

one he had come by, and on which Garay was encamped, and was ten miles from Tantayoca when daylight overtook him.

"At 10 o'clock, A. M., the lancers and guerillas again came in sight, and hung in the rear of the detachment all day, spearing and shooting down, without mercy, such unfortunate persons as straggled off from the main body. On one occasion, a large body of lancers collected in a group, when Captain Wyse gave them a salute with a charge of canister, and made great havoc among both horses and riders, killing and wounding about thirty men; and from that time they kept at a respectful distance.

"The Mexicans followed our little detachment for two days, occasionally exchanging a few shots. Lieutenant Heimberger was shot in the arm during the retreat the first day. When Colonel De Russy got within fifteen miles of Penuca, he despatched Mr. George Lefler, an old citizen of this place, to Colonel Gates, giving him an account of his position, and informing him of their being entirely out of ammunition, and a large body of the enemy in his rear.

"Colonel Gates immediately despatched Lieutenant-Colonel Marks to his relief with 160 men, two pieces of cannon, and plenty of ammunition. Lieutenant-Colonel Marks went to Penuca with his command per steamboat, where he met Colonel De Russy and his command, completely tired out, and almost without a cartridge. As there was an attack anticipated the following night on this place, both parties returned.

"Thus ended one of the most brilliant affairs, for the

numbers engaged in it, (terminating with a masterly retreat,) which have taken place during this war.

"Our loss on the occasion was about thirty killed, wounded, and missing; while that of the Mexicans is set down at 150 killed and wounded."

A SOLDIER'S LETTER TO HIS MOTHER.

Engineer Camp, near Vera Cruz, April 2d, 1847.

I FIND, my dear mother, that there is more truth than poetry in the old saying, "there's no rest for the wicked," for I have had about as much as I could attend to on my hands, ever since this kennel capitulated. On the morning after I wrote the letter to father, the garrison marched out, with music playing and colors flying—they then stacked their arms and colors, and "vamossed the ranch."—On the southern side of the city, there is a long narrow lagoon, running nearly north and south; around this, and between it and the city, is a large level meadow. It was here that the ceremony took place. They issued from the gate of Mercy to the tune of that infernal old "che-wang-a-wang, che-wang-a-wang," which may well be called "the tune the old cow died of,"—halted on this meadow, between our troops, who were drawn up in two lines, one on each side of the meadow, and about 400 yards apart. At a signal, they laid down their arms and accoutrements, filed out, and marched on towards Alvarado, our troops presenting arms as they marched by. I took such a position that they passed within ten

feet of me as they marched on. First came a company of sappers, clothed in white; then a gayly-dressed band, followed by its regiment (one of the line), &c. They were nearly 4000 in all—some dressed entirely in white—some with white jackets and pants, and scarlet caps—some in blue—in short, dressed off in all kinds of colors. Their uniforms were coarse and cheap. The men looked like mere barbarians. Some of the officers were fine looking men; the majority of them very poor specimens of humanity. I observed some few—very few—officers, who were evidently very much affected by their humiliating position; but the great mass of officers and men appeared too brutish to have any feeling in the matter. I could not help feeling that we were fighting a nation far, very far beneath us. They are not “worthy of our steel,” although I must confess that the rascals can send their confounded shot and shells as thickly about one's ears as it is desirable to have them. Altogether it was a motley procession—rancheros, officers, soldiers, women, children, mustangs, burros, burristos, parrots, dogs, monkeys, and heaven knows what else, for I don't. It was a proud moment for us when we saw our noble old stars and stripes rise slowly over San Juan and the city. The next instant we were fairly deafened by the sound of artillery firing salutes to it. From the castle, the works around the town, our light batteries, breast batteries, from our own and the foreign vessels in harbor, pealed forth one great salvo of artillery in honor of our beautiful flag. I know not which was the most magnificent, the beginning or the end.

I landed with the first, in Worth's brigade; about

3000 were landed in the surf-boats at the same time. We were first collected in two long lines, in tow of the Princeton, and when all was ready were cast off and pulled steadily in four lines to the shore. Just as we cast off from the Princeton, a round shot whistled over our heads, and we all thought, “Now for it—they are going to pitch into us!” but it was a shot from one of our own gun-boats at some Mexicans on a sand hill. Oh, if the fools had had sense enough to have placed a dozen out of their 256 pieces of artillery in battery on the sand hills, but few of us would ever have reached that shore; the destruction would have been awful. Every moment, from the instant we left the Princeton, did we expect to hear and feel their shot crashing amongst us, but we rowed on and on, every ear strung to its utmost tension—every eye straining to see the expected flash. Not a word was said amongst us, or those we left behind us in the fleet—for they were more anxious for us than we were for ourselves; we had the intense excitement to carry us through. But when the first boat struck the shore, there arose a shout from the fleet, which was taken up by us, and carried on from boat to boat, from ship to ship—a sound so cheerful, so full of life, so indicative of confidence, of joy, and strength, I never expect to hear again, unless in battle. It was a stirring sound, and followed by a splendid sight, in which fine discipline appeared (for we were all regulars). As the boats struck, the color-bearers ran to their places, and the men formed upon them; in an instant there were formed in line of battle along the beach, two regiments of artillery and four of infantry; in another we advanced over the sand

hills, and found that the most dangerous part of our work was over, without the loss of a man. Six regiments of regulars were established on the shore, and we knew that nothing in Mexico could drive us back. We landed with four days' provisions in our haversacks (hard bread and ham), and our overcoats. We bivouacked in the sand that night, but were aroused about one o'clock by musket balls singing around us. It turned out to be a little skirmish between some riflemen and the piquet, a short distance from us. The investment was commenced on the next morning. We took our position with the 3d artillery on the right of the army on a most interesting bare sand hill, where we were almost burned to death. The Mexicans in the Castle and Santiago amused themselves by firing at us with their heaviest pieces, but could not reach us by 200 yards or so; the men were cracking their jokes at them continually. About 1 o'clock, we (Company "A") were ordered over towards Malibran, where there was some skirmishing. We cut a road to that place, or as far as the railroad. Here we had quite a lively little skirmish, between about twenty of our men and a party of Mexicans. We "ran them off," however. I took a shot at one fellow, but don't think I touched him.—We then went back to Malibran, and bivouacked there, wet to our waists—hard bread and ham for supper (water of course). Malibran is a ruined convent at or near the head of the lagoon I spoke of. It must be at least three hundred years old, and is a curious old place. The walls are made up in a great measure of earthen pots filled with sand. It abounds with queer cells, &c. The next morning we cut a road up to some

bare sand hills, which had been occupied the evening before by the Pennsylvania troops without opposition. It was very troublesome and hard work, for the chapparal was very thick, and the round shot, shells, and escopette balls, intended for other parties, fell in, around and amongst us, all the time. It was on this day that Capt. Alburdis was killed, and on this very road—the shot which killed him taking off the leg of a soldier near by. On this same morning, near the same place, one of the mounted rifles was killed, and several volunteers wounded, among them the lieutenant-colonel of the South Carolina regiment. Late in the afternoon we returned to our old place on the right, and bivouacked again in the sand.

I will write another letter to-morrow, if I have time, and try to give you some idea of the siege.—We are now encamped on the sea beach. Every exertion is being made to leave these diggins as soon as possible. Our next move is on Jalapa. We expect some opposition at Puerte del Rey, but will probably "turn it" by means of our ponton train. I think we must have peace in a month or so—if not then, I don't think the war will be over in less than four or five years. I should think that they were now sufficiently well thrashed to convince them that they have not gained the victory. M'C.

GENERAL LANE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE
BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.*Buena Vista, Mexico, May 10, 1847.*

FROM the comments of the press, the numerous letters that have been written and published, the many false and ridiculous statements uttered by different persons at sundry places concerning the battle at this place on the 22d and 23d February last, and more particularly in consequence of the erroneous statements invented and circulated in reference to the Indiana brigade in connexion with that memorable day, I feel myself constrained, in discharge of an imperious duty, to give to the public a succinct account of facts which may enable every candid reader to arrive at correct conclusions, and that the public mind may be disabused of a studied and systematic attempt at misrepresentation and detraction.

The disposition of the troops seems to have been confided to General Wool, and were posted in the following order—viz., the 2d regiment of Indiana volunteers, commanded by Colonel Bowles, with three pieces of artillery under Captain O'Brien, were posted on the extreme left. The 3d regiment of Indiana volunteers, commanded by Colonel Lane, occupied a height in rear of Washington's battery; the 1st Illinois regiment, commanded by Colonel Hardin, was stationed on a high hill near, and a short distance to the left and front of the same battery; the 2d Kentucky volunteers, under Colonel McKee, were on the 22d posted on the right of a deep ravine, at a distance of half a mile on the right of the battery, but on the morn-

ing of the 23d were ordered to cross the ravine, and took position near Colonel Hardin, and to his left. The 2d regiment Illinois volunteers, under Colonel Bissell, were posted further to the left, and in the rear, and to the right, at a distance of about half a mile from where the 2d Indiana regiment were placed—which regiment, as before remarked, occupied the extreme left of the field, near the base of the mountain. The four rifle companies of my command, under Major Gorman, were at early dawn of day ordered to move up the side of the mountain to engage the enemy, some three thousand strong, who were endeavoring to cross the points of the mountain, and to turn our left flank. These riflemen were directed to check their advance, if possible. Three rifle companies of the 2d Illinois regiment, and three companies of Colonel Marshall's mounted regiment, were dismounted and sent up the mountain to the assistance of Major Gorman, who had now been for some time hotly engaged with the enemy. The contest on the mountain brow raged with fury for about the space of three hours, when I was informed by Colonel Churchill that the enemy in great force were advancing under cover of a deep ravine, about four hundred yards in my front, and to the right. I immediately put my small command in motion to meet them. It should be borne in mind, that my whole force was the eight battalion companies of the 2d Indiana regiment, and Captain O'Brien's battery of three guns—in all, about four hundred men. On arriving on a narrow ridge, between two deep and rugged ravines, I found the Mexican infantry, from four to six thousand strong, supported by a body of lancers; the infantry were

coming up out of the ravine on my left, and forming in beautiful order across the ridge, leaving the lancers in the ravine; I immediately directed Captain O'Brien to halt his battery, and get ready for the fray. The column was halted when the first company was up with, and on the left of the battery, and formed forward into line of battle. I rode in front of the column, and continued in front, as the companies were forming into line, and was much delighted to see the officers and men move forward in good order. Coolness and courage were depicted on every countenance. By the time that half the companies were in line, and while I was yet in front, the Mexicans opened their fire from their entire line. In a moment, the left companies were in line. I passed to the rear, and the fire was returned with promptness and good effect. Thus commenced the battle on the plain of Buena Vista. The distance between the enemy's line and my own was about one hundred and twenty yards. About the time the action commenced, the enemy opened a tremendous fire from their battery of three heavy guns posted on my left, and a little to the rear, which nearly enfiladed my line. In this manner the battle continued to rage for near twenty-five minutes, the firing being very severe on both sides—the lines of the Mexican infantry presenting one continued sheet of flame. I observed the Mexican line to break and fall back several times; but their successive formations across the ridge enabled them at once to force the men back to their position, and keep them steady. I then formed the determination to take position nearer the enemy, with the hope of routing and driving them from that

part of the field, and for the purpose of placing the line out of the range of the enemy's guns, which had succeeded in getting the range, so as to be doing some execution nearly every fire. For that purpose I sent my aid to direct Captain O'Brien to advance his battery some fifty or sixty yards to the front, and to return to me to assist in passing an order to the line to advance to the same point. He went with the battery to its advanced position. I was at that moment near the left of my line. Before my aid returned to me, I was much surprised to see my line begin to give way on the right, and continuing to give way to the extreme left, not knowing at that time that Colonel Bowles had given an order to retreat; and it was several days after the battle (and not until after I had made my official report) before I was satisfied that the regiment had retreated in obedience to an order given by Colonel Bowles. This order was not obeyed until it had been twice repeated, as has since been proven in a court of inquiry appointed to inquire into the conduct of the colonel. Lieutenant-Colonel Haddon and twelve other good witnesses have testified to his having twice or thrice given the order before the line broke, so unwilling were they to abandon their position. The 2d regiment occupied an important position—it was the key to that part of the field—and were unsupported by any other troops.

An evidence of their being in a very hot place is, that about ninety of them were killed and wounded before they retreated. They had stood firmly, doing their duty as well as ever did veteran troops, until they had discharged over twenty rounds of cartridges at the enemy,

killing and wounding some five hundred of them; and I have no hesitation in saying, that if it had not been for that unnecessary, unauthorized, and cowardly order to retreat, they would not have left their position. I hesitate not to express my belief, that if my order to advance had been carried out, and we had taken the advanced position, as intended, we would have driven the enemy from the ridge.

Although the men retired in some confusion, the most of them were soon rallied—say to the number of two hundred and fifty—and they continued to fight like veterans throughout the day. Lieutenant Robinson (my aid-de-camp) and Lieutenant-Colonel Haddon were very active in rallying the men. Major Cravens was ordered to proceed to the *ranche* and bring back such of our men as had gone in that direction; which was promptly done. Captains Davis, Kimball, McRea, Briggs, Lieutenant Spicely (then in command of his company in consequence of the fall of the gallant and lamented Kinder), Lieutenants Shanks, Hoggatt, Burwell, Lewis, Foster, Benafiel, Kunkle, Lowdermilk, Roach, Rice, and Zenor, with the most of the company officers, were also very active in rallying their men. Captain Sanderson and Lieutenants Davis, Hogan, and Cayce (and several other officers), were wounded, and had to leave the field, as also Captain Dennis; who had fought like a hero, with gun in hand, until he found himself unable, from fatigue and indisposition, to remain longer on the field.

Paymaster Major Dix, having arrived on the field at this moment, was very active in assisting to rally our broken and scattered forces. He seized the colors from

their bearer, who was unable to carry them longer, and handed them to Lieutenant Kunkle, who carried them triumphantly throughout the day.

These colors, now in the possession of Captain Sanderson, were well riddled with balls; one 24-pound shot, one 6-pound shot, and many musket-balls passed through them while they were in the hands of this meritorious young officer; and they could at all times be seen high above the heads of the Indiana brigade, moving to and fro, wherever it was necessary to meet and repulse the enemy. Lieutenant (now Captain) Peck, of the rifle battalion, who had been compelled to retire from the mountain to the plain, and after the fall of his gallant old captain (Walker) succeeded in rallying about twenty men and joining the 2d Indiana regiment, continued to fight gallantly throughout the day. The severe loss in killed and wounded which the 2d Indiana regiment sustained in the action, will convey some idea of the danger they faced, and the tenacity with which they struggled. One hundred and seven of their number were killed and wounded.

At or about the time of the retreat of my small command under that ill-fated order, the riflemen were compelled, by superior numbers to abandon their position: on the mountain side, and retreat to the plain below. The cavalry, which had been posted some distance in my rear, and out of range of the enemy's battery, to act as circumstances might require—either to advance upon the enemy, and cut them off, in case they should retreat; or to succor my small force if they should be compelled to fall back—instead of affording me the least assistance,

left their position without receiving one fire from the enemy, and made a precipitate retreat to the rear, along the foot of the mountain, pursued by a large body of lancers, who succeeded in cutting off and slaughtering quite a number of our forces—most of them riflemen. If they had made a bold stand, and allowed the riflemen and the 2d Indiana regiment to rally on them, all together would have been a force sufficient to check the enemy before he had gained any considerable advantage. After these successive and almost simultaneous retreats of the different forces on the left, it remained wholly undefended; and the enemy—numbering several thousands—came pouring down from the mountain and from the front, and formed in good order along the foot of the mountain, in the rear of the position at first occupied by our forces. Soon after the retreat of the 2d, and while I was rallying them, the Mississippi regiment arrived on the field, and in a most gallant manner engaged the enemy, but were compelled, by vastly superior numbers, to fall back. At this time the 3d Indiana regiment, under Colonel Lane, was ordered into the fight, and, joined with the 2d Indiana and Mississippi regiments, composed a force about one-fifth as large as the enemy, but sufficient to engage them with success. Captain Sherman, with one gun of his battery, at this time joined us, and the whole moved towards the foot of the mountain, and engaged the enemy. Here the artillery proved very effective. This portion of the enemy's force became at length so closely pressed, and our artillery continuing to waste them away with its destructive fire, and they being separated from the enemy's main force, would in a short time have been com-

pelled to surrender, when a white flag was seen on the field, and we were ordered to cease firing. We did so; but the Mexicans continued to fire from their battery, thus covering the retreat of their forces. This flag was sent to the left wing from General Taylor, in consequence of Santa Anna's having sent to him a flag, which the general naturally supposed conveyed propositions either of truce or surrender. Hence the white flag on our part of the battle-field. This flag proved to be nothing more than a stratagem of the Mexican general to extricate that portion of his troops which he saw was absolutely in our power. During the delay caused by this interchange of flags, this portion of his army, so completely within our power, moved off, and made good their retreat to where the enemy's main force was posted. We now moved some distance, and took position to meet a large body of lancers, supported by about 2000 infantry. The Mississippi and a portion of the 2d Indiana were formed across a narrow ridge between two deep ravines, supported by one gun from Captain Sherman's battery; and the other part of the 2d Indiana and all of the 3d Indiana regiment, were on the brow of one of the ravines, and parallel to the same, the line being nearly in the shape of an L, and faced by the rear rank. The charge was made on the left flank of the 3d Indiana—now right, as they were faced. This charge, it is due the enemy to say, was made most gallantly, and was beautifully received by our forces, delivering our fire when they were within a short distance. It proved most destructive to the enemy, felling many a horse and his rider, breaking their columns, and putting them to flight, leaving many of their companions dead on the field. Soon after this

successful repulse of the enemy, the field on the left was completely cleared of the enemy's forces; and hearing a sharp and continued firing on our right, and to the left of Washington's battery, I put my command in motion at double quick time, for the purpose of taking part in the conflict. This fire proved to be a severe action between the entire Mexican infantry, and the 1st and 2d Illinois, and 2d Kentucky volunteers; which was Santa Anna's last and great effort. These forces had been repulsed by overwhelming numbers, and were retreating in confusion, hotly pursued by thousands of Mexicans, who were loading and firing on our men at every jump; when my command, consisting of the 2d and 3d Indiana and Mississippi regiments, arrived within musket-shot, which we did by coming up suddenly out of a deep ravine, and opened a destructive fire upon them. Finding themselves thus suddenly attacked from an unexpected quarter, they quit the pursuit, formed promptly into line, and returned our fire with considerable effect; but they in turn were compelled to retreat, under our well-directed fire, to the position they had occupied in the morning.

This was the last firing between the infantry of the opposing forces on that memorable day, although the cannon continued to play at intervals until dark.

The battle on the plain was opened, as has been shown, by the 2d Indiana regiment; and the last musketry fired, were fired by the 2d and 3d Indiana and Mississippi regiments.

It should also be stated that our forces had been under arms since the morning of the 22d, and remained upon the field of battle till the morning of the 24th.

I have here given a brief and faithful account of the

operations of the Indiana brigade on the 23d February, as came under my observations; and there was not one minute, from the time the battle commenced until the last gun fired, that I was not with them.

Captain O'Brien, who commanded the battery of light-artillery posted on my right, at the commencement of the battle, as well as Captain Sherman, who acted with us a part of the day, are deserving of particular praise for their gallantry and good conduct, moving and discharging their pieces with all the coolness and precision of a day of ordinary parade.

The intrepid and honorable conduct of the 2d Kentucky, and 1st and 2d Illinois volunteers, could not have been exceeded; and no commendation of mine could add lustre to the glory which should, and will be theirs. There is enough of honor and glory for each man who did his duty at Buena Vista. And he must be an uncharitable and selfish American citizen, who would, knowingly, wish to detract from any portion of that glorious little army, with a desire to augment that of any one corps, at the expense of another. The many gallant officers and men, who did their duty on that day, should not suffer by invidious comparison.

If I have neglected to particularize the conduct of the Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry, or to define their position on the field, it is not because I deemed them of little moment or importance; but for the reason, that from the time of their retreat, I had no opportunity of seeing any thing of their movements. They participated in the ranche fight, where the gallant Yell nobly fell at the head of his column: he, with the noble souls

who fell on that day, should never be forgotten. The ambition of distinction should never prompt us to deface any portion of the tablet of fame, which our country will erect to the honor of the actors in that battle; and the regular and volunteer army should be proud of it, as one of the greatest epochs in our country's history.

It is due to the commanders of the different batteries of *light* artillery to state, that their efforts were most powerful and efficient towards gaining the almost unparalleled victory of Buena Vista. Ready at all times to meet the enemy at fearful odds, their guns wasted them away with their fire in a handsome manner, compelling them to retreat whenever coming within their range.

Generals Taylor and Wool were present as commanders (the former as commander-in-chief). They were exposed to dangers almost every instant of the day, watching the movements of the enemy, and ordering and disposing of our forces in the best manner to meet and repel them. By their coolness and courage in gaining this victory, they have won laurels and a fame, that shall endure as long as traces of American history shall exist.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,
JOSEPH LANE, Brig. Gen.

AFFECTING INCIDENT.

Pico, brother to the Governor of California, had been dismissed by the Americans on parole, and was re-captured in the very act of breaking it. He was leading an insurrection cruel to the army, and devastating to the country, and the soldiers now clamored for his death. The haughty chieftain was brought before Colonel Fremont, identified, and subsequently condemned by court martial to death. Through all the examination and delivery of the sentence he remained cool and composed, and learned that he must die, with the solemn dignity of a Spaniard.

The hour of twelve was fixed for the execution, and the intervening time was solemn, even to the American commander. He had faced death amid the hurry of the battle-field with impunity; but something so repulsive seemed to lie in the idea of coolly executing a prisoner of war, that the brave heart shrunk from it with apprehension. As the time approached, the colonel retired to his room, and remained almost alone. Suddenly, about eleven o'clock, a noise was heard without, and before any one had time to ascertain its cause, a company of ladies and children rushed into the room, threw themselves on their knees, and with all the eloquence of passion begged that the *husband* and *father* might be spared. Young lips, which had often pressed those of the prisoner in pride and happiness, now quivered as they pleaded in agony for his life. The stern officer turned from the scene, while thoughts of other beings, far away, crowded