

# THE FREE PRESS IN CUBA.

## Change of Tone in the Old Journals—Aims of the New One—Platform of the Cuban Party in Havana.

The abrogation of the censorship in Cuba by General Dulce has not only produced a remarkable change in some of the old journals published in Havana, but has given rise to an entirely new crop of newspapers, which, doubtless, represent the state of the popular mind in that city much more faithfully than can be expected from those which existed under the old system. With these the change has been more in the tone than in the matter. The *Diario de la Marina* has descended from its former arrogant and dogmatic position and is now quite a moderate affair. It may be classed as the *Montpensier* among the Bourbons of the press, willing to wear any cap that may fit the time. The *Avensol* claims, however, the rank of the legitimate Bourbon, and still preaches fire and sword and no surrender to the modern ideas, while the *Gaceta Oficial* plods the quiet tenor of its ancient way.

Some of the new journals are more worthy of notice, and at the head of these we place *La Verdad*, of which the first number lies before us. It is a quarto sheet, of handsome typographical appearance, something after the style of the smaller New York weeklies, and evidently is conducted with ability. Its self-imposed mission is to proclaim "the truth," which its name signifies, and in its leading article on the situation it gives a very truthful sketch of the crisis that now attends the political status of Cuba. Believing that this article represents the views and feelings of the men of substance and practical hope in the island we translate the principal points of its first leader, which will be found in continuation.

The *Voz de Cuba* is another new journal, which from the fact of being edited by a native Spaniard is looked upon with suspicion by both parties, Cubans and Spaniards; and we do not find anything very noteworthy in its contents. The *Espectador Liberal*, which was formerly a weekly review of the stage, has taken to politics since the new freedom was granted to the press, and does not seem to know how to handle itself in its new sphere. On the other hand the *Boletín Republicano* is a lively little sheet of look-alike size, proclaiming as its creed "absolute independence; down with the Spanish government; freedom for all; universal fraternity; free Cuba for all freemen, without distinction of nationality or race." Its columns are largely occupied with extracts from the official paper of the insurgents published at Bayamo. We notice the names of other journalists in our Havana exchanges, but no copies have reached us.

## PLATFORM OF THE HAVANEROS—INDEPENDENCE THE ONLY POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT.

(Translated from *La Verdad* of January 15.)

We have reached the moment of the greatest crisis. At this moment we are deciding or have to decide not only the future of Cuba, but that of Spain in America. We must then take vigorous measures and clearly defined resolves, for no one is ignorant of the grave circumstances in which we are placed, however much the government has, until recently, endeavored to disguise them. We believe that the hour has come when all men of true patriotism should endeavor, even at the cost of their lives, to save the country. It is now no more a secret that more than a third of the territorial extent of Cuba is in a state of insurrection; that this insurrection is spreading, and that the remainder of the country is deeply agitated and discontented. Commerce is completely paralyzed, the present state of business affairs is intolerable, and any revolution, however serious and sanguinary, cannot more prejudice the country if it is indefinitely prolonged. The revolution is daily gaining strength and passion which is a natural result, because the principles on which the outbreak is founded are but too just, even should the adopted path which it has chosen be erroneous, not so much by its own wrongs on account of the circumstances previously mentioned. Many thousands of men have already grasped arms, and by contraband means sufficient can be obtained for those who are not yet provided, and the revolution must either conquer or be suppressed by force of arms. To obtain either result much time is required, and many millions of dollars and many lives must be sacrificed, and those who survive the decision will only meet ruin and graves.

How can we avoid such calamities? The condition of affairs clearly indicates the only possible means:—Prove to the country that it is not intended to deceive it any longer; lay aside ridiculous considerations of egotism and unfounded pride; renounce and repair former errors; establish guarantees for the future, and, in one word, treat openly and frankly, without deception or double intentions, with the revolutionary government, and let them find within the nationality of Spain all they could aspire to as an independent nation, and thereby avoid the shedding of torrents of brothers' blood and a sacrilegious struggle. \* \* \* \* \*

What inducement could move the insurgents to place themselves again under the nationality of Spain, or, rather, to become Spanish? For we Cubans and peninsular residents in Cuba, although Spaniards by birth or by race, are not so politically, having been, until lately, deprived of all the rights of Spaniards. We reply, the most just government, the most equitable, the soundest in principle, that is now being established in Spain—the governing of the country by the country—autonomy; a government composed of a Governor appointed by the nation; a colonial council, with all its employees—absolutely all—elected by the country, which must also determine the political organization best adapted to its necessities and convenience, treating Cuba the same as any other province, towards supporting the general expenses of the nation, in due proportion to its wealth, and declaring at once the immediate establishment of free trade between Cuba and Spain. This is no new feature, having been already proposed by the Commissioners named by Cuba for the Information; the government did not reject it, and it has been recognized by all the Captains-General who took part in it that it is absurd and impossible to govern Cuba from Spain. All, excepting two, Señores Serrano and Dulce, admitted that to obviate this difficulty more ample faculty of government must be allowed to them, and especially in the alteration of dispositions arranged in the peninsula, if considered inconvenient, which clearly proves the defects of the centralizing government. It is requisite, therefore, that the country make its own laws, for it knows its requirements best, and it is natural it is requisite that the country shall appoint its own servants and impose its own contributions in the most appropriate form. These ideas that we present now only in the rough, and are disposed to treat in detail if necessary, are the more attainable if notice be taken of the opinions expressed by Mosquera, Serrano and Dulce in their respective reports. In these, above all, in the very full report of the present President of the provisional government may be recognized, clearly and definitely seen, the justice of our aspirations.

There is no time to be lost nor vain illusions to be indulged in. The last decree of amnesty is useful, more than useful, because it explicitly recognizes the injustice hitherto shown to the country; because it accepts the grand and legitimate principle of governing the country by the country, and, above all, because it shows the intentions, the aspirations of the illustrious chief who signs it. This, however, is little, very little. It is not enough to proclaim to the country forgetfulness for the past. If it is not the government that has injuries to forgive, it is the country. It does not ask for pardon—but this be clearly understood—but asks justice, and asks it not humbly, but demands it, basing itself on the same principles as those proclaimed in the decree of amnesty.

Each new decree issued by General Dulce increases our hopes of attaining an honorable and useful conciliation. We can but subscribe and support by what we have already manifested the following paragraph of the decree of amnesty, in which the loyalty that characterizes it proves that General Dulce recognizes the original cause of the movement at Yara, and does justice to the sentiments of those who promote it.

It, by an impulse that will in due time be judged by history, and guided on by one of those little meditated resolutions in which passion usurps the place of prudence; if by the incredulity of the few and the impatience of the many, the insurrection of Yara was created and the peace and tranquillity of this Spanish province was disturbed by violent aggressions, it is time to employ all the possible means available in order to put an end to so many and to such lamentable occurrences. It is of no importance whether the standard of rebellion is raised on the eastern or western portion of this integral portion of the Spanish nationality. I came here to unravel difficulties of administration and government by means of free or forced judgment, and shall follow that path until liberty is developed in its most necessary manifestations, until the government of the country by the country is founded on a sound basis.

Let the country be placed in such a position that no political change that may transpire in Spain can wrench its liberties from it; give it real autonomy. Arrange matters in this manner and the memory of General Dulce will be handed down to posterity as one of the great benefactors of his country, and the name of Spain would be venerated and blessed, not only by her grateful daughter, Cuba, but by all America, that was formerly subject to her rule.