

## CUBAN AFFAIRS.

### The Castañon Murder—An Abrupt Conclusion to the Trial—Important Engagements—Capture of Cuban Artillery—Additional Executions.

From Our Own Correspondent.

HAVANA, Saturday, May 14, 1870.

The city has been kept alive with several sensational items, of which the first was extremely disgusting to the Spaniards, and the last equally agreeable. Key West furnished the first sensation, and if the account published in the *Diario* is correct in every particular, and there is no reason to doubt its accuracy, we must come to the conclusion that to a certain extent the Spaniards have a right to grumble. The examination of the Castañon murder case was fixed by the Grand Jury at Key West for the 10th inst., and a telegram was sent to Havana a few days previous announcing this fact, in order to advise the principal witnesses, who reside here, to present themselves in Key West. These witnesses feared, meeting with violence at the hands of the Cubans residing in Key West, and the acting Captain-General sent a telegram to Washington asking the Government to afford protection to the witnesses. This action of the authorities appears over-cautious, and perhaps foolish to persons in the United States, who undoubtedly would inquire what business the Government at Washington had to meddle in the affair; but such is not the true view to be taken of the case, the Spaniards being accustomed to have their superior Government do and order everything for them. In Cuba the Captain-General is autocratic, and can at any time annul the action of the Courts in criminal cases, and even many civil cases have to be submitted to him, while he can at any time take a case, even then undergoing investigation, away from the Judicial Courts and try it himself. Recurring to the subject proper, the Castañon trial, as no answer had been received from Washington, and as the Key West Grand Jury made no inquiries and refused to wait, they simply discharged the prisoners connected with the Castañon murder for want of proof. Leaving all political feelings or sympathies aside, it appears very strange that no testimony was forthcoming to implicate the prisoners, and we must come to the conclusion that the real culprits were those who escaped, (1) and that the rest were mere lookers on. At any rate, the Key West Grand Jury might have deferred action until they had been informed whether the Havana witnesses were coming or not. Assassination is always a crime, and never a political offense.

#### IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT.

Since the capture of Fort Asiento by Gen. Goyeneche, no engagement of any magnitude has taken place, except that which has just been effected by Major MONTANA, who left Santa Cruz for Tana, killing sixty-five insurgents in various encounters on the way, his principal assistance being the Cuban volunteers, (not Spaniards,) who acted as guides and advanced posts. At Tana several salt works were destroyed, the Spaniards losing one killed and another wounded, proceeding from there to Najara. On the 3d an engagement took place, when JUAN SUAREZ, second in command of the Cuban troops, and five more, were killed. On the 5th MONTANA reached La Bermeja, a very strong natural position, where he expected to meet with insurgent forces. He was not disappointed as a musketry fire was soon heard toward the front, and of a sudden a shot from a cannon, which he did not expect. MONTANA made a short speech to his men, told them that they must not permit that cannon to be fired again, and that it must be captured at all hazards. The soldiers then advanced at a double quick, MONTANA leaving his baggage behind guarded by fifty men, when the insurgents withdrew their piece from the front of the entrenchment, and opening into platoons formed on both sides of the road. The Spaniards continued to advance, the Cubans retreating in order, trying to reach some heights where they expected to make a stand. This troops could only move slowly, as the firing, although desultory, was incessant, and if the Cubans were only decent marksmen the Spaniards would have lost heavily; but all the shots went over their heads. The movement continued until 2 in the afternoon, when the Cubans reached the mountain, the Spaniards moving forward in a solid mass without firing a shot, following the footprints and ruts left by the wheels of the cannon, the Spaniards being without artillery. At times it was difficult to discover the track, but the Cuban guides soon found it again, MONTANA himself being well acquainted with the territory. The soldiers were suffering terribly from thirst, and looked as if they could not march any further, when at 4½ a shout and some shots were heard on the right. Assistance was sent, and Capt. TIRON, who commanded on the right, was found in possession, not of one, but of two cannon, with all the train belonging to it, five Cuban artillerists lying dead on the ground. One of the guns was that which the Cuban General ANGEL DEL CASTILLO captured on the 7th of August last from the Spanish Colonel PORTAL at Morou, when PORTAL was killed and over three-fourths of his command killed or captured. CASTILLO, who was killed at Lazaro Lopez, was one of the ablest and most promising officers of the Cuban forces. The other gun was a United States mountain howitzer, with the letters U. S. and T. J. on it, and was called the Tomas Jordan. The first soldier who laid his hand on the captured pieces was a Cuban named FRANCISCO AGRAMONTE, belonging to the Santa Cruz volunteers. On the morning of the 6th they moved forward, capturing and destroying a factory where swords and ammunition had been made. They then intended to cross the Najara River. The Cubans were on the other side, undoubtedly intending to defend the pass, when MONTANA ordered the captured artillery to the front, and soon drove them away with a few discharges, after which the troops crossed without being molested, the Contra guerrillas always in the front. But half a league from the river, and in the woods, the Cubans made a desperate attack to recapture the cannon. A hand-to-hand combat ensued, the Cuban machete clashing against the Spanish bayonet. The Cubans were reported losing sixteen killed and many wounded, and the Spaniards five killed. The troops rested there until the morning of the 7th, when the Cubans appeared again, firing at a long distance and without effect, in the vicinity of Callejon de Pasheco. The counter guerrillas flanked a small party and killed six Cubans. On the afternoon of the same day the troops caught a bearer of dispatches from Col. O'RYAN, who expressed his regret and inability to take part in the action, as his cavalry had no horses. This cavalry is undoubtedly that which lost its horses (eighty) a few days ago, the Spanish Col. AGUILAR having captured them. The Spanish account only gives two wounded, which is evidently false, as MONTANER himself acknowledges one soldier killed in the first encounter. MONTANER gives the Cuban loss at ninety-one killed, and supposes that many more died of wounds received. The captured artillery arrived this morning by the steamer *Pajaro*, and will be carried in triumph through the streets of Havana to-morrow morning.

#### MORE EXECUTIONS.

The *Pajaro* brought the two brothers, CASPAR and DIEGO AGUERO, the companions of GOICOURIA, who were captured on the Roman Key, to which they had crossed from Guajaba Key. The English or American Major who accompanied them died from starvation, the three pilots escaping. Some very queer reports are in circulation regarding the capture and denunciation of GOICOURIA, and even strong Cuban sympathizers express some exceedingly peculiar ideas. Until I have some proof that they are true, however, I shall not communicate them. The foreigner who died was not O'RYAN. The Agueros were taken to jail, and thence to Fort Principe. The Court-martial is now in session, and as its sentence cannot be doubtful, the rabble of Havana will be afforded the spectacle of another execution at 3 this afternoon. The only man who treated the prisoners badly was Col. RAMON HERRERA, who marched them on foot from the jail to Fort Principe, in order to show

off. The prisoners were worn out with fatigue, and compelled to rest twice on the road. The authorities, though, had given the Colonel strict orders to take them in a carriage, and to avoid display.

QUASIMODO.