

Baltimore at that hour. . . . As the hand of the clock was on the line of twelve, the Speaker declared the House adjourned to the first Monday in December. At that moment John Davis was prosing in the Senate about the two millions Peace bill, with David Wilmot's anti-slavery proviso, which thereby fell through."¹

Davis pleased nobody by his course. The anti-slavery people were desperately angry with him, because they believed that if the bill had been put to a vote in the Senate in the form in which it came from the House it would have passed. The administration was equally offended at the defeat of the measure in which they were interested; but with his usual secretiveness and self-control the President made no sign. He contented himself by expressing freely in his diary his views concerning Wilmot's "mischievous and foolish amendment" and Davis's "disreputable expedient of speaking against time." He also took occasion to note for his own future reference, more fully than before, his real object in asking the appropriation.

"It was this. Mexico is indebted to the U. S. in a large sum, which she is unable to pay. There is also a disputed question of boundary. The two Countries are now engaged in War. When peace is made the only indemnity which the U. S. can have will be a cession of territory. The U. S. desires to acquire Upper California, New Mexico, and perhaps some territory South of these Provinces. For a suitable cession of territory we are willing to assume the debts to our own citizens & to pay an additional consideration. My information induces the belief that Mexico would be willing to settle the difficulty in this manner. No Government, however, it is believed, is strong enough to make a treaty ceding territory and long maintain power unless they could receive, at the time of making the treaty, money enough to support the army. Whatever party can keep the army in its support can hold the power. The present Government is without any regular revenue, & without a prompt payment as a part of the consideration would not venture to make a Treaty. . . . Had the appropriation been passed I am confident I should have made an honorable peace by which we should have acquired California, & such other territory as we desired, before the end of October. Should the war be now protracted, the responsibility will fall more heavily upon the head of Senator Davis than upon any other man, and he will deserve the execrations of the country."²

¹ Adams's *Memoirs*, XII, 270.

² Polk's *Diary*, II, 76.

While Polk was thus relieving his feelings by confiding to his diary these unflattering comments on Wilmot, Davis, and the Whigs, Santa Anna was on his way to Mexico. He sailed from Havana on the evening of August 8, having chartered for the purpose the British steam-ship *Arab*, and was accompanied by his faithful Almonte, and by Rejón and Basadre, who had been, respectively, his Ministers of Foreign Relations and War at the time his last administration collapsed.

On the morning of Sunday, the sixteenth of August, the *Arab* was off Vera Cruz, where she appears to have been boarded by a boat from one of the British men-of-war then lying off the harbor. The senior British officer informed Commodore Conner that the vessel carried no cargo and would not be allowed to take any on her return; and she was allowed to enter the port without molestation. Conner wrote that he had thought it best not to board the *Arab* so that it might not appear that Santa Anna had entered with the concurrence of the American squadron.¹

Santa Anna's first act on landing was to issue a very long address to his countrymen setting forth his present political programme. He had, he said, been summoned by the people and garrisons of the departments of Jalisco, Vera

¹ Conner to Bancroft, Aug. 16, 1846; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 776. The above is the official account, but there appears to be some mystery about it. Lieutenant Raphael Semmes, who then commanded the United States brig *Somers*, published a detailed account of the *Arab* being boarded by a boat from the sloop-of-war *St. Mary's* and how the boarding officer was introduced to Santa Anna.—(Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 118.) Santa Anna himself described (for the benefit of his countrymen) how he left Havana at night, intending also to enter Vera Cruz at night, so as to evade the blockading squadron; how his plans were foiled by the incapacity of the drunken master of the *Arab*; how the ship was boarded by an American officer; and how in some way quite inexplicable to him the officer permitted him to proceed.—(*Apelacion al buen Criterio*, 17.) The strong probability is that the master of the *Arab* never had the slightest intention of trying to run the blockade at night, Vera Cruz, in the absence of buoys and lights, being altogether too dangerous a port even without a hostile squadron, and he had no doubt been assured by Santa Anna that the Americans would let him pass. If Conner's statement is accurate, the master probably took his ship along-side the first British cruiser he met (of which there were two or three then off Vera Cruz), asked if it was all right for him to proceed, and was reassured by the British officer who boarded him.

Cruz, Sinaloa, Southern Mexico, and other parts of the republic, and he had just learned of the overthrow of Paredes and of having been himself named general-in-chief of the liberating army. He denounced in unmeasured terms the intrigues of the monarchists, who (according to him) were responsible for all the difficulties in which Mexico found herself involved, accused Paredes of bringing to the capital troops who should have been in the field opposing Taylor, and declared that Paredes had "prepared and arranged for" the reverses at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma.

Never, said Santa Anna, had the situation of the republic been so difficult. On the one hand, its national existence was threatened by the United States, and, on the other, the monarchical party was trying to impose European dominion. The union of republicans of the true faith and the concert of the army and the people could alone secure independence and establish peace on the solid basis of public liberty. To this end he proposed that the Constitution of 1824 should be considered in force until the new Constitution, which was to be framed by the Congress just summoned, should be completed.

"The slave of public opinion myself, I shall act in accordance with it; seeking for it henceforth in whatever manner it may be known and expressed, and subjecting myself, afterwards, entirely to the decisions of the constituent assembly, the organ of the sovereign will of the nation."¹

After attending a banquet given in his honor in Vera Cruz, Santa Anna departed for one of his haciendas, El Encero,² and sent Rejón and Almonte to the capital. A cabinet was at once formed, with Rejón in his old post as Minister of Foreign Relations and Almonte as Secretary of War; while the Secretary of the Treasury was Gómez

¹ *Santa Anna's Address*; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 777-785. This, it is said, was written by Rejón.—(Rivera, *Hist. de Jalapa*, III, 782.)

² This is the usual spelling, but El Lencero is perhaps more correct.—(Roa Bárcena, *Invasión Norte-Americana*, 223.)

Farias, whose co-operation indicated that the union of the Santanistas with the extreme Radical group, suggested by Santa Anna in the spring, had been successfully accomplished. Salas, the commander-in-chief of the liberating army, continued to act as chief executive; but the real master of the country, whose orders Salas cheerfully obeyed, was the owner of El Encero.

The most urgent thing for the new cabinet to determine was the policy to be pursued in regard to the war, a matter which had doubtless been the subject of much discussion between Santa Anna and his friends before they reached Vera Cruz. It bore two principal aspects: the first, and to their minds probably the less important, being the probability of military success; and the second, the effect which the public knowledge that negotiations for peace were under discussion would have upon domestic policy. Previous Mexican administrations had been encouraged by the confidential reports they received from the United States to believe that no war would be waged by that country against Mexico; and no one had argued more earnestly than the new Secretary of War in favor of a bold policy in relation to the annexation of Texas. Writing from Washington in the spring of 1844, Almonte had assured his government that in the event of Texan annexation it was certain that the New England states, and perhaps New York and Pennsylvania, would secede from the Union, or, if not, would refuse to make war on Mexico.

"I have," he said, "the strongest assurances for this belief and you may rely upon it, since they come from members of Congress and Senators and from influential persons in the said states. This is without counting upon the abolitionists, who are and will be decided partisans of our cause."

As preliminary measures he had urged that commissioners should be sent to Cuba, to Spain, to England, and to France with letters of marque to be issued to privateers upon the outbreak of war; and he had advised his government "to send emissaries to certain people who are near our

frontiers and who, of whatever color they may be, will be of immense utility to us in the event of war."¹

War had now existed for some months, and whatever hopeful anticipations might have been based upon Almonte's assurances, they had been proved to be utterly unfounded. The American Congress was all but unanimous for war, the people proved to be eager to volunteer, nobody in any part of the world seemed disposed to venture a dollar in privateering, and both negroes and Indians were perfectly peaceful.

As for the American armies, it had long been the accepted Mexican view that they were entirely composed of adventurers without religion and without either instruction or discipline—the implied corollary being, of course, that the Mexican armies enjoyed all these priceless advantages, and that they were therefore certain of an easy triumph in the event of a battle upon anything like equal terms. The result of the first two battles of the war had not been such as to encourage much hope of successful resistance in the field, but Santa Anna and his friends had not yet lost faith in the Mexican army under a new leader.

The internal situation of affairs evidently presented no doubts or difficulties to their minds. Herrera's government had been overthrown because it had ventured to consider discussing terms of peace, and Paredes because he was believed to be plotting for a monarchy. Santa Anna, on his arrival in Mexico, had only to avoid these blunders and put himself forward as an uncompromising advocate of war. Certainly he could not have felt himself strong enough to take any step in the direction of peace—a step which was sure to excite the indignation of the ruling classes in Mexico, and was quite likely to result in his summary overthrow at the hands of eager and expectant rivals.

The army, the church, and the press in Mexico still entertained a strong belief in the prowess of their troops and the weakness of the American army. Moreover, they still clung to the belief that the Americans were fatally divided.

¹ Almonte to Minister of Relations, March 15, 1844; *Sec. Rel. Ext. MSS.*

They had been for so many years entertained by declamation against the designs of the United States, and by published extracts from American newspapers hostile to Texan annexation, that they were unable to perceive how the American people could forget political divisions in the face of a foreign enemy, nor how inevitably the wealth and strength of the American Union must accomplish the overthrow of the Mexican nation, no matter how earnestly its people might be resolved to defend themselves from invasion. "A muddy mixture of pride and ignorance," inherited doubtless from their Spanish and Moorish ancestors, prevented clear and wholesome thinking upon this subject; so that the time had not yet come when a government in Mexico could venture openly to negotiate with the United States.

It was therefore the necessary conclusion of Santa Anna and his advisers that they could not yet listen to overtures for peace, and a reply substantially in this sense was prepared to Buchanan's note of the twenty-seventh of July.¹ That note had contained a phrase to the effect that it was useless, "in the present communication," to discuss the causes of the war. His Excellency the general-in-chief of the liberating army, replied Rejón, could not accept a proposition on the basis of "refusing a discussion upon the causes of the war existing between the two republics," for to do so would be to waive the question of its justice, and thus complete the irritation of public opinion. He added that a congress had been summoned which would meet on the sixth of December; and to Congress the note of Mr. Buchanan would be submitted, "in order that it may determine upon what it shall judge to be proper for the interests of the nation." In the meanwhile the relations of Mexico toward the United States would continue on the same footing as they were when the general-in-chief of the liberating army assumed charge of the executive power of the nation.²

¹ See page 230 above.

² Rejón to Buchanan, August 31, 1846; H. R. Doc. 4, 29 Cong., 2 sess., 43.

This was obviously tantamount to a refusal to consider the question of peace at all, and it was so regarded at Washington, although, by referring the matter to the Mexican Congress, a door had been left open to possible changes in the political situation. Buchanan, after a long cabinet discussion, wrote to Rejón that he had never proposed to withdraw from discussion "the causes of the war existing between the two republics," and had no disposition to do so; and that the President would wait, "with patience and with hope," for the final decision of the Mexican government.¹

Polk was not yet fully aware how grossly he had been deceived by the assurances that had reached him of Santa Anna's pacific intentions. That he was to learn later. But already he must have begun to see that Santa Anna had not the smallest intention of making peace, and that so long as the Mexican newspapers continued to clamor for war the voice of the eminent "slave of public opinion" would join in the chorus. Polk had arranged to let Santa Anna pass the blockade because he regarded him as a disturbing element. In truth, Santa Anna, so far from being a disturbing element, was the one man about whom, at that moment, all the factions into which the ruling classes of Mexico were divided could rally for a united prosecution of the war.

¹ Buchanan to Rejón, Sept. 26, 1846; *ibid.*, 44.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MONTEREY

GENERAL TAYLOR, awaiting reinforcements and supplies at Matamoros, was very soon extremely embarrassed by the excited patriotism which sent him many more men than he could properly use. What he needed, more than men, were supplies and means of transportation.

"The volunteer force ordered to report to me here is much greater than I can possibly employ—at any rate in the first instance; the influx of twelve-months volunteers has even impeded my forward movement by engrossing all the resources of the quartermaster's department to land them and transport them to healthy positions."¹

His first embarrassment had come through the foolish activities of General Gaines, who still commanded the western division, with head-quarters at New Orleans, and who was again, as in 1836, busy issuing calls for volunteers, without authority and upon the strength of newspaper reports. Already in the summer of 1845 he had credited an absurd newspaper rumor to the effect that Taylor was likely to be attacked at Corpus Christi; and without a shadow of legal authority he had called upon the governor of Louisiana for two regiments of infantry and two companies of artillery as reinforcements. The governor, without stopping to inquire what right Gaines had to call for volunteers, furnished the troops. The two infantry regiments did not start, as the War Department interfered in time; but the two artillery companies were actually sent to Taylor and were kept in his camp at Corpus Christi for several weeks. But

¹ Taylor to Polk, Aug. 1, 1846; H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 337.