

We knew, from an examination last night, that there were deep ditches in various places, a fall into which might have occasioned no little injury; aware of this, there was a good deal of *feeling* to find where we were. "Where are you going?" "Why, I'm right." "No, you are not; you are *taking up* the bed of a dry stream." By the time the caution was given, the advance was in a ditch or a tree top. The cry then was, "Where's the trail?" for that was all we had to guide us. Trail found; again we moved on until some one pitched into a ditch, and set us all groping for the path. We had two camp women along, who were on horseback; and the poor creatures, from the tumbles they received, to say nothing about their scratched faces from projecting limbs, must have been thankful when day dawned. The road was of the very worst description, being traversed at brief intervals by the deepest gullies we have met. The labor was constant and fatiguing. The column passed early, and left us in the rear for the balance of the day.

We reached Altimira at 3 P.M., having marched fourteen miles. It is a very old and insignificant-looking place, situated upon a rise of ground near the edge of an extensive fresh-water lagune, which communicates with the Rio Tamesis. It is eighteen miles from Tampico. The distant roaring of the breakers was distinctly heard. Our anticipations with regard to oysters were not realized—not even a shell was visible. Some officers came out from Tampico to meet us, and gave bewitching descriptions of the place. We found some *Irish potatoes* at Altimira. One who is in the daily use of them can hardly conceive of the joy which the greeting of the good old standard vegetable produces after being without them for some time.

January 23d. The division arrived within three miles of Tampico at 12 M., and encamped in the vicinity of a large lagune. We marched fifteen miles; the road nearly the whole distance was through dense woods, chiefly of live-oak; the undergrowth of impenetrable chaparral, and the soil quite sandy. As we approached Tampico, the country became hilly and the soil quite rich. To avoid a hill, a road was cut through a wilderness of lime and lemon trees growing wild. The command picked a great quantity of them. General Patterson passed us this morning, and repaired immediately to the city: a salute announced his arrival. Our march, though fatiguing, and at times harassing, has been attended by few drawbacks; we have been blessed with fine weather and health, have passed through a new and interesting country. What more could we desire?

## CHAPTER XX.

GENERAL TAYLOR, with the 1st Mississippi regiment, under the command of Colonel Davis, Colonel May's squadron of Dragoons, and two batteries under Bragg and Thomas, arrived at Monterey, on his return from Victoria, toward the latter part of January, 1847, and re-occupied his old camp at the Walnut Springs. General Wool had established a camp at the rancho called Buena Vista, five miles to the south of Saltillo. His rapid march from Parras, to re-enforce General Worth, reflected great credit upon his command. The superior state of discipline to which he had brought his column, by his untiring energy and perseverance, his



rigid enforcement of orders, was not only soon to be displayed upon the battle-field, but had already gained for them the respect of the citizens of the different towns at which they were stationed. On leaving Parras, some of the ladies of the city besought the privilege of nursing his sick, and, to their honor be it recorded, watched by the sick-bed of an American soldier, and cast around him those comforts and conveniences which none but the gentle spirit of woman know how to bestow. General Taylor, though advised by General Scott to abandon Saltillo, with a prudent foresight determined to hold it and the strong passes in advance, and pushed forward all his available forces to those points.

On the 22d of January, at the Hacienda Encarnacion, sixty miles from Saltillo, two scouting parties, under the command of Majors Borland and Gaines, the former of the Arkansas, the latter of Kentucky cavalry, were surrounded and captured by General Miñon, with a command of three thousand Mexican cavalry. Their capture was the result of gross carelessness, and reflects little credit upon the vigilance of the officers. The command consisted of six officers and sixty-four men: they were immediately marched off for the city of Mexico. On their way, Captain Henrie, a Texas volunteer, made his escape, and, after an endurance of privations hardly credible, succeeded in reaching our forces in the vicinity of Saltillo. Another disgraceful and mortifying capture, the result of want of vigilance, occurred on the 27th of January—that of Captain Heady, with seventeen men, Kentucky volunteers, who, being on a scout, were captured by a party of rancheros without the least resistance. About this time was perpetrated a fiendish act of atrocity,

which one must blush to record. A private of the Arkansas cavalry was found near the pickets, murdered, having previously been lassoed. A party of that regiment, who should blush to own themselves men, armed themselves and repaired to a neighboring ranch, and, in cold blood, murdered several inoffensive peasants, in revenge for their lost comrade.

The capture of the different parties, and the rumors and reports which reached Saltillo of the advance of Santa Anna with an overwhelming force, induced General Taylor to change his headquarters. Bringing forward with him the command with which he marched from Victoria, he arrived at, and established his headquarters at Agua Nueva, eighteen miles south of Saltillo, on the 5th of February. By the 8th the whole army, with the exception of Major Warren's command, for the protection of Saltillo, was concentrated at that point. It was composed of two companies of the 1st Dragoons, under Captain Steen; two companies of the 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; 2d Indiana, under Colonel Bowles; 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.



Of this number *four hundred and fifty-three* men composed the entire regular force.

General Taylor minutely examined the country, with a view to selecting a position for the anticipated conflict. The camp at Agua Nueva was found to be untenable by so small a force, being easily turned on either flank. A pass two miles in advance of Buena Vista, critically examined by General Wool prior to the arrival of General Taylor, was selected. In the choice of his position, General Taylor exhibited the same comprehensive sagacity and military *coup d'œil* which has characterized him in the several battles of his brilliant campaigns. The valley, at the point selected, was about three miles broad, the surface very irregular, dotted with hills and ravines, cut up with deep arroyos, and bounded by lofty mountains. The main road ran along the course of an arroyo, the bed of which was so deep as to form an impassable barrier. On the right of the road impassable gullies extended to the mountains, and on the left commenced steep ascents to the tops of the spurs of the mountains, which united and formed an extensive plain for a battleground. Nothing could have been more judicious than this selection.

Information which reached General Taylor regarding the concentration of a large force of the enemy in his front, induced him to send out reconnoitering parties several miles in advance. Major M'Cullough had reported to the general a large force of cavalry at Encarnacion, on the route to San Luis Potosi. On the 20th of February a strong reconnoitering party, under Colonel May, was dispatched to the Hacienda Hendi-ondo, and Major M'Cullough made another examination of Encarnacion. The result of these examinations

rendered it certain that the enemy under General Santa Anna were in great force, and meditated an attack.

General Taylor broke up his camp on the morning of the 21st, and took position at the pass above described. Colonel Yell was left, with a command of cavalry, to cover the removal of the stores. This command was driven in by the advance of the enemy, after they had removed nearly all the stores, and set fire to the remainder. General Taylor, with a small force, proceeded to Saltillo to make arrangements for the defense of the place, leaving General Wool in command of the army. Dispositions were immediately made to receive Santa Anna. Captain Washington's battery was posted to command the road. The 1st and 2d Illinois regiments (each eight companies strong, to the latter being attached Captain Conner's company of Texas Volunteers), and the 2d Kentucky regiment, occupied crests of ridges to the left and in rear. The Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry occupied the extreme left, near the base of the mountain. The Indiana brigade, under General Lane, the Mississippi Riflemen, the two squadrons of Dragoons, and the light batteries of Sherman and Bragg, were held in reserve.

Before General Taylor had completed his arrangements for the defense of the city, on the morning of the 22d he received information of the advance of the enemy, and immediately repaired to camp. Clouds of dust announced the approach of the foe, who arrived in position between 10 and 11 A.M., with immense masses, sufficiently strong to have brought on an immediate engagement. All silently but firmly awaited the attack, when, true characteristic of the Mexican, a white flag made its appearance, and with it Surgeon-



general Lindenberg, bearing the following communication from Santa Anna:

"You are surrounded by twenty thousand men, and can not, in any human probability, avoid suffering a rout, 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."

To which, without the necessity of *one hour's consideration*, our brave general made the following brief but characteristic reply:

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

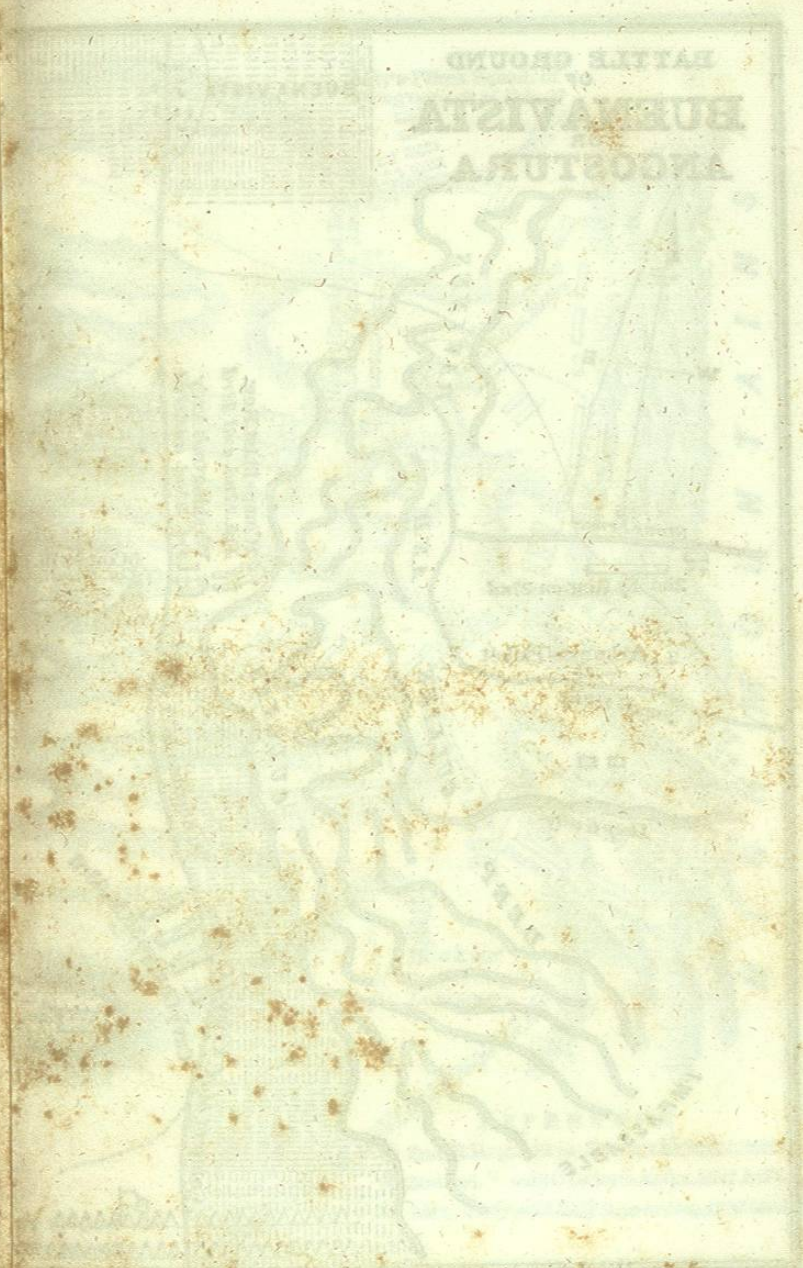
"Sir,—In reply to your note of this date, summoning me to surrender my force at discretion, I beg leave to say that I decline acceding to your request. With high respect, I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant, Z. TAYLOR,

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

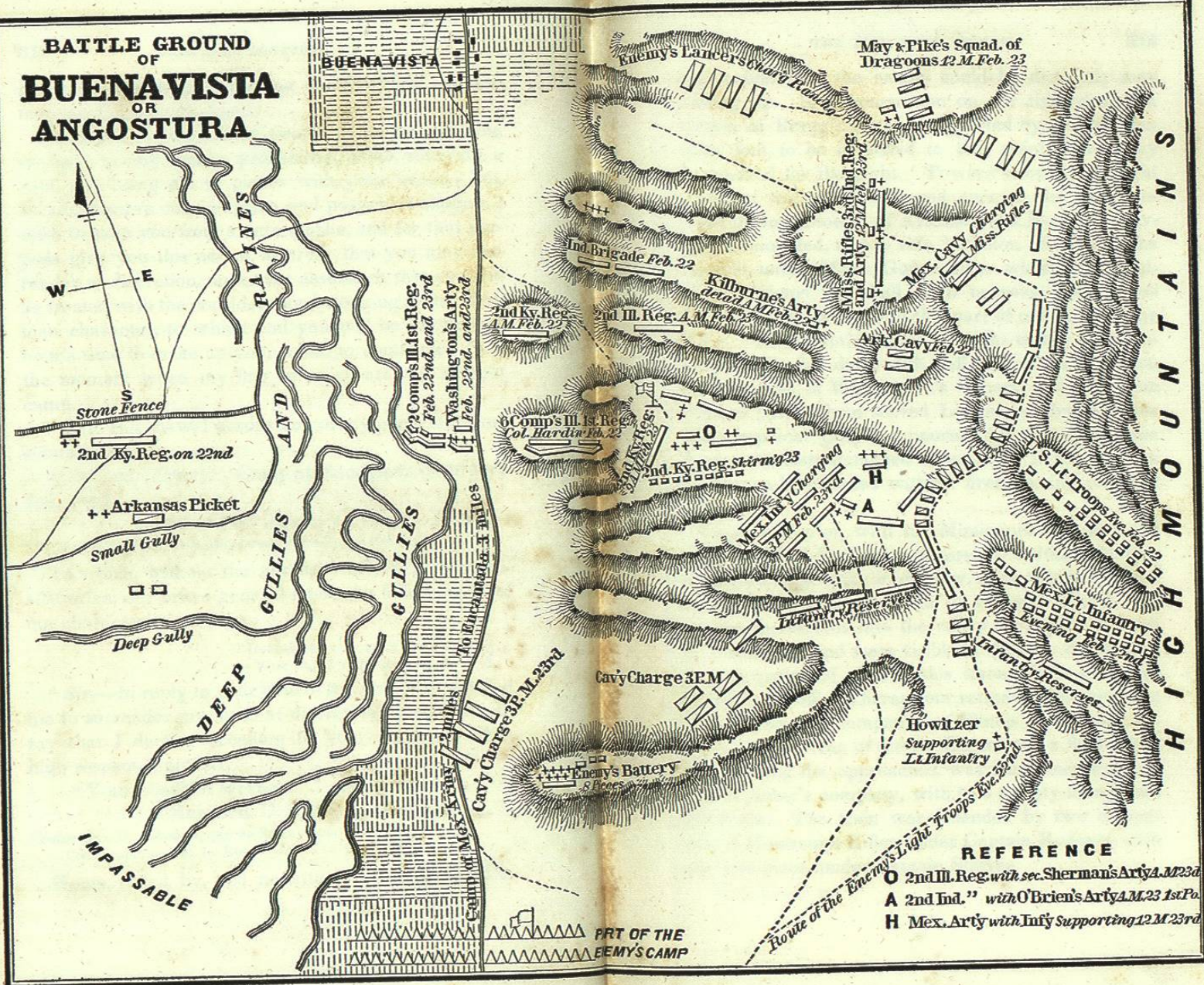
"Señor Gen. D. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, }  
Commander-in-chief, La Encantada." }

Hours rolled by, and no attack was made. The





# BATTLE GROUND OF BUENA VISTA OR ANGOSTURA





rear columns of the enemy could be distinctly seen coming up. A demonstration on our right caused a section of Bragg's battery, supported by the 2d Kentucky foot, to be detached to that point where they bivouacked for the night. Toward evening the light troops of the enemy engaged ours on the left, composed of detachments of Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry, dismounted, and a rifle battalion of the Indiana Brigade, under Major Gorman, the whole commanded by Colonel Marshall. An occasional shell was thrown by the enemy into this part of our line with no effect. The skirmishing of the light troops was continued until after dark, with trifling loss on our part. Three pieces of Washington's battery, under Captain O'Brien (with whom served Lieutenant Bryan, of the Topographical Corps, supported by the 2d Indiana Regiment), were detached to our left. In this position the troops bivouacked without fires, resting on their arms.

General Taylor, with the Mississippi regiment and squadron of 2d Dragoons, repaired to Saltillo. During the day, a large body of cavalry, some fifteen hundred strong, under the command of General Miñon, had thrown themselves into the valley by a pass through the mountains, and were visible in the rear of the city. In anticipation of victory, this strong force was thus posted to cut off and harass our retreat. The city was occupied by four companies of Illinois Volunteers, under Major Warren of the 1st Regiment; a field-work, commanding the approaches, was garrisoned by Captain Webster's company, with two twenty-four-pound howitzers. The train was defended by two companies of Mississippi Rifles, under Captain Rodgers, with one field-piece, under Captain Shover.



During the night of the 22d the enemy threw a large body of light troops on the mountain side, for the purpose of outflanking our left. At this point the action was renewed early on the morning of the 23d. Our riflemen, under Colonel Marshall, re-enforced by three companies of Illinois Volunteers, under Major Trail, handsomely maintained their position, and used their rifles with great effect. About 8 o'clock a heavy column moved up the road and threatened our center, but were driven back by the fire of Washington's battery. All attempts upon our right, from the nature of the ground, would have been time and labor thrown away. Santa Anna saw this, and determined, if possible, to gain and outflank our left, stationed on an extensive plain. For this purpose, large masses of both infantry and cavalry were collected in the ravines, under cover of the ridges. The 2d Indiana and 2d Illinois regiments formed the left of our line, the former supporting O'Brien's three pieces. Brigadier-general Lane had the immediate command at this point. To bring the artillery into more effective range, O'Brien was ordered to advance. His pieces were served with terrible effect against an overwhelming mass of the enemy. The firing at this point was very severe. The Mexican artillery poured in its grape and canister, to cover the advance of their forces. The 2d Indiana regiment broke in confusion, unable to withstand the galling fire, and left the artillery unprotected. Captain O'Brien, thus deserted, was forced to retire, leaving one of his pieces, at which every man and horse was either killed or wounded. All efforts to rally the flying regiment failed; a few, by the gallantry of Major Dix, Paymaster U. S. Army, were brought back, and with their colonel (Bowles), attached themselves to the

Mississippi regiment, and did good service the remainder of the day.

The left of our line giving way, afforded the enemy an immense advantage, who, pushing forward their masses, forced our light troops on the mountain side to retire. Many of the latter were not rallied until they reached the *depôt* at Buena Vista, where they afterward assisted in the defense of the train. The 2d Illinois regiment, to which had been attached a section of Sherman's battery, were driven before the advancing columns. The enemy continued pouring in their masses of infantry and cavalry; the base of the mountain seemed covered with men, and their bright arms glistened in the sun. Our rear was in danger; the tide of battle was decidedly against us; the fortunes of the day seemed cast upon a die, when, at this critical juncture, General Taylor arrived upon the field, and occupied a commanding position on the elevated plateau. *His presence restored confidence.* The Mississippi regiment, under the gallant Davis, was ordered to the left, and immediately engaged the masses which had turned our flank. They nobly sustained a fearful struggle against overwhelming odds, and added fresh laurels to those already gained. The 2d Kentucky, under Colonel M'Kee, with a section of artillery, under Captain Bragg, had been previously ordered to the support of our left. This command, with a portion of the 1st Illinois, under Colonel Hardin, were soon fiercely engaged in the fight, and partially recovered the lost ground. The batteries of Sherman and Bragg, stationed on the plateau, played with dreadful effect upon the advancing masses, and especially upon those who had gained our rear. The Mississippi regiment, fighting manfully, and sustaining, without flinching, more



than their share of the fight, were re-enforced by the 3d Indiana, under Colonel Lane, and a piece of artillery under Lieutenant Kilburn. The struggle at this point was dreadful; repeated efforts were made, both by the cavalry and infantry, to force our line, but were signally repulsed with great loss. Our sheet anchor, the artillery, literally *mowed* down their masses; the precision and rapidity of their fire was the admiration of all.

The squadrons of regular cavalry, and Captain Pike's, of the Arkansas cavalry, were under the command of Brevet Lieutenant-colonel May. He was ordered to hold in check the masses which had gained our rear, in conjunction with the Kentucky and Arkansas cavalry, under Colonels Marshall and Yell. The enemy still, with the greatest pertinacity, continued the attack upon our left. Different sections and pieces, under Sherman, Bragg, O'Brien, Thomas, Reynolds, Kilburn, French, and Bryan, were extended along the front, and belched forth their incessant fire. The iron hail, directed with the greatest judgment and coolness, rent their ranks, staggered their masses, and the cannon's roar drowned the horrid yell of battle, and the shrieks of expiring hundreds. Short-lived was the enemy's shout of triumph at their temporary success; under our galling fire they gave way. Lieutenant Rucker, with his squadron of 1st Dragoons, was ordered to dash in among them; this he did in handsome style.

A large body of cavalry, who had gained our rear, threatened an attack upon our train at Buena Vista. Colonel May, with his command, with two pieces under Lieutenant Reynolds, was dispatched to strengthen that point. Before his arrival, the enemy had been gallantly met and repulsed by the Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry. They broke into two columns; one, sweep-