

COLONEL WILLIAM BARTON ROBERTS IN THE MEXICO CITY CAMPAIGN—1847

BERT ANSON*

WILLIAM Barton Roberts was a business man born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, on January 2, 1809, who became colonel of the Second Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry in 1847. The regiment was a part of the force raised to supply General Winfield Scott with an army sufficient to capture Mexico City and enforce terms of peace with that nation.

The Pennsylvania troops were sent down the Ohio river to New Orleans, and then shipped to Scott's rendezvous on the Island of the Lobos, off the west coast of Mexico about fifty miles southeast of Tampico. They were among the first troops at the meeting place, and were forced to wait while the necessary shipping and troops were assembled.

The Second Volunteers did not see extensive service at Veracruz, as a part of General Patterson's division, but were involved in General Pillow's faulty strategy and leadership at Cerro Gordo. The Second Regiment was placed in support of the Second Tennessee regiment of infantry, but so far in the rear that the sharp engagement was ended by the time the Pennsylvanians could come up to the front. There they were involved in the retreat of the Second Tennessee troops. Colonel Roberts believed his men performed well at this engagement, though some accounts say they were demoralized by the retreating Tennessee troops. They were then made a part of the Jalapa garrison while Scott prepared for the advance on Mexico City.

Colonel Roberts' forces were a part of Scott's march on Mexico City, Justin H. Smith says that a part of the Second regiment was detached to Colonel Watson's Marine brigade and General Shields' brigade in General Quitman's division, but Roberts' last letter says he commanded a brigade of Pennsylvanians under Quitman. This division was the rear guard at the battle on Contreras on August 20, 1847. An armistice was signed with President Santa Anna August 21, 1847. Fighting was resumed September 8, when it was realized that no satisfactory peace terms could be reached.

Quitman's division was first stationed at San Augustin, south of the city, during the armistice, and placed in charge of prisoners. They

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were then brought closer to the city gates, at Coyoacan, and placed on the Tacubaya causeway. When Chapultepec was attacked, the brigade was under heavy fire from the Belen gate and the hill. The Second Pennsylvania waded through the ditches and was among the first troops through Chapultepec's outer walls. Quitman immediately attempted to storm the city. He attacked on the Tacubaya causeway. The Second Pennsylvania and New York troops took to the ditches and broke through the walls to capture the fort at the Belen gate. They were pinned down by heavy fire, and all the officers killed or wounded, but Quitman refused to retreat without a positive order.

Santa Anna offered terms of capitulation that night, September 14, 1847, and Quitman received orders to garrison the city. He immediately marched into the Plaza, where Colonel Roberts ran up the American flag on the palace as the signal of conquest. He died in the city two weeks later, October 3, 1847, from typhus; his body was later exhumed and buried in the old Methodist church yard at Uniontown.

Sixteen of Colonel Roberts' letters to his wife, Hanna Brownfield Roberts, were placed in the Northern Indiana Historical Society Museum at South Bend, Indiana, by his granddaughter, Mrs. William McHenry, of South Bend. They present several points of interest of a conflict which has always relied heavily on the private writings of its soldiers for its details. Press coverage of a war in 1847 was not the highly organized effort we see today. Roberts' letters reveal a well educated and calm approach to his duty, in spite of his wife's disapproval, his business responsibilities, and his young family. He was quite pleased with the development of the Irish troops, and stoutly supported the value of properly led volunteer soldiers. His conclusions on gossiping and trouble making friends of married soldiers, and their effects on morale at home and in the field, are those of a man of common sense. The absence of letters after August 14th, during the armistice period, is unfortunate, since he then had leisure time for observation. When fighting was resumed, his regiment was very active, and he soon became ill.

Roberts' determination to see the war to its conclusion, and the educational value of a campaign of travel reveal an adventurousness that we recognize as a part of the westward migratory movement. It should come as no surprise to learn that a part of his family migrated to Niles, Michigan, and South Bend, Indiana, in 1834, and that his daughter, Catherine (Mrs. D. H. Baker) followed them after her father's death.

Pittsburg, January 8, 1847

I am still here and in good health. We have had a very exciting time of it. You have heard of my success which will somewhat multiply my labours and cares. You must try and keep up your spirits and hope for the best; grieving is of no use. Our friends all appeared very much gratified at my election. Thomas and Peter were here today and left this evening.

I have sent off six companies of volunteers today, including ours, which started this afternoon; the balance will start tomorrow. I shall leave in the last boat.

Excuse the shortness of this. I am very much hurried; a great deal to do and no time to do it in. Write to me soon. Direct your letter as before and it will reach me before I shall leave Point Isabell.¹

Col. W. B. Roberts
2d Reg. Pa. Vol.
Point Isabell, Texas

Steamboat Cambria
January 10, 1847

Dear Wife,

We are now about 300 miles on our way down the Ohio river. I started last evening about 11 o'clock in the last boat; we started from shore about 4 o'clock but laid out in the river waiting for the Greens to hunt up and bring aboard some of their men who had got drunk and did not come aboard.² It has been a stormy day. The men are in fine spirits, are very quiet and civil. They had a kind of service on board today, the men sang hymns and were then dismissed for 20 minutes to go to their berths and attend to their devotional exercises which the great part of them done.

My fellow officers are a very gentlemanly and agreeable set of men. Mr. Shugart is on board going on to attend to the duties of his office. His rank is a captain, his pay \$90.00 per month.

We expect to be in Cincinnati by tomorrow at noon. I feel quite

1 Point Isabell near the mouth of the Rio Grande river was the port by which General Zachary Taylor's army was supplied. Later plans selected Lobos Islands for General Scott's assembly port.

2 The value of immigrant troops was a hotly debated topic in this war, ranking with merits of volunteer vs. regular troops. Channing says that one fourth to one third of the army was immigrant. See Edward Channing *A History of the United States*. 6 Vols., V., (1927) 598.

well; I have eaten quite hearty today. The excitement having worn off, I begin to feel like myself again. I would be glad to hear from you all. I hope you are quite well; if I was only sure you was I would feel better satisfied.

I am very pleased with the orderly conduct of the men. The Irish Greens who were thought to be the hardest set of cases in the regiment prove now they have got sober to be very orderly men. One of them had a touch of delirium tremens this morning and two or three more of them were a little sick, but they appear to be all well this evening.

I will close this at Cincinnati tomorrow morning.

Monday, 3 o'clock: We have just arrived at Cincinnati, having been longer in reaching it than we expected owing to something having got wrong with the machinery, to repair which we shall have to be up till tomorrow morning. The day has been very cold. I see people sleighing in the streets of Cincinnati.

W. B. Roberts

New Orleans
January 18, 1847

Dear Wife,

We arrived safe here this morning at 1 o'clock. We had a very pleasant trip but lost 2 days by one engine breaking at Cincinnati. The men are all well and in fine spirits; they are encamped on the Battleground 8 miles below the city. We shall leave in a few days for Point Isabell. The first regiment left on Saturday. I have had excellent health; the weather here is warm like April but damp and foggy. New Orleans is a splendid place and adorned with magnificent buildings. . . .

Ship I. N. Cooper,

8 miles below
New Orleans, Jan. 27, 1847

We are still here and all in good health. We expect to sail tonight if the day keeps clear so that we can get our tents dry enough to pack on board the ships. . . . I thought I had seen it rain, but I never did till Saturday night, when it poured down. Our camp was deluged with water from one foot to eighteen inches deep, and the men had to wade out, which made it rather an unpleasant business.

But the ships had just got down and we got them aboard and they

are getting along pretty well. We have not yet had a sick man in our company and but very few in the regiment. Our men stand it much better than the Mississippi regiment which is likewise encamped here, about one fourth of whom are sick and they will lose one tenth of their number. They are poorly clad and cannot stand the wet, cold weather. Our men, having good warm clothes and flannels, do not mind it. . . . We do not know yet where we shall be sent to as we shall sail with sealed orders.

Direct your letters Second regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, Mexico via New Orleans. The boys are all in fine spirits and had it not been for the unprecedented rains we should have got along very well, as the ground we were encamped on is the prettiest I ever saw, being the ground where Gen. Jackson fought the battle of the 8th of January.

The only word I have had from home was by Dr. Muhlenberg, who told me of some man in Brownsville on the Wednesday after I left, who told him to tell me that you were all well and that Sarah had got much better. Tell the children that they must all try and be good. . . .

Ship I. N. Cooper

Saturday, January 31, 1847

I write this in the Gulf of Mexico. We have just crossed the bar and I send it back by the tow boat that towed the ships down. We are just about to set sail but where we do not know as our orders are sealed; we will know in half an hour but dare not open them until the boats leave us. We are all well. We left Orleans yesterday morning; you will not likely hear from me again for 3 or 4 weeks as there will not likely be any means of conveyance from Mexico sooner than that. We are on a fine ship and will likely sail over in a few days.

You must keep your spirits. . . . I wish you would write. I have received but two letters since I got here. . . . In my next I will be able to tell you all about where we are and what we are to do. . . .

The men of our company are all well and in fine spirits but I am sorry to say we have been disgraced by a few deserting. But one from Uniontown, Bill West, deserted the next day after we arrived at New Orleans. Yesterday was a delightful day—a heavy white frost in the morning and clear sky, which made it seem like an April morning. . . .

Give my respects to Mr. [illegible] to Erving and all the rest of

my friends. When you write, let me know about the shop. Has Diffendorfer and [illegible] taken possession and how are they getting along?

Island of the Lobos, Mexico

February 14, 1847

We arrived here safe yesterday about noon and set foot on Mexican soil for the first time about three o'clock. Lobos is about 60 miles south of Tampico and seven miles from the Mexican shore. It contains about 60 acres, thickly covered with evergreen trees, principally banyan, lime, lemon, and [illegible] trees. The banyan is the tree you read of in history that spreads out branches and takes root, thus forming innumerable trunks.

When we first came here there were a great many limes and lemons but they had got them all wasted before we got here. The men in our company are all in good health and spirits except one of the name of Turner from Smithfield. He got a fall which injured him and took cold. We encountered two very heavy storms, one commencing the second day out and the other the ninth. It was awfully grand to see the waves rolling higher than the ship and break over her, filling the deck frequently with water, but I did not enjoy it much as I was most desperately seasick. I was taken down with the first storm and after vomiting two days or three almost constantly, I lay on my back for six days without eating a mouthful of food.

When the weather became calm I got better and began to eat a little for two days when the second storm came on and I was taken on my back again for three more days without a mouthful of food. So you may judge I did not enjoy my voyage on ship very well, but it was not unexpected; but I have never felt better than at present except excessively weak. The Island is a beautiful place and healthy. They get pretty good water by digging six or seven feet.

There is here now thirteen ships and about 3100 soldiers. Two of our ships containing seven companies are here and there has been but two ships the same number of the first regiment here. The most of the men were very sick at sea. John Sturgeon is fat, hearty and as good natured as ever. I took dinner with Cols. Winecoop³ and Block today. They had part of one of the finest fish I ever ate, of which there is

3 Col. Wyncoop commanded The First Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry.

plenty here, and they have great sport fishing. I bought a fine horse in Orleans for which I paid \$125.00, but got him considerably injured by rubbing and jamming about in the storm, but I think he will get over it.

We expect in about two or three weeks to have about 1,200 men. We suppose we are to be used to take Vera Cruz in three or four weeks. Gen. Scott is expected here in a few days. We are all very anxious to hear from home; the only letters I have received were one from D. Kaine and one from Uncle Hook, that I received at Orleans before leaving. . . .

I am now about 3,000 miles from home. The weather here is about like May; we are in the torrid zone. I have got along very well with the men and have had no trouble with them. There has been but two deaths in our regiment since leaving Pittsburgh; one of them going down the river and one at Orleans. You must keep up good spirits. I often think of you and the children and friends I have left behind me and the distance that separates us, but I am in hopes I will be spared to return to you again.

Island of Lobos, Feb. 24, 1847

We are still here and expect to remain for 8 or 10 days when we shall again go on board ships and sail south to some point near Vera Cruz. Gen. Scott arrived here the 21st. I was on board the steamship "Massachusetts" to see him yesterday. He is in fine health and spirits and will sail as soon as 5000 troops arrive from Tampico together with 60 large surf boats to transport the troops from the ships to land. He expects to land 5000 of us at once which will have to be done in the face of the enemy's fire.

There is now 4 full regiments here—2 Pennsylvania, South Carolina and the balance of the New York arrived yesterday. The Mississippians have been sent back to the Rio Grande and are intended to garrison Monterey, the Louisianians to garrison Tampico. Lobos is truly the climate of spring and always a fine sea breeze. . . .

There is now about 50 ships anchored here and about 600 men on the Island and on board the ships. The general health is very good. There is but two sick of the Fayette volunteers and they are mending and not dangerous. They were both men who were not seasick (E. Abercromie and Dan'l Torrey.) . . .

Since I last wrote to you we lost a man by the name of Turner

from Southfield. He fell down the stairs of the ship twice directly after leaving Orleans and injured himself internally, from which time his health declined and he died about 4 days ago. We have not yet landed the three companies which came in our last ship owing to the appearance of a case amongst them which was supposed to be smallpox. It has been 4 weeks since the man was taken sick; he is now perfectly well and no sign of anything breaking out among the men.⁴

Gen. Scott is going to send his physicians on board tomorrow to make an examination and see whether it will do to land them. . . . Tell Wm. Stevens that Benjamin (who some thought would not be able to stand it) is well and hearty—has never been sick a minute and appears to be growing stouter and heartier every day.

We miss many things here that we have at home; no butter, fresh meat, light bread, as we have no means of baking as there is not a stone in the Island, nor clay with which to make a bake oven. We have cleared about 5 acres and have a beautiful encampment and parade ground, and our men make a fine appearance when drawn up in line. I have not yet received anything since leaving Orleans and nothing from any of you, and the time begins to seem long. . . .

Army of Occupation near Vera Cruz

March 13, 1847

I am here in full sight of Vera Cruz on one of the highest points overlooking the city and just out of reach of their guns. We landed last Tuesday night about two miles south of the city, which to all appearances is a beautiful place with an immense number of domes and spires. We met with no opposition in landing but about two o'clock in the morning a party of them made an attack on our advance guard and fired 3 or 400 shots, but did little injury, only slightly wounding three or four individuals, but the balls whistled pretty lively over our heads for a short time.

We are now in possession of the whole country and have the city surrounded. . . . They shower the balls and shells at us every day and have had several skirmishes with them and have killed in all about 40 of them and have had about seven or eight men killed.

. . . We are getting so used to them we do not mind them. Yester-

⁴ Robert's letter of April 27 says that three companies of his regiment were left on Lobos with sixteen cases of small pox, but had no fatalities.

day a 24 pound ball passed within six feet of my head through a bush and fell within 25 feet of me on the ground and bounded away. . . .

The men are in fine spirits and have got so used to the whistling of cannon balls and bullets that they do not dodge anymore, nor appear to mind them when they whistle over their heads. While I write one of the men has just handed me a hind quarter of venison which I saw him shoot within 200 yards of this about an hour ago. . . .

The country around here is very poor, a great portion being vast sand hills which drift with the wind like snow, the balance covered with chapperal. We have plenty of fresh beef, cattle being very plenty. All our men have to do is to go out and shoot a beef whenever they need one. They run wild, the country affording pasture all the year round. We have got about 100 mules and jack-asses which the men catch round the country, which they pack their plunder and provisions on.

One of the men told me he saw William Jacquett yesterday. . . .

We are under command of Major General Patterson. The Mexicans sent out a man about an hour ago to ask permission to send out their women and children before we attacked the town. I do not know what answer Gen. Scott gave him but I presume a refusal. We do not expect it will be a very difficult matter to take the city and in less than a week it will certainly be ours.

We all sleep out in the open air with our blankets around us, our tents not yet having arrived from the ship, but we do not experience the least inconvenience from it; but if we had our tents we should not lie in them as we have to lie on our arms, not knowing what moment we may be attacked either from those in the city or those trying to reinforce them. They have the best information we can obtain, about 3000 men besides citizens in the city and castles, and we have now here a force of about as near as I can ascertain 13,000 men. . . .

March 14, 1847

. . . Nothing occurred during the night worth relating except the interception of a bearer of dispatches which gives the numbers of troops in the city and castle at 4500. We have received orders this morning for a gradual advance on the city for purposes of entrenchment. I was stationed last night within one half-mile of the city walls under cover of some chapperal with 4 of my companies and 3 Tennessee regiments.

They continue firing shot and shells at intervals but have done as yet but little execution.

You can tell E. M. Gregg that John is well and looks better than I ever saw him. I forgot to say that Capt. Quails was left on board a man of war at the beach and had not yet joined us; he had been unwell for some days but thought himself well enough to come with us but thought it prudent to stay on board the Potomac for a few days to gain strength before landing. Tell Mrs. Pine, Spears, Gordon, Giles, and the wives of all others with us that their husbands are well and hearty and I think I never saw a more contented, happy or finer spirited set of men than is in our regiment, although the life is a little rough as we have no conveniences for cooking, working, or anything of the kind as we have not yet got our baggage off the ship; but we have plenty to eat but pretty rough sea biscuit and flicht except the beeves we have been killing. Time passes very fast. Week after week is gone and we hardly know how. It is now two and one half months since we left home and we hardly know what has become of the time.

I wish Mr. Potton to go to Pittsburgh to assist Mr. Kane for a while or as long as he may want him, to overhaul the books, and make out a statement of the business with its profits and forward it to me.

You speak of Thomas. I hardly know what you had better do with him. Sometimes I wish I had brought him along and if it was to do over again I would do it, as this is a school in which much is to be learned, and all who have the fortune to return safe will be possessed of a fund of knowledge which will repay them for their trip and all its attendant privations. Consult Erving in the matter and do with him what ever you think best.

John Mustard is well and hearty and one of the best soldiers we have and has not been sick a minute.

Camp Washington

Near Vera Cruz, March 26, 1847

We are still here, this being the 18th day. The firing has ceased on both sides for the last 48 hours. The Mexicans are endeavoring to get the best teams they can for a surrender. I think the fighting is all over here. They must and will surrender, which I think they probably have done before this time. If they do not, it will be a small job to take it now. We had all the guns of the city but one silenced day before

yesterday, before the armistice commenced. It is said that a very large number have been killed in the city, of which I have no doubt for we sent perfect showers of shells and shot into the city, sometimes at the rate of eight or ten per minute for six hours at a stretch.

We have not lost but eleven or twelve men from all the shot that has been fired from the city and castle and but few wounded. We will likely take up our line of march for Jolloppe in a few days after the city is taken, and I think the probability is that we shall have but little hard-fighting. Our regiment has not yet lost a man from their shot; the first regiment has lost but two—one from a cannon ball and one in a skirmish. The city is very much battered to pieces. Gen. Worth had a battery of ten mortars from which he threw ten inch shells. I saw not less than 300 thrown; all with the exception of some one half dozen exploded after lighting in the city and must have been very destructive. Gen. Patterson's division erected a battery immediately in the rear of the city and within 4 or 500 yards of the city, upon which the officers of the navy mounted six 64 pound guns, which were fired with great rapidity and done immense execution. They must be in pitiable condition in the city which would have given up before this but for the castle.

. . . Stuart Speers shot himself through the left hand with his revolver a few days since but is doing as well as could be expected. Since writing to Mr. Beerer, a young man of the name of Felter of Company 4 has died. He did not appear to have any disease and the doctors all said up to within an hour of his death there was nothing the matter with him but [illegible] or the effects of imagination, together probably with fear.

. . . The "Princeton" is in waiting and will leave for Philadelphia as soon as the present conference is ended, which will give the news of the termination of the conference, which I cannot give now, but which [illegible] by the papers probably as soon as you receive this. . . . We had a terrible northern yesterday, which drove about thirty vessels of different description ashore. The damage to the shipping will be very great; the sand drifted about like snow, which made it almost impossible to go about. . . .⁵

⁵ Scott's army debarked at Mocambo Bay, three miles south of Vera Cruz, on March 9, 1847. British Naval Officers later estimated the city's casualties at about 150 killed and 500 wounded, mostly soldiers. Negotiations for surrender were begun March 26, 1847, and American troops occupied the city on March 29. Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, (1919) 2 Vols., 11 29-33.

Vera Cruz, April 8, 1847

It is now 10 o'clock at night. We have just finished packing up to start in the morning at daylight for Jolloppe which is about 70 miles from here on the road to Mexico. I expect you have received before this the news of the taking of Vera Cruz. . . . I need not say much about particulars as Stuart Spears promised me he would give you all them. I received a letter from you on the 1st of April dated the 12th of March, and on the 5th one dated 12th of February. So you may know the mails are very irregular.

The place we are going to is said to be one of the finest places in the world. It is at the foot of a mountain covered with perpetual snow, fine water and fruits and vegetables in abundance which last we very much need. They were scarce and very high here. The country is quite barren and uncultivated immediately around the city (Vera Cruz); there is large hills of sand which drift like snow every high wind. The town is not very handsome except the public buildings, which are fine. The houses are all built with a mixture of coral or brick and then plastered over, the roofs of all the houses are flat, made of brick and plaster which dries as hard as a stone and does not crack like ours. The shells and cannon balls done a great deal of daamge; scarcely a house in the city in which a shall had not burst in. The doors and windows through the greater part of the town are literally knocked to pieces.

It seems quite lonesome and as if there was something wanting since the firing have cease and the shot and shells quit whistling over our heads. . . .

We start to the interior in the morning with Pillow's brigade consisting of the First and Second Pennsylvania regiments and the First and Second Tennessee, Shields' consisting of the New York and the Illinois and Alabama regiments and Twigg's brigade of regulars, in all something over 6000 men. About 4 or 5000 more will follow in a few days as soon as they can have means of transportation ready.

Give my respects to all my friends and tell mother not to fret herself about me, as I do not think the Mexicans have spunk to make a hard enough fight for many of us to be killed and the climate agrees with me first rate.

Plano del Rio, April 18, 1847

I wrote a letter to Erving yesterday . . . in which I informed him

that we were on the eve of a great battle. We have had it. It is over. We have gained it and taken 5000; five generals, among the number, Gen. LaVega, and a large number of officers. Santa (Anna) it is expected made his escape but was pursued by our men. Our loss is near as we can ascertain between 4 and 500 killed and wounded.

Our regiment had fourteen wounded, four we think mortally. Company H had but one wounded—James Share had his finger shot off and in less than two hours had the stump cut off and dressed and took his place in ranks.

The principal part of the hard fighting was done by Gen. Twiggs' and Gen. Shields' brigades, the latter of whom was mortally wounded. We were exposed to a most terrific fire of grape and canister shot, together with musketry. Our men moved on steadily through it without flinching and kept their ground until we were ordered to halt. In consequence of the second Tennessee and one Company of Kentucky troops who were the charging party were obliged to return having lost one fourth their number by the murderous fire. They passed through our lines, we were then ordered to halt by Gen. Pillow. The line accordingly halted and was preparing for a second attack when we received information that they had surrendered.

You can say to the friends of the men of this country that they need have no fears as to their bravery; the fire they passed through, it is agreed by all who were at the different places was much heavier than any at Monterey or Resaca de la Palma, and to their honor be it said not one of them flinched but stood up gallantly. I can say the same of the regiment. The result is a glorious one. We returned with the prisoners and have them all in camp and a beautiful set they are. We got a large number of cannon and ammunitions.

I do not think this will end the war. I conversed this evening with a Mexican officer who speaks English well. He is of opinion they will continue to fight and resist and my opinion is that the sooner the U. S. sends on a strong force to enable us to go to Mexico the better.⁶

You perhaps wish to know what my own sensations were during the heavy fire. I am hardly aware of what they were myself, but they were far different from what I had expected they would be. I felt very little excitement and was perfectly composed after the first fire, at which I felt a kind of shudder and passed on. They came thicker and thicker

6 Ibid, 364-5 contains information on the federal and state attempts to raise more troops in 1847.

but after that I paid no attention and all I thought of was to see that the men did not follow company. We had but two officers out—Quail and Sturgeon, Rine unwell remained in camp. Jack Sturgeon is the making of one of the best officers in the army and is now acknowledged the best lieutenant in the Second Pennsylvania regiment.

The men are generally well with the exception of those left at Vera Cruz of which you have had an account before this. To the friends of all that are with us you can say they are well with the exception of Lt. Rine and his is only a bilious attack of which he will be well in a few days. I will write further particulars tomorrow. They took Santa Anna's carriage and about \$18,000 in gold. There was many incidents passed during the day, but we have not got them all collected and cannot rely on all we hear. What I have related may be relied on with the exception of the number killed and wounded (except our own regiment) as it is difficult to ascertain the number of killed and wounded on either side until some time elapses.⁷

Camp near Joloppa
April 27, 1847

We are at present encamped near Joloppa. The country here is rich and fertile and at present very much like the first of June at home.

Vegetable and fruits are here in abundance—fine sweet oranges for a cent each, fine apples for 6½ to 12½ cents each, which is much higher than the usual price which is high in consequence of the Army being here which creates quite a demand. We have a fine market every day at our camp, generally from 40 to 60 Mexican men and women with oranges, lemons, plantains, bananas, eggs, cheese, onions, sugar in small loaves weighing about one half pound, cigars and various other articles. The weather here we are so near the high mountains is cloudy the greater part of the time. When at a distance we could see the tops of the mountains above the clouds.

I have now here my full regiment. The three companies left at the Island of Lobos with smallpox arrived day before yesterday in good health, not having lost a man. They had 16 cases of smallpox.

I wrote two letters, one the day before the battle to Erving, and one the evening after to you. The battle of Cerro Gordo in its results was perhaps as brilliant an affair as had been achieved since the com-

7 The following letter describes the battle of Cerro Gordo in more detail.

mencement of the war. We took 6000 prisoners including five generals, among the rest LaVega and about 1000 killed and wounded including Gen. Vasques and a number of officers. We took 50 pieces of cannon and from 5 to 6000 stand of arms and an immense quantity of ammunition, as much perhaps as would load from 15 to 20 of our large road teams in the U. S.

We did not participate actively in the fight as we were placed in the reserve and did not get into the action before it was concluded, but were exposed to a very heavy and galling fire of canister, grape and musketry, which wounded 14 of our men and it is a matter of astonishment that we escaped with so few, as in getting to our position we were exposed to full view and in range of musketry, and had to pass through the very heaviest of the fire. But the boys marched steadily on without the least faltering. When we had nearly reached our position the 2d Tennessee regiment who had charged found themselves unable to sustain the charge and retreated, and in their retreat broke through and ran over a part of my line, knocking down and running over some in their flight. But they got up and took their places in line under fire and stood their ground.

We were then ordered by Gen. Pillow, who by this time had received a wound in the arm, to stand where we were. We had been halted but a short time till the firing on our right ceased and a white flag was displayed from the enemy's line and in a few minutes a messenger arrived announcing that the enemy had surrendered and ordering us to draw off. Our loss in killed and wounded is about 425, that of the enemy not less than 1000.⁸

I visited the line of action next day in the evening. It was a sight shocking to see our men had buried all their dead, but the Mexicans had buried but few of theirs; they had dragged a great many off the grounds and threw them in piles in the hollow and there let them lay. The bushes were full of them. In the hospital the sufferings of the wounded was pitiable to behold ;there lay friend and foe, side by side.

8 Santa Anna placed Gen. Canallizo in command of fortifying the rugged mountain passes at Cerro Gordo, where Scott's army must come up from the fever plains swamps near Vera Cruz. The battle took place on April 18, and the Mexican army's defeat was largely due to its poor leadership and training. Pillow's brigade was badly handled and he temporarily left the field with a slight wound. The Pennsylvanians distinguished themselves after they were placed in Quitman's division.

The Mexican losses at Cerro Gordo were 1000 to 1200; the American was thirty officers and 387 men, of whom only sixty-four were killed. Ibid, 11 56-7; 353.

Some had lost a leg, some an arm or otherwise been wounded; our own and the Mexican Doctors all busy amputating and dressing the wounds. The second day after the battle, the morning of the twentieth, we took up our line of march for Jolloppe, 21 miles distant.

We marched twelve miles that day and encamped at a river about one half mile from Gen. Santa Anna's residence which he had left in great haste. It is a beautiful place. His house is well furnished. His flight had been so sudden he had not time to move anything, not even his own or his wife's clothes. His sofas, chairs, marble top tables, and so forth, were of American manufacture. The farm is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. Several thousand acres of it he can irrigate from the mountain streams, from one of which on this farm Santa Anna had a ditch dug which carried its waters clear to Cerro Gordo to water his army. The ditch must be 15 miles long and that is the way his army got water.⁹

We saw a number of dead Mexicans lying along the road very much swollen, and a great number of horses, which would average one to the half mile near to Jolloppe. Santa Anna left in such a hurry as to leave his carriage with \$35,000 in his camp. The cavalry pursued close in his rear to Jolloppe and took possession. Gen. Worth marched on and took possession of the Castle of Perote which they handed over to him without firing a gun. The general opinion here is that the war is *not* ended; they are rallying their forces and will probably make a stand either at Puebla or the City of Mexico, for which place we shall take up our line of march in a few days.

We should not have stayed here this long only on account of provisions, for which we had to send back the train of wagons which came up with us, to Vera Cruz, and have to wait its return.

I learn this evening that Dan'l Forry is dead; the rest of the sick left it is said are all doing well. Gen. Pillow leaves in the morning for the U. S. on furlough. Gen. Shields is still alive and hopes of his recovery. My respects to my friends. Tell them [illegible] is getting along as well as I could expect. The boys are all doing well and ours is the largest and most efficient regiment in the field. . . .

⁹ Santa Anna's principal ranch was near Jolloppe and was called El Encero. Ibid, II, 37-39.

Unaddressed letter,
probably that referred to in letter
of June 6, and containing
sections written May 25 and May 16

Edmund Rine leaves for home tomorrow. He had not been very well for some time but is much better than he was some time back. Which with the letters he receives from his wife who tells him that people tell her he does not care for her or he would not have come away, which is wrong in people, as it is no evidence of not caring for their wives because men have spirit and patriotism enough to offer their services to their country when it needs them. These things have a tendency to make both wives and husbands unhappy if listened to which I believe has been the case with Mr. & Mrs. Rine. Altho I am sure he has the fondest attachment to his wife and family, a knowledge of these things together with his sickness has made him low spirited and homesick, and induced him finally to get a discharge and go home.

If any such meddling persons should come telling you such stuff I know you have sense enough to pay no attention to them but you will do me a particular favor if you will at least order, if not kick them out of the house. Mr. Rine can give you particulars better than I can write them. My own health has been better than it has been for the last 15 years for the same length of time. . . .

I should like very much to see you all, but I shall never leave until the war is closed, and I do not know when that will be, as I see no more prospect of it now than there was a year ago. Nor do I believe there will be peace until an army is sent sufficient to occupy their whole country. I see the papers speak of peace as they have been doing after every flight, but I suppose when about the time they were looking for news of peace after the news of our taking Vera Cruz, instead of it they received news of our having whipped Santa Anna with 18,000 or 20,000 men, they were much surprised May 16 Sunday Morning.

I did not quite finish last night so I include this morning. I was awakened by the hum of voices in the market, this being Sunday. It is the principal market day and the whole plaza is covered with marketing. Our situation here is a very pleasant one and will be rather more so than we anticipated. We shall likely remain here for two or three months at least, or until some of the fresh troops arrive to take our places, when we expect to join the main army and proceed to Mexico. Three companies of the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment were sent back and arrived

here yesterday from Perote. They are to be an addition to our garrison here, which will now amount to about 1200 men. Gen. Scott moves on to Puebla with the balance of the army under Gen. Twigg about 2000 strong on Tuesday, where the whole will likely remain in garrison until fresh troops arrive. On Friday the last train that is expected to be sent from Vera Cruz arrived, consisting of about 400 wagons and 200 mules with packs.

. . . May 25 . . . We are endeavoring to get Dr. Fuller appointed surgeon to our regiment. If he gets it and comes out I want you to send Thomas along with him, provided you have not got him into any kind of business. I think it would be of great advantage to him in after life, as he is now of an age when he would remember what he would see and learn.

We are pleasantly situated here and will in all probability have to remain here some two or three months. I see the papers from the U. S. speak of peace. I do not think we are likely to have peace very soon, and not until the Administration send men enough to take possession of the country and hold it. Gen. Scott and the army have all gone on to Pueblo, except five companies of artillery, one cavalry, three companies of the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment and our regiment, which remains to garrison Jolloppe, in all about 1300 men. We have a considerable number of men complaining of diarrhea, caused it is said by the weather having been unusually dry, but the rainy season has commenced and it now rains almost every afternoon.

. . . I have just been witnessing a torchlight procession from the church by the Mexicans. It was a very grand affair. Some of our officers participated with them, walking in their ranks and carrying a wax candle about three feet long. The procession was, as near as I can get at it, to save one of their great men who was very low and not expected to live. Rine can give you a description of it better than I can write it.

. . . The last accounts say that Santa Anna was fortifying himself between Puebla and the City of Mexico and had about 10,000. I have sent another letter a few days since by Major Harwood which you will likely receive a few days after you get this containing a \$500.00 treasury note with directions how to apply it. . . .

Jolloppe, Mexico, June 6, 1847

I am still in this place but we shall take up our line of march to

join the army and proceed to Mexico in a few days. Gen. Scott has come to the conclusion to withdraw the garrison from this place and cut off all communications with the coast. It is necessary in consequence of the smallness of our force. His whole force now in Mexico will not exceed 9,000 men and it is necessary for him to concentrate them to advance. We have been in garrison in this place just one month today, doing duty with a regiment of regulars. Our men here behaved themselves better and done their duty equally as well as them and have gained a great deal of credit as it has always been contended by the regulars officers that volunteers could not be brought under sufficient discipline to garrison a city or town, but our men have not even been charged with an outrage or breach of order, which appears to be a matter of surprise to the regular officers.

We have [illegible] in ourselves so far and intend to demonstrate to the People of the United States and to the Army that volunteers can behave as well, be as well disciplined and be as efficient as regulars.¹⁰ I have never in my life had more real satisfaction in a pursuit as I have had since I have been in Mexico; the good conduct of the men rendering my duties pleasant and agreeable. . . .

We are all pleased with the idea of going on to Mexico. We were afraid we were going to be left here as a garrison, which although it is in our opinion one of the most pleasant places in the world, we did not care about staying our time out here, but we are anxious to get on to Mexico. I occupy a large fine house on the principal corner of the city and live fine, but I would rather go on. I am about to send three of my officers home for recruits. We are allowed to increase our companies to 100 privates in a company, and I am anxious that they should be raised and got on this fall. The only chance of bringing the war to a close is for government to sent in sufficient men to take possession of the country and my opinion is, and it is the opinion of all intelligent persons here, that a peace will not be obtained until it is done.

There is no more sign of peace now than there was after the battle of Palo Alto. So if our friends ever want to see us back, they will exert themselves to send additional forces, and by that means to bring the war to a close. I would think that almost any young man would be

10 The controversy over regular versus volunteer troops has a long American history which has involved such questions as abolition of West Point and creation of a military aristocracy. It was especially heated in 1846-7, when the precepts of Jacksonian democracy were new. Channing, *A History of the United States*, V. 596-7.

glad of the chance to come. It is indeed worth almost half a lifetime to see what we have already seen. They would now have none of the difficulties to undergo that we have had, but would be landed and at once marched into the interior where it is cool and healthy; the thermometer never rising higher than 75 degrees in the shade and never falling lower than 55. The persons I am sending home are my adjutant B. F. Dutton of Philadelphia and Lieut. McWilliams of Harrisburgh and Lieut. Williams, (a brother of Steel Williams) of Cambria County. They are all three good and efficient officers and should any of them come to Uniontown show them as much kindness as you can.

I wrote to you in my long letter sent by Mr. Rine to send Thomas, and if you do it I think it would be of great advantage to him and he would have an opportunity of learning the Spanish language and seeing the country, which might be of great importance to him in after life. I saw by a paper I received about a week since that our work shop in Pittsburgh had been burnt but I have not yet received any letters giving me the particulars, but we are looking for a mail every day, when I suppose I shall hear all about it. The loss will be considerable, but I expect Mr. Kane will be able to get along pretty comfortably notwithstanding, as we have made considerable. His greatest loss will likely be his not having a shop to put the hands in to work, and the loss of time before he can get the engine repaired and put up again. I have not learned whether the policy of insurance has been continued on the property in Uniontown. If it has not I want it attended to immediately as I want it kept under insurance. . . .

Hacienda Bonavista, Mexico

August 14, 1847

We left Puebla on the 8th and arrived here in four days. Gen. Twigg's took the advance, on Saturday ours, Quitman on Sunday, Worth's on Monday, Pillow's on Tuesday, and all arrived safe. Nothing occurring on the way worthy of note with the exception of one of our men getting killed by some lancers. He had fallen behind the column and was picked up by them. Pillow, it is said, lost five the same way.¹¹ We are lying with in 22 miles of the City of Mexico and close to the edge of the lake.

11 The fate of stragglers is vividly pictured by Alfred Hoyt Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict*, (1947) 247, 251, 258.

A canal comes to the Hacienda (farm house) in which I am encamped, the walls of which are extensive enough to accomodate my whole command, soldiers, horses, wagons (17) and all and afford shelter and comfortable quarters. The wall is about 15 feet high, the roofs flat and a parapet or wall all round two and one half feet higher than the roof. It is in fact a perfect fortress.

I am under the command of Major. Gen. Quitman whose division is composed of four squadrons of horse, a battery of six pounders under Capt. Steptoe, the New York and South Carolina regiments and four companies of Marines under Gen. Shields, they forming the 1st Brigade; and the 2d Pa. regiment, to which is added the two new companies from Pennsylvania, under Capts. Caldwell and Taylor, which comprises the 2d Brigade under my command, which amounts to about two-fifth of the whole infantry force under command of Gen. Quitman; mine being two-thirds that of Shields. Gen. Twiggs lies about one and one-half miles directly between me and Mexico city, Gen. Shields. . . .

end—remainder of letter pages are

empty. Was not addressed and presumably
never finished.