

A Cuban view of Events—The Course of the Campaign—Lersundi and Valmaseda—Slavery to be Abolished by the Revolution.

New York, Jan. 1, 1892.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

The following information, in regard to recent events in Cuba is derived from well informed native sources in Havana, and will be found interesting, as it gives the obverse of the official reports which come from there:—

The arrival of the Count de Valmaseda here caused no little surprise, and the organs of the Spanish government stated that his object was to confer with the General; but later the truth of the event was ascertained. The Count de Valmaseda, when convinced of 'the impossibility' to deceive the Cubans, sent a telegram to Lersundi, informing him that the whole country was in revolt; that if he gave battle and should be routed all would be lost; and if he won nothing would be gained, as the entire country was hostile and the number of the insurgents so considerable that they could soon preserve their positions. To this Lersundi replied that his duty was to maintain himself at his post. Valmaseda therefore endeavored to avoid a fight, and by roundabout roads went to San Miguel in order not to pass through or go to Nuevitas, and would surely, with all his forces, have been taken prisoners if he had not quickly placed himself under the protection of the guns of the vessels of war. He embarked at San Miguel for Havana, and on being received by Lersundi was asked if he came to give an account of his shameful routing by a handful of men, badly armed and novices in the art of war.

He was at once ordered back by Lersundi to take command of his column, which caused a serious misunderstanding between these two Spanish chiefs. Moreover, he was submitted to a council of war for disobedience, in order to explain his communication, that it would be the same to fight or to fly. Valmaseda desired to yield the command to Espinar, or that he should be allowed 15,000 men, but Lersundi objected to Espinar's taking possession. In the same manner Lersundi would not allow General Latorre to take the command of Santiago de Cuba, because he would not recognize the provisional government. In Havana it is believed that General Lersundi will refuse to deliver up his command to General Dulce, which will cause a serious struggle. The Brigadier Garcia Muños officially requested Lersundi to send him 6,000 men, as he was short of everything, and that the country was excessively agitated. Lersundi replied that he could not make soldiers. Muños then endeavored to pass the command to Colonel Queros, who, however, declined. In fact, the utmost discord is said to exist among the Spanish authorities. Benegasi has been completely routed between Silara and Holguin, and when his men refused to go on he, like General Etna, advanced and was seriously wounded. The insurgents in possession of Holguin have formally established themselves at Jibara.

The battalion of the "volunteers of order" commanded by Colonel Nevita, composed of 800 rank and file, is reduced to 200 men by desertions. Of the troops arrived from Spain and sent to Benegasi, at Jibara, 200 returned, refusing to fight against Cubans who were struggling for liberty. This incident assisted to disconcert the Spanish authorities. In Santiago de Cuba entire companies of volunteers have gone over to the insurgents. The Spanish officers have learned to commit excesses. Mena caused two young telegraph operators to be shot in Port au Prince; Valmaseda set fire to the plantations of Altigracia, St. Isabella and the Union, and advised the negroes to murder the proprietors; he poisoned the water at St. Isabella and two sacks of salt, returning in order to sow the latter well and prevent the act being discovered, but in his hasty flight all was made known. Lamela did the same at the Trapiche estate. Quiros in Baire caused all the bodies to be cast into the springs and wells. Campillo, at Manzanillo, shot an insurgent and had the body dragged by a rope tied to the neck to the cemetery. In his march on Holguin Benegasi caused all the children, aged people and women to go ahead of his army, which fact is asserted by many persons worthy of credit. Camilo Cepeda has died in the prison of Havana, and there is every reason to suspect that he was poisoned.

The Spanish officers in Cuba wish to act in the same manner as they did at St. Domingo, where, after committing all kinds of cruelties, they retired, taking with them a number of ladies and young girls and filling the wells and springs with corpses. Although Garcon Machin was found by the insurgents, badly wounded, he was assisted and placed at liberty on giving his parole not to take up arms against the Cubans.

The journals of the independent portion of the island write in favor of union, and the government issues anonymous and doubtful pamphlets tending to divide parties. Neither the Spanish soldiers nor the established peninsulars wish to continue the strife, therefore the situation of the Spanish authorities is terrible. Zulueta, Ibañer, Duran, Argudin and other colored persons of the island have told General Lersundi that the conduct of Valmaseda at Port au Prince is unbecoming, as he devastates plantations and provokes the negroes to commit irregularities that cannot be tolerated on any account. These are the bosom friends of the first authorities on the island. The Spanish government is so disconcerted that the military operations are not conducted by military men, but by a lawyer, Mr. Devran, who is a defender of the negroes.

The Cubans are heartily grateful to the British subjects, from whom they receive the most efficacious asylum, and, further, because they have stopped working at the copper mines and are busy making cannon for the insurgents. When this work is finished the attack on Cuba will be undertaken, and is almost sure to produce the so much wished for results. The English, wherever they are, remain purely English and work unceasingly for their country. Those belonging to the copper mines have understood that the revolution must triumph, and that the good services rendered to-day will cement closer ties in the union of to-morrow, and have profited by the opportunity.

I have further private information that I will hand to you later, in order not to prevent the execution of certain plans. Let it suffice for the present to know that the revolutionists have formally declared that slavery will disappear on the banner of liberty being raised, and if they have not already joined the slaves it is because they have not sufficient arms, and because some must cultivate the soil in order to provide for the wants of the liberating forces, because the Cubans will not allow themselves to partake in anything that they deny to the negroes. This is the reason why the chiefs of the revolution await the time when to liberate their slaves and admit them to their ranks in order to fight with them for the redemption of the country. We are assured that steps are being taken to establish a school in Bayamo for whites and blacks, which will certainly yield good results.

The Cubans in general earnestly hope to be recognized as belligerents by the government of the United States; but they believe that the early recognition by that country is of as much importance to the cause that they are supporting as it is to the commercial interests that exist between the two countries, which now reaches about thirty millions annually and may be considerably increased in the future.

As Spain has declared war without quarter the Cubans do not wish to fight against the poor soldiers, and therefore attack the officers with greater vigor. Out of forty officers that accompanied Valmaseda only five were left. The Cubans think that the Spanish officers who are the authors of such acts should also pay for their faults.