

manded that we should be encumbered with all these things so indispensable to our existence, to the success of our enterprise, and to what, in any situation, would make us an effective force, in despite of the naturally inhospitable barrenness of the country, or the efforts of an active enemy in laying it waste before us. As yet our progress has not been retarded by the firing of a single shot; but our officers and men have labored with a zeal and fidelity, which can never be appreciated but by those who have witnessed their efforts, and observed from day to day how many have been the obstacles they have overcome to reach this advanced position. The continued evidences of their energy and perseverance have been sufficient, aside from the other and more weighty considerations of patriotism and desire for distinction, to warrant the belief that the flag of our far-off and beloved country is safe when intrusted to such hands. C."

Four days after the above letter was written, the Centre Division left Parras for Agua Nueva.  
See Appendix, B.

**B.**

(See page 5.)

After the Battle of Buena Vista had been fought, several officers are said to have claimed the honor of having chosen the ground upon which it took place. As the selection of the field had been made by Gen-

eral Wool himself, he desired to correct the mistake which those officers were laboring under, evidently from ignorance of that fact. Accordingly he wrote the following note to Captain Carleton, of the 1st Dragoons, who, as one of his aides-de-camp, was with him at the time the choice was made.

"Buena Vista, July 27, 1847.

"SIR: You may recollect, that the next evening (that of the 22d December last) after my arrival at Agua Nueva from Parras, I left my camp to visit Generals Butler and Worth, who were both reported as being confined by illness at Saltillo. I was accompanied by Captains Lee, Hughes, Chapman, my aide, and yourself, acting aide-de-camp. Before we reached La Encantada, it became quite dark; and, whilst passing through the valley toward Saltillo, some of the party, on several occasions, had to dismount in order to keep the road. It was too dark, owing to a fog, to make a reconnoissance of the valley\* that night.

"The next morning, I returned to Agua Nueva, accompanied only by yourself. The remainder of my staff did not leave Saltillo until toward night. When I arrived at the Pass, or Narrows, where Washington's Battery was stationed during the Battle of Buena Vista, I halted to examine the position. Will you do me the favor to state what passed, or was said, on that

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\* Viz. the Pass of Buena Vista.

occasion, in reference to the Pass, the surrounding heights, and the gullies on the right of the position?

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN E. WOOL, U. S. A.

"To Captain J. H. CARLETON,

"1st Dragoons, Present."

To this letter Captain Carleton replied as follows:

"Buena Vista, Mexico, July 27, 1847.

"GENERAL: I have been honored with the receipt of your note of this date, and, in reply, would state, that, by a reference to my '*Journal of the Marches, &c., of General Wool's Column,*' I find, that, on the 21st of December, 1846, you arrived in the valley of La Encantada, with your whole force, consisting of cavalry, artillery, and infantry, with their complete trains, and encamped at Agua Nueva, situated at its southern termination. That point is twenty miles in advance of Saltillo, which city was then occupied by General Worth, to whose assistance you had marched from Parras, a distance of one hundred and fifteen miles, in less than four days. At that time, the command of General Worth was only a brigade, and he had sent, by express, a request to you, at Parras, to join him with your column, as soon as possible, to assist in repelling an attack, then daily expected from the enemy in force under General Santa Anna.

"About the same time, General Butler arrived at Saltillo from Monterey. On the evening of the 22d

of December, you left your camp, at Agua Nueva, to visit both him and General Worth,—it being reported that they were confined to their beds in consequence of the wounds they had received. You were accompanied by Captains Lee, Hughes, and Chapman, U. S. A., by your aide, Lieutenant McDowell, and by myself, then on duty also as one of your aides. It was quite dark when you left Agua Nueva; and, when you arrived at that part of the Pass of Buena Vista known as La Angostura, a heavy fog, accompanied by rain, had set in, rendering it so much more so, that it was with the utmost difficulty the road could be kept. Indeed, the officers who were with you were frequently obliged to dismount and seek for it on either hand. It was past eleven o'clock at night when you and your party reached Saltillo. The next day, when your interview with Generals Butler and Worth was concluded, you started on your return to your camp at Agua Nueva, accompanied only by myself, all the other officers who had gone to Saltillo with you being still detained there by official business. When you had proceeded as far as La Angostura, one mile in advance of the hacienda of San Juan de la Buena Vista, you halted, and, after having glanced over the ground on each side, you said to me; 'Mr. Carleton, this is the very spot of all others I have yet seen in Mexico, which I should select for battle, were I obliged with a small army to fight a large one.'

"You then pointed out to me what you conceived to be the great military advantages it possessed, and

said that the net-work of deeply-worn channels on the right would completely protect that flank; that the heights, on your left, would command the road, while the ravines in front of them, and which extend back to the mountain on that side, would cripple the movements of the enemy, should he attempt to turn that flank. You continued conversing with me on this subject, until, as you may recollect, we met Lieutenant McCown, 4th Artillery, a mile or more farther on. So forcibly was I impressed with your choice, and all you had said in favor of it, that, immediately after my arrival at Agua Nueva, I described the place to some of the officers of your staff, — I think to Inspector-General Churchill, and his assistant, Captain Drum, U. S. A., saying at the time, that you had selected it for a battle-ground, and repeating all you had stated in relation to it.

“It may not be improper likewise to add, that, on the 26th of December, General Butler visited you at Agua Nueva, and that, on the 27th, before he returned to Saltillo, he gave you an order to move with your troops, and select, in the neighborhood of La Encantada, or farther down the stream towards Saltillo, a suitable place, and there encamp. As this order was entirely discretionary as to the precise locality for your proposed camp, you chose the plain between La Angostura and the hacienda, before alluded to, as the best, because it was not only less exposed to the bleak winds, which continually swept through the Pass at La Encantada, and which, at that season of the year, would cause the troops much suffering, as we were all

in tents and fuel was very scarce, but offered the additional advantage of an abundant supply of pure water; and, besides, was just in the rear of what you had selected as a strong point of defence.

“That evening (the 28th), General Butler sent you an order to return to La Encantada, and encamp there. You wrote a note to him, requesting, for reasons which you assigned, that he would permit you to remain where you were, and sent it by Colonel Hardin. Captain Drum and myself accompanied Colonel Hardin, and were present at the interview between General Butler and him. During the conversation that ensued after your note had been delivered, Colonel Hardin, among other reasons which he gave why he hoped your request might be complied with, urged the fact that you were near a point which you believed you could maintain, in case the enemy advanced upon you from the direction of San Luis de Potosí. General Butler said he would not revoke his order, and remarked, that, if the Mexican army came, he had already chosen a ground for battle, and even gone so far as to fix the points to be occupied by the several corps. That ground was the broad plain immediately in front of Saltillo; and I think he also said he had already prepared roads for the artillery, leading from the city up to it. I have mentioned all these circumstances, to show with what anxiety and exertion you endeavored to be permitted to occupy a point within striking distance of the one you had selected as the best for battle. On the 30th of December, your whole command was obliged to retrace its steps to La

Encantada, which it did with evident reluctance, as all the officers agreed entirely with you in opinion as to the disadvantages arising from such a change of position.

"Previous to the time when you first went to Saltillo (the 22d), not one of your officers had ever gone through the Pass of Buena Vista. All those who went with you, on that occasion, were prevented, as I have shown, by the extreme darkness, even from seeing the great road on which they sought to travel, and could not, therefore, have had at that time a favorable opportunity for making military reconnoissances. You returned from the city, and had pointed out the position to me, as I have stated, before they repossessed it. The choice and partialities of the officers in Saltillo, it is fair to presume, for many reasons, were coincident with those expressed by General Butler. When General Taylor came up from Monterey, he saw, at a glance, that your views were correct; and, although he moved the whole army forward to Agua Nueva, as there he could have an extensive plain for the drill and discipline of the troops, with wood and water convenient, and besides, by doing so, could take the initiatory step in one of the most beautiful pieces of strategy of modern times,—still, when, by the advance of Santa Anna, the moment had arrived to gain the grand result by feigning a precipitate retreat, that retreat was but a rapid movement back to the identical spot which you had chosen, and to which the Mexican army was hurriedly drawn on, with all its fatigue and disarray, consequent

upon a forced march of upwards of forty miles; and here, on the 22d and 23d of February, 1847, was fought the battle of Buena Vista. The result of that conflict afforded conclusive evidence of the correctness of your first remark;—for there four thousand six hundred and ten Americans contended successfully against upwards of twenty-two thousand Mexicans.

"This letter, General, is but a dry detail of facts; but I hope they are set forth with sufficient clearness to prevent their being misunderstood.

"I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"JAMES HENRY CARLETON,

"*Captain U. S. 1st Dragoons.*

"To Brigadier-General JOHN E. WOOL,

"*Commanding, &c. &c. &c.; Present.*"

The following is the note which General Wool wrote, acknowledging the receipt of the foregoing letter:

"Head-Quarters, Buena Vista, Mexico,  
August 1, 1847.

"MY DEAR SIR: I give you many thanks for your interesting letter, of the 27th ultimo, relating to the selection of the field of battle, to meet General Santa Anna and his forces, called by him La Angostura, and where, he said, on the two eventful days of the 22d and 23d of February last, 'blood flowed in torrents, and the field of battle was strewn with the bodies of the dead.'

"The great credit given, throughout the United States, to officers said to have suggested the field of battle to me, induced me to call your attention to the subject. Your letter, which is strictly in accordance with my own recollections, settles the question. I never thought, however, that any great credit was due on account of the selection, for it appeared to me too obvious to escape observation; still, if great credit is due to any one, it belongs to myself, for, in company with you, on the morning of the 23d of December last, it attracted my attention, as set forth in your letter, and before any person had indicated to me the position.

"I am very truly yours,  
JOHN E. WOOL, U. S. A.

"To Captain JAMES H. CARLETON,  
"1st Dragoons, Present."

General Wool permitted the reporter of the New Orleans "Picayune" to make a copy of Captain Carleton's letter for that paper. After it was published, it became the occasion of several communications, published in various newspapers, by different officers. But, as none of these communications controverted the facts it specified, they remained unanswered. Captain George W. Hughes, of the Topographical Engineers, was one of the officers who had claimed to have suggested to General Wool the battle-ground, and to have pointed out its advantages while in the discharge of his official duties. As soon as Captain Carleton's letter was published, he addressed a long

communication to the Editors of the "National Intelligencer," in which he says; "General Wool (on the *twenty-seventh* of December) instructed me to select a camp [!], in reference to a *field of battle*, at some point between Encantada and Saltillo,—not, however, to approach nearer than three miles of the latter place. I do, however, most solemnly aver, that the General gave me no other instructions than those above mentioned, and that he never once named to me, nor even hinted at, Buena Vista,—nor did any other person." "As a mere encampment, the place chosen by me, at Buena Vista, was unexceptionable. It was on a smooth, beautiful plain, well sheltered from the prevailing winds, with cool, delicious water in front and rear, good grazing in the vicinity, and plenty of fuel hard by. Important as were all these considerations, they were not the most important. Its highest recommendation was its remarkably defensible character. As a comfortable, agreeable, and convenient camp, it was not necessary to look farther."

"No one but myself, I believe, ever committed himself, in writing at least, or in any other way (unless, perhaps, by some slight, trivial phrase), by suggesting Buena Vista as a battle-ground, until after the battle was fought. Its advantage then became apparent, no doubt, to hundreds! I regret that there should have been any controversy about this matter; and I certainly should have taken no part in it, but for the fact that my memoir was published during my absence with the army; and that this publication has been

made necessary by an attempt to deprive me of the credit of some little service which my friends think I have rendered to the country."

For the information of the reader, it is necessary to state, that Captain Hughes left Saltillo for Brazos Santiago early in January, nearly six weeks before the battle was fought. He has not been upon the ground since. All he states in reference to the selection of the camp at *Buena Vista* is probably correct. If there is any thing in Captain Carleton's letter calculated to "deprive" Captain Hughes "of the credit of some little service, which his friends think he has rendered to the country" by that important act, it is there through mistake, and is hereby recalled. No one could wish to deprive the gallant captain of his hard-earned honors. It is granted that he did select that encampment, as he claims to have done. In return, will not that chivalrous officer extend the same generosity toward General Wool? If Captain Hughes imagines, for a moment, that General Wool desires to receive credit for having chosen "the encampment at Buena Vista," he does the General great injustice. But why should there be any controversy at all? General Wool claims to have selected the battleground at *La Angostura*,—Captain Hughes claims to have selected the site of an encampment at *Buena Vista*. THE TWO PLACES ARE ONE MILE AND A HALF APART.

## C.

(See page 37.)

Ejército Libertador Republicano,  
General en Jefe, Señoría de Campaña.

Está V. S. rodeado de veinte mil hombres; y humanamente [no] puede escapar de sufrir una derrota y de ser anihilado con los suyos; pero mereciendome V. S. consideracion y particular aprecio, quiero evitarle una catástrofe, y al efecto le hago esta intimacion para que se rinda á discrecion, seguro de que sea tratado con la consideracion propia del carácter Mejicano; concediendole al efecto una hora de término, que correrá desde el momento en que se presente un parlamentario en el campo de V. S.

Con este motivo protesto á V. S. mi atenta consideracion.

Dios y Libertad! Campo en la Encantada, Febrero 22, 1847.

ANTO. LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA.

Señor Gen. Z. TAYLOR,  
*Com'dte de las Fuerzas de los E. U.*

## D.

(See page 82.)

Boston, June 26, 1848.

MY DEAR COLONEL: I have recently written a History of the Battle of Buena Vista, in which I have spoken of the important and highly distinguished service

you rendered during the darkest period of that sanguinary conflict, in rallying the troops belonging to the Second Regiment of Indiana Volunteers, which had given way before a vastly superior force of the enemy, and were flying the field. Will you do me the favor to state how many, in your opinion, you rallied on the occasion to which I have alluded?

I have the honor to be,

Very faithfully, yours,

JAMES HENRY CARLETON,

*Captain U. S. 1st Dragoons.*

To ROGER SHERMAN DIX,  
*Brevet Lieut.-Col. U. S. A., Present.*

Boston, June 27, 1848.

MY DEAR CAPTAIN: I have received your letter of yesterday, informing me that you have written a History of the Battle of Buena Vista, and inquiring how many of the 2d Indiana Volunteers were rallied after that regiment had "given way before a vastly superior force of the enemy, and were flying the field."

I am glad to learn, that one who had the best possible opportunity of observing the battle, and who distinguished himself by some of its most brilliant acts, has undertaken to write its history.

In reply to your inquiry, I would state, that nearly 200 of the Indiana Regiment, about *two thirds* of those who had broken and fallen back, were rallied, and returned to the field.

You have, without doubt, (as I am sure it is your intention to do to all) done full justice to our gallant

friend, Brevet Major T. B. Linnard, for the valuable assistance he rendered on the occasion referred to.

Thanking you for the very complimentary expressions contained in your letter,

I remain, my dear Captain,

Most faithfully yours,

R. S. DIX,

*Brevet Lieut.-Col. U. S. A.*

Captain J. H. CARLETON,  
*1st U. S. Dragoons, Present.*