

**Dulce's Decree Declaring Blockade Runners Pirates—Its Impression on Foreigners—Arrival of the Mary Lowell at Havana—The Illegality of Her Seizure Admitted—She is Offered to the American Consul—News of the Insurrection—Capture of a Coasting Steamer by Insurgents—Tonnage Dues—Export Duties.**

HAVANA, March 26, 1869.

In the eye of a Spaniard, as in that of the whole world, it makes great difference "whose ox is gored." When, in the early part of the American war, a certain Confederate cruiser was captured (off Charleston if I recollect right), and it was proposed to hang the officers and crew as pirates, no one more loudly cried out against the enormity than the Spanish people or more emphatically applauded the promptness and energy of Mr. Davis in announcing to the United States government that he held seventeen colonels of its army, a number corresponding to the men captured, as hostages for the safety of the privateersmen. Now that Spain is in much the same difficulty as were the United States at that time her ideas on the subject have materially changed, and through the Captain General of the "ever faithful isle" she issues the following decree:—

Superior Political Government of the Provinces of Cuba.—The better service of the State demanding it and with the firm determination that the insurrection, already mastered by the force of arms in the interior, shall not receive any assistance from abroad which may contribute to its prolongation with the resultant serious injury to property, commerce and industry, in virtue of the extraordinary and discretionary powers invested in me by the supreme government of the nation, I decree as follows:—

The vessels that may be captured in Spanish waters or on the free seas adjacent to this island, with cargoes of men, arms and munitions or such materials as, in any manner whatever, may contribute to abet or encourage the insurrection in this province, irrespective of their point of departure or destination, and after examination of their papers and register will be considered *de jacto* enemies to the integrity of our territory and treated as pirates, in accordance with the naval ordinances.

The persons who may be thus captured, whatever their numbers, shall be immediately shot.

HAVANA, March 24, 1869. DOMINGO DULCE.

It will be seen that the scope of this decree is extensive, and, under such interpretation as Spanish officials may choose to give it, places the commerce of the world appearing in these waters and the officers and crews of all vessels entirely at their mercy. The foreign residents here are very much excited over it, and suggestions have been made that the consuls in a body meet and protest against the erroneous attitude assumed by Dulce, who, like most of his race, seems to think that Spain still rules the Indies and threatens to overshadow the nations with her power. It is not probable, however, that they will do this, as the Captain General in his communication with them confines them entirely to their commercial duties.

During the night of the 24th arrived here the Spanish warsteamer *Blasco de Garay* and *Guardiana*. The former had in tow the American brig *Mary Lowell*, Captain Van Deyersgan, seized at Ragged Island, Bahamas, by the *Andalusia*, as stated in my last. This brig hails from Bearport. She cleared from New York January 23, with a crew of eight men, laden with forty-two packages, which are reported here to contain eight cannons, 6,000 guns, a large quantity of revolvers, sabres, &c., besides cockades and other small paraphernalia. The sabres are said to be engraved with the word "Independencia." She had a considerable quantity of percussion caps for Remington rifles, which were a godsend to the Spaniards as they were much needed here.

Spanish journals here, with their usual barefaced disregard for the truth, are claiming that the brig was captured in Cuban waters, near Gibara. The officers of the vessel, however, more gracious, admit the facts and the illegality of the seizure; but state that they have thereby prevented the landing of the arms and now can afford to apologize, and, if necessary, pay damages. General Dulce has offered to return the vessel to Mr. Hall, the American Vice Consul here, who very properly declined to receive it. Mr. Dunlop, the British Consul General, has informed his government of the facts by mail and Mr. Hall by both mail and telegraph. The war steamer brought five prisoners, four of whom were of the crew of the brig and one insurgent. What will be done with the former in the light of Dulce's decree is a matter of conjecture. As Great Britain has a way of looking out for her subjects it is presumed that the Dons will not shoot them with that celerity which would certainly be exercised were they Americans.

The usual holidays consequent on the closing of Lent seem to have been kept by the news gatherers as well as others, and there is little of interest to record concerning the insurrection. Forces still continue to be sent to the field. Out of the seven battalions of volunteers here three are to be formed for the field, and throughout the various villages and hamlets in the vicinity and in Matanzas enrolment is going on with much energy. It is proposed to issue a decree calling on every Spaniard in the island for service and declaring them all liable to military duty.

We hear nothing of Valmasela at Bayamo, and insurgent sympathizers claim that he is shut up there and only able to communicate outside through a considerable force. He is evidently obeying superior orders and doing nothing. One of the city papers mentions that on the 9th at Bayamo the commanding general ordered out a column of the *Batall Chasseurs*, 170 infantry of the *Lepanto* regiment and two pieces of artillery, under the command of Colonel Lopez Campillo. They marched as far as Angostura. In the savanna of Parcieo they discovered a party of 100 rebels, who fled. Afterwards part of the force reconnoitred Ceja de Cruz, killed a chief and his horse and captured despatches from Cespedes for different chiefs. Later they met and killed the so-called generals Ruviales and Daniels.

A letter from Manzanillo says:—"A thousand men are wanted here. Valmasela needs at least 2,000. Should such a reinforcement come the rebels would be compelled to take to the sierras. In the recent battles of the troops and volunteers they have killed forty-four rebels and wounded many."

From Cienfuegos, the 22d, it is reported that the column under General Poggio had attacked the rebels between Moron and Remedios, causing them great loss, killing no less than 800. Doubtless eight or eighty would be near the truth. The squadron of cavalry militia had arrived from Guines and was marching over the country, where the rebels are divided into small groups. Insurgent sympathizers here claim that this body has met with a disastrous defeat.

Recent advices from Espiritu Santo give the official communication of Governor Mediavilla, dated the 20th, setting forth that fifty men of the *Banquilton* troops fought 400 insurgents for more than an hour, when they were supported by the third company of the "Orden" volunteers and fifty militia. They killed ten and wounded many. Among the former was a chief named Caballero. The troops only made two prisoners and captured many arms and seventy-five horses, as likewise the correspondence. The latter implicated many prominent persons of said city. Count Villamar and Don Antonio Cancio were immediately arrested and imprisoned. The state of siege had been revoked. *El Diario* corrects the statement before given of 800 killed.

An account from a Spanish source has arrived from Remedios, dated 21st, of an action between the volunteers, under Commandant Herrera, and the rebels in that vicinity. The latter, it appears, were defeated, as usual, and lost three cannon. The volunteers had only one wounded and took many trophies.

A letter from Macagua, the 19th, says:—"More than 100 men garrison this point, chiefly cavalry volunteers of Colon. There is also a section of colored women and a detachment of civil guard. The column of troops under Captain Chacon, after a march of twenty miles, returned yesterday. No rebels were encountered, though we are surrounded by them on every side."

An American gentleman on an estate near Alvarez writes that when the insurgents were in possession of that place they killed every Spaniard, in retaliation for Cubans killed. They also took large numbers of negroes from the estates in the vicinity.

A gentleman near Cardenas reports fifty-two of his negroes taken by the insurgents recently, leaving but twenty inferior ones behind.

The Alicante arrived from Spain last evening with 600 troops. The Andalusian battalion, lately arrived, are going to Trinidad. On the evening of the 24th a grand serenade was given General Dulce by all the volunteer bands; meanwhile the chiefs and officers ascended the palace stairs to pay their respects to his Excellency.

A meeting of the planters took place at the Palace on Tuesday evening touching financial matters. The results have not transpired.

The coasting steamer *Comanditario*, running between this port and Cardenas, has been captured by a party of twenty-five insurgents, on board of her in the guise of passengers. The real passengers, as reported, have been landed at some point in the United States or elsewhere, and the vessel made her way to Nassau, it is supposed.

In reference to the tonnage dues as between the United States and Spain, while both parties have declared their willingness to make an arrangement on the basis of reciprocity, nothing is done, each declaring that their dues will be removed as soon as they are by the other, and neither takes the initiative. Of course Spain in her present straits will do nothing that will decrease her immediate revenue in the least degree, and so the matter hangs fire.

Of the 255 political prisoners recently transported it has transpired that only forty-five had a trial of any character and those by military commission.

The *Oficial Gazette* publishes the official estimates of expenditure for April next as follows:—War, \$966,248; Navy, \$275,251; government, \$203,745; finance, \$654,713; other items, \$123,034, for law and equity, \$79,278; public works, \$61,160; total, \$2,364,626.