

A VOLUNTEER IN CUBA.

Story of an American Who Joined the Cuban Army—What He Saw in the Island—Wretchedness and Misery—The Army a Mob—Jealousy Among the Officers—How the Cubans Fight.

A young fellow who volunteered with other Americans in a New-York recruiting-office some months ago to go to Cuba and fight for the Cubans and Liberty; who went there; and who shortly returned a sadder and a wiser man, tells the very interesting story which follows of what he saw and experienced:

FROM NEW-YORK TO CUBA.

On the 3d of January I was one of nine volunteers for the Cuban army, who left New York on the brig *Timothy Field*, which was cleared from this port for Nassau, New-Providence. She had a cargo of arms and ammunition for Cuba. Near "Hole in the Wall" the steam yacht *Anna* came up with us, evidently by previous arrangement, and we transferred our cargo to her, and then got on board and started for Cuba. There were in all forty men on the yacht; the following Americans: Col. Ryan, Col. James Clancy, Capt. Tom Lillie Mercer, Capt. Simon Gratz, and myself. And of the prominent Cubans were: a son of President Cespedes, Cisonans, who was in command, and Dr. Molce. On the deck we had most of the cargo. We had twenty tons of coal on board, most of it in bags on deck. There were two howitzers on board, and these we kept ready for use in case any Spanish gun-boats should be met. We met with no opposition, however, and at length reached the coast and anchored three hundred yards from the shore in a little inlet called Horse-shoe In'et. We landed in a great hurry, the officers being in mortal fear of meeting some Spanish craft, on a rubber raft. We took off with us one thousand Springfield rifles, fifty revolvers, fifty spears, fifty *machetes*, an hundred Remingtons, two mountain howitzers, two hundred thousand rounds of ball-cartridge, seventy rounds of cannon ammunition, and several bags of clothing, nearly all of which was for the destitute women and children.

THE WRETCHED CUBAN SOLDIERS.

We remained here for seven days. A dispute arose soon after landing about who should have command, Col. RYAN or CLANCY. Finally CLANCY got the position, the understanding being that he should hold it until somebody higher in authority should arrive. On the fourth day a body of Cubans came, under command of Gen. VERONA. We were very near firing on them, as they did not give the proper signal. These were the first Cubans we had met, and such a miserable lot of soldiers I never before saw. They had scarcely any clothing to cover their nakedness, and were miserably armed. Some had no arms—some only the *machete* they brought. They seemed half-starved. They had some of the Cuban bread, made from the root called *ucah*, but very little else. When they came up with us, they at once commenced to ransack the goods and to help themselves to the clothing. The next day brought two other Generals; their names were MODESTA DEIS and DEIZ. They had about one hundred men with them, who made a clean sweep of all the clothing, including the women's garments, with which they covered themselves, thus making an exceedingly ludicrous appearance. This second lot looked as wretchedly as the first I saw. There was no discipline or order among them. Two-thirds of them were negroes and Chinamen of the very lowest types. They gathered around us Americans and seemed to regard us with as much interest as if we had been wild animals. Col. RYAN was very anxious and happy to show his stock of goods. He had a Brigadier-General's uniform with him, a few dozen kid gloves, and much other similar warlike material. Two other Cuban Generals came to see us very soon after; and we began to think that the Cuban army was pretty much composed of Generals.

ON THE MARCH.

On the seventh day we took up our line of march for the interior. The Americans were put in charge of Gen. FERNANDEZ, a Mexican by birth, and a perfect soldier and gentleman. At San Miguel we first drank the Cubans' substitute for coffee. It is made of sugar and water. They call it *Cuba libre*. We remained here for ten days, and then started again on Feb. 5, the order coming from JORDAN to proceed to head-quarters. We got horses to ride, but—oh ye gods!—what animals. A good stiff breeze would have blown them to pieces. We had straw saddles; and altogether did not greatly enjoy our journey. Col. RYAN left us here to go direct to head-quarters, with an American who came to Cuba with JORDAN by the name of Capt. BAILEY. The day after we left San Miguel we joined Col. VERONA, who had about seven hundred men for the purpose of escorting us to JORDAN's head-quarters. He was one of those proud, vain officers who imagine they know everything, and know nothing when put to the test. We now began to see some of the families. Nearly all of them are in a deplorable condition. The children and most of the women have no clothing whatever. If we camped on the plantations they would gather around to get a glimpse of the Americans. We had plenty of plantains and meat to eat, occasionally some sweet potatoes, yams, &c. The negroes would serve themselves first and the officers afterwards. Our dishes consisted of palm bark, and our knives and forks were our fingers. Sugar cane was used very much by all the negroes, and in fact by the Cubans. They also used a great deal of honey.

THE PRESIDENT.

At Guymro the Americans paid the President a visit. He was at a cattle-farm two leagues from the town, and had his family with him. We were introduced to him by his son, who came with us from New-York. He addressed us as "brothers," and said he was glad to see us come to help the Republic along. He is not very prepossessing in appearance. He is a short, thick-set man, sharp nose, full face, with no beard whatever. He was plainly dressed in linen. He had a great many other officials with him, but a very small guard. He generously gave each of us one hundred dollars in Cuban bonds, which were not worth the paper they were printed on. The Cubans will not take it themselves in payment for anything. From here we marched toward Principe, where JORDAN was.

AT HEAD-QUARTERS.

After about ten days' march we reached head-quarters. Gen. JORDAN was just recovering from a severe sickness. RYAN was with him, having arrived five days before us. JORDAN told us that he was glad to see us, but wished there had been a thousand of us instead of a mere handful. He had five Americans on his staff; and out of the eighty or ninety which he brought with him from the United States to the island, only about ten or a dozen were left, the remainder either having got off home, or been killed. We soon found out that he was not in full favor with the Cubans. He was for concentration, and they argued against it. The fact of the matter it was, however, plain to see was, they were jealous of him and wanted to get him out of the way.

THE FIRST FIGHT AND ITS RESULT.

On the 22d of February we attacked a Spanish position on the railroad between Puerto Principe and Nuevitas. The Cubans had 1,600 men and three mountain howitzers, and the Spaniards had two hundred. We made the attack at daylight, opening with our battery of artillery. Then the infantry went in just like a mob, and after fighting for one hour, JORDAN ordered them to charge the Spanish work; but they protested, declaring that it was too warm for them there, and so we retreated with a loss of twenty-five wounded and three killed. JORDAN's object was to tear up the railroad track, burn the bridge that was there, and cut the telegraph. After this fight JORDAN got disgusted and resigned, and with RYAN and four Cubans, left for parts unknown. Some of us began to get very suspicious at all this, and anxious to get away

Gen. AGRAMONT succeeded JORDAN in command, and then all the Americans scattered.

OTHER SCENES AND INCIDENTS.

I got permission to go to the Cinco Villas, and started on the 5th of March, together with another American and four Cubans. We had to travel through a part of the country thickly infested with Spanish troops. We marched by night and rested in the daytime. We crossed the Remedios Mountains, and here met with a great many Cuban families in the most wretched condition. The children were perfectly naked and in the most filthy condition, and the men and women, negroes and Cubans alike, were scarcely better off. On the 12th joined Gen. HERNANDEZ. He had a fight the day previous at the foot of the mountains, twelve miles from Remedios. The Spaniards drove him into the mountains, where his force scattered, and he lost sight of his men, and hardly knew where he was himself. But after the Spaniards had retired they came out of the mountain, joined each other, and then claimed a victory. The men numbered about seven hundred. They were half naked and very poorly armed. They had all kinds of arms, from a double-barrel shot-gun to a Remington rifle, old-fashioned pistols, all kinds of old swords. There was no organization, and much jealousy, all wanting to be chief officers.

OTHER CUBAN ARMIES.

From here we started for Villa Clara. We passed through a most beautiful country. It was rolling land. After three days' march we joined Gen. MARCUS DEIZ. He had six hundred men with him, all badly armed. Here Gen. HERNANDEZ sent two hundred of his men to Gen. RULOFF, who was in the Trinidad mountains. We then parted with MARCUS DEIZ—he taking one route and we another. We now had five hundred men in our "army." After two days' march we came to a plantation where there was a Spanish guard of about twenty men. The General sent one hundred men to set fire to the cane. We were all dismounted now, having left our horses in the mountains. We were very much fatigued. I noticed that plantains and beef were getting very scarce. We would be sometimes two days without anything to eat. After the cane had been fired, the Spaniards followed and attacked us at night, but owing to the darkness withdrew. The next day we crossed a river and marched about seven leagues. The Spaniards attacked us in the rear about noon, and threw us into confusion. The officers found it impossible to command the mob. Somebody, for instance, would order "silence," and then everybody would repeat the order, so that instead of silence there was a big noise. When under fire the men did just as they liked. We attempted to make a stand that evening, but the Spaniards drove us, with a loss of twenty-six wounded and four killed. We had to march very slowly, for the wounded had to be carried on rude stretchers made by themselves. There were no doctors to attend to them, and every hour their condition grew worse. They had nothing to eat and very little attention from anybody. We made about eight leagues and then encamped. Here we found a few plantains but no beef. This is all we had to eat for three days. The Spaniards again attacked us the next day; and at the first volley the Cubans ran through the woods for dear life, leaving five or six of their wounded after them, who were not butchered by the Spaniards, but kindly cared for. Here I got disgusted with them and left. I went to the north shore and was taken by a Spanish schooner, where I was kindly treated.

THE CUBAN FORCE.

I have here attempted to show the real state of affairs as far as I learned them. I saw nothing but misery and wretchedness. No discipline; mobs, and not armies. I am confident from what I learned and saw that the Cuban force on the island does not exceed 5,000 men. Gen. AGRAMONTE has 1,600, badly armed; Gen. HERNANDEZ has 500, Gen. MARCUS DEIZ 600, Gen. RULOFF 400, Gen. MODESTE DEIS 300; I will allow 1,600 more scattered through the country in small bands. Of the arms they have, nine-tenths are of no account against the Remington rifle. Then two-thirds of their "army" are negroes and Chinamen. The Chinamen do the best fighting, if it can be called fighting at all. I must here state that of all the promises made to Americans here before going, not one of them has been kept so, and so I warn all young men who may be thinking of going to Cuba to remain where they are. The Cubans did not generally strike me as being brave men. As far as I could see, the man who got behind a rock the quickest when the Spanish came along, and cried "Viva Cuba Libre," was regarded with as much favor as the bravest of the brave. There are Cuban representatives in New-York living in luxury, and telling everybody to go to Cuba. Why don't they go themselves? At Key West there are something like 2,500. Why don't they go!