to another part of the country. The strong forts had been taken and the enemy conquered in every battle.

General Scott had been ordered to Mexico by the government, Nov. 23rd, 1846, in the following language:

WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, *November, 23, 1847*

Sir,—The President, several days since communicated, in person to you his orders to repair to Mexico, to take command of the forces there assembled, and particularly to organize and set on foot an expedition to operate on the Gulf coast, if, on arriving at the theatre of action, you shall deem it to be practicable. It is not proposed to control your operations by definite and positive instructions, but you are left to prosecute them as your judgment, under a full view of all the circumstances, shall dictate. The work is before you, and the means provided, or to be provided, for accomplishing it, are committed to you, in the full confidence that you will use them to the best advantage.

The objects which it is desirable to obtain have been indicated, and it is hoped that you will have the requisite force to accomplish them.

Of this you must be the best judge, when preparations are made, and the time for action arrived.

Very respectfully,

your obedient servant,

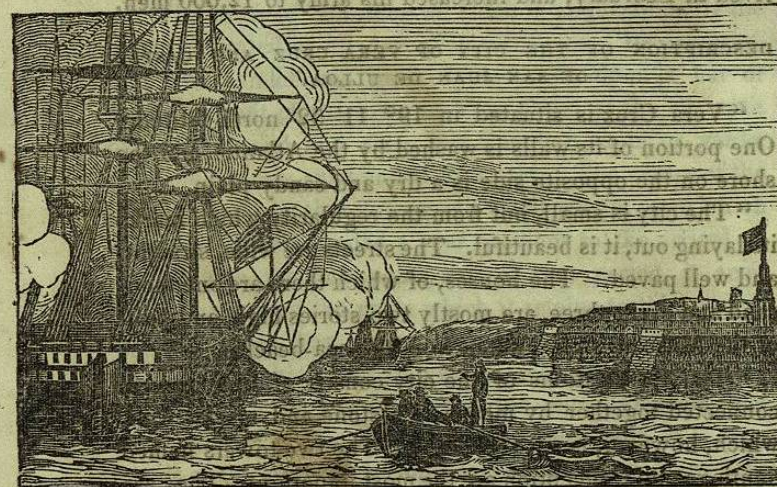
W. L. MARCY,

Secretary of War.

Gen. WINFIELD SCOTT.

Vera Cruz is situated in 19 degrees 11 minutes 52 seconds north latitude. One portion of its walls is washed by the Atlantic, and the shore on the opposite side is a dry and sandy plain.

General Scott sailed from New York, Nov. 30th and reached the Rio Grande Jan 1st 1847.



AMERICAN FLEET SALUTING THE CASTLE AT VERA CRUZ.