

This was obviously tantamount to a refusal to consider the question of peace at all, and it was so regarded at Washington, although, by referring the matter to the Mexican Congress, a door had been left open to possible changes in the political situation. Buchanan, after a long cabinet discussion, wrote to Rejón that he had never proposed to withdraw from discussion "the causes of the war existing between the two republics," and had no disposition to do so; and that the President would wait, "with patience and with hope," for the final decision of the Mexican government.¹

Polk was not yet fully aware how grossly he had been deceived by the assurances that had reached him of Santa Anna's pacific intentions. That he was to learn later. But already he must have begun to see that Santa Anna had not the smallest intention of making peace, and that so long as the Mexican newspapers continued to clamor for war the voice of the eminent "slave of public opinion" would join in the chorus. Polk had arranged to let Santa Anna pass the blockade because he regarded him as a disturbing element. In truth, Santa Anna, so far from being a disturbing element, was the one man about whom, at that moment, all the factions into which the ruling classes of Mexico were divided could rally for a united prosecution of the war.

¹ Buchanan to Rejón, Sept. 26, 1846; *ibid.*, 44.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MONTEREY

GENERAL TAYLOR, awaiting reinforcements and supplies at Matamoros, was very soon extremely embarrassed by the excited patriotism which sent him many more men than he could properly use. What he needed, more than men, were supplies and means of transportation.

"The volunteer force ordered to report to me here is much greater than I can possibly employ—at any rate in the first instance; the influx of twelve-months volunteers has even impeded my forward movement by engrossing all the resources of the quartermaster's department to land them and transport them to healthy positions."¹

His first embarrassment had come through the foolish activities of General Gaines, who still commanded the western division, with head-quarters at New Orleans, and who was again, as in 1836, busy issuing calls for volunteers, without authority and upon the strength of newspaper reports. Already in the summer of 1845 he had credited an absurd newspaper rumor to the effect that Taylor was likely to be attacked at Corpus Christi; and without a shadow of legal authority he had called upon the governor of Louisiana for two regiments of infantry and two companies of artillery as reinforcements. The governor, without stopping to inquire what right Gaines had to call for volunteers, furnished the troops. The two infantry regiments did not start, as the War Department interfered in time; but the two artillery companies were actually sent to Taylor and were kept in his camp at Corpus Christi for several weeks. But

¹ Taylor to Polk, Aug. 1, 1846; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 337.

Gaines, though sharply reprimanded by the Secretary of War, was incapable of learning wisdom.¹

The news of the capture of Captain Thornton's detachment of dragoons reached New Orleans on the second of May, 1846. Gaines, of course, jumped to the conclusion that Taylor was in desperate straits, and at once began issuing orders right and left to all sorts of persons—governors of states and others—requesting them to raise perfectly indefinite numbers of troops and despatch them to Texas. So far as the War Department could ascertain, the volunteer force thus called for might exceed twelve thousand men.²

Gaines's high rank in the army naturally gave weight to his requisitions, and the persons who received them apparently assumed that he was acting under orders from the United States government. The government, however, after its previous experience with Gaines, had very carefully abstained from authorizing him to call for troops, and for the third time, as in 1836 and 1845, found itself much embarrassed by the situation which he had created. The difficulty was solved by notifying the governors of Kentucky and Tennessee that they were not to comply with Gaines's calls, while at the same time the governors of Alabama, Mississippi, and Missouri were notified that his calls would be recognized, but only to the extent to which they had already been complied with.³

Gaines was also relieved from command and ordered to Washington. A court of inquiry upon his conduct found that General Gaines was guilty of violating orders and acting illegally in several instances; but the court recommended that in consideration of his long service, and the patriotism and purity of his motives, no further proceedings should be had in his case.

¹ See Sen. Doc. 378, 29 Cong., 1 sess., 35-48. General Scott at that time indorsed upon one of Gaines's reports the cheerful comment that it was charitable to suppose his irregularities arose mainly from insanity or dotage.—(*Ibid.*, 47.)

² Memorandum of the militia or volunteer force recently called, etc.; *ibid.*, 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 58.

"General Gaines," the President wrote, "is now a very old man & although guilty of acts which cannot be justified, and for the commission of which, if brought before a general Court Martial he would without doubt be punished, yet I determined in lenity to him to yield to the recommendation of the Court of Enquiry. . . . I directed further that he be ordered to the North and stationed there, so as to put it out of his power further to embarrass the Government during the pendency of the Mexican War."¹

General Taylor had also called for volunteer reinforcements immediately after the capture of Thornton and his men; but, unlike Gaines, Taylor had acted in precise accordance with orders. He had been authorized by the War Department, in case Mexico should declare war "or commence hostilities by crossing the Rio Grande with a considerable force," to call on the governors of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas for volunteers. When Taylor asked for aid, therefore, he called for eight regiments—or five thousand men in all—of which four regiments (two mounted and two of infantry) were called from Texas and four regiments of infantry from Louisiana.²

A serious legal difficulty soon developed in respect to the volunteers furnished in response to the calls issued by Gaines and Taylor. It was supposed at first that these men were enlisted for six months; but the matter being referred to Washington, it was decided that under the statute of 1795 then in force they could only be retained in service for three months, unless they decided voluntarily to re-enlist.³ The men who were subsequently enlisted under the act of May 13, 1846, were of course enlisted for twelve months or during the war.

The Louisiana three months' volunteers were the first to arrive at the front, one regiment, accompanied by General Persifer F. Smith, of the Louisiana militia, reaching Matamoros on May 24, and another soon after. With them

¹ Polk's *Diary*, II, 83.

² Marcy to Taylor, Aug. 23, 1845; Jan. 13, 1846; Taylor to Adjutant-General, April 26, 1846; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 85, 90, 140.

³ Marcy to Taylor, Aug. 3, 1846; *ibid.*, 316.

came a company from Mobile.¹ The Louisiana three months' men, as they arrived, were formed into a brigade under General Smith, and were encamped opposite Matamoros; and there they remained until early in August, when they were sent back to New Orleans to be mustered out of the service. General Smith, however, desired to remain. Taylor therefore asked permission to retain him and give him a command; and, although not a soldier by profession, he proved a useful officer.²

Of the Texas three months' men only a part were actually raised. Taylor had asked for two regiments of infantry, but only one was sent to the front, under the command of Albert Sidney Johnston, a native of Kentucky and a graduate of West Point. He had resigned from the United States army in 1834. In 1837 he went to Texas, joined the Texan army, became Secretary of War under Lamar, was engaged for some time in fighting Indians, and finally retired from public life owing to controversies with Houston. With the exception of a single company, Johnston's regiment declined to re-enlist at the close of their three months, and were sent home without having seen any active service. Johnston was much disappointed, and Taylor, who had known him in the army in previous years, made him inspector-general of volunteers.

The two Texan regiments of mounted volunteers were raised, one in the eastern and one in the western part of the state. Some independent companies of Texan rangers which had been attached to Taylor's army while he was at Corpus Christi, and had rendered useful service near Matamoros, were incorporated with the western Texas regiment under Colonel John C. Hays, who had a great reputation as a successful Indian fighter. The eastern regiment was under command of Colonel George T. Wood. Both regiments, with substantial unanimity, re-enlisted at the close of their first three months' service, General Taylor being

¹ Taylor to Adjutant-General, May 24, 1846; *ibid.*, 301.

² *Ibid.*, 317-320. He was later appointed colonel of the regiment of mounted rifles, authorized by the act of May 19, 1846.

specially anxious to retain them, as he felt that without them he would be much too weak in cavalry when he first took the field.¹

Early in June, 1846, the twelve months' volunteers began arriving at Santiago Island, and from then until the end of July, or later, they kept coming in constantly increasing numbers. With the exception of two regiments, one from Georgia and one from Alabama, and a battalion raised in and near Baltimore, the troops were all from the Mississippi valley—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Grim-visaged war presented itself to these citizen soldiers and their inexperienced officers under its least heroic aspect. The ships which brought them, some of them sailing vessels, were greatly overcrowded, and there was indescribable suffering from heat and sea-sickness. When, after periods varying from three to seventeen days at sea, they reached their destination, only one hundred and seventy-five miles north of the tropic, they saw nothing but a barren waste of dazzling white sand, without a single blade of vegetation to relieve the eye. Upon these burning sands the troops were landed, and were generally kept waiting through long summer days before it was possible to send river steam-boats around to the Brazos de Santiago to transport their stores and property to the mouth of the Rio Grande River. When the quartermaster of the army, after greater or less delays, was able to supply transportation, the men were marched along the beach, waded the shallow Boca Chica, marched to the river, and thence up to various places scattered along from a point opposite Burrita to a point opposite Matamoros, where they were permanently encamped.

The march from the mouth of the river was through a primitive wilderness, strange and picturesque to Northern eyes. The cactus and the Spanish bayonet dotted the open spaces; wild cattle and horses were seen running over the marshy prairie; the numerous lagoons and ponds swarmed with wild geese and ducks and the red-winged flamingo;

¹ Taylor to Adjutant-General, Aug. 31, 1846; *ibid.*, 322.

and the dense chaparral everywhere closed the background.

The rainy season had only just begun, and the sufferings of the troops from heat and unaccustomed marching were greatly increased by almost incessant wet weather. "Our camp," wrote one soldier, "which was near the river bank, was soon ankle-deep in mud; the heavy rain continued to fall incessantly; we were unable to cook our food or to sleep with any degree of comfort, for our clothes and blankets were thoroughly saturated with water night and day."¹ The rain, however, afforded one advantage, as the river had risen to an immense height, and it was reported by the inhabitants that for many years such a freshet had not been known. As a result, the usually shallow stream was rendered more navigable, though the current was extremely swift and the river steam-boats found difficulty in ascending the river. An advance by land was almost impracticable.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the volunteers suffered severely from sickness, which was particularly marked in the case of the men who had been suddenly transported from north of the Ohio River to a low latitude in the middle of summer. The volunteer surgeons were not always men of education or experience, and the surgeons of the regular army were reported by Taylor to be "too few even for their appropriate duties."²

Taylor was thus obviously disabled for some time from making any extensive forward movement. But early in June he wrote that he proposed to send a battalion of infantry up the river and eventually to establish a large depot at Camargo. Toward the end of June the seventh regiment of regulars and a portion of the Texas cavalry were therefore advanced, first as far as Reynosa, and then to Camargo, where they arrived on the fourteenth of July.

¹ Reid, *Scouting Expeditions of the Texas Rangers*, 55.

² Taylor to Adjutant-General, Sept. 3, 1846; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 417-419. The surgeon-general of the army, however, under date of July 29, 1846, reported that the regular troops employed against Mexico had comparatively as large a number of medical officers as any other army in the world.—(*Ibid.*, 415.)

By the end of the month the whole of the regular force had either reached Camargo or was in motion thither.

"We have now," Taylor wrote on July 22, "several steamboats in the river and the business of sending up troops and supplies is urged as much as possible. I find the difficulty of throwing supplies up the river to be very great, in consequence of the rapidity of the current, and the entire absence of dry steamboat fuel. But every effort will be employed to overcome these difficulties, and I have no doubt that we shall be able to keep up a depot at Camargo quite sufficient for any operations from that point. As yet the land route to Camargo is impassable for wagons owing to the recent rains and freshets. As soon as it shall become practicable, the field artillery and train of the army will move forward to Camargo. As soon as I can complete the necessary arrangements for throwing forward the volunteer troops to Camargo I propose to establish my headquarters at that point, and organize, without delay, a marching column to move to Monterey."¹

Accordingly, on July 30, Taylor issued orders for the movement of such of the volunteers as were destined to join in the advance, consisting of two Kentucky regiments, two Ohio regiments, two Tennessee regiments, the Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia regiments, and the Baltimore battalion. The rest of the volunteers were to remain near Matamoros. The heavy baggage, with four companies of each regiment and two companies of the Baltimore battalion, were to be sent forward by water. The remaining companies of each corps marched by land as soon as provided with wagons by the quartermaster's department, as did also the dragoons and horse artillery.²

The frail and filthy little steam-boats provided for transportation required nearly a week to struggle up to Camargo against the rushing waters of the winding river, owing partly to lack of fuel, partly to high water, and partly to the ignorance of the stream on the part of the pilots.

"At that period," as one of the Ohio volunteers recorded, "but few wood yards had been established, and we were sometimes compelled to take the troops ashore to gather the pickets enclosing the fields to

¹ Taylor to Adjutant-General, July 22, 1846; *ibid.*, 399.

² General Orders No. 93; *ibid.*, 496.

be used as fuel. Occasionally, too, we were detained at places where the river, in its whole length brimful, had overrun its banks and covered the country for miles, forming wide lagoons in which our pilots had to sound for the channel."¹

The march by land was as tedious and much more toilsome. Near the river the men were forced to wade through mud and water, nearly waist deep, in a burning sun. Back from the river there were rocky and desert stretches, where no water was to be found, and the troops suffered desperately from thirst. But at last, by the end of August, Taylor had assembled a force he considered adequate at Camargo and was ready to begin his advance. At Camargo, however, as at the camps lower down the river, there was much sickness: measles, dysentery, and fever, presumably typhoid.

"The mortality in our camp at Camargo," the same Ohio volunteer wrote, "was appalling. The dead march was ever wailing in our ears, and even at this distant period, I can scarcely look back to our brief stay there without a shudder. . . . Large hospital tents were constantly full—the dead being removed at sunrise and sunset but to make room for the dying. The groans and lamentations of the poor sufferers during those sickly sultry nights were heart-rending."²

The regular troops, who were better acclimated and better campaigners than the volunteers, suffered less, and the movement from Camargo was begun by a portion of the regulars under General Worth, who marched up to Mier about the nineteenth of August and thence to Cerralvo, a town about half-way between Camargo and Monterey. They were gradually followed by the remainder of the army, until by the first week in September all of those who were destined to take part in the advance were upon the road.

Four months had thus very nearly elapsed from the time of the battle of Resaca de la Palma, during which Taylor had been endeavoring to collect an effective force of only six thousand men, and to transport them to a point from which

¹ Giddings, *Sketches of the Campaign in Northern Mexico*, 49.

² *Ibid.*, 83.

they might begin operations against the Mexican troops. These delays had thoroughly justified Scott's anticipations that there would be no need for his own presence at the front before the first of September. His proposal in the month of May had been that the volunteers should be mustered into service and armed as promptly as practicable, and then held in camps of instruction in their own localities in readiness to move to the Rio Grande early in the autumn.¹ The President and his cabinet, however, as well as the newspapers of the United States, had manifested the greatest impatience at this delay, a striking example of the pathetic ignorance concerning the essential conditions of warfare which a peaceful nation is always certain to exhibit.²

Taylor's movements were doubtless hastened by his knowledge of this criticism. In a way he was unprepared. He had no accurate information in regard to the number of the Mexican troops in his front, or indeed whether there was any substantial garrison at Monterey or any likelihood of its being defended. No effort had as yet been made to impede his march or to interfere with the passage of the boats up and down the Rio Grande; and this failure of the most obvious means of defence naturally suggested that perhaps Monterey might be abandoned by the Mexicans.³ These anticipations were soon dissipated.

On the third of September Worth wrote from Cerralvo, reporting the fall of the Paredes government and the arrival of Santa Anna at the city of Mexico. He also reported that two thousand troops of the line had arrived at Monterey at the end of August with four pieces of field artillery, that ten guns had previously been placed in position, and that while there was no cavalry at Monterey it was supposed to be at Cadereyta and Marin. Lieutenant George G. Meade,

¹ Scott to Marey, May 25, 1846; Sen. Doc. 378, 29 Cong., 1 sess., 11.

² This aspect of the case is well explained in Meade, I, 110.

³ On August 14 Taylor wrote to General Wool that he "anticipated no serious difficulty in reaching and occupying Saltillo by October 1." See H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 411. On August 23, writing to his son-in-law, he said: "I fear the enemy will not fight us at Monterey, or in force anywhere else unless we penetrate far beyond there or Saltillo."—(Taylor to Wood, Aug. 23, 1846; *Taylor's Letters from the Battlefields*, 45-50.)

his principal engineer officer, was trying to get an accurate plan of the city showing the approaches and projected points of resistance. The weather for several days had been "very unpropitious" and, he feared, would impede the trains; but a few days of fair weather would restore the roads to good condition.¹

Worth's information as to reinforcements was fairly correct. Paredes, as has already been stated, had felt able to spare three thousand men from the city of Mexico, the last of which left the capital on the twenty-seventh of July in very wet weather. This brigade, under General Simeon Ramírez, reached Celaya on August 6, where they were overtaken by the news of the pronunciamiento of Salas, and they were ordered by the central government to halt and await further orders. A meeting of officers was held to decide what to do. Half of them were in favor of joining Salas and half in favor of standing by Paredes; but on the ninth they received news of the fall of Paredes, and under orders from the new government they continued on their march.²

The whole strength of these reinforcements when they left the capital was, as nearly as could be ascertained, three thousand one hundred and forty men, with thirteen field-pieces and three seven-inch mortars. They marched in three detachments at some distance apart, the last of which entered Monterey on the ninth of September, nearly a week after Worth had sent his budget of news from Cervalvo. Allowing for casualties on the march, the reinforcements numbered probably three thousand men when they reached Monterey. They were made up of three battalions of infantry of the line, two infantry battalions of permanent militia (Aguascalientes and Querétaro), two squadrons of regular cavalry, two squadrons of the lancers of Jalisco, and two of the Guanajuato regiment of cavalry. The total force then in Monterey, including these reinforcements,

¹ Worth to Bliss, Sept. 3, 1846; *ibid.*, 419.

² Balbontin, 16. The author gives a vivid and very informing account of the officers' discussion.

consisted of about four thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry, with forty-six pieces of field artillery, many of which were in bad condition. There were also, it would appear, some guns of position of moderate calibre. About a thousand men of the garrison were local militia, most of them mounted rancheros.¹

Taylor's army, as finally organized for the advance on Monterey, consisted of four divisions, two composed mainly of regulars and two entirely of volunteers. The first division was made up of the second dragoons, the first, third, and fourth regular infantry, Captain Shiver's company of Texas three months' volunteers who had re-enlisted, Ridgeley's and Bragg's batteries of artillery, and the Baltimore volunteer battalion. It was under the command of Brigadier-General David E. Twiggs, a native of Georgia. He had received his first commission as captain in the regular army just before the opening of the War of 1812, in which he played a modest part; and had served under General Jackson in his march toward St. Augustine in 1817, and in both the Black Hawk war and the Seminole war, in Florida. He was otherwise without distinction.

The second division consisted of a battalion of regular artillery serving as infantry, the fifth, seventh, and eighth regular infantry, Blanchard's company of re-enlisted Louisiana three months' volunteers, and Duncan's and Taylor's batteries of artillery. It was commanded by Brigadier-General William J. Worth, a native of New York, who had served in the War of 1812 as aid first to General Morgan Lewis and then to General Scott. He was made a captain near the close of that war as a reward for meritorious services on the Niagara frontier. After the war he was

¹ Balbontin, 27. The above estimate may very likely be too low. Arista, when he retreated from Matamoros, had 2,638 men left by the time he reached Linares.—(*México á través de los Siglos*, IV, 566.) There were probably some troops in or near Monterey at that time. Adding the three thousand reinforcements from the city of Mexico and the thousand rancheros, the total force must have amounted to as much as seven thousand men. In October, after sustaining losses by battle and desertion, Ampudia still had nearly six thousand men left; but he may have received some small accessions of force.