

Departure of Political Prisoners.

Correspondence of the N. Y. Herald.]

NEW YORK, March 20, 1869.

The sailing of the political prisoners for Fernando Po, in the steamer *La Florida*, is set down for tomorrow. It has for more than two weeks past been the principal topic of conversation, and speculation among the natives. There is, however, a possibility that the vessel will be further delayed. It is reported that the steamer, after calling at the port of San Juan de los Rios, a Spanish port, will be loaded with guns and eighty men. She is commanded by Commander Heres. The ship has been divided into three compartments, each to contain 105 prisoners. They will be subdivided in accordance with their position in life. They have been permitted to provide their own mess and to engage a cook. Mons. Edouard, of the French Hotel Legrand, has been selected. Each prisoner has contributed sixty-eight dollars towards the education fund. Private subscriptions have been made for the poorer prisoners, who are comparatively few. The cost of the provisions, wines, &c., provided, amounts to \$20,000. The money which the prisoners take with them, independent of the letters of credit, reaches the sum of \$300,000. It may be doubted if a ship load of prisoners were ever better provided before. They are to be guarded by 100 volunteers, who are paid as follows:—Two dollars per diem to the sergeants, one dollar and a half to corporals, and one dollar to the men. Among the officers going is one Martel, who is a person of some means, and whose hatred to the Cubans is such that he accompanies the prisoners, as he says, to treat them as severely as possible and to make sure that they are taken to Fernando Po.

Commander Heres is an officer of the Spanish navy and is represented to be a humane gentleman. He goes under sealed orders, with instructions to open them upon the high seas, and this confirms the idea, extensively entertained, that the prisoners will be taken to Cadiz; or at least those guiltless of any offense, comprising the majority. It is thought probable that the ship will touch at the Canary Islands. Most of the prisoners that have means have given powers of attorney for the transaction of their business to their friends, and many have made wills. Among the latter is Don Carlos del Castillo, who bequeaths \$1,000,000. It is stated this morning that their destination is Canary Islands.

News of encounters between the troops and insurgents continues to reach us as usual. From Cienfuegos, the 11th, we learn that the artillery column, under Morales de los Rios, with a squadron of cavalry, had come up with 2,000 rebels of Villa Clara, at Potrillo, under Morales the Pole, Villamil and others, and had completely routed them, killing 205; wounding 500 and capturing twenty-one prisoners, some horses, arms, &c. Thirty Spanish prisoners were also retaken. The troops lost one lieutenant and one man. General Pelaez and his staff arrived at Cienfuegos on the 14th. The main body of his command was at Arima, to which place he had sent supplies for 2,000 men. In his march he found the town of Cumauyague deserted, having been sacked by the rebels. The only point where the rebels found any refuge was in Siguanea, where, owing to the ruggedness of the road, he could not take his artillery, and he did not care to pursue them without it.

General Letona arrived in Villa Clara on the 14th. He had a number of encounters with the rebels, in all of which he punished them severely. The shops in that place had been closed a month, but upon the arrival of Letona with his chasseurs they were again opened. It was expected that the railroad to Cienfuegos would be repaired soon.

Dates from Trinidad are to the 17th. Colonel Bascours, commanding the column operating in this jurisdiction, had been slightly wounded in an encounter, but had recovered and was in the field again. The rebels had burned the estate of Senor Esquera, a Spaniard. The rebel chief Rojas was killed in a fight near Guiracabulla.

From Espiritu Santo dates are to the 12th.—Several parties of rebels had passed the borders of that jurisdiction from Morou, Remedias and Villa Clara. Poello was expected back soon from his excursion in the direction of Morou. It is thought he extended his march to the confines of Puerto Principe. Nothing was known of his movements. An early restoration of telegraph communication was hoped for.

Sagua dates are to the 15th. The insurgents, being hotly pressed, had returned to Alvarez, and on their way had destroyed the railroad and telegraph. A column of 800 volunteers was expected. Between Sagua la Grande and Sagua la Chica the insurgents have burned five sugar estates after carrying away the negroes, whom they armed with machetes. On the estate "Gesoria," belonging to Don Fabian Garcia, 350 hogsheads of sugar were destroyed and eighty slaves taken off. Later dates say there have been two very bloody actions in Alvarez, thirty miles from Macagua. Large forces of insurgents have overrun the country. A band of 1,000 men had appeared at Macagua. On the 17th a party of 500 invaded the territory of Cardenas, and in the vicinity of a town called Motimbo some fighting had taken place. Two estates belonging to Spaniards had been burned. The government had directed the concentration of all its forces in the Villa Clara district, including those under Letona, Pelaez and Poello, with the artillery column of Col. Morales de los Rios and a considerable force of cavalry, estimated to number in all 10,000 men. The insurgents, in despite of their inefficiency and the disadvantage of want of organization, and artillery, were fighting with great bravery and desperation. The nature of the ground is such that encounters are very frequent.

A fight is reported in Remedios on the 15th, when 3,000 rebels were defeated by a few volunteers and 136 killed, while the latter lost but two wounded. Five chiefs were taken and immediately shot.

In Colon on the 17th the express train had arrived, with 400 troops and a section of militia cavalry under Colonel Araoz.

Excessive rains throughout the jurisdiction had caused suspension of grinding on the plantations.

Brigadier Lopez Pinto has been appointed Commandant General and Governor of Matanzas. He has assumed office. A rising was reported in Bolondron.

Commander Obregon, second in command of Benegas's "order column," has been named Lieutenant Governor of Holguin, in place of Senor Camps.

Letters through Spanish sources have been received here from Puerto Principe. They state that Lesca left Guanaja with 1,800 and arrived with less than half that number, having lost the balance on the route. It was supposed the provisions he left at Guanaja fell into the hands of the rebels. Many of the women of Puerto Principe had gone out with their children to join their husbands, fathers and sons in the insurgent ranks. Lesca had issued an order directing their return within a certain time on pain of being made liable under military law. He wants them to prevent an attack on the city by the rebels.

Regarding the fifty prisoners recently brought here *La Voz de Cuba* says: "We cannot but censure Senor Mendez Villar, the Governor of Remedios, who is known for decision and energy, for having committed the error of sending hither men whom he could have tried himself. The trial of supposed criminals should take place in the locality of their alleged offenses; if innocent they suffer less; if culpable it is proper that they should suffer on the spot where their crimes were committed." The meaning of which is that Governor Villar should have shot them. Probably, however, that gentleman is not willing to do his share of that bloodletting which Dulce so lavishly lets out to his subalterns, in order that his own name may not be stained. Commissions of volunteers from Remedios, Trinidad and Santiago de Cuba have arrived here to represent the situation in their respective jurisdictions; they state that the forces in those places are far from sufficient to protect the people against the enemy who is everywhere presenting himself.

The Mexicans resident in Cuba are in a very bad way. They are everywhere objects of suspicion, no matter how innocent. A fortnight ago they applied to the American Consul for protection, but of course he could do nothing. There is no Mexican consul here. Numbers of them have been arrested and are now incarcerated, with no one to speak to their behalf. Two of them, who arrived here on the American steamer *City of Mexico* from Sisal, were arrested as soon as they reached the shore.—Senor Ojeda, a Mexican, was recently released, after having been confined twenty-nine days without any knowledge of his offenses.