

Columbia Democrat.

"I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man."—Thomas Jefferson

H. WEBB, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

Volume X.]

BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA COUNTY, PA. SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 1846.

Number 9.

OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRAT.
OPPOSITE ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, MAIN-ST.

TERMS:

The COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT will be published every Saturday morning, at TWO DOLLARS per annum payable half yearly in advance, or Two Dollars Fifty Cents, if not paid within the year. No subscription will be taken for a shorter period than six months; nor any discountance permitted, until all arrearages are discharged.

ADVERTISEMENTS not exceeding a square will be conspicuously inserted at One Dollar for the first three insertions, and Twenty-five cents for every subsequent insertion. A liberal discount made to those who advertise by the year. LETTERS addressed on business, must be post paid.

MEXICAN WAR.

THE BATTLES ON THE RIO GRANDE.

The following minute and graphic account of the battles of the 8th and 9th May, in which our gallant army won for themselves imperishable renown, will be read with deep and thrilling interest. It is from the pen of a heroic officer who nobly bore his full share of the duties and dangers of the trying occasion:

Camp opposite Matamoras,
May 13th, 1846.

On the 1st of May the army under Gen. TAYLOR took up its line of march at 3 o'clock, P. M., for Point Isabel, thirty miles distant, in order to force up from that point provisions, which were necessary to the maintenance of our fort here. To defend it in our absence Gen. TAYLOR left the 7th Regiment of Infantry, BRADY'S battery of four six pounders, Captain LEWIS'S battery of four eighteen pounders, and some convalescents as a garrison—the whole under the command of Major BROWN, of the 6th Army. We had heard of the crossing of six or seven thousand of the enemy, to oppose our march to our depot, and expected to fight them going down, but did not meet them. On the 2d instant, in the afternoon we reached Point Isabel, and on the 3d heard the bombardment continued at intervals for several days. In the meantime, General TAYLOR, having learned by express from Major BROWN, that he could hold the fort, put his whole command to work in the entrenchments at Point Isabel, the basis of our operations, and having made it sufficiently strong, and loaded about three hundred wagons with provisions and ammunition, he determined to proceed at once to the relief of our gallant little band in this fort, and to give battle to the enemy if necessary. He commenced his march at 2 o'clock, P. M., on the 7th instant, in the following order:—a squadron of Dragoons commanded by Capt. MAY, in front; the 3d Brigade, composed of the 3d and 4th Regiments of Infantry and RICHMOND'S Light Artillery; the 5th Infantry, not Brigaded, and the 1st Brigade, composed of the Artillery Battalion serving as Infantry, DUNCAN'S Light Artillery and the 8th Regiment of Infantry—to which must be added two eighteen pounders drawn by oxen, and Capt. KENN'S squadron of Dragoons protecting the rear—the wagons on the march, being, in a great degree, interspersed between the Brigades for greater security.

On the night of the 7th we encamped about 12 miles from Point Isabel, without seeing the enemy. On the 8th we had advanced about 6 miles, when we descried the enemy some two miles distant, drawn up in great force on the open prairie, and occupying the crest of a very gentle slope, with their backs to the thick bushes, called in this country 'chapparral.'

We immediately formed line to the front and advanced calmly and quietly to the attack. Our brave and considerate old General, finding that the enemy waited to receive us, and that we were passing near a lake of water, the day being very hot and the men thirsty, halted in full view of the adversary, and directed the men to fill their canteens with water. We had now a little leisure to examine the force of the enemy and its composition. The horizon in our front and to the right appeared lined with cavalry, (Lancers and Dragoons.) The

woods in their rear were giving up columns after columns of Infantry, which were manoeuvred with great regularity, and batteries were observed taking their designated places in our front and on our flanks. The lowest estimate at the time of the enemy's force was 5,000 of all arms—our own being under 2,000 fighting men. We have since learned that on this occasion the enemy had over 6,000 fighting men. But the greatest difficulty under which we labored was the absolute necessity of protecting in an open prairie, from the enemy our numerous train of provisions and ammunition without which, even if we gained a victory we could not relieve our garrison opposite Matamoras, or maintain our position there. Besides we were miserably deficient as to the number of our cavalry, having only 200 Dragoons, while the enemy could not have had less than 1800 or 2000. The men being refreshed our General rode to each Brigade, told the men to keep cool, and when the enemy charged not to fire a shot until they were repulsed with the bayonet, and had turned their backs in flight.

Our advances then recommenced slowly, but firmly, wagons and all, and when we arrived within good artillery range, their batteries opened upon us, some of their balls bouncing along the plain and passing us in 'rechochet' others flying over our heads and falling in the rear, showing us in a few moments that their pieces were served with skill and precision. A movement was now observed among the enemy's cavalry as if about to charge, and the Regiments nearest them were thrown into square, or formation preparatory to the square, and so disposed as to protect our own artillery whenever it was ordered to fire. During this time, some fifteen minutes, the enemy's fire was received in perfect silence by us, and at length, Captain DUNCAN having been ordered to open upon them, advanced in the most gallant manner, and placing himself in a position to be protected by the Infantry, result the enemy's cavalry, and one which would enable him of the same time to gallop their cavalry and masses of infantry, sent a withering fire among them, which created some confusion, and which was answered by our squares of infantry by one long simultaneous shout, which showed how anxious they were to be led to the charge at once—but this could not be. They were destined to give the strongest evidence of courage that a soldier can exhibit—to stand in squares for hours under the fire of the enemy's artillery, so as to protect from the enemy's cavalry our own artillery, whilst the latter was mowing down the enemy's ranks. As soon as Duncan opened, Major RICHMOND'S thunder was heard on the right. Lieutenant CHURCHILL'S from the 18 pounders in the centre, and all the enemy's batteries opening at the same time, a tremendous cannonading ensued, which, on this plain of almost boundless extent, presented a spectacle of great magnificence.—The battle commenced at 10 minutes past 2. P. M. It had lasted about an hour, when a large body of the enemy's red Lancers charged the 5th Infantry, with a view of cutting off our wagon train. They were met with the most perfect tranquility, and a discharge of musquetry from the 5th (Gen. BROWN'S) Regiment told us their fate. They fled precipitately, leaving men, horses, and guldons on the field. In the meantime the whole order of battle had been changed to conform to the manoeuvres of the enemy, and our Brigade, the 1st, which was the left, now found itself in advance and on the right—the Artillery Battalion being on the extreme right and most in advance. It must be observed also that in these different changes our General was always slowly but steadily gaining ground to the front, and the enemy gradually falling back. The enemy's fire having slackened, and then ceased. Gen. Taylor, from his new and more advanced position, ordered all his batteries to open, and in his turn attacked the enemy with such fury as to cause evident destruction in his ranks, but still they remained firm. By a charge on them they might have been routed entirely, but then we must have exposed our wagons to be captured by their cavalry, and that could not be thought of.

The battle had now lasted for 10 minutes past 2 P. M. to about 7 P. M. At this moment the enemy was discovered coming down with his left flank in great force of cavalry and infantry, on the Artillery Battalion and the 18-pounders which that Battalion supported. The 18 pounders were served by thirty men, and the Artillery Battalion was about 360 strong. Both the battery and this Battalion were in such a position that they could not be supported by the other portion of the army, and at the time the charge commenced the Battalion had deployed into line. However it was thrown into square by a prompt manoeuvre, and awaited steadily the Mexican charge. On they came, horse, foot and dragoons, shouting and yelling, when a single horseman rode into the square, and said, 'Men! place myself in your square.' The General was immediately recognized by the men who gave him three cheers for this evidence of his confidence. At this moment Lieut. Churchill discharged one of his 18 pounders loaded with grape into the advancing ranks, creating great havoc, but not checking entirely their onward movement.—They marched forward to within good musket range, some 150 yards of us halted and delivered their fire, which our men received quietly at a shoulder. Finding that they would come no nearer, Col. CHILDS commanding this Battalion, ordered the volley, which was given as if in parade, when the enemy immediately retired, and the action ended for the night. Our Army slept on their arms precisely as night found them, and occupied the position in which the enemy commenced the battle. The two armies slept quietly almost in presence of each other. The night was serene and beautiful, the moon casting the softest light, everything around us, and but for the groans of the wounded and the screams of those who were suffering under the knife of the Surgeons, no one could have imagined the scenes which had occurred but a few hours previously.

On our side we had 55 killed and wounded. The gallant Major RICHMOND was mortally wounded, and his noble steed killed by the same shot, he was giving his last fire for the night and after have distinguished himself by his coolness, precision and effect with which he managed his Battery. Capt. JOHN PAGE, of the 4th Infantry, was horribly wounded, supposed to be mortally. BLISS Lieut. DANIELS, Capt. MONTGOMERY, and several others.

Many Dragoon horses were also killed, and the escape were almost incredible. In MAGRUDER'S company, two men, whilst at an order, had the bayonets of their muskets cut off by cannon balls, passing just over their shoulders and between their heads. He had also a man killed on his immediate right and left. Some of the balls fell into the centres of the squares, and recoiled out again, without touching any one. Others fell just on the outside, and bounced over. To stand patiently and coolly, in squares, under such a fire, for five hours, without firing a shot, is the best evidence of discipline and invincible courage that troops can give. But more the effect of this conduct, which none but regulars could have shown, must be considered. The next morning the enemy retreated, leaving the field strewn with their dead, and having lost, by their own confession, 500 men killed and wounded; but we have found out since that his loss is much greater. The enemy's artillery was numerous and served with great rapidity and precision; while we had little cavalry, and they had an immense proportion of that arm. Hence our shell and grape shot told briskly among them. In short, we gained on that day a great victory. When we consider the enemy's numbers, his numerous and effective regular cavalry, and well-drilled infantry and artillery, and above all that he had chosen his own ground, the open which he is most accustomed to

fight—the plain—and compare all this with our inferiority in all arms, and that we were incumbered by a train we could not afford to lose, we can only account for the result by the impression made on the enemy by our firm and unshaken advance; by the steadiness with which we repulsed their cavalry and by the unrivalled skill of our artillery officers and men—to which must be added a perfect knowledge on the part of both men and officers, that if we lost that battle the Fort at Matamoras would fall, the Army be destroyed, and our depot, Point Isabel, be taken to the eternal disgrace of the American Army and the ruin of the interest of our Government, for some time, at least, in this part of the world. We could not afford to be driven back a single inch, and all were prepared for anything but retreat.

On the morning of the 9th, the Mexican army left the field at early dawn, and, after arranging our train, we commenced the march towards our Fort at this place. At 2 o'clock, P. M., we found the enemy drawn up in great force, occupying a ravine which our road crossed, with thick 'chapparral' or thorny bushes on either side before it reached the ravine, and a pond of water on either side, where it crossed the ravine, constituting a complete defile. They were 7,000 strong, we were 51 weaker than the previous day. The General ordered an immediate attack by all the troops except the First Brigade, which was kept in reserve, and soon the rattling fire of musketry mingled with the heavy sound of artillery, announced the commencement of the action. The enemy had chosen his position which he considered impregnable—was easily superior to us in numbers and had ten pieces of artillery planted in the defile, which it was absolutely necessary for us to take, before he could be beaten. The pieces were flanked on both sides by a Regiment of brave veteran troops, from Tampico, and we were obliged to stand an awful shower of grape and bullet before a charge could reach them. The battle had lasted some two hours with great fury on both sides, and many heroic deeds had been done, but no serious impression made, when Gen. TAYLOR sent for Captain MAY, of the 2d Dragoons, and told him he must take that battery with his Squadron of Dragoons, if he lost every man. MAY instantly placed himself at the head of his men, and setting off at full speed, with cheers and shouts, dashed into the defile, where he was greeted with an overwhelming discharge of grape and bullets, which nearly annihilated his first and second platoons, but he was seen unhurt, darting like lightning through this murderous hail storm and in a second, he and his men drove away or cut to pieces the artilleers.

The speed of his horse was so great, however, that they passed through the battery, and were halted in its rear. There turning, he charged back, and was just in time to rescue a Mexican General officer, who would not leave his gun, and who was parrying the strokes of one of his men. He handed his sword to MAY, announced himself as Gen. VEGA, and gave his parole. MAY turned him over to an officer, and galloping back to Gen. TAYLOR, reported that he had captured the enemy's battery, and the gallant Gen. VEGA bravely defending it, whose sword he had the honor to present his Commanding officer. The General was extremely gratified, and felt no doubt that a blow had been given, from which it would be difficult for the enemy to recover—and so it proved, for a portion of the 5th Infantry, finding that the enemy had immediately re-occupied and

commenced serving their pieces, gallantly charged and brought off several men left him, to have made a respectable defence. I made every preparation to cross the river above the side of Batavia, and the order of march was given out for one o'clock yesterday, from the camp near Fort Browne, when I was waited upon by Gen. Reguena, empowered by Gen. Arista, commanding in chief the Mexican forces, to treat for an armistice until the government should finally settle the question. I replied to this, that a month since I had proposed one to General Ampudia, which was declined, that circumstances were now changed, that I was receiving large reinforcements and could not now suspend operations which I had not initiated or provoked, that the possession of Matamoras was a sine qua non, that our troops would occupy the town, but that General Arista might withdraw his forces, leaving the public property of every description.

An answer to the above was promised in the afternoon, but none came, and I repaired at sundown to join the army, already in position at a crossing some two miles above the town. Very early this morning the bank was occupied by our two eighteen pounders and three batteries of field artillery—and the crossing commenced—the light companies of all the battalions were first thrown over, followed by the volunteer and regular cavalry. No resistance was made, and I was soon informed from various quarters that Arista had abandoned the town with all his troops the evening before, leaving only the sick and wounded. I immediately dispatched a staff officer to the prefect to demand a surrender, and in the meantime a commission was sent by the prefect to confer with me on the same point. I gave assurance that the civil rights of the citizens would be respected, and our troops at once dropped down opposite the town and crossed the 'Upper Ferry' the American flag being displayed at Fort Parades a Mexican redoubt near the crossing. The different corps are now encamped in the outskirts of the city to-morrow I shall make suitable arrangements for the occupation of the town, and for taking possession of the public property. More than three hundred of the enemy's wounded have been left in hospitals. Arista is in full retreat towards Monterey with the fragments of his army.

I deeply regret to report that Lieut. George Stephens, a very promising young officer of the second Dragoons, was accidentally drowned this morning while attempting to swim the river with his squadron. I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR.
Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A. Comd'g
To the ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY,
Washington D. C.

Head Quarters Army of Occupation, Matamoras, Mexico, May 20, 1846.

Sir—On the 26th of April I had occasion to advise the department that hostilities had actually broken out, and that in consequence I had found it necessary to use the authority with which I was vested, and call upon the governors of Louisiana and Texas for a force, each, of four regiments thus called for would make a force of nearly 5,000 men which I deemed sufficient to meet the wants of the service in this quarter.

At the same time that I wrote the Gov. of Louisiana requesting this volunteer force, I addressed a letter to Gen. Gaines, desiring him to assist in organizing these regiments and having them promptly supplied. In my communication to the Governor, the organization was very exactly prescribed, being that indicated from your office on the 25th of August 1845. I find however, that this organization has been exceeded, and moreover that General Gaines has called for many more volunteers than I deemed necessary—extending the call to other States besides Louisiana.

It will, of course be for the government to decide whether the future operations in this quarter will require the amount of force (entirely unknown) which is coming hither. I only desire to say that this reinforcement beyond the eight regiments mentioned above was never asked for by me and that in

his flight, and ought still, with the 3000 men left him, to have made a respectable defence. I made every preparation to cross the river above the side of Batavia, and the order of march was given out for one o'clock yesterday, from the camp near Fort Browne, when I was waited upon by Gen. Reguena, empowered by Gen. Arista, commanding in chief the Mexican forces, to treat for an armistice until the government should finally settle the question. I replied to this, that a month since I had proposed one to General Ampudia, which was declined, that circumstances were now changed, that I was receiving large reinforcements and could not now suspend operations which I had not initiated or provoked, that the possession of Matamoras was a sine qua non, that our troops would occupy the town, but that General Arista might withdraw his forces, leaving the public property of every description.

An answer to the above was promised in the afternoon, but none came, and I repaired at sundown to join the army, already in position at a crossing some two miles above the town. Very early this morning the bank was occupied by our two eighteen pounders and three batteries of field artillery—and the crossing commenced—the light companies of all the battalions were first thrown over, followed by the volunteer and regular cavalry. No resistance was made, and I was soon informed from various quarters that Arista had abandoned the town with all his troops the evening before, leaving only the sick and wounded. I immediately dispatched a staff officer to the prefect to demand a surrender, and in the meantime a commission was sent by the prefect to confer with me on the same point. I gave assurance that the civil rights of the citizens would be respected, and our troops at once dropped down opposite the town and crossed the 'Upper Ferry' the American flag being displayed at Fort Parades a Mexican redoubt near the crossing. The different corps are now encamped in the outskirts of the city to-morrow I shall make suitable arrangements for the occupation of the town, and for taking possession of the public property. More than three hundred of the enemy's wounded have been left in hospitals. Arista is in full retreat towards Monterey with the fragments of his army.

I deeply regret to report that Lieut. George Stephens, a very promising young officer of the second Dragoons, was accidentally drowned this morning while attempting to swim the river with his squadron. I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR.
Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A. Comd'g
To the ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY,
Washington D. C.

Head Quarters Army of Occupation, Matamoras, Mexico, May 20, 1846.

Sir—On the 26th of April I had occasion to advise the department that hostilities had actually broken out, and that in consequence I had found it necessary to use the authority with which I was vested, and call upon the governors of Louisiana and Texas for a force, each, of four regiments thus called for would make a force of nearly 5,000 men which I deemed sufficient to meet the wants of the service in this quarter.

At the same time that I wrote the Gov. of Louisiana requesting this volunteer force, I addressed a letter to Gen. Gaines, desiring him to assist in organizing these regiments and having them promptly supplied. In my communication to the Governor, the organization was very exactly prescribed, being that indicated from your office on the 25th of August 1845. I find however, that this organization has been exceeded, and moreover that General Gaines has called for many more volunteers than I deemed necessary—extending the call to other States besides Louisiana.