them to take advantage of their position which is admirably adapted for a great smuggling trade, and to resist all attempts to repress it. In short, Mexico, though she may gain in point of numbers, will not, certainly, acquire any real strength, by such an addition to her population. . . . Were but one hundredth part of the attention paid to practical encroachment, which will be bestowed upon anything like a verbal cession, Mexico would have little to fear." [1]

It was hardly fair to speak of the "lawless habits and dislike of all restraints" of these people. They were, in fact, always ready to conform to laws which they had made themselves and which they understood, for that had been their custom and the custom of their fathers for many generations. But there was one thing they would never submit to. They would never submit to the domination of a race they regarded as inferior. They despised Mexicans as they despised negroes and Indians, and they calmly ignored Mexican laws.

They were industrious and brave, and their morality, on the whole, stood high. The political conditions of their existence were already difficult, and were certain to become more and more so, as the disproportion increased between the numbers and wealth of the colonists on the one hand, and of the Mexicans on the other. On the side of the Mexicans was legal authority, backed by the distant and deeply distracted government in the city of Mexico; on the side of the new-comers were industry, frugality, intelligence, courage, and a great preponderance of numbers within the territory itself. A struggle was inevitable.

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[1] Ward to Canning, Sept. 6, 1825, in *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, IX, 140.

CHAPTER VII

MEXICAN POLITICS: 1824–1830

In the preceding pages an account has been given of the condition of the Mexican people—and especially of those who inhabited her northernmost provinces—at the period when they had finally succeeded in releasing themselves from the grasp of Spain and had set up a federal republic. We are now to see what use they made of their newly acquired freedom.

When the first election for President and Vice-President took place the condition of the country was, on the whole, fairly satisfactory, and those who hoped for the success of the republic could not have wished a better opportunity for testing the working of the governmental machinery. Order had been restored in all parts of the country. Relations with the continental powers of Europe—thanks to the friendly offices of the United States and England—were in a hopeful state of adjustment. The credit of the country was good. The proceeds of foreign loans had given the Treasury adequate funds. Trade was increasing. Foreign capital, chiefly English and German, was eagerly seeking to develop the mining industry of the country, and was ready to embark on any enterprise in Mexico which could show a reasonable assurance of profit. All that was needed in order to secure continued prosperity was internal peace and the certainty of protection to life and property.

The Constitution adopted in 1824 had provided that the President and Vice-President should be elected by the votes of the state legislatures. Two names were to be presented by each legislature—the person receiving the most votes to be President, and the person receiving the next highest number to be Vice-President. If there was not a majority of the votes of all the states, the federal Chamber of Deputies was to select the President and Vice-President from among the candidates who stood highest on the list. The term of office was to be four years.

The first election was ordered by the constituent Congress to be held in the early autumn of 1824, before the complete adoption of the Constitution, the persons then elected to take office immediately and to continue in office until the first of April, 1829. Subsequent elections were to be held by the legislatures of the several states on the first day of September preceding the end of each presidential term.

When the results of the election of 1824 became known, it was found that the votes of the seventeen states taking part were divided between three generals of the revolutionary war—Victoria, Bravo, and Guerrero. Victoria received a clear majority of all the states, and was declared elected President; Bravo and Guerrero each having received less than a majority, the Chamber of Deputies duly selected Bravo as Vice-President.[1] On October 10, 1824, the newly elected officers took the oath of office.

The choice of Victoria as President appeared full of promise. "He was one of Plutarch's Romans," said an admirer; and, indeed, he possessed many admirable qualities. He was of a good family in Durango, but had little education.[2] He had joined the revolutionists at an early day, and was one of the few active insurgents who accomplished the feat of living through eleven years of unceasing warfare without ever asking a pardon from the government.

The principal scene of Victoria's exploits was in the neighborhood of Vera Cruz, where, at the head of a small and highly irregular band, he had attacked convoys and intercepted communications with the capital. He could sometimes be persuaded to relate the most surprising tales of his

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[1] Dublan y Lozano, I, 719.

[2] His real name was Felix Fernández, but after some successes in the war of independence he changed his name to commemorate the event and to do honor to the Virgin of Guadalupe.—(Suarez, *Historia de México*, 71; Tornel, *Breve Reseña*, 24.)

sufferings and adventures, although generally he was modest and far from a fluent talker.[1] In Iturbide's time he was not in favor at court, in spite of his having very effectively used his influence in support of the plan of Iguala; and he was arrested, with Bravo and others, upon charges of conspiring against the Emperor. He was released after a short imprisonment, and when Congress was forcibly dissolved he joined the popular party and rendered useful service in overthrowing the empire. He was a man of integrity, and, indeed, seems to have embodied all the private virtues. But he had his faults. He was ignorant of public business, and was indolent and vacillating in his conduct of affairs at a time when a clearly defined policy and great firmness were, above all, essential.

Madame Calderon gives an interesting picture of him:

> "General Guadalupe Victoria," she says, "is perhaps the last man in a crowd whom one would fix upon as being the owner of the above high-sounding cognomen. . . . He is an honest, plain, down-looking citizen, lame and tall, somewhat at a loss for conversation, apparently, amiable and good-natured, but certainly neither courtier nor orator; a man of undeniable bravery, capable of supporting almost incredible hardships, humane, and who has always proved himself a sincere lover of what he considered liberty, without ever having been actuated by ambitions or interested motives."[2]

Nicolas Bravo, the Vice-President, was of a very similar type. He also was a white man, a member of an influential family in southern Mexico, who had adhered to the revolutionary party as early as 1811. He was the right-hand man of Morelos so long as that leader was at large. Near the close of the year 1817 he was taken prisoner; but as the revolution was then being rapidly suppressed, and perhaps from some regard for his personal character, the viceroy refrained from having him shot; and he was ultimately released upon the occasion of the marriage of Ferdinand VII to his third wife. He supported Iturbide in 1821, but later was one of his opponents.

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[1] Ward's *Mexico*, I, 170-175. C. M. Bustamante could not induce him to talk on the subject.—(*Cuadro Hist.*, IV, 175.) Alaman says these famous stories were "fables."—(*Historia de Méjico*, IV, 641.)

[2] *Life in Mexico*, 23.

Bravo's reputation rested upon his clemency to prisoners even under the greatest provocation.

> "Many were the instances of humanity," says a Mexican historian, "which this worthy officer displayed during the course of the revolution. Always valiant on the field of battle, his hands were never stained with the blood of a prisoner; and keeping his reputation clean through all the vicissitudes of war, he always lived up to the nobility of his character." [1]

This is high praise. The commanding officers on either side who did not habitually shoot their prisoners were rare indeed.

In spite of the selection of men like Victoria and Bravo for the two highest offices in the gift of the people, and in spite of the favorable circumstances under which the new Constitution came into operation, the path of the republic was still beset by serious dangers and difficulties—some inherent in the situation, and some arising out of circumstances more or less temporary.

The first and perhaps the most fundamental difficulty was the total inexperience of the Mexican people in the difficult art of self-government. They had abandoned autocracy and had substituted a system that was designed, by means of a written constitution, to be so regulated as to secure the rights of minorities and the blessings of freedom—in everything but religion. Such a system, even in the simplest form, would have been hard enough to work by men who had never lived under free institutions; but as a matter of fact not the simplest but the most complicated form of government known to man was adopted, and it is not at all surprising that the division of powers between federal and state governments was so little understood as to give rise to constant attempts by one or the other to usurp authority. The matter was made worse because there was no impartial arbiter like the Supreme Court of

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[1] Alaman, *Historia de Méjico*, III, 261, and see App. 5, same vol.

the United States to settle disputes, the sole authority in such cases being the federal Congress.[1]

The existence of militarism in an aggravated form was another source of danger. "In Mexico," says a liberal writer, contrasting the condition of his own country in 1821 with that of the United States in 1783, "*the officers of the army took possession of the revolution and its fruits.* Very few were content with the large pay they enjoyed. Positions as governors of states, commanders of military districts, the first places in the republic, hardly satisfied their ambition." [2]

In addition to the fact that few men occupied high office except through the favor of the army, there was the constant use of federal troops in the daily life of the nation. A military commander resided at the capital of each state, and assumed the right, quite independently of the state government or of the courts, to put down and punish conspiracies and other crimes, especially crimes of violence. Indeed, by an act passed by the constituent Congress itself, wide discretionary powers were given to the President, which it was impossible that he could exercise except by the use of the military arm. He was authorized to banish whatever foreigners he thought fit, to remove any person from one state into another, and to use force against the authorities of any state who should conspire against the federal system of the nation.[3]

The passage of this law not only showed a singular conception of the powers of the executive branch of the government, and of the proper manner of developing a scheme of ordered liberty, but it betrayed a consciousness of serious opposition to the form of government which had just been put into operation. That such opposition did exist was very well known, although it would probably not then have been prudent for those who held the hostile opinions to give public expression to their sentiments.

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[1] Constitution of 1824, Art. 165. A curious instance of state usurpation of powers was the banishment by the state of Vera Cruz of an unpopular but important federal office-holder; an abuse of power, says Tornel, which was imitated many times thereafter.—(*Breve Reseña*, 130.)

[2] Zavala, *Ensayo Histórico*, I, 351.

[3] Act of Dec. 23, 1824; Dublan y Lozano, I, 763. The banishment of citizens of states, however, was to be effected "*por medio de los respectivos gobernadores.*" This measure was vigorously opposed in Congress, but supported upon the ground that extraordinary powers were necessary to enable the President to control the Anti-Federalist party and to check the intrigues of Spanish agents.—(Tornel, *Breve Reseña*, 29.)

In a general way, it may be said that the wealth of the country and the influence that goes with wealth and education were in the hands of men who did not believe in the republican experiment. Among them were the higher orders of the clergy and most of the people who had what used to be called a stake in the country. They believed that their countrymen were unfit to govern themselves, and thought that any idea of a republic was purely visionary. Some hoped for a sovereign of the Bourbon family of Spain, some looked for a constitutional king, caring little whence he came, and some wanted a military despot after the pattern of Buonaparte; but they were all agreed in expecting a speedy end of republicanism. The conditions in many respects resembled those which prevailed in France for some years after 1871, when Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists, differing about everything else, were united in wishing for the downfall of the republic.

Among the anti-republicans were the large majority of the Spaniards who were still living in Mexico; and the manner in which these men, now become alien enemies, were to be dealt with was one of the most serious problems which the new government had to meet. The plan of Iguala and the treaty of Cordova had both proclaimed, as one of their essential principles, a perfect equality between Spaniards and Mexicans—a pledge which the government of Iturbide had utterly failed to keep. The result had been, of course, to incense the natives of Old Spain against the Mexicans. The former were naturally opposed to a government of Mexico by the Mexicans, for they regarded themselves as belonging to a superior race, and, as a matter of fact, they were generally superior in character, in enterprise and industry. There were still many Spaniards in the country, a large proportion of whom were soldiers who had surrendered

after the success of the plan of Iguala, and their mere presence, added to their superior ability and activity, evidently constituted a perpetual source of irritation. Even before the adoption of the Constitution a rather serious military outbreak in the city of Mexico had proclaimed hostility to Spanish residents as a principle which justified revolt; and then and later there were similar outbreaks in different parts of the country.

Another circumstance which gave rise to much anxiety was the growth of organizations that divided the country into bitterly hostile factions. They were not, in reality, political parties, for they were not essentially based upon differences of opinion concerning questions of governmental policy. They were rather accidental agglomerations of individuals, whose hopes of sharing in public plunder constituted the chief bond of union among them. The strength of such societies was properly regarded as a symptom of a deep-seated social disease. They could exist only in an ignorant population, who had no views of their own as to national affairs, and who could be easily led by promises of immediate personal advantage. These two factions happened to be Freemasons of different lodges, but they might just as well have been formed on any other basis.

Very unfortunately, Mr. Poinsett, the American minister, was popularly believed to have been engaged in promoting the success of one of these factions. Such a belief, even if it had been entirely unfounded, must have produced the worst effects, for if the American minister was thought to be busying himself in local politics it seemed to follow that his government was intent on interfering in the domestic concerns of her weaker neighbor. But there was a regrettable amount of truth in the charges against him.

Joel Roberts Poinsett, when he was first received as minister, was not a stranger in Mexico. Three years before, while a member of Congress from South Carolina, he had spent two months in the country, and his *Notes on Mexico*, first published in 1824, was one of the earliest accounts given to the world of the condition of things since Mexican independence.[1] He was a native of South Carolina and had been educated in Connecticut, and later in Great Britain. He had studied the art of war at Woolwich and the art of medicine at Edinburgh. After completing his studies, he had travelled widely in Europe and Asia, and had been favorably looked upon in very high circles.[2]

Soon after the revolt of the Spanish colonies, Poinsett was sent by Madison on an unofficial mission to inquire into the condition of South American affairs, and while in Chile he had joined the insurgent forces, and had taken some part in actual fighting. But notwithstanding his intimate relations with the South American patriots, his confidential reports were not unduly favorable. He told the government, says Adams, "much of the naked truth."[3] He chanced to be in Valparaiso on the day of the memorable fight of the *Essex* against the *Phœbe* and the *Cherub*;[4] and as the British commander refused to let him return to the United States direct by sea, he made the dangerous crossing of the Andes in April, and after a long journey reached home after peace between the United States and Great Britain had been declared. He was soon afterward elected to the legislature of South Carolina, and from 1821 to 1825 was a member of Congress.

He was an eager botanist, and although he lived to hold high office, the beautiful leaves of the *Poinsettia pulcherrima* have chiefly served to preserve his memory in the minds of his fellow-countrymen.

When he was sent, in the summer of 1825, to represent the United States in Mexico, he was forty-six years old. In the Mexican capital he was well received on account of the favorable impression he had made on his first visit, as well as on account of his excellent manners, and his easy command of the Spanish language; and as he entertained freely, he was soon on familiar terms with all those who were most distinguished by reason of social position, wealth, or talents.[5]

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[1] He was in the city of Mexico from Oct. 27 to Nov. 11, 1822, during Stephen F. Austin's sojourn, but there seems to be no evidence of their having met.

[2] J. Q. Adams, *Memoirs*, II, 56, 59.

[3] *Ibid.*, IV, 388.

[4] March 28, 1813.

[5] Tornel, *Breve Reseña*, 38, 39.

Unfortunately, he considered it a part of his duty to work actively for the overthrow of aristocracy and hereditary privilege and priesthood—a state of mind not uncommon among American democrats of his generation.

Early in Poinsett's career as minister an opportunity was afforded him to put this theory in practice by aiding in the establishment of new Masonic lodges, which were intended to be, and, in fact, were, purely political centres.

The first Masonic lodge in Mexico was established in 1806 by Spaniards. There were at that time four lodges in the Peninsula, which had been founded by Englishmen—two at Gibraltar, one at Cadiz, and one at Madrid—and it may be reasonably assumed that from these the Mexican Masons first derived their existence. It is reported that Hidalgo, who first raised the cry of independence, became a Mason about 1807. At any rate, the existence of this first lodge was short-lived, for it was denounced to the authorities in 1808, and many of the brethren were imprisoned and prosecuted before the tribunals of the Inquisition.

Later on the Spanish troops which landed in Mexico after 1811 brought in their ranks a number of Masons; and still later the Mexican delegates to the Spanish Cortes were initiated in Europe, and on their return founded lodges, which, deriving apparently from French sources, followed the Scottish rite.[1] These lodges were chiefly composed of men who were fairly well-to-do or were of recognized professional or commercial standing, and they thus naturally came to form in a short time a nucleus for those who were not favorable to the idea of a republic.

By 1825, the year of Poinsett's arrival in Mexico as minister, the need of a similar centre for men who professed more liberal and popular ideas appears to have been felt, and naturally suggested the idea of founding rival societies. Poinsett, who was himself a Mason, was either appealed to for help or volunteered his advice. At any rate, he lent himself to the project and helped to obtain charters for lodges practising the York rite, which were to serve as rivals to the existing Scottish lodges.

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[1] Chism, *Contribución á la Historia Masónica de México*, 6-14.

In a long and confidential letter to the President, written nearly two years later as a sort of *apologia pro vitâ suâ*, he explained his motives. He had become convinced, he said, after a few months' observation, that, while the majority of the people were not opposed to "our Republican principles," they were "dispersed and discouraged." Upon bringing together the friends of republican principles, they were easily made sensible of their weakness if they remained disunited, of the imminent danger that threatened the new form of government, and of the urgent necessity of systematic opposition to the plans of those who wished to overthrow it; and they therefore soon agreed to unite and organize themselves by forming a grand lodge of York Masons. The great success, he added, of this movement was popularly attributed to his (Poinsett's) influence, although in reality he had withdrawn himself from the party soon after its organization, and for twelve months before he wrote had not entered their lodges nor attended any of their meetings.[1]

The newly established York lodges rapidly multiplied, and proved immediately successful. They opened their doors much more freely than the older lodges to men of all classes, and soon became a very effective political machine, which controlled the conduct of elections and the distribution of patronage. As the York lodges developed in political effectiveness, their rivals imitated their methods, and the country soon became divided, not into Republicans and anti-Republicans, or into Liberals and Conservatives, but into Yorkinos and Escoceses—Yorkmen and Scotchmen. At the head of the Escoceses was Bravo, the Vice-President. His opponent at the time of the election, General Vicente Guerrero, was the chief of the Yorkinos. The President and

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[1] Poinsett to Adams, April 26, 1827; *Poinsett MSS.* Adams seems never to have answered this letter or others from the same source; at any rate, there are no replies preserved in the *Poinsett MSS.*, and no reference in Adams's diary to a reply. Adams notes the receipt of a letter from Poinsett, in vindication of his conduct, on Sept. 10, 1827.—(*Memoirs*, VII, 328.)

the members of his cabinet were also mostly Yorkinos, though Victoria himself professed an impartial attitude.[1]

Poinsett's course was amazingly imprudent, and, in fact, it wrecked his mission. The Escoceses were naturally incensed against him, while the leading Yorkinos were afraid to come to any public understanding with him lest they should be accused of betraying their country. Nor had he been without early warning of the difficult course he had to steer if he was to succeed in acquiring the good-will of those who directed Mexican affairs. From his first arrival in the country he had been made aware of a deep feeling of hostility to the United States which he felt himself unable to counteract:

> "They regarded the United States," he wrote, "with distrust and the most unfounded jealousy—a feeling which, I am sorry to say, still exists, and which, during the present administration, cannot be changed. It is in vain that I represent the disinterested and generous conduct of the United States towards these countries and assure them, that so far from our regarding their prosperity with envy (as they, with unequalled vanity, suppose) we are most desirous that the Mexican States should augment in wealth and in power, that they may become more profitable customers and more efficient allies. The government has been taught to believe that because the United States and Mexico border upon each other, they are destined to be enemies. . . . The most bitter hatred of the United States existed long before my arrival in this country; so much so that two of the Ministers of State had declared in secret sessions of Congress, that Mexico ought to regard the United States as her natural enemies." [2]

The American government had not, of course, authorized Poinsett's excursion into local politics. That was entirely his own conception of the rôle he was to play. But his attention had been officially directed to another subject on which the Mexicans were acutely sensitive, namely, the cession of Texas to the United States.

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[1] See as to the influence of the Masonic lodges, Suarez, *Historia de México*, 77–79; Zavala, *Ensayo Hist.*, I, 346; Ward's *Mexico*, II, 408. Zavala, Ramon Arispe, Alpuche, and Esteva were the most active among the public men of Mexico in founding the York lodges, and both Zavala and Alpuche were later concerned in Texan affairs, the former very deeply.—(Tornel, *Breve Reseña*, 43–46.)

[2] Poinsett to Adams, Apr. 26, 1827; *Poinsett MSS.*

Poinsett's instructions from his government had been one of the very first things undertaken by the newly formed alliance between Adams and Clay, and bore the marks of a careful preparation that was inspired by a sense of the great importance of starting fair in the matter of the relations between the two countries. It also bore evidence of the desire of the administration to meet the views of those persons in the South and West who felt aggrieved at the result of the Missouri compromise, and at the relinquishment of the claims to Texas. The Richmond *Enquirer*, in commenting on the compromise bill, early in 1820, before the Florida treaty was finally ratified, had advised the Southern and Western members of Congress to keep their eyes firmly fixed on Texas. "If we are cooped up on the North, we must have elbow room to the West";[1] but no one seems to have asked at that time how the North would regard the acquisition of Texas.

Clay prefaced the instructions to Poinsett by reciting at some length the liberal principles which had governed the policy of the United States in its dealings with the several governments established in Spanish America, and then proceeded to mention the subjects which the new minister was to take up. The first was a treaty of commerce, the second a treaty of boundaries.

As to boundaries, Clay began by the declaration that the Florida treaty, "having been concluded when Mexico composed a part of Spain, is obligatory upon both the United States and Mexico," and he authorized Poinsett to agree to the demarcation forthwith of the line of 1819, unless Mexico should be willing to vary it. If the Mexican government should have no "disinclination to the fixation of a new line," it was proposed that some point between the Brazos and the Rio Grande should be substituted for the Sabine as a starting-point, and that the "Red River and Arkansas and their respective tributary streams" should be wholly included in the United States; thus giving to the United States the whole of the drainage basin of the Mississippi. If this very

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[1] Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, I, 326.

indefinite change were made, involving apparently a surrender of somewhere between thirty thousand and three hundred thousand square miles, all causes of future collision would be prevented, the capital of Mexico would be nearer the centre of that country, and the United States would stipulate "to restrain, as far as practicable, the Comanches from committing hostilities and depredations." No pecuniary compensation to Mexico was suggested. Any treaty of boundaries, it was said, ought to provide for the surrender of fugitive slaves.[1]

Poinsett presented his credentials on the first of June, 1825, and made an unusually long speech on that occasion. The British minister, writing to the Foreign Office the same day, reported that Poinsett had concluded his remarks by "giving an analysis of the object of his mission, which, he said, was to conclude a treaty of commerce and boundaries, an intimation which appeared by no means so palatable as the preceding part of his speech, if one might judge by the looks of the spectators, who are well aware of the difficulties with which the question of boundaries is likely to be attended." [2] The fact of course was that the over-emphasis and over-confidence with which the government of the United States had repeatedly asserted its claims to Texas had very naturally led Mexican officials to suppose that the American minister was desirous of reopening the old controversy. Nor could they reasonably have been expected, when that delusion was removed from their minds, to agree to surrender any part of their acknowledged national domain to a foreign government. Even absolute monarchs, as the experience of the United States with France and Spain had abundantly shown, were not always easy to deal with; and a government whose existence depended in any degree on popular opinion had never been known to part with territory, except as the result of an unsuccessful war.

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[1] Clay to Poinsett, March 25, 1825; *Amer. St. Papers, For. Rel.*, VI, 578. A similar proposal for the surrender of fugitive slaves from Canada was made to the British government during Mr. J. Q. Adams's administration, but rather peremptorily rejected as "utterly impossible."

[2] Ward to Canning, June 1, 1825, quoted in *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, IX, 139. Poinsett to Clay, June 4, 1825, *State Dept. MSS.*, contains the text of his speech and the President's reply. The room, he says, was "crowded to suffocation with senators, members of Congress and respectable inhabitants of the city."

The first suggestion of the Mexican authorities as to boundaries was therefore purely dilatory. They proposed that a joint exploring expedition, without any definite authority, should examine the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific within certain latitudes; but Clay very positively rejected that idea.[1] They next suggested inserting a clause in the projected treaty of commerce, binding both governments to take up the subject of boundaries as early as possible, each of the governments in the meantime to allow exploring expeditions to make scientific observations within their respective territories.[2] This was agreed to by Poinsett, and added as an additional article to a treaty of commerce which he signed July 10, 1826, after nearly a year of discussion.[3]

The treaty, however, did not receive the assent of the United States Senate except subject to certain modifications which were advised on February 25, 1827, and the whole business was thereupon again thrown open to discussion. Poinsett himself thought it wise not to press the subject of boundaries. He had not failed to notice from the very first the jealous suspicion with which the Mexican government regarded all movements of the Americans toward Texas and New Mexico, and he thought it might be well to accede to the proposal for an exploring expedition which Clay had rejected.

> "It appears to me," Poinsett wrote, "that it will be important to gain time if we wish to extend our Territory beyond the Boundary agreed upon by the Treaty of 1819. Most of the good land from the Colorado to the Sabine has been granted by the State of [Coahuila and] Texas and is rapidly peopling with either grantees or squatters from the United States, a population they will find it difficult to govern and perhaps after a short period they may not be so averse to part with that portion of that Territory as they are at present." [4]

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[1] Clay to Poinsett, Sept. 24, 1825; *Amer. St. Papers, For. Rel.*, VI, 582.

[2] See Protocol of June 19, 1826; *ibid.*, 599.

[3] *Ibid.*, 613.

[4] Poinsett to Clay, July 25, 1825; *State Dept. MSS.*

Clay at first acceded to this notion, but after eighteen months' reflection instructed Poinsett that he might offer a million dollars for a change of the boundary line from the Sabine to the Rio Grande.[1] Poinsett, however, thought the offer much too small, and, it seems, never submitted it.[2]

Notwithstanding the rather cautious and tentative way in which the United States government had made its proposals for the acquisition of Texas, the most extraordinary rumors were current in the city of Mexico as to the American purposes and proposals. One story, that the United States had offered to advance a sum of money, said to be $12,000,000, to be secured by the pledge of Texas, was repeated in 1829 by Ward, the British minister in Mexico, and commented on by him as follows:

> "It is now seven years," he said, "since the design of appropriating to themselves that fertile province, and thus extending their frontier to the Rio Bravo del Norte, was first attributed to the United States; nor have the Escoceses hesitated, since Mr. Poinsett's arrival in Mexico, to ascribe to an ardent wish on his part to secure this prize, the share which he has taken, or is thought to have taken, in the intestine divisions of the Republic. . . . We are not informed what security the United States propose for the restoration of the territory, in the event of the money being repaid; but when we reflect upon the perseverance and assiduity with which, since the acquisition of the Floridas, their establishments have been pushed in a Southwesterly direction, roads having been traced and canals opened, in such a manner as to admit of their being prolonged at once, should an extension of territory render it advisable,—those least disposed to question the good faith of nations, will find reason to suspect that possession, if once obtained, will not easily be relinquished." [3]

The tale of a proposed mortgage on Texas was not more preposterous than that of canals pushed west and south to the Mexican frontier; but it is not surprising that if the gossip of Mexico had run upon a loan of $12,000,000 on the

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[1] Clay to Poinsett, Mar. 15, 1827; *State Dept. MSS.* He had at first proposed to offer some ships of war besides; but Adams thought it best to offer nothing but the money.—(*Memoirs*, VII, 240.)

[2] Poinsett to Clay, May 10, 1827; *State Dept. MSS.* And see Colton's *Clay*, III, 26.

[3] Ward's *Mexico*, II, 556.