

# THE CUBAN WAR.

## Succinct History of the Struggle for Freedom.

### A NINE YEARS' CONTEST.

#### Heroic Efforts of the Insurgents to Win Their Cause.

#### AN HONORABLE PEACE AT LAST.

The long and bloody struggle waged for the independence of Cuba since the autumn of 1868 has come to an end by the surrender of the insurgent forces, induced by concessions on the part of the Spanish government which many are disposed to regard as worth all the efforts made to win them by the Cubans. However, when one reviews the story of the nine years' war, and counts up all the losses sustained by both sides in men and money, besides the enormous damage inflicted on the island by the destruction of property and the suspension of production, the mind is filled with horror at a policy of selfishness which made such sacrifices necessary before the ordinary forms of popular government were conceded to the inhabitants of the devastated island. If Spanish pride is satisfied with the measure of success which has crowned the desperate war of repression waged against the Cubans, Spanish vanity is responsible for all the horrors of that war, because if it is deemed honorable and just to grant the privileges now conceded to Cuba after the struggle it was equally just that they should have been granted in 1863. In this war Spain has won, perhaps, a slight material advantage, but at the expense of a moral loss which she can never hope to recover. Indeed, her hold on the Antilles has been loosened through her own fault, and the near future may wrest from her altogether the fair jewels of her crown in the West Indies. Regarding the condition of Cuba after the war, it must be conceded that if she has failed to attain independence this time she has demonstrated that her people are capable of great and heroic efforts, and the lesson learned in misfortune may prove of incalculable advantage to her when the hour of success arrives. A leap from slavery to liberty must be made through the flames of a fire that purifies the victorious nationality. The conditions under which the Cubans commenced their efforts were unfavorable, inasmuch as they had to deal with the question of slavery as represented by a preponderating section of the population, by the empirical treatment which applied questionable remedies only locally, but left the great area of the evil practically untouched. They had to liberate the slaves without being able to control them in a state of ignorance and freedom, and when their own numbers were reduced in the struggle with the Spanish army their ranks were necessarily recruited from a source which could not possibly add to the moral strength of their cause. Hence even success had its dangers for the thoughtful section of the Cuban patriots, because with it they would find themselves face to face with an element of political force of their own creation, but which they were by no means certain of controlling for the good of their country. Possibly considerations of this kind had weight in the Cuban councils when Spain offered her terms of peace. The self-government which has been conceded must be regarded as the time being preferable to the state of anarchy that would probably arise when the patriots found themselves in a minority in presence of the emancipated field hands of the sugar plantations. The politics of St. Domingo would be repeated in Cuba and the country liberated from Spain become a prey to dissensions more disastrous to her interests than the overriding tyranny of the *hidalgos*. To maintain a national independence Cuba must win it after slavery has been abolished on her soil and political sobriety practised under the new forms of her government. When the Cubans frame and respect good local laws for the protection of society and the encouragement of industry, they lay the foundation on which they can easily erect a nationality which will command the consideration of the world. Then independence will become in reality the blessing with all the sacrifices that may be made to win it.

#### THE WAR IN CUBA.

The history of nearly ten years' struggle which commenced at Yara on October 10, 1868, is one of the deepest interest. The events that immediately preceded the outbreak have a close connection with the condition of politics in the mother country, as Spaniards love to call old Spain. The revolution of 1868 promised great reforms on the Peninsula, but the Cubans possessed a deep and burning hatred of Spain, had no faith whatever that the benefits to be enjoyed by the Spaniards would be extended to them. They, the Cubans, knew from experience that, no matter who ruled in Spain, Cuba would continue to be regarded as a conquered dependency, from which the sluices of war or the means for political intrigue would continue to be drawn. Therefore they looked on the disturbance of affairs in Spain as the long hoped for opportunity of putting in practice the cherished design of revolution and the expulsion of the Spaniards. Among the leading spirits in the insurrectionary movement were Carlos Manuel Cespedes, Francisco Aguilera, Manuel Aguilera, Belisario Alvarez, Vicente Garcia, Donato Marmol and Manuel Fernandez, each representing a local revolutionary junta in the Eastern Department of the Island. The information regarding the projected outbreak having reached Havana an order was sent to Manzanillo for the arrest of the conspirators. But a friendly governor of Bayamo gave them timely notice and they escaped. Early in October it had been determined to begin the war of independence on the 14th, but the action of the Spanish government seems to have forced the insurgents to commence on the 10th by the now historic declaration of principles and the proclamation of the Cuban republic at Yara. With a few hundred poorly armed followers the brave Cespedes took the field and won his first success in the capture of the town of Bayamo on the 18th, and of the citadel on the 23d. A Spanish force of 800 infantry with cavalry sent under the command of Colonel Quiros to relieve Bayamo was entirely defeated by the Cubans. After this success a republican government was formally organized under Salvador Cisneros Betancourt, Marquis of Santa Lucia, and the brothers Argfmonte.

Meantime Count Valmaseda, the *segundo Cabo*, or Deputy Captain General at Havana, was ordered to take the field against the insurgents. He commenced operations by making a final tender of terms to the patriots, but failed to make any impression on them by fair promises. He then advanced with a force of about 2,200 men, chiefly made up of volunteers, but counting a few regular troops. He was attacked between Nuevitas and Puerto Principe, and left his dead on the field. He finally reached San Miguel after a harassing march of five days, during which the patriots hung on his flanks and rear, cutting off many of his men. Increasing his force to 4,000 men he reached Bayamo after a series of bloody checks only to find the place burned and abandoned by the Cubans. In other parts of the Eastern Department the progress of the Spanish troops was continually being checked, and Colonel Acosta y Alvear was defeated by the patriots at Las Yaguas with heavy loss. On December 26 General Quesada succeeded in landing a cargo of arms and took command of the insurgent army of Camaguey. Lersundi, the Spanish Captain General, made great efforts to secure a peaceful settlement of the trouble, but failed and retired to Spain, being succeeded by Captain General Dulce. Toward the close of the administration of Lersundi the volunteers in Havana perpetrated a wholesale massacre of innocent persons at the Villanueva Theatre and the Louvre, under the pretence of avenging the insult offered to the Spanish flag. The organization of these corps of resident Spaniards created a condition of affairs that rendered the negotiations wholly fruitless. In February, 1869, Captain General Dulce sent commissioners to the Cubans to open negotiations, offering them everything but independence, but met with no encouragement. Toward the end of the same month a Congress of representatives of the revolution met at Camaguey, and the first act of the new government then organized was

the abolition of slavery. General Ruloff, a Pole, with 7,000 insurgents of the Villas, was successful in several battles with the Spaniards in February, 1869. On April 11 Cespedes was formally elected President of the Cuban Republic, and General Quesada Commander-in-Chief of the army. In the meantime Valmaseda—called the "tiger"—issued a general order that every male over fifteen years of age found in the country away from his home without good reason, should be shot, and that every house on which a white flag was not displayed should be burned, and that all women and children found alone on their farms should be removed, if necessary, by force, either to Bayamo or Jiguan. Important Landings were made of arms and men during May, one under Rafael Quesada and the other under General Jordan. The first reached its destination without molestation, the latter was attacked twice but repulsed the Spaniards and reached the Cuban camp. The command of the army of the Oriente was given to Jordan, who afterward succeeded Quesada as Commander-in-Chief. In August, 1870, Mr. Fish, the United States Secretary of State, proposed terms for the cession of the island to the Cubans, but the authorities at Madrid declined to consider them. General Caballero de Rodas succeeded Dulce as Captain General, arriving in Cuba in July with reinforcements equal to 30,000 men. De Rodas not proving to be popular with the volunteers of Havana, he was superseded by Valmaseda in December, 1870. The rule of Valmaseda has been stained by the cruel murder of eight medical students for a so-called political demonstration at a cemetery, and by the issue of many barbarous orders, which were in general carried out to the letter by the willing volunteers and military officers. He was succeeded in 1872 by Coballos, and in 1873 by General Pieltain, who tried to open negotiations with the insurgents on the basis of Cuba remaining a state of the Spanish Republic. This offer was, however, declined, and the operations of the patriots pushed vigorously westward into the Central Department. In November, 1873, Pieltain was superseded by General Jovellar as Captain General, and Cespedes gave way to Cisneros as President of the Cuban Republic. From October, 1868, to the end of 1873, Spain lost 68,000 out of the 80,000 troops she had sent to Cuba, exclusive of her losses of resident Spaniards, and in the first three years, ending October 1871, over \$70,000,000. The destruction of sugar estates and other property continued without interruption during all this time, and fighting was of daily occurrence on the lines between the opposing forces.

#### THE VIRGINIA AFFAIR AND OTHER EVENTS.

The reader will remember the excitement created in the country on the arrival of the news of the capture of the Cuban steamer *Virginias* off Jamaica, and the subsequent shooting of her passengers and many of her crew at the slaughter house in Santiago de Cuba. Coincident with that massacre was an attack by the insurgents on Manzanillo and also the battle of La Zanja. The horror manifested in the United States at the massacre of the *Virginias*' crew was taken advantage of by General Quesada to appeal to General Grant for belligerent rights for the insurgents, which, however, were not granted. General Burriel, Governor of Santiago de Cuba, who ordered the murder of the unfortunate men of the *Virginias*, was recalled to Spain, but rewarded there for his butchery. In the latter days of December a battle was fought at Palo Seco, in which the Spaniards were defeated. They sustained another defeat in January, 1874, at Meloune, and the insurgents destroyed a large number of plantations throughout that district. In February the indecisive battle of Maranzo was fought. In June the patriots captured the town of Bayamo, and in July negotiations were reported as being again in progress for a settlement, but came to nothing. From that time until the end of 1874 continuous fighting was kept up. Sixteen serious engagements took place during that time.

As Valmaseda was again made Captain General he offered amnesty in March, 1875, to certain leaders with their followers, but it was rejected, as before, and the war went on with vigor, although the Captain General renewed his offers again and again. Cespedes' death was a tragic ending to a patriotic career. He was succeeded by Palma and Juan B. Spoturno as presidents. The recent surrender of Spoturno marked the dissolution of the Cuban insurgent government. At the end of 1875 Valmaseda was superseded by Jovellar, who set at once to work in a systematic manner to reconcile the insurgents with the inevitable failure of their cause. In this he has been seconded by General Martinez Campos, who, although nominally in command of the army, took an active part in the negotiations. It is to be feared that the volunteers of Cuba may not immediately accept the peace terms, but the power of the government will undoubtedly be exercised for the preservation of order.