

by that time General Patterson had come up with the volunteer division, and by virtue of his rank as major-general took command of the whole force and issued an order suspending further operations until the arrival of General Scott.<sup>1</sup>

About noon on April 14 Scott arrived at Plan del Rio, and extensive reconnoissances were at once begun by two very competent young officers, Lieutenant P. T. Beauregard and Captain Robert E. Lee. The detailed examination of the ground by the engineers revealed the almost impregnable nature of Santa Anna's position near the river; but it was also Lee's opinion that by leaving the high-road near the point where it turned southwesterly a path could be made for some distance along a ravine parallel to the river, which would completely turn the left of Santa Anna's position.

Scott resolved, therefore, "to turn the enemy's left and attack in rear, while menacing or engaging his front"; and in accordance with this decision general orders were issued at Plan del Rio on Saturday, April 17, announcing that the enemy's whole line of intrenchments and batteries would be attacked in front, and at the same time turned, early on the following day. Twiggs's division, reinforced by two volunteer regiments under General Shields, was directed to move forward before daylight from the position it then occupied, and take up a position across the national road in the enemy's rear, so as to cut off a retreat toward Jalapa. Worth's division of regulars was to start at sunrise on Sunday morning, to follow Twiggs's movement against the enemy's left. Pillow's brigade was to be ready—

"as soon as he hears the report of arms on our right, or sooner, if circumstances should favor him, to pierce the enemy's line of batteries at such point—the nearer to the river the better—as he may select. Once in the rear of that line, he will turn to the right or left, or both, and attack the batteries in reverse, or, if abandoned, he will pursue the enemy with vigor until further orders."

<sup>1</sup> Patterson was ill at the time, and a few days after this was obliged to return home on leave. He reached Washington by the eleventh of June, and gave the President much interesting news from the army.—(Polk's *Diary*, III, 56 et seq.). Patterson saw no further fighting.

One field-battery and all the cavalry were to be held in reserve on the national road, a little out of view and range of the enemy's batteries.

"The enemy's batteries being carried or abandoned, all our divisions and corps will pursue with vigor. This pursuit may be continued many miles, until stopped by darkness or fortified positions, toward Jalapa. Consequently, the body of the army will not return to this encampment; but will be followed to-morrow afternoon or early the next morning by the baggage trains of the several corps."<sup>1</sup>

Twiggs's division, which Scott, in his orders of April 17, referred to as being "already advanced within easy turning distance toward the enemy's left," had marched out from the camp at Plan del Rio on the morning of that day, following the rough track which Lee and Beauregard had traced, "over chasms," as General Grant remembered in his later years—

"where the walls were so steep that men could barely climb them. Animals could not. . . . The engineers, who had directed the opening, led the way and the troops followed. Artillery was let down the steep slopes by hand, the men engaged attaching a strong rope to the rear axle and letting the guns down, a piece at a time, while the men at the ropes kept their ground at the top, paying out gradually, while a few at the front directed the course of the piece. In like manner the guns were drawn by hand up the opposite slopes."<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding very slowly, with the rifle regiment in advance as skirmishers, the column cautiously felt its way through the chaparral until about two o'clock in the afternoon, when they arrived at the bottom of the Atalaya hill. They were there fired upon by some Mexican skirmishers, and the rifles, with the first artillery (serving as infantry), were at once ordered to charge the hill and take it.

"The balls came whistling in no very pleasant manner," wrote one of the artillerymen, "as we made our way up the steep hill, helping ourselves occasionally by the branches of the bushes; but the Mexicans are bad shots, and besides they were afraid to expose themselves

<sup>1</sup> General orders No. 111, April 17, 1847; Sen. Doc. 1, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 259.

<sup>2</sup> Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 132.

by going forward to take deliberate aim; so that all their balls went whistling over our heads, doing us no damage whatever. In the meantime on we went, shouting and hurraing as if we were going to some delightful entertainment, every one in a state of the highest excitement, and nearly out of breath with hurraing and running up the steep hill, but at the same time disdaining to think of stopping to recover it."<sup>1</sup>

As the American troops reached the summit the small body of Mexicans on the top fled down the other side pursued by their assailants, who were exposed, as they reached the valley between the Atalaya and Cerro Gordo hills, to a severe fire from the latter position, and suffered some loss; but two mountain howitzers and part of a rocket battery also reached the Atalaya summit and helped to hold it against a threatened Mexican return. The American advance at this time, therefore, was checked, and the troops in the valley sheltered themselves behind rocks and trees as best they might until darkness fell, when they returned to the summit and rejoined the main body of the division, which bivouacked on the ground they had first occupied.

During the night one twenty-four-pounder gun and two twenty-four-pounder howitzers, with infinite labor, were dragged up by hand from the rear, under the direction of Captain Lee, and placed in position on the summit of the Atalaya hill. Twiggs was also joined during the night by three volunteer regiments under Shields—two Illinois and one New York—Scott's orders having been varied by sending three regiments instead of two. And on the same night, "with extreme toil and difficulty," as Scott reported, an eight-inch howitzer was put in position on the southerly side of the river, opposite to the Mexican right and a little over half a mile distant from their works.

Early on the morning of Sunday, April 18, the several columns of Scott's army moved to the general attack in accordance with his orders of the evening before. Twiggs at dawn found that the body of troops in front of him was being strongly reinforced, and his men were at once ordered

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of an English Soldier*, 180.

to prepare to assault the Cerro Gordo ridge. At the same time his heavy artillery opened fire from the top of the Atalaya hill, and the Mexican position was also shelled by the mountain howitzers and rocket battery, which had been moved to a point further west. Under this fire the rifle regiment, the first artillery, and the third and seventh infantry were sent forward to the assault. They had to descend from the Atalaya hill to cross a ravine, and to ascend the steep slopes of the Cerro Gordo under a heavy fire. A breastwork, lined by Mexican troops, near the bottom of the hill was quickly carried, and the troops scrambled up without any serious loss, the slope being steep, rocky, and covered with thickets for about two-thirds of the way up. As the first American skirmishers approached the summit, a strong force of Mexican infantry posted behind a breastwork checked the advance of the brigade for three or four minutes; but as the main body of the attacking party came up cheering, the defenders "threw their muskets down and scampered in the utmost confusion down the opposite side of the hill." The captured Mexican guns were at once turned with great effect on the retreating troops and upon their supports stationed along the road.

While these regiments were carrying the summit of Cerro Gordo the remainder of Twiggs's division had continued along the northerly and westerly side of the hill for the purpose of carrying out Scott's orders to take up a position in the Mexican rear; but being attacked in flank by a Mexican force, the American troops faced south, and advanced in line across the hills that lay between them and the high-road.

"On coming out in the plain west of Cerro Gordo," Twiggs reported, "and in full view of the Jalapa road, a battery of five guns, supported by a body of lancers, was discovered. General Shields's brigade was discovered by this portion of the enemy. The battery opened with grape on him and on Lieutenant Benjamin's company. The gallant general, with a shout from his men, pushed boldly for the road on the enemy's left, who, seeing their position completely turned, as well as driven from the hill, abandoned themselves to flight and the battle was over."

Among those who fled from this part of the field were General Canalizo and all his cavalry, Almonte, and Santa Anna himself. As the latter related, the capture of Cerro Gordo hill and the artillery fire from its summit threw his men into such confusion that the infantry fled headlong down the steep paths that led to the bottom of the cañon, and he would himself have been made prisoner had he not instantly followed them. As the Americans by this time were advancing toward these paths he took the nearest of them, which he descended with difficulty (on muleback, it seems), crossed the river, and rode up a similar path on the south side. At a clearing he managed to collect a small number of the fugitives and pushed on for El Encero, where he had expected to find Canalizo and the cavalry; but Canalizo had continued five leagues beyond El Encero, and Santa Anna was compelled to continue his flight to the town of Orizaba, more than thirty miles southwesterly from the field of battle.

Before the Mexicans on the left of Santa Anna's line broke and fled, as just related, a vigorous contest had been begun on his extreme right, and the sound of the battle from that quarter doubtless hastened the steps of the fugitives. Pillow's brigade of volunteers, composed of two Tennessee and two Pennsylvania regiments, had been ordered to advance when he heard Twiggs's guns and to "pierce the enemy's line of batteries"; but before he had been able even to take up a position in front of the Mexican works the sound of Twiggs's attack on Cerro Gordo was heard. The line of advance was indicated by Lieutenants Zealous B. Tower and George B. McClellan, of the corps of engineers, and the volunteers advanced with energy and enthusiasm. As they approached the batteries they encountered many serious obstacles, such as dense chaparral thickets and brush entanglements, and sustained so heavy a loss—General Pillow himself being badly wounded—that the brigade halted, fell back a short distance, and did not succeed in accomplishing anything.

When Twiggs gained the high-road, and the main body of the Mexicans took flight, it was therefore impossible for

him to pursue immediately, as the force which had withstood Pillow's attack and the force supporting the battery on the road near these hills were still intact. But in a few moments these troops discovered that they were entirely surrounded; and as their only means of retreat was by means of the highway, of which Twiggs's division was in full possession, they hoisted a white flag at 9.35 A. M., and after a short parley surrendered as prisoners of war. Twiggs, with his infantry, then turned to pursue the retreating force along the high-road. He was presently overtaken and passed by the cavalry and artillery which Scott had held in reserve, and the pursuit of the flying Mexicans rolled away on that day as far as Santa Anna's hacienda of El Encero; but beyond dispersing still further the Mexican army no serious damage was done them. The Mexicans had had half an hour's start on the infantry and nearly two hours on the cavalry.

But though the pursuit yielded no captives, the results of the battle were surprisingly complete. Santa Anna's army was, for the moment, utterly dispersed, the road to the city of Mexico was open, and the whole of the Mexican artillery, ammunition, and supplies had fallen into Scott's hands.

"We are quite embarrassed," he wrote in his first report of the battle, "with the results of victory—prisoners of war, heavy ordnance, field batteries, small arms, and accoutrements. About three thousand men laid down their arms, with the usual proportion of field and company officers, besides five generals, several of them of great distinction. Pinson, Jarrero, La Vega, Norriega, and Obando. A 6th general, Vasquez, was killed in defending the battery (tower) in the rear of the whole Mexican army, the capture of which gave us those glorious results. . . . I have determined to parole the prisoners—officers and men—as I have not the means of feeding them here beyond to-day, and cannot afford to detach a heavy body of horse and foot, with wagons, to accompany them to Vera Cruz. Our baggage train, though increasing, is not yet half large enough to give an assured progress to this army. . . . The small arms and other accoutrements, being of no value to our army here or at home, I have ordered them to be destroyed; for we have not the means of transporting them. I am also somewhat embarrassed with the pieces of artillery—all bronze—which we have captured. It would take a brigade and half the mules of this army to transport them fifty miles.

A field battery I shall take for service with the army; but the heavy metal must be collected and left here for the present. We have our own siege-train and the proper carriages with us. . . . One of the principal motives for paroling the prisoners of war is to diminish the resistance of other garrisons in our march."

On the following morning, Monday, May 19, Scott with all the regulars and Shields's brigade of volunteers entered Jalapa; and Worth's division, which had not been seriously engaged in the battle, was sent forward in advance toward Perote, where it was anticipated that resistance would be made. But Worth, advancing cautiously, soon passed the abandoned position of La Joya, where he found that defensive works had been begun and partially armed; and at noon, on April 22, he reached Perote and took peaceable possession of the old Spanish castle with sixty-six guns and large supplies of ammunition.<sup>1</sup>

The number of troops engaged on the American side may be closely estimated at nine thousand men, which includes Worth's division, who practically took no part at all in the action. The American losses amounted to 16 killed and 73 wounded in Twiggs's attack on the Atalaya hill on the seventeenth, and 247 killed and 295 wounded in the general battle of the eighteenth, about half the loss having occurred in the volunteer brigades of Pillow and Shields.

Santa Anna's forces were variously stated by him at seven thousand or seven thousand five hundred men; but from other sources it would appear that his total force amounted to over eight thousand rank and file, of which 5,840 were infantry and at least two thousand were cavalry. In addition there were a large number of artillerists for the forty guns he had in position, besides his medical corps and other non-combatants.<sup>2</sup> The locality was, of course, such that

<sup>1</sup> See Scott's reports of the battle with the reports from his subordinates; Sen. Doc. 1, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 249-302. See also accounts by eye-witnesses in Ripley, II, 55-77; *Autobiography of an English Soldier*, 178-189; Semmes, 175-184; Brackett, 53-72; *Reminiscences of a Campaign in Mexico*, 241-250; Hitchcock, 249-253; Oswaldel, 108-136; *Apelacion al buen Criterio*, 34-42, App., 69. Also Roa Bárcena, 194-239; *Apuntes para la Historia de la Guerra*, etc., 168-183; and Wilcox, 276-296.

<sup>2</sup> Roa Bárcena, 196.

Santa Anna's cavalry were of no use in the battle; and though they might have protected the retreat of the left wing when it was driven back by Twiggs's division, they were foremost in the flight.

Santa Anna's choice of the pass of Cerro Gordo as the spot at which to await attack by Scott's army was much criticised at the time by Mexican officers; and indeed he seems to have had no settled opinion of his own upon a matter concerning which he should have been the highest authority, as the scene of the battle lay about half-way between his two principal haciendas of Manga de Clavo and El Encero. His first idea had been to make a stand at the National Bridge, about fifteen miles east of Plan del Rio, and the pass of La Joya had also been considered; but apart from any other objection, the latter point was seven or eight miles west of Jalapa, and its defence would have necessitated giving up the town to the Americans without a blow.

Colonel Robles, who was Santa Anna's chief engineer, expressed himself as strongly of opinion that Cerro Gordo was not the best place to make resistance. Some slight intrenchments along the road he thought might serve to delay the American army, but he was in favor of fortifying and strongly holding the position of Corral Falso, about six miles in the rear of the ranchería of Cerro Gordo. His objections to Cerro Gordo were briefly: The difficulty of getting water, owing to the fact that the river near Cerro Gordo ran through a cañon five or six hundred feet deep; the great length of the line it was necessary to hold and the difficulty of reinforcing any threatened point; the impossibility of making use of the cavalry, in which the Mexican army was superior in numbers; the broken and woody character of the surrounding land, which facilitated the enemy's advance up to within a very short distance of the defenders; the possibility of the position being turned; and finally, the impossibility, in case of disaster, of saving the artillery and effecting an orderly retreat.

Moreover, Robles insisted that if the position of Cerro Gordo was to be held at all it was necessary to fortify

the Atalaya hill. Upon all these points he was overruled by Santa Anna himself, who, as we have seen, visited the ground in person. So far as fortifying Atalaya hill was concerned he and his staff decided that it was useless; first, because it was commanded by the hill of Cerro Gordo, and, second, because it was surrounded on the north and east by gullies and woods which, according to Santa Anna's own expression, not even a rabbit could get through. But Twiggs's division got through, and their capture of the Atalaya hill on the afternoon of the seventeenth enabled them early the next morning to pierce the centre and turn the left of the Mexican line.<sup>1</sup>

Scott found subject for congratulation in the assertion that his orders for a battle had been exactly carried out. The result had indeed been what he had foreseen, but in detail the battle was fought on somewhat different lines. It was evidently his intention that Twiggs's division should not undertake any active fighting until they struck the high-road west of the Cerro Gordo hill on Sunday morning, where they were expected to take the Mexican force in the rear; but this expectation must have been based upon imperfect knowledge of the topography, which practically necessitated the taking of Atalaya and the adjacent hills on Saturday, so as to enable Twiggs's division to pass north and west of them to the high-road. It is also probable that Scott never intended so vigorous an attack upon the Mexican right as Pillow actually attempted. Pillow was ordered not to assault the Mexican batteries until he heard Twiggs's guns, and it was clearly Scott's expectation that these guns would not be heard until Twiggs was established in the rear of the Mexican army, and that then no very vigorous defence of the batteries was to be anticipated. As it turned out, Twiggs's guns were heard long before the head of his column had reached the high-road, and when it was attacking not the rear but the centre of the Mexican position, and under the circumstances Pillow's assault was doomed to failure. Scott's victory at Cerro Gordo had opened the road to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

capital, and if he had been in possession of sufficient means of transportation he could undoubtedly have marched directly to the valley of Mexico, even with the limited number of effective men which casualties in battle and the uncertainties of the climate had left him. His difficulties in the way of moving his troops were not very well understood at Washington, though Scott's proper objective was quite clearly apprehended; and the administration felt much annoyance at what they all regarded as inexcusable delay.

"I would not only march to the city of Mexico," said the President in a cabinet discussion, "but I would pursue Santa Anna's army wherever it was, and capture or destroy it. I expressed the opinion that if I had a proper commander of the army, who would lay aside the technical rules of war to be found in books, which required a long train of baggage wagons; one who would go light & move rapidly, I had no doubt Santa Anna & his whole army could be destroyed or captured in a short time."<sup>1</sup>

Scott, however, did adhere to "the technical rules of war," and did not attempt to move without the means of subsisting his army. Perhaps his greatest anxiety at this time was that of supply. Writing from Jalapa to Colonel Wilson, the governor of Vera Cruz, he said: "We already occupy Perote and shall soon occupy Puebla. Indeed, we might safely take possession of Mexico without a loss, perhaps, of one hundred men"; but the real dangers and difficulties arose from the necessity of keeping communications open with Vera Cruz. He therefore urged on Wilson the infinite importance of getting up all essential supplies; those, namely, that fell within the ordnance, quartermaster's, commissary, and medical departments. Those which Scott regarded as indispensable were—

"medicines and hospital stores, clothing for troops, salt, ammunition, shoes for animals, and coffee; articles only a little inferior in importance are knapsacks, blankets, hard bread, bacon and camp kettles; sugar, flour, rice, fresh meat, beans and forage, we hope to find in the country. The above lists of indispensable articles, and of articles almost equally so, may not be complete, but it is nearly so."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Polk's Diary*, II, 432.

<sup>2</sup> Scott to Wilson, April 23, 1847; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 946.

A few days later he wrote in a querulous tone to the War Department, complaining of the insufficiency of his trains to bring up essential supplies, and of the difficulties of guarding his communications with Vera Cruz. The first fifty miles west of the port, up to Cerro Gordo, with the exception, perhaps, of one locality (Paso de Ovejas), were as deadly to strangers as any part of the coast; and he concluded that he could not leave any garrisons along those fifty miles. It would be necessary, in any case, he thought, to supply strong escorts to all trains, in order "to guard them against rancheros and other irregular troops of the enemy, who are well acquainted with the country and are natives of the climate."

He also wrote that he had expected the rapid arrival of detachments of the new regiments, and had made arrangements to send forward trains with each successive detachment of those troops; but he had just learned that about three thousand men under General Cadwalader, upon whom he had counted, had been ordered to the Rio Grande—to his great disappointment.<sup>1</sup>

"I have no certain intelligence," he added, "from Major General Taylor, later than his victory at Buena Vista, save that he had cleared his rear of the enemy, and the general belief at this place (Jalapa), which I begin to doubt, that he has reached San Luis de Potosi. I have sent an emissary to communicate with him, wherever he may be. . . . Here the weather is uncomfortably cool and requiring winter clothing, at the end of April; twenty-five miles below, the heat, except in the northers, is distressing early in March. Unfortunately, very many of our men, regulars as well as volunteers, have lost both great-coats and blankets, and the volunteers are otherwise badly clad. How many of the latter will re-engage under the act approved March 3rd, only received two days ago, I know not; probably but few. Hence the greater my disappointment, caused by sending the new troops to the Rio Grande; for, besides their keeping the road in our present rear open for many weeks, by marches, in successive detachments, I had intended, as I advanced, to leave strong garrisons in this place, in Perote and Puebla, and to keep, at the head of the movement,

<sup>1</sup> Cadwalader had been ordered to the Rio Grande in a moment of panic when Taylor's communications were severed after Buena Vista. At the very moment Scott was complaining of Cadwalader's detention, orders were being issued directing him to proceed to Vera Cruz.

a force equal to any probable opposition. It may now depend on the number of old volunteers who may re-engage, and a number of new troops that may arrive from the Brazos in time, as also, in some degree, upon the advance of Major General Taylor, whether I shall find this army in strength to leave the garrisons and to occupy the capital."<sup>1</sup>

Some ten days later Scott felt strong enough to push forward his advance to Puebla, and orders were accordingly issued to Worth, who was halted at Perote, to advance as soon as he was joined by General Quitman with three regiments of volunteers "and a train with some general supplies for the army." One regiment of volunteers, with a detachment of artillerists sufficient to serve the batteries of the castle, were to be left as a garrison; and Worth, with his own division and the two remaining regiments of Quitman's brigade, was to take and hold Puebla, but was not to advance beyond it. Scott then hoped to reach Puebla himself with Twiggs's division in the course of about two weeks later, depending on the arrival of trains from Vera Cruz.<sup>2</sup>

It was the expectation of the War Department at this time that by the end of June Scott's force would number twenty thousand, even after allowing for the discharge of the twelve months' men. In all 8,113 volunteers had been raised under the call of November, 1846, and it was expected that 5,360 more would be raised under a call issued April 19, 1847, of which Scott, of course, had no notice when he wrote from Jalapa. There were, besides, the ten additional "new regular" regiments which were to be enlisted for the war, numbering 8,512 rank and file.<sup>3</sup> But the calculations of the department failed to take into account the great amount of sickness in the army. Early in June there were about three thousand two hundred men in Scott's various hospitals, which left him with certainly less than ten thousand effective men in all. In this instance, as generally throughout the war, the generals in the field and the officials of the War Department

<sup>1</sup> Scott to Marcy, April 28, 1847; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 944.

<sup>2</sup> Scott to Worth, May 6, 1847; *ibid.*, 957.

<sup>3</sup> Marcy to Scott, April 30, 1847; *ibid.*, 922-928. Same to same, May 20, 1847; *ibid.*, 953.