

in carrying the revenue laws into effect and in punishing those who had insulted the national flag at Anáhuac.¹

These resolutions probably represented with accuracy the opinions of a majority, or at any rate a large proportion of the settlers in southwestern Texas, who were most exposed to Mexican attacks; but there, as elsewhere, there was a strong party in favor of driving the Mexican troops out of Béxar. Nevertheless the impolicy of taking any such action without a unanimous Texas behind them, was still manifest even to the most eager of the war party.

"The truth is," wrote Travis on July 30, 1835, "the people are much divided here. The *peace-party*, as they style themselves, I believe are the strongest, and make much the most noise. Unless we could be united, had we not better be quiet, and settle down for a while? There is now no doubt but that a central government will be established. What will Texas do in that case? . . . I do not know the minds of the people upon the subject; but if they had a bold and determined leader, I am inclined to think they would kick against it. . . . General Cos writes that he wants to be at peace with us; and he appears to be disposed to cajole and soothe us. Ugartechea does the same. . . . God knows what we are to do!"²

Texas did "settle down for a while," and all through the rest of the summer of 1835 peace reigned. Nevertheless, the uncertainties of the situation evidently needed to be cleared up by some concerted action of the colonists, and a third conference or convention was a tolerably obvious means to that end. Such a conference was first proposed at a meeting held at San Felipe on July 14, 1835; but similar proposals were made almost simultaneously at other places. The first definite action, however, was taken by

¹ Yoakum, I, 341; Edward, 239-245.

² Yoakum, I, 343. Edward Gritten, an English-born settler, who was on friendly terms with the Mexican authorities, wrote to Colonel Ugartechea half a dozen long letters between July 5 and 17, giving an account of affairs. He represents the great majority of the Texans as peaceable, law-abiding Mexican citizens, but says that the introduction of a large body of soldiers into Texas would unite all parties against the government. See *Publications of the Southern Hist. Assn.*, VIII, 345-456; *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, XIII, 150. Gritten had been a grocer in the city of Mexico, and was there involved in a lawsuit with Anthony Butler, the American chargé d'affaires.—(H. R. Doc. 351, 25 Cong., 2 sess., 110.)

the people of Columbia. Through a committee appointed at a meeting held there on August 15, 1835, they issued an address (dated August 20) to the people of Texas, inviting each jurisdiction or municipality to elect five representatives, who should meet at Washington, on the Brazos,¹ on the fifteenth day of the following October "for a consultation of all Texas."

Although the word *convention*, which had so vexed the Mexican authorities, was not used, and all that was proposed was a meeting for *consultation*, there was at first much doubt as to the wisdom of the proposed conference. Nevertheless, delegates were peaceably chosen, and if the colonists had been let alone, they would certainly have taken no hostile step until the consultation had been held. But the Mexican authorities, long before they had been adequately reinforced, were imprudent enough to provoke an armed conflict. They began (under orders from the capital) by demanding the surrender of six men whom they ought to have known that no self-respecting people would ever give up to certain death. The first of these was Lorenzo de Zavala.

Zavala was a native of Yucatan, and in his time had played many parts in the drama of Mexican history. When very young he had been kept a prisoner for three years by the Spaniards on account of his revolutionary tendencies; and after his release became for a time a deputy to the Spanish Cortes. He then travelled in England and the United States, and on his return to his native country held high office. As President of the constituent Congress in 1824, his name was the first subscribed to the federal Constitution. He became later one of the founders of the Yorkino party and an intimate friend of Poinsett's. At the time of the troubles in 1828 he was governor of the state of Mexico, and he was made Secretary of the Treasury in Guerrero's cabinet. He was necessarily in the background during Bustamante's rule, but in 1833, under Gómez Farias, he

¹ Washington was a new settlement, and there was a good deal of opposition to its selection. See *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, X, 96, 150.

presided over the Chamber of Deputies, and then served for a short time as Mexican minister to France.

In the spring or summer of 1835 he quarrelled with Santa Anna, and sought refuge in Texas, where for several years he had had pecuniary interests. It is known that in the year 1829 he had secured an empresario contract from the state of Coahuila and Texas, authorizing him to settle three hundred families in northeastern Texas, which contract he assigned to the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company of New York;¹ and he seems to have had other lands also on the San Jacinto River.

Butler, the American chargé d'affaires in Mexico, said in 1831 that it was then a matter of common knowledge in Mexico that Zavala had declared he would revolutionize Texas,² and two years later, in drafting a private letter to President Jackson, Butler wrote that Zavala was poor and a prodigal, and that he was purchasable;³ but Butler's word was not to be taken against anybody. Among the Texans Zavala was always regarded as a man of high character, as well as of great ability and experience. Tornel, who was bitterly opposed to Zavala after the latter quarrelled with Santa Anna, described him as a man of great talents and great versatility, with a character so singularly compounded of good and evil that it was difficult to understand how his successive acts could have proceeded from one and the same individual.⁴ It seems, on the whole, quite true that with all his talents he was "everything by starts, and nothing long"; and this would doubtless account for the very various estimation in which he was held by different people. What is important for present purposes is that Zavala was a firm friend to Austin, and that he had tried to help him in October, 1834, while in Mexico.⁵

¹ The origin and history of this rather dubious corporation is set out very fully in the report of *Rose v. The Governor*, etc., 24 Tex. Rep., 496.

² H. R. Doc. 351, 25 Cong., 2 sess., 382. Zavala came to the United States in the autumn of 1830, with a letter of introduction from Butler dated May 24, 1830; *State Dept. MSS.*

³ Butler to Jackson, Sept. 14, 1833; *Texan Archives MSS.*

⁴ Tornel, *Breve Reseña*, 43-46.

⁵ Yoakum, I, 325.

On August 1, 1835, Tornel, the Minister of War, sent orders to General Cos to arrest Zavala, and also the five men who were regarded as the most active agents in driving out Tenorio and his men from the post at Anáhuac. Cos was particularly required to exert all his "ingenuity and activity in arranging energetic plans for success in the apprehension of Don Lorenzo Zavala," who, when captured, was to be placed "at the disposition of the supreme government."¹

Cos could think of nothing more ingenious or energetic than to write a letter from Matamoros addressed to Colonel Ugartechea at Béxar, directing him to march "at the head of all his cavalry" and arrest Zavala in case the local authorities did not give him up. Ugartechea had commanded the fort at Velasco in 1832 and knew the Texans, and when he got Cos's letter he contented himself with writing to Wylie Martin, the American jefe político of the Brazos district, asking him for the surrender of the six men who were wanted.² Martin of course first temporized and then wrote that the men had left, and Ugartechea seems to have contented himself with this assurance. At any rate, he did not stir from Béxar.

But the news of the demand for the surrender of the six men had spread. Addresses and speeches, especially from those parts of Texas which were furthest from Mexican vengeance, warned the people that the Mexican garrisons were being reinforced; that the overthrow of the federal Constitution had been decided on; that the authority of Congress had been declared to be unlimited; that all who had come into Texas since April 6, 1830, were to be expelled; that those who had resisted Mexican soldiers were to be tried by court-martial; and that the slaves were to be freed. In a manner of speaking this was in fact the official Mexican programme, and the crude statement of such a policy was very well calculated to arouse the most hesitat-

¹ Tornel to Cos, quoted in Yoakum, I, 347.

² Eight men were later demanded, and two of them, Mexicans named Carvajal and Zambrano, were taken by the Mexicans and sent into the interior.—(Yoakum, I, 360.)

ing among the settlers and to put fresh zeal into the hearts of the warlike.

By the end of August Travis, who was an active leader of the war party, was able to write exultingly that the orders of arrest issued by Cos and Ugartechea had proved too much for the people to bear, that the "Tories and submission men" were routed, and the people had become "almost completely united." The Mexicans, he heard, were coming to garrison San Felipe and other towns, but the people would not submit to that—"we shall give them hell if they come here."¹

At the same time J. W. Fannin, a native of Georgia, who was eager in the same cause, was writing from Velasco to a friend in the United States army to urge him to resign and come to command the Texans. "The time is near at hand," he wrote, "nay has arrived, when we have to look around us and prepare, with our limited resources, for fight."²

A further source of trouble arose from the efforts of the Mexican government to control the contraband trade by means of a revenue-cutter stationed off Velasco. The vessel employed was the *Correo de México*, schooner, commanded by Captain Thomas M. Thompson, an Englishman by birth. Through the months of July and August she cruised up and down the coast and succeeded in capturing one American brig; but by the end of August the colonists and the American traders were ready for her.

On the first day of September, 1835, the American schooner *San Felipe*, inward bound from New Orleans, and having among her passengers Stephen F. Austin, fell in with the *Correo* off the mouth of the Brazos River. After a fight some miles offshore, which lasted for three-quarters of an hour, the *Correo* drew off. The *San Felipe* entered the river and landed her passengers, but the next morning the *Correo*, being becalmed about six miles off, the *San Felipe* came out in tow of a river steam-boat, whereupon the *Correo*, having had fighting enough the day before, surrendered.

¹ Travis to Andrew Briscoe, Aug. 31, 1835; *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, II, 25.

² Fannin to Colonel Belton, Aug. 27, 1835; *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, VII, 318.

Thompson and his crew were carried off to New Orleans and handed over to the federal authorities upon a charge of piracy committed against an American vessel on the high seas. As they could show no commission from the Mexican government, they were indicted and Thompson was tried; but the jury disagreeing, he was discharged.¹ The Mexican government asserted, through diplomatic channels, that the *Correo* was a regularly commissioned *guarda costa*; and although the regularity of the commission may have been questionable, the fact itself and the responsibility of the Mexican government for her acts seem to have been clear.²

This sea-fight, of which he had thus been a witness, produced a deep impression on Austin's mind. Of a naturally timid and hesitating disposition, disliking disturbances and extra-legal measures, with a sanguine belief in the power of reason and good temper to settle differences, he was better fitted to follow than to lead in a revolution. He was not of the temper to ride the whirlwind or direct the storm.

All that night, as we are told by his nephew, he "walked the beach, his mind oppressed with the gravity of the situation, forecasting the troubles ahead to Texas."³ He had returned home, after more than two years' absence, full of hope and bringing messages from Santa Anna and "the most intelligent and influential men in Mexico," to the effect that they were the friends of Texas, that they wished for and would do everything to promote her prosperity, and that special provision would be made for her people in the new Constitution. He found the country "in anarchy, threatened with hostilities, armed vessels capturing everything they can catch on the coast."⁴

A week later, in a speech at a large public meeting at

¹ A report of the trial by John Winthrop was printed and published at New Orleans in 1835.

² Thompson's activities had been the cause of complaints before 1835. In 1829 he seized an American schooner off Matagorda, and in 1832 he stopped vessels off Tabasco and was accused of robbing them. See H. R. Doc. 351, 25 Cong., 2 sess., 304, 305, 448, 450. The correspondence relative to his arrest and trial will be found at pp. 708-713, 720-724 of the same volume; where an account of the fight by a Mexican officer is given (712-713).

³ Guy M. Bryan, in *Comp. Hist.*, I, 500.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 503.

Brazoria, Austin gave a detailed account of affairs in Mexico, and of his conversations with Santa Anna and others. He had warned them, he said, that the sending of any armed force to Texas would be war, and his advice had been disregarded. What, then, was to be done? Texas needed peace and a local government. Its inhabitants were farmers and needed a calm and quiet life. But their rights and property were in jeopardy and some remedy must be found, and that without delay. The remedy, to his mind, was plain. All divisions, or excitements, or passion, or violence must be banished, and the general consultation of the people of Texas must decide what was to be done.¹ The "general consultation" had already been summoned, as we have seen, to meet on the fifteenth of October.

Rumors that Cos was actually coming to Texas in person and bringing reinforcements with him had, however, reached San Felipe even before Austin's return home, and it seemed probable that peace could not long be preserved. On September 19 Austin wrote to a friend that Cos's "final answer" had been received, that he had positively declared that the persons whose surrender had been demanded must be given up, and that the people of Texas must unconditionally submit to any alterations which Congress might see fit to make in the federal Constitution.² Two days earlier, a committee of safety, which had been formed at San Felipe, and of which Austin was chairman, had issued an address warning the people that war was their "only resource," and advising that volunteer companies be immediately formed;³ and the same spirit rapidly became manifest throughout Texas.⁴

Cos, as a matter of fact, had left Matamoros on Septem-

¹ What purports to be the text of this speech will be found in Foote, II, 60-65; Yoakum, I, 357.

² Austin to Grayson, Sept. 19, 1835, in Brown, I, 345.

³ Yoakum, I, 361.

⁴ At about this time the old central committee, appointed by the convention of October, 1832, and continued by the convention of April, 1833, was revived and reorganized. It sat at San Felipe and controlled affairs for six weeks, until the meeting of the consultation.—(E. W. Winkler, in *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, X, 142.)

ber 17, and he reached Goliad on October 2, 1835. On his arrival he was met by news of very serious import.

The little settlement of Gonzales, on the east (left) bank of the Guadalupe River, and sixty-four miles east of Béxar in a straight line, was in possession of an unmounted six-pounder brass gun, which had been either given or lent to the inhabitants four years previously by the Mexican commander at Béxar, for use against Indian attacks. In September, 1835, it seems to have occurred to Colonel Ugartechea at Béxar as a happy thought that it would be a wise measure of precaution to take the gun back, and he thereupon sent a corporal and four men with a cart to get it. After some delay the alcalde of Gonzales, Andrew Ponton, wrote, declining—on various grounds—to comply with Ugartechea's request. This letter, it would appear, the Mexican corporal sent back by one of his men, remaining himself near Gonzales with the other three. At the same time, the settlers buried the gun, sent their women and children away, and despatched messengers to various points for help.

On receipt of the alcalde's letter, Ugartechea did too late what he should have done at first. He sent eighty men under a lieutenant, Don Francisco Castañeda, to get the gun, bring off the corporal and his three men, and chastise those who had been guilty of such a piece of insolence.¹ Castañeda reached the Guadalupe River in front of Gonzales on Tuesday, September 29, 1835, and then learned that the corporal and his men had been disarmed and taken into town as prisoners; and he also found that all the boats had been taken across to the east bank of the river. There were at this time only eighteen armed men in Gonzales, and Castañeda could probably have forded the stream in spite of these few villagers and taken the place, if only he had acted at once. Instead, he wasted time in parleying, and then he learned that the Texans were being rapidly reinforced. His orders from Ugartechea were that, if he was certain the opposing forces were superior to his, he was

¹ Filisola, *Guerra de Téjas*, II, 145.

to retire, so as not to compromise the national honor, and he therefore determined to fall back.

His information in regard to reinforcements was correct. The news of the threatened attack on Gonzales had spread fast all over the country, and long before Castañeda had reached the Guadalupe, volunteers from the neighboring settlements were on the march. From all along the banks of the Colorado and the Brazos more or less organized bodies of men took their way to Gonzales, precisely as sixty years before the men of Acton and Chelmsford and Littleton and Carlisle had marched to Concord when they learned that a force was coming to seize arms and ammunition. By Thursday, the first of October, the Texan force had grown to over a hundred and sixty men, of whom fifty were mounted. Their first act, being native Americans, was to organize by electing a colonel and lieutenant-colonel. Their next was to cross the river at about seven in the evening in pursuit of the Mexicans, who were now slowly falling back. Early the next morning the Texans came up with the Mexicans, "in a commanding position on a slight eminence," and after a short encounter the latter scattered and fled. One Mexican was killed and one Texan was slightly wounded. There were no other casualties.¹

On the same day as this skirmish General Cos reached Goliad, where he received news of the unexpected resistance of the colonists; and on Monday, the fifth of October, he left for Béxar, about ninety miles away, where he arrived on Friday, the ninth.

Goliad, Gonzales, and Béxar formed approximately a right-angled triangle, Goliad lying nearly due south of Gonzales and sixty miles from it, and about southeast of

¹ The best and most detailed account of this affair will be found in *Tex. Hist. Quar.*, VIII, 149-156, by Ethel Zivley Rather. Amusing reminiscences by an anonymous eye-witness, written thirty years after the event, will be found in Baker's *Texas Scrap-Book*, 83-86. The writer says that as soon as the settlers felt strong enough they drew the cannon out in plain sight of the Mexicans and put a sign up over it in large letters, COME AND TAKE IT! When the Mexicans fell back, the decision to pursue them was based on the extraordinary reason that, as the volunteers had spent their own money and time in coming to Gonzales, "it was too much to bear" to go home without a fight.

Béxar. Some forty miles from Goliad was the port of Copano, on Copano Bay, which was frequently used by light-draught vessels entering through Aransas Pass, and which could readily have served as a means of communication by sea from Matamoros and other Mexican ports. In fact, military supplies in considerable amounts had already been sent to Goliad and were stored in what was called a fort, but was in reality an abandoned mission, with the usual stone church and extensive mission buildings.

From every point of view Goliad was a point of strategic importance for the Mexicans. It was within easy reach of the sea. By land, it was considerably nearer than Béxar to the important points of Matamoros and Mier, on the Rio Grande. It was also nearer than Béxar to San Felipe and all the other centres of American colonization. In any extensive military operations that might be undertaken by the Mexicans Goliad would have been the natural base of operations; and it is a measure of General Cos's incapacity that he left this important post under the guard of less than thirty men.

Late at night on Friday, the ninth of October, a small party of colonists, acting apparently on their own initiative, "rushed" the mission-fort and captured the entire garrison. One Mexican soldier killed and three wounded, and one Texan slightly wounded, made up the list of casualties. Twenty-five prisoners, including Colonel Sandoval, the commanding officer, large quantities of military supplies, several pieces of artillery, and three hundred muskets were the material prizes.¹ More important still were the indirect results of the capture, for Béxar was practically cut off from communication with Mexico.

When the news of Castañeda's repulse at Gonzales reached San Felipe, even the most peaceable among the Texans were ready to admit that a conflict had begun which could not be avoided and which must be vigorously carried forward.

¹ Yoakum, I, 369. Filisola says the attack was made at about 1 A. M. on Saturday, the tenth of October, and that the Mexicans made a vigorous resistance for an hour, losing three killed and several wounded.—(*Guerra de Tèjas*, II, 153. See also Baker, *Texas Scrap-Book*, 260.)

"One spirit, one common purpose," declared the Committee of Safety, "animates every one in this Department, which is to take Bejar and drive all the military out of Texas before the campaign closes";¹ to such a pitch had the most conservative of the colonists been raised by the events of the previous weeks. Austin himself, almost immediately after the receipt of the news, started for the scene of action; and by the middle of the day on Thursday, the eighth of October, he had reached Gonzales, and was immediately selected by common consent to be the commander of the motley army which had already assembled.²

The enthusiasts who were proposing with so light a heart to march on Béxar and drive all the Mexicans out of Texas were very far indeed from constituting a real military force. They knew nothing of discipline or obedience. They had not enlisted under any definite agreement or for any fixed term of service. They had elected their officers from their own ranks, and they could see no reason for treating them after election on any different terms from those they had used before. The men considered that they had a perfect right to come and go as they pleased, and that orders which they deemed unwise need not be obeyed. And yet they were not wholly without experience of a kind of warfare, for many among them had fought the extremely formidable Indian bands of the interior. A protracted campaign was, however, something of which they were wholly ignorant.

Nor was Austin the man to create an army. He had never had experience as a soldier, and he seems to have had no conception of the importance of discipline. He lacked the firmness and vigorous self-reliance which were essential for the task before him, and he was, very likely, only too conscious of his own shortcomings. Nevertheless he was, as always, honestly desirous of doing his best to serve the cause of the country he had created.

Having evolved some sort of organization, Austin and his

¹ Foote, II, 84.

² The rivalries of local celebrities, each anxious to be elected commander-in-chief, had threatened to disrupt the Texan forces before Austin's arrival.—(*Tex. Hist. Quar.*, VIII, 157; Baker, 89-91.)

army set out from Gonzales on Monday, the twelfth of October, but they marched so slowly that it was not until Tuesday, the nineteenth, that they reached the Salado Creek, close to Béxar. Here they remained for over a week, pushing forward small parties to reconnoitre the town. General Cos, though his force was probably at first numerically superior, did not attack them, and after a few days the disparity was greatly diminished, if not overcome, through the steady arrival of Texan reinforcements. By the end of the month Austin was in command of perhaps seven hundred men.

While encamped on the Salado the troops were visited by a number of the men who had been elected to the "consultation" which had been summoned to meet on October 16, but had been postponed. The soldiers, we are told, "demanded speeches from those who were regarded as orators, and were successively gratified by eloquent and patriotic addresses from Messrs. Houston, Archer, the two Whartons, William H. Jack, the old-time Baptist preacher Daniel Parker, and perhaps others." Having indulged in this characteristic pastime, the troops next held a mass-meeting and passed resolutions demanding that the orators go back to San Felipe and attend to business.¹ And then, on Tuesday, October 27, the legislators having departed, the Texan army moved to a new camp on the San Antonio River.

¹ Brown, I, 367; Yoakum, I, 370-372. Yoakum says that Austin at this time offered to resign his command in favor of Houston; but there seems to be little or no foundation for the story.—(*Comp. Hist.*, I, 185.)