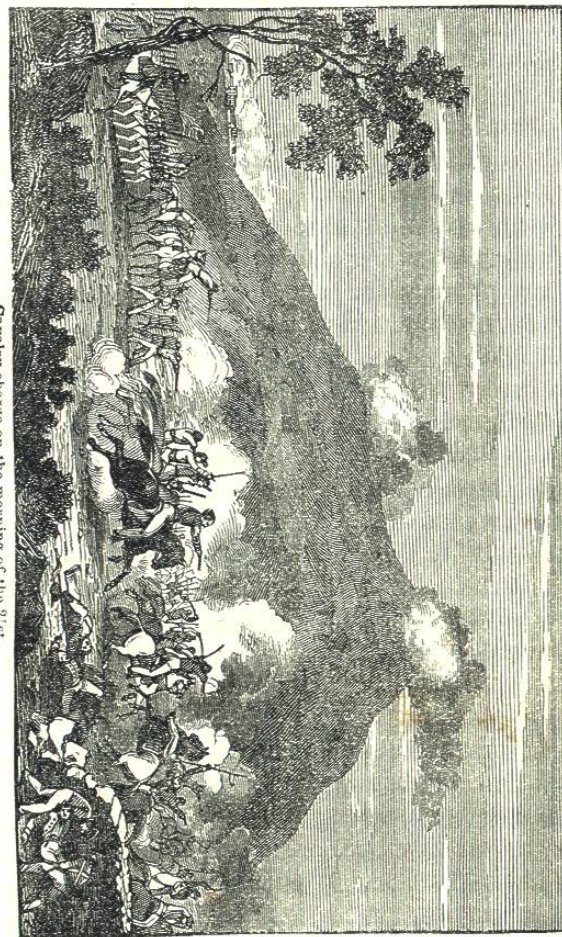


mountains, which arise over us on the west, When the head of the column approached this ridge, a body of Mexican cavalry came dashing around that point to charge upon our advance. Captain Gillespie immediately ordered his men to dismount and place themselves in ambush. The enemy evidently did not perceive this manœuver; but the moment they came up, the Texans opened upon them a most destructive fire, unsaddling a number of them. McCulloch's company now dashed into them. Captain C. F. Smith's camp, and Captain Scott's camp of artillery, (acting as infantry,) and Lieutenant Longstreet's company of the eighth infantry, with another company of the same regiment, likewise charged upon the enemy. The Texan horsemen were soon engaged with them in a sort of hand-to-hand skirmish, in which a number of them fell, and one Texan was killed and two wounded.

Colonel Duncan now opened upon them with his battery of light artillery, pouring a few discharges of grape upon them, and scattering them like chaff. Several men and horses fell under this destructive fire. I saw one horse and rider bound some feet into the air, and both fell dead and tumbled down the steep. The foot companies above named then rushed up the steep, and fired over the ridge at the retreating enemy, a considerable body of whom were concealed from our view, around the point of the hill. About thirty of the enemy were killed in this skirmish, and among them a captain, who, with two or three others, fell in the road. The captain was wounded in three places, the last shot hitting him in the forehead. He fought gallantly to the last, and I am sorry that I cannot learn his name.



Cavalry charge on the morning of the 21st.



The light batteries, one of which is commanded by Lieutenant Mackall, were now driven upon the slope of the ridge, and the howitzers opened upon the height of Palace Hill. A few shots only were thrown, before the enemy commenced firing with a nine-pounder from the height immediately over the right of the column, aiming at Duncan's batteries. The several regiments took positions, and a few more shells were thrown towards Palace Hill, but did no execution. The nine-pounder continued to throw its shot with great precision at our batteries, one ball falling directly in the midst of the pieces, but, fortunately, hitting neither men nor guns. Finding his batteries thus exposed, and unable to effect any thing, Colonel Duncan removed his command to a rancho about half a mile farther up the Saltillo road, where General Worth took up his position, after ordering the foot regiments to form along the fence near the point of the ridge. The artillery battalion, 5th, 7th, and 8th infantry, and the Louisiana volunteers, remained in this position about two hours, directly under fire of the enemy's guns. The balls fell directly in their midst all this time without wounding a man! To begin with, the Mexicans manage their artillery in battery as well as the Americans do—this, I believe, is now conceded by every officer.

At half-past ten, the column moved towards the general's position. At this time, Captain McKavett of the 8th infantry, was shot through the heart by a nine-pound ball, and a private of the 5th infantry was severely wounded in the thigh, and he died the next morning. About fifty Mexicans now appeared upon the side hill over the moving column, and fired at our troops some hundred musket-shot, without doing any harm. The



division deployed into the position pointed out, and remained an hour or two, when Captain C. F. Smith of the artillery battalion, with his own company, and Captain Scott's, together with four companies of Texan Rangers on foot, were ordered to storm the second height. This the gallant officer cheerfully undertook, and was followed with enthusiasm by the officers and men of his command. It was considered on all sides to be a dangerous undertaking, and his party was regarded most emphatically as a *forlorn hope*. That the height would be taken no one doubted, but that many brave fellows would fall in the attempt seemed inevitable. The distance to be climbed, after reaching the foot of the hill, was about a quarter of a mile; a part of the way almost perpendicular, through thorn-bushes and over sharp-pointed rocks and loose sliding stones.

The 7th infantry commanded by Captain Miles, was ordered to support Captain Smith's party, and by marching directly to the foot of the height, arrived before Captain Smith, who had been ordered to take a circuitous route. Captain Miles sent up Lieutenant Gantt, with a detachment of men upon the hill-side, to divert the attention of the enemy from Captain Smith's command, which could not yet be seen. The 7th had already sustained a heavy fire of grape and round-shot, as they forded the San Juan, which winds round the foot of the height, and which fell like a shower of hail in their ranks without killing a man. Lieutenant Gantt's party were greeted with grape and round-shot, which cut the shrubs, and tore up the loose stones about the ranks, without killing any one; but the gallant young officer came within an inch of being killed by a cannon-shot,

which ran down the steep and filled his face with fragments of rock, dust, and gravel. The fire was accompanied by a constant discharge of musketry, the enemy covering the upper part of the hill-side; but the detachment continued to move up, driving the Mexicans back, until they were recalled.

Captain Smith's party now arrived and moved up the hill, the rangers in advance, and did not halt for an instant until the Mexicans were driven from the summit. Whilst this was going on, Colonel Persifer F. Smith, who commanded the 5th and 7th infantry—the 5th with Blanchard's Louisiana boys, under Major Martin Scott, had been ordered to support the whole—gave orders for these commands to pass around on each side and storm the fort, which was situated about half a mile back of the summit on the same ridge and commanded the Bishop's Palace. Such a foot-race as now ensued has seldom if ever been seen; the Louisiana boys making tremendous strides to be in with the foremost. Captain Smith had the gun which he took upon the height, run towards the breast-works, and fired into it. Then came Colonel P. F. Smith's men, with a perfect rush, firing and cheering—the 5th and 7th, and Louisianians, reaching the ridge above nearly at the same time. The Mexicans fired at us with grape, but it did not cause an instant's hesitation in our ranks. Our men ran and fired, and cheered until they reached the work, the foremost entering at one end while the Mexicans, about a thousand in number, left the other in retreat. The colours of the 5th infantry were instantly raised, and scarcely were they up before those of the 7th were alongside. The three commands entered the fort together—so close was the race—the 5th

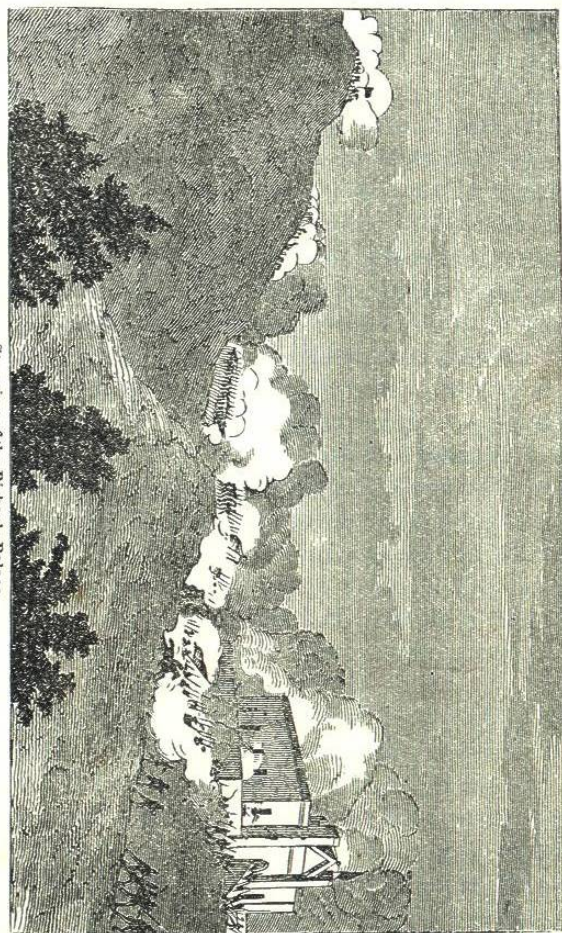


a little in advance. J. W. Miller, of Blanchard's company, was among the first four or five who entered. The three commands may be said to have come out even in the race, for the 7th was not five seconds behind. In less than five minutes the gun found in the fort was thundering away at the Bishop's Palace.

On the morning of the 21st, Colonel Childs of the artillery battalion, with three of his companies—one commanded by Captain Vinton, another by Captain J. B. Scott, and the third by Lieutenant Ayres—and three companies of the 8th infantry—company A, commanded by Lieutenant Longstreet and Wainright; company B, by Lieutenant Halloway and Merchant; company D, by Captain Schrivner and Lieutenant Montgomery—was ordered to take the summit of Palace Hill.

The colonel left the camp at three o'clock A.M., and climbed the mountain through the chaparral, and up the steep rocks, with such secrecy, that at daybreak he was within one hundred yards of the breastwork of sandbags before he was discovered. Three of the artillerymen having rushed ahead too fast, found themselves in the hands of the Mexicans. They surrendered, and were shot down with the very pieces they had given up. I saw the poor fellows lying there.

Colonel Staniford went up at daylight with the balance of the 8th, and Major Scott led up the 5th. The Louisiana troops were on the hill, with the 5th, at 8 A.M. One of Duncan's howitzers, in charge of Lieutenant Rowland, was dragged up, or rather *lifted* up, and opened on the palace, which was filled with troops. The Mexicans charged on the howitzer, but were driven back. A constant firing was kept up for several hours, particu-



Storming of the Bishop's Palace.