

# CUBAN AFFAIRS.

## ARRIVAL OF THE STEAMSHIP RAPIDAN.

The steamship *Rapidan*, from Havana Dec. 8, reached this port yesterday. By the courtesy of Purser OSCAR CROCHERON, our special correspondence, later by six days than that already received, came duly to hand.

## Receipt of Grant's Message—Excitement in Havana—America Governs Cuba—The Covadonga Volunteers—War News—Provisions—Two Days of Fighting.

From Our Own Correspondent.

HAVANA, Wednesday, Dec. 8, 1869.

The anxiously expected telegram, the subject of discussion for weeks and months—President GRANT'S Message and his opinions on the Cuban question—arrived yesterday at noon. Merchants left their counting houses, the artisan his workshop, and the news gatherers and news-mongers had picked out the soft stones of the sidewalk, in the vicinity of SPENCER'S reading room, hours before the telegram arrived. Cuban and Spanish *laborantes* (for the latter class is also well represented) pretended to look unconcerned and careless, whistling some favorite tune or chatting on commonplace subjects; but the nervous twitching of the facial muscles, the unsteady flicker of the eye and the restlessness of the individual, indicated but too plainly their great anxiety to learn the result and the probabilities of their future fate. The President's Message was not expected with a one-hundredth part of the anxiety or interest in the United States. In fact, after listening to the remarks made before and since the event by persons of every station and of every political shade, the fact can no longer be doubted, notwithstanding the bluster of the Spaniards and the self-confidence of the Cubans, that the American Union is the real controlling power in Cuba, and is becoming tacitly acknowledged as such by everybody. It will not be many years before a third party, composed of labor-loving and intelligent Cubans and of hard-working office-seekers hating Spaniards, will control the destinies of the island, and demand admission into the bond of States forming the American Union, consummating annexation without the shedding of a drop of blood or the expenditure of a single dollar. The ultras of both parties will be compelled to step aside, and the ZULUETAS, DURANONAS, ALDAMAS, and others of that ilk, will be compelled to take the wall, and instead of a purseproud and mercenary slaveholding aristocracy, the destinies of the island will be in the hands of the people. Even the illegal and reprehensible excesses committed by the volunteers in January have already been productive of beneficial results; those scenes taught the people that in union is strength, and that the people are something more than mere taxpaying machines. The expulsion of DULCE and other obnoxious officials of the Government destroyed the time-honored prayer of the Spaniards—"Love and obedience to the Virgin, the King and the authorities." That act proved to the people that even Captain-Generals are not infallible and all-powerful, and that the immaculate character of their leaders and their supposed infallibility and invulnerability must be a mistake. These scenes will be repeated in a different manner, and appear when least expected; the lesson of the past remains, and the power of military or civil satraps will never again be what it was. The Spaniards have shown the Cubans that rebellion is neither a sin nor a crime, but a work of praise when crowned with success.

### EFFECT OF THE MESSAGE.

The effect of the Message was electric, and Cuban stock went down; but it must be understood that the act of non-recognition will not be productive of as much evil to them as recognition would have been of benefit. I have no hesitation in saying that hundreds of lukewarm Cubans, who until now were more interested in piling up the dollars than in the future of their native home, awaiting and expecting that America and the Americans would do the fighting for them, will now openly oppose the insurgent cause, not so much out of a belief as from the reason that hereafter the fighting Cubans will not spare the plantation, house or life of Cuban or Spaniard, and destroy also the property of those who have hitherto been only sympathisers. General GRANT has changed the character of the Cuban war; it will henceforth be no longer a series of insignificant skirmishes and make-believe battles, but, as it has long threatened to be, a war of fire and sword, a war of incendiarism and extermination.

### THE COVADONGA VOLUNTEERS.

Among the different battalions lately arrived from Spain, none have attracted more attention than the so-called Covadonga Volunteers, from the province in Asturias, in Old Spain. They arrived by the steamer *Comillas*, on Sunday, and were escorted in procession through the streets, which were gaily decorated with the Spanish colors. These soldiers are like the others lately arrived from Spain, and it seems almost inhuman that the passions or politics of men should require the sacrifice of so many hundreds of young lives. On being received at the *Machina* by the Committee on Festivities, where several speeches were made, the Colonel commanding them became excited, and turning with his drawn sword toward his command, he shouted:

"Volunteers of Covadonga, do you swear to shed the last drop of your blood in defence of the national integrity, and not to lay down your arms while an enemy of the fatherland exists?"

And from a thousand voices the answer came: "We swear."

The scene was really grand, and the faces of all the spectators seemed to light up with intelligence and determination. At that moment I could realize how the Spaniards of old must have looked when going to battle.

### FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH.

The mail from the South coast that reached Havana this morning brings important news from the Eastern Department. A convoy of carts and pack mules crossing the Conto River for Las Tunas, and escorted by over 450 troops, under command of Colonel VELASCO and Major BONICHE, the hero of the battle of Las Tunas, was attacked by the insurgents in force; the fight, which was a running one, and lasted most all day, took place on the 26th ult. The troops suffered severely, Colonel VELASCO and several of his officers being wounded at Las Minas, where the insurgents seemed more persistent than previously in their efforts to capture the train. Want of unity of action on their part lost them the day. The rebel loss is not given, though said to be severe.

Colonel CAMARA, in an official report to General VALMASEDA, dated Nov. 29, says the troops at his disposal skirmished with the insurgents that day for more than eleven hours. The scene of action was the very rough broken country bordering on the Guaninicum Creek, which empties into Conto River. The loss on either side is not mentioned, though two incidents, well authenticated, may be apropos as showing the sanguinary nature of the fight. The day previous, Colonel CAMARA'S men found hung to the bushes the shoes of sixteen of their comrades, in an out-of-the-way place, with tangible evidence they had all been killed. The Spaniards, coming in contact with some forty rebels soon after, killed them all, and hung their hats on the bushes. It is said that in the first case the soldiers had surrendered previous to being shot, while in the second the rebels were captured without arms.

QUASIMODO.