



Charge at Buena Vista.

LEUT. ADJUTANT U.S.A.

ing by the ranch, received an effective fire from the fugitive forces, composed in part of Major Trail's and Gorman's command, who had been re-organized by the advice and exertions of Major Munroe, of the artillery; the other, gaining the base of the mountain, received a terrific fire from the pieces under Lieutenant Reynolds.

In the charge at Buena Vista, the gallant Colonel Yell fell, at the head of his regiment; and Adjutant Vaughn, of the Kentucky cavalry, yielded up his life like a true soldier. Colonel May, with his command, and portions of the Arkansas and Indiana troops, kept in check the right of the enemy. Their masses, crowded into ravines, were played upon incessantly by our artillery; the havoc was dreadful. The position of that portion of the enemy who had gained our rear was extremely critical, and their capture appeared certain. Santa Anna saw the crisis, and, by conduct unbecoming a true soldier, which only tended to increase the dishonor and baseness of a character already conspicuous for both in history, dispatched a white flag to General Taylor, asking him "what he wanted." General Taylor immediately dispatched General Wool with a white flag to answer it, and ordered our firing to cease. The interview could not be effected, as the Mexicans continued to fire, thus adding unparalleled treachery to the other acts of barbarity for which they are celebrated. Santa Anna's object was effected; the greater portion of his cavalry regained their lines. This could have been prevented by a breach of the sanctity of the white flag; but, thank God, that blot remains alone with the enemy. A formidable force, during their retreat, received a severe fire of musketry; and Reynolds's artillery, beautifully served, dealt death and destruction among them.



During the day, the cavalry under General Miñon occupied the road between the battle-field and Saltillo, and threatened the city. They were fired upon from the redoubt in charge of Captain Webster, and moved off toward Buena Vista. Captain Shover moved forward with his piece, supported by a miscellaneous command of volunteers, fired several shots with great effect, and drove them into the ravines which led to the lower valley; they were accompanied in this pursuit by a piece of Webster's battery, under Lieutenant Donaldson, supported by Captain Wheeler, with his company of Illinois Volunteers. The enemy made one or two attempts to charge the pieces, but were driven back in confusion, and left the plain for the day.

In the mean time, the firing had nearly ceased upon the main field. It was but the prelude to the fierce and last struggle for the day—a struggle which tested the courage and firmness of our army, and rendered, if possible, more conspicuous the strength and dreadful efficiency of our artillery, and the skill and gallantry of its able commanders. Santa Anna, re-enforced by his cavalry, under cover of his artillery, with horse and foot charged our line. The shock was gallantly sustained by our small band of heroes. On they came in overwhelming masses, their reserve fresh and eager for the contest, their artillery pouring in a dreadful fire, the whole under the immediate eye of their chief. The 2d Kentucky, 1st Illinois, and O'Brien, with two pieces, stood the brunt of the attack. On they came; their deadly fire thinned our ranks; the infantry in support of O'Brien's piece were routed, and that gallant young officer was forced to retire, leaving his piece in the hands of the enemy.

Our batteries now stood conspicuous; such was the

rapidity of their movements, that both officers and men seemed gifted with ubiquity; so dreadful was their fire, it could not be resisted. The enemy fell back in disorder. The gallant Hardin and McKee, with their regiments, charged the flying hosts with a degree of courage rarely equaled. The enemy, seeing the small force in pursuit, like magic turned upon them, and came up in myriads. For a short time the carnage was dreadful on both sides. We were a mere handful in opposition to their legions. Again our men were routed, and the day seemed lost without redemption. Brent and Whiting, of Washington's battery, covered the retreat of the remnants of these gallant regiments, who had so nobly borne the hottest of the fight.

General Taylor stood calm and unmoved upon the plateau—all eyes were turned upon him. The leaden messengers of death swept harmlessly by his person, while hundreds were passing to futurity. Bragg, with his battery, had arrived at the point of fearful struggle. Alone and unsupported was that battery and that brave old chief. Confident to the last of victory, he ordered his trusty captain to unlimber—to load with grape, and await the arrival of their masses until they nearly reached the muzzles of his pieces. On came the enemy, like legions of fiends, certain of victory. When almost within grasp of the battery, Bragg opened his fire. The first volley staggered them, the second opened streets through their ranks, and the third put them in full retreat, and saved the day. The Mississippi regiment and 3d Indiana supported the batteries on the plateau; the former arrived in time to throw in a galling fire, and add their might to the discomfiture of the enemy.



In this last conflict we sustained a great loss. Colonel Hardin, Colonel M'Kee, and Lieutenant-colonel Clay fell at the head of their regiments, sustaining a desperate conflict against an overwhelming force. Thrice during the day had our artillery turned the tide of battle; thrice had the masses of the enemy fallen before its terrible hail, and thus maintained the glory of the American arms. The battle had now raged for ten hours. No further attempt was made to force our lines, and our troops, weary and exhausted, sank on the battle-field, surrounded by the dead and dying, without a fire to cheer them and warm their benumbed limbs, to obtain that rest which was necessary to fit them for the conflict on the morrow. The wounded were removed to Saltillo, and every preparation was made to meet the enemy should the attack be renewed. Ere the sun rose they had fallen back upon Agua Nueva, leaving the field strewn with their dead and dying. Brigadier-general Marshall made a forced march from Rinconada, with a reinforcement of Kentucky cavalry and a battery of heavy guns, under Captain Prentiss, 1st Artillery, but too late to participate in the engagement.

Our loss was very severe, two hundred and sixty-seven killed, four hundred and fifty-six wounded, and twenty-three missing. The enemy, at the least calculation, must have lost two thousand. Five hundred of their dead were left upon the field of battle. Twenty-eight of our officers were killed on the field, and forty-one were wounded.

The following are the names of the killed and wounded: General Staff: Killed, Captain George Lincoln, Assistant Adjutant-general; wounded, H. W. Benham, 1st Lieutenant Engineers; F. S. Bryan,

brevet 2d Lieutenant Topographical Engineers. 1st Regiment of Dragoons: Wounded, Captain E. Steen. 2d Regiment of Dragoons: Wounded, Brevet Lieutenant-colonel C. A. May. 3d Regiment Artillery: Wounded, Lieutenant S. G. French. 4th Artillery: Wounded, 1st Lieutenant J. P. O'Brien. Mississippi Rifles: Killed, 1st Lieutenant R. L. Moore, 2d Lieutenant F. M'Nulty; wounded, Colonel Davis, Captains Sharp and Stockaw, 1st Lieutenants Corwin and Posey. 1st Regiment Illinois: Killed, Colonel Hardin, Captain Zabriskie, and 1st Lieutenant Houghton. 2d Regiment Illinois: Killed, Captain Woodward, Lieutenants Rountree, Fletcher, Ferguson, Robbins, Steel, Kelly, Bartleson, Atherton, and Price; wounded, Captains Coffee and Baker, Lieutenants Picket, Engleman, West, and Whiteside. Texas Volunteers: Killed, 1st Lieutenant Campbell, 2d Lieutenant Leonhard; wounded, Captain Connor. Indiana Volunteers: Brigade Staff: Brigadier-general Lane. 2d Indiana: Killed, Captains Kinder and Walker, and Lieutenant Parr; wounded, Captains Sanderson and Osborn, Lieutenants Cayce, Davis, Pennington, Lewis, Moore, and Epperson. 3d Indiana: Killed, Captain Taggart; wounded, Major Gorman, Captains Sleep and Connover. 2d Kentucky foot: Killed, Colonel M'Kee, Lieutenant-colonel Clay, and Captain Willis; wounded, Lieutenants Barber and Napier. Arkansas Cavalry: Killed, Colonel Yell, Captain Porter; wounded, Lieutenant Reader.

Some of the brightest spirits of that band of heroes were sacrificed for their country. The great number of officers killed is a sufficient guarantee of the manner in which they performed their duty. Lincoln, Hardin, M'Kee, Clay, and the other gallant spirits



who fell upon that bloody field, will ever be ranked among the proudest names of their country. The laurel and the cypress are necessarily joined in the battle-field. The wreath of the former, which decks the brow of the conqueror, is not more honorable than the branches of the latter, which shade the grave of the departed hero: their evergreen verdure is a fit type of the halo which memory throws o'er his deeds.

General Wool bore himself with distinguished credit throughout the day, and by his presence stimulated the men to great activity and exertion. The troops of his immediate command, with some exceptions, gave evidence of their discipline, and to his gallantry a large share of our success may be attributed. General Taylor speaks in high terms of the gallant bearing of his personal staff, as well as those of Generals Wool and Lane. Colonel Davis, with his gallant Mississippians, was particularly distinguished in maintaining his ground after the disgraceful flight of the 2d Indiana regiment. Though wounded, he still kept the field. Of the operations of the artillery too much can not be said. The battle may be called a "*battle of artillery*." In the words of the general-in-chief, "the services of the light artillery, always conspicuous, were more than usually distinguished. Moving rapidly over the roughest ground, it was always in action at the right place and the right time, and its well-directed fire dealt destruction in the masses of the enemy."

Throughout the day General Taylor was where the shot fell hottest and thickest; two balls passed through his clothes. His firmness of purpose, his energy of character, were never more freely developed. His quickness of perception, cool, unerring judgment, and

fertility of resources, were never at fault, and must rank him among the most conspicuous generals of any age.

The battle of Buena Vista stands unsurpassed in the annals of history. When we reflect upon the composition of the American forces, only four hundred and fifty-three of five thousand being regulars, the remainder citizen soldiers, drawn from different parts of the country, and of various pursuits, we can hardly realize the result. With a force so composed, how conspicuous was the judgment of our brave general in deciding to give battle instead of retreating. If he had pursued the latter course, the chances are, he would not only have lost his army, but the whole Valley of the Rio Grande, with all our depôts, would have fallen into the hands of the enemy. The great lack of numbers prevented the general from following up his success. Thus has it been from the commencement of the war; victories are gained, their fruits are lost. A brigade of regulars would have insured the capture of the greater part of the Mexican forces.

A staff officer was dispatched by General Taylor to Santa Anna, to negotiate an exchange of prisoners, which was satisfactorily completed. On the 26th the general issued the following order to his army:

Headquarters, Army of Occupation, }  
Buena Vista, February 26, 1847. }

*Order No. 12.*

I. The commanding general has the grateful task of congratulating the troops upon the brilliant success which attended their arms in the conflict of the 22d and 23d. Confident in the immense superiority of numbers, and stimulated by the presence of a distinguished leader, the Mexican troops were yet repulsed



in every effort to force our lines, and finally withdrew, with immense loss, from the field.

II. The general would express his obligations to the men and officers engaged for the cordial support which they rendered throughout the action. It will be his highest pride to bring to the notice of the government the conspicuous gallantry of particular officers and corps, whose unwavering steadiness more than once saved the fortunes of the day. He would also express his high satisfaction with the small command left at Saltillo. Though not so seriously engaged as their comrades, their services were very important, and efficiently rendered. While bestowing this just tribute to the good conduct of the troops, the general deeply regrets to say that there were not a few exceptions. He trusts that those who fled ingloriously to Buena Vista, and even to Saltillo, will seek an opportunity to retrieve their reputation, and to emulate the bravery of their comrades who bore the brunt of the battle, and sustained, against fearful odds, the honor of the flag.

III. The exultation of success is checked by the heavy sacrifice of life which it has cost, embracing many officers of high rank and rare merit. While the sympathy of a grateful country will be given to the bereaved families and friends of those who nobly fell, their illustrious example will remain for the benefit and admiration of the army.

By order, Major-general TAYLOR.

Signed, W. W. S. BLISS,  
Assistant Adjutant-general.

This order will be read at the head of every company.

By order: W. W. S. BLISS.

On the same date a close reconnoissance of the enemy's camp proved that only a small body of cavalry were left, and that the main body were retiring on the road to San Luis Potosi. On the 27th our army returned to their camp at Agua Nueva. A large number of wounded Mexicans were found there, and kindly taken care of. On the 1st of March a command, under Colonel Belknap, was dispatched to Encarnacion. The enemy had left in the direction of Matehula, their numbers reduced from desertion, and suffering greatly from hunger. Some two hundred wounded, together with sixty Mexican soldiers, were found at the hacienda. The dead and dying were strewed along the road, and the retreat of the enemy left marks of their perfect disorganization.

General Urrea, with a cavalry force estimated as high as eight thousand, had, prior to the battle of Buena Vista, completely succeeded in cutting off all communication between Camargo and Monterey: the whole line was infested with guerilla parties, who, in conjunction with the troops, attacked trains and murdered travelers. A train of wagons, escorted by thirty men of the 1st Kentucky regiment, under command of Lieutenant Barbour, were surprised and captured on the 24th of February, 1847, at Ramos, a small village between Ceralvo and Marin. The wagons were burned, many of the teamsters horribly mutilated, and their bodies, with savage barbarity, cast into the flames. Colonel Morgan, with the 2d Ohio regiment, occupied three points upon the line of communication—Punta Aguda, Ceralvo, and Marin. On the 21st of February he was ordered to concentrate his regiment and march to Monterey. Major Wall, from Punta Aguda, joined Colonel Morgan on the 23d, and on the 24th



Colonel Morgan marched for Monterey. On the 25th he was joined by some twenty teamsters, who had escaped the general massacre on the 24th. Lieutenant-colonel Irvin had left Marin, and reached Monterey. At the latter place, Colonel Morgan was joined by a command under Major Shepherd, 1st Kentucky regiment. At Agua Frio he met the enemy, but continued his march to San Francisco. During the march they repeatedly attacked and attempted to break his column, but were as often handsomely repulsed. At San Francisco Colonel Morgan was joined by a command under Lieutenant-colonel Irvin, who had returned from Monterey to re-enforce him. The enemy at this point made his final attack, and, after a short but sharp conflict, was repulsed, and left the field. Captain B. F. Graham, assistant quarter-master in the volunteer service, was killed, together with three Americans and one friendly Mexican. One soldier was slightly wounded. Captain Graham behaved very gallantly.

On the 7th of March, Major Giddings, of the 1st Ohio regiment, with a command consisting of three companies of the 1st Ohio regiment, two companies of the 1st Kentucky, and a small detachment of Arkansas cavalry, in charge of a downward train of one hundred and fifty wagons, was attacked near Cerralvo. After a sharp conflict, the enemy were repulsed. Fifty of the wagons were lost. Two privates of the Ohio Volunteers and fifteen teamsters were killed. The interruption of our communications, the repeated attacks upon trains, the depredations of the guerillas, and the large force under General Urrea, in the Valley of the San Juan, caused much uneasiness and alarm throughout the Valley of the Rio Grande.

General Taylor returned to Monterey early in March

with May's squadron of Dragoons, Bragg's battery, and the Mississippi regiment. The Kentucky cavalry were ordered to Monterey. He determined to take the field in person, and go in pursuit of the redoubtable general. For this purpose, he left Monterey on the 16th of March with a squadron of Dragoons, Bragg's battery, and the Mississippi regiment. Meeting the command of Colonel Curtis escorting a train to Monterey, he sent the train forward with an escort, and, taking with him the balance of the force, renewed the pursuit. Urrea retreated rapidly before his advance, and crossed the mountains. General Taylor returned to Monterey without meeting the enemy. From this time the communications were secure. Prior to the reception of the news of the battle of Monterey, Colonel Curtis sent on a requisition to the government for five thousand troops to maintain the line of communication.

On the 31st of March General Taylor issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of Tamaulipas, Nueva Leon, and Coahuila, requiring from the people of the country an indemnification for the loss sustained by the capture of the trains, and destruction of subsistence and other public property. He reminded them of his uniform kindness to the people of the country, and hoped (by their quietly keeping at home and remaining neutral) to be enabled to pursue toward them the same liberal policy.

The time for the discharge of the regiments of volunteers, who enlisted for twelve months, arriving, preparations were made early in May for their transportation to New Orleans, on their way to their homes. Major-general Butler left for the States prior to the battle of Buena Vista, on account of his wound. The



following is the assignment of the new levies to the army under General Taylor: Five companies 3d Dragoons, under Colonel Butler; 10th Regiment of Infantry, Colonel Temple; 13th Regiment of Infantry, Colonel Echols; 16th Regiment of Infantry, Colonel Tibbatts. In April the government made an additional call for six thousand volunteers. Of these were assigned to General Taylor one regiment of infantry from Indiana, and one from Ohio; one battalion (five companies) from New Jersey; one battalion of five companies from Delaware and Maryland; one battalion of five companies from Alabama; one company of foot from Florida; four companies of horse from Illinois, Ohio, and Alabama; two companies of foot from Virginia, and one from North Carolina. These, with the addition of the Massachusetts, North Carolina, Mississippi, Virginia, and Texas regiments, were presumed to have given General Taylor a force of ten thousand men. When the new levies shall have all reported, deducting for contingencies, his force will probably amount to eight thousand. The volunteer regiments were pressed forward to relieve those whose term of service had nearly expired. A camp of instruction was formed at Mier for the new levies, under the command of General Hopping.

Such was the position of affairs upon the Rio Grande in June, 1847. The arrival of re-enforcements were so slow, and the force, at best, placed under the command of General Taylor was so inadequate for our advance, that he quietly remained at Monterey, happy to perform his duty in any manner the government saw fit to direct, happy in contemplating the advance of our arms under other generals, happy in being loved and respected by all those who were or are under him, for

his kindness of heart, acute judgment, and sterling qualities of a great and good soldier, and happy in the reflection that his government and many States of the Union, by their votes of thanks, have demonstrated how strong a hold he has upon the hearts of his countrymen, and that his brilliant victories have sustained, untarnished, the honor of his country's flag.

Colonel Churchill, inspector-general, was conspicuous on the battle-field, not only for his gallantry and coolness, but for his sound judgment, and prompt and rapid movements in meeting the enemy. To his assistance and perseverance General Wool is greatly indebted for the superior (for volunteers) state of discipline into which his column had been brought.

THE END.



