

in vain to capture.¹ A detachment from the army under General Quitman was sent along the beach to co-operate with the navy, but on arrival at the mouth of the river they found that the fort, as well as the towns higher up, had already surrendered to the United States steamer *Scourge*.

A few days later Commodore Perry undertook with his naval forces to capture the town of Tuxpan, lying about half-way between Vera Cruz and Tampico. He started on April 12 from Vera Cruz with the steam-vessels in his squadron, having sent his sailing vessels a few days beforehand to meet him at Lobos Island, where the whole fleet concentrated on the seventeenth. The next morning the small vessels of the squadron were towed up the river to attack the forts, which were under command of General Cos, the hero who had defended San Antonio against the Texans in 1835. As the flotilla approached the first of the forts, about a mile and a half below the town, the rowing boats were run ashore, and the men in them jumped out and carried the fort in an instant. The remaining forts higher up the river were in like manner carried by assault, the town was taken, and a custom-house established.²

The American forces, therefore, now held at their mercy the whole Gulf coast of Mexico, including its one reasonably good harbor—that of Vera Cruz—and were henceforth able, through their undisputed command of the sea, to land and supply troops in such number as they might think advisable.

¹ Conner's want of success at Alvarado was thought by many men in the navy to be due to his lack of dash and enterprise—the consequence perhaps of continued ill-health. He was a great sufferer from neuralgia. It is, however, very doubtful whether any one could have done any better, considering the imperfect means at his command. See Conner's *Home Squadron*; Curtis, *Life of Buchanan*, I, 603.

² See reports of Commodore Perry in H. R. Doc. 1, 30 Cong., 2 sess., 1192-1203.

CHAPTER XLII

CERRO GORDO

SANTA ANNA and his men, as they retreated after the battle of Buena Vista, reached the neighborhood of San Luis Potosí by the ninth of March, and there they were met by accounts of the recent outbreak of the clerical party against the established government. As it was evident that the time had come when Santa Anna must declare himself and intervene in the contest between the factions, which was paralyzing the government throughout the country, he started out, after a very short delay, upon his journey of something over three hundred miles to the capital.

From the remnants of his shattered army and the garrison that had been left behind in San Luis, Santa Anna was able to organize a body of troops fit for service, composed of four battalions of light infantry, two battalions of the line, two batteries of artillery, and some squadrons of cavalry. The infantry, amounting to about four thousand men, was organized in two brigades under the command of Generals Ciriaco Vasquez and Pedro Ampudia, respectively, while the cavalry was under General Julian Juvera. This force, numbering in all 5,650, was ordered to march in the direction of the capital, and it started from San Luis about the fifteenth of March. Santa Anna's favorite regiment of hussars was selected to escort the general-in-chief to the city of Mexico, and General Mora y Villamil was left at San Luis, in command of the remnants of the army, with orders to reorganize them, and make up what was to be called the Army of the North.¹

Travelling rapidly, Santa Anna with his cavalry escort

¹ Balbontin, *Invasion Americana*, 105.

reached the suburb of Guadalupe Hidalgo on the twentieth of March and announced that he would not enter the city of Mexico itself until order was restored. He had been met on his way at various points south of Querétaro by numbers of persons of both parties who had come to lay their case before him in the hope of enlisting his aid; and he appears to have been inclined at first to support the anti-clerical cause. But as he approached the capital his views seem to have changed, yet he prudently remained silent, and gave very little intimation of what his real intentions were.

On March 21, 1847, after considerable discussion over the propriety of the step, Congress determined that as Santa Anna would not come to the city, they would send a committee of members of both houses to meet him, and receive his oath of office as President of the republic at Guadalupe Hidalgo.¹ The committee immediately set out, and Santa Anna was duly sworn in.

On the next day the ministers, accompanied by a committee of the anti-clericals, also went to meet the President and congratulate him in the name of the government; but if these gentlemen expected that Santa Anna would declare himself upon their side they were very speedily undeceived. It is quite probable that his private and personal sympathies were in favor of the *puros*, but all he could do was to secure for them a safe and honorable retreat from the impossible position in which they were now placed, in consequence of the all but universal opposition to Farias and his plans.

Another committee which went out from the city of Mexico to visit Santa Anna was made up of members of the cathedral chapter, with whom Santa Anna appears to have been very non-committal indeed. Certainly he gave them no positive assurances at that time of what he would be willing to do. Some of the more extreme of the clerical party were—for continuing the existing struggle in the streets of Mexico—if struggle it may be called where there was a great deal of shooting but no real fighting—unless Santa Anna would accede to their views. But milder counsels prevailed, and

¹ Decree of March 21, 1847; *Dublán y Lozano*, V, 262.

in spite of the prohibitions of the Council of Trent a compromise was finally agreed to by which, in consideration of two million dollars in cash, Santa Anna was to procure the repeal of the obnoxious laws of January 11 and February 4.

The next thing was for Santa Anna to carry out this bargain, which was by no means a simple thing to do. Both factions were easily persuaded to lay down their arms, so that ostensibly peace prevailed for the moment in the city of Mexico; but Farias remained in office as Vice-President, and, as it was thought essential for Santa Anna to leave the capital to go out to meet Scott and the invading armies, he would have to leave Farias again at the head of the executive. But to get rid of Farias was a prerequisite to getting any form of government established that could carry on the business of the country, and Farias persistently refused to resign. For several days violent discussions followed as to the means of getting rid of him.

In the meantime a new cabinet was made up, with Manuel Baranda as Minister of Relations at its head; and with the aid of this ministry the question of raising money for the use of the army was again brought forward in Congress. Santa Anna had asked for and obtained the passage of an act which gave him extraordinary powers to raise twenty million dollars, but it was provided that he was not to alienate national territory in whole or in part, to impose forced loans, to make contracts of colonization, to seize private property, or to take possession of church property by virtue of the second article of the law of January 11.

The third article of the statute provided as follows:

"The executive shall also be empowered to enter into agreements with the persons and corporations who were affected by the laws of December 30th, January 11th and February 4th last, passed with the object of procuring money for the government; and shall also have power to decree the repeal of these laws, if he shall deem it expedient."¹

The power to repeal the anti-clerical laws having thus been put into Santa Anna's hands, while at the same time he

¹ Law of March 28, 1847; *ibid.*, 262.

was empowered to raise the amount to be levied on the church from fifteen to twenty millions, the bargain with the church authorities was quickly carried through. On the day after the passage of the law just cited Santa Anna issued a decree reciting the terms of the law of March 28, and expressly repealing the law of January 11 and the various regulations resulting from it;¹ and thus ended, for the time being, the controversy over the secularization of church property, to be renewed several years later on a larger scale.

The next measure to be adopted was the one removing Farias from office. This was accomplished by the passage of a short act which amended the Constitution by abolishing the office of Vice-President, and which provided that in the absence of the President in command of the army a substitute President should be named by Congress, who should hold office only until the President's return.²

On the day after the passage of this law the election of the substitute took place. The choice fell upon Brigadier-General Pedro María Anaya, a rather inconspicuous supporter of General Santa Anna, who had held office as minister of War under the brief Presidency of Herrera.

At two o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday, April 2, 1847, Santa Anna, having thus completed his business, left the city of Mexico to proceed to the front.

"Baranda tells me," recorded a resident of the city, "that the scene was extremely pathetic and that all the circumstances were extremely moving. It was as though it were the death of a deity, and he saw tears flowing even from the enemies of Santa Anna. The latter expressed sad presentiments. The reason for this haste is that he may arrive in time to occupy the position of La Joya, so as to fortify it and delay the march of the Americans."³

¹ Decree of March 29, 1847; *ibid.*, 263.

² Law of April 1, 1847; *ibid.*, 264.

³ The foregoing account of Santa Anna's course in settling the difficulties in the city of Mexico upon his return after the battle of Buena Vista is taken from García's *Documentos Inéditos (México Durante su Guerra con los E. U.)*, III, 208-218. This part of the work consists of a long letter written by J. F. Ramírez to F. Elorriaga, dated April 2, 1847, with a postscript dated April 3, forming together a contemporary account of the highest value. Ramírez was in a position to know very fully what was going on behind the scenes.

Santa Anna reached his hacienda of El Encero, about seven or eight miles east of Jalapa, on April 5, and for the next few days busied himself in giving instructions for occupying and fortifying a suitable position in which to await Scott's attack. It had been his first intention to make a stand at the pass of La Joya, a narrow defile a few miles west of Jalapa, but on a further examination of the ground he determined to intrench the pass of Cerro Gordo, twenty miles east of Jalapa.

The high-road which ran from Vera Cruz in a generally westerly direction reached, near this point, the first foot-hills of the tremendous range of mountains which forms the easterly boundary of the great central plateau of Mexico. At a small village known as Plan del Rio, the road turned abruptly northward, and crossed a little stream known as the Rio del Plan over a fine stone bridge thrown across upon a single arch, and then began the long ascent to Jalapa, which lies nearly three thousand feet above the sea. Running at first northwardly, the road crossed by a zigzag a ridge of hills, and then turned and ran northwesterly for about a mile and a half through a hilly country, when it turned again sharply to the southwest, until it regained the bank of the river at a point nearly three miles above the bridge, the stream at this part of its course running through a deep and precipitous cañon.

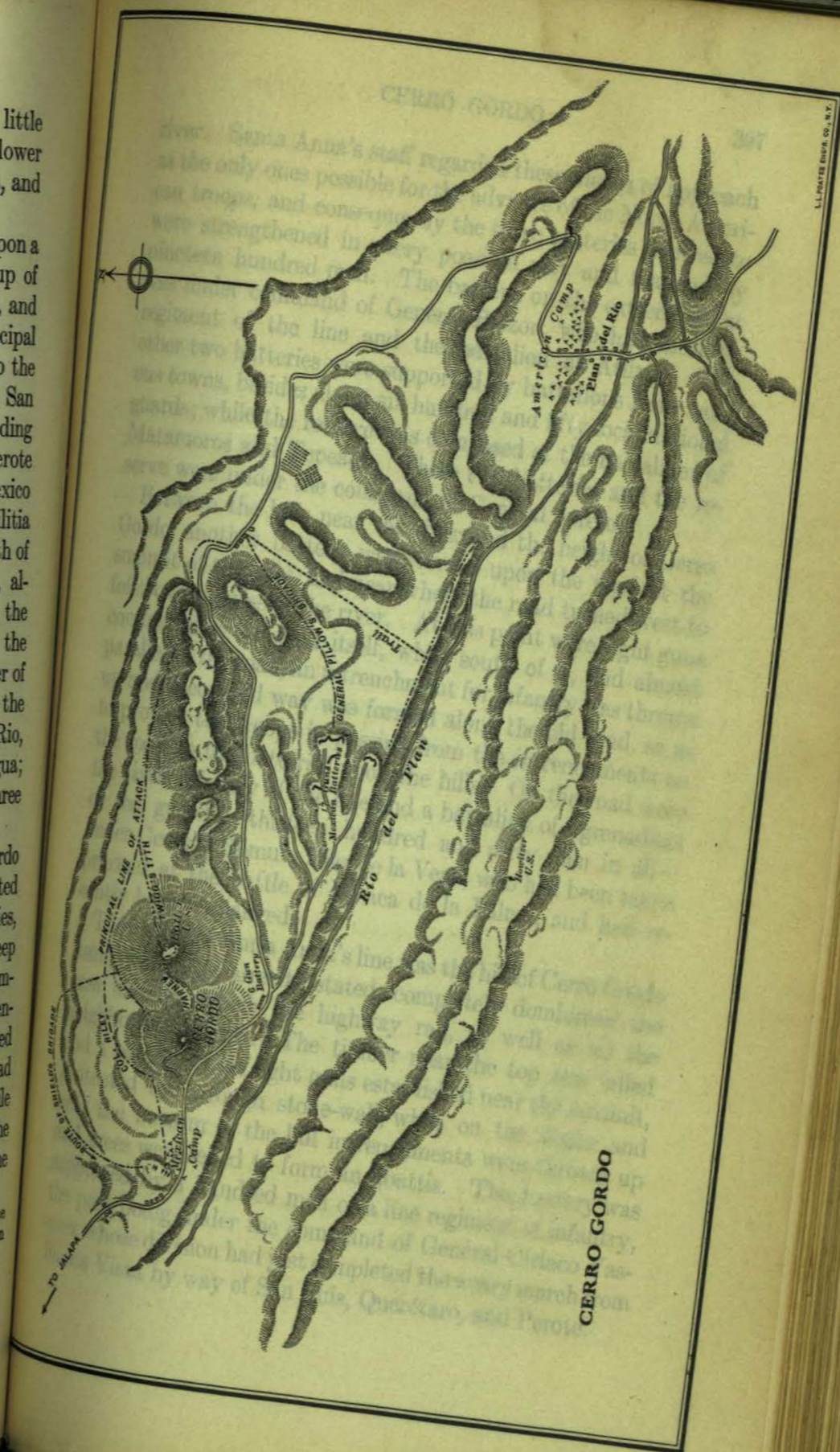
The road therefore, for about three miles above the bridge, formed, roughly speaking, an arc of a circle, of which the river—flowing nearly east and west—formed the chord. In the space between chord and arc, and close to the river, there are a number of steep hills which were covered for the most part with a dense and thorny chaparral. West of the point where the road first reached the river, after crossing the bridge at Plan del Rio, and dominating all the surrounding hills, is a very steep, isolated, conical mountain known as Cerro Gordo (thick ridge); and the road as it ran along the eastern base of this hill, and between it and the hills near the river, traversed a savage defile that formed the pass of Cerro Gordo.

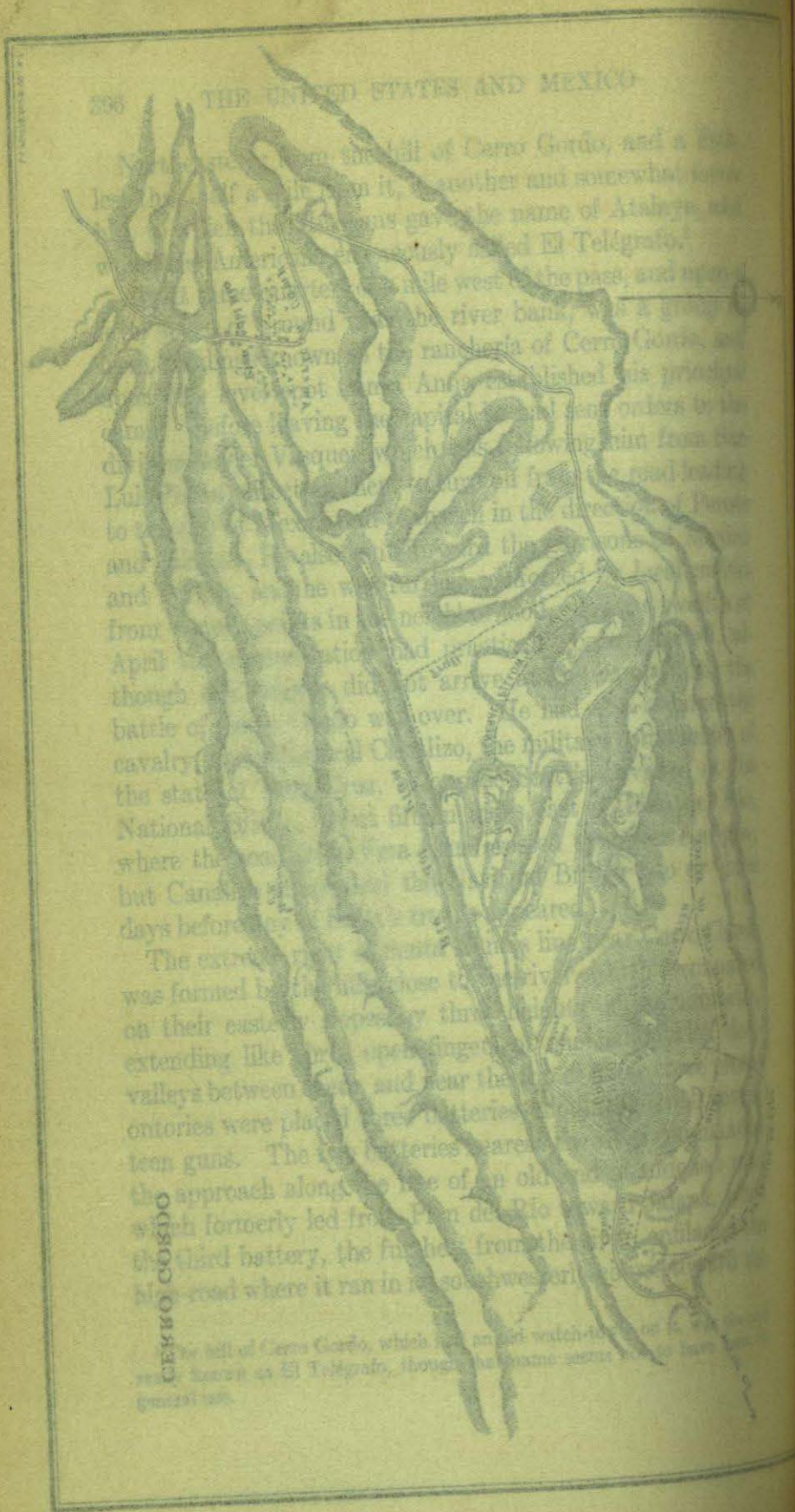
Northeasterly from the hill of Cerro Gordo, and a little less than half a mile from it, is another and somewhat lower hill, to which the Mexicans gave the name of Atalaya, and which the Americans erroneously called El Telégrafo.¹

About three-quarters of a mile west of the pass, and upon a level space of ground near the river bank, was a group of farm buildings known as the ranchería of Cerro Gordo, and upon this level spot Santa Anna established his principal camp. Before leaving the capital he had sent orders to the division under Vasquez, which was following him from San Luis Potosí, directing them to turn off from the road leading to the city of Mexico and to march in the direction of Perote and Jalapa. He also sent forward the garrisons of Mexico and Puebla, and he was further reinforced by local militia from various points in the neighborhood. By the twelfth of April the concentration had practically been effected, although one brigade did not arrive at the camp until the battle of Cerro Gordo was over. He had also ordered the cavalry, under General Canalizo, the military commander of the state of Vera Cruz, to oppose Scott's advance at the National Bridge, about fifteen miles east of Plan del Rio, where the road from Vera Cruz crossed the river Antigua; but Canalizo abandoned the National Bridge two or three days before any of Scott's troops appeared.

The extreme right of Santa Anna's line near Cerro Gordo was formed by the hills close to the river, which terminated on their easterly slopes by three heights or promontories, extending like three open fingers of one hand, with deep valleys between them, and near the top of these three promontories were placed three batteries, mounting in all seventeen guns. The two batteries nearest the river commanded the approach along the line of an old and abandoned road which formerly led from Plan del Rio toward Jalapa, while the third battery, the furthest from the river, enfiladed the high-road where it ran in its southwesterly course toward the

¹ The hill of Cerro Gordo, which had an old watch-tower on it, was the one really known as El Telégrafo, though that name seems not to have been in general use.





river. Santa Anna's staff regarded these means of approach as the only ones possible for the advance of the North American troops, and consequently the three batteries referred to were strengthened in every possible way and manned by nineteen hundred men. The battery on the extreme right was under command of General Pinzon, who had the fifth regiment of the line and the battalion of Atlixco. The other two batteries were supported by battalions from various towns, besides about six hundred and fifty local national guards; while the reserve was composed of the battalions of Matamoros and Tepeaca. These two batteries and the reserve were under the command of General Jarero.

Between the hills near the river and the height of Cerro Gordo another battery was erected upon the road at the summit of the pass, and near where the road turned west to follow the course of the river. At this point were eight guns commanding the road itself, while south of it, and almost parallel to the road, an intrenchment for infantry was thrown up and a covered way was formed along the old road, so as to protect the troops in passing from the intrenchments on the road to the batteries upon the hills. On the road were the sixth infantry of the line and a battalion of "grenadiers of the guard"—thirteen hundred and sixty men in all—under General Rómulo Diaz de la Vega, who had been taken prisoner at the battle of Resaca de la Palma, and had recently been exchanged.

The centre of Santa Anna's line was the hill of Cerro Gordo itself, which, as already stated, completely dominated the pass through which the highway ran, as well as all the neighboring heights. The timber near the top was felled and a battery of six light guns established near the summit, protected by a rough stone-wall, while on the slopes and near the bottom of the hill intrenchments were thrown up and trees were felled to form an abattis. This battery was supported by a hundred men of a line regiment of infantry, the post being under the command of General Ciriaco Vasquez, whose division had just completed the weary march from Buena Vista by way of San Luis, Querétaro, and Perote.

On the extreme left of the Mexican line—a line about a mile and a half in length and forming a curve convex to the north—Santa Anna's remaining troops were placed in position. They consisted of four battalions of light infantry, two regiments of infantry of the line, all the cavalry, and a field-battery. Forage and provisions were abundant, and the camp was supplied with water by means of a ditch which Santa Anna caused to be constructed from his hacienda of El Encero, about seven miles up the river.¹

In this strong position Santa Anna and his men awaited the arrival of the American army on its march from Vera Cruz toward the capital.

"An army landing on a hostile coast," says an accomplished military critic, "has to endure a certain period of inactivity. Under ordinary circumstances, as at Vera Cruz, the process of disembarking men is rapidly accomplished. The field-guns follow with but little delay, and a certain proportion of cavalry becomes early available. But the disembarkation of the impedimenta—the stores, waggons, hospitals, ammunition, and transport animals—even where ample facilities exist, demands far more time than the disembarkation of the fighting force. In the present case, as all the animals had to be requisitioned in the country, it was not till the middle of April that supplies and transport sufficient to warrant further movement had been accumulated."²

Scott, however, in his anxiety to avoid the dangers of yellow-fever on the sea-coast, prepared to move inland at the earliest possible moment, and on April 6, a week after the surrender of Vera Cruz, issued orders for the advance of a large part of his army. The second division of regulars, under General Twiggs, was directed to start on April 8, and was to be followed twenty-four hours later by General Patterson with two brigades of the division of volunteers. The whole of Worth's division of regulars and one of Patterson's three brigades were to be left in the vicinity of Vera Cruz,

¹ Near the rancheria of Cerro Gordo there were some paths running down to the river several hundred feet below; but they were so steep and difficult that it would have been impossible to get an adequate supply of water for the troops by carrying it up on muleback.

² Colonel Henderson's *Stonewall Jackson*, I, 38.

to await further means of transportation; as also the Tennessee cavalry (dismounted), until the arrival of their horses from the United States. Three field-batteries and two squadrons of the second dragoons were to accompany the advance detachment, which was also to have with it a supply train amounting to upward of two hundred wagons.¹

On April 11 Twiggs reported from the National Bridge that Santa Anna was certainly at Jalapa or its vicinity, but that he could not determine what the strength of the Mexican force really was. It was variously stated at between two thousand and thirteen thousand men, and it seemed to be certain "that the pass between this and Jalapa will be disputed." Twiggs expected to reach Plan del Rio that evening, and he had no doubt that he would reach Jalapa with his command.² Writing the same day to the War Department, Scott stated that he thought Twiggs (from whom he had not yet heard) "must now be near Jalapa"; that rumors were prevalent that Santa Anna had arrived at Jalapa with a force of six thousand men, but it was not believed in Vera Cruz that it amounted to half that number, and Scott thought that no conflict was to be expected before reaching Jalapa.³

After an extremely hot and toilsome march, which seems to have been unduly rapid for heavily burdened men through the sandy though generally level district of the Tierra Caliente, the head of Twiggs's division arrived at Plan del Rio at about noon on Sunday, the eleventh of April, where a party of Mexican lancers was seen. These quickly retired, and Twiggs spent the next two days in reconnoitring the enemy's position, the great strength of which soon became apparent to every man in his division.⁴ He made up his mind, nevertheless, to carry the hills south of the highway by a direct frontal attack early on Wednesday morning, April 14; but

¹ General orders No. 94, April 6, 1847; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 921.

² Twiggs to Scott, April 11, 1847; *ibid.*, 939.

³ Scott to Marcy, April 11, 1847; *ibid.*, 928.

⁴ *Autobiography of an English Soldier*, 167-172. During these reconnoissances Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph E. Johnston, of the engineers, was very severely wounded under the Mexican works near the river.