

*Mr. D. B. B...*

AN ADDRESS

*with the regards of*  
*Ashbel Smith*

DELIVERED

IN THE CITY OF GALVESTON  
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ON THE 22d OF FEBRUARY, 1848, 5

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE

BIRTH DAY OF WASHINGTON,

AND OF THE

BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.

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BY ASHBEL SMITH.

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News Office; Galveston,  
W. RICHARDSON, PUBLISHER.

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Published in conformity with the unanimous vote of the citizens of Galveston, in  
public meeting, assembled in the Methodist Church, on the 22nd of February,  
1848; ROBERT HOWARD, Esq., Chairman.

# ADDRESS.

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At the Ordnance Depôt in Galveston, on the 22d of February, 1848, there was a discharge of cannon at intervals of fifteen minutes, under the orders of the Superintendent, in commemoration of the day.

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## LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—FELLOW CITIZENS :

Why booms that gun over our peaceful city? It is the 22d of February—a day dear to every American: it is the birthday of the Father of his Country—of him who was “first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen.” It has ever been one of the great festal days of the republic; it has now a new claim to the grateful remembrance and celebration of the patriot.

In Mexico, some three hundred miles beyond the Rio Grande, there is an irregular and broken plain, partially encompassed by mountains, forming the hacienda of Buena Vista; a name expressive of the picturesque and commanding beauty which greets the eye of the beholder. On the 22d of February, 1847, as the sun rose over this beautiful plain, its rays gilded the arms and encampment of five thousand soldiers. The stars and stripes that waved over them told whence they came. At length, shouts loud, eager and joyous, rend the air. Is it to welcome friends? No. Over the distant hills are descried numerous bodies of armed men, they too hurrying to the same spot with the eagerness of hate. An army of twenty thousand Mexican soldiers, commanded by General Santa Anna, is soon arrayed upon the same plain. Buena Vista becomes a battle field. The Mexicans had confidence in their commander-in-chief. General Santa Anna then first appeared on the field in the present war; the prestige of his military renown had not yet been destroyed. They had confidence also in the overpowering superiority of their numbers—twenty thousand against less than five thousand. On the other hand the Americans had a stern reliance in their own valor and in their veteran commander, General Zachary Taylor, whose generalship had been proved on many a triumphant battle field. In fierce but partial conflicts, the afternoon of the day is

consumed, till the setting in of night separated the combatants to sleep on their arms. The encounters of the 22d were but a playful prelude to the furious, general, prolonged and decisive onslaught, with which the hostile armies rushed against each other on the morning of the 23d. Throughout the day the battle raged, and frightful was the carnage. When the sun went down that evening on Buena Vista, his setting rays lingered over many hundreds of dying and dead. The squadrons of Santa Anna, so full of confidence in the morning, had been broken and repulsed; under cover of the night they fled for safety. We turn again to Buena Vista; there the wind fluttered over the broad folds of the stars and stripes as if it loved them; victory again had perched on the banners of the soldiers of Palo Alto, the Resaca de la Palma and Monterey. At Buena Vista was annihilated the military power of Mexico in the north-eastern provinces of that country.

We have assembled to commemorate and do honor to this great and glorious victory on this its anniversary. Here it would be most grateful to sound the praises of the living who shared in the fight of Buena Vista, and to render in unstinted measure the merited homage to the dead who there gave their lives for their country. They spilt their blood on that field, their bones are there entombed; but their true sepulchre is in the undying remembrance and gratitude, in the hearts of their countrymen for all time to come. Here it would be most appropriate to recite the chivalrous deeds of our army, to relate instances of individual and self-sacrificing valor, to honor the rank and file who did the fighting. But, however grateful and appropriate such themes would be, I have chosen to regard our subject at this time under other points of view, to consider and discuss some practical matters suggested by the occasion which now brings us together.

With the loud and exulting hurrahs that rose to heaven in accord throughout our broad republic, on receiving intelligence of the battle of Buena Vista, there also ascended to God the tears of the mother bereft of her son, the wail of the widowed wife, and the cry of the orphan. The agony of the soldier expiring on the field of battle, his limbs palpitating with pain as life ebbs, is pleasure when compared with the woe and wretchedness which his death brings to his own fireside. War, in its most favorable results, is fraught with dire calamities. To the victorious nation it costs large expenditure of treasure, taxing the labor of the people; the blood of its citizens is spilt on the battle field; families are reduced to wretchedness and want. To the conquered nation, these evils are all aggravated in an enormous degree, and others are super-

added : it may be despoiled of its territories ; its public spirit may be broken ; and the waste of the districts which are the theatre of military operations is accompanied with a worse moral waste, the demoralization of their inhabitants. It is true that a wise Providence, always bringing good out of evil, so conducts human affairs that great and permanent blessings often result from war. Still war is a mighty evil, and a vast responsibility rests on the nation which is truly the author of it.

Why then were hostile armies arrayed against each other at Buena Vista ? Why were the thousands of either army so eager, so fierce and panting to commence the work of destruction, to set at play the engines of death ? For what cause have the United States, at vast expense, transported armies hundreds, and even thousands, of miles from their homes ? For what reason have Mexico and the United States appealed to the arbitrament of arms ? Who were the aggressors ? Which people was the author of this war ? If national sins are visited upon the nation which commits them, as is unquestionably true, then these become most solemn questions. If a well-merited character for justice is of value to a nation, and who can deny it ? a righteous decision of these questions, is full of momentous interest for the American people. And these considerations are rendered more serious, and imperatively claim attention, from the grave fact that it is boldly asserted in high places in this republic, in the halls of Congress, whose members are invested with high trust by their fellow citizens, that the *American* government, that is, the *American* people, are the aggressors in the contest with Mexico ; that *we* are the authors of this war ; that this war was unnecessarily, unconstitutionally and unjustly commenced ; that it sprung from an arbitrary exercise of power in the American President, and a lust of plunder and a desire to despoil Mexico of her territory, in the American people. The eminent position of the men who have uttered these opinions has given them credence ; they may pass into the domain of history. If these charges be true, then, indeed, is the hitherto fair escutcheon of this Union soiled ; disgrace and reproach will be our reward among other nations, and we may have good cause to dread the retributive vengeance of a just God upon us for national sins : if these charges be true, then, indeed, will some national purification, some lustration of the people, be of imperative need. But if these charges be not true, then let the croaker and disappointed politician, the bewrayers of their country, hold silence, and the misguided unlearn their error. And it has appeared to me especially proper on this, the anniversary of one of the glorious victories of the Mexican war, on this,

the birthday of the Father of his country, the purest and noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times, to examine these charges, and if they be wholly without foundation and utterly false, as in my soul I believe they are, then to assert the unsullied honor of our country, and vindicate truth in relation to this great matter. And we, the citizens of Texas, and more especially, the old Texians, have a particular interest herein; for Texas was the cause of the war; yes, fellow citizens, the annexation of Texas to the American Union was the avowed motive whereupon Mexico commenced hostilities. I shall afterwards consider some of the consequences likely to flow from the invasion of Mexico, to the Mexicans and to our own country.

As the rightful ownership of Texas is involved in the question, I beg permission to recapitulate a few facts in the history of Texas in order to vindicate the accuracy of American History, and to place the citizens of the Old Republic of Texas in a just light before the world. If the facts be dry, they will be briefly stated.

It is known to you all, fellow citizens, that the United States have frequently asserted a claim to the territory which now forms the State of Texas. Let us examine the facts. The early Spanish navigators first discovered the coast of Texas and laid claim to the country. Previously to 1595 they discovered the Rio Grande, and established settlements on both sides of that river. In 1684 the intrepid French navigator, La Salle, being in search of the mouth of the Mississippi, was carried by unknown currents out of his course and landed on Matagorda Bay. He claimed the country in the name of his master, Louis XIV. Immediately this was known, the Viceroy of Mexico sent an armed force against the colony left by La Salle, broke up the establishment and put the men to death. *This is the whole of the French title to the country now forming the State of Texas, under which the United States are alleged once to have held it.* But the Government of Spain not satisfied to scour the country of French intruders as they were termed, forthwith took active steps to establish therein a military occupation. Accordingly in 1698 the Spanish Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar was built; in 1716 that of Espiritu Santo subsequently called Goliad; in 1718 on the Eastern frontier the Presidio of San Miguel de los Adeas, and in 1732 the town of Nacogdoches. In 1742 the French Post of Natchitoches being injured by an inundation of the Red River, its Commandant asked and obtained permission of Sandoval, Commandant of the neighboring Presidio of Adeas, to move some 200 yards from the river on to Spanish territory. For granting this permission, Sandoval was instantly recalled by the



Viceroy of Mexico, tried by court martial and punished with the extreme rigor of the law. Spain thus held complete possession of Texas until 1763, when by the Family Compact as it was called, it likewise became possessor of Louisiana by cession from France. In 1800, by the treaty of San Ildefonso, Louisiana was retroceded to France, with the limits of 1762. In 1803 Louisiana was purchased from France by the United States. The American government appealed to that of France, from which we had purchased Louisiana, to sustain the American claim to the Rio Grande. So far from sustaining our claim, the French government affirmed the title of Spain to the country beyond the Sabine. Things remained in this position, when came the treaty of 1819. Without entering into more minute details, I may briefly state, after a careful examination of facts, that the United States never had even a color of title by virtue of the Louisiana purchase of 1803. Moreover by solemn treaty in 1819 just alluded to, they forever renounced all claim to any territory lying South and West of the line now forming the boundary of Texas on the North and North East; to wit, to any and all portion of the late Republic or present State of Texas. It is therefore worse than idle to speak of annexation, in the words of the late American Chief Magistrate, as "reclaiming a territory formerly constituting a portion of the domain of the United States," or to term it *re-annexation*, with the implied opinion that by annexation the people of Texas only restored to the American Union what was once rightfully a part of it; that we were in fact merely tenants in trust for the United States, holding for a time for their convenience. No, Fellow Citizens, away with the term *re-annexation* and all notions therein implied. Mexico forfeited all rightful authority over Texas by her oppression and tyranny, by frequent violation of the rights of person and property guaranteed by solemn covenant with the first settlers, by all those national crimes which rendered the Texas revolution unavoidable and righteous. *Our right to Texas was won by the valor and patriotism of her sons; our title was perfected at San Jacinto.* Our monuments are our battlefields, sealed by the blood of the heroes slaughtered in the Alamo and the victims of the inhuman butchery at Goliad. The bones of Bowie, Travis, Crockett and Fannin, and their comrades, buried in the earth where they fell, have forever consecrated the soil to liberty. The Great Powers of the World, by solemn treaty, acknowledged our independence and indisputable ownership of the Texian soil; and Mexico herself acknowledged it by deliberate treaty authorized by her Congress and negotiated under President Jones, the last Chief Magistrate of the Texas Republic; I allude of course to the treaty of March,

signed by Cuevas and Smith. *We have held Texas by the same title as our fathers and fellow citizens of the old United States have held the country wrested by them from Great Britain. And we had as perfect a right, the same right, to form a union with the other States of the Confederacy, as the other States had to do so with Texas.*

Texas belonged to its citizens by the acknowledgment of Mexico, as well as of Foreign Powers; and the only unsettled matter then subsisting, was the establishment of the boundary line between the two countries.

By annexation the United States assumed the position and relations of Texas with Mexico; and the settlement of the question of boundary then devolved on the American Government, as well in conformity with international law as by the express terms of annexation. Individuals in our country who denounce the Mexican war, have recklessly asserted that Texas could set up no valid claim to any country lying West of the Nueces, and that the occupation therefore by the American army of the district lying between this river and the Rio Grande, was a violation of Mexican territory, and indeed the cause and origin of the war. What are the *facts* bearing on, and in evidence in this matter? It is important here to remember the true grounds of our right to Texas as just stated, and that our boundaries are not regulated nor circumscribed by any limits or lines of provinces formerly marked out by the central government at Mexico; besides, Fellow Citizens, this whole matter of a "disputed territory between the Nueces and Rio Grande," is a pure figment of the wool gathering fancies of disaffected politicians, opposed to their own government. Mexico never made any such allegation; Mexico never accepted an issue based on this imaginary "disputed territory," and tendered to her by American politicians in moments of unpatriotic forgetfulness. No, Mexico from the outset declared annexation to be for her, cause of war, and she has been consistent up to the present time. Though not immediately bearing on the present argument, I beg to cite a few facts in relation to our claim to the Rio Grande. A specific article in the capitulation of Gen. Cos to Gen. Burleson, was the withdrawal of Mexican troops beyond the Rio Grande. A specific condition in the "solemn compact" entered into by General Santa Anna after the battle of San Jacinto, was that the armies of Mexico should evacuate Texas and retire beyond the Rio Grande. And General Filisola, then commanding in chief the armies of Mexico in Texas, ratified this compact, and obeyed the order to this effect, of General Santa Anna. It has been alleged that Santa Anna was under *duress*, and that the obligation was not, there-

fore, binding. *Duress* can be pleaded when the power it gives is used to extort or impose unjust terms. It is matter of history, that the compact was voluntary on behalf of Santa Anna; its advantages were mutual; its stipulations were faithfully performed by us of Texas; can Santa Anna and Mexico say as much? And quite recently, Santa Anna, in his report of the great battle, whose anniversary we are now celebrating, speaks of the Rio Bravo as practically the boundary between the American and Mexican territories. There has not been for long years a Mexican custom-house collector or garrison stationed in the district in question. They were on the other side of the Rio Grande. The legislation of Texas, always impliedly, and often specifically, has embraced this region. Our rangers scoured it to drive out Mexicans. Our town of Corpus Christi is situated beyond the Nueces. In all maps published in foreign countries, and in all histories of Texas written by foreigners since our independence, (I refer to Mr. Arrowsmith's maps, of London, and to Mr. Kennedy's history, both published seven or eight years ago,) the Rio Grande has been represented as our boundary. Such is the opinion of our claim entertained by intelligent foreigners, not prejudiced in our favor. So much for our claim to the Rio Grande. I might pursue it further in detail, but the argument does not after all turn upon the intrinsic validity of our claim. The Nueces district was unoccupied, or only partially occupied territory. The American Government, believing us the rightful owners of the soil, nevertheless, proposed to entertain the question with Mexico, and to settle all matters in dispute by friendly negotiation. Mexico had declared that she would regard annexation to be cause of war, and on this measure being accomplished, had recalled her minister from Washington in pursuance of her threat. Notwithstanding this and other acts of discourtesy, the American government persisted in its purpose of arranging all matters of difference by amicable negotiation, if possible, and sent accordingly to Mexico, a minister plenipotentiary, the highest foreign agent known to the practice of our country, fully empowered to settle all differences. To send a minister clothed with the amplest powers to the court of an unfriendly nation, is always deemed an act of gracious courtesy. Mexico rejected pertinaciously our friendly overtures. But one course then remained, which was to take possession of the unoccupied territory; it is the course that has been ever pursued in all ages and among all nations; it is, moreover, the course dictated by common sense, and has been objected to only by some American politicians, so blinded by party as to denounce their own government, although it has right, justice and usage on its side. Did time permit, I

could cite numerous pertinent cases from the history of other nations. The American President has been reproached for having ordered our army to the Mexican frontier at that time, as it was offensive to the Mexicans. Most *sensitive* gentlemen for the feelings of the Mexicans! Why were not the Mexicans more considerate toward us? It was *our* frontier as much as it was theirs. Yet on our frontier they assembled an army of six thousand men; nay, more, marched these six thousand men over into the unoccupied territory, into our territory, and attacked our army which they found there. This was the battle of Palo Alto, the first, decisive, unmistakable act in the drama of the war. Our territory was invaded, on our soil the first blow was given, on our soil the first blood of our fellow citizens was shed. Had Mexico been really desirous of preserving peace, what easier than to have done so by remaining on their side of the Rio Grande? Is there one man in this republic who imagines the American army would have been ordered across the Rio Grande to commence hostilities? Not one. But the acts of Mexico were in conformity with her previous threat.

Let us suppose for a moment that President Polk, heedless of the remonstrances of Mexico, had neglected to assemble the army under General Taylor on our western frontier? What would have opposed the army of Arista? What would have been the fate of the western towns of Texas? "The thing that hath been is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done." We may read it in the history of the Mexicans, from the broiling of Guatimozin, down to the wholesale butcheries of the Alamo and Goliad, and the decimation of the prisoners of Mier. Yes, but for the presence of our army, the ruins of San Antonio and Corpus Christi, of Goliad and Victoria, yes the plain of Goliad would have again been the scene of bloody tragedy, and execrated as a place of skulls; yes, the ruins of these and other towns of Western Texas, had they been left unprotected against the army of Arista, would have been black monuments of infamy, and the wailing and shrieks of orphans and widows would have been remembered as curses on the head of an Executive, who could have been so stupid or faithless. Most devoutly may we thank God that our Chief Magistrate followed other and wiser counsels than those of the opponents of the Mexican war.

I am far from charging the Mexican government with the stolid ignorance of not knowing the consequence of their rejection of friendly overtures as offered by Mr. Slidell. They knew it must needs bring on a war; they intended it should do so; but they wanted time to prepare for commencing hostilities, they wanted to blind us, and their suggestion of

a special commissioner in place of Mr. Slidell, had no other object, and could have no other result. The humble part I had in the affairs of the Republic of Texas, abroad and at home, and some intercourse with intelligent Mexicans, enable me to state that the angry feelings elicited in England and the United States, in reference to the Oregon controversy, and the high grounds taken by the two governments, had convinced the Mexicans that war between the United States and England was inevitable. And this conviction rendered the Mexican people not averse to plunging into war with us, in anticipation of the powerful cooperation of Great Britain. The demand for a special commissioner in place of Mr. Slidell was a pretext for delay, in the expectation that we should in the mean time become embroiled with that great European power. But, she rushed into the war; she must abide its consequences; she sowed the wind; she has reaped the whirlwind, and the end is not yet. There is an old opinion that drinking human blood drives one mad; there is a metaphorical if not a literal truth embodied in the opinion. The blood which Mexico drank at the Alamo, Goliad and Mier, seems to have maddened that whole people.

The assembling of American troops in the unoccupied territory, has seemed to some individuals to have brought on hostilities. It is a short-sighted error. I have intimated its necessity for protecting our frontier towns. Besides, no nation ever suffered loss or damage by showing a prompt disposition to maintain its honor; no people ever avoided a war by exhibiting themselves unprepared to meet it. It has been alleged that all the United States could have righteously done, and what we ought now to do, is to establish garrisons along our frontier, and to act purely on the defensive. I will not be detained to point out objections to such policy:—its folly and madness appear when we reflect that it would have left Mexico open to the introduction of munitions of war, and of European officers to drill and discipline their men and lead them in battle. And though the great results of the war would not have been materially changed, yet the prompt and decisive course of President Polk was the soundest policy dictated both by humanity and economy.

I have thus briefly vindicated our right to the soil of Texas, the justice of our claim to the Rio Grande, and the righteousness of the Mexican war. But our contemplation of this subject would be most incomplete if it stopped here. The Mexican war is a part of the mission, of the destiny allotted to the Anglo Saxon race on this continent. It is our destiny, our mission to civilize, to Americanize this continent. No nation once degenerate has ever been regenerated but by foreign conquest; and such

is the predestined fate of degenerate Mexico. The sword is the great civilizer, it clears the way for commerce, education, religion, and all the harmonizing influences of morality and humanity.

The present war is the commencement of the end to the institutions of Mexico, such as they were derived from Spain. The revolution whereby the political dependence of Mexico upon old Spain was thrown off, wrought no change in the social, and but little even in the political institutions of the country. New influences will be hereafter brought to bear on that people. The two races, the American distinctively so called, and the Spanish American or Mexican, are now brought by the war into inseparable contact. No treaties can henceforth dis sever them; and the inferior must give way before the superior race. Had Mexico listened to the dictates of prudence and been willing to settle by friendly negotiations the boundary between the two countries, the grassy wilderness extending from the Nueces to the Rio Grande, might, for an indefinite period, for fifty years perhaps to come, have formed a practical barrier between the two people. In the mean time, under more settled government than Mexico has hitherto enjoyed, the industry of that country might have been developed, better institutions been perhaps established, and in time consolidated so as to enable the nation to resist the rude shocks which must needs have come sooner or later from their Northern neighbors. I speak not of the shock of warlike hostilities, I mean the shock from the energy, industry and talents of the American population in peace, when the extension of our race shall bring the two people into close contact. And the war in which we are now engaged is comparatively a small matter, except as hastening and prelude to the rivalry of peace. After the war, when the 40,000 soldiers now in Mexico shall be withdrawn, their places will be soon more than supplied by a still greater number of merchants, mechanics, physicians, lawyers, preachers, schoolmasters and printers. In the towns of the valley of the Rio Grande, American stores are already established; the Mexicans themselves resort to these stores because they can there buy cheaper than of their own merchants; as for the American, we know him, he will never relinquish the right of trading, he would go to war again. And when the industry of the country districts of Mexico shall revive, on the restoration of peace, American commerce will assume an immense development, and American institutions will march hand in hand with our commerce and our people.

In Mexico to-day, the poor *peon* who is so unfortunate as to fall in debt, becomes the virtual slave for life of his creditors; but one sect or form of

religious belief is permitted by law ; the agricultural classes are palsied by a despotism the most intolerable and oppressive with which any country was ever cursed, a despotism exercised by military officers of all grades, from non-commissioned corporals up to generals. It is mainly this all pervading military despotism derived from the early conquest of the country, which has made industry hopeless and deadened the energy of that people. Formerly the vigor of the Viceroy's government alleviated the local military tyranny ; this check is long since gone. The regular normal condition of Mexico for long years has been revolution and intestine war. Wherever a Mexican army traverses a district, its track is desolation ; this might be borne, because of its comparative infrequency ; but no industry can live, no enterprise can thrive, where a petty corporal presses a farmer's mules or oxen on their way to market without redress or compensation. The country is the plunder of its own government.

A change must take place. The enlightened legislation of England and the United States in relation to debt, must supersede the servitude of the poor *peon* ; the American, instead of being restricted to the ceremonies of one form of religion, will worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. Wherever the American shall go, he will carry along with him freedom of opinion, security for person and property. He will also bear with him the *habeas corpus* and trial by jury, as shields and safeguards of his rights. Palo Alto and Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo and Churubusco, and the other battle fields of our armies, will be talismanic watchwords of freedom and security. The Mexicans too, will participate in those blessings equally with Americans. I know how slow and difficult is the substituting of new institutions ; I know, too, the obstinacy of the Mexican race ; but the establishment of law where violence ruled before, will be found easier than would be our task, had more settled institutions to be rooted out.

The adage, "whom God would destroy, he first deprives of reason," has been applied to Mexico, in view of their plunging into war with a nation so much more powerful than themselves. The adage seems only applicable to the military, revolutionary despotism seated in the city of Mexico, oppressing but not protecting her citizens. To the citizens themselves, the present war is fraught, in its great, ultimate, permanent consequences, with almost unmingled good. The first steps in Americanizing the broad valley of the Rio Grande to the Sierra Madre, and of the districts extending from Vera Cruz to the Capital, have already been solidly taken ; nor will there be

stay or hindrance until our institutions shall have extended to the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Isthmus of Darien on the south. Their progress is that of good order and good government, showering blessings on the people who live under them. War was, perhaps, a necessary prelude to their extension; it certainly has greatly precipitated events—events which will give Mexico, under Anglo-Saxon influences, that station among the nations of the earth, which its natural advantages seem to destine it shall occupy.

I have dwelt so long on previous topics, that I must very briefly despatch the consideration of the results of the Mexican war to the United States. We have to deplore the loss of gallant soldiers. It seems an established fact, painful though it may be, that the tree of liberty must, in its planting, be ever watered with blood; this seems still to be the price man must pay for God's choicest earthly blessing. The treasure already expended and hereafter to be expended, we regret infinitely less; the energy of the American people will soon replace it. Most of the foreign commerce of Mexico has been with Great Britain; the wealth of its mines has gone to enrich the merchants of the British Isles. The natural channel for all the north-eastern provinces, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, Sonora, Durango, etc., is through the state of Texas. There is no other easily practicable route. When our bank of the Rio Grande shall be settled by Americans, as it will shortly be, even if our boundary be not established beyond that river, the foreign commerce of all Northern Mexico will pass out of the hands of British merchants into those of our own countrymen. Who can estimate the value of this trade in the precious metals, in wool, silk, etc., etc., when to the distractions and bad government which have long palsied Mexican industry, there shall succeed the security of well administered laws, and facilities for obtaining foreign articles of utility and luxury, and free play be given to our people to carry on this commerce?

By the war Mexico has decided incidentally to whom the Californias shall belong. Upper California is, at this time, the most eligible country in the world for colonization or settlement. The harbor of San Francisco, in the absence of other good ports from the straits of Fuca to the Isthmus, confers on this region very great commercial advantages. Standing on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and beholding China, the Indies, and the European settlements on the great islands of the Indian Seas, it is scarcely possible to overrate the value of this oriental commerce at no distant period. Much of it



must reach the Atlantic through the harbors of Puget Sound, and thence along the route of the Hudson's Bay Company eastward, or by San Francisco and other southern harbors, and thence to the Gulf of Mexico. The advantages greatly preponderate in favor of the latter thoroughfare, when the country shall be populated. France and England have not been insensible to the value of the Californias; both powers have coveted their possession. The timid policy of France stood in the way of her desires. The Mexican population of the Californias is so small, and the territory so remote, that they are an appendage to, rather than an integral part of, Mexico. That they must soon be dissevered, has been long evident, and, until recently, the problem was, Shall they belong to the English for colonization, or to the Americans for settlement and beneficial occupancy? Shall England, by the possession of the Californias, hem in our Pacific territory on the north and on the south, and control the two great thoroughfares of the overland trade, adding to the enormous wealth of that mighty empire; or shall the Californias belong to us, and henceforth swarm with millions of republican freemen, adding to *our* strength and *our* resources. The war has decided this question, and rightly.

It would not be inappropriate to regard the probable influences of this war on our relations with European powers, showing as it does to the strong-handed monarchies of the Old World, that the republican institutions of the New are competent to the vigorous prosecution of distant war. But I avoid speculation, to deal with facts.

The grand, the important consequences of the Mexican war, the consequences compared with which all others are insignificant and nothing worth, are the fruits of those institutions whose seeds were first planted on this continent at Jamestown in Virginia, and by the pilgrim fathers on the rock of Plymouth. Bunker's Hill, Saratoga, the Cowpens, King's Mountain, Yorktown; Lundy's Lane, Tippecanoe, New Orleans; Velasco, San Antonio, San Jacinto; Palo Alto, Monterey, Buena Vista, Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Churubusco, Molina del Rey, Chapultepec, the City of Mexico—those great battlefields enchain'd together in one cause, serve to mark the progress of liberty, of civilization, and of human happiness. The carnage which ye have witnessed was not in vain; the Mexican war, with its glorious battles, has not been unnecessary and avoidable; no, it is an essential predestined part of the triumphal march of free institutions. Westward the star of empire takes its way. And shall that star be

now arrested in its course? No, a thousand times no, bursts from the soul of every true American. That star is the harbinger of American institutions, of republican government, of freedom.—Some twenty months ago, I beheld the broad banner of the Union waving over the *plaza* of Matamoras; that banner had crossed the Rio Grande. As it streamed vigorously in the fresh breezes, it seemed to dance with joy, as if conscious of its power, and of the noble principles inscribed on its ample folds. I asked myself if that banner should now, for the first time since 1776, take a retrograde movement. That flag is now planted in the city of Mexico; its stars and stripes now float over the palaces of the Montezumas. And shall it return without accomplishing its mission? Have all the blood and carnage, through which it has been borne, been in vain? No! no! no! I feel even here where we are assembled, that the flag which at this moment streams from the National Palace of the city of Mexico, has left an impress of its principles which can never be effaced. Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the sorcerers. The serpents of the former races of Mexico, which knotted and gendered under the Sacrificial Stone, are swallowed up; the rods of the military despots of the National Palace, which have so long scourged that country, are broken—soon, we trust, to be destroyed. When peace shall be re-established, then, indeed, the star-spangled banner shall be lowered from that proud flag-staff; but its influences will remain forever. I felicitate the soldier whose hands first run up that flag in the city of Mexico; I could not felicitate him who should be ordered to lower it for the last time, although such act be the symbol of peace restored between the nations.

I turn again to the battle-field. Marathon—Thermopylæ—ye were battle-fields of Freedom against Despotism: two thousand years have not dimmed the bright glory with which you were then invested. Bunker's Hill, Yorktown, New Orleans, San Jacinto, Buena Vista, City of Mexico! never shall fade the halo of undying renown which surrounds you.

I have regarded the battles of former wars in which our country was engaged, in connection with those of the present war, as being only successive steps of the same great work, the progress of Republican principles, the extension of the area of freedom. The actors in the different scenes of this great drama consisting of several acts are also associated. The hero of '76 the coadjutors of Washington, have worthy successors in the wars of 1812, 1836 and 1846. Warren, Hamilton, Greene, Knox,

Marion, Jackson, Milam, your bodies rest in the bosom of the earth which you defended while living ; but if it be permitted to the spirits of the dead to know the things of this world, you must recognize worthy and kindred souls in Scott, Houston, Taylor, Butler, Quittman, Twiggs, Worth, Shields, Wool and a host of others, to carry on the great work in which you bore so distinguished a part.

I do not name Washington in the same breath with the other great patriots whose names I have recited. Before the pure fame of Washington all other names pale, of whatever age or clime. He stands pre-eminent above all heroes and sages ; he so towers over the great and good of all time, that his virtues shine with unmingled lustre, a pattern and exemplar for the friends of the human race every where, so long as the great principles for which he fought and labored, shall find a place on this earth. We are his successors ; may we be the inheritors of his principles and his virtues.

Fellow Citizens, This review of some matters connected with the Mexican war, suggested by the occasion on which we are assembled, is satisfactory, as well as profitable. Other appropriate topics I have passed by without mention. I might have contemplated with just pride the magnanimity of our government towards Mexico, the clemency of our armies towards the conquered enemy, and their forbearance towards the inhabitants of the conquered districts ; the soldierly qualities, too, of the rank and file, composed mostly of citizens drawn from the pursuits of peaceful life, showing that large standing armies are not necessary for the defence of our country, is a matter of the highest felicitation. But I fear I have already wearied your patience. As well as the limits of a short speech and my slender ability would enable me, I have endeavored to place the cause of the old Republic of Texas, in reference to the great matter of our incorporation into the American Union, on high and the true ground ; I have endeavored to vindicate the cause of our country, by showing where the responsibility of the present war justly rests ; the ultimate benefits of the war, the martial virtues of our soldiers have not been overrated. While the councils of our government continue to be dictated by justice, while our armies continue to display the valor they have done in Mexico, we may, while praying for a return of peace, invoke with humble confidence the blessing of God upon our armies in the field, and on our people in their homes.

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Milton, Jackson, Altham, your names in the beam of the earth which  
 you demand while living; but it be permitted to the spirit of the  
 dead to know the things of this world, you must recognize worthy and  
 kindred souls in Scott, Houston, Taylor, Butler, Quitman, Shields,  
 Wood, Shields, Wood, and a host of others to carry on the great work in  
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 the great principles for which he fought and labored, shall find a place on  
 this earth. We are his successors; may we be the imitators of his  
 principles and his virtues, and we must remain so to the end.

Fellow Citizens, This review of some matters connected with the  
 Mexican war suggested by the occasion on which we are assembled,  
 satisfactory as well as profitable. Other opportunities again I have  
 given for without number. I might have contemplated with just  
 pride the magnanimity of our government towards Mexico, the courtesy  
 of our rulers towards the conquered enemy, and their forbearance towards  
 the inhabitants of the captured districts; the voluntary donations, too,  
 the rank and file, could hardly be named, however from the general  
 of persons, the showing that patriotic spirit has not deserted for  
 the defence of our country, is a matter of the highest importance. Had I  
 had time to have named your names, as well as the names of a  
 great and my slender efforts would enable me to have celebrated  
 the heroic deeds of the old Republic of Texas, in reference to the great  
 matter of our incorporation into the American Union, on high and the  
 late ground; I have also now to speak of the case of our country,  
 for showing how the responsibility of the present war justly rests; the  
 various benefits of the war, the moral virtue of our soldiers have not  
 been overrated. While the councils of our government continue to be  
 directed by justice, with our arms continue to display the valor they  
 have shown in Mexico, we may still praying for a return of peace,  
 thank with thanksgiving the blessing of God upon our arms in  
 the field, and on our people in their homes.

Wm. W. Garrison, Green, Nov. 1847.



