

Details of the Fight Between Puerto Padre and Las Tunas—Valor of the Patriots—Affairs on the Principe Railroad—Pecuniary Success of a Spanish General—Dissatisfaction With Letona—The Rio Blanco Fight—Death of one of the "Perit" Filibusters—A Gloomy Situation.

NEUVITAS, June 11, 1869.

The troops that let here on the 25th ult., under command of Brigadier General Ferrer to reinforce the Fifth mobilized volunteers, the Napoles regulars and part of the "regiment Havana" at Puerto Padre, returned on the 8th inst. to this city on the steamer Moctezuma. They accomplished their object, which was to assist the first named troops in conducting a convoy of prisoners to Las Tunas. They return in a very deplorable condition, having passed through innumerable hardships. The cholera broke out among them on their first day here. Out of nineteen case seven proved fatal before night.

These troops, in conjunction with those already at Puerto Padre, started from the latter place with a convoy of thirty carts, each drawn by six oxen, on the 26th ult. They encamped the first night at the plantation Manuel. On the 27th ult., at an early hour, they resumed their march, and soon after leaving the plantation they were hostelized by the insurgents, who kept up a running fire, which continued until they arrived at place called La Breñosa. Here the patriots attacked the centre of the Spanish column guarding the convoy, and a hard struggle ensued, they making use of their machetes to wrest the convoy from the troops. They attacked three successive times, but were repulsed on every occasion. As I am informed by a soldier, the insurgents were at one time very near becoming masters of the convoy, but the superiority of arms and discipline, together with a piece of artillery placed in a favorable position, decided the victory in favor of the Spaniards, the rebels retiring in good order. They were without artillery, but continued hostilizing the convoy until within six miles of Las Tunas. Generals Marmol, Marcano, Vicente, Garcia and Rubalcava were the chiefs in command.

The loss of the insurgents I have heard estimated by various Spanish officers from eighty to 800, among them General Marmol; but this last is very doubtful. As usual, it is very hard to get at the truth—a thing which never flourished in Cuba, and has now been entirely rooted out. The Spaniards confess to have lost seventy-six in killed and wounded, among the former a lieutenant of artillery, and Major Bonichi, considered one of the best and most gallant officers in the Spanish army, dangerously wounded. I have conversed with several officers concerning this action, and they all agree that the insurgents fought well and gave proof of much valor, a virtue generally denied them by the Spaniards.

Nothing of any interest has occurred recently between here and Puerto Principe. The train makes about two trips weekly without any obstacles. The line continues to be guarded by troops. The telegraph wires are cut occasionally, and attempts are made to burn the bridges; but the latter are frustrated by the watchfulness of the troops. The train arrived yesterday afternoon. A hand car, with four soldiers belonging to the engineer corps, and which was about two miles ahead of the train to examine the road, was cut off by a small party of rebels.

Don Fernando Betancourt, Don Domingo Mora, Dr. Emeio Marquez, Don Jose A. Recio and Don Carlos de Varona y la Torre, all gentlemen of high standing, are still in prison in Puerto Principe. No proofs have been found against them, but they are held, as the Spaniards say, for "preventive measures."

It is generally rumored here that Brigadier Mena, late Governor of Puerto Principe, took the nice little sum of \$60,000 with him. This demonstrates what a Spanish general can make in a besieged city. A great row is imminent among the volunteers in Principe. They are dissatisfied with General Letona and a commission of four is going to Havana with a view of having him relieved. Letona is too lenient for them.

The rebel account of the fight at Rio Blanco has been confirmed by several Spanish officers, who confess that their rear guard, consisting of 107 men and seven officers, was entirely cut off and captured, together with one cannon. The officers sent to Las Tunas for their clothing, which was sent to them. So it seems the insurgents do not shoot down their prisoners in cold blood, as the Spaniards frequently have done. The account of the fight referred to was published in the HERALD of the 20th ult.

Guimaro and Cascorro, as is said, have been burned by the rebels to prevent their being occupied by the Spanish troops.

On the 19th ult., a day after the engagement near the Bay of Nipe, a German, giving his name as John Jager, presented himself or was taken by the Spanish gunboat Africio. He stated that he embarked on the steamer Perit, Captain Fletcher; that he sailed from New York on the 7th ult. with thirty-nine Americans, twenty-nine Germans and 100 Cubans. Her cargo consisted of 2,000 rifles, eighteen cannon and other articles of war, with provisions. The steamer arrived at Nipe on the 14th, and after landing her passengers and cargo sailed away. He was shot in the act of jumping overboard to make his escape, as say the Spaniards. He was a native of Guttenburg, Germany, twenty-six years of age, a citizen of the United States, and served in the federal army during the late war.

In looking at the situation here, it is evident that the struggle will continue a long time. I do not see any advantages on either side which promise an early restoration of peace. Many of the Spanish officers are disheartened; they speak in very disparaging terms of their commanders, seeming to have no faith in them. As an officer remarked to me not long since, "It is nothing but marching and countermarching, conducting a convoy from one place to another, never stopping to fight and route the enemy. All we accomplish is to relieve Las Tunas, Puerto Principe, or some other city from starving. Much hard work and no glory; a good deal of noise and nothing more. Pompous and exaggerated reports are given by our colonels and brigadiers to gratify their ambition and advance their career."