

"The combat was long and bloody, which may be estimated from the calculations made by the commandant general of artillery, General D. Thomas Requena, who assures me that the enemy threw about three thousand cannon shots from two in the afternoon, when the battle commenced, until seven at night, when it terminated,—six hundred and fifty being fired on our side.

"The national arms shone forth, since they did not yield a hand's breadth of ground, notwithstanding the superiority in artillery of the enemy, who suffered much damage.

"Our troops have to lament the loss of two hundred and fifty-two men dispersed, wounded and killed,—the last worthy of national recollection and gratitude for the intrepidity with which they died fighting for the most sacred of causes.

"Will your excellency please with his note to report to his excellency the President, representing to him that I will take care to give a circumstantial account of this deed of arms; and recommending to him the good conduct of all the generals, chiefs, officers, and soldiers under my orders, for sustaining so bloody a combat, which does honor to our arms, and exhibits their discipline."

CHAPTER V.

Resaca de la Palma.—The Battle Commenced.—Character of the Mexican Troops.—May's Charge.—Capture of La Vega.—The Americans Victorious.—Lieutenant Lincoln's Heroic Conduct.—Incidents of the Engagement.—A Brave Corporal.—Colonel McIntosh.—Mexican confidence of Victory.—Taylor's Official Account.—Particulars of May's Charge.—Notice of the Battle.

EARLY on the morning of the 9th the enemy commenced their retreat from Palo Alto, towards Fort Brown, the cavalry being the last to leave the ground. They continued to fall back upon that post until they advanced several miles, to Resaca de la Palma, a position naturally very strong. At this point they had thrown up intrenchments and erected three batteries, so as completely to command the approach to Fort Brown. The road at the place where they had planted their batteries, crosses at right angles a ravine, which is about four rods wide, and four or five feet deep. The lowest part of it is usually filled with water, and in a wet season it forms a stagnant pond, which unites across the ridge forming the road, over which the American army had to pass. On the side of the ravine occupied by the Mexicans is a dense growth of chapparal. The enemy was formed in double line, one in the ravine, under the front bank, and the other behind the wall of chapparal. They were seven thousand strong, having been reinforced during the night, and strongly fortified, and skilfully posted. The narrow ridge of

*and here they surprised
General Taylor but he was
again victorious after a long
hard fought battle.*

road through the ravine, already referred to, which formed the only unobstructed approach to them, was perfectly commanded by their batteries.

Soon after the enemy had withdrawn, General Taylor formed his army in line of battle and commenced his march. He moved on until he reached the edge of the chapparal, where he halted, and ordered several companies to advance and reconnoitre the enemy and ascertain their position. While they were in the performance of this duty, Lieutenant J. E. Blake, who had been on duty the whole of the night previous, and was therefore nearly exhausted, dismounted for the purpose of obtaining a few moments rest. He unbuckled his holsters and threw them on the ground when, from some cause, one of the pistols exploded, the ball entering his body, and producing almost immediate death.

Captain McCall, who had command of the reconnoitering forces, moved on until he reached Resaca de la Palma, when he was suddenly fired upon by one of the Mexican masked batteries, killing one of his men and wounding three others. General Taylor, upon receiving a message acquainting him with the facts, immediately ordered Lieutenant Ridgeley, with his battery, and the Third, Fourth, and Fifth infantry to engage the enemy's infantry. Captain Smith was ordered to the right and Captain McCall to the left, with instructions to bring on the engagement. Lieutenant Ridgeley immediately advanced, and when he had discovered the position of the enemy's batteries, he charged upon them at full speed, quickly followed by the Fifth regiment and a portion of the Fourth, the Third and remainder of the Fourth advancing towards the ravine on the enemy's left. In the meantime Cap-

tain McCall had gallantly attacked their right. The Eighth regiment was also now ordered to enter the engagement, which they did in gallant style, at double quick time. At the same time Lieutenant Ridgeley was hotly pressed by the enemy, but he poured in upon them such an overwhelming shower of grape and canister, that they could make no impression upon him. But for the fact of the enemy's shots going nearly all above the heads of his men, they would have been literally cut to pieces. He was supported by the Fifth regiment, under Lieutenant Colonel McIntosh; the Third regiment, under the command of Captain L. N. Morris, and the Fourth, under Major Allen, scattered by the dense chapparal, were obliged to form in the ravine. The Eighth, under the command of Captain W. R. Montgomery, with Smith's Light and other corps, faced to the right. Duncan's battery was at the edge of the ravine, but he could not use it, as the only position from which he enemy could be engaged, without galling our troops, was in possession of Ridgeley.

The enemy fought with great valor and almost desperation. They were the best troops in Mexico; all veterans of many a hard contested field; and they seemed to have resolved upon victory or death. The contest in the ravine, therefore, was long and bloody. The Mexicans contested every inch of ground, with a bravery and determination that only the valor of American soldiers could have overcome. But the deadly discharge of artillery and musketry, and the repeated charge of our troops, was too much for flesh and blood long to endure, and they now began to waver, and at last to give way. They were finally driven from the ravine, and our troops occupied the position in it held by them at the beginning of the action. The infantry

had captured one of their guns, and they frequently attempted to charge across the ravine, in the meanwhile keeping up upon our front ranks a murderous fire of artillery. But it was of no avail against the discipline and firmness of our gallant troops. They were equally resolved on victory, and had never contemplated any other result of the contest.

The enemy still retaining their strongest positions, General Taylor saw that they must be dislodged, and the batteries taken. He therefore gave orders to Captain May to take them at all events. May replied, "I will do it, sir," and immediately placing himself at the head of his dragoons, said, "men, follow me!" and dashed forward with lightning speed, his command rapidly upon his heels. As he was rushing on, he was stopped by the brave Ridgeley, who said to him, "wait, Charley, until I draw their fire," and at the same instant discharged his batteries upon the enemy. The discharge of their guns was almost simultaneously with Ridgeley's. By this great presence of mind, and noble-hearted magnanimity, he saved May from a fire that must have made dreadful slaughter amongst his men, and drew the fire upon himself. There are but few instances of equal bravery and magnanimity on record. The instant Ridgeley had thus drawn upon himself the fire of the Mexican battery, May again dashed on in advance of his command, in spite of a most destructive fire, and cleared the enemy's works at a bound, cutting down the gunners at their pieces. He was gallantly supported by his men, and the Mexicans were driven from their guns by their furious charge. They immediately rallied, however, and again got possession of them, May's command having scattered amongst the enemy. But he collected several of

them, and again charged the enemy. In this charge he captured General La Vega, while bravely fighting at the guns. He immediately surrendered to Captain May, and was carried to our lines in charge of Lieutenant Stevens.

But though the battery had been silenced for the time, it was not captured. The enemy re-manned their guns, and were preparing to pour their deadly fire again into our ranks. But the Fifth regiment, which had followed closely upon the heels of the dragoons, now approached the battery, and charged the enemy up to the very cannon's mouth, the enemy and our soldiers contending hand to hand for the possession of the works. The struggle was a fierce and bloody one, but the enemy were cut down at their guns, or compelled to fly, and the battery was left in possession of the Americans.

The enemy having thus been driven from their batteries, the Eighth regiment under Captain Montgomery, and the Fifth under Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh, charged the Mexicans up the ravine, amidst a destructive fire from their right and front. Though vastly superior in numbers, the enemy were compelled to retreat after great slaughter, and were ultimately driven from the field. The battle was now nearly ended, and the victory won. In every part of the field where the contending parties met, the enemy were defeated. Whether they were only equal in numbers to the Americans, or four to one, made no difference—the result was the same. On all sides they were compelled to give way before the superior discipline, courage, and physical strength of our troops.

The further details of the action are supplied from "Our Army on the Rio Grande," the most minute and

interesting account of General Taylors's operations from the time he entered Texas to the capture of Matamoras, that has been published. During the progress of the action, Lieutenant Lincoln, of the Eighth regiment, made a charge on a body of Mexicans lodged in a thicket of chapparal, who were pouring a destructive fire upon his regiment as it advanced up the road. In the midst of the conflict, he saw Lieutenant Jordan, (who had personally charged the enemy,) wounded upon the ground, with a Mexican over him, in the act of running a bayonet through his body; Lincoln sprang forward, and the Mexican faltering, in alarm, ran his bayonet through the arm, instead of the breast of Jordan. At the same instant, Lincoln cleft his skull. This gallant officer, with his sergeant, engaged in a conflict with others of the enemy, causing them to retreat, after having slain three of them with their own hands. Lieutenant Chadbourne, also of the Eighth, after distinguishing himself for his bravery, in one of these skirmishes fell mortally wounded, at the head of his command.

The third regiment, under the command of Captain L. N. Morris, and the Fourth, under Major Allen, were conspicuous for the spirit with which they entered the contest. These two corps gallantly rivalled each other in sharing the brilliant events of the day. They fearlessly charged through the densest chapparal; and while Captain Morris, and the other officers of the Third, were overcoming what appeared to be insurmountable difficulties; to meet the enemy, the Fourth came into the ravine, opposite an intrenchment supported by a piece of artillery, that poured a most galling fire into our ranks. Captain Buchanan, being senior officer nearest the point, collected some twenty-

five or thirty men, and with Lieutenant Hays and Woods charged across the lagoon, knee and waist deep in water, and after a close-quarter conflict, routed the enemy. Lieutenant Hays distinguished himself by springing forward and seizing the leading mules attached to the piece, to prevent its being driven off, while Lieutenant Woods sprang to the handspikes, and turned it in such a direction as to lock one of the wheels against a tree. A large force of the enemy's cavalry suddenly charged upon these officers, but Captain Barbour, of the third, came to the rescue, and with the point of the bayonet drove off the cavalry. Corporal Chisholm, of the Third infantry, shot the Mexican lieutenant-colonel who led the charge. As the officer fell, the corporal was seen to hand him his canteen of water, and but a moment afterwards Chisholm was lying dead on his back, with a cartridge in his hand, and the bitten-off end resting on his lips.

Buchanan's party, along with portions of the Fifth regiment, then charged on the Mexican lines. In the excitement, Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh dashed on a wall of chapparal, although it was lined with infantry and cavalry. Under a galling fire he broke it down by repeated blows of his sword, and the weight of his horse. The instant he got through, his horse fell dead from under him; Colonel McIntosh sprang to his feet; a crowd of Mexicans, armed with muskets and lances, rushed upon him; still he gallantly defended himself. A bayonet passed through his mouth and came out below his ear; seizing the weapon, he raised his sword to cut the fiend down who held it, when another bayonet passed through and terribly shattered his arm, and another still, through his hip; borne down by superiority of force, he fell, and was literally pinned to

the earth. The command of the Fifth now devolved upon Major Staniford, who conducted it with zeal and ability to the close of the engagement.

After the first charge on the enemy's lines had been made, Ridgeley was obliged to suspend his fire for fear of galling his own troops. Duncan's battery had been idle, for want of a position to act with any effect. Both batteries were now ordered across the ravine, supported by Captain C. F. Smith's light infantry, and Captain Ker's squadron of dragoons. Lieutenant Duncan came up ahead with his battery, when the Fifth was engaged with the enemy, under a heavy fire from the opposite side of the lagoon that crossed the road. Here he met Colonel McIntosh, and requested of him a party to support him, while he crossed the lagoon, and forced the enemy from their strong position. In the hurry of the moment Lieutenant Duncan did not perceive that Colonel McIntosh was wounded. The Colonel turned to Lieutenant Duncan, presenting a most

The blood from some of his numerous wounds had clotted on his face, and he answered with difficulty, "I will give you the support you need." Lieutenant Duncan perceiving his situation, asked, with some emotion, "if he could be of any service to him?" Colonel McIntosh replied: "Yes! give me some water, and show me my regiment."

Lieutenants Woods and Hays, with a portion of the Fourth, pressed on, and came up with Lieutenants Cochrane and Augur, with a few men of every regiment, when, to their surprise, they found themselves in the head-quarters of General Arista. After taking possession of it, the party still kept up the road, until reconnoitred by a Mexican officer, who was seen riding very close. He was saluted with a discharge of mus-

ketry, but he escaped unharmed. Again he was seen moving towards our party, and again he was fired upon, and again escaped. Undauntedly he moved on, held his ground, and received a volley of musketry, and most singularly he remained upon his horse, and rode off. A moment only elapsed, when he returned with a squadron of lancers, charging like a whirlwind; our soldiers delivered their fire steadily, bringing one or two to the ground, and then fell back into the chapparal. Lieutenant Cochrane remained in the open space, and received the whole charge; he nobly defended himself with his sword, but was crushed down, falling dead with seven lance wounds in his breast.

All order of battle was now lost, yet the enemy, driven from their intrenchments, and without artillery and with their camp in our possession, still chivalrously but unsuccessfully, disputed the onward march of our troops.

The last Mexican flag that waved over the field had struck, the tri-color of the Tampico veterans, that had so gallantly shown itself on the Palo Alto, where it was torn by our artillery, and had been defended on the Resaca de la Palma, until the regiment to which it had belonged was literally destroyed, was torn from its staff by the gallant spirit that bore it; concealing it about his person, when all hope was lost, he attempted to flee to his countrymen on the east of the Rio Grande. The poor standard-bearer, however, did not escape; rode down by our dragoons, he, with others, was taken prisoner, and the flag of the *Battallon Tampico*, hangs a trophy in our national capitol.

Both Duncan's and Ridgeley's batteries were opened on the retreating enemy, driving them from their last holds, and completely routing those who still lingered.

Cavalry and infantry were seen in confused masses, flying in every direction; many rushing towards the Rio Grande.

The camp of Arista told the perfect confidence he had in the strength of his arms. It was evident that not the least preparation had been made for a defeat—no such thought had ever been indulged in. Arista brought with him into the field an unnecessary amount of baggage. His head-quarters were just being arranged; his splendid marquee, his trunks, and private property were together, surrounded by pompously arranged walls, comprising the military wealth of the army. There were stands of small-arms, ammunition boxes, hundreds and thousands of musket ball cartridges, and nearly five hundred splendid pack-saddles; in short, almost an eastern prodigality of military equipage.

In the camp of the army were found the preparations for a great festival, no doubt to follow the expected victory. The camp-kettles were simmering over the fires, filled with savory viands, from which our troops made a plentiful evening meal. In the road were carcasses of half-skinned oxen. The hangers-on of the camp, while the battle was raging, were busy in their feast-preparing work, unconscious of danger, when, on an instant, a sudden panic must have seized them, and they fled, leaving their half-completed labors to be consummated by our own troops. Never, probably, in the history of war, had a more perfect consternation seized upon a defeated army, and seldom has one left such singularly eloquent memorials of the fact, as did the Mexicans at Resaca de la Palma.

The detailed report of this brilliant action, so glorious to the American arms, and reflecting so much honor upon our gallant army, is given below. However

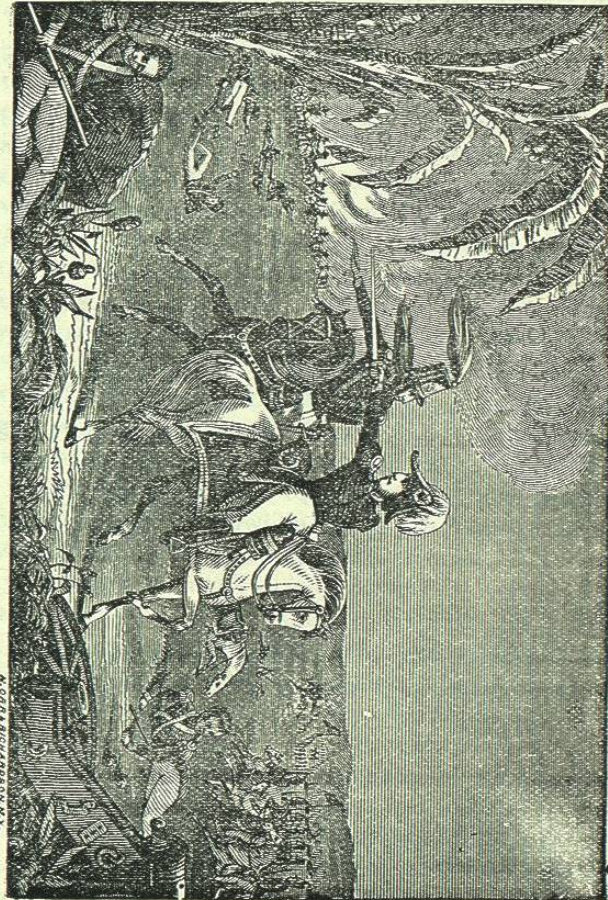
minutely and correctly it may have been described, the account would be imperfect without the report of the commanding officer. General Taylor seems to be everywhere and to see everything, and is therefore better prepared to give perfectly all the particulars of the engagement. He does it in this instance, as in all others, with that rare combination of modesty and good sense, and it is marked by the same beauty and elegance of style, and clearness and perspicuity of expression, that have distinguished all his dispatches:

"Early on the morning of the 9th instant, 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 parked 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 chapparal or forest, which extends to the Rio Grande, a distance of seven miles. The light companies of the first brigade, under Captain C. F. Smith, 2d artillery, and a select detachment of light troops, the whole under the the command of Captain McCall, 4th infantry, were thrown forward into the chapparal, to feel the enemy and ascertain his position. About three 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 at about four o'clock I came up

with Captain 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 Captain 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 were thrown into the forest on the left, and the 3d and the 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. Captain 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 upon 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 Gen. 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 taken, but it was completely silenced. In the meantime, the Eighth infantry had been ordered up, and had become warmly engaged on the right of the road. This regiment and a part of the Fifth, were now ordered to charge the batteries, which was handsomely



GENERAL TAYLOR AT THE BATTLE OF RESACA DE LA PALMA
May 9th, 1846

done, and the enemy driven from his artillery, and his position on the left of the road.

"The light companies of the First brigade, and the Third and Fourth 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, Fourth 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 Captain Barbour, Third 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 Fourth 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 place.

"The artillery battalion (excepting the flank companies) had been ordered to guard the baggage train, which was parked some distance in rear. The battalion was now ordered up to pursue the enemy, and with the Third 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, as exhibited in the annexed field report, was one hundred and seventy-three officers, and two thousand and forty-nine men—aggregate, two thousand two hundred and twenty-two. The actual number engaged with the

enemy did not exceed one thousand and seven hundred. 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 Lieutenant Inge, second dragoons, who fell at the head of his platoon, while gallantly charging the enemy's battery; of Lieutenant Cochrane, of the Fourth, and Lieutenant Chadbourne, of the Eighth infantry, who likewise met their death in the thickest of the fight. The officers wounded were Lieutenant-Colonel Payne, inspector general; Lieutenant Dobbins, Third infantry, serving with the light infantry advance, slightly; Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh, Fifth infantry, severely (twice); Captain Hooe, Fifth infantry, severely (right arm since amputated); Lieutenant Fowler, Fifth infantry, slightly; Captain Montgomery, Eighth infantry, slightly; Lieutenants Gates and Jordan, Eighth infantry, severely (each twice); Lieutenants Selden, Maclay, Burbank, and Morris, Eighth infantry, slightly. A statement of the killed and wounded is annexed herewith.

"I have no accurate data from which to estimate the enemy's force on this day. He is 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 six thousand 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 two hundred 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 one thousand 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 have fallen into our hands.

"The causes of victory are doubtless to be found in the superior quality of our officers and men. I have already, in former reports, paid a general tribute to the admirable conduct of the troops on both days. It now becomes my duty—and I feel it to be one of great delicacy—to notice individuals. In so extensive a field as that of the 8th, and in the dense cover where most of the action of the 9th was fought, I could not possibly be witness to more than a small portion of the operations of the various corps; and I must, therefore, depend upon the reports of subordinate commanders, which I respectfully inclose herewith.

"Colonel Twiggs, the second in command, was particularly active on both days in executing my orders, and directing the operations of the right wing. Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh, commanding the Fifth infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel Garland, commanding the Third brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Belknap, commanding the First brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Childs, commanding the artillery battalion, Major Allen, Captains L. N. Morris and Montgomery, commanding respectively the Fourth, Third, and Eighth regiments of infantry, were zealous in the performance of their duties; and gave examples to their commands of cool and fearless conduct. Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh repulsed with his regiment a charge of lancers in the action of Palo Alto, and shared with it in the honors and dangers of the following day, being twice severely wounded. Lieutenant-Colonel Belknap headed a charge of the