

CUBA.

Progress of the Struggle for Independence.

The Spanish Squadron in West Indian Waters.

Opinions Regarding President Grant's Message.

The steamer *Rapidan*, which arrived at this port yesterday from Havana, brings us the following news up to December 8. The purser will accept acknowledgments for favors received.

General Grant's Message—Its Effect in Havana.

HAVANA, Dec. 8, 1869.

The Spaniards of Havana are jubilant. Last evening was published a telegram, received here by the Associated Press, announcing that President Grant in his message opposed the granting of belligerent rights to the Cubans, and immediately the face of every Spaniard glowed all over with satisfaction, while the Cubans appeared correspondingly heart-sick and worn. The celebration in honor of the arrival of the Asturian volunteers was going on and a new zeal was added to it by the knowledge that the head of the Great Republic of the North had no word of encouragement for the patriots struggling for self-government here. The papers of this morning make few comments. The *Prensa* says:—"President Grant knew how disastrous to the United States would be a war with a great nation like Spain," and no doubt he did.

Should this prove true and Congress take no action the hopes of the Cubans are admittedly at an end, as they cannot continue the struggle under existing circumstances, though much blood will be shed and millions of property destroyed before it is ended.

A Campaign Against Camaguey—A Review of Matters in That Locality—Arrival of General Lesca from the Cinco Villas—Report of the Situation There—Desperate Fighting in Santiago de Cuba—The Insurgent Position "Mogote"—Burning of Estates—A Convoy to Las Tunas and Hard Fighting—List of Vessels on the West India Station.

HAVANA, Dec. 8, 1869.

That portion of Cuba called Camaguey comprises the greater part of the eastern end of the island and covers an area larger than Porto Rico. Within its boundaries are the insurgent headquarters. Here is located the Céspedes government and the main army of the Cuban republic, under Quesada. For some months past it has seemingly been shut in from the world, and little or nothing of what has transpired there has been known outside. Only by a careful study of what the Spaniards do and do not say, the report of a deserter or a foreigner—most likely an engineer—have we been able to learn anything of insurgent movements in this locality. Meanwhile the operations of the Spanish forces have been more than usually resultless. They have kept open the railroad line from Puerto Principe to Nuevitas and nothing more. Since the great victory at Las Tunas, following which the commander of the Spanish forces came here with a few followers and has not returned thither, nothing warlike is reported. Benegas, who just subsequent to the battle was said to be marching from Holguin to the relief of Tunas, has not been heard from since, and, for aught that is known of him or his command he may have been consigned to the tomb of the Capulets. The Cubans say he is dead and his force destroyed. Valmaeda, as he reported, succeeded in sending a convoy from Bayamo to the relief of Tunas; but as not one word of the condition of affairs there has since appeared it is fair to conclude the whole truth has not been told. In a word, for two months past but little more has been positively known as to what has been going on in all that immense region than as though it were situated in the interior of Japan twenty years ago. It is known that the Spanish troops in Puerto Principe and Nuevitas and on the railway between have suffered in a most unexampled manner from sickness. At one time there were in the hospitals of the former place 1,400 men, and of the latter, 400. The fine battalion of Catalans which landed here last spring 1,200 strong, made up of hardy, robust men, has dwindled to 250 weak, cadaverous persons, and the other troops have suffered in the same proportion. The insurgent bands have been very active too, and hundreds of their enemies have bitten the dust as the result of their efforts. It is now proposed, judging from the movements of the Spanish forces, to inaugurate a campaign here and open up all this vast region to the authority of the government. The volunteers of Madrid, which recently arrived here, have been despatched to Nuevitas, as before reported, and from Santi Espiritu we learn that a strong column has left that place for Camaguey, under command of General Goyeurch. Colonel Lascones, with 800 men, was moving against a large camp, situated in front of Cayo Romano, which has existed for some time as a means of facilitating the landing of arms and munitions. The former officer had encountered several bands of insurgents. The *Voz de Comercio*, in speaking of the movement, says that by the end of December this great district will be entirely occupied by 12,000 men.

General Lesca, late commanding operations in the Cinco Villas, arrived here on the 6th, and will proceed to Spain. He is suffering much from an old wound received in the Peninsula, and this is the ostensible reason of his retirement. An officer of his staff states that the greatest difficulty which the generals have to contend with in the field is from the uneducated and brutal Spaniards, who are in favor of exterminating all Cubans. So strong is this feeling that commanders find it not only difficult to be humane but human. General Lesca had received those coming in and granted pardons with great readiness to those not known to be guilty of any crime. This had an excellent effect, as those thus pardoned wrote to their friends remaining within the insurgent lines, and many were thus induced to abandon the insurrection. The number of those presenting themselves is reported as follows:—In August, 60; September, 80; October, 170; November, 250. This, however, had rendered the general very unpopular with the Spaniards. The officer reports that a very large part of the Cinco Villas is entirely free from insurgents, and the people are working in their fields. The insurgents were recently in strong force at Giguanea, a very strong position among the hills, from whence they once fled before the columns of Pelaez. A strong force had attacked them there and driven them out. The worst part of the whole section is about Trinidad. The health of the troops was very good. There had been but five deaths from cholera, and these were among the cavalry, though the infantry had frequently to wade through water waist deep and even generally barefooted, their shoes wearing out in a few days. They remained healthy. The Segundo Cabo (General Carbo), who recently went to the Cinco Villas, will return soon; and Señor Colonel D. Manuel Portillo y Portillo, of the engineers, will take command. This officer is not well spoken of in Havana. From Cienfuegos we learn that seven additional estates have been burned. A gentleman who recently visited Havana from that place, on his return, writes that matters were daily growing worse and that bonfires were seen in every direction. A Trinidad letter of the 4th says the troops accomplish nothing against the insurgents. They march out, and on their return report nothing found or a "great victory"—both of equal moment.

Information from Santiago de Cuba confirms the idea that some of the most determined fighting of the war has been going on there, and up to the latest dates without determinate result. The position known as "Mogote" is a series of very strong redoubts, built of the hard wood of the country and impervious to shells. These cover an extent of seven leagues, and along them for many days has been severe fighting and heavy losses. At latest accounts Camara had captured one of the positions, known as "Arroyo Guerra," but the fighting was still going on. A letter from Santiago de Cuba of the 27th ult. says:—"I don't think the rebels have lost heart yet. When they do you can be assured the leaders will be trying to get out of the country." The same letter states that near Cauto an entire company of troops, with their officers, had gone over to the insurgents.

The steamer *Pelayo* arrived here yesterday, bringing later dates from Gibara and Holguin. Nothing of interest is mentioned. The troops on going out failed to meet any insurgents and many persons were presenting themselves to the authorities. Since the foregoing was written we learn through Spanish sources that on the 26th of November 450 soldiers of the Regiment de Espana, commanded by Don José Velasco, with Bonider as second in command, started from the post of Guaima, in Mansanillo, with a convoy for Las Tunas. In an hour after they left the enemy opened fire from ambush upon a squadron of the Lancers del Rey. The lieutenant, Lazañca, was wounded, and the commandant, Velasco, confused. Near Las Minas the firing was terrible, and so continuous was it that it did not cease from seven A. M. to six P. M. A captain of volunteers, Don Angel Martin, was among the wounded. During the day the bayonet drove the insurgents before the troops and the artillery was in constant play. On the following morning, the 27th, the march continued over the five leagues that remained to Tunas, the firing being incessant from six to four, though not so hot as the day previous. At six in the evening

the convoy reached its destination, the garrison and the people, who were in a deplorable condition, going out to meet them. Further details are promised.

Colonel Pelaez, who was practically driven from the island and whose action, it will be remembered, had immediate connection with the deposition of Dulce, has published a pamphlet in Spain defending himself and calling on those who accuse him of sending large sums of money to Spain to come forward and make themselves known. He states that at no time did he have more than 3,100 men under his command.

Up to this date there have been 2,400 properties confiscated.

One of the city papers publishes the following list of Spanish war vessels now on this station:—

Names.	No. of guns.	Hoist of ensign.	Date of construction.	Character.
Victoria.....	27	10.0	1857	Iron-clad.
Varangosa.....	1	8.0	1857	Iron-clad.
Alemania.....	46	800	1864	Screw frigate.
Gerona.....	51	600	1864	Screw frigate.
Lealtad.....	57	600	1869	Screw frigate.
Ciudad de Cadiz.....	17	600	1871	Sidewheel, first class.
Fernando el Catolico.....	15	600	1850	Sidewheel, first class.
Isabel la Catolica.....	16	600	1850	Sidewheel, first class.
Churrua.....	2	400	1876	Sidewheel, second class.
Elasco de Garay.....	2	3.4	1842	Sidewheel, second class.
Pizarro.....	6	250	1851	Sidewheel, second class.
Hernan Cortes.....	6	350	1856	Sidewheel, second class.
Ulloa.....	6	250	1856	Sidewheel, second class.
Vasco Nunez.....	6	250	1856	Sidewheel, second class.
Africa.....	3	160	1852	Screw, third class.
Condor.....	3	8	1856	Screw, third class.
Andaluzia.....	3	13	1853	Screw, third class.
Favorita.....	3	130	1863	Screw, third class.
Huelva.....	3	130	1867	Screw, third class.
Sirena.....	3	130	1868	Screw, third class.
Guardiana.....	3	130	1865	Screw, third class.
Trinidad.....	2	130	1853	Sidewheel, third class.
Don Juan de Austria.....	1	128	1849	Sidewheel, third class.
Neptuno.....	2	120	1852	Sidewheel, third class.
Guadalupe.....	2	10	1852	Sidewheel, third class.
Bazan.....	3	160	1840	Sidewheel, third class.
San Quilalin.....	4	200	1859	Screw transport.
Iberia.....	—	—	—	Pontoon.
Fulero.....	5	100	—	Gunb'ts, present service
Concha.....	1	60	—	Gunb'ts, present service
Matanzas.....	1	60	—	Gunb'ts, present service
Union.....	1	60	—	Gunb'ts, present service
Guana.....	1	60	—	Gunb'ts, present service
India.....	1	60	—	Gunb'ts, present service
Luzia.....	1	60	—	Gunb'ts, present service
Gorillon.....	1	2	80	Gunb'ts, present service
Maria.....	1	1	60	Gunb'ts, present service
Delta.....	1	—	—	Sailing vessel.
Omega.....	1	—	—	Sailing vessel.

The iron-clads have 350 pound Armstrong's, 150 idem; 20 centimetros, Rivera and 16 idem, while inferior vessels have guns of lesser calibre.