

CHAPTER X.

Review of the condition and prospects of the country at the time of declaring independence—military affairs resumed—volunteers from the United States—Col. Johnson marches for the Rio Grande—is surprised and defeated—Santa Anna with an army of eight thousand men invades Texas—unprepared state of the country—the Alamo besieged by Santa Anna—heroic defence of Travis—fall of the Alamo—operations at Goliad—Captain Holland's account—Fanning and his army surrender as prisoners of war, and are massacred by order of Santa Anna.

SINCE the first provisional government went into operation, and especially since the surrender of the Alamo, the last Mexican post in the country, Texas had been, *de facto*, an independent state. She had, however, hitherto acknowledged a qualified dependence upon the federal government of Mexico—such as the states of this union owe to the general government; and this dependence, so far from seeking to throw off, she had faithfully observed, and indeed, striven to maintain, until the authority to which it was due, no longer existed even in name.

The people of Texas had now put forth their pretensions to the rank of an independent nation, and published them to the world in solemn form, not from vain pride, but from stern necessity. We shall not pause here to inquire into their right. The inquiry cannot be necessary, since the measure was forced upon them; or if indeed there was an alternative presented to them, and rejected with becoming scorn, the people of Texas will never be reproached for having rejected such an alternative, by any faithful citizen of the United States; to him it must appear that the motive was imperative. Had the measure been adopted a few months earlier, in the midst of the confidence inspired by the astonishing success which had crowned the efforts of a few armed citizens, it might have been pronounced a mere ebullition of pride, from which she would shrink in the day of trial, when threatened with real dangers, or overtaken by adverse fortune; but never, in the eyes of the world, was Texas further from independence, than at the moment which was chosen to proclaim it. It was done in face of the chief, whose right was disputed, surrounded by a force which had been pronounced

sufficient to crush the country at a blow. A chief whose military career had hitherto been attended with unvaried success; whose repeated victories had acquired him the reputation of the ablest general of the age, the appellation of "The Napoleon of the South." However men may differ in opinion about the right, or the expediency of a declaration of independence by the people of Texas; all must respect the courage which called it forth in face of the dangers which surrounded them.

We have here anticipated in some degree, the events of the second campaign. This seemed to be necessary in order to bring down our history of the civil affairs of the country to an important epoch, as well as to avoid a too frequent interruption of the narrative. We will now return to the military affairs of the country, which were left at the surrender of San Antonio.

This event having closed the campaign, the Texian citizens of whom the volunteer army was mostly composed, returned to their homes, and the forts of San Antonio and Goliad were left to be garrisoned by the volunteers coming in from the United States. During the months of December and January, probably not less than a thousand young men arrived in Texas from the United States. Direct appeals had been made to their sympathies, by various addresses from the Texian authorities at home, and from their agents in the United States. But the best and most effectual appeal, was the simple fact, that their brethren were doing battle in the cause of liberty, against fearful odds.

Much has been said of the character of Texian volunteers, too much indeed, by those who know *little* of the men, and still *less* of the motive that led them to the field. It was an impulse that finds a response only in kindred bosoms. The generosity that withholds *nothing*, but pours out its *blood* like the mountain stream, in the cause of the oppressed, can be little understood by him who withholds all, and whose sympathies flow only for the oppressor. There are those who envy La Fayette the fame acquired by a like sacrifice, to whom nature has denied the courage to imitate his example; and there are those who envy him only for the accidents of birth and fortune, which he sacrificed in such a cause. The former were never found among the Texian volunteers, and the latter will condemn all who were, and scoff at the generous impulse which led them there.

Finding that the enemy had been already driven from the country, and no certain intelligence that he was about to return, and finding also that their support would be a heavy burden to the people, many of the volunteers, and especially those who were unprovided with means for their own support, returned to the United States before the opening of the campaign. Those who remained were a portion of them, scattered through the country

waiting a demand for their services, but the greater number joined the garrisons at San Antonio and Goliad;—the Texians still remaining at their homes, waiting also a call for their services.

Continual rumors were afloat during the winter, that the Mexican chief was preparing to invade the country; and reports frequently came that he had already entered it, and was advancing upon San Antonio. Alarm and preparation followed, which soon subsided on a contradiction of the report. Rumors were also afloat of commotions and insurrections in different parts of Mexico. And many believed that in the unsettled state of the country, Santa Anna could neither invade Texas himself, nor spare any considerable force for that purpose.

In this state of things, an expedition against Metamoras was much talked of among the volunteers, and for this purpose most of those at San Antonio were drawn to Goliad. Col. James W. Fannin, a brave and accomplished officer, who commanded at the latter place, finding the expedition disapproved by the authorities of Texas, declined proceeding. Colonels Grant and Johnson, notwithstanding, determined to go on with about one hundred volunteers, who were willing to accompany them. About the last of February, they had reached the neighborhood of San Patricio, and having neither seen, nor heard of an enemy, were moving carelessly on, unsuspecting of danger, when they were surprised by a large force, (which proved to be the van of the right division of the invading army,) and nearly all cut off. Col. Johnson, with two or three others, escaped and brought the first intelligence of the approach of the enemy.

At this time the whole Texian force in the field did not exceed five hundred men; and an army of eight thousand Mexicans in two divisions, had already advanced far into the country, and was rapidly approaching the settlements. Such was the rumor that reached San Felipe, and spread over the country, about the first of March. The effect of this report upon the minds of the Texian people, was neither what it ought to have been, nor what might have been expected, in view of the heroic courage they had exhibited during the last campaign. So much may be said in general terms. But the degree of censure to which they are justly liable, will best appear from a detail of the principal facts and circumstances which may be supposed to have exerted an important, not to say controlling, influence over their minds at the time.

The events of the last campaign, so flattering to themselves, and so discreditably to their enemy, were little calculated to stimulate to vigorous effort in preparing for another. That vigilance, which keeps a wakeful eye upon the slightest movement of an enemy, the sure precursor of success in war, had been lulled

asleep, by too much confidence in their own prowess, and too great contempt for their enemy. From the proneness of the human mind to fly from one extreme to the other, there was now great danger that this high-wrought confidence would be succeeded by a panic, and unhappily for the Texians, there were too many other circumstances to aid in producing such a result. It was certain that the enemy in great force had reached the very threshold of their settlements, while they were wholly unprepared to meet him. This force, which, when truly represented, must in their condition be sufficiently appalling, was variously exaggerated; different reports making it from ten to twenty thousand men. The offended chief had come with the declared intention, if he found resistance, to spare neither age nor sex, but to lay the country in utter desolation; and as an earnest of his sincerity, he had come with his hands yet stained with the blood of the Zacatecans.

He had advanced thus far with a celerity, which from the condition of the country, would have been deemed scarcely practicable. His arrival therefore, in the heart of the settlements, might be almost daily expected. And should they now leave their homes to meet him in the field, uncertain of his progress or of his course, their families, with no one to give notice of his approach, or aid them in flight, might fall a prey to worse than savage barbarity.

That Santa Anna in person would presume to leave Mexico when so recently seated in power, and the elements of opposition so powerful as they were believed to be at home, or that in the impoverished state of the country, he could muster sufficient resources to support a large force at home, and bring another across land into Texas, had been deemed incredible by many, and not a few of the most intelligent men in the United States, as well as in Texas, had partaken of this incredulity. It required indeed, to accomplish it, the power to extract from the country its resources, for some years in anticipation.

But had all the circumstances of his coming been known, saving the time, which he could easily conceal, separated as the countries were, by hundreds of miles of almost untrodden wilds, and all intercourse prohibited by land or water, the Texians had no resources to keep themselves constantly in the field to await his approach. It was difficult even, while at home on their farms, to subsist the small force then in the field. They could only have concentrated this force, kept a sharp look out, and rushed to the conflict when the enemy appeared. Had this been done, and a skill and intrepidity been exerted, equal to that displayed in the last campaign, it is probable the historian of Texas might have been spared from recording events whose first recital

was everywhere listened to with a chill of horror; which brought mourning and desolation into many families, scattered over this whole continent, and which came near extinguishing for ever the new risen star of Texas.

It has been already remarked, that the invading army had entered Texas in two divisions; the right commanded by Gen. Urea, was following the line of the coast, and advancing upon Goliad, while the left, commanded by Santa Anna in person, was marching upon San Antonio, by an interior route. The van of the latter, consisting of more than a thousand men, arrived in the neighborhood of the town, on the 23d day of February. The Texian garrison, consisting of one hundred and fifty men, mostly volunteers from the United States, who had arrived in Texas since the beginning of the war, was commanded by Col. W. B. Travis.

The garrison, on discovering the approach of the enemy in so large a force, retired into the Alamo, carrying with them all the provisions they could collect, in order to be prepared for a siege. On the morning of the 23d, they received a summons from the Mexican commandant, demanding a surrender of the fort, and threatening in case of a refusal to put the garrison to the sword. This was answered by a shot, and a cannonading now commenced on both sides, which was kept up, with perhaps a few intervals of repose, until the 6th of March. In the meantime, on the side of the Mexicans, successive bodies of troops were daily coming in, until on the 3d of March, an army of 4000 men, with Santa Anna at its head, invested the fort, defended by the little band of volunteers before mentioned, aided now by the services of some thirty Texian citizens, from Gonzales and its neighborhood, who had found their way into the fort since the enemy had invested it.

The measures adopted by Travis to apprise the authorities and people of Texas, and commandant at Goliad, of his situation, that they might hasten reinforcements to his relief, will best appear from the subjoined letters; they contain also interesting details of the progress of the siege, and serve to exhibit the spirit and mind of the man; they constitute the only legacy of a brave man; and the patriot soldier who would form himself upon the most perfect model, need not look beyond the letters and the example of Travis.

(PROCLAMATION AND LETTER OF TRAVIS.)

"To the People of Texas and all Americans in the world.

*"Commandancy of the Alamo,
Bejar, Feb. 24, 1836.*

"Fellow citizens and compatriots.

*"I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans, under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual bombardment and cannonade for twenty-four hours, and have not lost a man. The enemy have demanded a surrender at discretion; otherwise the garrison is to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the summons with a cannon-shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then I call on you in the name of liberty, patriotism, and every thing dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all despatch. The enemy are receiving reinforcements daily, and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. Though this call may be neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible, and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honour and that of his country. *Victory or death!**

W. BARRETT TRAVIS, Lieut. Col. Com't."

"To the President of the Convention.

*"Commandancy of the Alamo,
Bejar, March 3d, 1836.*

"SIR,—In the present confusion of the political authorities of the country, and in the absence of the commander-in-chief, I beg leave to communicate to you the situation of this garrison. You have doubtless already received my official report of the action of the 25th ult. made on that day to General Samuel Houston together with the various communications heretofore sent by express; I shall therefore confine myself to what has transpired since that date. From the 25th to the present date, the enemy have kept up a bombardment from two howitzers, and a heavy cannonade from two long nine pounders, mounted on a battery, on the opposite side of the river, at the distance of four hundred yards from our walls. During this period, the enemy have been busily employed, in encircling us with entrenched encampments on all sides, at the following distances, viz. in Bejar, four hundred yards west, in Lavilleta, three hundred yards south, at the powder-house, one thousand yards east of south, on the ditch, eight hundred yards northeast, and at the old mill eight hundred yards

north. Notwithstanding all this, a company of thirty-two men from Gonzales made their way in to us on the morning of the 1st inst. at 3 o'clock, and Col. Bonham, (a courier from Gonzales,) got in this morning at 11 o'clock, without molestation.

"I have so fortified this place, that the walls are generally proof against cannon balls, and I still continue to entrench on the inside, and strengthen the walls by throwing up the earth. At least two hundred shells have fallen inside of our works without having injured a single man. Indeed, we have been so fortunate as not to lose a man from any cause, and we have killed many of the enemy. The spirits of my men are still high, although they have had much to depress them. We have contended for ten days against an enemy whose numbers are variously estimated at from 1500 to 6000 men, with Gen. Ramirer Siesma, and Col. Batres, the aides-de-camp of Santa Anna, at their head. A report was circulated that Santa Anna himself was with the enemy, but I think it false. A reinforcement of about 1000 men is now entering Bejar from the west, and I think it more than probable, from the rejoicing we hear, that Santa is now in town.

"Col. Fannin is said to be on the march to this place with reinforcements, but I fear it is not true, as I have repeatedly sent to him for aid without receiving any. Col. Bonham, my special messenger, arrived at La Bahia fourteen days ago, with a request for aid, and on the arrival of the enemy in Bejar, ten days ago, I sent an express to Col. Fannin, which arrived at Goliad next day, urging him to send us reinforcements; *none have yet arrived.* I look to the colonies alone for aid; unless it arrives soon I shall have to fight the enemy on his own terms. I will however do the best I can under the circumstances, and I feel confident that the determined value and desperate courage heretofore evinced by my men will not fail them in the last struggle, and although they may be sacrificed to the vengeance of a Gothic enemy, the victory will cost the enemy so dear that it will be worse for him than a defeat. I hope your honorable body will hasten on reinforcements, ammunition and provisions, to our aid, as soon as possible. We have provisions for twenty days, for the men we have; our supply of ammunition is limited; at least five hundred pounds of cannon powder, and two hundred rounds of six, nine, twelve, and eighteen pound cannon balls, ten kegs of rifle powder, and a supply of lead, should be sent to this place without delay, under a sufficient guard. If these things are promptly sent, and large reinforcements are hastened to this frontier, this neighborhood will be the great and decisive battle-ground. The power of Santa Anna is to be met here or in the colonies. We had better meet them here, than to suffer a war of desolation to rage in our settlements. A blood-red banner waves from the church

of Bejar, and in the camp above us, in token that the war is one of vengeance against rebels; they have declared us as such, and demanded that we should surrender at discretion, or that this garrison should be put to the sword; their threats have had no influence on me or my men, but to make all fight with desperation, and that high-souled courage which characterizes the patriot who is willing to die in defence of his country's liberty and his own honor.

"The citizens of this municipality are all our enemies except those who have joined us heretofore; we have but three Mexicans now in the fort. Those who have not joined us in this extremity, should be declared public enemies, and their property should aid in paying the expenses of the war. The bearer of this will give your honorable body a statement more in detail should he escape through the enemy's lines. *God and Texas, liberty or death.*

Your obedient servant,
W. BARRETT TRAVIS,
Lieut. Col. Com't."

No other communications from the lamented Travis, or any of his associates in the siege, ever reached the authorities or people of Texas. Many fancy sketches of the further progress of the siege, and the conduct of individuals who composed the garrison, have been published. The following is all that can be relied upon as authentic.*

"From the beginning of the siege, (Feb. 23d,) to the 6th of March, the Mexicans had made frequent attempts to storm the fort, which were as often repelled, generally with great loss on the side of the enemy. The garrison were occupied night and day, in fighting and watching the foe, and strengthening their works, (which were large, and required at least five hundred men to man them well.) On the night of the 5th, they had been working until nearly exhausted; they retired to rest two hours before day. That morning had been chosen by Santa Anna to make a more desperate assault than had hitherto been attempted,

* This account our informant derived from a colored servant boy of Col. Travis, the only male survivor of the garrison. Moved to compassion by his age, or more probably by his complexion, the enemy had spared him; and he remains, the only monument of Mexican sparing mercy. This boy had been actively employed in waiting on the garrison, during the last terrible conflict, and relates these few facts with great apparent simplicity and truth. The circumstances of the attack by the Mexicans, came from a Mexican officer taken prisoner at the battle of San Jacinto, who had been actively engaged in storming the Alamo, and whose account of the closing scene also, corroborates that of the colored boy.

and for that purpose he had drawn up his infantry around the fort, and posted his cavalry outside, with orders to shoot down every man who turned back, and thus, about an hour before day, the Mexican chief drove his own forces to the attack. Most of the Texian sentinels, worn out with fatigue, had fallen asleep, and were killed at their posts. On the first alarm, the assailants were on and within the walls, in great numbers. The garrison soon rallied and attacked the assailants with the energy of desperation; twice they cleared the yard and the walls.

'They fought like brave men long and well,
They piled that ground with foemen slain.'

But overpowered by numbers, and covered with wounds, they sunk, one by one, with weariness and loss of blood; one man alone was found alive when the Mexicans had gained full possession of the fort; he was immediately shot by order of the Mexican chief."

The victory must be ascribed to the Mexicans, since there was no man left to dispute it. But the heroic Travis had redeemed his pledge. "It cost them dearer than a defeat." More than a thousand Mexicans had fallen by the weapons of the garrison, since the commencement of the siege.

While these events were passing at San Antonio, Col. Fannin was at Goliad, ninety miles below, with a garrison of about four hundred men. He had received a letter from Col. Travis, apprising him of the attack upon San Antonio, and requesting reinforcements, and was preparing to comply with the request, when Col. Johnson and the other survivors of the party who had been surprised near San Patricio, arrived at Goliad, bringing intelligence of the fate of their companions, and of the approach of a large division of the Mexican army towards that post. The strength of this division was reported to be between three and four thousand men, with a large body of cavalry, whose arrival in the neighborhood might be daily expected. It will be readily seen, that under these circumstances, Fannin could spare no part of his force for the relief of San Antonio, unless he abandoned his own post, which was deemed as important as the other. He therefore made the best preparation in his power for an attack or a siege, and awaited the arrival of the enemy.

For an account of the further progress of events at Goliad, and of the tragic fate of Fannin and most of his associates, we avail ourselves of the following communication from Capt. Benjamin H. Holland, who was a captain of artillery, in active service until the surrender. This account is corroborated by the statements of other survivors of the massacre. It has, too, the char-

acter of a semi-official, as there was no other officer of equal rank among the survivors, and as such it was ordered for publication by the President ad interim of Texas.

"On or about the 12th of March, orders were issued by Gen. Houston, to destroy the town and fort of La Bahia, and the forces to fall back to Gonzales, to unite with him and concentrate all the Texian forces.

"Prior to the receipt of these orders, Captain King's company was ordered to the Mission, (a distance of about twenty-five miles,) in order to relieve some families who were in danger of falling into the enemy's hands. Upon their arrival at the Mission they were met and attacked by a large body of the enemy, and after a gallant and well-sustained fight, retreated in an orderly and judicious manner to the church, where they sustained themselves against a very superior number of Mexicans and Indians with but small loss to themselves, but a severe loss to the enemy, until relieved by the Georgia battalion under Col. Ward, who had been sent to their aid. The separation of our forces caused us to delay our retreat. An express was sent to Col. Ward, at the Mission, to fall back and join the forces at Goliad with all possible despatch, or should he be cut off by the enemy, (of whose advance from San Patricio we had intelligence,) to make good his retreat through the Gaudaloupe bottoms, and join the main army at Victoria.

"On the 16th our scouts brought intelligence that a body of the enemy, 1500 strong, were on the San Antonio road. Many of the cannon having been dismounted preparatory to a retreat, we immediately remounted them, as we anticipated an attack that night. About 12 o'clock the picket guard gave the alarm, and retreated into the fort; it however proved to be only the enemy's spies reconnoitring. On the 17th the enemy forded the San Antonio river and showed themselves at the old Mission, a distance from our fort of four miles. This day we destroyed the whole town of La Bahia by fire, battering down all ruined walls, so as to secure us a full sweep of the enemy, should they attack the fort.

"March 18.—The enemy still hovering round the old Mission, a council of war was called, when it was decided, that inasmuch as our ammunition was not sufficient to sustain a siege, and as our provisions were short, and as we were well aware of the overwhelming force of the enemy, it was advisable to fall back to Victoria.

"This night we made every preparation for an early retreat in the morning and by daylight every one was in marching order: before day a scouting party was despatched to ascertain the position of the enemy, who returned shortly after daylight and re-

ported the lower road being clear. Col. Horton was then ordered by Col. Fannin to post all, advance, rear, right and left guard.

March 19th, at about half-past six, A. M., took the line of retreat towards the lower ford; and about 9 A. M., got our baggage and cannon across. We had nine pieces of brass artillery, consisting of one six-inch howitzer, three short sixes, two long and two short fours, with several small pieces for throwing musket balls. We then commenced our advance towards Victoria. We had advanced several miles without receiving any intelligence of the enemy by our videttes, and at about 10 A. M. halted to graze our cattle, and take some refreshment on the outskirts of some timber we had just passed. We tarried about three fourths of an hour, when we again took up the line of march. We had advanced about four miles into the prairie, when we had intelligence of the enemy's approach. Col. Horton's cavalry, who were ordered in the rear, had neglected to remain in that position; and, in consequence, the enemy had advanced within the distance of from one to two miles, ere they were discovered by the infantry in the rear; and almost simultaneously they were descried upon both flanks, evidently with the design of surrounding us. The enemy had now formed a semicircle on our right and left, and as we had no means of moving our artillery but by exhausted and worn-out men, were fast surrounding us. Captains Hurst and Holland of the artillery were ordered to the rear, to keep up a retreating fire, under cover of which the army advanced about a mile and a half in the face of the enemy. It now became necessary for us to take a position, as we were entirely surrounded, our cavalry cut off from us and escaped, leaving us now two hundred and fifty effective men, consisting of the following companies:—

New Orleans Greys—Captain Pellis.
 Red Rovers—Captain Jack Shackelford, from Alabama.
 Mustangs—Captain Duval.
 Mobile Greys—Captain McManaman.
 Regulars—Captain Westover.
 1st Company Artillery—Captain Hurst.
 2d do. do. —Captain Holland.
 3d do. do. —Capt. Schrusnecki, a Polish engineer.

“ We were about three hundred yards to the left of the road, in a valley, with an elevation towards the road, of about six feet in the whole distance; we were unfortunately obliged to take that very disadvantageous position, in consequence of our having pursued our advance so far in order to gain the woods. We drew our wagons into a cluster, formed ourselves into an oblong circle around them, and posted our artillery in positions to defend it:

the circle was about 49 feet of shortest central diameter, and about 60 feet of longest diameter. It was now 1 o'clock, P. M., at which time we were attacked on all sides by the enemy, with a brisk fire of musketry: we were ordered not to fire, until the word of command was given, in order to draw the enemy within rifle-shot. We reserved our fire for about ten minutes, and several were wounded in our ranks previous to our firing. At the request of the officers, the artillery was permitted to open fire. The wind was blowing slightly from the N. E., and the smoke of our cannon covered the enemy, under which they made a desperate charge, but were repulsed with a very severe loss. Our cannon was loaded with cannisters of musket balls, and the howitzer with grist. In this manner, the action was kept up with great fury by the enemy; charge after charge being made by the cavalry and infantry, and always repelled by a heavy loss on their part. Our men behaved nobly; and, although surrounded by overwhelming numbers, not a change of countenance could be seen.

“ Thus was the battle kept up; and upon the repulse of each charge, column upon column of the enemy were seen to fall, like bees before smoke. Here would be seen horses flying in every direction without riders, and there dismounted cavalry making their escape on foot, while the field was literally covered with dead bodies. It was a sorry sight to see our small circle: it had become muddy with blood; Col. Fannin had been so badly wounded at the first or second fire as to disable him, the wounded shrieking for water which we had not to give them. The fight continued until dusk, when the enemy retreated, leaving us masters of the field, with ten men killed and wounded, while the enemy lay around heap upon heap. We possessed a great advantage over the Mexicans, they having no artillery, and we having nine brass pieces, with which we kept up an incessant fire of musket balls.

“ It now became prudent to take measures as to our next procedure: accordingly, the officers were all summoned to Col. Fannin, where he lay wounded, and the question was, whether we should maintain our present position, or retreat. It was carried that we should sustain ourselves as long as possible; consequently, we commenced heaving up a redoubt, some three feet above the mean level of the prairie, exclusive of the dyke.

“ The night was now very dark and cloudy, drizzling with rain and misty fog: the enemy encompassed us, and kept up a continual sound to charge, so that we appeared to be surrounded with bugles. We had with us 1000 spare muskets, which we loaded, and each man took an equal share, our cannon ammunition being nearly exhausted. Daylight broke upon us in this