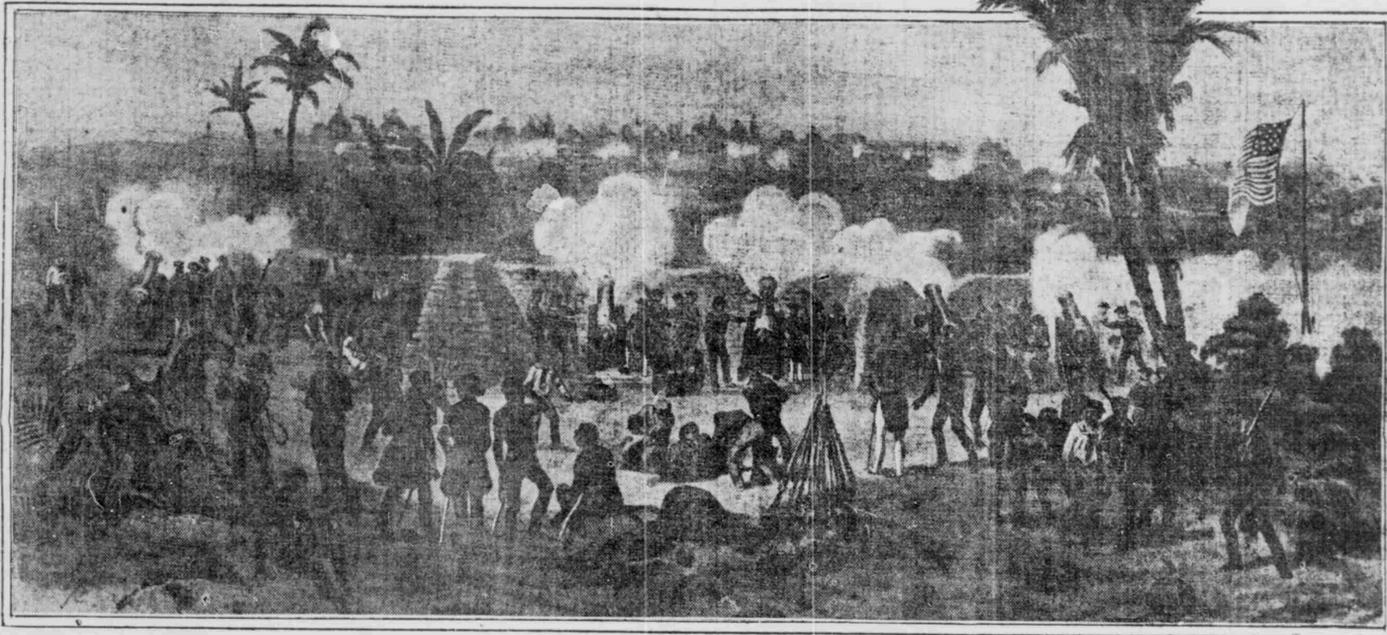


How We Captured Vera Cruz in 1847

The Capture of Vera Cruz.

From a drawing made on the spot by Carl Nebel, a celebrated author and artist of the time.

In the Foreground at the Centre of the Line of Investment Is the Battery Equipped from the Navy, Whose Ships Lie Beyond the Domes and Spires of the City in the Background. The Sketch Represents the Moment of the Most Furious Bombardment on March 25, 1847, the Day Before the City and Castle of San Juan de Ulua Capitulated.



WHEN the United States forces under General Zachary Taylor had captured the important Mexican city of Monterey, after winning in his initial contest with the Mexican army under Santa Anna at Palo Alto, the Government at Washington determined upon the reduction of Vera Cruz with its strong castle of San Juan de Ulua. In November, 1846, President Polk entrusted this formidable undertaking to General Winfield Scott, then senior officer and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United States.

General Scott's attack upon Mexico's great and classical stronghold upon the sea marked the beginning of the second stage of our war with that country. It meant that the American army, after capturing Vera Cruz, was to fight its way northward to the Capital City, along the same route traversed by the Spanish army under Cortes three hundred years before, and with the same object—to win a definite decision by occupying the capital.

Although generally recognized by the people of the United States as a hazardous undertaking, the war was a popular one, for upon its issue depended the security of Texas, which a year before had been admitted to the Union after Santa Anna, beaten by Sam Houston, had acknowledged its independence in return for his personal safety. Returning to Mexico City, Santa Anna repudiated that agreement and put himself at the head of military operations designed to recover the vast territory he had signed away. Consequently he found himself at war, not merely with the forces of Texas, but with the United States, of which it was one.

Prior to the admission of Texas to the Union, Mexico, including Texas, New Mexico, California, Yucatan and the present republic of Guatemala, was the third largest country in the world, coming next after the Russian and Chinese empires. It was used to war, having hardly ever enjoyed even a breathing spell of peace. The bravery and ferocity of its soldiers—among the most expert horsemen in the world—were well known. Even with the encouragement of General Taylor's victories at Palo Alto and Monterey, the prospect of reaching the capital from the north, with its intervening deserts and mountain ranges, was exceedingly doubtful. Hence the determination to take Vera Cruz and attack the country's heart from the south.

General Taylor still had his work to do in the north, for Santa Anna, returning to Mexico City, and being elected President of the republic, declared that he could serve his country best by leading its army. The result was the battle of Buena Vista, in February, 1847, while General Scott was gathering his forces and materials for the attack on Vera Cruz. The Americans gained the victory at Buena Vista, but it was not so decisive as had been the contests at Palo Alto and Monterey. However, it virtually ended the northern campaign, for the Mexicans now had to prepare to defend its strongholds in the south.

General Scott could now call upon General Taylor for all his regular infantry, including the veteran commands of Twiggs and Worth, and these troops were immediately put in motion for the general rendezvous of Scott's army. This was Lobos Island, on the Mexican coast, about one hundred and twenty miles north of Vera Cruz. By the latter part of February, 1847, the greater part of both regulars and volunteers had reached the rendezvous.

On March 6 General Scott, accompanied by Worth, Patterson, Pillow, all his principal staff and field officers, and by Commodore Connor, then in command of the large squadron on the station, made a thorough reconnaissance of the coast, finding a suitable landing point at Sacrificios, a few miles to the south of the castle of San Juan de Ulua. They were repeatedly fired upon from the fortress, but escaped without loss.

On March 8 the fleet, numbering over one hundred and fifty vessels, now gathered at Anton Lizardo, a good and safe anchorage about twelve miles to the southward of Vera Cruz, began to move up under Sacrificios, where large surf boats, expressly built for the landing of troops and heavy guns, were to discharge the men and arms and munitions of the fleet within range of the 13-inch mortars of the castle.

More than twelve thousand soldiers were suddenly to be thrown upon a hostile coast within eight and a half miles of the strongest fortresses in the world. Some half dozen of foreign men-of-war, English as well as French and Spanish, were lying at the anchorage of Sacrificios, their tops crowded with anxious spectators.

Worth's division of four thousand five hundred regulars were first to land. Taking advantage of the roll of the surf, the boats were sent in line to a point within twenty yards of dry land. At this instant the entire force leaping into the water as one man, holding high their muskets and cartridge boxes, dashed to the shore, and the different regiments, forming with wonderful alacrity, were sent over the first ridges of sandhills at a run. Between four and five thousand men had gained a foothold upon the enemy's soil without even a single soldier receiving a scratch. By 10 o'clock at night General Scott's entire army had safely disembarked. On the following day the heavy guns, ammunition and provisions were landed, without hostilities except occasional sharp musketry fire upon American pickets.

Vera Cruz is a walled city fronting upon the water, with the strong castle of San Juan de Ulua built upon a reef half a mile distant. Near the beach, to the south, is Fort Santiago, and also near the beach, to the north, is Fort Concepcion. Between these, within the wall of the city, are the bastion works of San Jose, San Fernando, Santa Barbara, Santa Gertrudes, San Javier, San Mateo and San Juan. All held heavy artillery, so disposed as to take every approach. The total amounted to over four hundred guns.

The garrison consisted of five thousand regular troops under command of General Morales, an officer of unquestioned obstinacy and bravery. To reduce the formidable castle and fortified city General Scott had but little more than 12,000 men, divided into three divisions, under Worth, Twiggs and Patterson, the last named consisting entirely of volunteers. During the progress of the investment of the city the marines from the squadron, under Edson, with heavy guns from the ships, were added.

The American forces were not well provided with heavy artillery. General Scott's original requisitions had called for no less than fifty 10-inch mortars, with a proportionate number of 24-pounders and other breeching

guns. But on March 10, only one-fifth of the total had reached the Sacrificios landing. To offset this deficit in ordnance for the reduction of the Vera Cruz forts, guns from the ships were landed and transported with vast difficulty inland to occupy the central position in the line of investment.

Entrenching the line and placing the batteries, owing to a succession of heavy gales from the north, were not completed until the return of calmer weather, on March 22. Meanwhile, there were numerous skirmishes with bodies of Mexicans, who were invariably forced back under the walls of the city. Throughout the siege there were no sorties in force from the garrison, Morales appearing to rely almost solely upon his strong forts and heavy guns.

Ample precautions were taken by the invaders to prevent attack upon their rear. Only one engagement of this character marked the progress of the siege, in which the attacking party were so severely punished that similar efforts evidently in preparation were abandoned.

Having completely invested the city with a line extending from the beach on its south to the beach on its north, and his batteries being in readiness to open fire, General Scott sent a summons to General Morales to surrender. His anxiety to spare the beautiful city from the imminent hazard of demolition, and its defenders and peaceful inhabitants, including women and children, from the inevitable horrors of a triumphant assault, caused him to address the intelligence, gallantry and patriotism, no less than the humanity of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Vera Cruz. Morales replied that both the city and the castle of San Juan de Ulua were under his authority, and that he should defend both at all costs, and that his

adversary might commence his operations of war whenever it suited him to do so.

The bombardment began immediately. The play upon the city was incessant, including that of the little fleet, standing out to the south, out of the direct line of fire from the guns of the castle. The ships were the steamer Spitfire, under Porter; the Vixen, under Sands, with the schooners Bonita, Reefer, Petrol, Falcon and Tampico. Their fire was mainly concentrated on the nearest fort, Santiago; they remained uninjured by the return fire from the castle.

The play of the Mexican forts upon the American land batteries was incessant, doing considerable damage to the works, but resulting in few casualties.

During the evening of the 24th, the English, French, Spanish and Prussian consuls acquainted General Scott with the frightful results the bombardment had already caused, and prayed that a truce might be granted to enable their countrymen, as well as Mexican women and children, to escape from the city. As they had already been warned in ample time, the American commander replied that no truce could now be granted except by the Mexican commander's distinct proposition to surrender.

The bombardment continued with increased energy. Other ships had arrived and landed more heavy guns. These were dragged inland, and with the batteries thus strengthened the Americans were able, on March 25, to cause the enemy to stammer more and more in their answering fire. It was General Scott's determination to continue the bombardment and cannonade with increasing vehemence for twelve hours longer, when, if no proposals to surrender were received, an assault was to be organized.

A little before daylight on the morning of the 26th another violent norther sprang up, increasing with such fury that all operations were suspended. With the full light of day a white flag was seen approaching from the direction of Fort Santiago. A messenger bore from Morales a proposal for an honorable capitulation. Operations continued suspended and a conference between representatives of both sides arranged for the following morning.

In this conference the Mexicans were represented by Colonels Villaneuva, Gutierrez and Robles. Captain Aulic was landed from the feet and represented the American Navy. After a lengthy conference the terms originally offered by General Scott, with some slight modifications, were accepted.

The city of Vera Cruz and the castle of San Juan de Ulua, together with their garrisons, were to be surrendered to the army of the United States, the entire Mexican force to march out and lay down its arms on March 29, with all the honors of war. All the material of war, with all the public property of every description in the city, was to belong to the United States, subject to a definite treaty of peace. Absolute protection was guaranteed to persons in the city. This was the programme carried out on March 29. The Americans marched in, taking possession of both castle and city. The loud booming of heavy cannon, announcing the raising of new and strange banners upon San Juan de Ulua and the different forts on shore was now heard coming up from the squadron and the batteries on land—and thus ended the siege and capture of Vera Cruz.

The houses of the city showed evidences on every side of the devastation caused by the American mortar batteries. The streets were

blocked up with the ruins of fallen walls. Every building containing combustible materials had been consumed, while the churches and palaces, the dwellings of the foreign consuls, as well as the different public buildings, had all shared alike in the horrors of the bombardment.

The loss of the Mexicans could never be fully ascertained, but unfortunately it fell heaviest upon the non-combatants, for numbers of both women and children were known to be slain. The loss of the Americans fell a little short of one hundred in all, killed and wounded.

No estimate can be made of the number and weight of the round shot and shell sent into the American works and intrenchments by the enemy, but its aggregate must have been immense. The small American loss redounded to the credit of the American engineers for the skill and caution with which they performed their work along the whole line of investment.

The entire weight of the missiles expended by the Americans during the siege was upward of four hundred and sixty-three thousand pounds. From the land batteries were thrown into the city three thousand 10-inch shells, five hundred 24-pound round shot and two hundred 8-inch howitzer shells, while the flotilla threw in a total of twelve hundred round shot and shell. The battery equipped from the ships contributed one thousand 8-inch shells and eight hundred 32-pound round shot.

Vera Cruz doubtless could have been carried by assault; but as this would have involved the lives of hundreds if not thousands of men, and as General Scott had the means to avoid this outlay of blood, he chose to consult the safety of his own soldiers rather than that of the inhabitants of the city, who had been given timely warning and ample opportunities to escape.

Mr. Chesterton Explains Why Pro-German Arguments Do Not Impress Americans

By G. K. Chesterton
the Famous English Publicist.

SOMEbody has sent me anonymously several copies of a pro-German paper; and until I had read them carefully I was under the impression that the Germans had a case. It is in no way necessary to my own conviction to suppose that they have no case. I have never known before such a thing as a side with no case.

Strange to say, I am sufficiently subtle to know that the Germans are not necessarily wrong merely because all the English newspapers say they are wrong, nor even because all the English people think they are wrong. I have been in minorities myself, as during the Boer War, and I am quite aware that a clear and tenable case can be swamped and almost effaced, partly by manufactured press opinion, but partly also by genuine popular patriotism. But the pro-Boers had a case; and, whenever they could get a letter printed in the corner of a newspaper, they stated it. But I have just read some twelve solid newspaper pages of printed matter, written in the German interest issued in Germany, circulated in the open market of America; and it is literally not too much to say that, in the plain matter of right and wrong, there is not a word about the war from beginning to end.

It is called the "Continental Times. A Journal for Americans in Europe." It is written in a very singular style, which is neither English nor American. Perhaps it is Yiddish; but I am sure, if so, it is bad Yiddish. Here is a good sentence: "The red fluid lost in the eastern battlefield by Austria and Hungary is a mighty test of blood." It seems to have been at first supposed that it was a test of cochineal. They are great on the red fluid in the Continental Times. "Surely," they argue, "unless the terrible revelations which have been made by the pitiless blade of war have caused deeper than human reason can divine, the day must come when the English people, made sound again by one pure drop of its old yemman blood, will rise and send the man who sold it into the red slavery of war. Who are these men? The arch-traitor Sir Edward Grey and his evil conscience, Sir William Nicholson, Herbert Asquith, white-haired Druid, etc.

Personally, I should ask for more than one drop of my old "yemman" blood before I started reading Druids, however white-haired; and I think it a little mean to allow Sir Edward Grey to have even an evil conscience of his own. But the style is one which lends itself to misunderstanding. The Austrians, it appears, "have seen their beloved Emperor to face." We also read that "the legions of the open-eyed are gathering behind Ramsay Macdmoald"—which would appear not to be Yiddish, but presumably Chinese. It is stated that a person called "Napoleon" were he alive (which is not the case), would call us a nation of "peddlers."

But, though the style and spelling of this journal are a perennial feast, I am here concerned with what arguments it can present—or rather, what present. And I repeat that there is no attempt at any defense of Germany at all. There are all sorts of other things. There are statements which are entirely true—as that some French caricatures are blasphemous, or that some English advertisements are vulgar. There are statements which are entirely false—as that the Russian retreat was a savage and neat, which anybody can disprove with a few pins, a map, and a scientific grasp of the number of days in a week. The Italians are described as "cautious Italians," apparently because they attacked the Austrian army and not the Turkish army. They are also called swarthy.

There is not wanting the divine afflatus of song, as in the lines—
Hats off to the German Kaiser!
The victim of English greed,
Who lived up to his given word
Clasped hands with a friend in need.
This is actually the nearest we get even to an allusion to the moral cause of the war, and the allusion is slightly obscure. The same note is distantly sounded in the sentence: "Again we say what a contrast to this grand and inspired German nation is furnished by the traitorous land that in an evil and erring moment struck it sister in the back." And beyond that, absolutely nothing.

German apologists have first to face one quite simple fact. The English case against Germany is not founded on the things that are disputed. It is founded on the things that are admitted. Doubt everything that can be doubted, deny everything that can be denied;

imagine anything unknown and unknowable to palliate what we know—and the German position remains radically indefensible, and, as we have seen, undefended.

Suppose no single German has committed one single crime in Belgium; the crime is that he is in Belgium. Suppose that historians like Lord Bryce and Mr. Fisher, of New College, cannot sift evidence at all, but pass hundreds of stories, not one of which has any sort of foundation. Still the tale of what happened in broad daylight before Liege and before Europe is not a tale without foundation. And that tale is self-evidently as vile as it is true, for it was a double treason, both to Belgium and to France.

The most even Germans have ever said for it was that it was necessary. But necessary to what? It was not necessary to a fight. It was only necessary to a foul. The Prussians were not even doing evil that good might come; but treachery that treachery might come. The act was not needed for the fighting of the French, nor even for the cheating of the French. It is so with all the first facts of the war: in the ultimatum to Serbia, in the ultimata to France and Russia.

Long before Germany did wrong, Germany was wrong. Everything essential in what we say could be quoted verbatim from what our enemies say. It was not we who declared the invasion of Belgium a "wrong"; it was the German Chancellor. It was not we who first called German soldiers liars; it was the German Emperor. It was not we who said that a certain righteousness was necessary in their military occupation; it was their own military authorities. Out down our case to the bones of the utterly indisputable, and it is final and secure. If there is no international right, we are necessarily as good as they are. If there is right, they are wrong.

Against this stunning simplicity in our case the Germans have nothing to say, save such fondering irrelevances as I have cited. In number after number of this large paper they have full room to spread themselves, but they grow thinner and thinner as they spread. It is not surprising that nothing they say persuades a people so lucid, so logical, so eager for argument as the Americans.

It may be said almost universally that the

language of a paper like this is not only unintelligent, but positively unintelligible. And yet there is an exception; and that exception is one which Englishmen have very gravely to consider. There is one, and only one, kind of contribution to these German papers which might possibly influence an intelligent and judicial citizen of the United States. There is one, and only one, type of paragraph which might move him against England, if not in favor of Germany. And it is the melancholy fact that these words of encouragement to Germany are not written by Germans.

They are the only words in this rag which are written in real English; and they are written by Englishmen. They are quoted from English newspapers. It is actually on English authority that these babyish barbarians can say that the English arms are foiled and the English spirit hopeless. Across one page of this paper is written, in enormous letters, a crowning parody of the cry that our poor fellows have so often caught up in the trenches, "Are We Downhearted? Yes!" That is the German version of our present condition; and it is supported, in the lines beneath, simply and solely by quotations from two London morning papers.

If there be anywhere in the world an informed and thoughtful man who sympathizes with Germany, I can imagine his reading this German journal with a sinking heart. Page after page would show him nothing but vaporous evasions, such as he would know to be absurd in the eyes of any educated people anywhere, and expressed in language that would make a man laugh on his deathbed. And then suddenly his heart would be lifted up. His eyes would light on a sentence written in unmistakable English by an unmistakable Englishman, and practically admitting despair in England and ruin in Russia. "All that talk of a brilliant retreat, of an army saved, and concerning the non-importance of Lemberg, is ridiculous." If he were really an informed man he would know that this is not "pessimistic," but simply untrue. He would know that the retreat was brilliant, that the army was saved, and that Lemberg is unimportant in comparison. But he would be very glad that English writers should utter such sullen ignorance, and that English readers should believe it.