

The explanation of the evacuation of Ojinaga was virtually the same from all sources.

Men and officers and refugees on the American soil all gave the same account simmered down: "The Federals took fright and ran before the Rebels had charged their trenches."

A number of Federals in the outposts and trenches came rushing back into the fortification for more ammunition with which to meet the Rebel charge. In the darkness the Federals in the trenches thought the men after ammunition were Rebels and started to shoot them.

This thoroughly demoralized the men after ammunition, who thought the Rebels had, by some trick, gained the trenches behind them. So the Federals on both sides thought each other Rebels and began to run. Once the panic started, nothing could stop it.

General Mercado and General Castro, ranking Generals, crossed the river before many of their men.

In their flight from Ojinaga many of the Federals encountered the Rebel army already charging up the hill, and they had to fight their way through the Rebel ranks to escape.

The Federals were disarmed as soon as they waded out of the Rio Grande onto the American side, if they had not already dropped their rifles, sabres and ammunition in the race from their abandoned fortress. If they carried them long enough to reach the river, they unloaded them in the muddy waters of the International Stream.

United States troops formed a great semicircle into which they forced the Federal prisoners. Wood was provided and great fires built to enable the shivering Federals to thaw out their wet clothes, and to keep from freezing, as the night was cold and a high wind was blowing.

As soon as they could regain their composure, the deserters began to be happy and seemed to be relieved of a great responsibility and fear.

General Mercado and General Castro and Aduna mounted their horses and quickly rode to the American side, where they surrendered to Captain Ben Lear and Lieutenant Cowles, who immediately notified Major McNamee. They were taken to one of the officer's tents, where they were afforded every consideration.

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED

Sunday both Pancho Villa, the victorious Rebel leader, and General Salvador Mercado, the defeated Federal leader, on opposite banks of the Rio Grande, discussed the incidents in Mexican history in which they had just taken a part.

General Villa sat triumphantly in the little adobe palace on the plaza in Ojinaga.

General Mercado, a refugee, sat in the camp of the border patrol.

"It was hopeless," said General Mercado. "Our men had only seventy-five rounds of ammunition, and, after the panic started, some of our men, returned from the outposts for ammunition, were mistaken for Rebels. I ordered the evacuation and flight across the river. Otherwise, it would have been a massacre."

"Hundreds of women and children refused to desert the soldiers. Those non-combatants had no arms, and would have been killed in the confusion. We had many loyal officers and soldiers, who had reason to believe they would be killed if captured."

"When I saw there was no hope, I had to command the soldiers to leave. I chose to place the lives of my men in the care of the United States, rather than risk the Rebels. We are thankful for our hospitable refuge here."

Charges of cowardice were made against General Orozco, Salazar and Rojas by Mercado. He asserted that the Generals abandoned their troops at the beginning of the battle and thus weakened the Federal defense.

"The only Generals who quit the battle field with honor," General Mercado said, "were those who accompanied the Federals across the Rio Grande."

Pancho Villa, when interviewed, said of the battle of Ojinaga: "The credit for this victory is due to General Toribio Ortega and Panfilo Natra. That the Federal Army retreated from Ojinaga Saturday night, before it was compelled to do so, is established to a certainty. Investigation today in Ojinaga showed positively that the Federal death list was not heavy, and that the wounded, also, was too light to have forced a retreat. 'Fright,' pure and simple, caused the Federals to quit the town in face of the Rebel charge."

Never, since the retreat from Moscow, has anything equalled this deserting of an entire army, and its seeking protection in a foreign country.

Many Federal officers from Ojinaga, who escaped to the American side of the river, when the town was surrendered, did not surrender to the United States troops, but made an effort to escape.

They lined the depot in Marfa, waiting for trains. The information of this fact was wired to secret service agents to watch all trains and arrest all Mexicans suspected of being deserters from Ojinaga.

Quartered on American soil, the Federal command were completely surrounded by soldiers of the 14th and 15th Cavalry, and in the background thousands of rifles and a hundred thousand rounds of ammunition were stacked.

The total number of dead on both sides