



PLAN OF THE BATTLES OF MEXICO.

On the 19th and 20th of May, and the 8th, 12th, and 13th September, 1847.

in motion. General Twiggs, with his division, was sent Bk. VII.  
on in advance. Ch. 5

He had not expected opposition. On the 12th of April, A. D.  
he found himself before the enemy, consisting of 13,000 1847.  
men, under Santa Anna himself, strongly posted at Cerro Com-  
Gordo, a conical hill, which towered above the heights mence-  
and forests of the surrounding country. General Scott ment  
had received intelligence of the proximity of the enemy of the  
on the 11th, and the next day started in person to join March.  
General Twiggs. General Worth's division marched on  
the 13th.

The enemy was well supplied with water and other Battle of  
necessaries, and hoped to present an obstacle to the fur- Cerro  
ther advance of the Americans, until the yellow fever Gordo.  
had wasted their ranks. But General Scott, perceiving  
the necessity of an immediate advance, resolved to storm  
the heights. On the 18th of April, the attack com-  
menced, and was completely successful. The Mexicans  
fled, and Santa Anna himself, with great difficulty, ef-  
fected his escape on the wheel-mule of his carriage. The  
American forces were 9000, and their loss in killed and  
wounded, was 431. The enemy was completely dispersed,  
and lost all his artillery. The loss, in killed and wounded,  
was 700, beside 3000 prisoners, including five generals.

This battle was followed by the rapid occupation of  
Jalapa and Perote, and the invaders advanced to Puebla,  
on the great road to Mexico, and, on the 15th of May,  
took possession of that city. Santa Anna himself returned Santa  
to Mexico, to defend the city of Montezuma from the Ame- Anna's  
rican invaders. He found it in a state of anarchy. The mea-  
violence of faction, and the decline of his own popularity, asures.  
prevented him from rallying, to the extent desired, his  
beaten and scattered forces. But, being still possessed  
of extraordinary powers, he seized and confined the most



Bk. VII. turbulent chieftains and the generals most unfriendly to  
 Ch. 5. him. He then sent in to the Mexican Congress his re-  
 A. D. signation, which was neither accepted nor rejected. No  
 1847. action being taken upon it, and the public affairs being  
 Preparations for the defence of Mexico. very critical, he withdrew it, and virtually became dicta-  
 tor. If any one could save the capital, it was he, and  
 he exerted his utmost energies to collect troops and  
 strengthen his defences; and such were his efforts that,  
 by the end of July, he had under his command, around  
 Mexico, according to Mexican accounts, 36,000 men and  
 100 pieces of artillery.

Meanwhile, his preparations for the last stand of re-  
 sistance were closely watched by the American comman-  
 der at Puebla. In order to increase his strength, he  
 gave orders to abandon Jalapa, while a new accession to  
 his forces was made by the arrival of General Pillow, on  
 the 8th of July, thus increasing his troops to 10,276, of  
 all arms, although over 2000 remained upon the sick-list.  
 On the 6th of August, his army was further increased by  
 a force of 2429 men under General Pierce.

Advance of Scott upon Mexico. During this pause at Puebla, General Scott collected  
 all the information in his power respecting the different  
 routes to the capital. On the 7th of August, Harney's  
 cavalry and Twiggs's division marched towards Mexico,  
 followed, the next day, by Quitman's volunteers, and, on  
 the 9th, by Worth's division; while the remainder of the  
 troops marched on the 10th, General Pillow's composing  
 the rear. No opposition was made by the enemy, and,  
 on the 10th of August, the advanced guard entered the  
 Valley of Mexico.

A system of active reconnoissance was now commenced,  
 and the different routes were closely observed. After  
 much deliberation, the road round Lake Chalco, south-  
 east of Mexico, was decided upon. The most direct route

to the city was defended by El Peñon, a fortress seven Bk. VII.  
 and a half miles distant, and deemed impregnable, al- Ch. 5.  
 though that fortress might be avoided by a detour to A. D.  
 Mexicalcingo, another strong position, a few miles south- 1847.  
 west of it, and still nearer the capital. But the daring  
 and skilful reconnoissance of the Chalco route, by Colonel  
 Duncan, removed all doubt, and, on the 15th of August,  
 the march was commenced.

So soon as Santa Anna was apprised of the fact that  
 General Scott was advancing south of Lake Chalco, he  
 withdrew most of his troops from El Peñon and Mexi-  
 calcingo, and fortified San Antonio and Churubusco, about  
 four miles from the city, determining to make a strong  
 defence at these points.

On the 17th of August, Worth, in advancing, seized  
 San Augustin, about twelve miles from the city, from  
 which reconnoitring officers examined the position of the  
 enemy, and which became the key of operations.

On the 19th and 20th of August was fought the battle Battle of  
 of Contreras, which resulted in the destruction of the Contreras  
 veteran division of General Valentia, who had been posted  
 on the road to San Angel, to dispute the passage over the  
 Pedregal, a vast field of lava, and entirely impracticable  
 for cavalry or artillery, except by a single mule-path.  
 The loss of the Mexicans could not have been less than  
 2000 in killed and wounded; four general officers were  
 taken prisoners, and the whole train of artillery, with  
 heavy stores of ammunition, fell into the hands of the  
 victors. Not more than 60 Americans were killed and  
 wounded.

A vigorous pursuit of the flying enemy was made, and Battle of  
 the advance brigade of the veteran division of Twiggs Churubusco.  
 brought up at the post where Santa Anna had concen-  
 trated his forces, and the terrible conflict of Churubusco





Storming of Chapultepec.

commenced. The Americans suffered severely, 1000 of our bravest troops having fallen in that desperate encounter. But the Mexican loss was dreadful. It is supposed that 7000 were either killed or wounded. The panic was extreme, and Mexico was at the mercy of the conquerors.

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The consequence of this decisive victory, which gave the most incontestible evidence of General Scott's energy and capacity, as well as the bravery of his subordinate generals, was, that an armistice was agreed upon, for the purpose of negotiating a peace.

The commander-in-chief has been censured for this armistice, but it reflected immortal honour upon him, showing his great moderation in the midst of victory, and his earnest desire to avoid an unnecessary waste of life. But this armistice proved of no avail, and terminated on the 7th of September. At its conclusion, the effective force of the Americans amounted only to 8500.

Armi-  
stice  
agreed  
upon.

On the 8th of September was fought the battle of Molino del Rey, near the castle of Chapultepec, with a view of breaking up a foundry for cannon. The assault was committed to General Worth, and was gallantly performed. The place was taken, and the enemy fell back into the grove of Chapultepec, but were not pursued. This action was the most severely contested of the whole war. The force engaged was less than 4000, but of these 789 were either killed or wounded. The forces of the enemy were 10,000. No decisive results, however, followed this action.

Battle of  
Molino  
del Rey.

The American commander now directed the whole force of his genius to the reduction of the city of Mexico, into which the greater part of the defeated forces had retired. The reconnoissances upon the enemy's works were commenced on the 10th, and were pushed over the two main causeways which led to the city from the south, the most important of which was San Antonio, from which the

Scott  
prepares  
to as-  
sault  
Mexico.



Bk. VII. Mexican generals anticipated the final assault upon the city.  
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A. D. 1847. But Scott resolved to begin with Chapultepec, a rock which rose 150 feet from the plain, and which was strongly defended, not only by important works, but also by a large garrison, under the command of Don Nicolas Bravo, one of the most celebrated of the Mexican leaders. On the 12th, the batteries were opened on this strong fortress; but the cannonade and bombardment not effecting much, the storming of it was ordered. This took place on the following day, and the assault was entrusted to General Pillow. After an hour of fierce contest, the American flag floated on the highest points of the castle, and the western defence of Mexico was in the possession of the Americans.

Fall of Mexico. Generals Worth and Quitman pursued the flying enemy over the causeways, and before night succeeded in seizing the western gates and advancing a considerable way into the city. Santa Anna, during the night of the 14th, withdrew his troops, and the next morning the main plaza and the national palace were occupied by the American generals. Both the city and the valley of Mexico were now in undisputed possession by our troops.

The strength of the American forces which were engaged during these final operations did not exceed 6800 men, and the aggregate of losses in killed and wounded was 863. The great dependence of the Mexicans was upon the castle of Chapultepec, and when this fell, all confidence departed from them.

Reflections on the conquest. That so small a body of troops should have successively beaten armies more than thrice their number, led by so able a general as Santa Anna, and entrenched behind defences that were deemed impregnable, and that, finally, the constantly diminishing army of the invaders, at last

reduced to a handful of men, if measured with European conflicts, should successfully assault the capital of a great nation, is one of the wonders and prodigies of modern warfare. Great as is the praise due to the American troops in general, as well as to the gallant officers who led them on to victory, the chief merit belongs to Scott and Taylor themselves, by whose transcendent coolness, firmness, and judgment the great victories were won. They had the rare talent of grasping and weighing and understanding their whole field, and of directing the energies of their subordinates in the right channel.

To the credit of Santa Anna, it must be said, he disputed his ground inch by inch, and fought bravely to the last; but it was his misfortune to lead dispirited and enervated troops, and to contend with Americans and such generals as Scott and Taylor. After the reduction of Mexico, he established his head-quarters in the city of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but was without money and provisions. His last resort was to attack the communication of the American army, and accordingly he marched upon Puebla, where the campaign had been commenced; but, before marching, he resigned his presidency into the hands of the judges of the Supreme Court of Justice, and contented himself with the subordinate power of a general. He arrived at Puebla on the 22d of September, which was defended by Colonel Childs, with only about 500 effective men, 1800 being on the sick list. This city was already besieged by a party of guerrillas, under General Rea, and Santa Anna's arrival was the signal for an assault, which was, at intervals, continued until the 30th of September, without success. It being known that an American force was advancing from Vera Cruz, Santa Anna withdrew, with 4000 men, and continued to harass the Americans until the 12th of October.



Bk. VII.  
Ch. 5. In the mean time, General Taylor, finding that his forces in the north of Mexico, after garrisoning Saltillo, Monterey, Camargo, and Matamoras, were not sufficient to advance upon San Louis Potosi, confined himself to defensive measures, and was in favour of sending all his surplus troops to the aid of General Scott. Having received, at his own suggestion, instructions to that effect, he despatched Generals Lane and Cushing to Vera Cruz, with about 2500 men. They arrived at that city on the 20th of September, and soon after marched towards Mexico, dispersing the various guerrilla parties to which the Mexicans were now reduced. On the 12th of October, General Lane entered Puebla.

March of Lane and Cushing to Mexico.

Occupation of Mexico.

While these things were occurring, the main body of the Americans remained at the city of Mexico, waiting for the new Mexican government to enter into negotiations, now that the conquest of the country was fairly secured. After arranging the internal affairs of the city, General Scott turned his attention to preserve his lines of communication with Vera Cruz.

As the Mexican authorities still refused to sue for peace, when all hope of gaining any important advantage was at an end, General Scott forbid the payment of revenues to the Mexican government, and imposed a system of contributions. Mr. Trist, the American commissioner, not giving satisfaction to his government, was recalled; and Generals Pillow and Worth, in consequence of unfortunate differences with the commander-in-chief, were arrested.

Arrest of Pillow and Worth.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

However, before the recall of Mr. Trist was known to the Mexicans, a treaty was made at Guadalupe Hidalgo, February 2d, 1848. By this treaty the territories of New Mexico and Upper California were given to the United States, as indemnity for the war, while Mexico

released all claim to Texas. But, in consideration of these extensive grants of territory, the United States agreed to pay fifteen millions of dollars, and assumed the debt which Mexico owed to her own citizens, amounting to nearly five millions additional. Although these negotiations were made after Mr. Trist was recalled, still they were ratified by both governments, and Messrs. Sevier and Clifford were appointed commissioners.

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General Scott, in the mean while, was relieved from his command, and General Butler succeeded him. The government had nobly seconded General Scott in his measures to secure the conquest of Mexico, but, when this was completed, party animosities and rivalries between the leading chieftains recommenced, with their usual bitterness, and efforts were made to deprive the illustrious commanders, and especially the commander-in-chief, of the glory they had earned.

Scott relieved.

On the 12th of June, the treaty being duly ratified, the American troops yielded up to the Mexicans their capital, and commenced their march to Vera Cruz. By the end of July, the country was completely evacuated. The volunteers were discharged, and the regiments of the regular army disbanded, according to the laws of their organization.

Evacuation of Mexico.

Thus ended one of the most brilliant series of military successes in these modern times, the ultimate results of which, for good or evil, are beyond the power of mortal man to anticipate. This war was the chief event in the administration of Mr. Polk, and this alone will render it ever memorable.

During this administration, however, the country was in a very prosperous state, in a commercial point of view. The political troubles of Europe, and the distress of the Irish population, in consequence of the potato-rot and

State of the country



Bk. VII. other evils, caused an immense immigration, which again  
Ch. 5. resulted in the settlement of the Western States. Iowa  
A. D. and Florida were admitted in 1846, and Wisconsin in  
 1848. the following year.

Election of Taylor. In June, 1848, was held a great Whig convention, in Philadelphia, which nominated General Taylor for President and Millard Fillmore for Vice-President. The hero of the Mexican war was chosen by a considerable majority. On the 4th of March, 1849, President Polk

Death of Polk. retired to private life, but survived his retirement only a few months. He died, June 15th, 1849.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ADMINISTRATION OF GENERAL TAYLOR.

THE 4th of March occurring on Sunday, the inauguration of the new President was deferred to the following day. He made choice of John M. Clayton, of Delaware, for Secretary of State; William M. Meredith, of Pennsylvania, Secretary of the Treasury; George W. Crawford, of Georgia, Secretary of War; W. B. Preston, of Virginia, Secretary of the Navy; Thomas Ewing, of Ohio, Secretary of the Interior; Jacob Collamer, of Vermont, Postmaster-General; and Reverdy Johnson, of Maryland, Attorney-General.

The summer of 1849 has been rendered memorable by the settlement of California. In consequence of the discovery of gold, near Sutter's mill, in February, 1848, the immigration thither was enormous. By the articles of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed February 2d, 1848, California had become a territory of the United States. The settlement of this new territory, on the distant border of the Pacific Ocean, was unprecedentedly rapid, and has no parallel in the history of nations. The desire for the acquisition of gold was the inciting cause; and Providence made use of this universal passion as a means of colonizing one of the fairest sections of the globe, which, owing to its remoteness from the realms of civilization, might have remained unoccupied, except by Indians and casual adventurers, for centuries to come. Europeans, Chinese, and Americans, flocked to this El