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CAPTURE of the CITY OF MEXICO.

Report of Major-General Scott.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Palace of Mexico, Sept. 18, 1847.

At the end of another series of arduous and brilliant operations, of more than forty hours continuance, this glorious army hoisted in the morning of the 14th, the colors of the United States on the walls of this palace.

The victory of the 8th, at Molino del Rey, was followed by daring reconnoissances on the part of our distinguished engineers—Capt. Lee, Lieut. Beargard, Stevens and Tower—Major Smith, senior, being sick, and Capt. Mason, third in rank, wounded. Their operations were directed principally to the south—towards the gates of the Piedad, San Angel (Niño Perdido,) San Antonio, and the Paseo de la Viga.

This city stands on a slight swell of ground, near the centre of an irregular basin, and is girdled with a ditch in its greater extent—a navigable canal of great breadth and depth—very difficult to bridge, in the presence of an enemy, and serving at once for drainage, custom-house purposes and military defence—leaving eight entrances or gates over arches—each of which were defended by a system of strong works that seemed to require nothing but some men and guns to be impregnable.

Outside and within the cross fires of those batteries we found, to the south, other obstacles but less formidable. All the approaches, near the city, are over elevated causeways, cut in many places to oppose us, and flanked, on both sides, by ditches also of unusual dimensions. The numerous cross roads are flanked in like manner, having bridges at the intersections, recently broken. The meadows thus checkerboarded, moreover, in many spots, under water or marshy; for, it will be remembered, we were in the midst of the wet season, though with less rain than usual, and we could not wait for the fall of the neighboring lakes and the consequent drainage of the wet grounds at the edge of the city—the lowest in the whole basin.

After a close personal survey of the southern gates covered by Pillow's division and Riley's brigade of Twigg's—with four times our numbers concentrated in our immediate front—I determined, on the 11th to avoid that network of obstacles, and to seek, by a sudden inversion to the southwest and west, less unfavorable approaches.

To economize the lives of our gallant officers and men, as well as to insure success, it became indispensable that this resolution should be long masked from the enemy, and again, that the new movement, when discovered, should be mistaken for a feint, and the old as indicating our true and ultimate point of attack.

Accordingly, on the spot, the 11th, I ordered Quitman's division from Coyoacan, to join Pillow by daylight, before the southern gates, and then, that the two major-generals, with their divisions, should, by night, proceed (two miles) to Tacubaya where I was quartered with Worth's division. Twigg's, with Riley's brigade and Capt. Taylor's and Steptoe's field batteries—the latter of 12-pounders—was left in front of those gates to manoeuvre, to threaten or to make false attacks, in order to occupy and deceive the enemy. Twigg's other brigade (Smith's) was left at supporting distance, in the street at San Angel, till the morning of the 13th, and also to support our general depot at Miscocac.

The stratagem against the south was admirably executed throughout the 12th, and down to the afternoon of the 13th, when it was too late for the enemy to recover from the effects of his deception.

The first step in the new movement was to Chapultepec, a natural and isolated mound, of great elevation, strongly fortified at its base, and its acclivities and heights. Besides a numerous garrison, here was the military college of the Republic, with a large number of sub-lieutenants and other students. Those works were within gunshot of the village of Tacubaya, and carried we could not approach the city on the west, without making a circuit too wide and hazardous.

In the course of the same night (that of the 11th) heavy batteries within easy range, were established—No. 1 on our right, under the command of Capt. Drum, 4th Artillery, (relieved the next day for some hours by Lieut. Andrews of the 2d,) and No. 2, commanded by Lieut. Hagner, of the 2d, both supported by Quitman's division, the former by Capt. Brooks and Lieut. S. S. Anderson, 2d Artillery, alternately, and the latter by Lieut. Stone, ordnance. The batteries were traced by Capt. Huger and Capt. Lee, entered, and constructed by them, with the assistance of the young officers of those corps and the artillery.

To prepare for an assault, it was foreseen that the play of the batteries might run into the second day; but recent captures had not only trebled our siege pieces, but also our ammunition, and we knew that we should greatly augment both, by carrying the place. I was, therefore, in no haste, in ordering an assault before the works were well crippled by our missiles.

The bombardment and cannonade, under the direction of Capt. Huger, were commenced early in the morning of the 12th. Before night-fall, which necessarily stopped our batteries, we had perceived that a good impression had been made on the castle and its outworks, and that a large body of the enemy had remained outside, towards the city, from an early hour, to avoid our fire, and to be at hand on its cessation, in order to reinforce the garrison against an assault. The same outside force was discovered the next morning, after our batteries had re-opened upon the castle, by which we again reduced its garrison to the minimum needed for the guns.

Pillow and Quitman had been in position since early in the night of the 11th. Maj. Gen. Worth was now ordered to hold his division, in reserve, near the foundry, to support Pillow; and Brig. Gen. Smith, of Twigg's division, had just arrived with his brigade, from Piedad, (two miles,) to support Quitman. Twigg's guns, before the southern gates, again reminded us, as the day before, that he, with Riley's brigade and Taylor's and Steptoe's batteries, was in activity, threatening the southern gates, and there holding a great part of the Mexican army on the defensive.

Worth's division furnished Pillow's attack with an assaulting party of some 250 volunteer officers and men, under Capt. McKenzie of the 2d Artillery, and Twigg's division supplied a similar one, commanded by Capt. Casey 2d Infantry, to Quitman. Each of those little columns, was furnished with scaling ladders.

The signal I had appointed for the attack was the momentary cessation of fire on the part of our heavy batteries. About 8 o'clock in the morning of the 13th, judging that the time had arrived, by the effect of the missiles we had thrown, I sent an aid-de-camp to Pillow, and another to Quitman, with notice that the concerted signal was about to be given. Both columns now advanced with an alacrity that gave assurance of prompt success.—The batteries, seizing opportunities, threw shots and shells upon the enemy, over the heads of our men with good effect—particularly at every attempt to reinforce the works, from without, to meet our assault.

Major Gen. Pillow's approach, on the west side, lay through an open grove, filled with sharpshooters, who were speedily dislodged, when, being up with the front of the attack, and emerging into open space, at the foot of a rocky acclivity, that gallant leader was struck down by an agonizing wound. The immediate command devolved on Brig. Gen. Cadwalader, in the absence of the senior Brigadier (Pierce) of the same division—an invalid since the events of August 19. On a previous call of Pillow, Worth had just sent him a reinforcement—Col. Clark's brigade.

The broken acclivity was still to be ascended, and a strong redoubt midway, to be carried, before reaching the castle on the heights. The advance of our brave men, led by brave officers, though necessarily slow, was unwavering, over rocks, chasms and mines, and under the hottest fire of cannon and musketry. The redoubt now yielded to resistless valor, and the shouts that followed announced to the castle the fate that impended. The enemy were steadily driven from shelter to shelter. The retreat allowed not time to fire a single mine, without the certainty of blowing up friend and foe. Those who at a distance attempted to apply matches to the long trains, were shot down by our men. There was death below, as well as above ground. At length the ditch and wall of the main work were reached; the scaling ladders were brought up and planted by the storming parties; some of the daring spirits first in the assault, were cast down—killed or wounded;—but a lodgment was soon made; streams of heroes followed; all opposition was overcome, and several of our regimental colors flung out from the upper walls, amidst long-continued shouts and cheers, which sent dismay into the capital. No scene could have been more animating or glorious.

Major Gen. Quitman, nobly supported by Brig. Gens. Shields and Smith [P. F.] his other officers and men, was up with the part assigned him. Simultaneously with the movement on the west, he had gallantly approached the southeast of the same works over a causeway with cuts and batteries and defended by an army strongly posted outside, to the east of the works. Those formidable obstacles Quitman had to face, with but little shelter for his troops or space for manoeuvring. Deep ditches, flanking the causeway, made it difficult to cross on either side into the adjoining meadows, and these again were intersected by other ditches. Smith and his brigade had been early thrown out to make a sweep to the right in order to present a front against the enemy's line outside and to turn two intervening batteries, near the foot of Chapultepec. This movement was also intended to support Quitman's storming parties, both on the causeway. The first of these, furnished by Twigg's division,

was commanded in succession by Cap. Casey, 2d Infantry, and Capt. Paul, 7th Infantry, after Casey had been severely wounded; and the second, originally under the gallant Major Twigg's marine corps, killed, and then Capt. Miller, 2d Pennsylvania volunteers. The storming party, now commanded by Capt. Paul, seconded by Capt. Roberts of the Rifles, Lieut. Stewart and others of the same regiment, Smith's brigade, carried the two batteries in the road, took some guns, with many prisoners, and drove the enemy posted behind in support. The New York and South Carolina volunteers, Shield's brigade, and the 2d Pennsylvania volunteers, all on the left of Quitman's line, together with portions of his storming parties, crossed the meadows in front, under a heavy fire, and entered the outer enclosure at Chapultepec just in time to join in the final assault from the west.

Besides Maj. Gens. Pillow and Quitman; Brig. Gens. Shields, Smith and Cadwalader, the following are the officers and corps most distinguished in those brilliant operations:—The Voltigeur Regiment, in two detachments, commanded, respectively, by Col. Andrews and Lieut. Col. Johnstone—the latter mostly in the lead, accompanied by Major Caldwell, Capt. Howard of that regiment, one of the foremost in the assault, and Capt. Barnard and Biddle, of the same regiment—the former the first to plant a regimental color, and the latter among the first in the assault;—the storming party of Worth's division, under Capt. McKenzie, 2d Artillery, with Lieut. Selden, 8th Infantry, the first on the ladder and badly wounded; Lieut. Armistead, 6th Infantry, the first to leap into the ditch to plant a ladder; Lieuts. Rodgers, of the 4th, and J. P. Smith, of the 5th Infantry—both mortally wounded;—the 9th Infantry, under Col. Ransom, who was killed while gallantly leading that gallant regiment; the 15th Infantry, under Lieut. Col. Howard and Major Woods, with Capt. Chase, whose company gallantly carried the redoubt, midway up the acclivity;—Col. Clark's brigade, (Worth's division,) consisting of the 5th, 8th and part of the 6th regiments of Infantry, commanded respectively by Capt. Chapman, Maj. Montgomery and Lieut. Edward Johnson—the latter specially noticed, with Lieuts. Longstreet, (badly wounded, advancing, colors in hand) Pickett and Merchant—the last three of the 8th Infantry;—portions of the U. S. Marines, New York, South Carolina and 2d Pennsylvania Volunteers, which delayed, with their division—Quitman's—by the hot engagement below, arrived just in time to participate in the assault of the heights—particularly a detachment, under Lieut. Reid, New York Volunteers, consisting of a company of the same, with one of Marines; and another detachment, a portion of the storming party (Twigg's division, serving with Quitman) under Lieuts. Westcott and Steel, 2d Infantry—after the fall of Lieut. Gantt, 7th Infantry.

In this connection, it is but just to recall the decisive effect of the heavy batteries, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, commanded by those excellent officers—Capt. Drum, 4th Artillery, assisted by Lieuts. Benjamin and Porter of his own company; Capt. Brooks and Lieut. Anderson, 2d Artillery, assisted by Lieut. Russell, 4th Infantry, a volunteer; Lieuts. Hagner and Stone, of the Ordnance, and Lieut. Andrews, 3d Artillery—the whole superintended by Capt. Huger, Chief of Ordnance, with this army—an officer distinguished by every kind of merit. The Mountain Howitzer Battery, under Lieut. Reno, of the Ordnance, deserves also to be particularly mentioned. Attached to the Voltigeurs, it followed the movements of that regiment, and again won applause.

In adding to the list of individuals of conspicuous merit, I must limit myself to a few of the many names which might be enumerated:—Capt. Hooker, Assistant Adjutant General, who won special applause successively, in the staff of Pillow and Cadwalader; Lieut. Lovell, 4th Artillery, (wounded,) Chief of Quitman's staff; Capt. Page, Assistant Adjutant General, (wounded,) and Lieut. Hammond, 3d Artillery, both of Shields's staff, and Lieut. Van Dorn, (7th Infantry), Aid-de-Camp to Brig. Gen. Smith.

Those operations all occurred on the west, southeast and heights of Chapultepec. To the north and at the base of the mound, inaccessible on that side, the 11th Infantry, under Lieut. Col. Hébert, the 14th, under Col. Trousdale, and Capt. Magruder's field battery, 1st Artillery—one section advanced under Lieut. Jackson—all of Pillow's division—had, at the same time, some spirited affairs against superior numbers—driving the enemy from a battery in the road, and capturing a gun. In these, the officers and corps named, gained merited praise. Col. Trousdale, the commander, though twice wounded, continued on duty until the heights were carried.

Early in the morning of the 13th, I repeated the orders of the night before to Maj. Gen. Worth, to be with his division, at hand, to support the movement of Maj. Gen. Pillow from our left. The latter seems soon to have called for that entire division, standing momentarily in reserve, and Worth sent him Col. Clark's brigade. The call, if not unnecessary, was, at least, from the circumstances, unknown to me at the time; for soon observing that the very large body of the enemy in the road, in front of Maj. Gen. Quitman's right, was receiving reinforcements from

the city—less than a mile and a half to the east—I sent instructions to Worth, on our opposite flank, to turn Chapultepec with his division, and to proceed, cautiously, by the road, at its northern base, in order, if not met, by very superior numbers, to threaten or to attack, in rear, that body of the enemy. The movement, it was believed, could not fail to distract and to intimidate the enemy generally.

Worth promptly advanced with his remaining brigade—Col. Garland's—Lieut. Col. C. P. Smith's light battalion, Lieut. Col. Duncan's field battery—all of his division—and three squadrons of dragoons, under Major Sumner, which I had just ordered up to join in the movement.

Having turned the forest, on the west, and arriving opposite to the north centre of Chapultepec, Worth came up with the troops, in the road, under Col. Trousdale, and aided by a flank movement of a part of Garland's brigade, in taking the one-gun breastwork, then under the fire of Lieut. Jackson's section of Capt. Magruder's field battery. Continuing to advance, this division passed Chapultepec, attacking the right of the enemy's line, resting on that road, about the moment of the general retreat consequent upon the capture of the formidable castle and its outworks.

Arriving some minutes later, and mounting to the top of the castle, the whole field, to the east, lay plainly under my view.

There are two routes, from Chapultepec, to the capital; the one, on the right, entering the same gate, Belón, with the road from the south, via Piedad, and the other obliquing to the left, to intersect the great western or San Cosme road, in a suburb outside of the gate of San Cosme.

Each of these routes (an elevated causeway) presents a double roadway on the sides of an aqueduct of strong masonry, and great height, resting on open arches and massive pillars, which, together, afford fine points both for attack and defence. The sideways of both aqueducts, are, moreover, defended by many strong breastworks at the gates and before reaching them. As we had expected, we found the four tracks unusually dry and solid for the season.

Worth and Quitman were prompt in pursuing the retreating enemy—the former by the San Cosme aqueduct, and the latter along that of Belón. Each had now advanced some hundred yards.

Deeming it all-important to profit by our successes, and the consequent dismay of the enemy, which could not be otherwise than general, I hastened to despatch from Chapultepec—first Clarke's brigade, and then Cadwalader's, to the support of Worth, and gave orders that the necessary heavy guns should follow. Pierce's brigade was, at the same time, sent to Quitman, and in the course of the afternoon I caused some additional siege pieces to be added to his train. Then after designating the 15th Infantry under Lieut. Col. Howard—Morgan, the colonel, had been disabled by a wound at Chirubusco—as the garrison of Chapultepec, and giving directions for the care of the prisoners of war, the captured ordnance and ordnance stores—I proceeded to join the advance of Worth within the suburb, and beyond the turn of the junction of the aqueduct with the great highway from the west to the gate of San Cosme.

At this junction of roads we first passed one of those formidable systems of city defences, spoken of above, and it had not a gun!—a strong proof—1. That the enemy had expected us to fail in the attack upon Chapultepec even if we meant anything more than a feint; 2. That in either case we designed, in his belief, to return, and double our forces against the southern gates—a delusion kept up by the active demonstrations of Twigg's and the forces posted on that side; and 3. That advancing rapidly from the reduction of Chapultepec, the enemy had not time to shift guns—our previous captures had left him but few—from the southern gates.

Within those disorganised works, I found our troops engaged in a street fight against the enemy posted in gardens, at windows and on house-tops—all flat, with parapets. Worth ordered forward the mountain howitzers of Cadwalader's brigade, preceded by skirmishers and pioneers, and pick-axes and crow-bars; to force windows and doors, or to burrow through walls. The assailants were soon on an equality of position, fatal to the enemy. By 8 o'clock, in the evening, Worth had carried two batteries in the suburb. According to my instruction, he here posted guards and sentinels, and placed his troops under shelter for the night. There was but one more obstacle—the San Cosme gate (custom-house) between him and the great square in front of the cathedral and palace—the heart of the city, and that barrier, it was known, could not by daylight, resist our siege guns thirty minutes.

I had gone back to the foot of Chapultepec, the point from which the two aqueducts begin to diverge, some hours earlier, in order to be near the new depot, and in easy communication with Quitman and Twigg's as well as with Worth.

From this point I ordered all detachments and stragglers to their respective corps, then in advance; sent to Quitman, additional siege guns;