

CUBA.

General Review of the Situation—Volunteers Masters of Havana—Dulce Powerless—Government Forces—Character of Operations—Scarcity of Results—The Insurgents—Their Leaders—Finances of the Island.

HAVANA, March 20, 1899.

The somewhat monotonous yet exhilarating strains of the "Riego Hymn" sound in my ears as I sit down to write. They precede the march of 800 masters of the city, who have just returned from keeping watch and ward over political prisoners in the cabanas, having been relieved by 800 other masters. Through with the formality of a dismissal, with smiling, confident air, musket in hand, they move off to their carts, their waiters' aprons, to the grogshops and coffee houses, where these descendants and heirs of the Spanish cobbler and Manchego mule, who in the days of Ferdinand VII., failing other representatives of the Cid, had a right to rule the Indies, gain a precarious livelihood, pending the hour of vengeance. Quiet enough in their labors and not distrustful, for with every man of their battalion and of every battalion, succeeding until their term of duty comes round again, there is a fierce determination that not one of the hundreds now languishing in the cabanas, only charged with seeking that liberty the Spaniard so recently demanded for himself at the point of the sword—and many of them not even that—shall be released without their knowledge and consent. Say they to the "Superior Political Governor of the ever faithful Isle," "you can imprison; we only can discharge." Said the second officer of this colonial government, but recently, to a prostrate, weeping wife and mother, "Thank God when the ship which bears the father of your children away leaves the harbor!" and the woman rose and left with a new horror. No one better than this officer, and all the political and military household of the Superior Governor, realizes that these prisoners are at the mercy of a bigoted and malignant mob, into whose hands Lersundi placed arms, and that their forbearance is that of the cat certain of its victim. Nor is there any remedy. The regular troops which arrive here are regarded as even more dangerous than the volunteers. On their arrival the latter immediately mingle among them; and with their discipline already affected by the scenes in which they have taken part in Spain they become the more mutinous and turbulent from their previous submission to restraint. For this reason they are not permitted to remain here in contact with the volunteers a moment longer than is necessary, but are hurried off to the field.

Dulce, with whatever desire to do justice, is powerless. There are those who, tried by that mockery or military commission, have been pronounced guilty, yet they are not released. The volunteers will not consent. A day or two since the Captain General gave authorization to a gentleman to see a prisoner. Entering his cell he was about to speak, when the sentinel cautioned him not to utter a word. Remonstrating, this master of Havana pointed to the order, "Can you read? To see the prisoner, look at him!" And the gentleman was compelled to go. Nor are these volunteers slow to show their authority elsewhere. It behooves the peaceful citizen to give them the wall if they require it, and to be entirely respectful in his manner. A party of them emerged from a drinking place as an American was passing. Their appearance or manner caused him to smile. "I expected every moment," he afterwards said, "that they would shoot me;" and it was doubtless owing to the presence of a Spanish friend that they did not. They arrest citizens on their own motion, and, taking them to the prison, charge them with insulting a volunteer—an unfortunate exhibition of *indefinita*, for only volunteers can let them out. They peer and pry into the private social relations of both foreigners and natives, are active in finding out who is invited to dinner, and once their suspicions are excited guilt is presumed.

The long delay in the departure of a large number of political prisoners, now set down for to-morrow, has grown out of the spirit manifested by the volunteers, and the fact is undoubted that many will be sent ostensibly to Fernando Po who would be unconditionally released were it not for them.

The feeling thus existing in Havana is emulated by the soldiery, of whatever name and character, throughout the island. Defiant of authority, save when exercised in accordance with their views, they demand the death of every suspected person, and allow no interference in the carrying out of their wishes. While in Havana Dulce is doing all he can to prevent his name becoming stained with blood, by threats, representations, finesse and intrigue he is endeavoring to get the political prisoners out from the control of the volunteers, who are thirsting for their blood. Elsewhere men are being shot down in cold blood by hundreds. Throughout the rural districts the Guardia Civil, a body composed of ignorant and besotted Spaniards, are going about arresting and killing without a shadow of authority and in defiance of safe conducts over the signature of Dulce himself. It is well to know that amid this carnival of lawlessness and blood, everywhere the name "American citizen" arouses suspicion and hate, and many of these are abandoning their property, fearing to be shot down like dogs. Such is the situation as affecting peaceful people.

The military situation throughout presents a picture of hopeless entanglement. There would seem to be neither unity of purpose nor concert of action among those in command. It is true that little or nothing is known, save of unimportant encounters between the troops and the insurgents, ludicrously exaggerated by the Spanish press; but if amid all the authorities are doing anything likely to lead to a successful suppression of this rebellion, they possess a faculty of mystifying both friends and enemies which would put your new President to utter shame. For aught that is known to the contrary, General Valmaseda remains in command of all the forces in operation, but we as seldom hear his name mentioned as though he were among the forgotten dead. "What of Valmaseda?" is the constant wonderment. At last accounts, more than a month old, he had divided his forces, retaining a portion at Bayamo, sending another to Santiago de Cuba, still another to Manzanillo, and placing a small garrison at Jiguaní, and, in accordance with orders, had suspended all military operations. It is fair to say that one of the city papers recently mentioned the fact that he had sent a column, under Colonel Vargas, to operate in conjunction with Lopez Camara against Mayari, in the jurisdiction of Santiago. The reports of the combat in the latter place are conflicting. There is reason to believe that Cespedes, with a considerable force, is there. He had been for some time previous in the jurisdiction of Holguin, close at hand. As reported at Charleston and published in the *HERALD* of the 11th, Cisneros had landed there with a few men and a very considerable quantity of arms. In face of the large number of insurgents which must have been concentrated there the Spanish report of Lopez Camara's victory is extremely improbable; but whether true or not it is certain that the results are trivial, as indeed are the results of every encounter as given by the Spaniards themselves. The march of Lesca from Guanaja, in which he lost half his force—I have it from good authority that he entered Principe with but 600 men—has been entirely barren. The insurgents are admittedly as numerous, as bold and active as before, and are still besieging the last named city, between which and Nuevitas there is still no communication. In Espiritu Santo, Poello, with his Dominican tactics, occasionally manages to surprise a party of rebels, captures a few and shoots them. In Trinidad Bascomes is pursuing a similar course without the tactics. In Remedios, Sagua, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos and Colon numerous encounters are taking place, all, as reported, favorable to the government cause, and not of the slightest practical importance. From every one of these places constant demands are made upon the Captain General for reinforcements, and the troops arriving here are hurried off at the earliest moment, and volunteers are mobilizing for service and as soon as ready marched off, yet still the cry is for more. While I write a deputa-tion is in the city to represent to the Captain General that the city of Trinidad is insecure, and that reinforcements are imperative. Volunteers are to be sent there.

Of the number of the government forces employed a pretty fair estimate can be made. The *Diario*, in its usual foolish style of exaggeration, places them at 70,000, which is far above the actual number. When the insurrection broke out, in September last, there were 10,000 troops on the island. There have arrived since that time 13,000. There have been raised of volunteers in Havana 9,000, in the various cities and villages of the island 8,000—the last two large estimates—making a total of 40,000 men of all arms. These, from the nature of the service required, are divided into small detachments, the largest numbering not over 2,000 men; generally they are much less.

Of the insurgents, as correctly stated in the *HERALD*, they continue the Fabian policy, adopted since the inception of the rebellion. Their numbers are to be estimated by the number of arms attainable; for, as a certain officer returned from the Eastern Department remarked, "Every Cuban is an insurgent." Always avoiding the troops, save in positions of the greatest advantage, they constantly harass and worry them by firing upon them from ambushes and hilltops, by cutting off their supplies and capturing their stragglers. There has as yet appeared no man of prominence among them. Cespedes is the admitted leader, as is known; he is a lawyer of no marked ability. Quesada has some reputation as a fighter, obtained in Mexico; none as a general. Aguilera, Arteaga and others of the best families of Cuba are brave men and patriotic, no doubt; but as yet they have manifested no great ability as leaders. The insurgents have been poorly armed, but they are constantly improving in this regard by constant importations, made in despite of the Spanish cruisers. They are being drilled under competent officers, and it is claimed that they are fast becoming efficient soldiers.

The immediate effect upon the island is of course most disastrous, and will be more so after a short time. The vindictive spirit felt upon both sides results in the large destruction of estates upon which Cuba depends for her prosperity. The insurgents, determined in their efforts for independence, do not hesitate to destroy the property of the Spaniard, who willingly contributes of his substance to support the government, thereby rendering him powerless against them, while the troops are equally quick to destroy the property of those in sympathy with and supposed to contribute to the support of

the rebellion. In this both parties are to an extent restrained by the fact that the crops are growing, or are being gathered, influenced by that instinctive avoidance of destruction to results nearly attained common to all humanity. But as time passes and both become more accustomed to these scenes of devastation, and as, the crops being in, the owners begin to abandon their estates through fear and flee to the large cities, the destruction will be increased fourfold. Indeed, it may well be doubted if another crop of any magnitude will be attempted on the island until the matter is settled one way or the other.

Of the financial affairs of the island, upon which the whole question may not unlikely turn at no distant date, it is well known that they are in inextricable confusion and that the government is straining at every point for means to carry on the war. Upon the arrival of Dulce it was indebted to the Spanish Bank in the sum of \$15,000,000. Under a recent arrangement, heretofore mentioned in the *HERALD*, the bank undertakes to furnish as required the sum of \$8,000,000, for the payment of which an export duty has been levied, the amounts of which are paid into the bank weekly. This sum is, as it were, a mere drop in the bucket of what is required. At present, as the crop is coming in and going out, the embarrassment is comparatively trifling; but this can last but a little time. Just now the government has issued a decree reducing the direct taxes one-half—a measure which would seem to denote strength—and proposes in lieu thereof to levy an additional export duty. The truth is that these taxes are not being collected, nor can they be. Those favorable to the insurrection will not pay unless obliged to, and many of the friends of the government are by no means anxious to contribute of their means to what possibly may be a lost cause. Therefore, with much seeming magnanimity, it reduces the taxes one-half as a base for the establishment of an export duty, not heavy at present, but certain to be increased, and for the payment of which reliance can be placed. But this duty, however light it may become, can be of no use to the government, when, as is probable, no crops of importance are raised. With it all, too, comes the unceasing, never satisfied demands of Spain, clamoring for money from that source upon which she has always depended.

The capital of the Spanish Bank is.....\$5,000,000
Its deposits do not exceed.....3,500,000
The amount due of unpaid taxes, for which

it holds scrip of government, is.....3,500,000
Its issue of notes is.....15,000,000

Though the statement seems somewhat anomalous under the usages of the commerce here, although it refuses to redeem its notes in larger amounts than ten dollars, its condition is considered satisfactory.

Of the insurgents it is sufficient to say that they have no finances. A few small bonds have been issued by some of the leaders, on their own responsibility, no doubt payable when the independence of the island is established; but both officers and men serve without pay and live off the country.

The Proposed Sequestration—Foreign Property Holders—Insurgents' Bonds.

HAVANA, March 20, 1899.

The *Diario de la Marina* is still harping on its sequestration idea. In its issue of yesterday, after reviewing the law and practices of nations in reference to confiscation, it says:—"If the principles of modern codes are against confiscation, they are by no means opposed to indemnity. All codes justify the latter—all nations applaud it. Of course the imposition of either benooves the civil courts, and therein lies our preference to the principle of indemnity. Preventive measures, under present circumstances, ought to be adopted to prevent concealment as well as "distraction" of the property of political delinquents, and such estates ought to serve for the speediest and most complete indemnity for the damage they may have caused."

La Prensa of the 18th says:—"There are already some foreigners among us, new proprietors of the island of Cuba, having in the United States bought property of emigrants who had estates here. It is nothing strange that some sons of Cuba, now absent from their patria, should have sold their estates, wherewith to pay the expenses they make on a foreign soil. If those sales have been made conformably with law, if no third party is thereby injured, and provided the property was free from debt, we believe there can be no opposition thereto. On the other hand, if foreigners acquire such property with their capital it will be with the desire to see it produce, and therefore it is natural that they should aid us in re-establishing peace and give an impulse to the true prosperity of this Antille. They will naturally desire us to have sufficient troops and a solid government to preserve the island's wealth and agricultural productiveness." We are not aware that any such foreigners have yet arrived here. It may only be a simple surmise of *La Prensa*, yet it may have close connection with the proposed confiscation, first suggested by that journal, and it may perhaps be as well that the so-called delinquent Cubans abroad avail of the hint in time to save their property, without giving any account to *La Prensa* whether the sale be a *bona fide* transaction or not.

The same paper states that its persevering editor has seen one of the provisional five dollar *bonos* or notes issued by the Revolutionary Junta of Villa Clara, "authorized by no one and without any guarantee or signature but that of Señors Gutierrez and Garcia, and hence, even were the insurgents victorious, their paper might be deemed more discredited than that of the poor Dominicans. The note exhibited to *La Prensa* purports to be one of the 'first series,' and is dated the 1st instant."

A committee has arrived here from Santiago de Cuba, and another from Trinidad, to ask General Dulce to send reinforcements there. A third committee has come from Remedios for the same purpose. The warfare in the latter jurisdiction is represented to be of a very sanguinary character. The Captain General has given permission for the formation of a flying column of volunteers, to go immediately to the field and serve as *contra guerrillas* in the district of Holguin. The Fifth battalion of mobilized volunteers has embarked for the north coast.

The Captain General has been pleased to authorize Mr. Horatio Fox to discharge the duties of the Vice Consulate of the United States in Trinidad de Cuba, "in the character of a commercial agent."