

Drifting into War.

There is an old adage about saving at the spigot and losing at the bung-hole, which has been disastrously exemplified by the recent conduct of the Administration. It has been so absorbed of late in taking political advantage of the scheme of Old Brown at Harper's Ferry, that it has neglected altogether the more serious affair of Cortinas, at Brownsville. At the very time when it was exhausting its energies to put down a slave stampede, caused by seventeen white men and five negroes, our territory was invaded by a foreign enemy, our citizens butchered, and a considerable village taken from the hands of its inhabitants.

According to the telegraphic report of a letter from Brownsville, received in New Orleans on the 12th November, Cortinas and the Mexican troops under his command were in full possession of the town. The Mexican flag was flying from the principal buildings, and all communication from the outside had been cut off. "In fact," says the report, "the entire population on both sides of the Rio Grande were in arms, with the intention of exterminating the Americans and reconquering the country to the Colorado river. The news is confirmed by affidavits of citizens of Cameron county who had to fly to save their lives.— Another affidavit says that the frontier of the Rio Grande is in a state of war, and that Cortinas is sustained by the Mexican population. The most earnest appeals had been made for aid. Eighty men were advancing to the relief of Brownsville, but they will have to encounter the band of Cortinas, numbering seven hundred men."

Six weeks ago when Cortinas began his depredations, with a mere handful of brigands, his movement might have been easily suppressed. If our government had been as alive to the duty of protecting its white citizens as it has shown itself to the self-imposed task of guarding against the flight of negroes it could have punished and restrained his daring inroads at once. But such was its inefficiency that the people of Brownsville were absolutely indebted for safety to certain Mexican troops which came across the Rio Grande to their aid.— Not a United States soldier appeared on

the ground, nor did one appear for week afterward; and the consequence of this impunity has been, that the marauders have been encouraged to increase their numbers and to multiply their outrages.— Cortinas, indeed, has drawn a multitude of Mexicans into his schemes who were not in the outset connected with him, and their plans look to the seizure of Brazos and Point Isabel, where many gun batteries and much ammunition is stored.

In vain the inhabitants appealed for assistance, as long ago as the 16th October last—one month since—to General Twiggs, whose headquarters were at San Antonio, Texas; they were told he could furnish them no assistance; and they have been compelled to trust to such imperfect defences of their lives and the lives of their wives and children as a peaceful settlement may improvise on such an occasion. As for the authorities at Washington, they did not lift a hand in the business, and, indeed confess that they had heard nothing about it until Tuesday last, when a dispatch was received from the Collector of New Orleans, urging the necessity of action. Six weeks after the outbreak of hostilities—one month after formal application to the chiefs of our army for aid—they learn of these affairs for the first time, although the newspapers in every part of the country have spread the details before the public, and several of them, our own journal among the rest, had criticised, in terms of due severity, their imbecility and negligence. Prompt action, that!

At length, however, we learn that some fifty United States troops have been ordered to Brownsville, not merely to expel the invaders of that town, or punish them if taken, but to pursue them across the river into Mexican territory, and to avenge the injuries our people have sustained wherever the offenders may be found. That is, in order to redress a grievance inflicted upon our citizens by irresponsible Mexicans, we are to violate the soil of Mexico, and give occasion for war. From a disgraceful indifference, the government rushes into an over zealous officiousness, and an affair which in the beginning might have been crushed by the "twelve marines" sent to Harper's Ferry, is allowed to swell into national importance.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands