

proclamation requiring elections to be held on the third Monday in December for the choice of a governor, a lieutenant-governor, and members of the state legislature. The legislature was to meet as soon as the Constitution of the state of Texas was accepted by the Congress of the United States, whereupon two senators were to be chosen by the legislature, and provision was to be made for the election of representatives in Congress.

A number of intricate but relatively unimportant questions arose as to the legal status of Texas during the period between the acceptance of annexation on the fourth of July, 1845, and the completion of all the preliminaries; but these questions were eventually disposed of, and on February 16, 1846, J. Pinckney Henderson was inaugurated governor, and a month later Sam Houston and Thomas J. Rusk took their seats in the Senate of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The annexation of Texas to the United States, which had been the cause of so much discussion, and had excited so many jealousies within the United States and Mexico, not to speak of England, was thus irrevocably completed. The success of the negotiation had not indeed been in serious doubt for a moment since Polk's inauguration, and his cabinet, from the very day it first met, was free to consider the consequences of annexation and the next step to be taken. What Mexico might choose to do about it was of no consequence whatever. She had failed to reconquer Texas during the nine years that Texas stood alone, and she was too plainly devoid of military power, either by sea or land, to regain her lost province now that it was incorporated with the United States. She would doubtless threaten war, but without allies it was impossible for her to make effective war.

For the American government, therefore, the question of Texas was settled and done with from the spring of 1845. There was no fear of serious Mexican aggression; and if the

<sup>1</sup> For details as to the hesitation and final action of the Texan government, and the delays in the consummation of annexation, see J. H. Smith, *Annexation of Texas*, 432-468.

question of Texas had stood alone, affairs with Mexico might very well have been left to settle themselves. But the Texan question by no means stood alone. The unpaid claims of American citizens against Mexico constituted a very substantial and very real grievance which remained to be disposed of, along with the adjustment of the new boundary. Here, it was hoped, was a lever which might serve to move the Mexican government to make territorial concessions, precisely as Spain had been moved twenty-six years before to yield the Floridas. A settlement of the spoliation claims and an adjustment of a disputed boundary, by yielding all the peninsula of Florida, were what Monroe had obtained from the Spanish monarchy. It was a precedent complete in all particulars, and Polk looked to make a similar bargain, only this time there was to be a surrender of land on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. His ambitions did not concern themselves any longer with Texas. That had been acquired by his predecessor. What he looked to was California.

Nearly forty years after Polk was in his grave George Bancroft related how, when they were alone together in the early days of the administration, Polk had laid down the four great measures he proposed. They were:

1. A reduction of the tariff.
2. The independent Treasury.
3. The settlement of the Oregon boundary question.
4. The acquisition of California.<sup>1</sup>

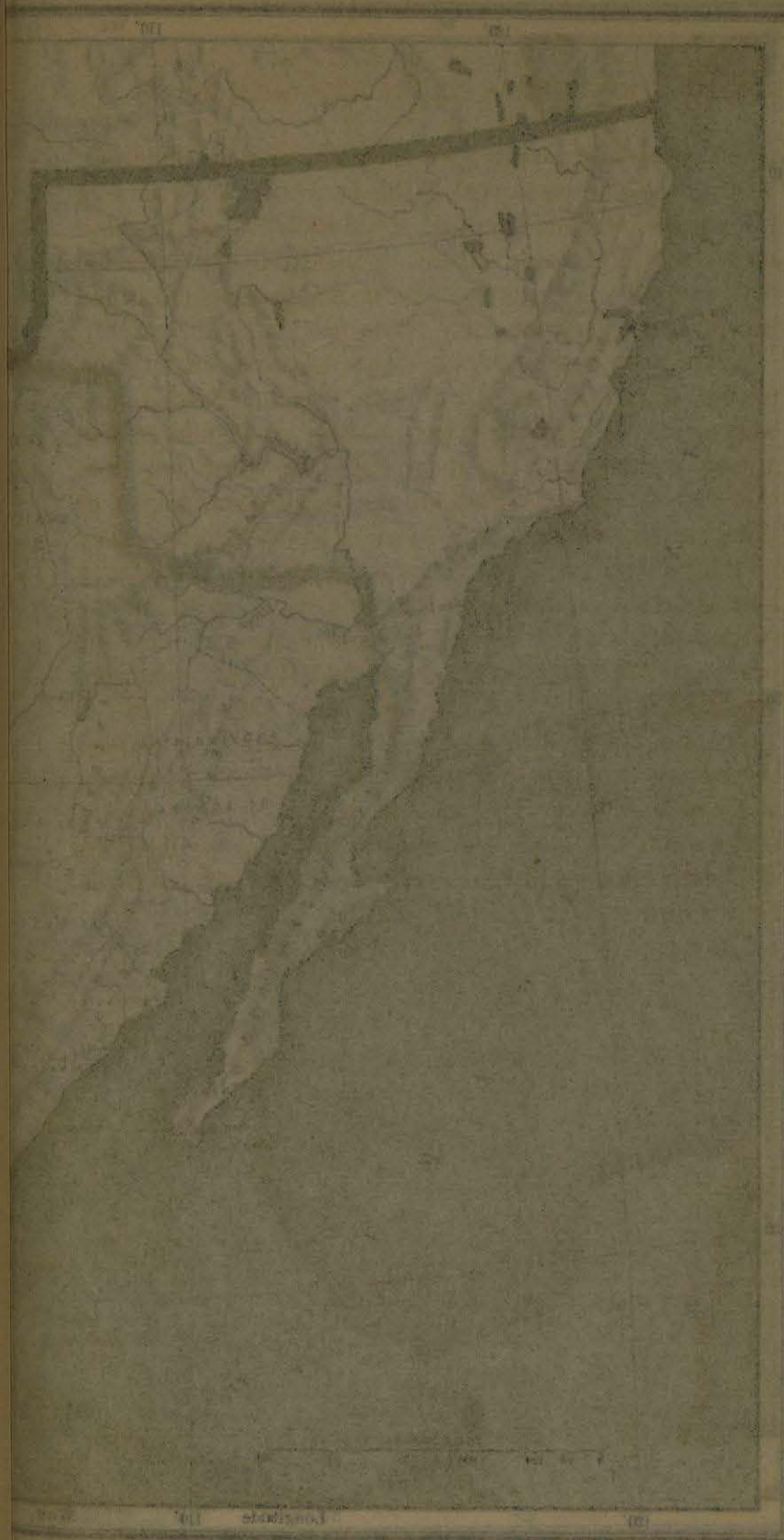
How far the memory of a man of nearly ninety could be trusted to relate correctly a conversation which, in the light of subsequent events, looked astoundingly like prophecy, is no doubt a question; but that Polk from an early period in his presidency was casting about for means to acquire Cali-

<sup>1</sup> Schouler, IV, 498. Six months before the inauguration the acquisition of California formed no part of Polk's programme. In September, 1844, he told Francis W. Pickens, of South Carolina, that, if elected, he was determined to reduce the tariff of 1842, to introduce strict economy, and to acquire Texas "at all hazards." This was not at all the programme as related by Bancroft. See Pickens to Calhoun, Sept. 9, 1844; *Amer. Hist. Assn. Rep.* 1899, II, 969.

foria, abundantly appears from contemporaneous evidence. And it is also apparent that in this he was far in advance of the public opinion of his time. California had not yet been mentioned in general political discussion, it had attracted little attention in Congress or in the newspapers, and it had furnished no plank for party platforms.

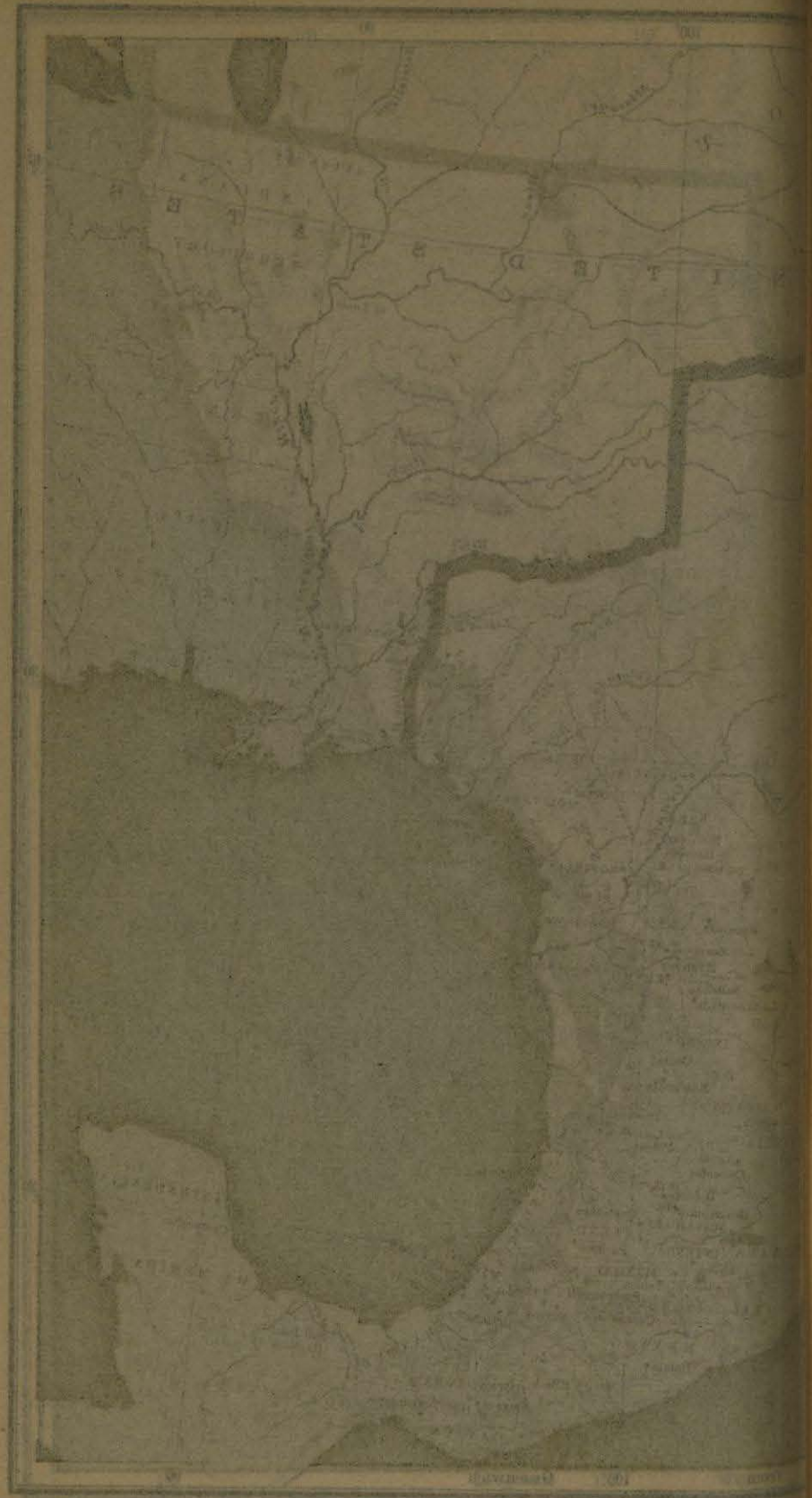
But almost silently the impressive phenomenon of emigration on a large scale had begun. Hundreds of toiling wagons and thousands of men, women, and children had already marked out the rough highway which led from the head-waters of the Platte to the meadows of Oregon, or thence southward, across the Mexican frontier, to the valley of the Sacramento. The Democratic convention, with a keen appreciation of a spirit that was beginning to stir the nation, had confidently put forward a demand for "the whole of the territory of Oregon"; and Western expansion was a policy that no administration could have ignored.

To this policy Polk and his cabinet chiefly addressed themselves, and the topics with which American diplomacy was now most concerned related, directly or indirectly, to Oregon and California, the former involving the relations of Great Britain, and the latter those of Mexico, with the United States.





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