

CHAPTER III.

Admission of Texas into the Union.—Indirect Cause of the Mexican War.—War Recognized by the American Congress.—Prominent part General Taylor has acted since its Commencement.—Orders of the War Department to him.—Texas accepts the conditions of Annexation offered by the United States.—Ultimate Views of Government.—General Taylor arrives at Corpus Christi.—Extracts of the Official Correspondence between him and the Secretary of War.—Intentions of the American Government.

On the first day of March, 1845, Texas was admitted into the Union, by a joint resolution of the Congress of the United States. Though this act was not the immediate cause of the rupture between the United States and Mexico, it led to the adoption of measures which brought the armies of the two governments into collision, and terminated in a declaration of the *existence* of war by the American government. But whether the war was declared formally or not, according to the laws of nations, having virtually been commenced, it was recognized and adopted, and the American people, with a unanimity not shown even in the last war with Great Britain, and notwithstanding there was a difference of opinion as to the necessity and justice of it, everywhere evinced their willingness to assist the government to prosecute it with vigor, or end it with honor.

Amongst those whose names are more intimately connected with the prosecution of this war than that

of any other of the brave men who have added such lustre to the American arms during its continuance, by their gallant deeds, is that of General ZACHARY TAYLOR.

Soon after the annexation of Texas, General Taylor, who was then stationed at Fort Jessup, in Louisiana, received the following communication, from Mr. Marcy Secretary of War, marked "confidential," and dated "War Department, May 28, 1845 :—"

"SIR :—I am directed by the President to cause the forces now under your command, and those which may be assigned to it, to be put into a position where they may most promptly and efficiently act in defence of Texas, in the event it shall become necessary or proper to employ them for that purpose. The information received by the Executive of the United States warrants the belief that Texas will shortly accede to the terms of annexation. As soon as the Texas Congress shall have given its consent to annexation, and a convention shall assemble and accept the terms offered in the resolutions of Congress, Texas will then be regarded by the executive government here, so far a part of the United States as to be entitled from this government to defence and protection from foreign invasion and Indian incursions. The troops under your command will be placed and kept in readiness to perform this duty.

"In the letter addressed to you from the Adjutant General's office, of the 21st of March, you were instructed to hold a portion of the troops under your immediate command in readiness to move into Texas under certain contingencies, and upon further orders from this department. In the treaty between the United States and Mexico, the two governments mutually stipulated to use all the means in their power to maintain peace and harmony among the Indian nations

inhabiting the lands on their borders, and to restrain by force any hostilities and incursions by these nations within their respective boundaries, so that the one would not suffer the Indians within its limits to attack, in any manner whatever, the citizens of the other, or the Indians residing upon the territories of the other. The obligations which in this respect are due to Mexico by this treaty, are due also to Texas. Should the Indians residing within the limits of the United States, either by themselves, or associated with others, attempt any hostile movements in regard to Texas, it will be your duty to employ the troops under your command to repel and chastise them, and for this purpose you will give the necessary instructions to the military posts on the upper Red river, (although not under your immediate command,) and, with the approbation of the Texan authorities, make such movements, and take such position, within the limits of Texas, as in your judgment may be necessary. You are also directed to open immediate correspondence with the authorities of Texas, and with any diplomatic agent of the United States, (if one should be residing therein,) with a view to information and advice in respect to the common Indian enemy, as well as to any foreign power. This communication and consultation with the Texan authorities, &c., are directed with a view to enable you to avail yourself of the superior local knowledge they may possess, but not for the purpose of placing you, or any portion of the forces of the United States, under the orders of any functionary not in the regular line of command above you.

"Should the territories of Texas be invaded by a foreign power, and you shall receive certain intelligence through her functionaries of that fact, after her con-

vention shall have acceded to the terms of annexation contained in the resolutions of the Congress of the United States, you will at once employ, in the most effectual manner your judgment may dictate, the forces under your command, for the defence of these territories and to expel the invaders.

"It is supposed here that, for the mere purpose of repelling a common Indian enemy, as above provided for, it may not be necessary that you should march across the Sabine or upper Red river (at least in the first instance) with more than the particular troops which you were desired in the instructions before referred to, of the 21st March, to hold in immediate readiness for the field, but it is not intended to restrict you positively to that particular amount of force. On the contrary, according to the emergency, you may add any other corps, or any number of companies within your department deemed necessary, beginning with those nearest at hand; and in the contingency of a *foreign* invasion of Texas, as above specified, other regiments from a distance may be ordered to report to you."

This order was succeeded by another, also confidential, from the Hon. George Bancroft, Acting Secretary of War, and dated June 15th, 1845. After advising General Taylor, that on the 4th of July, or very soon thereafter, the convention of the people of Texas would probably accept the proposition of annexation, and that such acceptance would constitute Texas an integral portion of the Union, he ordered him forthwith to make a forward movement with the troops under his command, and advance to the mouth of the Sabine, or such other port on the Gulf of Mexico, or its navigable waters, as in his opinion might be most convenient for an embarkation at the proper time, for the western portion

of Texas. The point of his ultimate destination, he was informed in this order, was the western frontier of Texas, and he was instructed to select and occupy, on or near the Rio Grande, such a site as would consist with the health of the troops, and be the best point to repel invasion, and to protect what, in case of annexation, would be our western border. He was further instructed to limit himself to the defence of the territory of Texas, unless Mexico should declare war against the United States, and not to effect a landing on the frontier, until he had ascertained the acceptance of the proffered terms of annexation by Texas, from our minister to that government.

Not long after, the anticipated information of the acceptance of the conditions offered to Texas by the United States was received by General Taylor, and on the following day he left New Orleans, with a portion of his troops, and on the 25th of July arrived at St. Joseph's Island. In the early part of August, he took up his position at Corpus Christi, on the west side of the Neuces, and near its mouth, where he remained until the 11th day of March, 1846. Whilst in this position, he sent forward to the Rio Grande a party of observation, with the view of selecting some favorable position as a depot of military stores, and a proper position for the encampment of the army. Some time in February, 1846, this party returned, and reported in favor of Point Isabel, a few miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande, as a depot of provisions and military stores, and in favor of the position where Fort Brown was subsequently built, as a suitable position to be occupied by the army.

It may be necessary here to give such portions of the correspondence between the War Department and

General Taylor, while the latter was at Corpus Christi, as will explain the immediate and ultimate views and intentions of the government towards Mexico, the position of Taylor, and the agency he had, if any, in hastening the war. For this purpose, the part of that correspondence that throws the most light upon these subjects, is annexed. It will be observed from it, and the order of the Secretary of War already given, that General Taylor acted under positive and specific instructions in all his movements, when such instructions could, in the nature of the case, be given. In these orders, and the dispatches of Taylor, will be found all the information required, to lead to a correct understanding of the immediate steps on the part of the two governments which led to the collision between their respective armies, that ended in the existing war. On the 23rd of August, 1845, Mr. Secretary Marcy addressed to General Taylor the following order:

"The information hitherto received as to the intentions of Mexico, and the measures she may adopt, does not enable the administration here to give you more explicit instructions in regard to your movements, than those which have been already forwarded to you. There is reason to believe that Mexico is making efforts to assemble a large army on the frontier of Texas, for the purpose of entering its territory and holding forcible possession of it. Of their movements you are doubtless advised, and we trust have taken, or early will take, prompt and efficient steps to meet and repel any such hostile incursion. Should Mexico assemble a large body of troops on the Rio Grande, and cross it with a considerable force, such a movement must be regarded as an invasion of the United States, and the commencement of hostilities. You will, of course, use

all the authority which has been or may be given you, to meet such a state of things. Texas must be protected from hostile invasion, and for that purpose you will of course employ, to the utmost extent, all the means you possess or can command.

"An order has been this day issued for sending one thousand more men into Texas, to join those under your command. When the existing orders are carried into effect, you will have with you a force of four thousand men of the regular army. We are not enabled to judge what auxiliary force can, upon an emergency, be brought together from Texas; and as a precautionary measure, you are authorized to accept volunteers from the States of Louisiana and Alabama, and even from Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky. Should Mexico declare war, or commence hostilities by crossing the Rio Grande with a considerable force, you are instructed to lose no time in giving information to the authorities of each or any of the above-mentioned states, as to the number of volunteers you may want from them respectively. Should you require troops from any of these states, it would be important to have them with the least possible delay. It is not doubted that at least two regiments from New Orleans, and one from Mobile, could be obtained and expeditiously brought into the field. You will cause it to be known in these places, what number and description of troops you desire to receive from them in the contemplated emergency. The authorities of these states will be apprised that you are authorized to receive volunteers from them, and you may calculate that they will promptly join you when it is made known that their services are required. Arms, ammunition, and camp equipage for the auxiliary troops that you

may require, will be sent forward, subject to your orders. You will so dispose of them as to be most available in case they should be needed, and at the same time with a due regard to their safety and preservation. Orders have been issued to the naval force on the Gulf of Mexico to co-operate with you. You will, as far as practicable, hold communication with the commanders of our national vessels in your vicinity, and avail yourself of any assistance that can be derived from their co-operation. The *Lexington* is ordered into service as a transport ship, and will sail in a few days from New York, with a detachment of United States troops for Corpus Christi. She will be employed as the exigency of the public service may require. In order to keep up a proper communication between the army in Texas and the United States, the *On-ka-hy-e*, the *Harney*, and the *Dolphin* will be put into service as soon as they can be made ready, as dispatch vessels, to convey intelligence, supplies, &c. You will avail yourself of these vessels, and all other proper means, to keep the government here advised of your operations, and the state of things in Texas and Mexico."

Two days after, on the 25th of August, the Secretary of War addressed a circular letter to the Governors of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and on the 28th, a similar letter to the Governors of Kentucky and Tennessee, advising them that General Taylor had been appointed to the command of the army of occupation in Texas, and that he was authorized to draw any auxiliary force he might need from that state. He advises them that General Taylor has been authorized to call on them for any additional volunteers he might consider necessary to repel the invasion of Texas by Mexico, should it be attempted. He also observes,

"that the emergency rendering such assistance from the militia of your state necessary, does not appear to have been foreseen by Congress, and consequently, no appropriation was made for paying them; but it is not to be doubted that such a provision will be promptly made when Congress shall again assemble. In order to be paid, the state troops must be mustered into service. In organizing companies and regiments for that purpose, the number of officers must be proportioned to that of the privates. Inclosed I send you from the Adjutant-General, a statement of the number and rank of officers for each company of men, as well as the regimental and staff officers, should a regiment of volunteers be called for. From the known patriotism and military ardor of the militia of your state, it is presumed that volunteers, to the number that may be required, will readily tender their services to their country in the contemplated emergency. Should aid from your state be required by the commanding general in Texas, it will be of the utmost importance that the troops should be sent into that state without delay. This consideration will render it proper that they should come from such parts of the state as can most promptly furnish them."

On the 30th of August Mr. Marcy wrote to General Taylor, to urge upon him the importance of availing himself of every opportunity of communicating with the War Department, as it was desirable to have early and correct information from him, so as to enable the government to form a true judgment of the designs and movements of Mexico, founded upon ascertained facts. He then continues: "It is presumed that, in pursuance of previous instructions from this department, you have taken special pains to become ac-

quainted with the proceedings of Mexico, particularly in regard to the number and kind of Mexican troops at Matamoras, Monterey, and other places, as well as those which are on the march towards them, and may be brought to act against your forces, or pushed across the Rio Grande, either in the vicinity of Matamoras or at distant points on that river. You will not, I trust, underrate the importance of such information, or fail to use the proper and necessary means for acquiring it. You are directed, should you deem it expedient, to employ competent and trustworthy persons to obtain such intelligence.

"The instructions heretofore issued, enjoin upon you to defend Texas from invasion and Indian hostilities; and should Mexico invade it, you will employ all your forces to repulse the invaders, and drive all Mexican troops beyond the Rio Grande. Should you judge the forces under your command inadequate, you will not fail to draw sufficient auxiliary aid from Texas, and, if there be need, from the states, pursuant to your previous instructions. It is not to be doubted, that on your notification, volunteer troops, to the number you may require, will rally with alacrity to your standard. You have been advised that the assembling a large Mexican army on the borders of Texas, and crossing the Rio Grande with a considerable force, will be regarded by the Executive here as an invasion of the United States, and the commencement of hostilities. An attempt to cross that river with such a force, will also be considered in the same light. There may be other acts on the part of Mexico which would put an end to the relations of peace between that republic and the United States. Should depredations be committed on our commerce by her public armed vessels, or pri-

vateers acting under authority, this will constitute a state of war.

"Orders have been issued to the vessels of the United States in the Gulf, to furnish you with information of any hostile proceedings of Mexico, and the state of things in that republic. You will embrace every occasion that may present, to forward to the commanders of these vessels such intelligence as you may possess concerning the movements of the military forces and the state of things in Mexico and Texas, and to suggest to them such assistance and co-operation as you may desire to receive.

"In case of war, either declared or made manifest by hostile acts, your main object will be the protection of Texas; but the pursuit of this object will not necessarily confine your action within the territory of Texas. Mexico having thus commenced hostilities, you may in your discretion, should you have sufficient force, and be in a condition to do so, cross the Rio Grande, disperse or capture the forces assembling to invade Texas, defeat the junction of troops uniting for that purpose, drive them from their positions on either side of the river, and, if deemed practicable and expedient, take and hold possession of Matamoras and other places in the country. I scarcely need to say that enterprises of this kind are only to be ventured on under circumstances presenting a fair prospect of success."

Again, on the 16th of October, 1845, the Secretary of War informed General Taylor that no apprehension was felt at Washington, that any serious attempts would be made by Mexico to invade Texas, although she still continued to threaten it, and that in carrying out the instructions of government he would be left very much to his own judgment, as his superior knowl-

edge of localities, and his advantages for obtaining earlier notice of the views of Mexico, and the movements of her troops, would enable him to judge much more correctly what action on his part might be necessary. He was advised that he would, in a great measure, be left to act, during the coming winter, as circumstances might seem in his judgment to require, and instructed to approach as near the western boundary of Texas, ("the Rio Grande,") as a due regard for his safety and the comfort of his army would permit.

Having given such suggestions as he considered advisable as to the movements of the army, the secretary proceeds: "Ought your present position to be changed? the forces which are, or soon will be, assembled under your command, be kept together or divided? and, if divided, what positions are to be taken, and how are they to be divided? These are questions which must be in a measure left to your judgment, or, at least, the decision upon them here, if there be time, will be influenced in no inconsiderable degree by the information and views which you may furnish the department. You need not, therefore, wait for directions from Washington, to carry out what you may deem proper to be done. Upon all the points above enumerated, and others not suggested, your reports and views in full are desired, not only with reference to the continuance of the present aspect of affairs between the United States and Mexico, but in the contingency of your selecting, or being directed to take, a position on the banks of the Rio Grande near its mouth, or places above, or even in the event of open hostilities. It is expected that the officers of the Engineer and Topographical Corps, who have been sent into Texas, will examine as far as practicable, under your direction, the country, with a

view to selecting eligible positions for permanent or temporary occupation, for depots of supplies, arms, and munitions of war. It is extremely desirable that the sea-coast, or at least that part of it which will be likely to be visited by our vessels in aid of any contemplated military operations, should be better known here than it now is; as well as the character of the several rivers which may present obstacles to the movements of our forces, or furnish facilities for transporting supplies. You are requested to avail yourself of all proper occasions, and employ the means you possess to collect information in regard to matters, and forward it to this department."

The next communication from the Secretary of War to General Taylor is an explicit and peremptory order to march to the Rio Grande, and take such a position there as he might deem advisable, the season, the route by which his encampment could be approached, and the security of the army being considered. Mr. Marcy writes: "I am directed by the President to instruct you to advance and occupy, with the troops under your command, positions on or near the east bank of the Rio del Norte, as soon as it can be conveniently done with reference to the season and the routes by which your movements must be made. From the views heretofore presented to this department, it is presumed Point Isabel will be considered by you an eligible position. This point, or some one near it, and points opposite Matamoras and Mier, and in the vicinity of Laredo, are suggested for your consideration; but you are left to your better knowledge to determine the post or posts which you are to occupy, as well as the question of dividing your forces with a view to occupying two or more positions.

"In the positions you may take in carrying out these instructions, and other movements that may be made, the use of the Rio del Norte may be very convenient, if not necessary. Should you attempt to exercise the right which the United States have, in common with Mexico, to the free navigation of this river, it is probable that Mexico would interpose resistance. You will not attempt to enforce this right without further instructions.

"You are requested to report to this department, without delay, what means you may require, if any, beyond those you now possess, to enforce and maintain our common right to navigate this river, as well as your views of the importance of this right in the defence and protection of the state of Texas.

"It is not designed, in our present relations with Mexico, that you should treat her as an enemy; but, should she assume that character by a declaration of war, or an open act of hostility towards us, you will not act merely on the defensive, if your relative means enable you to do otherwise.

"Since instructions were given you to draw aid from Texas, in case you should deem it necessary, the relations between that state and the United States have undergone some modification. Texas is now fully incorporated into our union of states, and you are hereby authorized by the President to make a requisition upon the executive of that state for such of its militia force as may be needed to repel invasion, or to secure the country against apprehended invasion."

These extracts from the instructions and orders of the Secretary of War to General Taylor, in regard to his movements in Texas, and his operations there, will render sufficiently intelligible the objects and wishes of

the American government in regard to Mexico, and what was expected of the commanding General. The dispatches of General Taylor to his government during the same period, are necessary, however, to place before the reader the whole question in all its bearings, to show the condition and number of the army, with which the first great achievements of this war were accomplished, and to help to illustrate the character of the extraordinary man whose name has been so closely identified with almost every incident of it. Besides the official dispatches of Taylor that are annexed, there will be found a communication to him from the Prefect of Tamaulipas, and also one from General Ampudia, Commander-in-chief of the Mexican army on the Texan frontier, as well as General Taylor's reply to it:

"NEW ORLEANS, La., July 20, 1845.

SIR:—I respectfully acknowledge your communication of July 8th, covering the instructions of the Secretary of War of the same date, relative to the Mexican settlements on this side of the Rio Grande. Those instructions will be closely obeyed; and the department may rest assured that I will take no step to interrupt the friendly relations between the United States and Mexico. I am gratified at receiving these instructions, as they confirm my views, previously communicated, in regard to the proper line to be occupied at present by our troops.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding.

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
Steamship Alabama, Aransas Pass,
Texas, July 28, 1845."

SIR:—I respectfully report my arrival at this place on the 25th instant, with eight companies of the Third infantry, it having been found necessary to leave two companies of that regiment to be brought over in other transports.

The troops are temporarily established on St. Joseph's Island. I am waiting the report of a boat expedition sent to Corpus Christi Bay, before I determine on the site of an encampment. I hope to receive the necessary information in the course of the day, when I shall immediately commence the removal of the Third infantry to the point selected. The position will probably be "Live Oak Point," in Aransas Bay, some ten miles from our present position. I am very anxious to establish myself at the mouth of the Nueces, but the extreme shoalness of the water will, I fear, present an insuperable obstacle, unless we can procure lighters of much lighter draught than those we have at present.

The difficulties of effecting a debarkation on this coast, and of establishing depots for supplying the army, are much greater than I anticipated, and will render our operations at once embarrassing and expensive. Between Pass Cavallo and Brazos Santiago there is no entrance for vessels drawing more than seven or eight feet; and the prevailing winds render the operation of lightening extremely uncertain and hazardous. We have been favored with fine weather, and, should it continue, the other transports, which may now be expected, will be enabled to discharge without difficulty.

We had a very favorable run from New Orleans and I am happy to state that the health of the command was greatly improved by the voyage. The eight companies have scarcely any sickness at this time.

The day before leaving New Orleans, I received from Major Donelson, a communication dated at Austin, on the 7th of July, informing me that the convention had unanimously accepted the proposition of annexation, and suggested that two companies should be posted at Austin. I still deem it best to concentrate my force until our relations with Mexico shall become settled, and until the country can be examined, and the best mode of supply ascertained.

I hear nothing important from the Mexican frontier. Some Indian depredations are committed from time to time near Corpus Christi, and will claim my first attention after I can get established.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR.

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,"
Corpus Christi, Texas, Aug. 15, 1845. }

SIR:—I have the honor to report that, by New Orleans papers of the 7th inst, I have received intelligence of the preparatory steps taken by Mexico towards a declaration of war against the United States. I shall spare no exertions to meet suitably this probable change in the relations between the two countries; and the additional force ordered to join me, as announced in your communication of July 30th, will, I trust, enable me to do something more than maintain

a merely defensive attitude on the Nueces. This will depend upon the demonstrations made by Mexico along the Rio Grande, in regard to which the Secretary of War has solicited a report. I am enabled to say, upon information which is regarded as authentic, that General Arista was to leave Monterey on the 4th of this month for Matamoras, with one thousand five hundred men—five hundred being cavalry. I learn, from the same source, that there are five hundred regular troops at Matamoras. In regard to the force at other points on the Rio Grande, except the militia of the country, I have no information; nor do I hear that the reported concentration at Matamoras is for any purpose of invasion. I have but just arrived at this place, and hope in a few days to be able to obtain more full and precise intelligence concerning the movements of the Mexicans. I shall not fail to communicate promptly to the department all such intelligence upon which I think reliance can be placed.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding.

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,"
Corpus Christi, Texas, Aug. 30, 1845. }

SIR:—I respectfully report the arrival at this post of seven companies of the 7th infantry, under Major Brown, and two companies of volunteer artillery under Major Gally. Major Seawell's company, I am informed, was ordered back to Baton Rouge by General Gaines, and some small detachments of that regiment were also left at several posts. I have retained one