

Affairs in Nicaragua.

[Special Correspondence of the N. O. Picayune.]

Virgin Bay, May 26, 1856.

The transit route between the two oceans is now open and unobstructed. The passengers from California by the Sierra Nevada, and those from New York by the Orizaba, met each other in the river, and were promptly despatched to their respective destinations. Considerable disappointment was felt at the non-arrival of a steamer from New Orleans this time; but we indulge the hope that hereafter there will be no interruption between that port and San Juan del Norte.

Mr. Wheeler, the American Minister, came up from Greytown on the last steamer, having gone there for the double purpose of sending his family to the States and of seeing Capt. Tarleton, of the British frigate *Enrydice*, and ascertaining the cause of his attempted interference with the passengers of the *Orizaba*, on her previous trip. Capt. Tarleton stated that he had boarded the *Orizaba* at the request of the people of Greytown, who were anxious to prevent any destitute passengers from landing there, as the provisions in the town were already short. "But," said Mr. Wheeler, "why did you send a cutter filled with armed men to the mouth of the river, which is nearly two miles from Greytown?" The captain hesitated for a moment, and then said he feared the passengers might get off on the river steamer before he could reach the *Orizaba*, an equivocation so palpable, that he blushed when he stated it. He denied having received any special instructions from his government; but the last mail from the United States brought letters which state positively that he acted at the express desire of the British government, transmitted through Mr. Crampton, its Minister at Washington.

The necessity for stationing a man-of-war at San Juan del Norte is becoming every day more apparent. Mr. Wheeler has repeatedly urged upon the United States government the propriety of stationing one at that point, but to no purpose. The other day the sloop of war *Saratoga* came in, and although earnestly solicited by several American citizens to remain, left next day. Her commander wrote a letter to Mr. Wheeler, stating that he had been ordered to communicate with him, but that finding provisions scarce at Greytown, he had concluded not to remain.

The fact of it is, that the station is not a very pleasant one, and our officers would much rather spend their time at Havana, or some other agreeable resort. In the meantime the interests of the country suffer for want of their presence, but their pay goes on.

Gen. Walker's army is at present distributed between Virgin Bay, San Juan del Sur, and Granada, one company being stationed at Castillo, and another at the junction of the *Serapiqui* with the *San Juan*. The rainy season is coming on, and as offensive operations will be then almost impossible, it is probable that the army will soon go into winter quarters. The bulk will probably be stationed either at Leon, or between that place and Granada, as the healthiest portion of the republic. No further advance is expected on the part of the Costa Ricans, who seem to be exceedingly disgusted with the result of their trip into Nicaragua. Their losses in the terrible battle of Rivas, together with the ravages caused by disease, amount to fully two-thirds of the entire force which crossed the borders of Nicaragua. Persons who have recently arrived from San Jose state that thirty-two hundred men left that place for Nicaragua, and only nine hundred returned. This is a fearful loss for Costa Rica, and has effectually crippled her military force.

It appears from all I can learn that Costa Rica was leagued with the States of San Salvador and Guatemala for the invasion and subsequent partition of Nicaragua. Anxious to be the first in the field, and thus obtain the lion's share of the spoils, Costa Rica moved before the others were ready, and took possession of Virgin Bay, San Juan del Sur and Rivas. Her object was to obtain possession of the Transit route and the control of the San Juan river, and the former was to be handed over to an English company, which was ready to receive it. The enlargement of her boundaries has ever been an object of paramount interest to Costa Rica. The Department of Guanacasta, always a recognized part of Nicaragua, has been claimed by Costa Rica, and in consequence of the weakness of Nicaragua, caused by her internal dissensions, she has occupied the greater portion of it, including the city of Guanacasta and the cultivated country around it. That portion of Guanacasta bordering on the San Juan river she has never been able to obtain possession of, the fortified points of Castillo and *Serapiqui* being in the hands of the Nicaraguans. The only point on the river which has ever been occupied by the Costa Rican troops is a little island at the mouth of the Rio San Carlos, from whence they were soon dislodged by the Nicaraguans.

The country between San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, and the San Juan river, is a wild, mountainous tract, about which nothing definite is known. The Rio Frio, which empties into the lake within a few yards of the source of the San Juan, runs from the mountains of this region, and its banks are inhabited by a warlike race of Indians called *Guastos*, about whose wildness and ferocity many strange stories are told. They are said to be much lighter in color than the other Indians of the country and to have light hair, a tale which is rendered somewhat probable by the name given them by the natives of the country, that of *Indios Blancos*. Formerly they traded at San Jose and San Carlos, exchanging gold, which they appeared to possess in large quantities, for such articles as they needed. One or two attempts, on the part of the Spaniards, to penetrate their country were fiercely repelled, and since then they have ceased all communication with the natives. Through this country the Costa Ricans have found it impossible to penetrate, and the only way they can reach the San Juan river is from the lake or down the *Serapiqui*. An attempt to cut a passage down the latter stream was recently frustrated by Capt. Baldwin, who defeated more than ten times his own number.

Nicaragua has never surrendered her claim to Guanacasta, and the present government, finding itself in a position to enforce these claims, sent envoys to Costa Rica to arrange an amicable settlement of the disputed boundary question. How those envoys were received, and what has occurred since, are matters of history—to which I need not advert more fully. It was undoubtedly the intention of Costa Rica, when she anticipated the Northern States in her invasion of Nicaragua, to take possession of and retain such portions of the State as suited her views and interests. Confident of the support of England, and relying upon a general uprising of the people of Nicaragua in their favor, they anticipated no difficulty in defeating and exterminating the handful of Americans in the country. The slaughter of unoffending men at Virgin Bay, the wanton murdering of the prisoners taken by them at Santa Rosa, and the butchery of the wounded Americans found in the hospital at Rivas, sufficiently show the spirit which animated them. It was just what Yora's proclamation stated, to drive the Americans of all classes from the country, and prevent them from ever returning, and there can be doubt that in this they received the tacit, if not active support of the English authorities in the country.

It was not from lack of will that this attempt was not seconded by San Salvador and Guatemala, but for want of the necessary men and means. The former were gathered, and a thousand of them were actually marched to the borders of Nicaragua, but here their hearts failed them, and more than half of them deserted and went back to their different homes. This, together with the news of the disastrous retreat of the Costa Ricans into their own country, caused the final break up and failure of the expedition. In the meantime the government of Nicaragua has notified Guatemala that unless the present actual government of this State is recognized by her, it will be considered equivalent to a declaration of hostility. So matters stand at present; and although I think there is no immediate danger of the attempt being renewed, yet I understand that Gen. Walker will at once move a portion of his forces to Leon, in order to be prepared.

My reasons for not anticipating an immediate movement on the part of the Northern States are, that San Salvador, having lost nearly the whole of her two last crops, on which large advances had been made by foreign merchants, is deeply in debt, and every man within her borders is needed to labor in the fields. The army of Guatemala is composed almost entirely of native Indians, who are nothing unless led by Carrera in person, and he dare not leave the State for fear of an insurrection on the part of the Spanish and mixed races, whom he has oppressed so cruelly. All his available force is required to watch these parties. The people of Honduras are democratic in their tendencies, and really wish well to the Nicaraguans; and although the principal men of the State would willingly see a war break out, yet Guardiola, the President, who formerly commanded the legitimist army in Nicaragua, and was defeated by Walker, has had quite enough of the Americans, and publicly states so. As I before stated, the rainy season will prevent any offensive operations on the part of Nicaragua, so we are likely to have a quiet spell for some months.

The recent election for President of this State has not resulted in a choice by the people, a number of the departments not having voted at all, in consequence of the disturbances caused by the Costa Ricans in Rivas and the Chamorristas in Chontales. The principal candidates are Salazar and Rivas; and although the former has the best of it so far, yet I am inclined to think the latter will be elected. The Constituent Congress will meet at Leon or Managua in a few days, and the question will then be decided. The Americans have taken no part whatever in the matter, and manifested but little interest, as all the candidates are democrats.

The cheering news from the United States brought by the last mail has brightened up every countenance here. The enthusiastic meetings in New Orleans and New York, and the almost certainty of the reception of Padre Viji by the government at Washington, have convinced the Americans that they have not been forgotten by their brethren at home, and the difficulties under which Nicaragua has labored in consequence of the refusal of the United States government to recognize her as a State will soon be dispelled. By the way, I perceive that Colonel Parker H. French was one of the speakers at the New Orleans meeting, and was enthusiastic in his praises of Walker and Nicaragua. This is something strange to most persons here, it being well understood that he is in decidedly bad odor with the government, having left here a defaulter, to the extent of ten or fifteen thousand dollars, which had been entrusted to him; and for which he was unable or unwilling to account. He would hardly do as treasurer of the funds that may be raised in New Orleans.

I see in one of the Washington papers an attempt to prove that Padre Viji is not a man of good character. This is an entire mistake. No man in the republic stands higher, or is more beloved and respected than Padre Viji. He is a native of Granada, was rector of the church there, and is known to all its inhabitants. Col. Wheeler, the United States Minister, speaks of him in the highest terms, as does every person to whom I have spoken on the subject.

GRANADA, June 3, 1856.

The steamer *San Carlos* arrived here yesterday, bringing a battalion of one hundred and eighty men, under command of Col. Jaques, all from New Orleans. These men come out fully armed and equipped, with plenty of ammunition and provisions, ready to go into action at once. They are a fine looking set of men, and like all from your section, are orderly and obedient. The steamer also brought the news of the reception of Padre Viji and the recognition of Nicaragua by the United States government. You can imagine how welcome this was to every one here, and the whole city was in a fever of joy. A national salute was fired on the plaza, and the bells rang out their most joyous peals.

The passengers by the *Minie Schaeffer*, and those by the *Daniel Webster* met at San Juan del Norte, and came up the river together. Col. Jaques and Lieut. Sherman have gone to Leon, and Gen. Fry has ordered the new battalion to Masaya, a beautiful town about twelve miles from here, and very healthy. They leave to-day, all in good health. A sad accident occurred while they were in the lake, a musket having been accidentally discharged, the ball passing through the head of one of the members of Capt. Ellis' company, killing him on the spot. I have

been unable to learn his name. His remains were interred this morning, with all due ceremony.

Gen. Walker left here several days since for Leon, accompanied by the 1st Rifle battalion. The government is at present established there, but I presume the General's movement is caused by the threatening attitude recently assumed by the Northern States.

Quite a gloom was thrown over the city by the receipt of the intelligence that Gen. Goicurr was a very dangerous illness at Masaya; which was shortly after followed by a report of his death. I am happy to state, however, that this morning the courier arrived bringing news of the General's convalescence, and that he was to leave in a day or two for Leon. Col. Thomas S. Fisher was also confined to his bed by sickness, but I believe his disease is not considered dangerous. There are not two officers in the army who would be missed so much as these.

Capt. Payne, formerly of Texas, a most efficient ordnance officer, died recently at Virgin Bay, of a disease called cholera, somewhat resembling the cholera. Lieut. Coleman, son of Col. Coleman, of Vicksburg, Miss., was also wounded in the leg at Virgin Bay by the accidental discharge of a pistol. The wound is a very painful one, but is not considered dangerous.

Gen. Hornsby is in command of the Meridional Department, comprising Rivas and Guanacasta, and Gen. Fry commands this department. Lieut. Col. A. F. Rodler commands the posts on the San Juan river, an appointment which gives general satisfaction.

There is nothing of interest or importance from the Northern States or from Costa Rica. I still adhere to the opinion that no operation of any magnitude will be attempted until the close of the rainy season, three or four months hence. It will take some time for Costa Rica to recuperate, and it is extremely probable that the first move in that direction will be the occupation of Guanacasta by the Nicaraguan forces. By the close of the rainy season Walker will doubtless have men enough to leave garrisons in the principal towns in Chontales, Matagalpa and Segovia, and thus check the movements of the Chamorristas and the hostile States of the North. The former are contemptible in numbers, but at present they are harassing the people of these departments, flying from the approach of the American troops, but returning as soon as the latter depart.

I perceive in one of Senor Molina's letters to Mr. Marcy, he states that the Costa Ricans were fighting against a marauding band of Americans, and not against the people of Nicaragua, who were all in their favor. The falsity of this statement is apparent from the fact that during the occupation of Rivas, Virgin Bay and San Juan del Sur, by the Costa Ricans, not more than a hundred native Nicaraguans joined them, while three or four times that number joined Walker, and fought with a valor and determination worthy of all praise. Col. Machado, the leader of these troops, who was killed there, was as brave a man as ever drew a sword. His death was a severe loss to Gen. Walker.