

# CUBA.

## Details of the Capture of the Comanditario.

## Spanish Seizures in British Waters.

## PROGRESS OF THE INSURRECTION

**Details of the Capture of the Comanditario—The Demand for Belligerent Rights—The Capture of American and British Vessels—The Peruvian Iron-Clad—The Political Prisoners.**

HAVANA, March 31, 1899.

While there is now no doubt that the coasting steamer Comanditario was captured by a party going on board from here, a persistent attempt has been made to create an opposite impression, with a view of diverting suspicion from those remaining here who had to do with the affair. To such an extent has this been carried that a statement, purporting to have been signed by the captain and a large number of people on board, was furnished the Cardenas *Boletin*, which published it, and it was afterwards reprinted in all the papers here, and though on careful scrutiny it bears the impress of fabrication, it nevertheless deceived every one. It was subsequently contradicted by the *Boletin*, and the material facts stand as before published in the *HERALD*.

Don Angel Lobo, a native of Santiago de Cuba, nephew of the Spanish Colonel Lobo and brother of a naval officer of that name, acted as leader of the party. He had been unfortunate and was driven to desperation by need. He speaks English with fluency. A man named Camacho, a seaman, who had been mate of a vessel, took command of the ship. Don Juan Lopez, an engineer of the coasting steamer Alfonso, and afterwards of the Matanzas mud machine, was, however, recognized by the men as the head of the expedition. He had been in prison for alleged conspiracy.

The passengers were landed on the coast and were taken up by the gunboat Ana and the coasting steamer Cardenas. From the passengers it is known that when the party took possession one of them placed a pistol at the captain's breast, another pointed one at him from behind and one placed himself on each side with a machete, and he had nothing to do but surrender. It is said that there were \$21,000 belonging to the government on the vessel, and the captors demanded a loan of \$300 from each of the passengers. Three Spanish sailors, four coal-feeders and the same number of coal-heavers were retained on board. The captors strenuously insisted upon the captain and mate signing a document to the effect that the steamer had been attacked and taken by a considerable armed force in a launch, which sank in the struggle. This they resolutely refused, but such a paper was signed by others on board. The Comanditario was subsequently sighted between Great and Little Sturup Keys under sail, she probably having little coal.

Your Nassau correspondent writes on the 28th of March as follows about this affair:—

The Spanish steamer Comanditario left Bahama on the 23d bound for Cardenas, with a general cargo, including a large amount of jerked beef and rice. She left at seven P. M., having among her passengers eighteen insurgents, several of whom were from Regla, very strong, dashing fellows, and accustomed to a seafaring life. At half-past eleven the same night the blow was struck. One of the eighteen came to the cabin door, where many of the passengers were sleeping and others still up, and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, every one remain quiet; this steamer is already in the hands of Cuban insurrectionists." They obeyed, one of them remarking, "If that is so, *¡vivan los rebeldes!*" No blood was shed. One of the sailors attempted to make a noise, but he was soon silenced. This is certainly in pleasing contrast to the course of the Spaniards, who are killing every Cuban who falls into their hands. The Comanditario has not been here, but I have had some conversation with the chief of the party—where, I am not at liberty to say—and he informs me that the crew has been very considerably increased in numbers, the steamer well armed, a surgeon on board and all prepared for active operations.

The *Diario de la Marina* in a recent issue says:—"According to a telegram from Washington, dated to-day, the government of the United States gives the most complete assurances of neutrality upon the Cuban question and refuses to receive the commission presided over by Linares Lenus, which seeks belligerent rights for the rebels and a recognition of the independence of the Isle of Cuba. The relationship between that government and Spain is most satisfactory and cordial." This statement does not meet with general credence here. Leading Cubans, however, frankly confess that until their conference, struggling for liberty and autonomy, have established a seat of government, and can show something tangible for the United States to recognize, it is not to be expected that she will take any steps in the premises.

The press of the city is evidently a little nervous over the seizure of the Mary Lowell and other vessels, and is endeavoring in every possible way to distort the facts. The *Prensa*, whose editor has been a sea captain, refers to the course pursued by the United States during the late war, declaring that all vessels in any way suspicious were seized and condemned, leaving to diplomacy to right any matter afterwards, which was wrong. It asserts that cases of illegal capture will be considered by foreign nations solely in the light of the proper indemnity, and none of them will think of going to war with Spain for any such seizures, provided she manifests a disposition to settle such claims as may arise. Evidently the government has determined, in its weakness and bankruptcy, to seize any and all vessels it has any cause to suspect and trust to state craft to bring itself out uninjured; for such is the policy portrayed in the journals.

Mr. Dunlop, the British Consul, recently addressed the Captain General a full and elaborate statement, couched in energetic yet polite language, of the outrages lately committed in British waters by the Spanish navy. General Dulce, probably realizing that the representatives of her Majesty could not be snubbed and insulted with the same impunity as those of the United States, replied in very courteous terms, stating, among other things, that the case of the Mary Lowell is now before the Spanish Admiralty Court, whose province it is to pass upon the legality of her seizure. Mr. Dunlop, at a late hour on Saturday evening last, despatched her Majesty's gunboat Heron to Calbarren, for the purpose of making due inquiries into the seizure of the English ship Jeff Davis in British waters, on the 14th, by the Spanish war steamer Concha, and brought into that place on the 16th. She was without cargo, having, as is alleged, just returned from some point to which she had taken a load of sponges. As soon as she arrived at Calbarren the captain and crew were thrown into a common dungeon, among the worst of criminals. The same day the volunteers assassinated two Cuban passengers brought ashore from her, named Dr. Francisco M. Jimenez and Rafael Falero, highly respected citizens, natives of Remedios. They were without papers.

The British Consul General, who is in regular communication with Bermuda, Jamaica and other points in the West Indies, is expecting a considerable naval force to cruise along this coast and the Bahamas for the protection of British interests. Among others, the iron-clad Victoria, built on the newest and most improved models, is expected. Americans in the island are anxiously looking for the promised increase in their national squadron here, as their situation is regarded as insecure.

The question of the Peruvian iron-clads is exciting much comment here, and they are now generally regarded as intended for operations connected with this island. It is known that one of them is now at Staged Island, waiting for coal from Nassau. This information is up to the 22d. The whereabouts of the other is unknown, nothing having been seen or heard of her. Naval men express the opinion that she is lying in some one of the numerous ports of the island, and that both will be heard from ere long. Competent naval officers, who themselves commanded similar craft during the late war, and who visited these monitors when laying at Key West, state that they are in magnificent condition for active service; that they are commanded by men thoroughly acquainted with them, and that with their own offensive and relative powers, any harbor of Cuba is at their mercy, not excepting, perhaps, Havana. This is not generally appreciated, but much natural anxiety is felt concerning them. There is certainly every probability that they will soon be heard from in a manner that will astonish the Dons and the world.

News has been received here of the political prisoners on the Francisco de Borjas. As soon as the ship was clear of Cuba the commander, who takes sealed despatches, to be opened on his nearing Cadix, disarmed the volunteers and informed them that he had command of the ship and of the expedition, that their arms would be placed in safe keeping, and, should they be required, due notice would be given. The prisoners were treated as passengers and allowed to go about the vessel as such.

The police system of the island, which for some time past has been very defective, has been reorganized and is now controlled directly by the government. The office of Superior Directorship of Police in Havana is suppressed and the duty entrusted to the city governor. The governors of the different jurisdictions constitute the chiefs of police within their respective commands. Other changes have been made which it is hoped will increase the security both in the cities and rural districts.

A report has reached here that two steamers and the same number of schooners, with men and \$5,000

stand of arms and having General Henningsen on board, have safely landed at Cape May.

The *Diario de la Marina*, with its chronic disregard of truth, claims that the Mary Lowell was seized nine miles from the Bahama coast. In its comments thereon it is by no means complimentary to the Anglo-Saxon race, and says that Spain "has a right to pay other nations in the same coin she has received from them." The coasting steamer Comercio has been armed and fitted out as a gunboat to prevent any landing near Cardenas.

The Spaniards are styled by the Cubans *gorriones*, or sparrows—referring to the grasping, thieving propensities of those birds. Recently one of them (the bird) fell dead from a tree in the Plaza de Armas. It was picked up by a volunteer, who doubtless appreciated its name as applied to Spaniards, and by him and his comrades was placed in a neat box and laid out in state, like a corpse, with candles, &c., about it. The matter finally attracted so much attention that presents were sent for the occasion by persons high in authority, and no less a sum than \$345 was collected about the remains of the poor bird, which has been placed in the hands of Colonel Jimenez, commanding the First battalion of light infantry (seventeen volunteers), for distribution among those volunteers who may be wounded in the field. A request has been sent from Matanzas for the box to be sent thither, to be returned again.

A meeting was convened by General Dulce a few evenings since, composed of the proprietors of small farms and sugar estates, for the purpose of enabling them to contribute towards the maintenance of a respectable rural police force, or Guardia Civil, to prevent incendiarism and other depredations. Such representations were made to them that they agreed to pay a certain sum, proportionate to the amount of sugar that they raised. Evidently this is but another means adopted by the authorities to screw out money from the small property holders, as with the large number of troops they have in the island they make no headway in stopping the depredations referred to. Again a large number of the officials sent out from Spain are as yet unprovided with places, which must be provided for them. The *Diario* estimates that the force required additional to that already in service will cost \$1,440,000 per annum.

Admiral Holf has obtained information that there are fifteen or twenty American engineers on estates in the island, some of them with families, who are anxious to get away. He represented the matter to General Dulce, who has promised to send orders to the authorities to facilitate their coming to Havana as much as possible. At the same time Dulce expressed himself desirous to do everything possible to preserve the existing good relations with the United States.

The *Official Gazette* contains a decree of the Captain General dismissing Don José Morales Lenas, lately commissioned by the Cuban committee to apply to the Washington government for belligerent rights, from the office of Counsellor of Administration subject to the approval of the Supreme government, and declaring him liable to the penalties which the Spanish code imposes, of which due notice has been given to the High Court of Justice here.

On Sunday a disturbance occurred in the parish of Jesus Maria, where most of the free negroes and many poor whites live, during which a mulatto and others uttered seditious cries before a sentinel at the Military Hospital. A rumor was started that they desired to attack the hospital and a number of volunteers soon collected and so maltreated the mulatto that he subsequently died. The affair created considerable excitement at the time.

The Captain General has given permission for the establishment of a Spanish club in this city. It was duly inaugurated on the 26th. It is called the "Casino Peninsular," and among its objects commerce, the arts and agriculture are to be discussed.

The gunboat Narragansett left this port for Key West on Tuesday evening for the purpose of taking in coal. She will return immediately after.