

AN INSIDE VIEW OF CUBA.

Arrival of Cuban Ladies from the Insurrectionary Districts.

Account of the Mode of Life There—Sketches of Insurgent Chiefs—Horrible Cruelties Practiced by the Spaniards—Account of Their Capture—Cuban Enthusiasm and Confidence of Success.

By steamer from Havana recently arrived here the Señoras Angeline Agramonte de Primelles and Carmelle Agramonte, sisters of the prominent and well known Cuban General Eduardo Agramonte and related to all the first families of Puerto Principe. Some weeks since, through information furnished the Spanish commander by a *presentado*, they were surprised and captured. Taken to Havana they were there released by General De Rodas and permitted to proceed hither for the purpose of joining their friends, now resident in New York. Ladies of intelligence and rare accomplishments, they have resided within the insurgent lines since the beginning of the war, and the information which they have kindly furnished our reporter, while it is of a character implicitly to be relied on, gives an excellent idea of the general condition of the Cuban people, who, hemmed in by a circle of Spanish bayonets, are nevertheless living under their own laws and their own rulers in a state of practical independence, and, at the same time, shows how futile are the efforts of the Spanish government to again bring under the yoke of tyranny a people fiercely determined to be free.

Soon after the breaking out of the insurrection in the Camaguey they left the city of Puerto Principe and joined their husbands, then on their plantations about six miles from that place. Here they were not permitted to remain long, as the mobilized volunteers and regulars, who were in the habit of making raids in the environs and meeting no insurgents, satiated their bloody instincts by killing defenceless and inoffensive people. They removed to a farm called Guanabanito, situated in the district of Maraguan, where Cornelio Porro, to whom they were related, was in command, and whither the troops could not penetrate, as all approaches were well defended by that chief. Here they resided in the greatest security and happiness, realizing something akin to the fabled idea of Arcadia. All around them were men and women inspired with a passionate longing for freedom and a corresponding hatred to their long time oppressor. Happy in the consciousness that the first great blow had been struck, the first step taken in that grand march over graves and through rivalets of blood which leads to liberty with an enthusiasm and an exultation unknown to colder climes, every individual in one way or another labored for the accomplishment of the one great end. While the men were engaged in organization, in military drill or in the manufacture of rude arms to be used until better could be obtained, and of other articles necessary in the long and bloody contest which was to follow, the women labored in making uniforms, in scraping lint and preparing other necessaries for the hospital, in looking after the sick and wounded, at all times, by their heroism and self-abnegation, strengthening and stimulating their fathers, husbands, sons and brothers in the cause they had undertaken. During the first year of the war plenty everywhere reigned, nor were the ladies compelled to undergo those hardships from want of clothing and other necessities which followed later. Perfect fraternal feeling existed, all distinctions of class were done away with, and the rich shared with the poor in everything they possessed. Throughout the Camaguey very little damage resulted from the raids of the Spanish forces, who conducted themselves with great prudence and caution, never approaching the strongholds of the patriots, but content, for the most part, in shooting down unarmed country people—a habit they have kept up to this day.

In Bayamo, however, the troops of Valmaseda, the assassin of Jiguani, acting under his famous sanguinary order, were committing terrible excesses, in consequence of which thousands of ladies, the mothers with their children, escaped to the hills of Camaguey, there to remain in quietness and safety. Later, and with the arrival of the large reinforcements from Spain, in the autumn of 1869, the operations of the troops became more extended, and the situation of the non-combatants became precarious and uncertain. The bitter feelings entertained by the Spanish soldiers, most of whom were of the lowest grade in society and completely brutalized, prompted them to kill and destroy in the merest wantonness. Everywhere they marched they left behind them a track of devastation and blood. The thatched houses of the poor were burned, the plantain groves and vegetable gardens were destroyed, the small stock killed, and domestic animals, cattle and horses driven off. Nor was this the worst. Appalling atrocities were perpetrated on defenceless women, such as no pen can relate; they were left to die in horrible agonies. Children just able to walk were shot down before the eyes of their mothers. Old men, whose gray hairs should have excited reverence, were ruthlessly slaughtered, and every countryman, no matter how inoffensive or harmless, was killed. Nor has there been any abatement of this style of warfare, and these atrocities are only the less as the opportunities are fewer for perpetrating them. Following the more active operations commencing in the fall of 1869, as referred to, the women were compelled to change their residences frequently, to leave the vicinity of roads and take up their abode in the forests. A frequent change was also necessary to prevent their whereabouts being made known by traitors, who presented themselves to the Spaniards. Naturally these involved great hardships and fatigue, but very little sickness existed among the people and despondency was a thing unknown.

All this time these ladies were constantly in the vicinity of all the more prominent Cuban leaders, with whom they were in almost daily contact, and with whose position in the insurrection and general character they are entirely familiar. Space will permit but a casual glance at some of these. Antonio Zambrana, representing Camaguey in the Cuban Congress, is one of the most prominent members of that body, and one of the principal characters in the revolution. In connection with Rafael Morales, Secretary of the Interior, and Luis Victoriano Betancourt, representing Havana, he exercises a controlling influence in the civil affairs of the republic.

At the time of the capture of these ladies Manuel Boza was the Cuban chief of operations in the Camaguey. He is from Puerto Principe and has distinguished himself greatly during the war. The cruelty attributed to the well known chief, Ignacio Agramonte is positively denied; he is represented as being a strict disciplinarian, capable and very popular. Julio Sanquillí commanded the cavalry before the arrival of Colonel Ryan and before he was disabled. He is one of the mostashing and courageous officers in the insurrection, and in attacking the enemy always selected the open field. One of his legs was paralyzed before the war and it was necessary for him to be lifted on his horse by his men. In an encounter with the troops he was badly wounded in the other leg, which has incapacitated him from further service. Bernabé de Varona, known as "Bruebeta," is the handsomest man in the insurrection, the *beau ideal* of a cavalier; the bravest, most generous, most gallant of all. Cornelio Porro, who has sacrificed his immense fortune for his country, is adored by the poor, to whom he is, as he had ever been, a father. He is greatly admired by the Spaniards even, and the greatest temptations have been offered him to induce him to return to his allegiance. The stories in reference to his having been killed by his troops are the merest *rumors*, as he retains all of his popularity among them. Vicente Garcia, who commands in the jurisdiction of Las Tuñas, has greatly distinguished himself by the injury he has inflicted upon the convoys of the Spaniards.

Jordan is represented as extremely popular among the Cubans. Great confidence is placed in him, and it is believed he will continue active in the cause until Cuban independence is established, a result which these ladies seem to consider eventually certain. Colonel Ryan is also very popular with the Cubans. Quesada lost the confidence of the people before his departure from the island, and his prestige can only be restored by his return in fulfillment of his many promises.

Of their capture the ladies give the following account:—They were at the time living in the Camaguey, at a farm house in close proximity to the woods. At early morning on the 29th of July, and before they had arisen from their bed, a body of fourteen Catalan contra-guerrillas, dressed as insurgents, entered the house, which was occupied by nine women and four children. The men had taken the alarm and fled to the woods. From subsequent remarks of the Spanish officers it was known that their whereabouts had been betrayed by one Federico Castellanos, who had presented himself. The guerrillas, on entering the house, commenced at once the use of vile and threatening language, putting their bayonets to the breasts of the women and threatening them with instant death unless they delivered up their husbands and gave information where Ignacio Agramonte and Cavada could be found, as they had been informed these chiefs were living in the house. Failing to ascertain anything, they collected the women and children together, sacked the house and then set fire to it. They then started for the headquarters of the regiment, compelling their prisoners to walk a distance of about two miles. Upon arrival the women complained to Colonel O'Daly, the commander, of being robbed of all their clothes, when that gallant gentleman responded that they should be thankful to have anything on their backs, as his

orders were to destroy everything and leave women and children naked in the woods, and that the time would soon come when neither the lives of women nor children would be spared. From thence they were taken to an encampment called the Oriente de Maraguan, where they were kept eight days, suffering many privations and without a change of clothing. Our informants state that some of the officers treated them with courtesy, while others used insulting language and endeavored in every way to mortify them. From thence they were sent to Puerto Principe, where they were permitted to receive the attentions and attentances of their friends. They were afterwards sent to Havana to be placed at the disposition of the Captain General, by whom they were released and permitted to proceed North.

According to the assurances of these ladies the Cubans have lost none of their faith in achieving their ultimate independence. They have, as they state, been repeatedly assured by their friends that the many troops of the Spaniards accomplished nothing practical in scouring the country, as, indeed, they themselves witnessed, and that only the want of arms prevented the Cubans assuming the offensive. The enthusiasm among them is very great, even boys of the best families taking their place in the ranks and serving with ardor.

In conclusion, our informants mentioned the names of the following young men who were cut to pieces with machetes by the contra-guerrillas, under Montaner, in the presence of their wives:—Tomas Bansta, Arturo Betancourt and Alonzo Batista.