

Reforms in the Financial Administration—Revision of Tariffs and Instructions—Vexatious Fines to Be Abolished—The Captain General to Take the Field—Items from the Insurrection—Resignation of Chico Valdes—The Cubans in Venezuela—Financial Report of the City.

HAVANA, Nov. 20, 1895.

Such interest as appertains to this island is naturally so centred in the insurrection that other matters of great importance are lost sight of. Among the chief of these are the reforms in the financial administration being initiated by the very able and astute Intendente, General D. J. Emilio de Gantos, and as rapidly as possible carried into operation by the Captain General. Both of these gentlemen seem far more imbued with the progressive spirit of the age than is customary with Spanish officials. They fully appreciate the gross corruption which has so many years existed in the administration of affairs here, the many absurd, vexatious and oftentimes contradictory instructions, resulting from irresponsible power and the greed of those high in authority, under which the employes of the customs have acted, and the great necessity for such revision in the tariff as shall not only determine the amount and character of the revenues, but shall also redound to the advancement of commerce. The first and perhaps the easiest step taken was the exposure and stoppage of the grosser and more open frauds in the Custom House, the perpetration of which, from long habit, had ceased to be considered fraudulent. A thorough overhauling of the Custom House here followed, in which the Captain General in person took part. The long habit of entering false invoices was stopped at once, and the merchants, in consequence of the laxity which had been exercised, were permitted to make out new invoices within a certain time, instead of submitting to the confiscation of their goods, as under the strict letter of the law they would be required to. As far as practicable new instructions in keeping with the proposed reforms were issued, and the way paved for the initiation of such reforms.

In a recent issue of the *Gazette* the Captain General announces the appointment of a commission made up of officials and merchants, to pass upon such revision of the tariff and upon other matters as may be submitted by the Intendente. The decree is preceded by a communication of the latter official to the superior government, in which he states that the reforms in the tariff and administration of the customs should be attended to at once, not only from their intrinsic importance, but in obedience to instructions from the Regent. He continues:—

As important as is a revision in the tariff, a revision in the instructions under which the employes of the Custom House act is equally so, as without the latter the former would be of no avail. Many of them are old and not adapted to the present condition of affairs, and as a consequence disputes are constantly arising between the Custom House and commerce. * * * A reform of the tariff, even though acceptable to the diverse interests of commerce, would be of no value if the laws designed for the collection of the tariff should not be in cognizance with the usages of the age. Modern commerce requires the utmost facilities for the transaction of business—liberty of action, with the resultant economy of time. Without these requisites the advantages to be gained by a revision of the tariff would be of no avail. These rules and regulations seem to have always been an obstacle to the proper administration of the customs.

The appointment of this commission is in accordance with the usages here and in other countries where the combined wisdom of administrative and legislative bodies cannot be brought to bear. The report will doubtless embrace the details of the prospective reforms and the best means for carrying them into execution. They ostensibly follow upon the revolution in Spain, and are to be in keeping with its liberal spirit. It will be a matter of great interest to American and other foreign shipping to know that the intricate and vexatious rules of the customs at the various ports in the island, the interpretation of which is left to the caprice of individuals, and under which large fines are often imposed on commanders of vessels entirely innocent of any intentional offence, will be so modified, rendered fixed and determinate as to put an end to troubles under them.

All this promises much; but, while yielding all due credit to the present government here, it should be borne in mind that much has been promised before, and that under the system of rule now existing here a succeeding administration can undo all that the present one is working with so much energy and sagacity to accomplish.

Additional energy is to be infused into field operations by the presence of the Captain General himself, who, upon the arrival of the anticipated 3,500 men from Spain, will join to them two or three battalions of volunteers and place himself at their head. Such is the well authenticated statement. Henceforth a portion of the volunteers will be kept employed all the time, and though, from present appearances, they are likely to be engaged only in guarding estates and garrisoning towns, it is to be hoped an opportunity will be afforded them to wipe out the memory of their engagement with innocent, unarmed persons in the Villanueva theatre and the Louvre. As stated in a previous communication, the Second battalion has already proceeded to the Vuelco Abajo, where it will remain thirty days. It will be succeeded by the others in the following order:—First battalion, Colonel J. M. Morales; Third, Colonel Miguel A. Herrera; Second de Ligeros, Colonel Francisco Ampudia; Seventh, Colonel M. Martinez Rico; Artillery, Colonel Miguel S. Vigil; First de Ligeros, Colonel Bonifacio Jimenez; Fourth, Colonel Nicolas Valdivieso; Fifth, Colonel Ramon de Herrera; Sixth, Colonel F. Calderon y Kersel.

The more important items from the seat of insurrection are as follows:—The insurgents continue to burn estates throughout the Cinco Villas, though the cane is hardly in the best condition as yet for that purpose. Great efforts are made to prevent this incendiarism, but as yet without success. On the 16th General Lesca left Santa Clara at the head of a column, going in pursuit of the insurgents who burned Taguayabon, in Remedios. The usual number of encounters are reported, with invariable like success to the troops. They are only of interest as denoting the prevalent activity in the field. The *Imparcial* of Trinidad publishes a long account of operations of the troops from that city. They came upon a number of abandoned camps, the insurgents fleeing before them, leaving large quantities of supplies behind. The country over which they travelled was mountainous and most difficult of passage. In one of the defiles a party of twenty-five came upon from 400 to 500 insurgents, and kept them at bay until reinforcements came up. The *Bayames Español* of the 7th has an official report of Colonel Campillo, which states that he had encountered and dispersed the bands of Jesus Perez, Cintra, Fernandez and Naranjo, causing sixty-two deaths, a great number of wounded, and burning their encampments, capturing a quantity of arms, horses, &c. A party of insurgents recently entered the village of Manaca, in Cienfuegos, and carried off four men prisoners. A telegram from the Cinco Villas received last night states that thirteen insurgents had presented themselves to the authorities for pardon.

One of the papers of the city publishes the following proclamation of Chico Valdes, a prominent insurgent leader under Quesada. The journal calls him a bandit of long standing, and laughs that so insignificant a person should issue such an address:—

TO THE PEOPLE OF CAMAGUEY:—

From the 7th of October of the past year I entered into the revolution against Spanish despotism and united myself to the people to combat the absurd institutions by which we are governed. Since that time I have been united to them by the firm tie of the love of democracy, and have experienced the dangers, the calamities and horrors of war. Since that time you have exercised your rights and performed your duties as free men.

To-day in separating myself to return to my home, there to recover from the ailments with which I am afflicted, and in surrendering my charge and declining to accept the command which the citizen General M. Quesada has tendered me in the east of the island, I again address myself to the people that they may understand that only causes beyond my control were capable of separating me from them. But it is in the joyful hope of returning to reunite with them to prosecute our object of regeneration and to exterminate tyranny under whatever form it is concealed and seeing at the banquet of nations Cuba appear as one of the most civilized of earth.

ESTATO AGUSTIN, Sept. 29, 1893.

CHICO VALDES.

It is announced in the official *Gazette* that the first article of the decree of the 28th of September, referring to passports, has application to those embarking from the island, and not those arriving here in transit.

The search for treasure, some time since reported buried in the convent Santa Clara, has ended with no result. In Mariano yesterday a suspicious meeting was surprised by the police and the persons composing it arrested.

Señor, Don Ramon Ferrero, manager of the Antilles line of Spanish mail steamers, has given orders to all consignees of the line in ports of this island and Porto Rico to receive the bills of the Spanish Bank of Havana at par.

An effort at a municipal election was made in Cardenas on Sunday last, but the necessary number of votes were not deposited, and another effort will be made to-morrow.

The *Diario de la Marina* has seen a letter from Caracas of the 7th inst., which states that a diplomatic representation from the Cuban insurrection had arrived there, with the ostensible object of inducing the Venezuelan government to recognize them as belligerents. At the same time they will endeavor to obtain some recruits to take the held in place of those sympathizers who are passing their time in the various cities of the United States.

The property of the following has been sequestered:—D. Francisco Guillen, Pedro Giral, Felix Giral and José Maria Pedra.

Mayor Roberts, a few days ago, presented his report to the City Council of Havana, setting forth the condition of the different branches of the municipal government. Estimates for the coming year accompany, or rather form, an integral part of the document, which is very full and contains many items of local interest. The report was accepted by the City Council, approved by Captain General Rodas and ordered published. Mayor Roberts says, "Upon taking possession of his office he found disorder everywhere, the city burdened with a large floating debt, the result of current expenses that for long years past had exceeded usual receipts, lack of promptitude in paying salaries of city employes, &c. His first effort was, by means of a loan, to wipe out the floating indebtedness and pay all salaries, in which he fully succeeded. He then directed his attention to the new aqueduct, procured a loan specially for that purpose, paid up back dues, increased the force largely, and the work is now being pushed forward rapidly to completion."