

Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. Thompson, of the sixth infantry, who fell in the discharge of his duty at the head of his regiment. He was in feeble health, brought on by exposure to this climate during the past summer, refusing to leave the country while his regiment continued in it. Although he received two balls from the fire of the enemy early in the action, which wounded him severely, yet he appeared to disregard them, and continued to give his orders with the same coolness that he would have done had his regiment been under review, or on any parade duty. Advancing, he received a third ball, which at once deprived him of life; his last words were—'Keep steady, men, charge the hammock—remember the regiment to which you belong.' I had known Colonel Thompson personally only for a short time, and the more I knew of him, the more I wished to know; and had his life been spared, our acquaintance, no doubt, would have ripened into the closest friendship. Under such circumstances, there are few, if any other than his bereaved wife, mother and sisters, who more deeply and sincerely lament his loss, or who will longer cherish his memory, than myself."

The battle of Okee-Chobee had a very beneficial influence upon the efforts to subdue the Indians of Florida. An officer writing from Fort Bassinger subsequent to it, says: "The Indian prisoners now admit that they lost twenty killed on the ground, and a great many wounded, in the fight with Colonel Taylor. They had a strong position and fought well, but were terribly whipped, and have never returned near the ground since. Jumper, Alligator, and other warriors afterwards came

in, and were subsequently employed by the colonel in inducing their hostile companions to surrender themselves; by this means large numbers delivered themselves to the Americans. Indeed the general policy pursued by Colonel Taylor while in Florida, together with his industry and perseverance, and the hardy constitution he possessed, rendered his services immensely valuable to the government in subduing the savages and giving peace and safety to the southern frontier. The country was not insensible of his value, and the department at Washington conferred on him the rank of Brigadier-General, by brevet, to take date from the battle of Okee-Chobee.

GALLANT ACTION OF CAPTAIN THORNTON ON THE RIO GRANDE.

WHEN General Taylor was encamped opposite Matamoras, it was reported that the Mexicans were crossing the river to surround him. This made frequent and active reconnoissances necessary.

In consequence of the rumored intentions of the enemy, Captain Thornton was despatched on the 24th of April, 1846, to the crossing, above the fort, and Captain Ker below. Accompanying Thornton were Captain Hardee, Lieutenants Mason and Kane, and sixty-one men. After proceeding about twenty-six miles, they encountered a Mexican, who reported that at a short distance, the enemy were stationed to the number of two

thousand, under General Torrejon. Partly from the cowardice of their Mexican guide, and partly from ignorance of the country, they were led into a plantation surrounded by a thick chapparal fence, round which was concealed an ambush of more than ten times their number. Thornton, followed by his command, crossed the plantation to the house, where he commenced conversation with one of the residents. While thus engaged, the enemy took possession of the gate, and now for the first time, the party perceived that the chapparal was crowded with infantry, supported by cavalry, who were preparing for a charge. This was met with gallantry and success; but in the struggle Lieutenant Kane was unhorsed, and the captain became separated from his command. The whole Mexican force now poured in a destructive fire upon the few men under Captain Hardee, who, notwithstanding, rallied and endeavored to retreat by way of the river. This he was unable to accomplish, and after having eleven men killed, including a sergeant and two other officers, he consented to surrender, on condition of his men being treated as prisoners of war, declaring that if this were refused, they would continue the battle at all hazards. This was acceded to, and the captain and twenty-five men were carried into Matamoras.

The bravery of Captain Thornton deserves notice. As we have stated, he met the charge of the cavalry with success, but was unable to break the crowded lines of the infantry by whom they were supported. The chapparal was at this time in one wide blaze of fire, and in rushing toward it, the horse of the captain



Gallant Action of Captain Thornton.

made a tremendous leap, completely clearing the whole enclosure, and alighted in the midst of the enemy. This feat, however, was not performed with impunity; the animal received a severe wound at the very moment of its accomplishment, and was subsequently obliged to carry his intrepid rider through a host of armed men. The captain escaped unwounded, and though both horse and rider subsequently encountered a severe fall, he succeeded in approaching within about five miles of the American camp. But at this place he was intercepted by an advance guard of the enemy, and conveyed prisoner to Matamoras.

Lieutenant Mason was killed before the chapparal, and Kane shared the fate of Thornton.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages against which the Americans contended, this affair was a source of unbounded exultation to the enemy. Besides public rejoicing in Matamoras, Arista wrote to General Torrejon in terms of congratulation, which would have been considered extravagant in General Taylor after the battle of Palo Alto.

THE BATTLE OF PALO ALTO,

DESCRIBED BY GENERAL TAYLOR.

THE main body of the "Army of Occupation" marched under my immediate orders from Point Isabel, on the evening of the 7th of May, and bivouacked seven miles from that place.

Our march was resumed the following morning. About noon, when our advance of cavalry had reached the water-pole of "Palo Alto," the Mexican troops were reported in our front, and were soon discovered occupying the road in force. I ordered a halt upon reaching the water, with a view to rest and refresh the men and form deliberately our line of battle. The Mexican line was now plainly visible across the prairie, and about three-quarters of a mile distant. Their left, which was composed of a heavy force of cavalry, occupied the road resting upon a thicket of chapparal, while masses of infantry were discovered in succession on the right, greatly outnumbering our own force.

Our line of battle was now formed in the following order, commanded on the right: 5th infantry, commanded by Lieut. Col. McIntosh; Major Ringgold's artillery; 3d infantry, commanded by Captain L. N. Morris; two eighteen pounders, commanded by Lieut. Churchill, 3d artillery; 4th infantry, commanded by G. W. Allen; the 3d and 4th regiments composed the 3d brigade, under command of Lieut. Col. Garland, and all the above corps, together with two squadrons of dragoons, under Captains Ker and May, composed the right wing, under the orders of Col. Twiggs. The left was formed by the battalion of artillery, commanded by Lieut. Col. Childs, Captain Duncan's light artillery, and the 8th infantry, under Captain Montgomery—all forming the 1st brigade, under command of Lieut. Col. Belknap. The train was packed near the water, under direction of Captains Crosman and Myers, and protected by Captain Ker's squadron.

At 2 o'clock, we took up our march by heads of

columns in the direction of the enemy—the eighteen pounder battery following the road. While the columns were advancing, Lieut. Blake, of the topographical engineers, volunteered a reconnoissance of the enemy's line, which was handsomely performed, and resulted in the discovery of at least two batteries of artillery in the intervals of their cavalry and infantry. These batteries were soon opened upon us; when I ordered the columns halted and deployed into line, and the fire to be returned by all our artillery. The 8th infantry, on our extreme left, was thrown back to secure that flank. The first fires did little execution, while our eighteen pounders and Major Ringgold's artillery soon dispersed the cavalry, which formed his left. Captain Duncan's battery, thrown forward in advance of the line, was doing good execution at this time. Capt. May's squadron was now detached to support that battery, and the left of our position. The Mexican cavalry and two pieces of artillery were now reported to be moving through the chapparal to our right, to threaten our flank, or make a demonstration against the train. The 5th infantry was immediately detached to check this movement, and, supported by Lieut. Ridgely, with a section of Major Ringgold's battery and Capt. Walker's company of volunteers, effectually repulsed the enemy—the 5th infantry repelling a charge of lancers, and the artillery doing great execution in their ranks. The 3d infantry was now detached to the right as a still further security to that flank threatened by the enemy. Major Ringgold, with the remaining section, kept up his fire from an advanced position, and was supported by the 4th infantry.

The grass of the prairie had been accidentally fired by our artillery, and the volumes of smoke now partially concealed the armies from each other. As the enemy's left had been driven back, and left the road free, as the cannonade had been suspended, I ordered forward the eighteen pounders on the road nearly to the position first occupied by the Mexican cavalry, and caused the 1st brigade to take up a new position still on the left of the eighteen pounder battery. The 5th was advanced from its former position, and occupied a point on the extreme right of the new line. The enemy made a change of position corresponding to our own, and after a suspension of nearly an hour the action was resumed.

The fire of artillery was now most destructive—openings were constantly made through the enemy's ranks by our fire, and the constancy with which the Mexican infantry sustained this severe cannonade was a theme of universal remark and admiration. Capt. May's squadron was detached to make a demonstration on the left of the enemy's position, and suffered severely from the fire of artillery to which it was for some time exposed. The 4th infantry, which had been ordered to support the eighteen pounder battery, was exposed to a most galling fire of artillery, by which several men were killed, and Capt. Page dangerously wounded. The enemy's fire was directed against our eighteen pounder battery and the guns of Major Ringgold in its vicinity. The Major himself, while coolly directing the fire of his pieces, was struck by a cannon ball and mortally wounded.

In the mean time the battalion of artillery, Lieut. Col. Childs, had been brought up to support the artillery

on our right. A strong demonstration of cavalry was now made by the enemy against this part of our line, and the column continued to advance under a severe fire from the eighteen pounders. The battalion was instantly formed in square and held ready to receive the charge of cavalry, but when the advancing squadrons were within close range, a deadly fire of cannister from the eighteen-pounders soon dispersed them. A brisk fire of small arms was now opened upon the square, by which one officer, Lieut. Luther, 2d artillery, was slightly wounded, but a well directed fire from the front of the square silenced all further firing from the enemy in this quarter. It was now nearly dark, and the action was closed on the right of our line, the enemy having been completely driven back from his position, and foiled in his attempt against our line.

“While the above was going forward on our right and under my own eye, the enemy had made a serious attempt against the left of our line. Capt. Duncan instantly perceived the movement, and by the bold and brilliant manœuvring of his battery, completely repulsed several successive efforts of the enemy to advance in force upon our left flank. Supported in succession by the 8th infantry and by Captain Ker's squadron of dragoons, he gallantly held the enemy at bay, and finally drove him, with immense loss, from the field. The action here, and along the whole line, continued until dark, when the enemy retired into the chapparal in the rear of his position. Our army bivouacked on the ground it occupied. During the afternoon the train had been moved forward about half a mile, and was packed in rear of the new position.

"Our loss, this day, was nine killed, forty-four wounded, and two missing. Among the wounded were Major Ringgold, who has since died, and Captain Page dangerously wounded; Lieut. Luther slightly so. I annex a tabular statement of the casualties of the day.

"Our own force engaged is shown by the field report to have been 177 officers and 2111 men—aggregate 2288. The Mexican force, according to the statements of their own officers, taken prisoners in the affair of the 9th, was not less than 6000 regular troops, with ten pieces of artillery, and probably exceeded that number; the irregular force not known. Their loss was not less than 200 killed and 400 wounded—probably greater. This number is very moderate, and formed upon the number actually counted upon the field, and upon the reports of their own officers.

"The conduct of our officers and men was every thing that could be desired. Exposed for hours to the severest trial—a cannonade of artillery—our troops displayed a coolness and constancy, which gave me, throughout, the assurance of victory."

The tabular statement alluded to in the above letter represents that nine non-commissioned officers and privates were killed in the battle, and forty-four wounded, including three commissioned officers.

THE BATTLE OF RESACA DE LA PALMA,

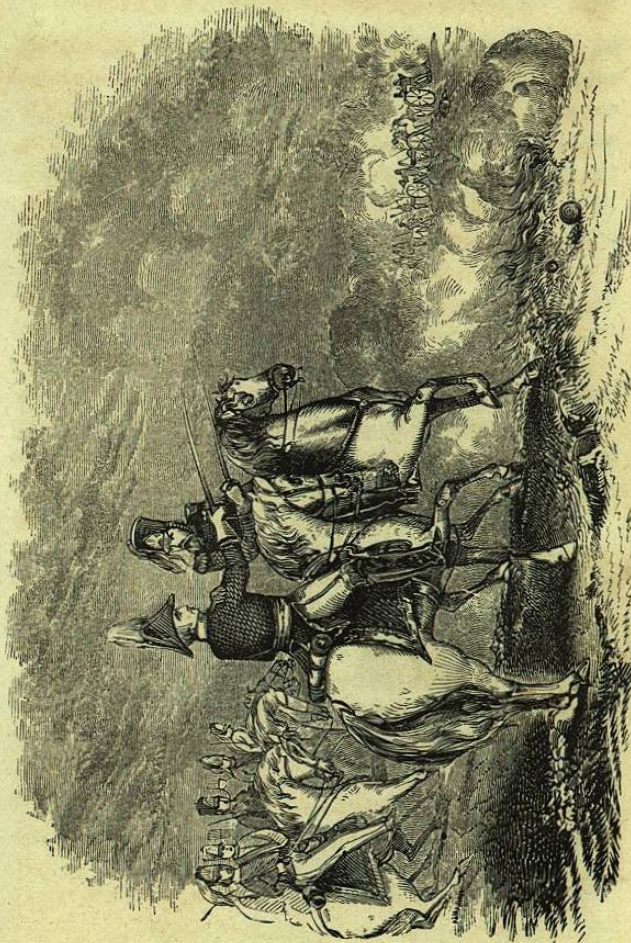
DESCRIBED BY GEN. TAYLOR.

"Early in the morning of the 9th, the enemy, who had encamped near the field of battle of the day previous, was discovered moving by his left flank, evidently in retreat, and, perhaps, at the same time to gain a new position on the road to Matamoras, and there again resist our advance.

"I ordered the supply train to be strongly packed at its position, and left with it four pieces of artillery—the two eighteen-pounders which had done such good service on the previous day, and two twelve-pounders which had not been in the action. The wounded officers and men were at the same time sent back to Point Isabel. I then moved forward with the columns to the edge of the chaparral, or forest, which extends to the Rio Grande,—a distance of seven miles. The light companies of the first brigade, under Capt. C. F. Smith, 2d artillery, and a select detachment of light troops, the whole under the command of Capt. McCall, 4th infantry, were thrown forward into the chaparral, to feel the enemy and ascertain his position. About 3 o'clock, I received a report from the advance that the enemy was in position on the road, with at least two pieces of artillery. The command was immediately put in motion, and about 4 o'clock I came up with Capt. McCall, who reported the enemy in force in our front, occupying a ravine which intersects the road, and is skirted by thickets of dense chapparal. Ridgeley's battery, and the advance under Capt. McCall,

were at once thrown forward on the road, and into the chapparal, on either side, while the 5th infantry and one wing of the 4th was thrown into the forest on the left, and the 3d and other wing of the 4th, on the right of the road. These corps were employed as skirmishers to cover the battery, and engage the Mexican infantry. Capt. McCall's command became at once engaged with the enemy, while the light artillery, though in a very exposed position, did great execution. The enemy had at least eight pieces of artillery, and maintained an incessant fire on our advance.

"The action now became general, and although the enemy's infantry gave way before the steady fire and resistless progress of our own, yet his artillery was still in position to check our advance—several pieces occupying the pass across the ravine, which he had chosen for his position. Perceiving that no decisive advantage could be gained until this artillery was silenced, I ordered Captain May to charge the batteries with his squadron of dragoons. This was gallantly and effectually executed; the enemy was driven from his guns, and General La Vega, who remained alone at one of the batteries, was taken prisoner. The squadron, which suffered much in this charge, not being immediately supported by infantry, could not retain possession of the artillery, but it was completely silenced. In the mean time, the 8th infantry had been ordered up, and had become warmly engaged on the right of the road. This regiment, and a part of the 5th, were now ordered to charge the batteries; which was handsomely done, and the enemy entirely driven from his artillery and his position on the left of the road.



General Taylor ordering Captain May to charge the Mexican Battery.

"The light companies of the first brigade, and the 3d and 4th regiments of infantry had been deployed on the right of the road, where, at various points, they became briskly engaged with the enemy. A small party, under Captain Buchanan and Lieutenants Wood and Hays, 4th infantry, composed chiefly of men of that regiment, drove the enemy from a breastwork which he occupied, and captured a piece of artillery. An attempt to recover this piece was repelled by Capt. Barbour's 3d infantry. The enemy was at last completely driven from his position on the right of the road, and retreated precipitately, leaving baggage of every description. The 4th infantry took possession of a camp where the headquarters of the Mexican General-in-chief were established. All his official correspondence was captured at this point.

"The artillery battalion (excepting the flank companies) had been ordered to guard the baggage train, which was packed some distance in the rear. That battalion was now ordered up to pursue the enemy, and, with the 3d infantry, Captain Ker's dragoons, and Captain Duncan's battery, followed him rapidly to the river, making a number of prisoners. Great numbers of the enemy were drowned in attempting to cross the river, near the town. The corps last mentioned encamped near the river—the remainder of the army on the field of battle.

"The strength of our marching force on this day was 173 officers, and 2049 men—aggregate 2222. The actual number engaged with the enemy did not exceed 1700. Our loss was three officers killed, and twelve

wounded; thirty-six men killed, and seventy-one wounded. Among the officers killed, I have to regret the loss of Lieut. Inge, 2d dragoons, who fell at the head of his platoon, while gallantly charging the enemy's battery; of Lieut. Chadbourne, of the 8th infantry, and Lieut. Cochrane, of the 4th, who likewise met their death in the thickest of the fight. The wounded officers were—Lieut. Col. Payne, Inspector-General; Lieut. Dobbins, 3d infantry, serving with the light infantry advance, slightly; Lieut. Col. McIntosh, 5th infantry, severely (twice); Lieut. Fowler, 5th infantry, slightly; Capt. Montgomery, 8th infantry, slightly; Lieuts. Gates and Jordan, 8th infantry, severely (each twice); Lieuts. Selden, Maclay, Burbank and Morris, 8th infantry, slightly.

"I have no accurate data from which to estimate the enemy's force on this day. He was known to have been reinforced after the action of the 8th, both by cavalry and infantry, and no doubt to an extent at least equal to his loss on that day. It is probable that 6000 men were opposed to us, and in a position chosen by themselves, and strongly defended with artillery. The enemy's loss was very great. Nearly 200 of his dead were buried by us on the day succeeding the battle. His loss in killed, wounded and missing, in the two affairs of the 8th and 9th, is, I think, moderately estimated at 1000 men.

"Our victory has been decisive. A small force has overcome immense odds of the best troops that Mexico can furnish,—veteran regiments, perfectly equipped and appointed. Eight pieces of artillery, several colors and

standards, a great number of prisoners (including fourteen officers), and a large amount of baggage and public property, fell into our hands.

"The causes of our victory are doubtless to be found in the superior quality of our officers and men."

EFFECTS OF THE BATTLES OF PALO ALTO AND RESACA
DE LA PALMA.

It is difficult to speak with moderation on these two brilliant actions. The excitement, which the first promulgation of the news created throughout the Union, may be imagined but not described. It created a feeling of excitement and enthusiasm—an impulse towards military adventures, throughout the length and breadth of the land. Preparations were made in every direction for calling forth volunteers,—increasing the regular army,—fitting out vessels of war,—for the display of a land and sea force, unprecedented this side of the Atlantic.

In less than two weeks, the United States, throughout their length and breadth, were converted, as it were, into a camp. From the most northern part of Maine to the orange groves of Florida—from the Atlantic to the Pacific—nothing was heard of but the din of military preparations; the proclamations of Governors; the mustering of forces, and the shouts of volunteers, produced by a nation's leaping at once to arms. In fact, the transition of this vast confederacy into one magnificent camp, from the first call to arms, was as rapid and as quick as the masterly evolutions and admirable discipline which gave victory to the American arms in both the battles on the Rio Grande.

How can this sudden military transition—this sublime spectacle of military preparation—be accounted for? It arose only from the perfect freedom of our institutions, the equality of our laws, and from the determined spirit of the American character. The insults of a quarter of a century, repeated injuries and spoliations of the property of American citizens, had aroused a peaceful and quiet people, and changed them, as it were, into a nation of soldiers, determined to avenge themselves, and to chastise the insolence of the Republic of Mexico.

MATAMORAS,

ON THE NIGHT OF THE NINTH OF MAY, 1846.

WHILE the battle was raging at Resaca de la Palma, thousands of people lined the shores of the Rio Grande, listening to each burst of artillery with breathless suspense. News of victory had reached them the preceding day, but no conquerors had returned in triumph to the city. And now the dread roar of cannon, swelling louder, and fiercer, and nearer—what did it portend? The fire of the city was abandoned, and the cheering suppressed; and pale, anxious faces, gazed in racking silence in the direction of battle. Soon the dread reality was disclosed; infantry and cavalry burst madly from the thicket, dashing aside garment and weapon, as they swept toward the river. Then a cry—one of anguish

and horror—went up from that living mass; and its hollow tones told tales of poverty and wretchedness for the future. Crowd on crowd of terrified soldiers now came from the chapparal, and rushed toward the city. Soon dense masses filled to sinking the little flat provided for their conveyance. The next moment they were hurled into the river by the reckless cavalry, who in their turn were swept away. Mules loaded with wounded and dying were plunged in, and numbers were precipitated from the shore. It was an awful scene. Horse trampled over horse, crushing their riders to earth, and trailing their bridles and furniture along the ground; the river was foaming with life, while plunge after plunge announced the sad fate of numbers more; the shouts of officers, curses of soldiery, yells of the wounded, and shrieks of the drowning, were appalling. Wretched beings grasped the flat in agony, only to be murdered by those upon it; and scores of mules, and hundreds of soldiers, clenched in each other's embrace, sunk to a watery grave.

Yet dreadful as was this scene, it was but the shadow of what Matamoros witnessed during the night. Mules were continually entering the city, laden with wounded, whose piercing shrieks, as their wounds poured afresh at each step, rose above the din and hurry of trampling armies. All discipline or order was at an end, and thousands of infuriated soldiers poured along the streets for rapine and plunder. Women fled to the ball-rooms where preparations for victory had been made, and tore the wreaths and ornaments from the walls. Scarcely had they done so, when hordes of lawless rancheros burst