

CHAPTER XIX

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

FOR more than nine years after the battle of San Jacinto the republic of Texas existed as an independent sovereignty. Into the details of its history it is needless to inquire, for they related principally to local affairs which in no way affected the United States or Mexico; but both nations were deeply concerned in the larger aspects of the development of the country.

The population of the Texan republic when it first came into existence—including the American settlers, the negroes, and the resident Mexicans—was estimated by Morfit, in 1836, at something over 30,000. From that time forward there was a continuous and rapid growth. No census was taken until 1847, but it may fairly be concluded that the republic in 1840 had about 55,000 inhabitants, of whom 7,000 or 8,000 were negro slaves. In the same year the state of New York had a population of nearly 2,500,000, Rhode Island of more than 100,000, and Delaware of over 75,000. The nearest neighbors of Texas were Louisiana, with over 350,000 inhabitants, and Arkansas, with almost 100,000.

The population was therefore small compared with that of the neighboring American commonwealths, but its area was relatively immense. The republic, even within the bounds traditionally assigned to it, while an integral part of New Spain, was roughly estimated to include about 250,000 square miles, or four times the area of Virginia, then the largest state in the American Union.¹ The population continued to be made up chiefly of small farmers, who lived widely scattered over the region between

¹ Ward's *Mexico*, II, 431.

the Sabine and the Nueces, and within one hundred and fifty miles of the Gulf of Mexico. The remainder of their widely extended territory was uninhabited, except by tribes of nomadic and warlike Indians. The people had no extensive commerce, no mines, no manufactures, few roads, few steamboats, no railroads, and no banks; and with this extremely scanty equipment, but with an immense faith in their future, they set out to establish and maintain an independent existence.

The problems of organizing a government and a judiciary, of erecting necessary public buildings, of constructing roads and bridges, of regulating the disposal of their public lands, of establishing and enforcing a system of taxation and a system of dealing with the aborigines, and a hundred other pressing questions of internal administration, were necessarily difficult; but such problems had been solved by all the commonwealths that made up the American Union. Texas, however, with a population and resources less than those of Delaware, was forced also to deal with the great variety of important subjects which under the Constitution of the United States fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. Of these the most urgent, as well as the most costly, was the creation and maintenance of an army and navy adequate to cope with the threatened Mexican invasion. The establishment also of a diplomatic service both in Europe and the United States, if not imperative, was at least extremely important. The solution of most of these problems ultimately resolved itself into questions of finance, and the financial history of Texas was that which had the greatest significance for its neighbors.

When Houston was inaugurated as President in the autumn of 1836 the Treasury was empty, and the debt of Texas amounted to about one million and a quarter of dollars. Most of this was due in small amounts to a multitude of persons—to soldiers and sailors, to civil officers for salaries, and to merchants—some in Texas itself and some in the United States—for supplies of all kinds. The amounts due for money borrowed were relatively small, for the loans

negotiated in the United States had in the end amounted to very little. But the war up to this time had so easily been financed that the first constitutional Congress paid little attention to the question of raising money. The provisional government had established a tariff on imported goods and regulated the manner of collecting land dues, and beyond some amendments of the existing system it was not thought necessary to do anything in the way of fiscal legislation.¹

The expenditures of the Texan government were bound to be large in any event, but with a war on its hands, and therefore an army and navy to support, the outgo was certain to be greatly in excess of any possible income. It was expected that the ordinary revenues would chiefly be derived from duties on importations and from direct taxes on property; but it was only too evident that the income from these sources, in a country with a long frontier by land and sea, and with a poor and widely scattered population, would be small for many years to come. The government, therefore, could only in part be supported by taxation, and it was necessary to consider by what means, direct or indirect, additional sums of money could be borrowed to cover the deficit.

The real source to which the authorities in Texas always looked to meet their obligations was the vast extent of unoccupied land belonging to the commonwealth. It was expected that this land would ultimately be sold, and that in the meantime it would furnish an asset against which loans for large amounts might be placed abroad. In reality such an asset was of very little avail, but almost to the last the government of Texas clung hopefully to the delusion that wild lands could be made to pay the debts of the republic, besides supplying the deficiencies in the revenue. The truth, of course, was that it was hard to find purchasers for land that not only was entirely unimproved, but which was also quite inaccessible by roads of any sort, and which, moreover, in many localities, was exposed to Mexican or,

¹ See "Finances of the Texas Revolution," by E. C. Barker, in *Pol. Sci. Quar.*, XIX, 612-635.

what was more serious, to Indian depredations. The government was trying to sell or mortgage "what in time of peace had little commercial value, even in Texas, and what in time of war had hardly any."¹

Quite apart from the ordinary difficulties of selling such land was the fact that the effort to effect sales in the United States was made in the height of a most disastrous panic, when fertile lands in old-established and well-developed communities could be had for little or nothing. Not only was the demand for vacant agricultural land at the lowest possible ebb, but there was the further difficulty that the supply which Texas had to offer was far beyond the capacity of even a steady market to absorb; for while the government was offering its own land for sale it was at the same time creating competition with itself by a liberal system of bounties to soldiers and settlers.² "The Texan government bestowed its lands with so much profusion on soldiers and settlers as to supply all demands, not only for cultivation, but for speculation, for many years to come."³ The certificates, or scrip, issued to soldiers and settlers authorizing them to locate lands within the republic were constantly offered for sale, and thus came in competition with the direct offers of the national government—with the result that for many years the land office, even after it had been fully organized, and after surveys had been begun, was unable to dispose of any considerable quantity.

When Congress met again in the early summer of 1837 the condition of the Treasury was desperate. The government had been unable to borrow any money, or to sell any substantial quantity of land, and a message from the President, issued, he said, as soon as he was able to get accurate information, called the attention of Congress to liabilities which must be immediately met if the army was to continue to exist. Supplies, said the President, had only been ob-

¹ Gouge's *Fiscal Hist. of Texas*, 64.

² The laws on the subject are numerous and conflicting. An adequate discussion for historical purposes will be found in chap. XX of *Comprehensive Hist. of Texas*, I, 812-826, by Dudley G. Wooten.

³ Gouge, 141.

tained upon his own individual notes, indorsed by certain members of Congress.

"This was done," he continued, "at a time when a part of the army was in an actual state of mutiny from want of every kind of provisions. Galveston Island would have been deserted had not this course been pursued. Since the commencement of the constitutional government no public officer has received any salary. Their personal expenses are great from the fact of their having to pay an exorbitant price for board. Their individual means are quite exhausted. . . . The Executive since he has come into office has received into the treasury and disbursed only five hundred dollars for provisions for the troops. Under these circumstances your honorable body must be aware of the absolute necessity of some provision being made to sustain the country."¹

In face of the widely advertised fact that the Mexican government was collecting troops for an invasion of Texas, it was evident indeed that immediate steps must be taken to meet the immediate necessities. The British colonies, when faced by similar difficulties sixty years before, had issued paper money, and to that obvious resource Texas now turned.² By an act of June 9, 1837, the government was authorized to issue its promissory notes to the amount of five hundred thousand dollars, and these notes were made receivable for all public dues.³ It is to the credit of Texas that they were not made legal tenders for debts between private individuals.

However, notwithstanding the despairing tone of President Houston's message, the government of Texas in some way managed to exist for nearly another six months without having recourse to the paper money. A new tariff act, passed June 12, 1837, had required that duties should be paid "in gold and silver, or such current bank-notes as

¹ Message of June 6, 1837.

² Treasury notes to the amount of \$150,000 had been already authorized by an ordinance of the provisional government passed January 7, 1836, and approved by the lieutenant-governor after Smith had been "deposed," on Jan. 20, 1836.—(*Ordinances and Decrees of the Consultation*, 129-130.) The ordinance was therefore of doubtful validity, and it is probable that no notes were issued under it.

³ *Laws of the Rep. of Texas*, I, 249.

the government might direct";¹ and the Secretary of the Treasury seized upon the discrepancy between these two acts as a ground for refusing to issue the treasury notes. For this he was called to account in the autumn by Congress, which passed a joint resolution on October 23, 1837, declaring that "the necessary and pressing wants of the country require that the issue of such notes shall immediately commence."

It was indeed high time that something should be done.

"The finances of our country," said the President in a special message, "since the commencement of the revolution up to this time have been in a more embarrassed situation doubtless than any other nation ever experienced. Since the commencement of the present administration, during the first year there was at the disposition of the Executive or in the treasury, but five hundred dollars in cash. The several amounts that had been appropriated for specific or general purposes depended upon the sale of scrip, and *that* by acts of Congress was placed in the hands of foreign agents who were irresponsible to the Executive. . . . This imaginary and unfortunate expedient is now at an end."²

The treasury notes were now at last issued, and, being limited in amount, passed current for some time at par; but they soon began to fall of their own weight, and the issuance of additional notes under authority of Congress hastened rapidly the inevitable depreciation. By June, 1839, the paper money was "almost worthless," although it bore ten per cent interest. In the autumn of 1840 the notes were said to be worth from fifteen to twenty cents on the dollar,³ and ultimately "they sunk so low that no price at all could be obtained for them in many parts of Texas."⁴ The total amount issued is stated to have been \$4,717,939.⁵

The immediate cause of the final fall in the value of the treasury notes was the passage of a law of Congress on January 18, 1842, providing that nothing but gold and silver or the "exchequer bills" of the government should be received in payment of public dues.⁶ The government at

¹ *Ibid.*, 253 *et seq.*

² President's message, Nov. 21, 1837.

³ Gouge, 97, 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵ See App. B, *ibid.*, where details are given.

⁶ *Laws Passed at the Sixth Session*, etc., 55.

the same time was authorized to issue "exchequer bills," payable on demand, to an amount not exceeding two hundred thousand dollars. These bills were issued for only very moderate amounts, and there were seldom as many as fifty thousand dollars in circulation at one time. Nevertheless, the practical repudiation of the old treasury notes, by the refusal to receive them in payments to the government, caused the "exchequer bills" also to sink rapidly in value, so that by the end of the year they, in turn, were worth only twenty-five cents on the dollar. This very rapid fall was due to the fact that Congress, only six months after their issue, passed a law which was in fact a partial repudiation of the "exchequer bills"; for by an act of July 23, 1842, public officers throughout the republic were required to receive these bills only at the current rates at which they were sold in the market—a striking instance of folly no less than of bad faith.¹

In addition to the depreciated currency already referred to, the Texan government had from an early date attempted to meet its obligations by providing that what were called "audited drafts" on the Treasury should be received in payment of money due on lands granted or sold.² For a time these drafts also were receivable for direct taxes and for customs; but notwithstanding this feature they fell with extraordinary rapidity, and in May, 1837, they could only be sold for about fifteen cents on the dollar. Audited drafts, however, continued to be issued by the Treasury, and to be accepted by creditors who could get nothing else, with the result that there were ultimately issued very nearly eight million dollars of such paper in all. Of this amount less than seven hundred thousand dollars was received in payment of public dues; somewhat less than a million was exchanged for bonds, and about six millions was paid at the Treasury by exchanging the audited drafts for treasury notes, which were worth no more in the market, but were more convenient as currency.

¹ *Laws Passed at a Special Session of the Sixth Congress, etc.*, 4. And see Gouge, App. I, 279.

² Ordinance of Dec. 30, 1835; *Ordinances and Decrees*, 114.

From its very first days the Texan government made every effort to borrow money abroad. As early as November 24, 1835, the General Council authorized an issue of bonds for one hundred thousand dollars, the rate of interest not to exceed ten per cent.¹ This was followed by an ordinance, on December 4, authorizing the representatives of Texas in the United States to negotiate a sale of ten per cent bonds to the amount of one million dollars, payable in not less than five nor more than ten years in the city of New York, and "to pledge or hypothecate the public lands of Texas, and to pledge the public faith of Texas in such manner and with such restrictions as shall best comport with the honor and dignity of the state, and give effect to the pledges."²

On November 18, 1836, although the bonds authorized in the previous year were still unsold, the first constitutional Congress authorized the President to sell additional bonds to an amount not exceeding five million dollars, and at a rate of interest not exceeding ten per cent per annum.³ These bonds, however, or any bonds were impossible of sale in the United States. The financial crisis which wrecked so many banks in the United States in the early months of 1837, and which induced President Van Buren to call the American Congress together for a special session, soon made it out of the question for any banker to attempt to dispose of securities, no matter how well they might be secured. Moreover, the people of the United States had never been in the habit of investing in the obligations of foreign countries, so that even in the best of times it would have been difficult for Texas to find an American market for her bonds. There remained, of course, the markets of Europe, but until the independence of Texas was recognized by European powers it was difficult to conduct hopeful financial negotiations.

Attempts to secure recognition abroad were first begun

¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

² *Ibid.*, 44; and see supplemental ordinances of Dec. 5, 1835, and Jan. 10, 1836; *ibid.*, 52, 130.

³ *Laws of the Rep. of Texas*, I, 32.

in the summer of 1837, when General J. Pinckney Henderson was appointed diplomatic agent to Great Britain and France. In the spring of the following year he succeeded in obtaining from Great Britain a partial and limited recognition of Texan independence; that is, he was informed that, pending complete recognition, Texan ships and cargoes to Great Britain would be received on the same footing with British ships so long as British ships should practically enjoy the same privileges in Texas. Henderson very naturally asked what, precisely, this meant. Lord Palmerston replied that a Texan ship would be "admissible into the Ports of Great Britain as a Mexican ship according to the stipulations of the Mexican Treaty, notwithstanding that the Documents issued for the use of such ship should bear upon their face they were the avowed acts of a Govt. in Texas, assuming the style of a Republic independent of Mexico."¹ In November of the same year a somewhat similar arrangement was entered into with France.² The full recognition of Texan independence was, however, delayed by the French government until September, 1839, and France was not followed by the British government until November, 1840.³

But before any foreign government had taken definite and final action to recognize Texas an attempt was made to place the five millions of bonds in London or Paris; and prior to leaving the United States General James Hamilton,

¹ Palmerston to Henderson, April 6 and April 11, 1838; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 856, 859.

² Molé to Henderson, Nov. 2, 1838; *ibid.*, 1233.

³ The following treaties were entered into, viz.: with France, treaty of commerce, etc., Sept. 25, 1839; ratifications exchanged Feb. 14, 1840. With England, treaty of commerce, etc., Nov. 13, 1840; "Convention containing certain Arrangements as to the publick debt," Nov. 14, 1840; treaty for the suppression of the African slave-trade, Nov. 16, 1840. There was a long delay on the part of the Texan Senate in ratifying the last of these treaties, owing, as the British government believed, to the trickery of General Hamilton, the Texan plenipotentiary. The British government refused to exchange the ratifications of any of the treaties until Texas was ready to ratify them all, and it was not until June 28, 1842, that this was done, and a British diplomatic agent was sent out to Texas. A treaty was made with the Netherlands Sept. 18, 1840, and ratified June 15, 1841. Negotiations for treaties of commerce were also conducted with the Hanse towns and with Belgium, but none were ever actually signed and ratified.

who had been appointed financial agent for the Texan government, managed, in May, 1839, to obtain an advance of four hundred thousand dollars from the then moribund Bank of the United States in Philadelphia, against which, presumably, the whole amount of the bonds was deposited as collateral security.¹

Hamilton never met with any financial success in London. His failure, it seems, was due partly to distrust of all North American securities, partly to the activities of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and partly to the opposition of the British holders of Mexican bonds. Nor did he succeed in Holland, where it would appear that another effort was made to place bonds. But early in February, 1841, he was enabled to make a contract by which the well-known firm of J. Lafitte & Co., of Paris, agreed to take the whole issue upon certain terms. As soon as the contract with them was signed Hamilton communicated the fact to the newspapers, and the immediate result was, of course, a great improvement in the credit of the Texan government in the United States. Treasury notes rose in New Orleans to thirty cents on the dollar, and the few ten per cent bonds which had been placed in the United States rose to forty.

Unfortunately for Hamilton, his contract with Lafitte & Co. contained the following clause:

¹ James Hamilton had been governor of South Carolina, and was an eager nullifier. Although an American citizen, he offered his services to the Texan government—largely, it would seem, because he was interested in land in that country. His first employment was as Texan agent to Great Britain and France, to act with Henderson in securing recognition of Texan independence. He was appointed special and confidential agent of Texas to Great Britain, and commissioner to negotiate with Mexico, in Dec., 1839; joint agent with A. T. Burnley to negotiate a loan with France, and agent to Belgium, April, 1840; confidential agent to Holland, Sep., 1840; minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to Great Britain in 1841. He was recalled early in 1842, and not again employed. Hamilton was a promoter of a familiar type—unscrupulous, untruthful, and because of his reckless optimism entirely untrustworthy. He constantly made the wildest and most reckless assertions. At one time he had a plan for a maritime expedition into Mexico which would strike terror into that government and astonish the world by its boldness and success. At another he was assuring the British government that a hundred thousand emigrants had gone from the United States into Texas within three months!—(*Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 468, 883.)

"The present contract is concluded upon a formal assurance given by the Texan Envoy that he has obtained the consent or admission of the French Government to the above Loan, and a further assurance that the said Government will facilitate with its moral aid the negotiation of the said Loan of which assurances the Texan Envoy has furnished us with the documentary proofs."

What "the documentary proofs" may have been which Hamilton furnished to the bankers does not appear; but it is clear that the French government at least did not consider that it was in any way bound to afford aid, moral or otherwise, to the flotation. On the contrary, it proved very unfavorable. On May 6, 1841, the official newspapers published articles which Lafitte & Co. described as "of a nature to inspire the public with doubts as to the security offered of the Loan." Hamilton, who had probably deceived the bankers as to the assurances given by the government, professed vast indignation at what amounted to a refusal to allow the bonds to be sold on the Bourse. "The French Government," he wrote, "cannot without a breach of faith unexampled even in the treachery of modern diplomacy, refuse us this privilege; if they do, I shall have to let Messrs. Lafitte & Co. off their contract, and denounce the conduct of the French Government in the face of all Europe. I think they will find old Lafitte and myself rather troublesome customers."¹

Hamilton, however, was not such a troublesome customer as he thought, and these negotiations fell through; but the Texan government was not discouraged, and manfully renewed its efforts to sell its bonds. On June 14, 1842, an agreement was made with a certain M. Bourgeois d'Orvanne for a loan of a million dollars, in connection with a project for introducing European colonists. This loan also ultimately fell through.

At last, on January 17, 1844, Congress passed an act repealing "all the laws authorizing the President to negotiate a loan or loans upon either the public faith or the hypothecation of the public lands." The total amount of loans

¹ Hamilton to Lamar, May 17, 1841; *ibid.*, 1336.

previously contracted by the Texan government seems to have been from first to last only half a million, being about seventy-four thousand dollars borrowed in the winter of 1836, before the battle of San Jacinto, and four hundred thousand dollars borrowed from the Bank of the United States in the spring of 1839.

With insufficient revenue, with unsalable assets, and with practically no credit abroad, it is not surprising that the Texan government continued to be in great financial straits. In the latter part of 1838, when Houston's first term as President was coming to a close, the public indebtedness amounted to a little short of two million dollars; and from that time forward, under the administration of Houston's successor, the public debt rapidly increased.

Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, who was inaugurated President of Texas on December 9, 1838, was a native of Georgia, and was at that time a little over forty years old. He had come to Texas three years before, had entered the army as a private, had commanded the cavalry detachment at the battle of San Jacinto, and had been Vice-President under Houston's administration. One of his successors as President of the Texan republic, who was not unfriendly to him, described him as a weak man, governed by passion and prejudice, though undoubtedly honest and always actuated by good motives. He had local celebrity as an orator, and the author already mentioned, who describes him as "an elegant writer," also declared that Lamar's mind "is altogether of a dreamy poetic order, a sort of political Troubadour and Crusader, and wholly unfit by habit or education for the active duties, and the every-day realities of his present station. Texas is too small for a man of such wild, visionary, vaulting ambition."¹

Lamar's ambition at once led him to develop a very extravagant policy, largely as the result of what John Jay had called, nearly sixty years before, "drawing drafts on the Bank of Hope." The expectation of being able to float five millions of bonds in Europe had completely turned the

¹ Jones, *Republic of Texas*, 34.

heads of Lamar and his advisers, and the attempt at a strong navy, with every sort of reckless expenditure, was the result. Unlike Houston, Lamar openly rejected the idea of annexation, upon the ground that Texas was quite strong enough to stand by herself. The same sort of policy was practised in respect to Indian affairs. Houston, who knew the Indians well, was in favor of soft words, of conciliation and fair treatment. Lamar was for driving the Indians out with a stern and ruthless hand. The result of his administration is seen in the fact that when his term expired in December, 1841, the total debt of Texas amounted to nearly seven millions and a half of dollars, which at that time there was no possible means of paying.

Under the Constitution of Texas the President was not eligible to succeed himself until one presidential term had intervened, and Houston was elected as Lamar's successor, and took office on December 12, 1841. There was but one course for his administration. A radical cutting down of expenditure was absolutely essential if Texas was to continue to exist; and by some miracle of economy Houston managed to reduce the outgo of the government in a single year from nearly a million and a quarter to less than two hundred thousand dollars. During the three years of Houston's second term of office the average expenditures for all purposes amounted to only one hundred and seventy thousand dollars, against an average annual expenditure during Lamar's three years of office of over one million six hundred thousand dollars.

"The Texans," says Gouge, "never became economical until constrained by necessity. So long as there was any hope of negotiating a loan in Europe, and so long as they could borrow from the citizens of the United States, by new issues of treasury notes, their extravagant expenditures were continued. When they were reduced to such straits that they could borrow no longer, except from themselves, and then only to a limited amount, in anticipating the revenue by issues of exchequer bills, then they became saving."¹

¹Gouge, 127. In App. F of Gouge's *Fiscal Hist. of Texas* will be found a tabular statement of the debt of Texas at different periods.

Bad as was the condition of the Texan finances, the evil was not vital. With great untouched resources which were bound in time to become of substantial value, with constantly increasing exports, constantly increasing production of cotton, and a swelling stream of immigration, the future of the country was reasonably safe, provided only that peace could be assured. But the strain of an actual war with Mexico could not possibly have been long endured, and if Texas continued to exist it was simply because the Mexican republic never found it possible to furnish either an army or a navy adequate to the task of recovering the lost territory. As Morfit had pointed out in his report of 1836, the security of Texas depended more on the weakness and imbecility of her enemy than upon her own strength; and as time went on the truth of that remark became more and more manifest.

During the first two years which elapsed after the battle of San Jacinto the Mexican government repeatedly and publicly, and in stentorian tones, proclaimed its intention of reconquering Texas, and in 1837 and during a part of 1838 it maintained a force at Matamoros which, it was said, was destined to take part in the advance. That force, however, never attained any serious proportions. No sooner were troops collected there than it became necessary to despatch them to the interior to put down some military mutiny. Some efforts were made to enlist the aid of Indian tribes. Thus, in 1838 and 1839, General Filisola, who was once more in command at Matamoros, and his successor, General Canalizo, sent emissaries to the Cherokees and other Indian tribes in northeastern Texas, with a view to stirring them up to an attack on the settlements, and thus facilitating a Mexican advance into the southwestern part of the country. Two of these men were killed, and the papers found upon them abundantly proved the fact of official Mexican complicity in this projected piece of wickedness.¹ But nothing else was done.

Indeed, after the middle of the year 1838, the war with

¹ Sen. Doc. 14, 32 Cong., 2 sess., 31-55.

France and the successful rising in Yucatan absorbed all the spare energies and cash of the Mexican government, and Texas, if not forgotten, was at least left undisturbed. Nevertheless, the Mexican government was never willing to admit for a moment that the independence of Texas was a question to be considered. The ruling classes in Mexico had inherited from their Spanish ancestors their characteristic unwillingness to look facts in the face, or to admit disagreeable truths, as well as their peculiar sensitiveness and desire to preserve appearances at any cost—traits which at least suggest an Oriental origin. All factions in Mexico, therefore, made the reconquest of Texas a party cry, “urging the continuation of the war as being necessary for the vindication of the national honor, *although they had neither the will nor the power to carry it on.*”¹

The Mexican government had already shown their utter inability, in the campaign under Santa Anna, to carry on a distant and difficult offensive war, and every day the conquest of Texas was becoming a more serious task. A well-equipped and well-drilled army of twenty thousand men would not have been too large; and, to enable it to advance, a navy capable of securing control of the Gulf, of blockading three or four hundred miles of coast, and of assisting in the seizure of the principal ports would have been essential.² None of these requisites did Mexico possess.

Less than twenty years before Spain had loudly protested against the recognition by the United States and Great Britain of her former American colonies, and had announced her unalterable determination to reduce them to obedience. Mexico used precisely the same language in respect of Texas, and it was quite as impossible for Mexico to conquer Texas as it had been for Spain to conquer America.

¹ Rivera, *Historia de Jalapa*, III, 291.

² “The continued bad faith of the Mexican Government has induced the President to issue letters of marque and reprisal; *the great object now being to keep command of the Gulf.* They cannot reach us by land, unless they can supply their troops by sea.”—(Irion, Texan Secretary of State, to Hunt, Sept. 20, 1837; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, I, 262.)

The failure to undertake an aggressive campaign against Texas was the more remarkable because the Texans had on several occasions given active help to the enemies of Mexico, and were constantly giving other causes of annoyance. Reference has already been made to their participation in the Federalist rising in northern Mexico, and to the help given by the Texan navy to the people of Yucatan. In the early part of 1837 a small party of Texans made an unsuccessful effort to capture the Mexican town of Laredo, on the eastern bank of the Rio Grande. Hostile parties, both of Mexicans and Texans, constantly ranged over the territory between San Antonio and Matamoros, “and gave to their respective superiors such news as they could gather—the most of which was totally unreliable, yet still calculated to produce uneasiness and uncertainty on the frontiers.”¹ Still another trivial event which pleased the Texans and annoyed the Mexicans was the friendly visit paid to Texas by Admiral Baudin, with a part of his fleet, after the Vera Cruz campaign, in the course of which he exchanged civilities with the authorities of the republic.²

But in spite of these petty sources of irritation on both sides Mexico might have continued to abstain from committing any actual acts of warfare if it had not been for the very imprudent conduct of Lamar’s administration. In his annual message for 1839 President Lamar had urged that some steps should be taken to extend the authority of the Texan government as far as the upper waters of the Rio Grande, in what was then and is now known as New Mexico.

The province of Texas during Spanish times, and later under the Mexican republic, had never extended so far as that; but the Texan Congress had passed a law three years

¹ Yoakum, II, 210.

² The admiral landed May 2, 1839, at the mouth of the Brazos River, but sent his ships on to Galveston. He visited the city of Houston, at that time the capital, where he was very cordially received, and he sailed from Galveston on the fourteenth, after giving a reception and dance on board his flag-ship.—(Blanchard et Dauzats, 522–525.) General Bee, of Texas, met Baudin in June at Havana, who expressed himself as “perfectly charmed with you all. He says if not ordered to France, he will go to Texas, take horses and ride over the country.”—(Bee to Webb, June, 1839; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 455.)