

The Steamer Bienville on Fire—Safety of Passengers and Crew—The News from Cuba.

The steamship Bienville, which put into Norfolk, as reported in our issue yesterday, left Havana on the 21st for New York with a full list of passengers and 150 United States troops on board. About eleven P. M. of the 24th an alarm of fire on board was sounded, and passengers and crew were all ordered on deck in case it should be necessary to abandon the ship. The officers immediately applied every energy to discover and subdue the fire, while the ship was headed for the land, Cape Hatteras bearing southwest, about fifteen miles distant. After an hour of anxious exertion the fire was subdued and the passengers were permitted to go below.

Our informant, Mr. Smith, of the firm of Youngs, Smith & Co., 75 South street, states that great presence of mind was displayed by the officers and prompt obedience by the passengers and crew. The ship, however, put into Forters Monroe, from whence we have received our correspondence, given below, in which will be found the latest news of operations in Cuba.

Spanish Accounts of Matters in Camaguey—The Road to Principe Opened—Operations of Insurgents—Reported Massacre by the Spaniards—Volunteers Likely to Take the Field.

HAVANA, May 23, 1863.

The *Diario de la Marina* of the 18th gives the Spanish version of affairs in Camaguey. Lesca arrived at Puerto Principe from Nuevitas with the convoy of provisions on the 5th. He brought with him a quantity of rails, sleepers and parts of the machinery of a locomotive, necessary to reconstruct the one in the former place. On his arrival fabulous prices were obtained for eatables; for example, one dollar for a pound of coffee, fifty cents for a small biscuit, one dollar a bottle for rum, twenty dollars per hundred weight for rice, and other things in proportion. Subsequently Lesca issued an order to prevent speculation in the necessities of life and established reasonable and, at the same time, remunerative prices. No additional details of the encounters along the road are given. It is mentioned that Quesada has the tact to offer battle near savannahs so that he can escape with his followers, and that he did so at Altagracia, where the convoy was joined by the column which had gone out from Puerto Principe to meet it. As stated, he owed his preservation to the fleetness of his horse. The point of interest in this statement is the admission that Quesada sometimes offers battle instead of always running away as claimed; for according to the patriot official account heretofore published in the *HERALD* he was not at the fight at Altagracia.

A train left Puerto Principe on the 12th for Nuevitas, drawn by a locomotive, and arrived on the 16th, being detained in repairing the road and bridges, which the insurgents were constantly destroying both before and behind the train. It started back on the same day. It is stated that on the 12th, the time the train left, Lesca went out with a column composed of infantry, cavalry and artillery, to attack the rebel camp at Centa; that, on his arrival, the rebels fled, abandoning their fortifications. However, as Letona had previously reported his occupation of that place, the statement is probably incorrect. After the convoy had gone out from Nuevitas it came upon a figure with the hide and form of a cow, and upon it a placard with the following, in large letters:—"When this cow gives milk the engine will pass with the train." It was supposed that a desperate effort would be made to destroy the convoy. Letona is on the line of the road, moving from point to point, evidently, as his column is reported at different places. In Bayatabo, three miles from Minas, the insurgents had established what was known as "detention quarters," where, as says the account, a large number of families were closely watched, to prevent their presenting themselves to the General. On the approach of the troops under Letona they set fire to the encampment and abandoned it. A large number of the women and children were carried to Minas, where is stationed a strong detachment. The number of these unfortunates may be set down at 600. The General had assigned them ground on the lands of the Marquis of Santa Lucia upon which to build huts.

The Spaniards report that the insurgent force of Camaguey does not exceed 5,000 men; that they are badly mounted and worse armed, they having in their various forays lost many horses. They are in want of salt, rice and flour, now sustaining themselves on meat and vegetables, of which they have abundance, seasoning them with lime juice. The heavy rains, however, will soon deprive them of vegetables.

Napoleon Arango and his brother were still prisoners. The sentence of death passed upon them had been commuted to perpetual imprisonment through the influence of Cespedes and their brother Aurelia, one of the New York Junta.

It was rumored that Silbanien, Cascorro and Gualmar had been ordered to be burned by the insurgents; but this is no creditable. Aguilera was at the latter place. A number of rebels had arrived in Camaguey from Cinco Villas. In speaking of the operations about Puerto Principe during the past six months the *Diario* admits that no action decisive in its character has taken place, and that the loss of the troops in the various encounters would foot up as high as 1,000 men. Before the insurrection the population of Camaguey was 41,000. Of this number full 25,000 have abandoned their homes and taken to the fields and forests.

The captain of a Spanish coasting steamer brings the almost incredible report that the troops came upon an encampment of women, children and old persons, and a general massacre followed. The force was of Lesca's command, and a serious difficulty had arisen between him and Letona on account of the affair.

The United States gunboat Penobscot, Lieutenant Commander Eastman, arrived here on Monday, having left Nuevitas on the 15th. The commander confirms the arrival of a train from Puerto Principe, which was guarded on its way down by 2,000 men walking alongside of the cars. The rebels were very active all around, destroying the bridges and doing all possible to impede the progress.

Advices from Gibara, Puerto Padre and Manati confirm the reported presence there of the insurgent chiefs Marmol, Marciano and Bratta. The steamer Triunfo recently took to the former place two companies of the Guides of Madrid and the battalion of foot artillery, and the Moctezuma took the 11th battalion of mobilized volunteers and some companies of the Napoles regulars. As soon as the insurgents heard of their landing they set fire to the towns of Santa Barbara, San Andres and Maniabon. They also destroyed two sugar estates. The prompt movements of the troops prevented the destruction of the large store houses at Puerto Padre. The forces in Gibara have been doing little or nothing for some months past, and the arrival of reinforcements there will doubtless give an impetus to operations. An expedition is reported landed in Gibara and another on the south side.

There was a rumor very generally current among the Spaniards upon the wharf yesterday that Valmaseda had been defeated by Marmol, and compelled to fall back on Manzanillo.

A German gentleman, who arrived on Saturday, the 15th, from Trinidad, reports that just before he left about fifty wounded soldiers and volunteers had been brought in from outside the town. Another account states that of a force of 200 which went out only sixty had returned.

The question of giving the command of the volunteers to regular army officers is being agitated somewhat in the Havana press, and is regarded as the incipient step towards preparing the volunteers for the field, to which point it must inevitably come. *La Voz de Cuba* states that it has received suggestions from different parts of the island recommending the appointments referred to.

At the late private meeting of wealthy Spaniards, referred to in a recent despatch, the question of the sale of the island came up and was not unfavorably received.

It has been generally understood of late that the *Prensa* (newspaper) was about to suspend publication and the proprietor to leave for Spain. While this may be the ultimate result, that journal will continue for the present.

The Corillon, armed vessel (formerly the Comandante), arrived on the 18th, with two English wreckers, the Geneva and Julia, in tow, they having been captured some time since near Cape San Antonio, where lay a wrecked vessel. They belong to Great Cayman, and the owners have come here to demand them. The British Consul General has seen the Spanish Admiral in reference thereto, and as there is no reason to suppose that they had any connection with the insurgents they will probably be released after being admonished for coming to these shores under present circumstances.

The steamer Pajaro del Oceano sailed on the 18th for Nuevitas and Santiago, with a few hundred mobilized negroes and some regulars.

The Moctezuma arrived on the 17th from Gibara and Nuevitas with Brigadier Mena, formerly Governor of Puerto Principe, and a number of passengers, who came down on the train from that place; also eleven wounded soldiers.

A decree of Dulce, dated the 15th, contains the necessary regulations for the collection of funds, designed for the maintenance of the second or additional division of Rural Guardia Civil and the establishment of the permanent commission of planters for the management of the corps in the jurisdictions of Sagua, Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, Remedios, Cardenas and Colon. The President and Vice President are to be elected by the directors, who are composed of the largest taxpayers among the agriculturists.

A supplemental circular of Dulce, dated the 15th, orders that before any writs of mortgage be made out in other parts of the island the notaries are to forward the details to the Lieutenant Governors, who are to submit them to the Havana Administrative Council of Sequestered Properties before they can be duly authorized. By order of Dionisio Lopez Roberts, the president of this council, a public sale of several lots of cooperage stock belonging to Don Ignacio Alfaro, a merchant, is advertised.

A Madrid telegram of the 17th announces the pro-

motion of Brigadier Lesca, Commanding General of Puerto Principe, to the rank of Mariscal de Campo, or Major General. This promotion has caused considerable dissatisfaction among the friends of Valmaseda and of Mena, particularly of the latter, who is considered to have borne the brunt in Camaguey. The explanation lies in the fact that Lesca belongs to the new régime and the others to the reign of Isabella.

A telegram from the national capital of the 18th directs that all American vessels are hereafter to pay no more port charges and navigation dues than are levied on Spanish vessels.

Operations in the Eastern Department—Reported Defeat of Troops—Desperate Bravery of Insurgents—The Rainy Season Set In.

SANTIAGO DE CUBA, May 14, 1863.

The news of operations in the surrounding country, as officially reported, is extremely limited. The commanding officer at Cobre announces the defeat of a small party of rebels at the coffee estate "Refugio," and the colonel in command at Aserradero reports the death of two insurgent chiefs (of no special note) at the Santa Clara. On the other hand, rumors of encounters in which the troops have been worsted are very current. It is known that some four days since twenty-four soldiers were brought in here wounded. The government accounts make no mention of any action with loss to the troops. The current version of the affair is that Donato or Eduardo Marmol, with a force of insurgents, was surrounded by the Spaniards, and remained so for three days, when, driven to desperation, they attacked the troops on three sides and succeeded in cutting their way through, with great loss on both sides. Yesterday the report of a severe struggle in Intenico reached here. A fight took place during a tremendous rain storm, in which the insurgents showed great bravery, attacking the Spanish macheta in hand. Four officers and some soldiers have been brought in wounded. No official version given.

Arrivals from Brazos de Carito report that district quiet. The weather is very bad, the heat being intense and the rains falling heavily. This must materially affect the health of the troops and military operations generally. Grinding must also become paralyzed, and from all appearances there will not be more than one-third the average crop shipped from Santiago de Cuba. Guantanamo will, however, be quite up to the average, if not beyond it, although cholera has made great havoc on some estates.

The North German corvette Victoria, ten guns, came in on Wednesday, the 12th inst., and exchanged the usual salutes. She will remain here a week and then proceed to Port Royal, Ga.