

"Ampudia has come! Ampudia has come!" was heralded by every Mexican that came into our camp vending the products of the farms. And so it was. He came clothed in modesty, and made a display of it immediately by sending a dispatch on the 12th ordering Gen. Taylor to get out of his camp in twenty-four hours, and not to stop on this side of the Nueces. I do not believe Taylor was much acquainted with fear, because, instead of "folding his tents like the Arabs, and silently stealing away," he had the audacity to remain just where he was until the twenty-four hours had expired, and long after.

About this time Col. Cross, of the quartermaster's department, was murdered by some one and his body thrown in the chaparral. I was with a party of officers that was riding up the river, not expressly in search of Col. Cross's body, some seven or eight days after he was missed, and we observed some vultures resting in an old tree top. I rode in toward them, and saw a blue coat on the ground. It was Col. Cross's, and some of his remains were there. They were afterwards gathered up and cared for properly. One of the parties, a detachment of dragoons, sent in search of Cross's body got into a fight with the Mexicans and Lieut. Porter was killed; and yet there was no war?

And now a greater than Ampudia had arrived, and on the 24th of April Gen. Arista assumed command of the Mexican army now encamped in and around the city, and he informed Taylor that he considered hostilities commenced, and had "let slip the dogs of war." The enemy was now reported to have crossed to our side in large numbers, and parties were sent out to make reconnoissances, one of which was captured by the Mexicans; and Capts. Thornton and Hardee were now prisoners of war.

CHAPTER V.

Arista and His Cavalry—United States Excited—Two Hundred Thousand Men Offer Their Services—Congress Declares "War Existed by the Acts of the Mexican Republic"—Taylor Marches to Point Isabel—Bombardment of Fort Brown—Capts. May and Walker—Taylor Marches for Matamoras—Battle of Palo Alto—Victory—Arista Falls Back to Resaca—Battle of Resaca—Capture of Enemies' Batteries—Capts. May and Ridgely—Gen. La Vega Captured—His Sword Presented to Taylor—Duncan and Ridgely Pursue the Enemy—I Capture La Vega's Aid—Col. McIntosh—Ride over the Field of Palo Alto—Death of Lieuts. Chadburne and Stevens—We take possession of Matamoras—Gen. Twiggs appointed Governor—Twiggs and Jesus Maria—Arrival of Gens. W. O. Butler, Robert Patterson, Pillow, and others—Promoted to Second Lieutenant—Officers of the Company—March to Camargo—Thence to Monterey—Seralvo—Arrival at Monterey.

AND now Arista, on the part of the Mexican government, having declared that war existed; and some of our forces, both men and officers, having been killed or captured, the pony express carried this news to the city of New Orleans; and as there was no telegraph, it spread all over the country and became magnified like "the three black crows." The apprehension that we were cut off from communicating with home by Arista's army occupying a position between us and Point Isabel was widespread, and impromptu meetings held for volunteers to go to the relief of our army, and thousands responded to the call. Congress was in session, and it promptly declared that "war existed by the acts of the Mexican Republic," and authorized the President to accept into service fifty thousand volunteers. As over two hundred thousand men offered their services, it may be, as Mark Twain once observed, that many persons "persuaded their wives' relations" to avail themselves of this unique occasion to visit the land of the Aztecs, and enjoy balmy breezes under the shade of the acacia, the bamboo, and the pomegranate, with transportation free. In the meantime we were in blissful ignorance that we were in such danger, and did not know it until our friends came to our relief.

When Arista landed a part of his force on our side of the river, it was put in the field under the command of Gen. Torrejon, and, being cavalry, had gained possession of the road lead-

ing to Point Isabel, thus cutting off all the creature comforts that we daily enjoyed. If it did not affect our pockets, it curtailed the duties of our *chef de cuisine*, and diminished the pleasures of the table. In plain English, rations were getting short, and the less we had to eat the harder we worked on the fort and other defenses.

May Day, when our friends were inhaling the fragrance of the bloom of the peach and cherry, the rose and the violet, and children were dancing around the maypole, we were striking our tents, packing up "traps," burning letters, preparatory to leaving for Point Isabel. A mocking bird that would sit on the ridgepole of my tent and sing to me daily, and warble sweet notes by moonlight, now sat on the fence adjoining and sung a parting song, for I never saw him again, and it filled my heart with sadness. Sing on, dear bird; I hear thee now!

The Seventh Regiment of Infantry, Bragg's company, or battery, and a company of foot artillery were left in the fort under Maj. Brown, and Gen. Taylor started for Point Isabel, where our supplies were in store. The day following we arrived, and I was delighted to see old ocean again. Our departure should not have been made an occasion for sensible persons to rejoice, for did we not trust about six hundred men to entertain the Mexicans during our absence? and thus notify them that we purposed to return, and did we not do so?

"And I have loved thee, ocean," and I love thee still, and I was content to hear thy voice again and be near thee; but life is a dream, and from that dream I was awakened at dawn on the morning of the 3d. I was sleeping on the ground. A dull distant sound broke on my ear. I rested my head on my elbow, and heard nothing; putting my ear again to the earth, I heard the boom! boom! of distant cannon. It was heard by others, and soon the camp was astir. It was now certain from the continuous sounds that Fort Brown was being bombarded. Gen. Taylor sent out Capts. May and Walker to communicate with Maj. Brown, and Walker succeeded in getting into the fort and returning. The defense of Point Isabel was to be intrusted to Maj. Munroe, assisted by the navy in command of Commodore Connor; and the army, now reduced to two thousand four hundred men, was to move to the relief of the garrison in Fort Brown.

About noon on the 7th this little force started to meet Arista, who was between us and Fort Brown, without a question or doubt of getting there, although it was known the enemy's force numbered about eight thousand men. It was near noon on the 8th of May when far away over the broad prairie, dimly outlined, was seen a dark line directly in front of us. It was the Mexican army drawn up in battle array across our road to Matamoras. When we arrived where there was water Gen. Taylor halted to give the men time to fill their canteens and to have a little rest.

Soon the long roll sounded, hearts beat, pulses kept time, and knees trembled and would not be still. Our line was formed as follows: the fifth infantry (Col. McIntosh), Ringgold's battery, third infantry, two long, heavy iron eighteen pounders, fourth infantry, and two squadrons of dragoons posted on our right, all commanded by Col. Twiggs, formed the right wing; the left was a battalion of foot artillery, Duncan's battery, and eighth infantry. In some respects it was a laughable thing to see the deployment of our line, of which the Mexicans were quiet spectators. Looking back from where we came into battery, which was executed in a half minute and in advance of the infantry, I could see the two great, long, heavy iron eighteen pounders, and the white-topped ammunition wagons lumbering along to get into line, drawn by a team of twenty oxen each. They came into line by words of command not laid down in the work on tactics; they described a great semicircle at the commands, "Haw, Buck! haw, Brindle! whoa, Brandy!" and finally got their muzzles pointed to the front. If we had had elephants in place of the oxen, it would have been more picturesque, and presented a fine panorama.

Arista must have thought he had performed his whole duty when he barred the road with his troops to prevent Taylor from advancing. He had been in line of battle all the morning awaiting our coming, yet he *permitted us to deploy undisturbed*, although we were in easy range of his guns, instead of assuming the offensive as he should have done. With a courtesy becoming a knight of the Middle Ages he permitted Lieut. Blake, in the presence of the armies, to ride down to within musket shot of his line, to dismount and survey his troops through his glass, then to remount and ride along down his front without allowing

a shot to be fired at him. As this reconnoissance had unmasked his artillery, he ran his guns to the front, and the artillery on both sides commenced firing. My rank assigned me to the duty of sitting on my horse to look at the fight and watch the caissons. Presently a small shell came along and struck the driver of the lead horses. The shell entered his body after carrying away the pommel of his saddle, and exploded the moment it left his body, as fragments of it wounded his horse in the hip, split the lip and tongue, and knocked out some teeth of a second horse and broke the jaw of Lieut. Ridgely's blooded mare. That was the first man I saw killed in battle. It was war, but it was not pleasant, and I thought it was no place for me to sit on my horse idle; so, dismounting, I gave my horse to a horse holder, and walked to the howitzer on the right, took command of it, and helped work it. As no one demurred at what I was doing, I remained in charge of it all day. I would prefer to take my rod and line and go fishing, even if I got only a nibble, than to sit still on a horse offering myself as a target for cannon balls. To have a hand in the fray is quite another matter.

I shall not describe this battle. It was almost and altogether an artillery fight. Once the Mexican cavalry with two pieces of artillery under Torrajon made a detour to our right with a view of turning it, or capturing our wagon train. This movement was defeated by the Fifth Infantry and two pieces of artillery being sent to meet it. The infantry formed in square, and when the Mexican cannon were being loaded to fire on the square, Ridgely and I came up, and so *quickly* did we bring our guns into action that we unlimbered, loaded, and fired before the Mexicans could; in fact they did not fire a cannon shot, but retreated *slowly* back whence they came. Why they moved so doggedly slow under fire I could not tell; perhaps it was Mexican pride. Not long after this Maj. Ringgold, while sitting on his horse, was struck with a cannon shot, from the effects of which he died. Maj. Ringgold was an accomplished officer and an elegant gentleman, and his loss was a source of universal regret. Lieut. Ridgely succeeded to the command of the battery. The firing ceased about dusk. Our loss was only ten killed and forty-four wounded. Arista stated that his loss was two hundred and fifty-three. They turned their guns on our batteries; we fired at their infantry as instructed. During the night Arista fell back to a

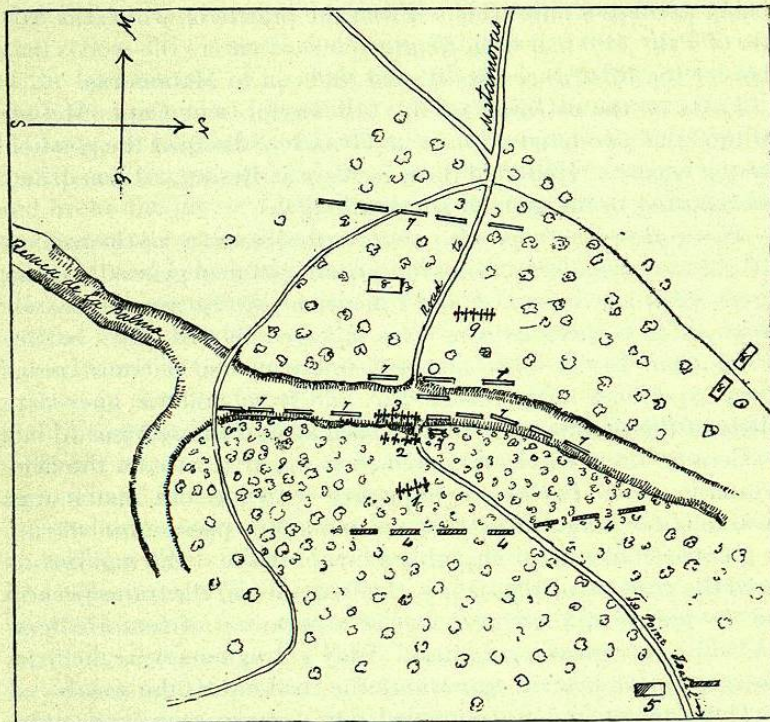
strong position on the banks of a dry bed of a stream about thirty yards wide called Resaca de la Palma. It runs through a wood with a dense undergrowth of chaparral, the woods on either side being perhaps a mile wide. From the prairie on which the battle of Palo Alto had been fought the road enters the woods that border the Resaca, crosses it, and leads on to Matamoras.

Early on the morning of the 9th Taylor sent Capt. McCall with about two hundred men in advance to discover the position of the enemy. He found them in force at Resaca, returned, and so reported to the general commanding.

There have been men who *create occasions* and avail themselves of the circumstances arising therefrom; but man generally is the creature of circumstance, and I mention this because it has an application to persons who were engaged in this day's battle. From Gen. Taylor down no one in this army had had much practical experience in the *art* of war, and from practice knew but little of the peculiar province of each arm of the service.

Because the artillery rendered such signal service on the field yesterday Gen. Taylor was impressed with the idea that it was available for pursuit of cavalry in mountain passes, for storming entrenchments, or charging a line of battle. Having discovered the position of the enemy, the General had the trains parked on the prairie and left in charge of a battalion of foot artillery and the two eighteen pounders. May's dragoons were held in reserve on the prairie near where the road enters the woods.

These arrangements completed, our battery, now under the command of Ridgely, was ordered to advance, take the road through the woods and chaparral, and attack the enemy. Here then was the singular tactics of a battery of horse artillery all alone, leaving the entire army behind, moving down the road through the woods without any support whatever. Capt. Walker was our guide. He and I and Ridgely were in advance. We had gone half a mile or more when crash through the tree tops came a shot from the unseen batteries in front. "At a gallop, march," was the order, and on we went until the road turned to the left about forty-five degrees. At the turn we halted, and this gave us a battery front (in part) to their guns near the bank of the dry river. We could not see their guns, nor they see ours, owing to undergrowth, but the guns were discharged at the smoke that each other made. We kept advancing "by hand"



PLAN OF BATTLE OF RESACA, MEX.

Fought May 9, 1846.

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| 1. Ridgely's guns when he called for May's dragoons to capture Mexican Battery. | 4. United States infantry moving to attack. |
| 2. Position of Ridgely after the charge. | 5. May's dragoons previous to the charge. |
| 3. Position of Mexican battery when captured. | 6. Reserve. |
| | 7. Mexican infantry. |
| | 8. Mexican cavalry. |
| | 9. Mexican artillery. |

down the road. Their skirmishers now began to annoy us. Ridgely came to me and said: "Go to Gen. Taylor and ask him to send some infantry supports." I got on my horse and galloped back up the road at full speed, met Gen. Taylor, Maj. Bliss, and other staff officers in the road, and delivered the message. The reply was: "The infantry has been deployed and will soon be there." I returned at a run. No one was to be seen anywhere. We had now been fighting the enemy's guns alone for more than a half hour, and had driven them from off the plain into the ravine or dry bed of the river, and had obtained possession of an open camping ground directly in front of their pieces and not over a hundred yards distant. Again Ridgely came and said: "Go to Gen. Taylor as quick as possible, and tell him to *send me* assistance to capture the Mexican batteries in front of us." The road and also the woods on both sides were now full of our infantry moving forward. I soon met Gen. Taylor, delivered the message, adding: "General, their guns are just in our front and can be taken." His only answer was: "*My! my! G—d, where is May? I can't get him up!*"* Nothing more was said, and I returned. By this time our infantry was engaged with the enemy on the right of the road. The firing was very heavy. I had been back with my gun about ten minutes, when down the road came May, in column of fours; he halted and exclaimed: "Hello! Ridgely, where is that battery? I am ordered to charge it." Ridgely said: "Hold on, Charley, till I draw their fire, and you will soon see where they are." Our guns fired, and theirs replied. Away went May toward the Mexican guns, and our guns after him at a run. We came up to them muzzle to muzzle, only theirs were below the banks of the ravine and ours above. May had swept the gunners away and was out of sight on the other side in the chaparral. I was in command of the twelve-pound howitzer, and as I gave the order in battery, "Fire to the front!" a Mexican regiment behind some earthworks in the ravine and on the other side, with their right directly in front, fired a volley. Two drivers fell, the wheel locked the gun in turning, a horse fell, and it was with difficulty we could unlimber. I said to the sergeant, "Run for a canis-

*The inference is that Gen. Taylor ordered May up on the receipt of Ridgely's first message.