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TO WAR WITH MEXICO:  
A Diary of the Mexican-American War

Jamie S. Linder and William B. Eigelsbach*

The anonymous author of the following diary, detailing one soldier's experience at the Battle of Cerro Gordo during the Mexican-American War, was a member of the Knoxville Dragoons, a volunteer militia unit that could serve as either cavalry or infantry as needed. The unit had been formed in 1846, six years before the start of the war, and was under the command of Captain William R. Caswell, a planter and a district attorney general, and Lieutenant Samuel Bell, an alumnus of East Tennessee University.

On May 24, 1846, Tennessee governor Aaron Venable Brown issued a proclamation ordering the state's volunteer militias to report to their area's major generals for possible service in the recently declared war with Mexico. 1 East Tennessee units were to report to Major General William Brazleton of the 1st Division of Militia, whose headquarters would be in Knoxville. East Tennessee's quota was to supply "seven companies, four of which were to be infantry or riflemen, and three to be cavalry or mounted men." 2

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1 The literature on the Mexican-American War is extensive. Sanford H. Montaigne, Blood Over Texas (New Rochelle, 1976) provides an interesting analysis of the causes of the war and its various interpretations. A good general history of the war is Colonel John S. D. Eisenhower, So Far From God: The U.S. War with Mexico, 1846-1848 (New York, 1989). A contemporary viewpoint from the Mexican side can be found in Ramon Alcaraz, The Other Side; or, Notes for the History of the War Between Mexico and The United States (New York, 1850). Santa Anna's own account, written after years in exile, is Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, The Eagle; the Autobiography of Santa Anna, edited by Ann Fears Crawford (Austin, 1967).

2 Aaron V. Brown, Speeches, Congressional and Political, and Other Writings (Nashville, 1854), 390.

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Due to the large number of service members, Captain Caswell's troop, Captain Caswell's troop, Dragoons—their official designation was Company K of the Mounted Rifles of the State of Tennessee—were called upon to leave their homeland to answer the call of war.

Once in New Orleans, Captain Caswell and his men were placed under the command of Lieutenant Bell. Here Caswell and his men were given the task of escorting a shipment of goods to the port of Galveston. The journey was fraught with danger, but Captain Caswell and his men were able to complete the mission successfully.

The troops proceeded from Galveston, and as they approached the Continental army's line of defense, Caswell and his men were ordered to take up a position along with the Tennessee units. However, it was not until the battle was won that Caswell and his men were able to return to Tennessee and resume their lives as civilians.

Circumstances were to work against Captain Caswell, as his unit was forced to march to Mexico, and capture the capital city of Mexico, Mexico City.

On March 6, 1847, Captain Caswell and his men were ordered to attack the eastern side of the city. Despite the odds, Caswell and his men were able to successfully capture the city, and with it, the victory. The battle was a turning point in the war, and Captain Caswell was hailed as a hero.

I landed on the shore of the city, after a few days. I had been lucky, but I could not put my foot on the beach for the first time...

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1 William R. Caswell to Benjamin P. H. B. Scott, May 26, 1846.

2 Quoted in O'Steen, 9.
Due to the large number of volunteers, not all militia units were accepted for service. Captain Caswell's troops were among the favored few chosen. The Knoxville Dragoons—their official designation in the United States Army would be that of Company K of the Mounted Infantry—were ordered to proceed to New Orleans by way of Memphis.

Once in New Orleans, Captain Caswell temporarily succeeded to Lieutenant Bell. Here Caswell accepted the position of aide de camp to General Gideon Pillow. "The command of a captain is the prettiest command of the army," Caswell wrote his stepfather, Benjamin McCulloch, "but I have been persuaded to leave my company and act as aide to Gen. Pillow with the privilege of rejoining my company." Most likely to the surprise of all the Whigs, Caswell appears to have gotten along well with the temperamental Democrat general.

The troops proceeded from New Orleans to Texas and toward Mexico to join the Northern command under General Zachary Taylor. This theater of war must have been frustrating for the Knoxville soldiers. Battle always seemed to elude them. As other Tennessee units were winning glory, the Knoxville Dragoons were engaged in endless marches, always miles away from active war. The most action the unit saw was when Caswell, who had returned to command of the company in October of 1846, led his men in an unsuccessful chase of a Mexican cavalry unit shadowing the American army. As one of his troops wrote home, "Why is it that the Tennessee regiment of mounted gunmen are thus kept out from any show in the field? We left our homes earlier than any of the infantry, yet we are now resting on our arms 600 miles from where they are winning laurels."*

Circumstances were to change when Captain Caswell and his men were sent to the southern arena of war to serve under the overall command of General Winfield Scott. Scott was planning to seize the port of Vera Cruz, march into the interior of Mexico, and capture the capital, Mexico City.

On March 6, 1847, Scott landed 10,000 troops several miles south of Vera Cruz. His army then moved to invest the city. The Mexican army garrisoned 1,200 men in the fortress of San Juan de Ulua and a further 3,800 in the town proper. Surrender was demanded of the Mexicans; ultimately they refused. On March 22, Scott started to bombard the city and the fortress. Writing a few days later to his wife, Elizabeth, Captain Caswell described his part in the battle:

I landed on the day before yesterday in the midst of the storming of the city, after a long and tempestuous voyage of twenty five days. I had been in hearing of all the guns and within sight of flash, but could not land until day before yesterday. And when I put my foot upon the shore, I found my company upon the beach for the first time under arms. I drew off my coat, and hav-

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* William R. Caswell to Benjamin McCulloch, November 22, 1846, Caswell Papers.

* Quoted in O'Steen, 9.
ing left my arms on board, I borrowed a carbine and led the company out into the interior of the country to attack a body of Mexicans who were fortified at a bridge. They were routed before we got there, but the march there and back (about 12 miles) made me so sore and tired that I haven’t been able to walk about much until today... It is considered one of the greatest victories ever achieved.¹

Seven days after the start of the American bombardment, the city of Vera Cruz surrendered. The battle cost the Mexicans some 80 soldiers and 100 civilians. The American army lost 19 soldiers and 63 were wounded.

A surrender ceremony to mark the victory typified General Scott’s love of military pomp. “Old Fuss and Feathers” lived up to the affectionate nickname given him by his troops by staging an event akin to a Roman triumph. Captain Caswell relived the ceremony in his next letter home:

The formal surrender of the city, Castle, arms, public stores and of the soldiers themselves as prisoners of war, (they were released however upon parole) took place today. Worth’s and Pillow’s Brigades were drawn up, on each side of an open plain in front of the city. The Mexicans marched out of the city into the plain. A white flag was placed in the center of the ground. At ten o’clock the Mexicans marched out between our ranks to the flag, at the head of the column came the women and children, and with them the Rancheros bearing heavy bundles of household goods, such as bedding &c. When I saw this my greatest sympathy was excited for their unfortunate situation, and the deaths among them we had been forced to occasion. After the women came the column of Mexican soldiers. They stacked their arms and lay down their flags and musical instruments, and dispersed in every direction. They made a poor show, compared with our army. With few exceptions they are miserable looking creatures—and I believe are mostly gratified at the termination of the battle.... After the Mexicans retired, we hoisted our flag upon the castle and forts of the town fired a national salute, and Gen. Worth’s division marched into the town. I marched in also with a few of my men, being the only Tennesseans who entered the town.²

With Vera Cruz captured and the surrender ceremony finished, General Scott began to mobilize his men for their march into Mexico’s interior. On April 9—the same date as our anonymous author’s mention of their assignment for the next day, ordered to carry messages on scouting missions, and to destroy the fortifications at the battlefield:

The pass of Cerro Gordo winds its way up the left, it is flanked by the hill of Cerritos, at the upper end to the height of the fortifications, shut in by heights that had fortified him, Cerro Gordo; and another fortification on the road—one at the head of the road—enfilading the road. The fortifications of the road, breastworks, &c.; so that in order next in order next in order next in order to the front of these lines... the fortifications are felled, and other fortifications.³

All this combined to make the attack:

On April 17-18 the American victory was celebrated. Captain Robert E. Lee’s advance upon the Mexican capital caught the Mexican defenders unprepared. The battle was fought on the battlefield’s heights.

¹ Caswell to Elizabeth Caswell, March 27, 1847, Caswell Papers.
² Ibid., March 29, 1847.
³ Semmes later served as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy. He was a Union officer during the American Civil War. His memoirs, which he began writing in 1867, were not published until 1880. Raphaël Semmes, The Career of a Confederate Naval Officer (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1880).
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situation, and the deaths among
ersion. After the women came the

They stacked their arms and lay
struments, and dispersed in every
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to Mexico’s interior. On April 9—the

same date as our anonymous diarist’s first entry—the Knoxville Dragoons received
their assignment for the next stage of the campaign. Captain Caswell’s company was
ordered to carry messages between the American armies under Scott, to conduct
scouting missions, and to do escort duty for any out-riding parties.

As Scott and his 8,500 soldiers marched down Mexico’s main highway to the
nation’s capital, they found waiting at Cerro Gordo a well-entrenched army of
12,000 men. The enemy army was under Mexican president General Santa Anna,
conqueror of the Alamo. Supplementing the enemy’s defensive entrenchments
was a severely rugged terrain. Just how bad the terrain was and how strong the
enemy fortifications were can be seen in Lieutenant Raphael Semmes’ description of the
battlefield:

The pass of Cerro Gordo is four miles from the Plan del Rio. Immediately upon leaving the “Plan,” the road begins to ascend, winding its way through a narrow defile of the mountains. On the left, it is flanked and commanded for two miles, before reaching the hill of Cerro Gordo, which lies on the right of the road, at the upper end of the pass, by almost inaccessible ridge, rising to the height of eight hundred feet. On the right it is alternately shut in by heights, and skirted by a dense chaparral. The enemy had fortified himself on the ridge on the left, and on the hill of Cerro Gordo; and had beside, established two batteries across the road—one at the head of the pass, near the base of Cerro Gordo, and another farther up the road, in the direction of Jalapa. His fortifications on the height on the left, consisted of a series of breastworks, armed with cannon, and so arranged as to command the road—enfilading it in many places—and each other, in succession; so that in the event of the first battery’s being taken, the next in order might be opened upon it; and so totes quotes. In front of these batteries, along the slope of the height, timber was felled, and other obstructions thrown in the way of storming parties.  

All this combined to make the Mexicans optimistic of victory. They were mistaken.

On April 17-18 the American army defeated the Mexican army in battle. The key
to the American victory was the flanking movement. Acting on the advice of then-
Captain Robert E. Lee, General David E. Twiggs swung wide from the American
advance upon the Mexican’s positions and fell upon them from a direction that
calmed the Mexican defenders with surprise. Twiggs’ forces drove them from one of
the battlefield’s heights.

7 Semmes later served as a Rear Admiral in the Confederate navy.

Raphael Semmes, The Campaign of General Scott in the Valley of Mexico (Cincinnati, 1852), 63-64.
The next day Colonel William S. Harney launched a savage assault on the Mexican army’s main defensive position. Santa Anna, seeing the battle as lost, began to withdraw his forces. Simultaneous with Harney’s assault, General James Shields hit the far left flank of the Mexican army, turning an attempted retreat into a rout. Santa Anna and his army lost nearly 1,200 men, while the Americans lost 431. Future generals in the Civil War present at the battle, namely Lee and George McClellan, learned an enduring lesson about the efficacy of a surprise flanking movement.

The Knoxville Dragoon’s role in the battle unfolds on the pages of the diary. The account can be usefully supplemented with another letter from Captain Caswell to his wife:

We alone of our regt., marched with the army and were in the battle. And from the time we left Vera Cruz up to our arrival here a few days since I was put upon constant duty with my few men, conveying dispatches to Gen. Twiggs in front, to Gen. Scott in the rear, and to the different corps of the army, riding night and day—guarding provender and provision trains, escorting Gen. Staff and Engineer officers upon reconnoitering & tours of survey, which was hazardous service. In the battle of the 18th, I formed my men with the reserve of Gen. Pillow’s Brigade, ready to dash upon the enemy whenever the storming party should have obtained possession of the enemy’s breastworks. With my men I was exposed to the fire of cannon and musketry, but all escaped unhurt.\footnote{Caswell to Elizabeth Caswell, April 24, 1847, Caswell Papers.}

With this hard fought battle ended Scott and his army began to prepare the advance upon the Mexican capital, but war—for the Knoxville Dragoons—was over. While some, such as our diarist, thought the company would continue on to Mexico City, Captain Caswell had thought for some time that they would be sent home, since their twelve-month enlistment was soon to expire. Caswell was right. General Scott sent the Knoxville soldiers and other similarly circumstanced home. On June 15, 1847, the first of the returning troops reached Knoxville. A few weeks later a reception was held celebrating the Knoxville Dragoon’s role in the war with Mexico and honoring their few losses—but most importantly, welcoming them home to East Tennessee.

April 9. A portion of the company consisting of the 22 mounted men with the

\footnote{William Richard Caswell of North Carolina, was a lawyer, planter, and attorney general of the 12th Tennessee. Lawson McClung reports Samuel Bell as attorney general in the state’s provision. Hugh Lawson McClung Library, University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville.}

\footnote{Samuel W. Bell compiled the above mentioned and extensive note to his account. According to McClung, Bell, a man of good standing, had a pair of whiskers and mustache.}

\footnote{Robert Patterson (1792-1854) served as a major-general of volunteers during the Mexican-American War, and was a member of the Aztec Club.}
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Folds on the pages of the diary. The
total letter from Captain Caswell to

the army and were in the
brush up to our arrival here
whereby duty with my few men,
soon in front, to Gen. Scott in
the army, riding night and
day on trains, escorting Gen.
F. Montgomery & tours of sur-
veillance on the road of the battle of the 18th, I
am informed. Pillow's Brigade, ready
for his storming party should
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Gideon J. Pillow, from Robert T. Conrad (Grigg, Elliot & Co., comp.), General Scott
and His Staff (Philadelphia, 1848). Courtesy of the Special Collections Department,
The University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville.

Capten and Lieut. Bell as pioneers of the Regt marched today advanced guard of
Gen Patterson's Division on the way to the Hall of the Montezeumas. We regret
very much to leave our dismounted comrades exposed to dangers of sickness always

10 William Richard Caswell (1809-1862), the grandson of a Revolutionary War governor of North
Carolina, was a lawyer, planter, banker, and railroad entrepreneur. At the start of the war, Caswell
resigned as attorney general of the 12th Judicial Circuit. In a letter to his wife written on November 4, 1846,
Hugh Lawson McClung reports Samuel Bell as saying that Caswell was "the most popular man in the regiment
and that if there was an election he would not lose one hundred votes out of the thousand composing the
Regiment." When Tennessee seceded from the Union, Governor Isham Harris appointed Caswell a
general in the state's provisional army. Caswell was murdered returning to his home at Caswell Station.
Hugh Lawson McClung, Letters, 1840-1858. Special Collections Department, The University of
Tennessee Library, Knoxville.

11 Samuel W. Bell enlisted June 10, 1846 as a First Lieutenant and mustered out May 31, 1847. In the
above-mentioned letter to his wife, Hugh Lawson McClung described running into Bell in New Orleans.
According to McClung, Bell, who was there arranging re-supply for the troops, had "the most formidable
pair of whiskers and moustache you have ever seen." H. L. McClung Letters.

12 Robert Patterson (1792-1881) was an Irish-born soldier and Pennsylvania industrialist. In the war, he
served as a major-general of volunteers. Later Patterson was to serve again as a major-general in the early
days of the Civil War. Patterson was long-time head of the Mexican-American War veterans' organiza-
tion, the Aztec Club.
incident to stationary soldiers camps & especially in the environs of Vera Cruz, so noted for its sickness at seasons of the year now approaching and near at hand. Scott, A Hawkins, Suttle and Carnes were neither of them well when we left, but we hope that soon our horses and friends left at Tampico will arrive and the balance of the company will overtake us. Our route lay for several miles upon the beach, and the heavy march upon the deep sand of the long line of infantry which follow us cause us to rejoice that we are cavalry and we are particularly favored in being furnished with a baggage wagon for the transportation of our provisions whilst the infantry pack 4 days supply in their haversacks. When we applied on yesterday to Gen Patterson for transportation we told him it could not be had without detriment to the service we could march without it. "I know," said the Genl, "you would do so[,] I know you would go in any way[,] your company has never given ... any trouble to me." We proceeded sufficiently far in advance to halt upon the beach, and take a delightful bathe in the salt surf of the gulf. We struck out upon the turnpike amid the sand hills with the hot sun beaming down almost perpendicularly upon us. At the distance of five miles we came to the village of Santa Fe which we found to be almost entirely depopulated. A small fort was erected upon a mound near the road and at a bridge we passed it was torn up and obstructions of large stones placed in the road all looked as if the Mexicans have contemplated disputing every step we might attempt to take towards their holy city. We passed within view on our right hand upon an eminence the private residence of Santa Anna.

Vera Cruz was Mexico's principal city on the Gulf of Mexico.

Edward L. Scott enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

Absalom Hawkins enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

Noah Suttle enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

William C. Carnes enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

Tampico is a seaport on the eastern coast of Mexico.

Santa Fe was a small town half way between Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo.

Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (1794-1876) was one of Mexico’s leading generals and several times president of the country. In America he is best known for his role in the Battle of the Alamo. In 1845, Santa Anna was forced into exile after having seized the country's presidency two years before. When the war with America broke out, Santa Anna convinced President Polk to arrange his return to Mexico to restore peace between the nations. Once back in the country, he took charge of the war against the Americans. His lack of success led once again to his banishment. He did not return from exile this time until a year or so before his death.
called Manga de Clavo. We are told that Santa Anna, owns all the land for 8 or 10 leagues on both sides the road, from Vera Cruz to Jalapa from the rent of which he must derive an immense revenue for one of his tenants told us he paid annually for the farm the sum of $650.00 besides this the cattle which fill the whole woods (after you have advanced a short distance into the interior are all his private property and have his brand of A. L. The initials perhaps of Antonio Lopez.) Our camp for the night was on the side of one of the many long and excellent bridges which are built of stone and cement—we had selected the encampment for our little corps beneath the deep shade of coconut palm trees. but the insects below and the harsh croaking of the chaperal cocks & parrots in the trees above prevented us from sleeping much during the night. Besides these annoyances we made a march of 16 miles and our wagons did not arrive until very late, so that we had no other supper than such as Santa Annas beef afforded.

April 10th. On account of the many soldiers breaking down and the late arrival of the train, we only march 7 1/2 miles today and halted at a stream over which another bridge of great length and superior masonry had been constructed with much labor. Our mounted men were stationed at head quarters apart from the main body of the Division, and thereby fell into the luck of some harder service than has been our want of late. We were required to divide the watches of the night and keep a picket guard upon the road while some were thus employed (Lt. Bell taking a watch as sentinel in turn with the men) the others rolled themselves in their blankets lay down beneath the wide spreading limbs of an immense and beautiful forest.

April 11th. At 1/2 past 12 o'clock this morning Capt [as well] with ten men were called into the saddle to transmit to Genl Twiggs at the National Bridge a dispatch from Gen Scott. This detachment proceeded with much caution in the star light

This hacienda was located 15 miles from Vera Cruz and two miles from the National Road.

Jalapa was a sizable Mexican city for the time with close to 12,000 citizens.

David Emanuel Twiggs (1790-1862), the son of a Revolutionary War general, was a professional soldier, serving in the infantry and the dragoons. For his service at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Twiggs was made a regular army brigadier-general and was later made a major-general for bravery at the Battle of Monterey. Transferred to the Southern campaign under Winfield Scott, Twiggs led the vanguard of that army in the march to Mexico City. For his services in the war, Congress presented him with a jeweled sword with a gold scabbard. Twiggs served in the Civil War as the ranking general in the Confederate Army.

The National Bridge was built by General Diego Garcia Conde according to the plans of sculptor/architect Manuel Tolsa. The bridge was considered an architectural marvel.

Winfield Scott (1786-1866) held the rank of general in the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and the Civil War. In the Mexican War, Scott commanded the Southern campaign that commenced with the capture of Vera Cruz. Close to six months later Scott captured the Mexican capital and effectively ended the war. In 1852, Scott was the unsuccessful Whig candidate for president. In the early part of the Civil War, Scott was head of the army and devised the strategy of defeating the Confederacy by dividing the South. His nick-name among his soldiers was "Old Fuss and Feathers," reflecting his love of military pomp.
of night moving in a body with two men from 50 to 100 yards in advance. Our horses feet clattered upon the paved turnpike as we marched amidst perfect stillness from all other sound. After marching some 3 miles one solitary light was visible in a large village (was Servaco) which as we approached exhibited to us a body of soldiers with muskets whose bayonets bristled between the light of our eye. They proved to be a body of straglers from Gen Twigg Division. As we rode across the celebrated Peruria National, the beautiful scene of a Division encampment with all their fires blazing, met our eyes. When we halted at Gen. Twigg quarters, we found him ready to march the only 3 o'clock. We delivered the dispatches, and were informed that the Mexicans had abandoned this position (which the Gen. declared could be maintained by 500 men against the world) several days before his arrival. The Genl said the Mexicans were fortified in the mountains 20 miles distant their force was variously estimated at from 2 to 15000 men. "I shall fight them," said he "tomorrow at 10 o'clock, and I shall whip them" I would like to have you with me, but I cannot wait. I shall bolt my train at Rio Blanco to-night to-morrow I shall march out, whip them, and return to my camp!" Corporal Swan private Portis Renfro went back with a communication for Genl. Scott. Lt Bell came forward with the balance of the marching command at the head of the Division, whilst those who had come forward during the night guarded the village & bridge formerly called the King's bridge. Is superior to any work of the kind we have ever seen & said to be one of the best structures of the kind in the world. The Bridge is about 300 yards long of solid stone & cemented over—having seven arches spanning the main stream built in 1802 by the merchants of Vera Cruz & Mexico under the patronage of the Government in (?) having scarcely a crack or break upon it. The mountains which rise almost perpendicularly upon each side with crowning batteries upon their heights make it an impregnable position if defended with any spirit. This morning after delivering our dispatches to Genl Scott we made fast our horses to feed them, slept upon our blankets lay down around the roots of a large tree, whose branches held many nests of the jacksaw, and the serenade of these chattering birds was no interruption to the sound sleep of men who rode the night march which we had

36 Another name for the National Bridge.

37 Rio Blanco, or White River, was a river on the way to Cerro Gordo.

38 Samuel G. Swan enlisted in Knoxville June 10, 1846 and was discharged from service at New Orleans on May 31, 1847 as a corporal.

39 William E. Portis enlisted in Knoxville June 10, 1846 as a private and was discharged from service at New Orleans on May 31, 1847.

40 James Renfro enlisted in Knoxville June 10, 1846 as a private and was discharged from service at New Orleans on May 31, 1847. In an accidental discharge of his own gun on April 18, 1847, Renfro shot off the third finger of his left hand and the end of the second finger.

31 Another name for the National Bridge.

made. We were awakened with fright to ask our provisions, found eight of Gen. Twiggs dead, but had contented them over which they were many inmates of the house from us vessels in which to content from the commissary of the Army.

April 12th. The road on both sides at an expense of 29 a degenerate race of Mexico & keep it up. But excellent intense rays of the sun for many of the Infantry to fall others thus left behind were and two privates of the Enfield Dragoons had taken at Cerro Gordo 4.5 miles on the mountain heights where a majority of the Mexicans were put to who drew the fire of the Johnson of the Topography. In this little skirmish the many. We selected a butte, where we reeled our horses in the we might be ready for the Shipe sleeping up

32 A demijohn is a narrow-necked bottle.

33 William Selby Harvey (1806-1863) He was made a brigadier-general, despite pro-Southern symp.

34 Cerro Gordo was about 45 miles his army to resist the American

35 Joseph Eggleston Johnston (1820-1862) Seminole War. Trying to get in twice wounded. In the Civil War, he the U.S. House of Representatives.

36 Plan del Rio was located in

37 Jackson Shipe enlisted June Orleans May 31, 1847.
made. We were awakened by a Mexican man and woman who came all trembling with fright to ask our protection from soldiers of our army, we went to their hut and found eight of Gen. Twiggs's men who had searched their house in every corner but had contented themselves with taking only a large demijohn of "aqua diente" over which they were making merry. We sent them forward and relieved the poor inmates of the house from further terror for which they were grateful enough to lend us vessels in which to cook our breakfast the elements of which we had procured from the commissary of the first Division.

April 12th. The road over which we marched is graded paved & mostly walled on each side at an expense of labor which astonishes everyone who may see it but the degenerate race of Mexicans permit it to wear away without attempting to sustain & keep it up. But excellent as the road is, the long march without water and the intense rays of the sun from whose burning heat we could find no shelter caused many of the Infantry to fall exhausted by the way side, several of whom died—and others thus left behind were attacked by the Mexican scouts. One dragoon killed, and two privates of the Pennsylvania volunteers were wounded. We overtook Gen. Twiggs' Division at Rio Blanco. At which place Col. Harney with the U.S. Dragoon had overtaken the advanced guard of the Mexican Army now in a position at Cerro Gordo. 4.5 miles distant with fortifications and batteries of artillery upon the mountain heights which overlook the road on both sides. The advanced guard of the Mexicans were pursued and reconnoitering parties sent out with the engineers who drew the fire of the enemy's cannon and several volleys of musketry. Capt. Johnson of the Topographical Engineers and two or three privates were wounded. In this little skirmish the enemy has sustained some loss but we do not know how many. We selected a hut in the village of Plan Del Rio for our head quarters and corralled our horses in the rear of the hut spread down our blankets to rest upon that we might be ready for the action which we expected to take place in a few hours.

Shipe was sleeping upon his blanket on the floor of the hut & some soldier in

32 A demijohn is a narrow-necked bottle, normally encased in wicker.

33 William Selby Harney (1809-1889), a native of Davidson County, was colonel of the 2nd Dragoons. He was made a brigadier-general for his service at Cerro Gordo. In the Civil War, he was a Union general, despite pro-Southern sympathies.

34 Cerro Gordo was about 45 miles from Vera Cruz. In the mountain pass here Santa Anna entrenched his army to resist the American march to Mexico City.

35 Joseph Eggleston Johnston (1807-1891) was a graduate of West Point and had previously served in the Seminole War. Trying to get information as to the Mexican positions at Cerro Gordo led to him being twice wounded. In the Civil War, Johnston was a Confederate general. After the war, he was to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

36 Plan del Rio was located in a small valley near Cerro Gordo.

37 Jackson Shipe enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.
wantonship had jerked a large iron grape shot which fell thru the thatched roof of the huts upon the floor near Shipe. The noise of the fall waked him & jumping up he enquired where that came from. Looney⁴⁸ asked him if he had not heard the roar of the cannon. Shipe opened his eyes (Looney says) as large as billiard balls, and declared he had slept so sound and had heard so many cannon at Vera Cruz as well as this morning he did not awake until the shot fell near his head.

The citizens of this village have fled precipitately and left all the furniture of their huts. There is a small cathedral with some rich and handsome ornaments—one image of the virgin as life dressed in a silks robe of blue & yellow with earrings & bracelets of gold holding the image of an infant in her hand tho the most natural representation of a sacred illustration we have yet seen was of our saviour in the Sepulchre which we saw in the grand church of Cruz. There is upon a mountain spur close to the bridge across the rio blanco a fort grey with age, the wooden works of which have rotted down or burned long since. It looks as if it had been in past times the castle of some feudal chief into which he could retire, raise his draw bridge, reconnoiter an enemy & fire upon them from the loop holes & embrasures of his castle perfectly secure against all the world, unless by investment with siege artillery which alone in time might batter down his thick stone walls. Swan Portis and Renfrro reached camp this evening having travelled thru from Vera Cruz to-day with dispatches from Gen Scott to Gen. Patterson, a hazardous adventure which is plain from the fact that other dispatches with the same force have been cut off by the enemy. Swan reports our men at Vera Cruz as doing well.

April 13th. Our company were sent out to-day with four wagons for forage. We found some 600 bushels which the Mexicans were engaged (just before we arrived at the place) in transporting upon mules to the Mexican camp. Our wagons were loaded (& the quantity reported to the Qt. Master who paid them at the rates of about $1.00 per bushel). Meanwhile we made our dinner upon parched corn—returned safe to camp not having seen a Mexican soldier in our route, tho we understood a body of 50 horsemen crossed the road one or two miles behind us. This evening orders were issued to the army with arms—2 days supply of provisions & water to be ready by 3 o'clock in the morning, for an attack upon the enemy by storming the heights. This order was countermanded by the Gen. Patterson. (who being very sick & confined to his bed the plan of attack had been designed by Genl. Twiggs & Pillow).⁴⁹ And the assault determined to be delayed until the arrival of Genl. Scott.

⁴⁸ Abadon Looney, a native of Hawkins County, was a very successful Knox County farmer. Looney enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service May 31, 1847.

⁴⁹ Gideon Johnson Pillow (1806-1878) was a Tennessee lawyer and one-time law partner of James K. Polk, whom he helped secure the presidency in 1844. When war came President Polk rewarded Pillow with the rank of brigadier-general. Pillow fought at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, and Chapultepec. Pillow was twice wounded. In the Civil War, Pillow was once again a general. His service at Fort Donelson and elsewhere was questioned at the time and afterwards.
About 9 o'clock at night quite a stir was made in our camp by the Mexicans firing a volley of musketry upon our picket guard (Dragoons) or rather firing in the direction of the guard for the cowardly scamps were afraid to approach near enough to do any mischief, or even to draw the fire from our pickets. They may consider this quite a bold venture in their system of warfare for they fight (as they call it) some great battles against each other and sometimes from one side of the city of Mexico to the other for weeks without doing any mischief[,] it is said that at Palo Alto the Mexican Cavalry were ordered to charge a part of our lines. They came galloping down to within about 2 1/2 miles and halted. Our men were drawn into a square to receive them, but never thought of firing up at such a distance. When Genl. Vega was taken prisoner in a conversation with Majr Bliss[,] he asked as if with some pride what the Majr thought of the charge. Bliss asked him if they had made a charge, which as was much as if we would not call such a movement by such a name. And indeed it is supposed they learned at Buena Vista from Col. Humphrey Marshall what we would call a charge.

April 14th. At day light half the men were sent out with the beef contractor to protect him, whilst collecting beef for the army. At 9 o'clock the others were ordered to the saddle to bear dispatches to Gen. Scott & to take along with us the whole company. Receiving the dispatches we passed the beef range where we were joined by the detachment first sent out & without baggage or any encumbrance except our arms proceeded toward Vera Cruz. Near the National bridge we saw the Advance guard of Genl Scotts escort approaching. When they discovered us they halted and rode several times across the road as if watching us with much suspicion, then one of them alone rode forward about 100 yards, halted, and after looking awhile turned, went back under whip & spun and proceeded with his comrades to give an

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4 A battle won by Zachery Taylor on May 8, 1846 in the Northern campaign.

4 Romulo Diaz de la Vega was captured twice in the war. He was first captured by General Zachery Taylor's army at the Battle of Resaca de la Palma. Prior to his capture de la Vega had been acting commander of the Mexican troops at the battle. He had been released on parole, but Santa Anna ordered paroled soldiers back into service against the Americans. Captured again at the Battle of Cerro Gordo, he was once again offered parole. This time he refused to accept release from capture.

4 Thomas Childs (1796-1853) was a graduate of West Point and a professional soldier. Prior to the Mexican War, Childs had served in the War of 1812 and the Seminole War. For his services at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, he was made a colonel. From April to June 1847, Childs was military governor at Jalapa. Childs ended the war a brigadier-general.

4 Humphrey Marshall (1812-1872) was a West Point graduate and Kentucky lawyer. He was colonel of the 1st Kentucky Cavalry. At the Battle of Buena Vista he made a series of brilliant cavalry charges. Later he served in the U.S. House of Representatives, as U.S. minister to China, and as a member of the Confederate House of Representatives. Prior to serving in the last office, Marshall was a brigadier-general in the Confederate army.
alarm of Mexicans approaching. But we adopted means of deceiving them. At the National Bridge we delivered our dispatches to Gen. Scott, who with his staff admired the celerity of our movements. We were supplied with forage, ordered to rest rested two hours & to follow the General which we did. At the first ranch we came to a company of Dragoons in guard of 20 wagons loading the corn found there. They had been without water & provisions during the day. We guarded the train until they watered their horses from a stream 1 1/2 miles distant. This delay detained us until in the night in getting into camp.

April 15th. Having performed hard service we were allowed to rest our horses to-day, and they need such rest, for by the hard ride on yesterday the backs of most of them were hurt, and we have but scanty rations of forage for them. We lay about during the day in the shade of the trees and of our hut, some of us bathing in a pool of water we found at no great distance from camp in a deep glet overhung by trees, shrubbery & vines, into which the clear water of the stream poured thro a channel in the rocky bed down a steep declivity. We have been considerably annoyed in the day by soldiers attempting to tear down our hut for fire wood and at night by their seeking lodgings in our already crowded room. One fellow came about bed time and enquired if there was a place where he could sleep. Some of us told him in jest he could find accommodations at Wolfingers tavern which was next door. He understood the joke, and we heard him enquire at the open shed adjoining for the landlord, he received an answer from several of the soldiers who were crowded under the shed. We ordered the ostler to take his horse, another directed the bar keeper to furnish him some refreshment. one told him he could sleep in the barn (a building not known in Mexico) at half price, another ordered a servant to show the gentlemen into No. 10, on the third floor. But the poor fellow finally slept in the road, perhaps to dream of the comfortable accommodations ordered by our neighbors to whom we had referred him.

April 16. We were mounted at 4 o'clock this morning to guard the beef contractor & butchers with about 8 or 10 infantry soldiers who went out to shoot the [?].

44 There are illegible deleted lines in the text: "The company halted and Cap. C. galloped forward and stopped there, enquiring if they could not distinguish us from the enemy. They said they could see we did not have the uniform of Dragoons & that the Captain had on a red jacket from all which they took us to be the enemy."
Halted at a Ranch 8 miles from camp where we found some cattle, and soon after, the butchering commenced, two Mexicans showed themselves in the road, unarmed. They were suspected as spies but being unarmed were not molested. We kindled a fire in the (upon the cement floor) large hall of a castle in the ranch, which was furnished with tables as if prepared for a banqueting hall, and cooked some of the fresh beef for our breakfast. After which 5 or 6 of us proceeded into a deep valley 1/4 miles distant to search for water, and found the coolest running water we have yet had in this country. After procuring a refreshing drink, Capt. C. L. Bell & Thomas Snoddy, road along the narrow & deep path which led to a broad cultivated valley below whilst the other men returned to camp. At a turn in the path, a dark ugly Ranchero presented himself and raising his escopet took deliberate aim at the Capt. who was in front with his red jacket on but fortunately the gun missed fired. Neither of us were prepared to return the fire and such a thing as an attack upon armed Americans being as uncommon it was supposed that the Ranchero was sustained by a strong party. The Capt. Lt. & Snoddy turned and galloped up the hill to the company. Not finding beef enough, the butcher took two wagons and went on to the next Ranch upon the road. H. Tipton, Heard, Cameron and John McCall guarded these two wagons and soon after they left a company of Dragoons with a train of wagons passed on to the same ranch for corn. The body of our company remained at the castle, with the horses saddled and close to the door. Every thing being quiet we all by turns took a little sleep. As Tipton and his three comrades returned just in advance of the beef wagons they were fired upon by a body of Mexicans, who had way laid them upon the hill side in view from our position. Heard was slightly wounded in the elbow and a shot scaled the stock of his gun, a ball scarred Fortner's horse and one was lodged in Cotners saddle. Our 4 men returned the fire & retreated, but Tipton's gun first

Thomas Snoddy enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847. On March 5, 1847, Snoddy became company bugler.

H. Tipton enlisted June 10, 1846 in Knoxville as a corporal and was discharged in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

William Augustus Heard enlisted June 6, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

Alexander Cameron enlisted June 6, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

John McCall enlisted June 6, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

Archibald Fortner enlisted June 6, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.

Calvin Cotner enlisted June 6, 1846 in Knoxville as a private and was discharged from service in New Orleans May 31, 1847.
snapped & he halted within 25 yards of them put on a fresh cap & knocked the powder into the tube and fired with as good aim as he could take. The beef contractor at the first alarm, dashed on in great precipitation leaving his hat & [?]. We heard the alarm and mounted in haste, the Mexicans had now showed a part of their force in the road and as we charged in full speed they fled into the thick chaperal. We dismounted except J. L. & R. B. Roberson12 and Day13 and Portis who remained to protect the horses, the rest of us took the chaperal and proceeded cautiously parallel with the road, until we came to the place where the Mexicans had left the road. Not finding them we came into the road to remount, and just at this time the party with the horses were attacked. Jn. Roberson when sitting on his horse had discovered a man in the chaperal but lest he might fire upon one of our own men (for it was precisely the place where McCarty14 had first gone into the chaperal) dismounted and ... went upon a rise just outside the road. It was a Mexican who had concealed himself in the bushes and at this time shot Roberson thro the thigh with an ounce ball & put a shot into his hand. As soon as he fired R. B. Roberson stepped forward and shot his carbine with good aim at the Mexican as he ran. Portis also had a shot either at him or his comrades. Report of the first gun was heard by the company and all ran to the rescue shouting for the men to hold their ground. The waggons by this time had passed the first place of attack and the beef shooters on foot coming up just at this time, discovered a part of the enemy near the road, fired upon them, and drove them back. We put Roberson into a wagggon & bound up his wound he suffered very much at first the bone is fractured high up on the thigh, but he was brought in upon a litter, a bed spread upon the floor of our hut, and medical aid immediately at hand, he bears the pain with great fortitude. By the bye we brought our beef to camp tho we had some trouble to get our share of it from the commissary. Gen. Worth15 with his Division arrived in camp during the night.

April 17th. Reconniatering & working parties have been constantly moving around the enemies works. The Mexican flag has been hoisted this morning upon a flag on the right of their line of fortification on a height in view of our whole camp.

12 John L. Roberson joined as a private at the June 17, 1846 unit reenactors at Sequatchie Valley. Rufus B. Roberson, his brother, joined at the same time at the same rank. John L. Roberson died of his wounds received in the skirmish being described. Rufus B. Roberson was discharged from service at New Orleans May 31, 1847.

13 John Day enlisted at Knoxville June 10, 1846 as a private and was discharged at New Orleans May 31, 1847.

14 Benjamin F. McCarty enlisted at Knoxville June 10, 1846 as second sergeant and was discharged from service May 31, 1847.

15 William Jenkins Worth (1794-1849) was a New York state merchant when he joined the army at the start of the War of 1812. He served as aide-de-camp to General Winfield Scott. He stayed in the army and was commandant of West Point from 1820-1828. He served in the Seminole War. For his bravery at the Battle of Monterrey, he was made a major-general and was awarded a sword by Congress. After joining the Southern army under Scott, Worth displayed his usual ability and courage. While in command of the Department of Texas, Worth died of cholera.

We were sent out this evening with a view of the enemy's line and individuals. They were all in a moment of an attack. Another Division has been cutting and proceeded in taking one height and asstalling them in rear upon the main mountain. The infantry were sent out to-do the same body of Ranchero men and wounding two of them in their fortress.

Sunday April 18th. In the early breakfast and fried equipments all snugly fitted to the Brigade formed the enemy who by reason of the number of our comrades we were able to roll the day. We thought of the order, and all resolved ruthlessly marched at the head of the descent of the eminent make the attack. There followed the volley of Lieutenant, of the whole the rear of the column might not notify the Mens. Staff and field officers, but with firm steps which traversed the paths which traversed the paths with their cases of instru with their position, as they stood however they soon retired a storming party (consisting of a reserve & 1st Pennsylvania) attained their respective

16 An escopeter is a short rifle.

17 William Turner Haskell in his Seminole War: In the Mexican-Tennessee Volunteers. As soon as these of Representatives. In the y
We were sent out this evening with staff & Engineer officers as a guard, and had a view of the enemy's line and position, being near enough to see the movements of individuals. They were all under arms, and appeared to be in expectation every moment of an attack. Around the other end of the line Genl. Twiggs with his Division has been cutting out a road fighting them all day, by spells, and has succeeded in taking one height which enable to pass their left flank and prepare for assailing them in rear upon the main road. At one time Majr Child with 18 men carried the main mountain heights, which had been left unguarded, but was compelled to retire for want of support. A company of Dragoons and a company of Infantry were sent out to-day as guard of our beef contractor. They were attacked by the same body of Rancheros, with whom we had a fight on yesterday, killing one man and wounding two others. They came off without returning their fire or assailing them in their fortress, leaving their dead man on the field & without their beef.

Sunday April 18th. In obedience to orders, we mounted at 6 o'clock having had an early breakfast and fed and watered our horses our arms were in order, our horse equipments all snugly fitted on. We formed our company as the ... several regiments of the Brigade formed their lines. We knew we were going into a battle with an enemy who by reason of their strong position must necessarily make a stand, and many of our comrades who were now standing arms, would never live thro the day. We thought of the character of our State and country, of our individual character, and all resolved rather to die upon the field than discredit either. Our company marched at the head of the column, until we left the main road & commenced the escort of the eminence upon which the enemy was in position where we were to make the attack. There were only twenty of us including the Captain & 1st Lieutenant, of the whole Brigade who were mounted. We were ordered to follow in the rear of the column from the foot of the hill that the clatter of our horses feet might not notify the Mexicans of the silent approach designed for the same reason the Genl. Staff and field officers all dismounted. Slowly, silently and with solemn thoughts, but with firmness and determination we moved along by one of the many paths which traversed the thick chapeal upon the declivity. The medical officers with their cases of instruments bandages & other implements & attendants took their position, as they supposed beyond the reach of the enemy's shot, from which however they soon retreated. We followed on the rear of the column. Before the storms party (consisting of the 2nd Tennessee on the right with the 2nd Penn. as a reserve & 1st Pennsylvania Regimt. on the left with the 1st Ten as a reserve) had attained their respective positions in line of battle, the enemy opened their fire, with 17 Cannon bearing upon us and 1500 escopets and muskets. Col. Haskells Regt.

An escopet is a short rifle.

William Turner Haskell (1818-1859) was a lawyer, politician, and songwriter. He served in the Seminole War. In the Mexican War, Haskell was colonel of the 1st Brigade, 2nd Regiment of the Tennessee Volunteers. As soon as he returned home from the war, Haskell was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In the year of his death he made an unsuccessful campaign for the governorship.
(2nd Ten) dashing from the cover of the chaperal made the charge in the face of all this armament, thro' an open space in front of the breast works but covered with brush in many places waist deep, for the purpose of impeding a charge. The gallantry and the desperation of this attempt, with the immense lose in killed and wounded the military history of our country will record and fame display the names of those who fought and fell. Our company had gone beyond the point of prudence; tho we preferred going beyond rather than halting on this side. Balls fell thick around us and soldiers fell behind us as well as in our front but fortunately we escaped unhurt. Every moment amidst the roar of arms, we expected to receive notice that the enemy's works were carried, when we proposed to ride thro' and fall upon them with our sabers. But instead of receiving such notice our forces were compelled to retire from before a position which with the soldiers who manned it might have been maintained against 8000 men. Men all bloody from the wounds received came staggering along the path supported by their comrades, others actively disabled and dripping with blood were borne along toward the quarters of the Surgeons and shame to say some cowards came running in great havic whom we tried to rally and many of them we did halt and return to their several companies, whereas others ran hastily past toward our camp but few of these we are proud to say were Tennesseans. Then we commenced our labors of the day. Carrying orders, despatches and intelligence from and between the officers and different corps and between each wing of the army, transporting the wounded to the hospital and conveying water to those who were almost famished for its want. In this service several of us were at different times misled by the numerous paths, and galloped suddenly within point blank musket shot of the enemy's lines—who could have easily cut us off, but they had suffered so severely by the attack of Genl. Twiggs' Division that they had now proposed to hoist flags of truce to capitulate and the fight had every where ceased. When they made their proposition, Gen. Scott replied they must surrender uncon-

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"Battery No. 2, Charged by Second Tennessee Regiment," from George C. Furber, The Twelve Months Volunteer (Cincinnati, 1849). Courtesy of the Special Collections Department, The University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville.

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Ditionally and that too within 15 minutes. Upon receiving this intelligence, we charged the breast works in the road where we met with a heap and broke and burned. Six Guardsmen, La Vega, Gen. Jerrero.60 600 prisoners fled in great precipitation leaving his sword and his wooden leg. How many soldiers, when we went into action is said to be 5000. When we returned to camp we found whom we had left this morning as wounded, now evidently beyond the reach of pain, made no complaint and some man having received the wound of two of the battles of his country.61

Genl. Twiggs' Division commenced the storming of the castle height with the 11th of May, the height was so elevated that their cannon in ascending the hill. The two columns one half the face of the hill, which were within about 30 yards of the enemy a moment. Then charged in orders:

60 Actually the number was five: Pinson, Jaquez, Howard, Johnson, and Draper.
61 Jose Maria Jaquez y Ruiz (1801-1867) was aconvert who served as a soldier in the city infantry.

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On April 18, 1847 his brother wrote the following:

Alas! How should I tell you of the terrible things that had happened in the city? At 12 o'clock having suffered about four days, his recovery until a few hours before his death, he received this in his recovery until a few hours before his death, he received this in...
general made the charge in the face of all of the breast works but covered with those of impeding a charge. The gallantry with the immense loss in killed and killed record and fame display them gone beyond the point of prudence, g on this side. Balls fell thick around our front but fortunately we escaped with no loss, we expected to receive notice that we were ordered to ride thro' and fall upon them. Notice our forces were compelled to soldiers who manned it might have body from the wounds received came comrades, others actively disabled and in the quarters of the Surgeons and had hauic whom we tried to rally and several companies. whilst others ran there are proud to say were Tennesseans. Carrying orders, despatches and intelligent corps and between each wing of hospital and conveying water to those service several of us were at different stopped suddenly within point blank and have easily cut us off, but they had Twiggs's Division that they had now pressed the fight had every where ceased. replied they must surrender uncon-

ditionally and that too within 15 minutes, which they acceded to. And immediately upon receiving this intelligence, we escorted Genl. Pillow round the road to the breast works in the road where we met the prisoners whose arms were thrown into a heap and broke and burned. Six Genl. officers taken prisoner among them Genl. La Vega, Gen. Jerreto. 6000 prisoners of war were guarded into camp Santa Anna fled in great precipitation leaving his private carriage, 20,000 dollars in silver coin, and his wooden leg. How many soldiers escaped we do not know but their number when we went into action is said to have been 15000.

When we returned to camp we found our brother and comrade John L. Roberson, whom we had left this morning as we all supposed, in a fair way to recover from his wounds, now evidently beyond the hopes of recovery. He was calm, and in but little pain, made no complaint and soon and suddenly died, with the fortitude of a man having received the wound of which he died, fighting like a gallant soldier the battles of his country.

Genl. Twiggs's Division commenced the action upon the enemy's left flank, 1/2 past seven o'clock, he opened a battery from the height he gained on yesterday, and stormed the castle height with the Rifle Regiment, the 2nd 3d & 7th Infantry. The height was so elevated that their cannon could not be made to bear upon our troops in ascending the hill. The two columns which stormed the heights covered about one half the face of the hill, which was almost a perfect cone. They marched up within about 30 yards of the enemy's breast works, formed in line of battle, breathed a moment. Then changed in order the enemy remained until the powder burned

59 Actually the number was five: Pinson, Jarea, La Vega, Noreiga, and Obando.

60 Jose Maria Jarea y Ruiz (1801-1867) was a native of Jalapa, where he commenced his military career as a soldier in the city infantry.

61 On April 18, 1847 his brother wrote their father the terrible news.

Abat! How should I tell you, my dearest brother John is no more. He was badly wounded on the evening of the 16th and expired this evening about 6 o'clock having suffered about fifty hours. I entertained almost confident hopes of his recovery until a few hours before his decease. When I communicated to him my fears, he received this intelligence with utmost composure. And the few remaining hours, we spent in conversation in reference to his hopes in a future world. His hopes were placed alone in the savor of sinners. And he died tranquil. He was rational almost to the last moment of his life and sent his love to you and all his brothers and sisters, and hoped to meet you all in heaven.

I was near him when he fell, and ran immediately to his relief. He fell a brave soldier fighting in the service. Oh how should I be able to bear it—my brother, my brother—He lies near me cold in death—with numerous others who fell today, until his consignment to the tomb tomorrow. Oh that I could be with you all that we might weep and mourn together.

John L. Roberson Letters, Special Collections Library, The University of Tennessee.

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their faces as our soldiers fired. And Genl Vasquez who was killed here had his face powder burned and fell by his cannon. Genl Shields Brigade which acted in concert with that Genl. Twiggs marched to the right & rear of the castle hill took a battery of ... small cannon killing many ... & taking position up on the road intercepted the army and baggage train when they attempted to retreat. This they effect-

ed admirably for the Illinois troops soon routed the division that was sent to oppose them and formed immediately upon the road and so slaughtered the drivers & mules of the Mexican train that they stopped the whole of it. But just as they were doing this the Lancers that were retreating with Santa Anna formed & charged down upon them but they were being in the thick chapedal by road side & gave them such a tremendous fire that they... left and precipitately fled, and were not again seen upon the field of battle. By this time the enemy had surrendered and the Dragoons were ordered to follow those that had fled and they [pursued] the [enemy] so hotly that they overtook and killed about 20 of their number. But just as Genl.

64 Ciriaco Vasquez died trying to rally the Mexican troops to defend their artillery emplacements from American assault. On the site of the battlefield a memorial has been raised to commemorate his bravery.

65 James Shields (1806-1879) was an Irishman who immigrated to Illinois in 1826. He entered into a legal career and became a Democratic politician. Politics led Shields to challenge the Whig Abraham Lincoln to a duel that failed to come off. With the coming of the Mexican War, Shields became a general in the Illinois Volunteers. Seriously wounded at Cerro Gordo, Shields was rewarded with brevet rank of major-general. After the war, Shields became a United States Senator. In the Civil War, he served as a brigadier-general.

66 Several semi-legible lines are crossed out here that refer to the capture of one of Santa Anna’s wooden legs that had been left behind among the abandoned material by the Mexican army.
Shields at the head of his brigade had so effectually & gallantly completed the part to him assigned he was wounded (and supposed mortal) and fell, but should he die his name will live while the history of our country is extant for there are registered the names of the good & brave.

April 19th. To-day our first duty was the burial of our deceased friend. Jn. L. Roberson. A rude coffin (which can seldom be obtained on such occasions) by much industry was procured in which his body was placed. The company flag spread over the coffin. At the appointed time our funeral procession moved from our quarters in the following order. 1st. Pennsylvania band (music, the dead march). 2nd. An armed escort of soldiers under command of Capt. Foster.* 3rd. The corpse. 4th. Officers of the company with the brother of the deceased. 5th. The horse of the deceased caparisoned with the usual equipments and bearing the arms boots and spurs of his late rider. 6th. The members of the company. 7th. The friends and acquaintances generally of the deceased among the Ten. Volunteers. We deposited him in a grave at the foot of the hill below the cathedral, and over him we fired the customary military salute, shed our heart felt tears in silent sorrow and returned to our military duties. Most of us visited the battle field to-day. The mangled bodies of our comrades lay thick in front of the breast works and within their nearest forts, stripped & robbed of all that was of any value about them. The 2nd Tennessee Regt. had made the charge without firing a gun intending to reserve their fire until they reached the walls, consequently there were none of the enemy killed (except one man who was killed by some one who fired against orders. But upon the heights where Genl. Twigs had charge the dead bodies of the Mexicans lay thick and in piles. And to-day they were burying their dead whom they treated with less of the feelings of humanity than we would have done a butchered hog, tying them by the feet and dragging them down the fill. A French surgeon was seen at very skillful work among the wounded of both armies. We were told he had joined the Mexican army with the proviso that he should be allowed to attend the sick or wounded of our Army as well as our enemies. And had performed several "handsome operations" as our surgeons declared in amputating the limbs of some of our wounded soldiers.

April 20th. Moved off at the head of the Brigade at an early hour. Marched passed the enemy's works, and having a full view of their strength, which struck us as being powerful and strong as nature and the art of engineers could conceive as we passed the base of the castle hill. And for several miles the stench of the dead Mexicans still unburied and the dead mules shot down, was almost intolerable; and occasionally during all the day we passed dead Mexican men and horses. Our camp for the night

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* Robert C. Foster served as a captain in Company L of the 1st Infantry. Foster was the first man on the wall at the Battle of Vera Cruz. He was discharged from service on April 8, 1847 on a surgeon's certificate. Upon the secession of Tennessee from the Union, Foster was one of the generals of the Tennessee provisional army appointed by Governor Isham Harris.
was at Santa Anna’s favorite hacienda En El Cienna.\textsuperscript{6} A fine mansion situated in the mountains in a yard containing a mile square of cleared grass land, commanding a most beautiful view of mountain and valley, but destitute of the cultivated fields or surrounding forests. The doors were opened and the company visited the various apartments elegantly furnished with marble tables with soft sofas, large and bright mirrors, with rich paintings, and carpeted floors. We gratified our curiosity by examining all, even the tastefully furnished wardrobe supplied mostly with the military dress of the warrior owner of these halls. We found that Gen. Scott had posted upon the walls, and upon the door of the cathedral, his “Safeguard,” making it an offence punishable by death to do violence or injury to the property the persons nor soldiers of family (but not including Santa Anna himself) of the hacienda. We took our quarters at the porters lodge near the great gate leading thro the stone wall by a paved and serpentine walk to the Mansion. (16 miles)

April 21st. We were late getting our breakfast ready out of the materials on hand especially in preparing our flour. And were hurried off by observing the column in motion. The duty assigned as of front guard was quite troublesome in checking the straggling soldiers who were eager to press forward. We marched under arms in order with music tho the city of Jalapa, And here we have met with the greatest and richest city yet seen by us the prettiest women, and the most beautiful mountain scenery whose declivity is dotted with cultivated fields. Our hearts were glad to see for the first time in many months some of the growth of our country, the Sycamore the peach tree, the elder and the blackberry, and we looked more at an old log cabin though it did not have the “garments and [?]ment skins” of our human cabins in the suburbs of the city than we did at the palace and castles of the city. We made no halt in the city, but march out upon the road to Mexico about 4 miles beyond and entered upon a grassy field, took our quarters under a clump of trees upon the margin of a cemented aqueduct, thro which the cold water runs rapidly to a cotton manufactory just below; made fast our horses, made our supper out of the remnants of our breakfast, the supplies of our Brigade being exhausted. We rolled up in our blankets and slept, but the night air was cold and chilly, and we have not yet found that climate where it is never either too warm or too cold for comfort, as this is said to be; unless a man has an imagination of such vigor that in the heat of the day he might cool himself by looking to the peaks of Orizaba\textsuperscript{6} or the Cofre de Perote,\textsuperscript{6} both of which we have seen to day and have been so near their base as to raise our heads & look into the clouds to see their lofty peaks.

22nd. No other duty assigned us than to send out 5 men to assist in arresting the soldiers who contrary to our orders, were not to our account. Some of us visited the father\textsuperscript{6} of Santa Anna, who is not of the late imprisoned.\textsuperscript{6} He is at Perote, where he under the 50 cannon\textsuperscript{6} in.

23d. Some of us visited the quarters of our Gauss. Two of us went.

24th. By turns we visited the city about Jalapa. We found it of a superior order to the others but does not cast very much like the others; it is a still lower class of the people; with copper complexion, and a prancing thro’ the streets of the town, caparisoned with a small coat covering the horse’s (a)

\textsuperscript{6} El Encoro was the correct spelling of this hacienda. Others, such as future Tennessee governor William B. Campbell and future Confederate Admiral Raphael Semmes, were also impressed with the grandeur of the estate.

\textsuperscript{6} Pico de Orizaba, a dormant volcano, is the highest peak in Mexico and the third highest in North America.

\textsuperscript{6} Cofre de Perote is another smaller dormant volcano.
A fine mansion situated in the heart of cleared grassland, commanding a view of the cultivated fields on the plains and the city. And the company visited the various rooms, with their soft sofas, large and bright pictures. The curators gratified our curiosity by examining the military dress of Gen. Scott, posted upon the wall. They were “Safeguard,” making it an offence to the property the persons not soldiers (including ourselves) of the hacienda. We took our gate leading thro the stone wall by a 10 ft. gate.

The last ready out of the materials on hand were carried off by observing the column in front and the guard was quite troublesome in its attempts to press forward. We marched under the shade, and here we have met with the most beautiful women, and the most beautiful of cultivated fields. Our hearts were full of the growth of our country, the gooseberry, and we looked more at an old object and the very sights of our human nature at the palace and castles of the city. We drove to Mexico, about 4 miles, as our quarters under a clump of trees in which the cold water runs rapidly. Our horses, made our supper out of the place of Orizaba, and the Cofre de Perote, where we met a Lieut. Col. of the Mexican Army

The soldiers who contrary to orders have been hunting and killing beef upon their own account. Some of us visited the cotton factory near us owned it is said by the God father of Santa Anna. The buildings are excellent, and extensive but the machinery is not of the latest improvement. It was made at Patterson New Jersey and is superintended by an American. We have received news to-day that Gen Worth has arrived at Perote, where he met a Lieut. Col. of the Mexican Army who formally surrenders the 50 cannon in the castle with all its other munitions of war.

23d. Some of us visited the city to-day, while others reclined upon the green turf of our quarters. Two companies of our Regiment (Lacy’s & Hayne’s) arrived today.

24th. By turns we visit the town. There appear to be several races of people in about Jalapa. We find some who in their appearance, manners & dress seem to be of a superior order to be the mass of Mexicans of the North. There is too a middle cast very much like those we have generally seen upon our march. And again, there is a still lower class of a degraded race, who resemble our savage Indians in their dark copper complexion, and scanty dress. We saw a Spanish looking gentleman to-day, prancing thro the streets of the city, upon a ... handsome grey mustang poncy caparisoned with a saddle almost covered with massive silver with embellished leather covering the horse’s [?] down to his hocks, and fringed around with glistening metal.

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46 Don Garcia.

47 Colonel Velasquez of the Artillery.

54 The real number was 54.

51 William A. Lacy was first lieutenant in Company A of the 1st Mounted Infantry.

52 Milton A. Hayne served as captain of Company F of the 1st Infantry. During the Civil War, Hayne was a Lt. Colonel of McGowan’s artillery.
25th. The Mexicans are bringing to our camps a plentiful supply of vegetables, poultry and choice fruits, for most of these things they ask enormous price. Turkeys $3, Chickens 75¢, Eggs 2 1/2¢, Pine Apples 12 1/2 to 25¢ & most excellent they are, Oranges 2 1/2¢, Banana’s 2¢, Plantains 1¢. Those who have money enjoy these things especially the fruits, but it has been so long since our last pay day that we are not only getting scarce of money but our clothes are pretty well worn out. And we do not now deny that we are ragged volunteers[.] The prices asked for clothing are about three times the amount of those at home. And being beyond the proportion of our pay. Some are like the fox who was curtailed by a trap have in jest proposed that each man should tear his clothes in uniform with the rent in his own indescribable, but the weather is getting rather to cool especially by night, otherwise the temperature is as pleasant as could be desired.

26th. We are getting no forage for our horses and they are entirely dependant upon the pasturage of the field in which we are encamped for their support, but it is an excellent pasture. Large quantities of corn is being brought in by the Mexicans & purchased by our forage masters. Gen. Scott designs this supply for his march to the city of Mexico. On account of our horses we remain generally at our quarters. The diligence[3] from Mexico came to-day and brings intelligence that there are no troops either at the city or upon the route. Our officers say that according to a late report of the Mexican Secretary of War compared with the result of our invasion we have captured all the ordnance of the nation except six cannon. They must be pretty well wound up in the further persecution of a warlike resistance to our advance upon their capital.

27th. No military duty, and we spend our time beneath the shadow of the trees above our “stakes.” We have no tents having surrendered the few with which we started to the wounded of Col Haskell’s (2nd Regt.) and have never stretched one since we left Vera Cruz. But last night we felt the need and use of a comfortable tent; for during the night, a steady rain commenced and continued until nearly day. All of us were rolled up in our several blankets, which before the rain ceased were thoroughly soaked, & those of us were almost afloat who occupied positions from which the water would not run off. About 30 steps from our quarters, there is a precipice, from the ravine at the bottom grown tall trees, whose tops just peer above the brow. This has been a fatal place to sun-dried jacks[4] and jennets[5] which have infested our camps by stealing the provender from our horses and even making encroachments upon our unguarded provisions. One company of the 1st Ten Regt. were so unfortunate a few nights past, as to have not only their barrel of crackers destroyed but all their sugar eaten up and their coffee trampled in the dirt by these animals, which have been mostly imported within our lines, by the wearied soldiers on the marches, who packed them with their persons.

Two or three of the men are deprived of their breakfast this morning, owing to our precipice and for retaliation was continued a little longer, thus destroyed. In my case, I was one in distress down deep, as I was more fortunate than the others. He refused to tell his name or his story, & rolled on his way down the glen and disappeared in the center of our neighbors. The three men disclosed the person who had hit me, and missed the step in his daze.

28th. The rain continued to mence, wherein we are to sit around our camp fires and find the rain and wear and armoir, which is constantly being made men to the Surgeon for armours. The officers require the use of quite a dozen horses, this high and healthy regiments and that soon we shall allow.

29th. Our Regt. is called back to Vera Cruz today and presented to the Colonel of the 3rd Regt. because we decidedly present to Vera Cruz, and for the benefit of Col Marshall[6] Newman[7] orders to return immediately and of our Regiment, which we consider as to the time of our enlistment; whereas we had no homes before the expiration of June? Can we reach them as whether we shall fight.

April 30th. This being
who packed them with their knapsacks guns & in some instances by riding them. Two or three of the men of this company who were so encroached upon and deprived of their breakfast commenced retaliation upon the animals by casting them

over this precipice and from the fall none of them escaped a sudden death. This retaliation was continued and now in this gloomy hollow there is a heap of jacks and jennets, thus destroyed. In the late hours of last night, we heard the shout of some one in distress down deep in this ravine, he said he had fallen over the precipice, and more fortunate than the jacks had escaped with life, but had received several bruises. He refused to tell his name and was there upon thrown a burning brand to light his way and unfeelingly recommended to ride up one of the jacks below. He found his way down the glen and back to camps and at the morning dress parade an officer of our neighbours The 1st Pennsylvania Regt. had his arm in a sling and thus disclosed the person who in the night had taken either a lovers leap or who had missed the step in his dark & perhaps incessant perambulations.

28th. The rain continues, and we are apprehensive that the season has commenced, wherein we are told the sun does not appear for many weeks together. We sit around our camp fire, with our blankets over our shoulders to protect us from the rain and ever and arrow, fork out a piece of boiled beef from our large camp kettle, which is constantly boiling upon the fire. This indulgence has sent several of our men to the Surgeon for a dose of Laudanum and camphor, whilst two or three others require the use of quinine to check the chills which we are surprised to find in this high and healthy region. It is however hoped they will have but short endurance; and that soon we shall all be stout and hearty.

29th. Our Regt. is called upon for a force of 100 men to guard a train which starts back for Vera Cruz today. We were apprehensive of being sent upon this service and presented to the Colonel many reasons in a long argument why we should not, because we decidedly preferred to remain here, to avoid the sickness we fear of Vera Cruz, and for the benefit of our horses. Three other companies of the Regt. (Marshall, Newman, & Lacy) were selected and sent back with the train with orders to return immediately, and with them we expect the balance of our company and of our Regiment, who are at Vera Cruz. Now speculations and conjectures are rife as to the time of our discharge, and how we shall in the mean time be employed. The prospect is that we shall be retained until the full expiration of our term of enlistment; whereas we had thought we would be allowed time to return to our homes before the expiration of our term. But how far can we march before the tenth of June? Can we reach the halls of the Montezumas? Are questions often asked as well as whether we shall fight again or not.

April 30th. This being the muster day prescribed by general regulations. A mus-

66 John W. Marshall was captain of Company B of the Mounted Infantry.

67 L. D. Newman was captain of Company D of the 1st Mounted Infantry.
tering officer (Lt. Rains) attended and entered upon the duties supposed to have been assigned him. The Col. and Maj. were both sick and unable for duty. The command of the Regt. turned over to Capt. Caswell, who appointed Charles Stone acting Adjutant. By reference to an order issued from General head quarters, it was ascertained that Lt. Hammonds was the proper mustering officer; being late in the day, wet and rainy & the horses out on pasture, the muster was deferred until tomorrow morning 9 O’clock.

May 1st. The muster kept us engaged pretty much during the day. We presented 2 officers—4 non commissioned officers 2 musicians and 15 privates (one of whom Cobb kept in quarters to avoid a chill). All passed muster with their arms, and horses. By some attention full rations of corn was obtained for our horses. Lt. Donnelly was appointed Quarter Master for the Regt. temporarily.

May 2nd. We are notified to be in readiness to march towards the city of Mexico in a few days; what opposition we shall encounter is entirely a mystery. As yet we have heard of no organized force, but that Gutter bands are being prepared to harass our front & rear. Already several attacks have been made upon our trains and dispatch bearers between this place and Vera Cruz, and to-day a volunteer of the Illinois Regiment was killed near camp. The rain falls every day, and there can be no doubt but that the rainy season has commenced. Generally in the morning the peak of Perote and the bright top of Orizaba laughs in the brightness & splendor of a bright beaming sun, over the wide land scape between us over the city, villages, and cultivated fields, which remind us of the accounts given of Alpine vinyards; in the afternoon clouds gather and darken the sky above, and then a shower like the gentle showers which bring forth and refresh the spring vegetation of our own country. And oh! in the list of these things, to see again our friends, and our faces set and our clothes.

May 3rd. A heavy rain. Some person had sold us false guides to the road to Mexico. And to establish the reputation of the 2nd Cavalry march to-morrow the 2nd Squadrons forage. The riggery of the men have rigged, which is however of such a nature as the road a wild forage. Our blankets gathered together to transport our cooks. The “The Halls of the Mountain” with the order came home from this place.

Incidents

At the capitulation of Cerro Gordo, a Captain refused to surrender to Monterey. Genl. Winfield Scott, General in Chief to the army. "Let him go back and whip him in front"--came to terms.

On the 17th Col. of a small detachment of Cerro Gordo, had observed and he was to advance the signal for our sound, he appealed to the Col., he did not know what Gibbs was with his own corps. "Col. I am in the front.

When the 2nd Tennessee came hobbiling and in reply to notice,

Puebla was a massacre.

Alfred Gibbs (1823-) wounded before Cerro
try. And oh! in the listless, dreary hours of our present life, how ardently do we desire to see again our friends and homes. The time has arrived when we expected to have our faces set and our daily marches leading us in that direction.

May 3rd. A heavy rain in the afternoon, to which some of us were fully exposed. Some person had sold Fortner's horse to a Tn. Master for the Dragoons who claimed him. And to establish Fortner's right of property keep several of us riding backwards and forwards thro' the rain. Again an order was received for a Squadron of the Ten. Cavalry march to-morrow towards Puebla. We were selected to compose a part of that Squadron, and late in the evening commenced preparations in procuring rations & forage. There was a distribution of the captured Mexican clothing. Many of the men have rigged themselves out in motley & fantastic ill fitting uniforms, it is however of such coarse & inferior quality that much of it lies scattered uncared for over the ground of the encampment.

May 4th. A hasty and an early breakfast was dispatched our saddlebags packed. Our blankets gathered up. Our horses all saddled. A waggoner reported himself to transport our cooking utensils and all were ready to take up the line of march for "The Halls of the Montezumas," when the order to march was countermanded and with the order came the information that we would march no farther but return home from this place.

Incidents

At the capitulation which preceded the surrender of the Mexican army at Cerro Gordo, a Captain of the Mexican Navy, who commanded one of the front batteries refused to surrender unless allowed to march out with the honors of war, allowed at Monterey. Genl. Worth putting his foot with impatience and without waiting for the General in Chief to reply, told him he admired his spirits and to go back to his battery. "Let him go back" said he to Genl. Scott, "by G. I have 2200 fresh men & I will whip him in five minutes"—but the Navy Capt. thought better of it & soon came to terms.

On the 17th Col. Child of the Artillery, with a portion of the Rifle Regt. and several small detachments of different corps, had advanced half way up the Castle hill of Cerro Gordo, his perilous position his small force being unsupported was observed and he was recalled by a bugle signal of the Rifles. In his eagerness to advance the signal was not regarded. It was sounded again. Not understanding the sound, he appealed to Lt. Gibbs of the Rifle corps, to tell him what it meant. I do not know said Gibbs. Col. Child told him he certainly must know the signals of his own corps. "Col," said he "I never learned the signal for a recall."

When the 2nd Tennessee Regt. charged the Mexican breast works on the 18th one man came hobbling to the reserve, with his hand upon the fleshly part of his back and in reply to numerous enquiries relative to his hurts, answered as he passed on to

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66 Puebla was a manufacturing city on the way to Mexico City.

67 Alfred Gibbs (1823-1868) was a West Point graduate. Gibbs was promoted to brevet captain and wounded before Cerro Gordo. In the Civil War, Gibbs was a Union major-general.
the Surgeons. "Oh! I am killed. My wound is considerable bad. I believe I shall die," but he was soon assured that he would only suffer an inconvenience in sitting down for a few days.

A Pennsylvanian who was among the first to run at Cerro Gordo came to our camp fire, and complained bitterly of the exposures & privations of a soldier, and stated that he had been thoroughly wet by rains for several days in succession. Dripping wet ourselves, we felt the truth of his observations, but in better spirits, we offered him the mock comfort of an assurance that he would become entirely accustomed to such moist weather so as not to mind water by the time the rainy season commenced. He went away in despair of escaping death both from the enemy and the climate.