

one who had a fearful interest in the scene, we forbear further comment. The deed is sufficiently characterised by a simple record of the facts.

In dismissing the subject, however, we will introduce one other witness to speak for us, who also bore a part in the tragic scene, different indeed from the last. He was an instrument of the assassin, (and as it would appear from his language, an unwilling instrument,) in consummating the foul deed. We extract the following from a letter written by a Mexican officer after the massacre:—

“This day, Palm Sunday, March 27, has been to me a day of most heartfelt sorrow. At six in the morning, the execution of four hundred and twelve American prisoners was commenced, and continued till eight, when the last of the number was shot. At eleven commenced the operation of burning their bodies. But what an awful scene did the field present, when the prisoners were executed, and fell dead in heaps! And what spectator could view it without horror! They were all young, the oldest not more than thirty, and of fine florid complexions. When the unfortunate youths were brought to the place of death, their lamentations and the appeals which they uttered to Heaven, in their own language, with extended arms, kneeling or prostrate on the earth, were such as might have caused the very stones to cry out in compassion.”

## CHAPTER XI.

*Reception of the intelligence of Santa Anna's invasion, at the seat of the Texian government—Gen. Houston's appeal to the citizens—he appoints a rendezvous at Gonzales—proceeds there by a forced march—is informed of the fall of Alamo—retreats upon the Colorado—learns Fannin's surrender—retreats to the Brazos—Mexicans advance to San Felipe—General Houston learns the force of the interior division—decides to give them battle—leaves his position upon the Brazos—arrives near Harrisburgh—capture of the Mexican Courier—Deaf Smith—movement of Santa Anna to Harrisburgh and New Washington—the hostile armies meet—affair of the 20th—number and character of the opposing forces—their position described—official account of the battle of San Jacinto.*

HAVING brought the bloody drama, which was acted on the western frontier at the beginning of the campaign, to its closing scene, we turn back a few days to the time that notice of the arrival of the invading army at San Antonio first reached Washington. This was on the morning of the second day of March, and previous to this, no certain intelligence that a Mexican had crossed the Rio Bravo, with hostile intentions, had reached that place. It was probably a part of the plan of the campaign with Santa Anna to surprise the Texians, and in this he had fully succeeded. The news that San Antonio was already besieged by two thousand men, came accompanied with all the circumstances of the advance of the invading army in two divisions, and that Santa Anna was either at San Antonio, or on his way there to direct in person the military operations of the campaign. There was nothing kept back. All the astounding facts came at once, with many exaggerations, rendering them still more fearful and appalling. It was reported that the strength of both divisions could not be less than fifteen thousand men; that the garrison at San Antonio had already been overcome and put to the sword, and that the enemy were on the march for the Colorado.

It will be recollected that the Texian convention, clothed with full powers to declare independence, and form a constitution, were then in session at Washington; and it was at this dark hour, in face of the impending storm which threatened to lay their country

in utter desolation, that the delegates of the people of Texas adopted a declaration of independence, and put their names to the instrument.

General Houston, the commander-in-chief of the Texian army was also at Washington, on the receipt of the foregoing intelligence. From the day of his appointment, he had made unsparring efforts to furnish the means of equipping and subsisting a small army upon the frontier, and for this purpose, every available resource of the country had been put in requisition; but these were few indeed, and his progress had been slow and discouraging.

The savages upon the frontier, probably excited by the emissaries of Santa Anna, had, during the winter, assumed a hostile attitude, and the commander-in-chief found it necessary to engage personally, in various measures of menace and pacification, to relieve the frontier citizens from apprehensions from that quarter, that they might be ready to take the field against the Mexicans when occasion should demand it.

To embody the citizens, and march with them to the western frontier, when the whole resources of the country were scarcely sufficient for the transportation of a supply of provisions, necessary for their subsistence for a single month, was not to be thought of. There was no other feasible course but to await the event and call them out on the first alarm. That alarm had now come, but the call had come a distance of nearly two hundred miles, crossing rivers and traversing a country without roads or bridges, and over the deep soil of Texas, in the rainy month of March. Its progress had unavoidably been slow, and so must be the response, in spite of human effort.

The commander-in-chief having appointed Gonzales, as a place of general rendezvous, immediately despatched couriers to all the principal settlements with the following order:—

## ARMY ORDERS.

} "Convention Hall,  
Washington, March 2d, 1836.

"War is raging on the frontiers. Bejar is besieged by two thousand of the enemy under the command of Gen. Siesma. Reinforcements are on their march to unite with the besieging army. By the last report, our force in Bejar was only one hundred and fifty men strong. The citizens of Texas must rally to the aid of our army or it will perish. Let the citizens of the East march to the combat. The enemy must be driven from our soil, or desolation will accompany their march upon us. INDEPENDENCE IS DECLARED it must be maintained. Immediate action united

with valor, alone can achieve the great work. The services of all are forthwith required in the field.

"SAM. HOUSTON,

*"Commander-in-chief of the Army.*

"P. S. It is rumored that the enemy are on their march to Gonzales, and that they have entered the colonies. The fate of Bejar is unknown. The country must and shall be defended. The patriots of Texas are appealed to in behalf of their bleeding country.

"S. H."

After sending out this brief but "stirring" appeal, Houston proceeded to muster all the force that could be collected in the neighboring settlements, and commenced a forced march for Gonzales, his place of rendezvous.

Meantime, the same alarming intelligence that reached Washington on the morning of the second, had previously spread through most of the settlements west of the Brazos. That a panic to some extent was the consequence, we have before intimated. Indeed, in view of all the circumstances, the absence of it might be deemed incredible. Men, who might perhaps have acted bravely, where personal safety alone was concerned, became cowards in contemplating the indefinable dangers to which their families might be exposed in their absence. Many therefore proceeded to remove their families before the enemy, instead of manfully facing the enemy and driving him back from their families. There are men however, who cannot be reached by a panic, and in no country is the proportion greater than in Texas. This class of men hastened from all quarters to the frontiers, and on the 7th of March, when Houston reached Gonzales, he found himself at the head of about five hundred men. On the 8th a Mexican brought in a report of the fall of the Alamo, and the fate of the garrison.

A company, consisting of most of the men able to bear arms in and about Gonzales, had but a few days before marched to the relief of the garrison. They had bravely broken through the lines of the besieging army and reached the fort in safety, but to become early victims to numbers too overwhelming to be resisted. Tidings of their fate now first reached their relatives. "No human pen (says our correspondent, one of the aids of Gen. Houston,) can describe the scene that these sad tidings produced in the little town of Gonzales. Not less than twenty women, with young and helpless children, were made widows. Fathers had lost sons, brother had lost brother. In short, there was not a family.

in the once happy and flourishing settlement of Gonzales, that did not mourn the death of some murdered relative. The soldier too partook of the general affliction of the citizens of the place, for they too had lost many a brother, men fit to have stood by Cæsar. For several hours after the receipt of the intelligence, not a sound was heard, save the wild shrieks of the women, and the heart-rending screams of the fatherless children. Little groups of men might be seen in various corners of the town, brooding over the past, and speculating of the future, but they scarce spoke above a whisper, for here the public and private grief was alike heavy, and sunk deep into the heart of the rudest soldier.

"It was suggested that the report brought by the Mexican might be an invention of the enemy, although there were too many corroborating circumstances to leave a serious doubt of the awful truth. It was deemed expedient that not only the fate of the Alamo should be known beyond a doubt, but that the position and strength of the enemy should if possible be ascertained. Accordingly the next day, Deaf Smith (the Harvey Birch of the Texian revolution,) and two others, of whom our correspondent was one, volunteered, at the call of the general, to proceed upon this hazardous service. Having advanced about twenty miles on the route to San Antonio, they discovered at a long distance on the prairie in front, three persons approaching on horseback. Supposing at first they might be a Mexican scouting party, they pressed rapidly forward, but on coming nearer they discovered a *bonnet*. The party proved to be the unfortunate Mrs. Dickinson with an infant in her arms, accompanied by Ben, a servant of Almonte, and the boy Sam, the faithful and devoted servant of the lamented Travis. Mrs. D. and the others, after recovering from the fright, occasioned by the unceremonious charge of the advancing party, confirmed the report of the Mexican, in regard to the fall of the Alamo, and the fate of the garrison. The party brought also a sort of bragging proclamation from Gen. Siesma, whom they had left that morning on the advance to Gonzales, at the head of a force which they estimated variously from three to ten thousand men." The party then returned with the intelligence thus obtained, to the camp at Gonzales. On the receipt of which, it was decided by Houston, in accordance with the general sentiment of his officers, to burn the town of Gonzales, and fall back upon the Colorado, in the expectation of meeting reinforcements and increasing the strength of his little army. The afflicted inhabitants of the settlement of course accompanied the army in their retreat, and availed themselves of its aid, in taking along their few valuable moveables.

Having crossed the Colorado, the Texian general took a posi-

tion on its banks, which he continued to occupy until the twenty-fifth of the month, when learning of Fannin's surrender, and the probability that Santa Anna was concentrating his two divisions to attack his position, and having thus far been disappointed in his expected reinforcements, he decided upon a further retreat to the Brazos.

The settlements between these two rivers were now quite deserted of inhabitants, most of whom had crossed the last mentioned river, and were moving east toward the Trinity, and by the time the Texian general had pitched his camp upon the Brazos, the flying inhabitants had all crossed the Trinity, and the whole country west of that river was now occupied alone by the two armies. The position now chosen by Gen. Houston, was on the west bank of the Brazos, about twenty miles above the town of San Felipé. He threw up some slight fortifications about his camp, such as time and means would permit, and waited the advance and attack of the enemy, or for the disclosure of any favorable circumstances that would seem to justify an attack on his part. His fearless and faithful scouts all the while keeping a watchful eye upon the advancing enemy, and almost daily reporting his progress.

Strong hopes had been entertained, that many of the citizens who had been engaged in removing their families out of danger, would, on placing them east of the Trinity, return and join the ranks of the army, but these hopes were not to be realized, and all the reinforcements which had joined the army, since the retreat from Gonzales, left it still short of eight hundred effective men.

In the meantime, Santa Anna had not (as it was believed he would,) united the two divisions of his army, but both had crossed the Colorado and advanced by different routes for the Brazos. The one for San Felipé and the other for Brazoria, places ninety miles distant from each other.

A small company of Texians had been left at the latter place, with orders, on the near approach of the enemy, to set fire to the town, cross the river and retreat to the Texian camp, leaving the scouts to watch and report the next movement of the enemy.

From the report of his scouts now brought to his camp, on the fourteenth or fifteenth of April, Houston became enabled to make a tolerable correct estimate of the strength of the Mexican division, which had reached San Felipé, and finding it greatly below all previous reports, and that it would not present such a disparity of numbers as to weaken the hopes and confidence of his men, he determined to break up his camp, cross the Brazos and take a route which would probably place him in front of this division of the invading army. That the enemy on crossing the Brazos

would proceed first to Harrisburgh, was rendered probable, from the fact, that it was then the seat of the Texian government; the officers of which Santa Anna would be eager to secure, in order to wreak his vengeance upon the chief actors in the *rebellion*. An additional reason for his proceeding in that direction, existed in a small depot of military stores at New Washington, on the San Jacinto bay, of which the enemy would probably seek to possess himself.

Houston left his camp on the 16th, and by a forced march reached the Buffalo bayou, opposite Harrisburgh, a distance of fifty miles, on the evening of the 18th. The difficulties to be overcome in transporting his sick, his baggage, artillery and munitions, and a present supply of provisions, through a country entirely new, and destitute as Houston was of any suitable vehicle to facilitate the operation, must have been seen and felt, to be duly appreciated. The labor could have been performed only by such men as composed the army of San Jacinto.

While at this point, Houston was supplied by one of those accidents which often decide the fate of empires as well as armies, with all the intelligence he could possibly desire in regard to his enemy. A courier was brought in with a despatch, giving an account of Santa Anna's late movements, his present position and force, and designating the point next in view, and his intended route.

We have said the Texian general was supplied by accident, and if we had said that he was providentially supplied, the same idea would have been conveyed to our readers. But in this case as in thousands of others, results attained only by a courage, vigilance and foresight, unsurpassed among the cherished records of patriotic deeds, are called accidental, or providential, because the agent is deemed too undignified to be brought into view, when if the same deed had been performed by any man of exalted rank, full credit would have been given to the true agent, and all the world would have sung his praise.

For the injustice we had inadvertently done, by imputing to accident, what was justly due to a great and good man, (if greatness and goodness arise from services as difficult, valuable, and disinterested, as ever mortal man rendered in a just and holy cause,) we will now endeavor to atone, by rescuing the man, and his services from oblivion, so far as our humble work can achieve that object. To Erastus Smith, better known as Deaf Smith, who has been called the Harvey Birch of Texas, but who has been to Texas as a second providence, watching with sleepless vigilance the evil designs of her enemies, and thwarting them with a wisdom, a courage, and an energy in action, almost superhuman, was Texas indebted, for revealing to her defenders, in

this crisis of her fate, when about to strike the last blow in her behalf, all they could have desired to know, of the intentions of their enemy, if they had been privileged to read his heart. Smith had tracked the route of the enemy, he had foreseen the return of the courier, and duly estimating the value to his own country of the despatches with which he must be charged, he had stationed himself at a point he must necessarily pass, and the rest followed of course. No enemy of his country, on whom he had once fixed his eye, ever attempted to escape him, without ruing the day. He thus made himself master of that which possibly, nay probably, involved the destiny of his country, and if Texians were compelled to choose among mortals, one in whom the destinies of their country must be confided, every eye would turn to Deaf Smith. The narrow limits of this work have restricted us to a passing notice of the heroes of the Texian revolution. Indeed, but few among them, living or dead, have received at our hands even that poor tribute of our admiration. Yet why should we regret this, since deeds like theirs cannot fail to command the rich homage of those pens which, like Plutarch's, confer immortality on their subject.

We need not enlarge upon the value and importance of the intelligence with which the Texian general had been so opportunely furnished. To our readers who have the slightest acquaintance with military operations, it must appear obvious at a glance.

Houston having determined to hazard a battle, the time, the place, and the numerical force of his enemy at the moment of meeting, were considerations which must greatly influence, and might control the result. The two first might be accidental, or perhaps be at the choice of his enemy, and as to numbers his enemy might have it in his power to avoid the conflict, until he had concentrated his whole force. These considerations which continually presented themselves to perplex the mind of the Texian general, while occupied with other cares, sufficiently distracting, were now no longer dubious. The precise point where they could meet the enemy, the time with sufficient certainty, and the number they should meet there, was now disclosed to the Texians, and they had only to press forward and be the first to occupy the ground. This secured them not a victory but only a battle. This was the object of their present movement, and so much was now secured to them. But in this, however, they would have no advantage over their enemy. Neither party could then escape the conflict, unless by permission of the other. Thus on the evening of the 18th, the Texians could anticipate the battle of San Jacinto. But no one, it may be presumed, in the wildest dream of enthusiasm, if indeed such dreams were given at that gloomy hour, had then even a faint glimpse of the glorious result. They had deter-

mined to hazard all upon a blow, which, if ineffectual, they well knew must be fatal to their country and themselves, since Texas had no other army, and the enemy spared no prisoners. In a week, the enemy would reach the Sabine—the soil would drink the blood of the last of their race who had not crossed that river, and their beloved country, which had so lately come into existence, beautiful as Eve from the hand of her Maker, would be again blotted from the map of nations: even their own existence and that of their country must be staked upon the issue. The fate of Fannin, too, was before them, and his blood unavenged. The highest and holiest appeals, therefore, from the voice of duty, would come seconded by the calls of vengeance, to strengthen the heart and nerve the arm in the day of battle.

History furnishes few, if any examples, where men have engaged in a conflict of arms with higher or more powerful incentives, than those which may be supposed to have animated the Texians at the battle of San Jacinto; and the event was answerable to the preparation.

Santa Anna having crossed the Brazos at Fort Bend, thirty miles below San Felipe, had directed his march upon Harrisburgh, as Houston had anticipated; but the movement had taken place earlier than was expected. The Mexican chief, having been disappointed in his hopes of seizing upon the officers of the Texian government, who had gained intelligence of his approach, and taken their departure for Galveston Island, a few hours before his arrival, set fire to the town of Harrisburgh, and continued his march down the bay, to the depot of military stores at New Washington.

General Houston, after having gained intelligence of this movement of his enemy, through the capture of his courier before spoken of, on the evening of the 18th, and learning also his intention to return to Lynch's Ferry, near the mouth of Buffalo Bayou, in order to cross the San Jacinto on his way to Anahuac, pressed forward with his army for the point indicated, which he reached on the 20th; and before his army had time to prepare refreshments, the Mexican army appeared in view. Santa Anna had drawn up his army in battle array, and made some show of attacking Houston in his position, which was promptly met by the latter. A cannonading was opened for a short time on both sides, and some skirmishes took place between the opposing cavalry, and also between detached parties of infantry. The Mexicans, however, soon retired, and took a position three quarters of a mile distant from the Texian camp. Houston had not declined the offered battle, but willingly drew off his men when the enemy retired, desirous of invigorating them with sleep and refreshments, which they had been long without, before he led them to

the final conflict. The day closed by a very brilliant feat of arms, on the part of the Texian cavalry, in which Gen. Lamar, the present Vice President of Texas, who had then but recently arrived in the country, led a charge against the Mexican cavalry, with an intrepidity and success that would have done honor to Murat, the quondam king of Naples, in the midst of his splendid career of arms. Night now closed in upon the hostile armies; and the Texians, wearied nearly to exhaustion by previous forced marches night and day, slept soundly upon their arms.

On the part of the Mexicans, we would not be answerable for their quiet repose, since they had not been previously subjected to equal vigilance and fatigue. With half their number, it was the last sleep from which they would awake to the light of the sun; and reposing now, for the first time, in presence of the brothers of those whom they had so recently murdered in cold blood at Goliad. It would not be surprising, if the terrible retribution of the coming day had been shadowed forth in their dreams.

But we will leave them "to such repose as they could find," under the open canopy of heaven, in a Texas prairie, in the month of April, (which, with a quiet conscience, we have found to be not less refreshing and more invigorating than in the curtained chambers of the palace hotels of our commercial cities,) and improve the interval in presenting a summary account of the number and character of the forces of the hostile parties, and the positions they now occupied.

General Houston, before crossing the Buffalo Bayou, had selected a secure and covert position, in which he left his sick and baggage, under the protection of a small guard, that in the event of his defeat, they might remain concealed for some time from the enemy, until the sick should have time to recover, and possibly entirely escape his fury. The force with which he then proceeded to occupy his present position, amounted to something less than eight hundred men. Every state in this Union may claim the honor of having given birth to more or less of the heroes of San Jacinto: some few, and but very few, were European born. There was a small band of Mexicans, collected mostly about Nacogdoches, who at all times had ranged themselves under the "banner of liberty." A very considerable proportion of the whole force—perhaps more than half—had been for some time citizens of Texas. These were mostly planters; but among them were some of every profession, trade or occupation, to be found in the country: statesmen and lawyers, the most eminent in the country, were found acting as privates in the ranks, vying with the ploughman and the blacksmith's apprentice, in their efforts to discharge with alacrity and cheerfulness all the severe

and laborious duties of the common soldier. But few officers or privates had previously seen service in the field: they were all, however, more or less familiar with the use of arms. But in regard to any practical acquaintance with the military exercises and manœuvres of the schools, most of them had none—not even that which may be learned in the common “train bands” of the country. Such was the number and character of Houston’s force; and for the character of the general, it is known to the world, and needs neither delineation nor elucidation at our hands. It may be proper to remark, however, that this was his first effort in leading an army to battle.

On the side of the Mexicans, the military character of Santa Anna, their chief, is also well known. An experience of nearly twenty years in arms, during most of which he had been a general in active command, and during which he had led we know not how many armies to battle, and as often to victory, rendered him truly a formidable antagonist. He had brought with him, in his advance upon Harrisburgh, more than a thousand of his choicest troops, most of them veterans familiar with the manœuvres and the strife of battles, accompanied with generals and subordinate officers, also of long experience, who had been accustomed to execute his orders, and whose valor and skill had been often tried under his own eye. Such was the Mexican force at the meeting of the hostile armies on the 20th; and at nine o’clock in the morning of the 21st, it was reinforced by the arrival of Gen. Cos, with five hundred additional troops of a like character, making the whole Mexican force at the battle of the 21st, little short of sixteen hundred men. The positions occupied by the two armies on the evening of the 20th, which was also the battle-ground of San Jacinto, may be found on the maps of Texas, near the San Jacinto river, immediately below its confluence with the Buffalo Bayou. The Texian army encamped in a narrow open prairie, along the south bank of Buffalo Bayou. In front was a skirting of timber, of some forty or fifty yards in width, terminated again by open prairie, which extended to the Mexican line, three fourths of a mile distant. The Mexican army had encamped in a line, with its right resting upon the San Jacinto, and extending into a narrow skirting of wood along that stream. The space between the strip of wood along the Buffalo Bayou, in front of the Texian encampment and the Mexican line, was not entirely open prairie. At midway between, or perhaps nearest to the Mexican line, a point of timber extended from the San Jacinto into the prairie some two hundred yards; and nearly in the same range, further out from the river, was a small copse of wood, or, in Texian phrase, an island of timber.

The San Jacinto and Buffalo Bayou, though apparently small

streams upon the map, are deep channels of navigable waters; and eight miles distant, in the direction of the Brazos, was another deep creek, over which was a bridge, which had been burnt by Houston’s order, just before the battle of the 21st; so that the two armies were enclosed in a small space, from which it was scarcely possible for either to escape without the permission of the other.

Having proceeded thus far with the preliminaries of the battle of San Jacinto, we will no further anticipate the official account of the Texian general, which describes the disposition of the forces, and the order, progress and result of the battle, with a brevity and perspicuity which we could not hope to attain. We therefore close the present chapter, by subjoining that highly interesting document.

*“To his Excellency D. G. Burnett, President of the Republic of Texas:—*

*“Headquarters of the Army,  
San Jacinto, April 26th, 1836.*

*“SIR—I regret extremely that my situation since the battle of the 21st has been such as to prevent my rendering you my official report of the same, previous to this time.*

*“I have the honor to inform you, that on the evening of the 18th inst., after a forced march of 55 miles, which was effected in two days and a half, the army arrived opposite Harrisburgh. That evening a courier of the enemy was taken, from whom I learned that Gen. Santa Anna, with one division of his choice troops, had marched in the direction of Lynch’s Ferry, on the San Jacinto, burning Harrisburgh as he passed down. The army was ordered to be in readiness, to march early on the next morning. The main body effected a crossing over Buffalo Bayou, below Harrisburgh, on the morning of the 19th, having left the baggage, the sick, and a sufficient camp-guard in the rear. We continued the march throughout the night, making but one halt in the prairie for a short time, and without refreshment. At daylight, we resumed the line of march, and in a short distance our scouts encountered those of the enemy, and we received information that Gen. Santa Anna was at New Washington, and would that day take up the line of march for Anahuac, crossing at Lynch’s Ferry. The Texian army halted within half a mile of the ferry in some timber, and were engaged in slaughtering beeves, when the army of Santa Anna was discovered to be approaching in battle array, having been encamped at Clopper’s Point, eight miles below. Disposition was immediately made of our forces, and preparation for his reception. He took a position with his infantry, and artillery in the centre, occupying an*