

CHAPTER XIII.

The capitulation of Monterey—Opinion of one of the commissioners thereon—Apparent difference in the assaults upon the city—Defences of the eastern end—Defences of the western end—Gen. Worth's position—Difficulties under which Col. Garland labored—Obstinacy of the defence of the eastern end of the city—Mexican anticipations of an assault—Historical reminiscences suggested.

THE capitulation of Monterey has been a subject of great discussion; able articles have been written in censure and in defence, and political feeling, with which the historian should have no sympathy, has entered into the controversy. In concluding the chapters that immediately relate to Monterey, we give, as a part of the history of that event, the explanation of the reasons of the capitulation, written by one of the commissioners.*

"As one of the commissioners who were intrusted, by Gen. Taylor, with the arrangement of the terms upon which the city of Monterey and its fortifications should be delivered to our forces, I have had frequent occasion to recur to the course then adopted, and the considerations which led to it. My judgment after the fact has fully sustained my decisions at the date of the occurrence, and feeling myself responsible for the instrument, as we prepared and presented it to our commanding general, I have the satisfaction, after all subsequent events, to believe that the terms we offered were expedient, and honorable, and wise.

"The instructions given by Gen. Taylor only presented his object and fixed a limit to the powers of his commissioners; hence, when points were raised which exceeded our discretion, they were referred to the commander; but minor points were acted on, and finally submitted, as a part of our negotiation. We fixed the

* Col. Jefferson Davis.

time within which the Mexican forces should retire from Monterey; we agreed upon the time we would wait for the decisions of the respective governments, which I recollect was less, by thirty-four days, than the Mexican commissioners asked—the period adopted being that which, according to our estimate, was required to bring up the rear of our army, with the ordnance and supplies for further operations.

"I did not then, nor do I now, believe we could have made the enemy surrender at discretion. Had I entertained the opinion, it would have been given to the commission and to the commanding general, and would have precluded me from signing an agreement which permitted the garrison to retire with the honors of war. It is demonstrable, from the position and renowned prowess of the two armies, that we could drive the enemy from the town; but the town was untenable whilst the main fort (called the new citadel) remained in the hands of the enemy. Being without siege artillery or intrenching tools, we could only hope to carry this fort by storm, after a heavy loss from our army, which, isolated in a hostile country, now numbered less than half the forces of the enemy. When all this had been achieved, what more would we have gained than by the capitulation?

"Gen. Taylor's force was too small to invest the town; it was, therefore, always in the power of the enemy to retreat, bearing his light arms. Our army, poorly provided and with very insufficient transportation, could not have overtaken, if they had pursued the flying enemy. Hence the conclusion, that, as it was not in our power to capture the main body of the Mexican army, it is unreasonable to suppose their general would have surrendered at discretion. The moral effect of retiring under the capitulation was certainly greater than if the enemy had retreated without our consent. By this course we secured a large supply of ammunition he had collected in Monterey, which, had the assault been continued, must have been exploded by our shells, as it was principally stored in the cathedral, which, being supposed to be filled with troops, was the especial aim of our pieces. The destruction which this explosion would have produced, must have involved

the advance of both divisions of our troops; and I commend this to the contemplation of those whose arguments have been drawn from facts learned since the commissioners closed their negotiations.

"To justify the commanding general, should misrepresentation and calumny attempt to tarnish his well-earned reputation, and for all time to come to fix the truth of the transaction, see Gen. Taylor's letters," in correspondence, at the end of this volume.

There was a singular inconsistency in the defence of the city of Monterey, which has been the subject of much remark, and probably, unintentional misconstruction. Allusion is made to the different character of the battle at the two extremities of the city. At the west end, the general commanding seems to have carried his intentions out with a celerity that involuntarily excites unbounded admiration. One stronghold after another fell with order and precision; the loss of life trifling; the results brilliant. At the east end of the city, the First and Volunteer Divisions made their way under continued obstacles; repulse succeeded repulse; every advantage was gained and accomplished at great labor and cost; and the mind is insensibly led to misunderstand the relations of the commanders, and the character of the circumstances with which they were surrounded. A hasty sketch of the defences of the city is, perhaps, necessary, as a preliminary to our remarks.

Without alluding to the natural advantages for the defence of Monterey, we find that the artificial ones were quite equal in magnitude. Along the bank of the San Juan, on the east side of the city, besides a loop-holed wall, there was erected a series of forts along the whole line, upon the north-eastern angle of which was a redoubt of masonry, of four faces, overlooked by a large stone house, prepared with sand-bags and loop-holes, for infantry. In the rear of this, was a strong redoubt of four faces, mounting three guns; farther on, another of masonry, mounting the same number of pieces, and commanding the approaches from Cadareyta; beyond, still, was another fort of three guns, overlooked and commanded by a strong stone building prepared with loop-holes and sand-bags. Such were the defences looking eastward.

On the north was a series of breastworks and forts, running from the east until they reached the head of the bridge,—one of the principal entrances to Monterey. Forts, of three guns each, commanded the extremities of the line, while, over the bridge, another strong battery completely commanding it, poured upon the invader. The houses in the vicinity, from their peculiar construction, offered the best possible means of offence and defence,—the parapets upon them being all loop-holed; while barricades of solid masonry, often twelve feet thick, with embrasures for guns, filled up the streets, and faced in every direction.

The citadel next came in the line of defence, facing north; it was of immense strength, and of large size. The citadel was only partially mounted. The walls had four bastioned fronts, and were prepared for thirty guns.

All these works, except, perhaps, the one in the rear of the fort commanding the Cadareyta road, were more or less used upon our forces, most of them firing at the same time, as in the first day's assault, when Fort No. 1, "Diablo," the buildings in their vicinity, the barricades leading to the *tête du pont*, and the citadel, were unitedly engaged.

On the west end of the city was the strong work, the Bishop's palace, mounting four guns; and the height above it was defended by two pieces. On the hill opposite was the first fort assailed, mounting one gun; the second work, on the same ridge, mounted two. All these works were strongly manned by infantry, which seemed to be most depended on for defence. The western end of the city was also strongly barricaded, and the cemetery fortified; but these works were mostly abandoned, as soon as Duncan opened his battery from under the walls of the Bishop's palace.

On the evening of the 23d, Gen. Worth's Division was hotly engaged, as it approached the Plaza, when the fight assumed the sanguinary character of that of the eastern side of the city.

Gen. Worth, whose military reputation forms one of the most brilliant pages in our national history, was fortunate in the character of the duties assigned him. He was the admiration of the army by his coolness and judgment, by the instant conception of

his plans, the promptness with which he executed them, and the remarkable manner with which the results justified his conclusions. The works, however, that he stormed, were isolated; they stood out prominently, one from the other. After gaining the position where he made his camp, beyond "the gorge," he knew precisely the work he had to perform. After that time, there were to him no concealed barricades, no unknown walls, covering immense forces. He viewed the defences of Federation hill and those opposite, and which should be first carried was instantly suggested. From the instant he commenced to act, a series of brilliant successes crowned his arms. His soldiers performed prodigies of valor, and nearly all met in the captured works unharmed, to congratulate themselves on their success.

The Mexicans were evidently unprepared for the spirit with which we assailed them. There is reason to believe that they occupied their strongholds, hugging the notion that they were invulnerable. They appeared to rely upon the natural fastnesses of their positions, more than upon personal prowess. They mistook the character of our troops, and seemed to be unaware, that the very glory to be obtained in storming the towering peaks on which they were enthroned, stimulated, rather than depressed, the ardor of our troops.

At the east end of the city, on the contrary, nothing of importance, of the defences, was really known. It was presumed to be strongly fortified, and Gen. Taylor disposed of his forces with that idea. Yet no military imagination could have conceived the forts and barricades that crowded upon each other; for there is no precedence in history for the multitudinous works that were erected at the east end of Monterey. Complicated and singularly strong, they stretched their arms even to the important position of the main Plaza, where was concentrated the main body of the troops. As Col. Garland approached, the enemy could reinforce, as needed, without exposure. If numbers were cut down, thousands occupied the rear to take the places of the slain and wounded; and hence it was, that in the first assault which led towards the *tête du pont*, the arrival of fresh troops was constantly noticed—hundreds were

seen pouring into places where, at the commencement of the action, a small number only was deemed sufficient.

In the three days' battle, the obstinacy of the resistance at the east end of the city is remarkable; Mexican soldiers there displayed unusual courage. Not a place was surrendered until it had been repeatedly reinforced. The thinned ranks of the First and Volunteer Divisions attest to the effects of the arrival of these overwhelming numbers. Except the charge of Lancers upon the height above the Bishop's palace, no attempt was made at the west end of the city, to regain a lost position; and that attempt was so miserably executed, that it cost the enemy the palace itself. More than four-fifths of the killed and wounded occurred at the east end of the city. It was there that the different commands made a series of assaults in the face of a superior force, and maintained their positions under singularly trying circumstances; they made the sacrifices that were to be consummated in the capture of the city.

It may be easily answered,—what would have been the character of the assault, had the defenders in these strongholds, however numerous, been confined to their original numbers, instead of being constantly reinforced, as long as the contest continued. It should also be remembered, that portions of these defences were the dwellings of the citizens. While they possessed all the strength that military art required, they were also sanctified by the social hearth; upon the walls hung the household gods, and unitedly, these influences inspired a bravery that the Mexicans never felt in the lone fortifications upon the mountain heights.

The spectator, at the east end of the town, after examining the forts, barricades, and fortified houses for the hundredth time, involuntarily utters exclamations of surprise, at their strength. When thus coldly viewed, the question does not suggest itself, "why so many were slain?" but, "why were not all, who faced them in the hour of battle, stricken down?"

Subsequent events have incontestably shown, that the Mexicans calculated that our army would attempt to enter the city over the bridge at the eastern end. The defences were all constructed

upon that supposition; *every piece of artillery* (except those for enfilading) pointed, as if from that direction alone might be expected an attack. And why was it, that the Mexicans did not accomplish their designs? Why was it, that our whole army was not cut up in the strongholds at the eastern end of the city? Because the commander-in-chief instantly conceived the idea of the enemy's plans, and he frustrated them by striking an unexpected blow on the West; the Mexicans thereby were confused, and their hopes defeated.

Whatever may be the effect of events now transpiring, on the future, the storming of Monterey will stand forth pre-eminently in military operations, as one of the most extraordinary on record. That city was always, among the sturdy Spaniards, accounted impregnable. It had been frequently assaulted, in the different wars of the country, by strong forces. It stood a severe siege of thirteen days, unharmed by the "royal troops of Spain," during the revolution which resulted in the independence of Mexico of the mother country.

In the assault on Monterey, the extraordinary spectacle is exhibited, of six thousand mixed troops, far advanced in an enemy's country, attacking a city of the greatest possible natural and artificial strength, and carrying it by storm.

It will be remembered, that in the year 1815, at New Orleans, a low barricade composed of cotton-bales, defended by a body of hastily collected militia, served to repulse fifteen thousand veteran regular troops, just from the scenes of successful warfare.

In the earlier history of our country, we find that Gen. Abercrombie, with a force of sixteen thousand English and American troops, made an assault upon Fort Ticonderoga, defended by six thousand men. The army advanced to the charge with the greatest intrepidity. The works were but nine feet high, but strengthened by the interlacing of fallen forest trees. Under the fire of about half the force in the fort, (that being the greatest number that could at any time come into action,) Abercrombie remained two hours, in that time losing two thousand men in killed and wounded, when he ordered a retreat.

At Monterey, American soldiers stormed its strongholds, carried its intrenchments, its castles and forts, although twice their own number were defending them;—while now, with a few thousand American troops, the city rivals in strength Quebec and Gibraltar; and, with those places, would be equally difficult for an attacking force to carry by storm

CHAPTER XIV.

Gen. Ampudia—His character—His despatch announcing the surrender of Monterey—His proclamation to the people of northern Mexico—Proclamation of the acting president of Mexico.

GENERAL AMPUDIA, after the capture of Monterey, established his head-quarters at Saltillo, where he had five weeks allowed, by the armistice, to arrange for future operations. The extraordinary character of this man for deceit and arrant cowardice presents a most disgusting picture to contemplate. It has been his fortune to distinguish himself in every base sentiment of the heart. His earliest notice is associated, to the American mind, with acts of treachery and cruelty; and that a man so perfidious should have an important command in the Mexican army, is a striking instance of the degradation of the morals of his nation.

We find Ampudia the same degraded being throughout his whole history. He is first heard of by his oppressing and murdering his own countrymen, as a leader of a strong band of robbers against weak and unprotected citizens.

His conduct at Mier makes him conspicuous for cowardice, and his revolting treatment of the body of Gen. Sentamanat distinguishes him for the basest cruelty. As second in command under Arista, in the battles of the 8th and 9th, he spread disorganization among the troops; and while professing the greatest friendship for his commanding general to his face, and, also, by his printed documents, he spent his time in treasonable efforts to dispossess him; and was the first to retreat from the battle of Resaca de la Palma, and, even in his precipitate flight, he denounced Arista as having sold his soldiers for American gold.

Characteristic of his whole life, on the day that the capitulation of Monterey was completed, he sent the following despatch to the

Mexican secretary of war, announcing the surrender of Monterey.

MOST EXCELLENT SIR :—After a brilliant defence, in the course of which the enemy was repulsed with the loss of fifteen hundred men from various posts, he succeeded in possessing himself of the heights commanding the Bishop's palace, and another to the south of it, and likewise of a detached breastwork, called the Teneria, and, continuing his attacks through the houses, which he pierced in a direction towards the centre of the city, he succeeded in posting himself within half a gunshot of the principal square, where the troops were posted, who suffered much from the hollow shot.

Under these circumstances, I was requested by various principal officers to endeavor to come to such terms as would diminish our losses; for, to open our way with the bayonet, surrounded as we were by intrenched enemies, would have resulted in the dispersal of the troops, and nothing of the *materiel* would have been saved. These considerations having been weighed by me, I also took into view what the city suffered, and would suffer from the attacks by the piercing of the houses as well as the destruction by the bombs; the scarcity of ammunition, which was beginning to be felt; the provisions which we were losing as the enemy's lines approached the centre; the distance from our supplies; and, finally, that to protract this state of things for two or three days, even if it were possible to do so, could not end in a triumph; and I consented to open propositions, which resulted in the annexed terms of capitulation.

Your Excellency will perceive that they preserve the honor of the nation and that of the army; and it is to be observed, that if they do not grant us as much as was, perhaps, expected, that of itself proves the superiority of the enemy, not in valor, which he displayed in most of the combats, but in his position within the squares of pierced masonry, which surrounded the square and cut off any supplies of provisions, wood, or other articles necessary to subsistence.

With the greatest regret, the army withdraws from their capital, abundantly watered with its blood, leaving under the guaranty of the promises of the American generals, the severely wounded and the neighbouring population of the state, whose civil authorities will continue in the exercise of their functions. To-morrow I shall continue my march to Saltillo, where I will await the orders of the supreme government. And in communicating this to you, for the information of his excellency the president, I have the honour to reiterate the assurances of my highest respect.

PEDRO DE AMPUDIA.

God and liberty!

HEAD-QUARTERS AT MONTEREY, *September 25th, 1846.*

Following this, on his arrival at Saltillo, he issued a proclamation to the people of northern Mexico, giving the details of the capture of Monterey, as follows:

The General commanding the Army of the North, to the People of the Three Departments.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—Occupied, before all things else, in providing for the defence of the rights and integrity of the territory of our beloved Republic, against the enemy that has invaded her soil, the supreme government thought proper to intrust to me the command of the patriotic troops destined on the northern frontier to this holy purpose. I accepted, with enthusiasm, the post assigned me—for the zeal with which I have ever defended the holy cause of the people is notorious to every one—and in the beginning of the month assumed the direction of such means as were in my power to repel the advance of the enemy. But, fearing that the charge would prove too great for my feeble abilities, I solicited the worthy and most excellent Senor Gen. Don Juan Neponuceno Almonte to come and relieve me from the command of the army, presuming that the illustrious conqueror of Panuco would, on his return to Mexico, resume the reins of our national government.

On the 19th instant, the enemy having appeared in the vicinity

of Monterey, and encamped in the San Domingo woods,—their camp being one league in length and three leagues in circumference,—I ordered their movements to be carefully observed, and hostilities to be commenced forthwith; the generals and other officers who were under my command, of every branch of the service, being all decided to risk a combat rather than retreat.

The redoubts of the citadel and of the new cathedral opened their fires the same day upon the enemy, who were occupied during that and the succeeding day in reconnoitering and preparing for the attack.

On the 21st, the assault was made by a formidable body of their troops, chiefly of the regular army, upon the bridge of the Purisima and our redoubts of the Teneria and Rincon del Diablo, but they were gloriously driven back by our valiant veterans, with a positive loss to our adversaries of fifteen hundred men.

On the morning of the 22d, Gen. Taylor directed his columns of attack against the Bishop's hill, an elevation commanding the city, and although in their first advance they were repulsed in a skirmish, a full brigade of regular troops returned to the charge. Unfortunately, two pieces of cannon and a mortar, which commanded the position, got out of order and became useless, and, although as soon as advised of it, I sent a reinforcement of infantry, with two pieces of light artillery, to their aid; it reached the hill too late—the enemy had already succeeded in obtaining possession of the castle.

This accident compelled me to concentrate my force in the plaza, in order to present to the foe a more vigorous defence, and to repel on the 23d, as was done, the assaults made by them through the streets and houses of the city. But, as under these circumstances, I suffered great scarcity of ammunition and provisions, and in spite of the ardor with which the entire army, both regulars and auxiliaries, were animated, I proposed to the American general, a parley, which resulted in an understanding by which the honor of the nation and the army, the *personel* of the division under my command, its arms and equipments, were preserved.

This is a true statement of the operations of the campaign, up to the 24th inst., and if an inadequate supply of means and other circumstances have led to this result, we have yet no cause for a moment's dismay, for the Republic will now put forward all her elements of greatness; and with one single victory, which we may, shall, and must obtain, will solve the problem definitely, in favor of our arms.

People of the east—The event which occurred at Monterey is of little moment. The favorite general of the Mexicans, the worthy and most excellent Senor Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, will promptly take charge, in person, of the direction of the campaign; let the sacred fire of patriotism continue to burn in our bosoms, and, without fail, we will triumph over our enemies.

PEDRO DE AMPUDIA.

HEAD-QUARTERS, SALTILLO, 29th September, 1846.

Ampudia opened the preliminaries that led to the capitulation of the city, by stating that he had positive information from his government, that arrangements had been entered into by the two nations that would lead to a peace. In his statement of the causes why he gave up the city, he says it was owing to the want of ammunition and provisions! In the cathedral, there was found powder enough to carry on the war for years, and the inhabitants of the city and our troops were comfortably subsisted for weeks upon the provisions left by Gen. Ampudia. Of the correctness of his statements regarding the military operations, the reader can judge. Such is the being who held supreme command over an important part of Mexico.

Upon the arrival, at the capital, of the news of the fall of Monterey, the acting president issued the following proclamation:

MEXICANS:—A government established against the will of the nation is interested in concealing from it events which are disastrous to it; above all, when the responsibility of their occurrence must fall upon the government. A government whose sentiments and interests are no other than those of the nation, and which has emanated from the movement by which it threw off its oppressors,

has no need to conceal any thing from it, for the nation itself must combat for its preservation and for its honor.

Mexicans! Monterey has fallen. It was not enough to defy death, as our valiant fellow-countrymen did for four days; it was necessary to do more, to defy want in every shape, and the insufficiency of means of resistance. The intention of the enemy to occupy the whole Republic is manifest; but the government is determined to triumph or perish with the Republic. Partial disasters are of no importance; the Spanish nation suffered much more in the space of six years, and the result of her heroic efforts, and the co-operation of all her sons, was that the bones of half a million of unjust invaders whiten the fields of the Peninsula. Shall we become unworthy of independence, by not showing ourselves sons worthy of our fathers? That independence was achieved by us alone, only after ten years of constancy; and it is not possible that an organized nation should show less strength than its oppressed sons, such as our first leaders were.

Mexicans! The time to act has come. Will you suffer your population to be decimated, sending it to perish by handfuls on the frontier, one to-day, another to-morrow, and to perish less by the enemy's balls than by neglect? The government will exert all its power in the defence of rights; but it has a right to expect that indifference or inactive contemplation shall not be the recompense of its plan of operations; for the nation will prefer that not one stone should be left upon another, rather than behold its sovereignty, its rights, and its temples trampled under foot. The invincible general, called by it to place himself at the head of the troops, is resolved not to survive the dishonor of his country.

Will it be less so? No. Our blood and our property will be the sacrifice that we offer up; and when you are in the full enjoyment of the rights which you claimed, I do not doubt of your co-operation, and with it we will snatch from fortune a complete victory, which in the end will ensure to us existence and honor.

JOSE MARIANO DE SALAS.