

Price found that the city had been abandoned by the Mexican garrison, and he learned that General Trias had withdrawn about sixty miles farther south to Santa Cruz de Rosales. He thereupon, acting with great energy, obtained remounts for the larger part of his men that same night, and started the next morning in pursuit. He arrived at Santa Cruz at sunrise on the morning of the ninth, with two hundred and fifty cavalry, having marched sixty miles in twenty-four hours. Here he had an interview with General Trias in person, who asserted upon his honor that a treaty of peace had been signed, and expressed his belief that official confirmation of the fact would probably be received within three days. For this reason, and also because reinforcements of cavalry and artillery were expected, Price decided to blockade the town and not attempt any immediate attack upon the Mexican troops, who, as he believed, numbered over nine hundred.

On the morning of March 16 all of Price's expected reinforcements had arrived after remarkable marches. The battery of artillery, in particular, under Captain Love of the first dragoons—a company of which regiment were then acting as light artillery—had marched from the hot springs (*Ojo Caliente*) between 5 P. M. on March 12 and 5 A. M. on March 16, or three and one-half days. The distance is approximately one hundred and forty miles, which would make an average of forty miles a day. The cavalry during the last twenty-four hours had marched sixty miles.<sup>1</sup>

Price, having been thus reinforced, now lost no time in beginning an attack upon the Mexicans in Santa Cruz. During the course of the morning of March 16 he disposed his forces around the town and opened an artillery fire upon it. The defenders during the previous week had constructed barricades in the streets and had placed a number of small pieces of artillery in position, so that an assault was not easy. After a cannonading which lasted until the after-

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Doc. 1, 30 Cong., 2 sess., Love's report, 126; Lane's report, 129. These officers overstate the distance, having apparently confused kilometres with miles.

noon, Price, at about four o'clock, advanced and attacked with his whole force; and after some vigorous street fighting the Mexicans surrendered "shortly after sundown." In addition to the prisoners, a considerable quantity of arms and ammunition fell into the hands of the Americans. The American loss in this action was four killed and nineteen wounded; while the loss of the Mexicans in killed and wounded cannot be stated.<sup>1</sup>

The most striking feature about this expedition of General Price's was the extraordinary rapidity of the march of the various detachments from El Paso to Santa Cruz, over a country which possessed no good roads and where traveling was made difficult for long stretches by the entire absence of water. In other respects Price's conduct can hardly be commended. The object which he had in mind, namely, to forestall a hostile advance upon New Mexico from Chihuahua, was hardly commensurate with the risk and expense which he incurred. Distant as he was from all sources of information, it still seems impossible to doubt that he must have known that the principal operations of the war had been ended nearly six months before by the capture of the city of Mexico, and that therefore the information given him by General Trias of the signature of a treaty of peace was probably true. Even assuming that Price was justified in occupying the city of Chihuahua as a measure of self-defence, it is hard to see what justification he could possibly have for pursuing the Mexicans sixty miles farther south and for fighting a serious action with them after reiterated assurances that news of peace had been received. And he should have known that if he had been defeated, it might easily have led to a renewal of the war and an indefinite postponement of peace.

However, Price's rapid march and the complete triumph

<sup>1</sup> See Report from General Price and subreports, *ibid.*, 113-136. He gives no separate estimate of the Mexican wounded, but states that their losses (apparently only those killed) were 236. This is obviously impossible, unless it is meant to include the prisoners, besides those killed and wounded. The Mexican accounts give no figures. See Roa Bárcena, 535-537; *Apuntes para la Historia de la Guerra*, 397-401.

over Trias—which gave the Americans the practical control of the whole state of Chihuahua—must, as it turned out, have had a moral influence in bringing about the ratification of the treaty of peace. In connection with the naval operations on the Pacific coast of the republic it produced the impression of that sort of constricting and crushing force which we have been taught to regard as the peculiar characteristic of sea power.

Thus ended the war, which had begun less than two years before, and which had resulted in the occupation by the American forces of the capital of Mexico, many of its principal towns, and much more than one-half of its territory. There can be no doubt that the war would have been far shorter in duration and far less costly in human life if the American army had been in a more complete state of preparation. Its entire lack of any intelligence department, and of any systematic method of increasing the army by means of volunteers, was the first and most obvious cause of its palpable shortcomings. The volunteers were enlisted, organized, clothed, equipped, and drilled haphazard; and although they subsequently gave an excellent account of themselves, no one can possibly doubt that they would have been far more efficient and could have been put far earlier in the field if the work could have been undertaken in accordance with some predetermined plan.

Another very obvious cause of delay was the extreme slowness of Congress, after the first impulse of enthusiasm was spent, in voting the necessary measures for reinforcing and supplying the armies in the field. The violent discussions which went on over the origin of the war served not to shorten but to prolong the existence of a state of things with which the opponents of the administration found so much fault.

The military results were undoubtedly striking from their completeness and from the unbroken success of the American armies; but it cannot be denied that these were in large measure due to the weakness and inefficiency of the Mexican

troops. The material upon which the Mexicans had to rely was not good in itself. The native races were not warlike by nature, and probably not much better fighting men than the Bengalis, of whom the British never have been able to make efficient soldiers. Nevertheless, they possessed many qualities, such as patience and endurance, which, under better leadership, might at least have made them formidable for the purpose of defending fortified positions. But one great weakness of the Mexican republic was that it had few good officers. None of the commanders, with the very important exception of Santa Anna, gave evidence of either energy or capacity; and some of them, like General Valencia, proved not only incapable but cowardly. The officers of lower rank also seem to have been, on the whole, extremely indifferent. General Grant, in a passage already quoted, speaks of their want of endurance in action, and there is no record of any feat of energy or enterprise on their part.

At the bottom, however, of all the difficulties of the Mexican army was the want of money honestly and economically employed. The country was poor, and the money necessary for keeping up a military establishment, thoroughly armed and equipped, with solid fortifications and well-drilled men, would have exhausted all the scanty resources which the government of Mexico was able to command, even if the money could have been applied upon a proper system of disbursement and accounting. Mexico was not wanting in natural resources, and under more capable and peaceable administrations might have been able to command the means for keeping a small but efficient army in the field; but from the time of its independence down to the period of the war it had been so constantly misgoverned and had been the scene of so much domestic disturbance that it was at no time able to offer serious opposition to any foreign invader.