

learned that General Worth had been reinforced, by the arrival of General Wool's command, and that Santa Anna had retreated to his old quarters at San Louis Potosi. General Taylor, in consequence of this new aspect of affairs, again started for Victoria, and reached there on the 30th of December.

While at this place, he received information that General Scott had been ordered to Mexico with the view of commanding in person the troops destined for the reduction of Vera Cruz. Being the commander-in-chief of the army, this act would, as a matter of course place General Taylor in a subordinate position to him. But it was understood that it was at the request of Taylor that Scott was sent to Mexico. Upon receiving orders to repair to Mexico, General Scott wrote the following letter to his old friend and companion in arms, for the purpose of informing him of his object and intention. The letter was marked confidential, but was published with the correspondence between General Taylor and the Secretary of War, called for by Congress. It is dated at New York, November 23, 1846, after Scott had departed from Washington for Mexico:

"I left Washington late in the day yesterday, and expect to embark for New Orleans the 20th inst. By the 12th of December I may be in that city, at Point Isabel the 17th, and Camargo, say the 23d—in order to be within easy corresponding distance from you. It is not probable that I may be able to visit Monterey, and circumstances may prevent your coming to me. I shall much regret not having an early opportunity of felicitating you in person upon your many brilliant achievements; but we may meet somewhere in the interior of Mexico.

"I am not coming, my dear general, to supersede you in the immediate command on the line of operations rendered illustrious by you and your gallant army. My proposed theatre is different. You may imagine it; and I wish very much that it were prudent, at this distance, to tell you all that I expect to attempt or hope to execute. I have been admonished that dispatches have been lost, and I have no special messenger at hand. Your imagination will be aided by the letters of the Secretary of War, conveyed by Mr. Armistead, Major Graham, and Mr. M'Lane.

But, my dear general, I shall be obliged to take from you most of the gallant officers and men, (regulars and volunteers,) whom you have so long and so nobly commanded. I am afraid that I shall, by imperious necessity—the approach of yellow fever on the Gulf coast—reduce you, for a time, to stand on the defensive. This will be infinitely painful to you, and for that reason distressing to me. But I rely upon your patriotism to submit to the temporary sacrifice with cheerfulness. No man can better afford to do so. Recent victories place you on the high eminence; and I even flatter myself that any benefit that may result to me, personally, from the unequal division of troops alluded to, will lessen the pain of your consequent inactivity.

"You will be aware of the recent call for nine regiments of new volunteers, including one of Texas horse. The president may soon ask for many more; and we are not without hope that Congress may add ten or twelve to the regular establishment. These, by the spring, say April, may, by the aid of large bounties, be in the field—should Mexico not earlier propose terms of accommodation; and, long before the spring

(March,) it is probable you will be again in force to resume offensive operations.

"It was not possible for me to find time to write from Washington, as I much desired. I only received an intimation to hold myself in preparation for Mexico, on the 18th instant. Much has been done towards that end, and more remains to be executed.

"Your detailed report of the operations at Monterey, and reply to the secretary's dispatch, by Lieutenant Armistead, were both received two days after I was instructed to proceed south."

This letter, it will be seen, indicates to General Taylor the probability that he will be compelled to take from him a considerable portion of his troops, as well volunteers as regulars. The necessity for this action alleges to be the importance of taking Vera Cruz before the approach of the season for the yellow fever, or vomito, to make its appearance on the Gulf. The following extract from a letter of the Secretary of War to General Taylor, dated October 22, 1846, a short time before General Scott departed for Mexico, will show that in withdrawing so large a number of General Taylor's forces from him, he was but carrying out the wishes of the administration, and was acting under instructions from the War Department:

"I informed you in my last dispatch, that in connection with an invasion of Tamaulipas and attack on Tampico, an expedition against Vera Cruz was then under advisement. Upon a more full consideration of the subject, it is believed that Vera Cruz may be taken, and having possession of that city, the castle of San Juan de Ulloa might probably be reduced or compelled to surrender. If the expedition could go forth without the object being known to the enemy, it is supposed

that four thousand troops would be sufficient for the enterprise, receiving as they would the co-operation of our naval force in the Gulf; but *at least fifteen hundred or two thousand of them should be of the regular army, and under the command of officers best calculated for such an undertaking.* In looking at the disposition of the troops, *it appears to be scarcely possible to get the requisite number of regulars without drawing some of those now with you at Monterey, or on the way to that place.* Should you decide against holding military possession of any place in Coahuila or Chihuahua, and order the troops under General Wool to join you, it is presumed that the requisite force for the expedition to Vera Cruz could be detached without interfering with your plans of operation.

"You will therefore, unless it materially interferes with your own plan of operations, or weakens you too much in your present position, make the necessary arrangements for having four thousand men, of whom fifteen hundred or two thousand should be regular troops, ready to embark for Vera Cruz, or such other destination as may be given them, at the earliest practicable period. The place of embarkation will probably be the Brazos Santiago, or in that vicinity."

Accordingly, about the first of January, the divisions of Generals Patterson and Pillow, and also the brigades of Generals Quitman and Twiggs, as well as General Worth, were all detached from him for the purpose of acting under General Scott, against Vera Cruz and such other points as might dispute his march to the capital. Of the policy or necessity of thus withdrawing from General Taylor so large a portion of his troops, it is difficult to form a correct judgment at this distance from the scene of operations, and with

the imperfect knowledge of the views of government that everyone must possess not in the immediate confidence of the administration. But it is certain that it placed him in a most embarrassing and even dangerous position. Upon taking leave of his veteran soldiers, the heroes of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Monterey, he addressed them in the following brief, but manly and feeling terms:

"It is with deep sensibility that the commanding general finds himself separated from the troops he so long commanded. To those corps, regular and volunteer, who have shared with him the active services of the field, he feels the attachment due to such associations, while to those who are making their first campaign, he must express his regret that he cannot participate with them in its eventful scenes. To all, both officers and men, he extends his heartfelt wishes for their continued success and happiness, confident that their achievements on another theatre will redound to the credit of their country and its arms."

General Taylor continued at Victoria until about the last of January, 1847, when he returned to Monterey. His force now consisted of volunteers, with the exception of about four hundred and fifty regular troops, including Colonel May's dragoons. In the beginning of February he was reinforced by new volunteers, which increased his army to about six thousand men. With this small force, composed mostly of men who had never faced an enemy, and comparatively destitute of discipline, but longing to prove by their conduct that volunteers know how to fight, and can as steadily resist the attack of the foe, or as successfully charge upon him, as even veteran soldiers, General

Taylor must garrison Monterey, and hold in check the overwhelming army of Santa Anna.

Immediately after arriving at Monterey, General Taylor received information that a party of observation, consisting of about one hundred picked men, under Colonel May, had been surprised at Encarnacion, while attempting to gain some intelligence of the enemy, and that Captain Cassius M. Clay, and Majors Borland and Gaines had been taken prisoners by a Mexican force, under General Minon, of fifteen hundred men. This unwelcome intelligence, together with the belief that Santa Anna might make an attempt to re-conquer some of the posts between Monterey and the Rio Grande, and thus cut off his communication with Matamoras, determined General Taylor to march at once to Saltillo, with the view of giving him battle. He accordingly took up his march from Monterey on the 31st of January, leaving a force of about fifteen hundred men to garrison that city, and arrived at Saltillo on the 2d of February. He had been reinforced, in the meantime, by the arrival of five hundred more volunteers, which made the effective force under his command five thousand strong. Two days after he marched to Agua Nueva, a strong position, twenty miles from Saltillo, on the San Luis side of that city, and encamped there, for the purpose of disciplining his troops, and to observe the movements of the enemy. He remained in this position until the 21st of February, examining the situation of the country, the passes through the mountains, and the best point at which to await an attack from Santa Anna, should he resolve to fight on any terms. On the 21st, information was brought him that Santa Anna was advancing at the head of his whole army, and was then within a short

distance. Believing Buena Vista, a point twelve miles nearer to Saltillo, and eight miles from that city, to be a much more favorable position at which to make a stand against such overwhelming odds as Santa Anna was bringing against him, he fell back to that place, and formed his army in order of battle, and calmly awaited the approach of the enemy. The account of the battle from eye witnesses, and General Taylor's official dispatch of the brilliant event, will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

Battle of Buena Vista.—Taylor's Position.—General Taylor's Line of Battle formed.—A Summons to Surrender.—The Battle Commenced.—An Attempt to Outflank Taylor.—Flight of the Indiana Regiment.—Great Slaughter amongst the Enemy.—Mexican Stratagem.—Almost a Defeat.—Gallant Charge of the Kentucky Regiment.—Excitement of Taylor.—Death of Colonels McKee and Hardin and Lieutenant-Colonel Clay.—Taylor's Official Account of the Battle.

ON the morning of the 21st, our army being encamped at Agua Nueva, information was received that the enemy was advancing, when General Taylor ordered the troops to fall back upon Buena Vista. Early on the 22nd, the clouds of dust towards Agua Nueva told that the Mexican army was on the advance. At about eleven o'clock the long roll of the drum summoned us to the field. Our regiments were formed, artillery posted, and we availed ourselves of every advantage that could be taken of the ground. In a few minutes, the leading columns of the enemy were distinctly seen, at a distance of two miles, steadily advancing in the most perfect order. Some two thousand lancers with the artillery, fourteen pieces of different calibre, from twenty-fours down, composed the leading division; then such a host of infantry and lances as never was seen together in Mexico before, I suppose, came into full view and filed into position. It was the most grand and gorgeous spectacle I ever witnessed; the sun glancing from the bright lances and bayonets of the twenty-