

Eighth infantry, which resulted in driving the enemy from his guns, and leaving us in possession of that part of the field.

"Captain Duncan and Lieutenant Ridgeley deserve especial notice for the gallant and efficient manner in which they manœuvred and served their batteries. The impression made by Captain Duncan's battery upon the extreme right of the enemy's line, at the affair of Palo Alto, contributed largely to the result of the day; while the terrible fire kept up by Lieutenant Ridgeley, in the affair of the 9th, inflicted heavy losses upon the enemy. The eighteen-pounder battery, which played a conspicuous part in the action of the 8th, was admirably served by Lieutenant Churchill, Third artillery, assisted by Lieutenant Wood, topographical engineers. The charge of cavalry on the enemy's batteries on the 9th, was gallantly led by Captain May and had complete success.

"Captain McCall, Fourth infantry, rendered distinguished service with the advanced corps under his orders. Its loss, in killed and wounded, will show how closely it was engaged. I may take this occasion to say that, in two former instances, Captain McCall has rendered valuable service as a partisan officer. In this connection, I would mention the services of Captain Walker, of the Texan Rangers, who was in both affairs with his company, and who has performed very meritorious service as a spy and partisan.

"I must beg leave to refer to the reports of subordinate commanders for the names of many officers, non-commissioned officers and privates, who were distinguished for good conduct on both days. Instances of individual gallantry and personal conflict with the enemy were not wanting in the affair of the 9th, but

cannot find place in a general report. The officers serving in the staffs of the different commanders, are particularly mentioned by them.

"I derived efficient aid on both days from all the officers of my staff. Captain Bliss, assistant adjutant-general, Lieutenant-Colonel Payne, inspector-general, Lieutenant Eaton, A. D. C., Captain Waggaman, commissary of subsistence, Lieutenant Scarret, engineer, and Lieutenants Blake and Meade, topographical engineers, promptly conveyed my orders to every part of the field. Lieutenant-Colonel Payne was wounded in the affair of the 9th, and I have already had occasion to report the melancholy death of Lieutenant Blake, by accident, in the interval between the two engagements. Major Craig and Lieutenant Brereton, of the ordnance department, were actively engaged in their appropriate duties, and Surgeon Craig, medical director, superintended in person the arduous service of the field-hospitals. I take this occasion to mention generally the devotion to duty of the medical staff of the army, who have been untiring in their exertions both in the field and in the hospitals, to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded of both armies. Captains Crossman and Myres of the quartermaster's department, who had charge of the heavy supply-train at both engagements, conducted it in a most satisfactory manner, and finally brought it up without the smallest loss, to its destination.

"I inclose an inventory of the Mexican property captured on the field, and also a sketch of the field of 'Resaca de la Palma,' and of the route from Point Isabel, made by my aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Eaton. One regimental color, (battalion of Tampico,) and many standards and guidons of cavalry were taken at



the affair of the 9th. I would be pleased to receive your instructions as to the disposition to be made of these trophies—whether they shall be sent to Washington, &c.”

There is no incident connected with this brilliant action that has created so much admiration throughout the country, and which, in reality, displayed such daring courage, as the charge of Captain May upon the Mexican batteries. Though this bold and hazardous achievement has already been incidentally referred to, it is believed the following more detailed account, by an eye witness and actor in the charge, will possess interest. It is by Sergeant Milton, an officer of May's dragoons:

“At Palo Alto,” says he, “I took my rank in the troop as second sergeant, and while upon the field my horse was wounded in the jaw by a grape-shot, which disabled him for service. While he was plunging in agony I dismounted, and the quick eye of Captain May observed me as I alighted from my horse. He inquired if I was hurt. I answered no—that my horse was the sufferer. ‘I am glad it is not yourself,’ replied he; ‘there is another,’ (pointing at the same time to a steed without a rider, which was standing with dilated eye, gazing at the strife,) ‘mount him.’ I approached the horse, and he stood still until I put my hand upon the rein and patted his neck, when he rubbed his head alongside of me, as if pleased that some human being was about to become his companion in the affray. He was a noble bay, which had, with a number of others, been purchased for the troop in St. Louis. I bestrode him, and we passed through the first day unharmed.

“On the second day, at Resaca de la Palma, our troop stood anxiously waiting for the signal to be

given, and never had I looked upon men on whose countenances were more clearly expressed a fixed determination to win. The lips of some were pale with excitement, and their eyes wore that fixed expression which betokens mischief; others, with shut teeth, would quietly laugh, and catch a tighter grip of the rein, or seat themselves with care and firmness in the saddle, while quiet words of confidence and encouragement were passed from each to his neighbor. All at once Captain May rode to the front of his troop—every rein and sabre was tightly grasped. Raising himself and pointing at the battery, he shouted, ‘Men, follow!’ There was now a clattering of hoofs and a rattling of sabre sheaths—the fire of the enemy's guns was partly drawn by Lieutenant Ridgeley, and the next moment we were sweeping like the wind up the ravine. I was in a squad of about nine men, who were separated by a shower of grape from the battery, and we were in advance, May leading. He turned his horse opposite the breastwork, in front of the guns, and with another shout ‘to follow,’ leaped over them. Several of the horses did follow, but mine, being new and not well trained, refused; two others balked, and their riders started down the ravine to turn the breastwork where the rest of the troop had entered. I made another attempt to clear the guns with my horse, turning him around—feeling all the time secure at thinking the guns discharged—I put his head towards them and gave him spur, but he again balked; so turning his head down the ravine, I too started to ride round the breastwork.

“As I came down a lancer dashed at me with lance in rest. With my sabre I parried his thrust, only receiving a slight flesh-wound from its point in the arm,



which felt at the time like the prick of a pin. The lancer turned and fled; at that moment a ball passed through my horse on the left side and shattered my right side. The shot killed the horse instantly, and he fell upon my left leg, fastening me by his weight to the earth. There I lay, right in the midst of the action, where carnage was riding riot, and every moment the shot, from our own and the Mexican guns, tearing up the earth around me. I tried to raise my horse so as to extricate my leg, but I had already grown so weak with my wound that I was unable, and from the mere attempt, I fell back exhausted. To add to my horror, a horse, who was careering about, riderless, within a few yards of me, received a wound, and he commenced struggling and rearing with pain. Two or three times, he came near falling on me, but at length, with a scream of agony and a bound, he fell dead—his body touching my own fallen steed. What I had been in momentary dread of now occurred—my wounded limb, which was lying across the horse, received another ball in the ankle.

"I now felt disposed to give up; and, exhausted through pain and excitement, a film gathered over my eyes, which I thought was the precursor of dissolution. From this hopeless state I was aroused by a wounded Mexican, calling out to me, '*Bueno Americano*,' and turning my eyes towards the spot, I saw that he was holding a certificate and calling to me. The tide of action now rolled away from me, and hope again sprung up. The Mexican uniforms began to disappear from the chapparal, and squadrons of our troops passed in sight, apparently in pursuit. While I was thus nursing the prospect of escape, I beheld, not far from me, a villainous-looking *ranchero*, armed with an American ser-

geant's short sword, dispatching a wounded American soldier, whose body he robbed—the next he came to was a Mexican, whom he served the same way, and thus I looked on while he murderously slew four. I drew an undischarged pistol from my holsters, and, laying myself along my horse's neck, watched him, expecting to be the next victim; but something frightened him from his vulture-like business, and he fled in another direction. I need not say that had he visited me I should have taken one more shot at the enemy, and would have died content, had I succeeded in making such an assassin bite the dust. Two hours after, I had the pleasure of shaking some of my comrades by the hand, who were picking up the wounded. They lifted my Mexican friend, too, and I am pleased to say he, as well as myself, live to fight over again the sanguine fray of *Resaca de la Palma*."

The splendid victories of Palo Alto and *Resaca de la Palma* were received with unbounded enthusiasm in every part of the Union. Fought against such overwhelming odds as they were, they were looked upon, not only by military men in this country, but by competent and not over partial judges in Europe, as evincing the very highest order of military genius in the commander-in-chief, and great courage and discipline in his soldiers. No actions, in modern times, were ever fought under such disadvantages of numbers and position, as those under which General Taylor labored in these two engagements, with such decisive results. The following notice of these actions, from a gentleman formerly attached to the army, will give a correct view of the character of the victories, besides possessing interest to all classes of readers:

"General Taylor, in his peculiarly modest manner



says: 'It is probable that six thousand men were opposed to us, and in a position selected by themselves, and strongly defended with artillery.' The whole tenor of the general's dispatches, proves an anxious desire not to overrate the numbers opposed to him or the character of his victories; and the concurrent testimony of the officers of both armies, leaves no question that, on the 9th of May, the enemy had actually engaged upwards of seven thousand troops, or more than *four times* the number opposed to them; and it is equally certain, that their loss greatly exceeded in killed, wounded and missing, one thousand. General Taylor accounts for four hundred buried by our troops in the two actions; and Colonel Twiggs in a letter now before us says, 'we found in the hospitals at Matamoras three hundred and eighty-two wounded soldiers and several officers, and very many wounded accompanied the retreating army.' This, it must be borne in mind, was on the 18th of May—nine days after the battle; and an officer writes that the number buried at Matamoras between the 9th and 18th must have been several hundred. Our conviction is, that in the two engagements the enemy's loss was nearer *two* than *one* thousand; and this fact is very material, as demonstrating the character of the Mexican troops, and proving that an army seldom fought better. They did not retreat on the night of the 8th, nor even on the 9th, until at least *one-seventh* of their whole army had been either killed or wounded; or, in other words, until our army had rendered *hors du combat* a number exceeding one half of its whole force.

"These facts prove that the Mexicans fought bravely. It is admitted on all hands that they were admirably disciplined, the flower of the Mexican army—and com-

posed of officers and men who had been engaged in battle after battle, and had nobly earned for themselves the title of *veterans*. This army, commanded, as has been said, by one of the most gallant and accomplished artillery officers of the age, (Arista,) selected its position, and arranged at leisure its line of defence, composed of three batteries of artillery, supported by five thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry—whose boast is, that they are the best cavalry in the world; and that they are brave, daring, and the best horsemen on the continent is fully admitted. Thus posted, this army is assailed by the American army only *one-fourth* as strong. General Taylor reports that its artillery, with the exception of Ringgold's and Duncan's eight pieces of light artillery, was parked with his immense baggage train and provisions a great distance in the rear, and was only employed in pursuing the enemy after he had been completely routed. Thus then, the naked fact is presented to the consideration of the country, that our army attacked the Mexicans 'strongly posted in a position selected by themselves. The forces thus posted and assailed, were composed of veterans, disciplined troops, *four times* as numerous as their assailants, with a heavier train of artillery, and nearly five times as many cavalry! They fought bravely for three hours; lost *one-seventh* of their whole number; and then were literally dispersed by the *bayonets* of our troops—throwing their muskets at our men in the spirit of desperation, swearing that they were devils incarnate!

"Such was the battle of Resaca de la Palma, and such, too, was that of Palo Alto on the day preceding it. To judge of this achievement and compare it with European battles, we need only ask ourselves, on what



occasion have eighty thousand disciplined troops strongly posted, in a position selected by themselves, been driven from that position, routed and cut to pieces, by twenty thousand? When and where did any army thus conquer, rout and completely disperse, *four times its number* of brave and disciplined troops, who fought in a manner which, under ordinary circumstances, entitled them to victory? When such affairs can be found in modern history, we will yield to them the palm. But we know that there are no such battles on record; and we desire to impress upon our countrymen, that our little army, under General Taylor, has achieved for itself a reputation, such as no other army has ever won in modern times, and the scene of which will hereafter be referred to as another Thermopylæ.

"Now a few words as to the causes which produced these two victories. We said on the 12th of May, when apprehensions were very general for the fate of our army, we felt very certain, that before that day, General Taylor had met and dispersed the entire force of the enemy, *if it was not more than four times as great as his own!* We said that this opinion was based upon a knowledge, that no disciplined troops ever yet abandoned their officers; that we knew our old comrades well, knew of what material they were composed—what West Point had made them—and that they would never yield or retreat. We knew that every officer in that little army was prepared for victory or death; and that such being the case, and knowing their men were disciplined and would certainly stand by them, we felt that victory was inevitable, unless the opposing force was so great as to forbid its possibility; in which case our whole army would be cut to pieces—selling their lives dearly, but never

yielding. And such, too, would have been their conduct, and such the result of this affair, if the opposing force had been English instead of Mexican.

"To this gallantry and determination on the part of our officers, we are indebted for the glorious achievements of the 8th and 9th of May; and an examination into the killed and wounded, very certainly demonstrates this fact. When in order of battle, the officers are always posted with a view to their greater security, as they are required to conduct the battle. Thus the company officers are immediately in the rear of their men in line of battle, and the field and staff, still further in the rear; and it is admitted to be a sound calculation, that when the proportion of officers to the rank and file is as one to twenty, the proportion of killed and wounded should be one officer to every forty of the rank and file, owing to the greater security of their position, intended to preserve their lives. Now let us apply this calculation to the battle of Resaca de la Palma.

"In that ever memorable affair, the proportion of officers to the rank and file, was as one to thirteen; and therefore, according to European calculation, the proportion of killed and wounded, should have been one to twenty-six. Now what are the facts? The total of killed and wounded is one hundred and twenty-two, of whom fifteen were commissioned officers, or one out of every eight!

"Here, in a few words, the country has the means of determining how it was that seventeen hundred American troops drove from their selected position, defeated and utterly routed, four times their number of disciplined Mexican cavalry, artillery, and infantry! Here is the true cause of the victories of the 8th and



9th of May, being the most wonderful in the history of modern warfare. Our officers fought in front of their men. They literally led them to the cannon's mouth; and as the history of these battles proves, when their swords were useless, threw them away, picked up the muskets and accoutrements of those who had fallen, and with these, set their men an example of coolness and daring which made every private in the little army feel himself a hero. When officers thus lead their men up to the very mouths of the enemy's cannon; when sword in hand, or with the bayonet, they drive the enemy from their guns, and then themselves perform the work of gunners; when for hours, as was the case in our flying artillery, the officers helped work the guns, and in some cases did the duty of three privates—victory is certain—inevitable.

"Such was the character of the battles of the 8th and 9th May—such the manner in which they were won—and such the conduct of such officers. Under such circumstances, our whole army might have been destroyed; but if not, then was victory absolutely certain. We care not how exalted the character of the troops opposed to them, or to what nation they belonged, in this, their first fight after years of peace and the taunts of members of Congress, it was morally and physically impossible to resist them. Honor—unfading and perpetual honor—to General Taylor, the gallant officers who so nobly sustained him, and to the army of heroes they led to victory on the 8th and 9th of May, 1846; and most fortunate for them and for the country was it, that we had no undisciplined volunteers or militia in those battles. We doubt not their courage; but no undisciplined troops could have fought those fights. It would have been morally impossible

for any such to have withstood the fire of the enemy on those days and do what was required of our soldiers and officers; and had there been any faltering—had a single battalion given way, as they most assuredly would—the enemy would have been encouraged to persevere, and our whole army might have been annihilated and cut to pieces. Never was the value of disciplined men more triumphantly demonstrated than on these glorious occasions; and since we have learned that General Taylor compels the volunteers with him to receive six hours' drilling per day, and relieves them from all other duties, to make soldiers of them, we venture to predict that they, too, when they meet the enemy, will add to the reputation of our arms. 'Rough and Ready' will first make them soldiers, and then win victories with them."

The London Herald remarks: "The proceedings of the soldiers under General Taylor have been such as to do honor to the Republic. The little army, amounting to but a handful of men, at a distance of thousands of miles from any available succor, has defended itself against superior numbers, and at length has crossed the Rio Grande, and took possession of Matamoras, almost in sight of an opposing enemy—an exploit which Napoleon has pronounced to be the *perfection of generalship*."

It is not easy to imagine the painful solicitude and anxiety that prevailed at Fort Brown during the actions of the 8th and 9th. Although within sound of the firing, the result of the contest was, of course, for many hours in doubt, however strong their confidence was that victory would, in the end, crown the American arms. But if they were in painful doubt as to the fate of the contest in which they knew their brothers in



arms were engaged, without being able to aid them in the struggle, they were left in comparative quiet by the Mexicans during the memorable two days, and had time to repair the damages done to the fort by the bombardment to which they had so long been subject; and, accordingly, on the morning of the 9th, their first act was to raise the national flag. The history of the events during the action are resumed from "Our Army on the Rio Grande." On the 8th, continues this work, the halyards had become unriggered, at a time when the firing from the enemy was too intense to establish them, the staff at that time being outside of the fort. To meet this difficulty, the regimental colors were raised on a temporary substitute, erected on the parapets. An officer of the Seventh succeeded in lowering the topmast of the staff, and rigging the halyards. While engaged in this patriotic duty, the enemy opened on him from all their batteries, with round shot and shell, amidst which he coolly labored for fifteen or twenty minutes. Finding he was not strong enough to elevate the topmast to its proper place, he lashed it in its position, and gave the stars and stripes to the breeze.

At 10 o'clock, a sergeant and ten men went out, and set fire to the rancho, known by Arista's dispatches as the *Fanques del Raminero*, the buildings of which had been successively occupied by our own and the enemy's pickets. This act brought forth a heavy discharge of shell, canister, and round shot, which continued at intervals for about four hours.

Major Brown, since his wound had lingered on, his friends bestowing on him every attention that the circumstances would admit: he bore his sufferings with the greatest fortitude, and whenever he spoke, he urged

the men to do their duty, and never surrender the fort. It was necessary that he should be placed in one of the bomb-proofs, to protect him from the missiles of the enemy: the weather was exceedingly warm, and the air in the bomb-proof necessarily close; this circumstance perhaps, joined with the aggravated nature of his wounds, hastened his death. He gradually sunk, and at two o'clock peacefully breathed his last. At the time of his death, everything around the fort was perfectly still; the soldiers around the dying man seemed scarcely to breathe, lest they should intrude upon his parting spirit; nor was the silence broken, until Ridgeley opened his batteries upon *Resaca de la Palma*.

No language can describe the intense interest with which the raging battle was listened to: each man was at his post, and every booming gun called forth an almost agonizing interest to learn its nationality and effects. Meanwhile the bombardment opened simultaneously with the firing on the field, and continued to increase with unprecedented severity; but it was not to the batteries of the Mexicans that attention was directed. Our eighteen-pounders were occasionally fired, to let General Taylor know that all was still well in the fort. The firing on the battle-field was now growing less and less powerful, and the discharges were becoming irregular. "They have charged on the guns!" shouted one of the officers; another, and another was silenced. "They have carried them!" shouted another in uncontrollable ecstasy. All cannonading ceased; volleys of musketry were next heard, then all was still. How eloquently the silence spoke of the hand-to-hand conflict, and how the blood in the hearts of these brave men went and came, from excitement to be engaged