

respect to Texas and Mexico.¹ Speaking on July 5, 1838, he declared that "a system of deep duplicity worthy of Tiberius Cæsar, or Ferdinand of Aragon . . . had been pursued by the administration ever since the 4th of March, 1829," and that the object of this system was "the breeding of a war with Mexico, in order that, under the cover of such a war we might accomplish the annexation of the province of Texas to this Union." Adams was unable to complete his speech before the final adjournment of Congress, but he published it as a pamphlet, with a preface and a supplement, in which he stated that the presentation of the claims against Mexico had been deliberately managed so as to be a step toward "fretting the people of this Union into a war with Mexico, and that this object was pursued by indirect means and with a double face."

So far as Van Buren was concerned he could afford to laugh at these denunciations; for at the very time that Adams was speaking, the administration was busy settling the details of the treaty of arbitration. But the record of Jackson's administration for good or ill had been finally closed, and upon that record the judgment of history must be made up.

The conclusions to be reached as to Jackson's conduct in this business will principally depend upon the opinion to be formed as to his personal character; for the facts being now generally accessible, are not, in any material respect, in doubt. Adams looked upon Jackson as a man capable of carrying out a long-meditated system of "deep duplicity" which involved such subtle intrigue as the careful fabrication of a letter years in advance of its production; but the patient plotting requisite to the carrying out of such a system is foreign to the judgment that has generally prevailed in regard to Jackson's character. It seems far more in accordance with his impulsive and wilful nature to suppose that the violent course he pursued in reference to the presen-

¹ *Speech . . . on the Freedom of Speech and of Debate, etc., delivered in the House of Representatives in fragments of the morning hour, from the 16th of June to the 7th of July, 1838, inclusive.*

tation of the claims on Mexico was the result of genuine indignation at her procrastination, and at Gorostiza's insulting language, rather than to believe that it was the result of a complicated plot.

The bullying methods he adopted toward Mexico were the subject of just criticism, but there were extenuating circumstances. Jackson was pursuing substantially the same methods which he had adopted with success in his controversy with France only a short time before; and he was recommending precisely the methods which France, in her turn, was adopting with respect to her claims on Mexico, at the very time when the United States was settling its difficulties by the peaceful methods of arbitration. An account of what was done by the French government to enforce the claims of their subjects against Mexico is, therefore, of special interest as exhibiting, in the first place, what the public opinion and the practice of the leading European nations considered justifiable in such cases; and, in the second place, as throwing light upon the military and naval problems with which the United States at a later period undertook to deal, and upon the curiously compounded character of General Santa Anna.

The claims presented by the French against the Mexican government were entirely similar in their nature and origin to those presented by the government of the United States; but they were much smaller in amount. Some vague promises of settlement had been made by Cuevas, the Minister of Foreign Relations, in the spring of 1837, but nothing definite was done during that year, so that finally, in despair, the French minister, Baron Deffaudis, took his departure. When he reached Vera Cruz, he was met by instructions from his government, in consequence of which he addressed a renewed demand for reparation from on board a French naval vessel.

In this paper the French representative, after setting out in a general way the claims presented since 1825 by his government—none of which had been settled—went on to remark upon the policy pursued at different times by the

Mexican government in dealing with such complaints. The first plan, he said, consisted in excusing the injuries committed on foreigners by reason of the backward and disturbed condition of the country, the imperfection of its organization, and the inexperience of its subordinate officers; and in promising that reparation would be made as soon as the financial condition of the republic would permit. Subsequently the Mexican government had changed its tone. Instead of making promises, it had resorted to interminable delays and controversies, and to wholesale assertions that the allegations of the complainants were false and offensive to the Mexican government and people.

In conclusion, the French representative demanded the immediate payment of six hundred thousand dollars in cash; the dismissal from the service of various Mexican officials, including the same General Gómez of whose promotion Ellis had complained; an agreement never to impose forced loans on French subjects; and a treaty permitting French subjects to carry on retail trade on the same footing as Mexican citizens. The last two concessions were said to have been previously granted to British subjects. A reply would be awaited for three weeks, or until April 15, 1838. If this reply should not be perfectly favorable upon every single point, or if it were delayed beyond the fifteenth of April, the whole subject would be placed in the hands of Captain Bazoche, commanding the French naval forces, who would carry out the orders he had received.¹

The French ultimatum was at once laid before the federal Congress, with the statement that the Executive had replied to Baron Deffaudis by telling him that the honor of the Mexican nation would be outraged if it entered into negotiations while France retained its threatening attitude, and so long as its squadron was before the Mexican ports. Congress was delighted with this reply, "and the whole country applauded a response which was in accordance with the sentiments of all classes of society."²

¹ Blanchard et Dauzats, *San Juan de Ulúa, ou Relation de l'Expédition Française au Mexique*, 229-250.

² Zamacois, *Historia de Méjico*, XII, 132.

Before this controversy with the French government General Bustamante had again become President. He was elected by Congress in the spring of 1837, under the Constitution then in force, by a nearly unanimous vote, for the regular term of eight years.¹ He actually served less than four years and a half. This, his second term of office, although longer, was even more disturbed than his first. In addition to the war with France and minor revolts in various parts of the country, the Federalist party revived and became formidable, and for this revival there seem to have been several causes.

In the first place, the more remote parts of the country had felt keenly the change from federalism to centralism. In the twelve years from 1824 to 1836 the state legislatures had acquired a certain degree of prestige which attracted local men, who were naturally dissatisfied with changes that reduced their importance. But a more far-reaching result of centralism was the total neglect of local concerns by the distant government in the city of Mexico—a circumstance which was inevitable in so large a country, where means of communication were so slow and uncertain; and it is therefore not surprising that in Sonora, in Sinaloa, in California, in Tamaulipas, and in Yucatan formidable Federalist risings took place.

The most serious of the early revolts was in Sonora and Sinaloa, and was headed by General Urrea, who had been one of Santa Anna's principal lieutenants in Texas, and had been made commander of the northwestern department of the country by President Bustamante. Urrea's first act was to seize the custom-house at Guaymas, to pocket the money he found there, and to proclaim the restoration of the federal system. He was defeated, however, at Mazatlan, on May 6, 1838, and betook himself to Tampico, which revolted, in its turn, in October, 1838; so that the period of the French controversy coincided exactly with Urrea's rebellion.

¹ See Dublan y Lozano, III, 242, 363, for the legislation on this subject. The President was ineligible for re-election under the Constitution of 1836.

The French naval force naturally was not withdrawn upon the demand of the Mexican government, and Bazoche instituted what was rather absurdly called a pacific blockade of the Gulf ports during the summer of 1838. This blockade produced various consequences, the first of which was a considerable increase in the price of imported goods. That, however, was not regarded by everybody as a misfortune. Those who favored a protective system declared that the blockade was the greatest good that Heaven could have sent to Mexico.¹ It was also thought that a war with France would be of the greatest advantage to the country, because privateers could be sent out to cruise against French commerce, whose prizes would fill the country with gold.²

There were no fears of the result of such a war. It was not thought possible that any French expedition could penetrate the country, and the fortress of San Juan de Ulúa was looked upon as impregnable—as a second Gibraltar. San Juan de Ulúa was a masonry work, begun early in the seventeenth century, and built on the southwesterly edge of the Gallega bank or shoal, a large coral reef directly opposite the city of Vera Cruz, and distant less than half a mile from it. The shore at Vera Cruz runs very nearly northeast and southwest. The Gallega bank runs north and south, and is over a mile long, and more than three-quarters of a mile wide in its widest part; and beyond it, separated by a narrow deep channel, is a similar but smaller reef, the Galleguilla. The depth of water over all of these banks in 1838 was very trifling, and in most places they were awash at low spring-tides. As the tides rise and fall only about two feet on this part of the coast, and as the surface of the banks was smooth, level coral sand, it would have been perfectly practicable for assaulting columns to advance directly on the works. No vessels could approach the fort within a mile and a half on the north; nor could it be attacked on the south and west without the assailants coming under a cross-fire from the fort itself and the batteries of Vera Cruz. The only point, therefore, from which a naval attack could be delivered

¹ Rivera, *Hist. de Jalapa*, III, 354.

² Bulnes, *Grandes Mentiras*, 725.

was on the southeasterly face, where there was enough water for vessels of considerable draught within about a thousand yards.

The main body of the fortress was a quadrangle of great capacity, with strong bastions at the corners. The sea-front, looking northeasterly over the Gallega reef, was covered by a demilune and two redoubts, and beyond these by a water-battery extending entirely along the front; but these out-works gave little additional strength. Two hundred and seven pieces of artillery of all sizes were mounted upon the works, of which somewhat less than fifty could be brought to bear on any vessel attacking from the eastward. Well-constructed casemates gave excellent protection from high-angle fire. Included in the armament of the fortress were twelve mortars and a number of carronades, but it would appear that no shells had been supplied for them by the ordnance department of the government, and there do not seem to have been any furnaces for heating solid shot.¹

During the summer no attack was made upon any of the Mexican defences, but late in the month of October, 1838, an additional French naval squadron arrived at Vera Cruz, under the command of Admiral Charles Baudin, who was intrusted with diplomatic as well as naval functions.² Baudin's first act after reaching Mexico was to address a letter to the government, stating that he was authorized to request an answer to the note addressed the previous March by Baron Deffaudis. In reply Cuevas, who was still Minister of Foreign Relations, agreed to meet him for conference at Jalapa, where a discussion over the French claims took place during the month of November, without result.³

¹ Blanchard et Dauzats, 334-336.

² The British government had an understanding with France on the subject of Baudin's expedition, and instructions were sent to Admiral Sir Charles Paget in October, directing him not to interfere with the French operations, but to keep track of their squadron and to remain away from the coast of Mexico if an attack was to be made.—(Palmerston to Lords of the Admiralty, Oct. 9, 1839; E. D. Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 22.) The British shipping trade was seriously inconvenienced by the French blockade.

³ The first result of any agreement, according to C. M. Bustamante, would have been a revolution that would have destroyed the Mexican government.—(*Gabinete Mexicano*, I, 118.)

Finally, on November 21, 1838, Admiral Baudin notified Cuevas that he would wait off Vera Cruz until the twenty-seventh of the month, at noon, and if by that time an agreement had not been reached in terms completely satisfactory to France hostilities would immediately begin.

The French fleet now consisted of four frigates, two corvettes, nine brigs, two small steamers used as tugs, two mortar vessels, and three store-ships, whose crews amounted in all to about four thousand men. Early on the morning of the twenty-seventh three of the frigates proceeded to a point about sixteen hundred yards off the southeasterly face of the works, and anchored with a spring on their cables, and two mortar vessels were also moored about a mile to the northward.¹ Two smaller vessels were posted so as to be able to observe the fall of the shot, and to signal the frigates and mortar vessels when they got the range. The corvette *Créole*, under the command of the Prince de Joinville, a son of the French King, was to be kept under way, and take an active part in the attack as circumstances might dictate. The Mexicans all this time, under orders of their government, had remained silent.

No reply which Admiral Baudin considered satisfactory having been received, the ships opened fire at 2.35 P. M. and the Mexicans instantly replied. Before four o'clock a powder-magazine in one of the bastions exploded, and at half past four a tower in the fort also blew up, killing and wounding a number of the defenders. Firing continued until about six, when, darkness coming on, the admiral decided to withdraw his ships and wait until the next day. Before morning, however, the fort had surrendered.

About nine o'clock in the evening of the bombardment Admiral Baudin received a letter from General Gaona, who commanded the fort, proposing a suspension of hostilities. The admiral replied by stating that he would suspend hostilities until morning, but if at daylight the fort was not

¹ The admiral had previously made careful reconnoissances of the fortress of San Juan, some of his officers wading over the reef up to the very walls of the outworks.—(Blanchard et Dauzats, 219, 222; Jurien de la Gravière, *l'Amiral Baudin*, 134.)

surrendered he would blow it up, and negotiations for surrender immediately began.

While this exchange of letters was going on Santa Anna arrived at Vera Cruz, and offered his services to Rincon, the general in command of the town, ostensibly to aid in the defence, although, no doubt, he had really come to Vera Cruz to see whether something for his own benefit might not turn up. The first duty assigned to him was to visit San Juan de Ulúa to report on the extent of the damage done by the French fire. He found Gaona in conference with two French officers, and suggested that a council of war should be called to consider what was to be done. Like most councils of war, this one declined to fight, even though reinforcements should be sent; and finally, at half past two in the morning, an agreement was made, by which the fort was surrendered and the garrison was withdrawn, with their arms and baggage, and with the honors of war, under a promise not to serve against France for eight months. It was further agreed that the city of Vera Cruz should be neutralized; that there should not be a Mexican force exceeding one thousand men within ten leagues; and that the blockade of the port should be suspended for eight months, pending a settlement of the differences between France and Mexico.¹

News of this surrender was very badly received by the authorities in the city of Mexico, where it was universally attributed either to treason or cowardice. The government disapproved both the surrender of the fortress and the agreement neutralizing the city of Vera Cruz, and ordered Generals Rincon and Gaona to proceed to the capital of the republic, to appear before a court-martial. It further directed that the city of Vera Cruz should be defended and appointed Santa Anna to the command.

Santa Anna's appointment was tremendously popular.

¹ For accounts of the bombardment of San Juan de Ulúa and the text of the capitulation, etc., see Blanchard et Dauzats, 306-340, and C. M. Bustamante, *Gabinete Mexicano*, I, 121-136, where General Gaona's official report is printed. Some additional facts will be found in Jurien de la Gravière's *l'Amiral Baudin*, 106-153, together with excellent maps.

On Saturday, the first of December, before a crowded audience in the Chamber of Deputies, the ministry announced the news of the surrender of San Juan de Ulúa and the removal of Generals Rincon and Gaona. The minister, Pesado, who made the announcement, went on to say that the President had named, to succeed Rincon, "General—General"—the speaker hesitated, stumbled over his words, and suddenly blurted out—"Don Antonio López de Santa Anna." Instantly the galleries burst into loud applause, and shouts of "He's the man we want!" "He's the savior of the country!" "You heard the shouts of the galleries for Santa Anna," said General Tornel to his friends; "he is the only head of the nation that the people will approve"; and it is quite possible that President Bustamante was very much pleased to put so dangerous a rival in command of an indefensible city.¹

So far as public opinion condemned the surrender of San Juan de Ulúa, it had some good grounds for an adverse judgment. The preparations for defence had been excessively feeble; but Rincon, who had been charged with these preparations, could plead that the government had failed to supply him with the necessary funds. He had estimated that it would cost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to make adequate preparations, and he showed that the government had persistently failed to give him the money which he had reported was essential. Indeed, so distressed was he for want of funds that he was obliged to dismiss on furlough the boats' crews of the government launches, and was hardly able to procure provisions for the garrisons of the fort and the city.

When it came to the actual attack, General Gaona, commanding the fort, seems to have made poor use of such materials as were at hand. He had nearly twelve hundred men, many more than were necessary to man the guns. Instead of keeping his reserves in the casemates, they were drawn up in a hollow way, as though an assault might be expected at any moment upon this island fortress. In con-

¹ C. M. Bustamante, *Gabinete Mexicano*, I, 133-137.

sequence of these dispositions, there were not only many casualties among the men serving the guns but also among the reserves. These losses, coupled with the risk to the large number of women in the fort, had thoroughly demoralized the garrison.

The fort itself, as a result of the French bombardment, was a good deal knocked about, but the casemates were uninjured; a large part of the guns which could be brought to bear on the fleet could still have been served; and there were no breaches in the walls which would permit an assault. This, at least, was the opinion of the French officers who visited the fort after the bombardment. Lieutenant Maisin, aide-de-camp to Admiral Baudin, reported that the defensive works were intact, and consequently, according to the ordinary laws of warfare, the fort, though badly damaged, was still tenable.¹ M. Mengis, an officer of engineers, who accompanied the expedition, and who also visited the fort after the surrender, said that the principal powder magazine was intact, there were still at least seven hundred men in the garrison—who were more than enough for defence—and that there was no adequate reason for surrender.² Other observers were of a different opinion. Thus Captain (afterward Admiral) Farragut, who was present at the time of the bombardment in command of the United States sloop-of-war *Erie*, and visited the fort soon after its surrender, said that a single glance satisfied him that it would not have been practicable for the Mexicans to stand to their guns, and that in a few hours more the place would have been a mass of rubbish.³

The Mexican losses amounted to sixty-four men killed and one hundred and forty-seven wounded. The wounded, as usual, had received no medical attention, and were found in a shocking condition.⁴ The French losses amounted to four killed and twenty-nine wounded. Their ships had received practically no injury.

On December 4, 1838, General Santa Anna, under instruc-

¹ Blanchard et Dauzats, 465.

² Jurien de la Gravière, 151.

³ *Life and Letters of David G. Farragut*, 134. ⁴ Blanchard et Dauzats, 337.

tions from his government, notified Admiral Baudin that the convention neutralizing Vera Cruz was disapproved and was therefore void. The admiral, however, was unwilling to open fire upon an inhabited city, but as the town was fortified he decided to land a party at once, before the garrison could be reinforced, in order to spike the guns—at least on the seaward face of the works.¹ At three o'clock, therefore, on the morning of the following day two strong landing parties from the ships were sent ashore with instructions to take the northerly and southerly bastions respectively, spike the guns, and destroy the gun-carriages. A third party was ordered to land on the mole lying about half-way between the two bastions and opposite the gate of the town.

The landing was made in a thick fog. The town was taken completely by surprise. The bastions were seized by the right and left columns without difficulty, while the centre column blew open the gate and seized a piece of artillery which had been placed to command the mole, and rushed to the house which was occupied by General Santa Anna and General Arista. Arista, who commanded a force that was advancing from the direction of Jalapa to reinforce the garrison, was taken prisoner; but Santa Anna, who had been awakened by the explosion when the gate was blown in, managed to escape just in time. The Merced barracks, in the southeastern part of the town, where the whole garrison had assembled, were then attacked by the French force, and some fighting took place at this point without any particular result.

After it appeared that the town had been taken, Admiral Baudin himself came ashore to see that his orders were carried out. He found that the whole extent of the walls had been occupied by his men, and that the guns had been spiked and their carriages disabled; and his object being thus fully attained, he ordered the men to withdraw to the

¹ The city walls were built about 1741; they were six feet high and surmounted by a strong double stockade of the same height. At the north and south ends of the town were bastions mounting over forty guns between them, and protecting the arsenal and naval stores.—(Bancroft, *History of Mexico*, III, 215.)

shore in order to regain their ships. The retreating French forces were followed by the Mexicans—at a very respectful distance according to French accounts—and when the last of the French were embarking at the mole the Mexicans opened a musketry fire from the walls. The French replied with the piece of artillery that had been taken at the gate, as well as with their own boat guns. The principal losses of the French occurred at this point, where the men were crowded together during the confusion of embarkation; but the Mexicans at the same time suffered heavily. Among others, Santa Anna was wounded, being shot in the foot.

The French losses in this affair were eight killed and sixty wounded, all of the wounded being carried off in the boats. The Mexican losses were probably as large, although the exact figures were not known.¹

The wound of Santa Anna was so severe that it became necessary to amputate his leg below the knee the day after the fight; but his ingenious mind was quite equal to the task of turning this misfortune to account. In a high-flown report to the Mexican government he declared that he had repulsed the French attack and had driven them at the point of the bayonet until they took to their boats. He lamented that in consequence of his wound this victory would probably be the last he could offer to his country.

“At the close of my existence,” he continued, “I cannot but express the satisfaction which accompanies me at having seen the beginnings of reconciliation among Mexicans. I have given my last embrace to General Arista, with whom I was unfortunately at odds, and I now also embrace his Excellency, the President of the Republic, to mark my gratitude for his having honored me in the moment of danger. I embrace likewise all my compatriots, and I conjure them for the sake of a country that stands in such peril, that they put away their resentments and unite to form an impenetrable wall on which the daring of the French shall be shattered.

“I also request the Government of my country to permit my body to be buried in these dunes; that all my companions in arms may

¹ Blanchard et Dauzats, 360-382. Modern Mexican historians do not seriously dispute the accuracy of the French reports. See *México á través de los Siglos*, IV, 423-426. A detailed account by one of Santa Anna's aids, Colonel Giménez, will be found in García's *Documentos Inéditos*, etc., XXXIV, 62-72.

know that this is the line of battle which I have marked out for them, and that from this day forth the unjust enemies of Mexicans may not dare to tread with unclean feet upon our soil. . . . Let all Mexicans, forgetting my political errors, not deny me the sole title which I desire to leave my children: that of a good *Mexican*."¹

Santa Anna's life was really in no sort of danger, but this pathetic appeal to his countrymen exactly suited their taste, and from this time forward his political position was even stronger than it had been before his unlucky expedition to Texas.

¹C. M. Bustamante, *Gabinete Mexicano*, I, 143.

CHAPTER XVIII

SANTA ANNA ONCE MORE

THE capture of San Juan de Ulúa and the disarming of the fortifications of the city of Vera Cruz left the contending parties at a dead-lock. The French were not in sufficient force to attempt an expedition into the country, and the Mexican government was powerless to attack the French ships. Santa Anna's command, therefore, abandoned Vera Cruz and encamped a few miles outside the city, while Baudin stationed some of his smaller vessels in the harbor of Vera Cruz itself, thus holding the city entirely at his mercy. The Mexican government, however, did not dare to enter into negotiations for peace, as opinion both in Congress and out was still very much inflamed; and if it had been known that the administration was negotiating with the French, the result would probably have been an immediate revolution, that would have driven Bustamante from power.

The solution of the difficulty came through the mediation of the British minister in Mexico, who returned from a leave of absence rather unexpectedly, accompanied by the entire British West India squadron. As this squadron had with it two seventy-four-gun line-of-battle ships, it was greatly superior to Baudin's division, and the French admiral judiciously refused to accept the mediation of the British minister in the presence of a superior naval force. Mr. Pakenham, the British minister, saw the full force of this objection, and sent the two line-of-battle ships back to Jamaica, but kept the rest of the ships near Vera Cruz, as he had business of his own with the Mexican government.

For two months Pakenham, with great tact, negotiated with the Mexican government, and finally persuaded them to send representatives to Vera Cruz to treat with the French