

Buena Vista is shown, by the accompanying field-report, to have been three hundred and thirty-four officers, and four thousand four hundred and twenty-five men, exclusive of the small command left in and near Saltillo. Of this number, two squadrons of cavalry, and three batteries of light artillery, making not more than four hundred and fifty-three men, composed the only force of regular troops. The strength of the Mexican army is stated by General Santa Anna, in his summons, to be twenty thousand; and that estimate is confirmed by all the information since obtained. Our loss is two hundred and sixty-seven killed, four hundred and fifty-six wounded, and twenty-three missing. Of the numerous wounded, many did not require removal to the hospital, and it is hoped that a comparatively small number will be permanently disabled. The Mexican loss in killed and wounded may be fairly estimated at one thousand and five hundred, and will probably reach two thousand. At least five hundred of their killed were left upon the field of battle. We have no means of ascertaining the number of deserters and dispersed men from their ranks, but it is known to be very great.

"Our loss has been especially severe in officers, twenty-eight having been killed upon the field. We have to lament the death of Captain George Lincoln, assistant adjutant-general, serving in the staff of General Wool—a young officer of high bearing and approved gallantry, who fell early in the action. No loss falls more heavily upon the army in the field, than that of Colonels Hardin and McKee, and Lieutenant-Colonel Clay. Possessing in a remarkable degree the confidence of their commands, and the last two having enjoyed the advantage of a military education, I had

looked particularly to them for support in case we met the enemy. I need not say that their zeal in engaging the enemy, and the cool and steadfast courage with which they maintained their positions during the day, fully realized my hopes, and caused me to feel yet more sensibly their untimely loss.

"I perform a grateful duty in bringing to the notice of the Government the general good conduct of the troops. Exposed for successive nights, without fires, to the severity of the weather, they were very prompt and cheerful in the discharge of every duty; and finally displayed conspicuous steadiness and gallantry in repulsing, at great odds, a disciplined foe. While the brilliant success achieved by their arms releases me from the painful necessity of specifying many cases of bad conduct before the enemy, I feel an increased obligation to mention particular corps and officers, whose skill, coolness and gallantry, in trying situations, and under a continued and heavy fire, seem to merit particular notice.

"To Brigadier-General Wool my obligations are especially due. The high state of discipline and instruction of several of the volunteer regiments was attained under his command, and to his vigilance and arduous service before the action, and his gallantry and activity on the field, a large share of our success may justly be attributed. During most of the engagement he was in immediate command of the troops thrown back on our left flank. I beg leave to recommend him to the favorable notice of the government. Brigadier-General Lane (slightly wounded,) was active and zealous throughout the day, and displayed great coolness and gallantry before the enemy.

"The three batteries of light artillery, always con-



spicuous, 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. While I recommend to particular favor the gallant conduct and valuable services of Major Munroe, chief of artillery, and Captains Washington, Fourth artillery, and Sherman and Bragg, Third artillery, commanding batteries, I deem it no more than just to mention all the subaltern officers. They were nearly all detached at different times, and in every situation exhibited conspicuous skill and gallantry. Captain O'Brien, Lieutenants Brent, Whiting, and Couch, Fourth artillery, and Bryan, topographical engineers, (slightly wounded,) were attached to Captain Washington's battery. Lieutenants Thomas, Reynolds, and French, Third artillery, (severely wounded,) to that of Captain Sherman; and Captain Shover and Lieutenant Kilburn, Third artillery, to that of Captain Bragg. Captain Shover, in conjunction with Lieutenant Donaldson, First artillery, rendered gallant and important service in repulsing the cavalry of General Minon. The regular cavalry, under Lieutenant-Colonel May, with which was associated Captain Pike's squadron of Arkansas horse, rendered useful service in holding the enemy in check, and in covering the batteries at several points. Captain Steene, First dragoons, was severely wounded early in the day, while gallantly endeavoring, with my authority, to rally the troops which were falling to the rear.

"The Mississippi riflemen, under Colonel Davis, were highly conspicuous for their gallantry and steadiness, and sustained throughout the engagement the reputation of veteran troops. Brought into action

against an immensely superior force, they maintained themselves for a long time unsupported, and with heavy loss, and held an important part of the field until reinforced. Colonel Davis, though severely wounded, remained in the saddle until the close of the action. His distinguished coolness and gallantry at the head of his regiment on this day, entitle him to the particular notice of the government. The Third Indiana regiment, under Colonel Lane, and a fragment of the Second, under Colonel Bowles, were associated with the Mississippi regiment during the greater portion of the day, and acquitted themselves creditably in repulsing the attempts of the enemy to break that portion of our line. The Kentucky cavalry, under Colonel Marshall, rendered good service dismounted, acting as light troops on our left, and afterwards, with a portion of the Arkansas regiment, in meeting and dispersing the column of cavalry at Buena Vista. The First and Second Illinois, and the Kentucky regiments, served immediately under my eye, and I bear a willing testimony to their excellent conduct throughout the day. The spirit and gallantry with which the First Illinois and Second Kentucky engaged the enemy in the morning, restored confidence to that part of the field, while the list of casualties will show how much these three regiments suffered in sustaining the heavy charge of the enemy in the afternoon. Captain Conner's company of Texas volunteers, attached to the Second Illinois regiment, fought bravely, its captain being wounded and two subalterns killed. Colonel Bissell, the only surviving colonel of these regiments, merits notice for his coolness and bravery on this occasion. After the fall of the field-officers of the First Illinois and Second Kentucky regiments, the command of the



former devolved upon Lieutenant-Colonel Weatherford; that of the latter on Major Fry.

"Regimental commanders and others who have rendered reports, speak in general terms of the good conduct of their officers and men, and have specified many names, but the limits of this report forbid a recapitulation of them here. I may, however, mention Lieutenants Rucker and Campbell of the dragoons, and Captain Pike, Arkansas cavalry, commanding squadrons; Lieutenant-Colonel Field, Kentucky cavalry; Lieutenant-Colonel Roane, Arkansas cavalry, upon whom the command devolved after the fall of Colonel Yell; Major Bradford, Captain Sharpe (severely wounded,) and Adjutant Griffith, Mississippi regiment; Lieutenant-Colonel Hadden, Second Indiana regiment, and Lieutenant Robinson, aide-de-camp to General Lane; Lieutenant-Colonel Weatherford, First Illinois regiment; Lieutenant-Colonel Morrison, Major Trail, and Adjutant Whiteside, (severely wounded,) Second Illinois regiment; and Major Fry, Second Kentucky regiment, as being favorably noticed for gallantry and good conduct. Major McCulloch, quartermaster in the volunteer service, rendered important services before the engagement, in the command of a spy company, and during the affair was associated with the regular cavalry. To Major Warren, First Illinois volunteers, I feel much indebted for his firm and judicious course, while exercising command in the city of Saltillo.

"The medical staff, under the able direction of Assistant Surgeon Hitchcock, were assiduous in attention to the wounded on the field, and in their careful removal to the rear. Both in these respects, and in the subsequent organization and service of the hospitals, the

administration of this department was everything that could be wished.

"Brigadier-General Wool speaks in high terms of the officers of his staff, and I take pleasure in mentioning them here, having witnessed their activity and zeal upon the field. Lieutenant and Aide-de-camp McDowell, Colonel Churchill, inspector general, Captain Chapman, assistant quartermaster, Lieutenant Sitgreaves, topographical engineers, and Captains Howard and Davis, volunteer service, are conspicuously noticed by the General for their gallantry and good conduct. Messrs. March, Addicks, Potts, Harrison, Burgess, and Dusenbery, attached in various capacities to General Wool's headquarters, are likewise mentioned for their intelligent alacrity in conveying orders to all parts of the field.

"In conclusion, I beg leave to speak of my own staff to whose exertions in rallying troops and communicating orders I feel greatly indebted. Major Bliss, assistant adjutant-general, Captain J. H. Eaton, and Lieutenant R. S. Garnett, aides-de-camp, served near my person, and were prompt and zealous in the discharge of every duty. Major Munroe, besides rendering valuable service as chief of artillery, was active and instrumental, as were also Colonels Churchill and Belknap, inspectors general, in rallying troops and disposing them for the defence of the train and baggage. Colonel Whiting, quartermaster-general, and Captain Eaton, chief of the subsistence department, were engaged with the duties of their departments, and also served in my immediate staff on the field. Captain Sibley, assistant quartermaster, was necessarily left with the headquarters camp near town, where his services were highly useful. Major Mansfield and Lieutenant Benham, engineer,



and Captain Linnard and Lieutenants Pope and Franklin, topographical engineers, were employed before and during the engagement in making reconnoissances, and on the field were very active in bringing information and in conveying my orders to distant points. Lieutenant Kingsbury, in addition to his proper duties as ordnance officer, Captain Chilton, assistant quartermaster, and Majors Dix and Coffee, served also as extra aides-de-camp, and were actively employed in the transmission of orders. Mr. Thomas L. Crittenden, of Kentucky, though not in service, volunteered as my aide-de-camp on this occasion, and served with credit in that capacity. Major Craig, chief of ordnance, and Surgeon Craig, medical director, had been detached on duty from headquarters, and did not reach the ground until the morning of the 24th—too late to participate in the action, but in time to render useful services in their respective departments of the staff."

The following is the summons of Santa Anna to General Taylor to surrender. It evinces much more humanity for the American troops than the Mexican general had ever shown for his own, and is a model of that assurance for which he is far more celebrated than for his military talent or courage.

"You are surrounded by twenty thousand men, and cannot, in any human probability, avoid suffering a rout, and being cut to pieces with your troops; but as you deserve consideration and particular esteem, I wish to save you from a catastrophe, and for that purpose give you this notice, in order that you may surrender at discretion, under the assurance that you will be treated with the consideration belonging to the Mexican character; to which end you will be granted an hour's

time to make up your mind, to commence from the moment when my flag of truce arrives in your camp."

To this characteristic document General Taylor immediately returned the following laconic and modest reply:

"In reply to your note of this date, summoning me to surrender my forces at discretion, I beg leave to say that I decline acceding to your request."

Having now given the sober facts of one of the most decisive as well as the most remarkable victories ever won by American arms, it is appropriate to present some of the romance of history connected with an event which is the source of so much just pride in America, and of admiration in Europe. The official report of the battle by General Santa Anna, supplies this embellishment. This report of the wily Mexican commander, however, is important in another point of view; for while it claims a victory over the American forces, it virtually sustains General Taylor's account, and proves that the Mexican army was almost literally cut to pieces. No one can question this fact after having read the artful and ingenious attempt to cover the disasters he had suffered, and justify to his government his failure to redeem the just expectations that had been created by his magnificent preparations and his more magnificent promises. He says:

"In my dispatch from the battle-field of Angostura, dated the 23d, I promised to give you details of the action of the 23d, so soon as I should effect the movement which our entire lack of water and of all supplies made indispensable. In those engagements the army and the nation have restored the lustre of their arms, by overcoming obstacles inconceivable to all save those who witnessed them. These arose, not only from the



difficulties of this contest, and of our own situation, but also from the rigor of the season, and the exhaustion of the country along an almost desert route of over fifty leagues, that was destitute of good water, and of all save the most limited supplies.

"The supreme government was informed by communications made before my leaving San Luis, that the army under my command would not commence its operations till the end of winter, as I knew by experience the severe climate of the region, which was also scant of habitations, provisions, shelter, and even of fuel. I therefore resolved to go on organizing, drilling, arming and clothing the army; and, in a word, to put into a military shape the forces which had just been assembled. My intentions, however, could not be maturely realized.

"The want of pecuniary resources embarrassed all my dispositions. The soldiers, though well disposed to combat with the enemy, had been badly supplied for a month, and would soon have been in want even of food, but that the exertions of the commanders of corps prevented that destitution from driving them from their ranks. While those meritorious men were suffering all kinds of privation, certain writers, from ignorance, want of reflection, party spirit, or, perhaps, from mistaken patriotism, were zealously engaged in thwarting the plans which might otherwise have proved successful. This they did by unjust charges against the army and particular individuals, whom they abused for not marching to the conflict, accusing them of want of decision, and asserting that the position of the army at San Luis was more threatening to our liberties than to the enemy. In the clubs of that capital they labored with assiduity to make the army the instrument of a

revolt; but I frustrated their intrigues by timely steps. There was one writer who had the audacity to intimate that I was in collusion with the enemy. Yes, I, to whom they may attribute errors, but whose whole previous course has shown the most elevated patriotism! Traitors are they who seek not only to traduce me, but, by their detraction of the army, to unnerve its vigor for the service of the country. It seems as if a fatality directs the destinies of this nation, and interdicts a unanimity of the public will for its defence; and from this fatal blindness, the moment when every heart and every aspiration should be directed to one object, is the very juncture when division and distrust are disseminated. Behold me, then, compelled by every circumstance to change my plans. Desertion had already commenced to a shameful extent; and I was fully persuaded that if the scarcity should continue, the army would be dishonorably frittered away. I therefore resolved that, if annihilated, it should be with glory. Having no supplies, I, to obtain them, compromised my private fortune and the credit of myself and friends. All this procured me the sum of one hundred and eighty thousand dollars, with which I was able to furnish the needful supplies to the army for twelve days. I knew well the country we had to cross, and the necessity there would be for carrying provisions; and I sympathized in anticipation with the soldier for what he would endure from the rigor of the season; but to render good service to the country, and save its honor, I had to overlook all this.

"The army moved from San Luis by brigades, so as to render available the scanty resources afforded by the country we were to cross. The force consisted of thirteen thousand four hundred and thirty-two infan-



try, divided into twenty-eight battalions; four thousand three hundred and thirty-eight cavalry, in thirty-nine squadrons; and a train of artillery of three twenty-four pounders, three sixteen-pounders, five twelve-pounders, five eight-pounders, and a seven-inch howitzer, all served by four hundred and thirteen artillerymen—the total being eighteen thousand one hundred and thirty-three men. Of this force there remained behind, the garrison of the works of San Luis, and others which I allotted to the towns on the route; as also two squadrons to escort our small and only reserve of ammunition; a brigade of infantry, of two battalions, under General Don Ciriaco Vasquez, which remained as a corps of reserve in Matehuala, and of observation upon Tula; as also a brigade of cavalry, under General Don Jose Urrea. The latter was intended to pass Tula, and move through Tamaulipas to the neighborhood of Monterey, so as to call the enemy's attention to that quarter. The point of concentration for the brigades ought necessarily to be near this place, so that in the region through which they had to move, many troops might not be at once thrown together. I therefore fixed on the hacienda of Encarnacion for that point, it being, as I calculated, the last stage but one of my march. I there held a review of the army, which had already lost a thousand men by sickness and desertion. The former was caused by the scantiness and bad quality of food, and still more of water, which was brackish as well as scarce, as also by snow storms and the exposure of the troops, who had always to be in bivouac and without fuel. These snow storms obliged me to suspend the march two days, till the weather became more settled; for the cold had already caused the death of several men and horses, and I felt

bound by every means to diminish the losses we were incurring. These hardships will account for the number of desertions which occurred up to our arrival at Encarnacion, and which afterwards even increased. It must also be remembered, that almost the whole army had been recently formed, and, as is well known, of men taken by violence from their homes.

"We had advices that the enemy were fortified in the hacienda of Agua Nueva, with six thousand men and thirty pieces, resolved to defend the defiles known by the names of the passes of Canero and Agua Nueva. The Americans did not know the precise point on which our march was directed; for, though they exchanged some shots with our advance in Encarnacion, and had frequently small skirmishes with us in the above passes, they supposed our troops to be scouting parties of the first brigade of cavalry, under Don Jose V. Minon, whom I had advanced as far as the hacienda of Potosi. These were the impressions when I made my dispositions.

"It was my intention to place my forces between the enemy and Saltillo, so as to oblige him to fight under the disadvantage of having his communication cut off, or, if he would not leave his works, to enable me to besiege him in Agua Nueva. The plan might be carried out in three different ways. One was by marching twenty leagues by the direct road; another by moving to the right by La Hedionda, so as to occupy Buena Vista; and the third, by moving to the left by La Punta de Santa Elena, so as to occupy the hacienda of La Banqueria, and thereafter the road to Saltillo. The two last movements were at this time impracticable, for they would either of them require three or four days' march, while we were without



provisions, forage, or water. I therefore resolved to operate by the direct road, force the positions, and, after passing the last defile, make a diversion by the left, and occupy the rancho of Encantada, with the view of obtaining water, none of which was to be had for more than eighteen leagues. All this was favored by the enemy's ignorance of our march; but misfortune still followed us. A deserter from the regiment of Coraceras, a native of Saltillo, named Francisco Valdes, passed over from Encarnacion to the enemy, and gave him information of the movement. The execrable treason of this infamous wretch frustrated the best combinations.

"On the 21st, at noon, I ordered the march to commence, the four light battalions, under General Don Pedro Ampudia, forming the vanguard. I had not hesitated to allow that general, and other officers who had been court-martialled for the affair of Monterey, to participate in these operations, not only because I did not consider them culpable, but also on account of the zeal they manifested. This brigade was followed by one of artillery, of sixteen-pounders, with the regiments of engineers and their train, and those by the park of the regiment of hussars. Then came the First division, commanded by General Don Manuel Lombardini, with four twelve-pounders and the park. The second division, under General Don Francisco Pacheco, followed next, with four eight-pounders and their park; after these the whole of the cavalry, under Don Julian Juvera; and then the remainder of the general park and baggage, the rear being covered by a brigade of cavalry under General Don Manuel Andrade.

"In this order of march the troops were ordered to make the first fourteen leagues, between Encenada

and a plain called De la Guerra, which is in front of the first defile called the pass of the Pinones; and to pass the night on that plain in the same order of column. The troops having eaten their rations, order was given for carrying water, as none could be met with till the day following, after having overcome the enemy at Agua Nueva, three leagues beyond the aforesaid pass. I, with my staff and the regiment of engineers, occupied the front, a little behind the light troops. On arriving at the plain De la Guerra, I continued the march in order to pass the defile of Pinones, which was accomplished; and I ordered the light brigade to take a position in the pass of Carnero, where it had a skirmish with an advance of the enemy. Under these dispositions we passed the night.

"At dawn on the 22d the army continued its march, with the idea of carrying by force of arms the pass of Agua Nueva which I supposed would be defended by the enemy; but I found to my surprise that it had been abandoned. I then concluded that the American forces had retired to their fortifications in the hacienda, to concentrate their defence under cover of the intrenchments which I had heard they had there thrown up. Under this idea I continued the march, in order to turn by the right to the rancho of Encantada, which, as I have before mentioned, is on the Saltillo road, being between that city and Agua Nueva, and four or five leagues from each. Till that time no one had appeared to give me information, nor did any one after, except a servant from Agua Nueva, who told me that the enemy had been evacuating his position since the day previous, and falling back towards Saltillo; and that on that same morning, the hacienda had been wholly abandoned, by the retreat of a small detach-



ment which escorted a large quantity of munitions. By this movement my first plans and dispositions, founded on an expected resistance, were rendered abortive; but I still did not despair of a successful result, for I had in anticipation directed General Minon, with his cavalry brigade, twelve hundred strong, to occupy, on the morning of the 22d, the hacienda of Buena Vista, distant three short leagues from Saltillo. This force might arrest the enemy's march, or, at least, make a diversion that would give time for the army to come up. I therefore continued my march, without losing more time than would allow the soldiers to drink water on the road. The light brigade came within sight of the enemy's rear-guard, and I ordered them to charge in conjunction with the hussar regiment. I had reason to believe the enemy were making a precipitate retreat, as they left several articles on the road, such as carts, forge implements, extra wheels, and other things, which we gathered while marching. In consequence of the different reports I received, I ordered the cavalry to advance; I thought we would be able to reach their rear-guard, and placed myself at the head of those troops.

"On arriving at a place called Angostura, I found the main body of the enemy awaiting me in position. The road from the pass of Pinones to Saltillo runs between two chains of mountains, which form that pass and those of Carnero and Agua Nueva. The ridges open beyond the hacienda, and approach each other again at Angostura, where the road turns to the right. At this place there is a succession of ridges, which run out toward the line of our route, and at right angles with it, and between them are ravines which form the drains of the mountains on the right. They are more

or less passable, but all very difficult. The enemy's position was in front and in rear of the road, his right and front being covered by ravines that were impassable, even for infantry, and a battery of four pieces being planted on the highest point. His battalions were formed on the heights with two other batteries, one of which was in a low part of the road, between two hills; and, to my view, their forces appeared to be about eight thousand men, with twenty pieces; but the prisoners taken from them report twenty-six pieces, and upwards of eight thousand combatants.

"I reconnoitred the position and situation of the enemy, and ordered the director of engineers, General Don Ignacio de Mora y Villamil, to do the same. After ascertaining the force of the invader, it was necessary either to await the infantry, to take position, or to fight, as might seem most advisable. At this interval, I observed that the enemy had neglected to occupy a height on his left flank; and, without losing a moment, I ordered General Ampudia's light brigade to take possession of, and hold it at every cost. As the brigade came up, I formed them in two lines on a rising ground that fronted the enemy, there being another eminence between our two positions; the first division of infantry was under the command of General Lombardini, and the second under the command of General Pacheco. I directed that General Mora y Villamil, in conjunction with the commanding general of artillery, Don Antonio Corona, should find a position for a battery of sixteen-pounders, to be sustained by the regiment of engineers. Two other batteries of twelve and eight-pounders, were located by me. The cavalry, commanded by General Juvera, were placed on the right of our rear, and on our left flank. The



regiment of hussars was also posted in the rear, and on the left flank aforesaid was a height which I ordered the battalion of Leon to occupy. The general park was in the rear, covered by the brigade of General Andrade, and between this park and the lines of battle I took my own position.

"The making of these dispositions, as may be supposed, occupied some time, for the troops arrived at their positions after a march of more than twenty leagues. It was therefore not an hour for combat, and the army lay on its arms. The enemy, however, so soon as he perceived that we had occupied the height that flanked his left and our right, dispatched two battalions to dislodge us, which led to a warm engagement, that lasted all the afternoon and till after dark, when he was repulsed with the loss of four hundred men, according to the report of the prisoners. Ours was much less, as we had the advantage of the ground.

"At dawn on the 23rd I mounted my horse; the enemy had not changed his previous dispositions, and was ready to receive us. I observed but one difference, which was, that on his right, and at some distance from his position, he had formed two bodies of infantry, with a battery of four pieces, as if with the intent of threatening our left flank, but I at once believed this to be a mere demonstration, for he would never have left in his rear the difficult ground which gave strength to that position, being the web of impassable ravines before referred to. I, therefore, gave no attention to this disposition of his forces, and resolved to move mine by the right. With this intention, I advanced the divisions of General Lombardini and General Pacheco in that direction. I ordered General Don Manuel Micheltorena to plant the battery of eight-pound

ers on our right flank, so as to rake obliquely the enemy's line, and to remain with the staff of which he was chief, and await my orders. I directed that General Ampudia, with the light brigade, should charge by our left flank on the enemy's right, and that General Mora y Villamil should form a column of attack composed of the regiment of engineers, the 12th battalion, the *fijo de Mexico*, and the companies of Puebla and Tampico, commanded by Colonel Don Santiago Blanco. At the same time, I directed General Corona, commanding the artillery, to place the battery of twelve-pounders in a more commanding position, while the Third division remained in reserve, Under Brevet-General Don Jose Maria Ortega.

So soon as the enemy perceived our movements, he commenced the action at all points, attacked our troops with intrepidity, and maintained the conflict with great vigor. Our men received them with proper energy, driving back and following up the assailants. At this time my horse was disabled by a grape shot, and it was some time before I could mount another. As the enemy had yielded ground, I ordered the cavalry to advance and charge, which was done with vigor. Suitable orders had been sent to the generals of division and brigade, among the rest to General Don Angel Guzman; but, though the officers and troops acted with great resolution, it was impossible to overcome the difficulties of the ground; and after a struggle which did them honor, they were obliged to fall back to their positions. After various alternations, the same occurred with the infantry.

"The battle which commenced at seven in the morning, was prolonged for many hours, our loss every moment accumulating. Many officers and soldiers had