



Point Isabel.

Captain Walker's defeat.

a close personal contest. He was a gallant young officer and his death is much regretted. Though the force which obtained this success was about fifteen to one, it filled the Mexican army with ecstasy, and General Arista addressed to General Torrejon an eloquent letter of congratulation on his great and glorious victory. The reserve they had hitherto manifested was now cast wholly aside. They came across the river in great numbers; all intercourse between General Taylor's camp and Point Isabel was cut off, and there was imminent danger of the fall of that place with all the military stores it contained. Nothing of interest had occurred at Point Isabel up to this time. Major Munroe, who commanded, had completed his arrangements for defense, and armed some five or six hundred men, among whom were fifty or sixty sailors, collected from the vessels in port. Captain Walker of the Rangers, and some small parties of Texans had arrived there, and was speedily engaged upon important duties. Some teams having returned to Point Isabel, on account of the obstructions of the roads by the Mexicans, Captain Walker went out on the 28th with a number of men to reconnoiter. He was driven back to Point Isabel with great loss, having been attacked when midway between that place and the camp, by an overwhelming force of the enemy. His raw troops fled in confusion, and he was obliged to retreat. He returned with only two men; seven afterwards came in. He estimated the force of the enemy at fifteen hundred, and thought that many of them must have fallen in the skirmish. Notwithstanding this repulse, Captain Walker volunteered to carry a message to General Taylor. Major Munroe having accepted the offer, he started on the



evening of the 29th and, after encountering many imminent dangers, reached the camp in safety. As soon as General Taylor had received Major Munroe's statement, he determined upon a movement that would release him from the embarrassment of having the communication cut off. Accordingly, on the morning of the 1st of May, 1846, he took up the line of march for Point Isabel, with the main body of his army, leaving the seventh regiment of infantry and two companies of artillery under Captain Lowd and Lieutenant Bragg, to complete the works in the fort, and defend it if it was attacked. The whole was put under command of Major Brown. As the army passed out, the banks of the river on the Matamoras side were crowded with spectators of the departure of what they thought our discomfited army, whilst General Arista employed himself in announcing the "retreat" of General Taylor and his army to his government, taking care to pay to himself and his brave men the tribute so signal a triumph deserved.

The Mexicans, however, evinced great judgment by refraining from attacking him on the way to Point Isabel, as it afforded them an opportunity of attacking and trying to capture his fortified camp with a weakened garrison, by which, if successful, they would have a vast advantage over him when he returned, and also they would have more advantage and probability of success in annoying and harassing his forces, or in fighting a pitched battle on his return route, encumbered as he would be by two or three hundred loaded wagons.

The Mexicans were too sagacious to delay improving these advantages. On the morning of the 3d, a battery of seven guns placed in the town, opened a

brisk fire upon the fort. It was returned, and shortly silenced. They then fired shells and shot from the lower fort and a mortar battery, which was continued with a short intermission till midnight. During all this time a part of the troops laboured to complete the fortifications, although exposed to the full range of the enemy's guns. By the fifteen hundred shot fired during this first day, but one man was killed. The Americans stopped firing about ten o'clock in the forenoon, as they were wasting ammunition and doing no injury, except to the town. This silence was mistaken by the enemy as a symptom of fear or despair, they momentarily expected a surrender.

The noise of this cannonading having reached Point Isabel, General Taylor despatched Captain May with Captain Walker and a hundred men, to learn something of the garrison, and reconnoiter the country. They avoided the enemy, and penetrated to within a few miles of the fort. Captain May there concealed his party in the chaparral, and Captain Walker with six rangers proceeded to the fort. Walker not having returned to the detachment, May feared that he had fallen a victim to the enemy, and as the Mexican scouts had discovered his own position, he decided to return. He reached the camp in safety, having on the way put to flight and pursued for three miles, a very superior body of the enemy's cavalry. The supposed loss of Captain Walker, who was a general favourite, cast a gloom over the whole army, which, however, was speedily dispelled by the appearance of that gallant officer, bearing the gratifying intelligence that Major Brown was able to maintain his position. Captain Walker had returned to the place