

The Situation Becoming Worse—The Insurrection Drawing Towards the Western Department—Departure of General Rodas to Matanzas—Cuban Reports—The Convoy to Tunas Taken by the Insurgents—Reported Slaughter of Colonel Benegasi—The Massacre by Palacios.

HAVANA, August 21, 1899.

The affairs in the interior absorb the attention of the public mind, both among Cubans and Spaniards. Another mail steamer has arrived from Spain, but without any troops, nor are any more expected for some time. Nothing is so much talked about as the necessity of sending at least a portion of the volunteers to the country. These pretend that they never enlisted to go to the field, but for the object of defending this city alone. At the instance, however, of the Captain General, the citizen soldiers had themselves felt pretty much compromised, and they have had to come to the resolution to leave, if not to "the seat of war," at least to garrison some of the points in the Vuelta Abajo. It was half determined that the First Battalion was to proceed northwise to cover Pinar del Rio, and that another battalion was to leave and cover the southern part of the coast, both being relieved every month by the other battalions successively, and thus enabling the regular troops to be distributed in detachments throughout the country. But while the volunteers were about getting ready reports came in successively from more than one point in the Vuelta Abajo that the insurrection was moving in that direction. There have been demonstrations of a rising both in Consolacion del Sur and in Consolacion del Norte. It is said that a party of 300 insurgents overrun that locality—the same which appeared recently on the plantation Piora, near Candelaria, inviting the negroes of the estate to join their band. Some of them did so, while the others were prevented by the whites on the estate. Several citizens have been arrested in consequence, merely on suspicion. In Corral Falso de Macuriges, jurisdiction of Colon, a large party of insurgents, the number of which is variously stated from 300 to 1,000 men, appeared on Tuesday last, and as the force there was quite inadequate the Lieutenant Governor dared not expose it to an unequal encounter. So far the insurgents do not appear to have gone to further lengths than sacking one or more of the Spanish tiendas or country stores, but their appearance there has created considerable alarm among the wealthy Spanish planters residing here, who own extensive estates in those districts. The result is that the troops in the Vuelta Abajo cannot now be removed from that jurisdiction, and consequently the volunteers, not being needed there, can remain here.

It is given out that great alterations have taken place in the Political Secretary and an editor of *La Voz de Cuba*, because it was said that the Captain General wanted to arm the townspeople if the volunteers resisted the invitation to go to the campaign. In the meantime General Rodas has determined personally to get nearer than he was to the scene of the threatened rising, and his Excellency went by the Matanzas train of yesterday morning, along with the volunteer company called "the Captain General's Guides."

The movements in Jaguey Grande appear to have extended throughout the jurisdiction. In Macagua an insurgent camp has been established, on the hacienda Mayabon, which can be described from Colon, and is at the end of the railway track at Cardenas. Colonel Araoz has twice gone out to fight the insurgents, but he reports that none were discovered on his way. The theatre of war having commenced in the Western department, it now remains to be seen what his Excellency the Captain General may determine, from Matanzas; it is not improbable that he may also visit Cardenas.

The official war reports that have recently appeared in the *Gazette* are limited to the following:—"A telegram from the commandant of Santa Clara says, between the 9th and 11th, the columns of Colonel Arias and the Vascongados, reconnoitred Cuchilla de Maja, Mamoncillo and Rancho Capitan, by pathways never before traversed by Spanish troops, where the rebel chief Cabata had his encampments, and the insurgents of Cinco Villas held their central bureau, since the loss of Sigüenza. Our troops destroyed their fourteen camps containing provisions, &c., killed eight rebels, wounded several, captured fifty-six horses and a flag." Another from the same states:—"On the 13th, forty Guardia Civil of Encrucijada, with twenty-three volunteers, fought the enemy in the woods of the Guagen plantation, killed five, wounded several and captured many horses and arms." A communication from the same officer, dated the 13th, says:—"Lieutenant Colonel Laquidain encountered a rebel party on the farm of Juan Rodriguez, the enemy escaping. Only four were wounded in the swamps and twelve horses captured."

From Cuban sources we glean the following:—The convoy which Colonel Benegasi was taking to Tunas, considered as the last hope of that garrison, not only met with determined opposition from the insurgents, but the troops were completely dispersed. The same accounts say that officers state that poor Benegasi after this defeat, and in a fit of despondency, blew his brains out. This part of the report your correspondent is little disposed to credit. The convoy was represented to be of some importance and the whole appears to have fallen into the hands of the insurgents.

From Matanzas they report that there is a great deal of insubordination among the negroes on the plantations in that district and that all the measures of precautions taken by having the estates guarded by soldiers, volunteers and others from rebel attacks is only a pretext to prevent a rising among the negroes.

A brother of one of the victims of Palacios is said to be concealed here, afraid of being murdered for having supplicated General Rodas to investigate that horrible massacre and demand condign justice on the perpetrators. The General, it is stated, ordered an immediate process of prosecution to be instituted, and in the meantime sent the officer under arrest to Spain. "Retribution" might have desired for something more; but General Rodas may, in his wisdom, have strong reasons to get this scandalous affair hushed up—the more so as it was committed in violation of his own proclamation.

There is a rumor about town to the effect that General Rodas has the intention of sooner or later suppressing the Casino Español, as a political club, and not, as was pretended, a society of recreation. This society has now, it is said, about 6,000 members, of course all Spaniards, at a quota of two dollars each per month; it is stated that with said funds they intend to sustain those politics that may come under discussion and their control.

The skipper of a coaster from Cardenas reports having met a very large steamer in a direction parallel with and near the coast, with a considerable number of men aboard, and to all appearances attempting to make a landing.

Every possible measure of severity seems to be resorted to by the authorities here to prevent people from leaving for the United States. One instance will suffice to illustrate this:—A Chinaman applied the other day for a passport to New York and he was given to understand that unless he could present some known person of responsibility that would answer for the conduct of the poor fellow abroad for a space of two years he must stay here.

The following appears in the official *Gazette* of the 19th:—

SECRETARY'S OFFICE, HAVANA, August 18, 1899.
The Governor of Fernando Po having informed his Excellency the superior political Governor that the political exile hereafter named having abused the vigilance of the authority and fled from that island in an English sloop, his Excellency has thought proper to include said individuals in article one of the circular of the 20th April last and to have all their properties embargoed in accordance with said circular. Their names are:—Carlos del Castillo, Miguel Embil, Manuel Ryguiera, John Dugan, Evaristo Lamas, Francisco Janier, Valmaseda, Julio Broderman, Mariano Mendira, Jose M. Ponce de Leon, Miguel Bravo Sentes, Miguel Cantero, Patrocinio Fierrez, Erasmo Zavala, Felix Fuentes, Esteban Parodi, Rafael Zalazar, Jose Manuel Fernandez and Pedro Barrenquill.

CESARRO FERNANDEZ, Secretary.

The number of estates that have been embargoed already include 170 plantations. It is reported that an employe of the Direccion de Administracion has absconded with \$12,000 belonging to the sequestrations, and, if rumor may be believed, some scandalous doings are going on in this branch. The "Refaccion" accounts, or factor's advances made for the different estates, are nearly a hundred per cent overcharged, as compared when in private hands, and much of the confiscated property not in reality belonging to the parties pursued, immense injury is done to families who are quite innocent of any implication in the revolution.

The splendid mansion of Aldama will very shortly be occupied by the *Audiencia* or High Court of Justice, as likewise by all the other courts of Havana.

The embargoed furniture of Don Nestor Ponce de Leon was advertised by the sequestration office for public auction to be held yesterday, but there were no bidders.

Dr. Albert Simmons, an American citizen, after suffering close confinement in a dark dungeon in Principe for seven months, and lately sent here by General Puella, by order of the Captain General, gained his liberty on Thursday, the 19th. It appears that this victim of Spanish law and the arbitrary customs of Spanish officials had a process formed against him for disloyalty, which, once the accused was secured, nobody cared to disprove, so that he is indebted to no one for his release but to the happy arrival of General Rodas and the present Consul General for the United States.

A fellow prisoner of Dr. Simmons, Don Miguel Fernandez, a prominent gentleman and merchant, who came in the same steamer, by order of General Rodas has also regained his liberty, the Captain General having ignored the whole of the proceedings against him, founded upon a mere suspicion of "infidencia." This unfortunate gentleman was the right hand man of Brigadier Lesca; but General Letona took a great dislike to him, and not only had him arrested, but compelled him to work in the public streets of Puerto Principe in the common chain-gang, to the great indignation of the most prominent citizens of that city.

The Captain General issued a decree on the 17th, when he repaired to the public prison, the substance of which is as follows:—"Desirous of signaling by an act of clemency this my first visit to the national prison of this city, and wishing to somewhat mitigate the misfortune of those sentenced and there imprisoned for common delinquencies, and who by their good conduct are worthy of the paternal solicitude with which I have proposed to myself to govern this island, I have resolved to reduce the

term of their imprisonment by one-fifth of that for which they are condemned. Immediate orders will be given accordingly, and those whose time of imprisonment expires by this consequence will be released."

There have been several frauds discovered by the custom house committee of merchants, and the new system is working exceedingly well. The large revenues collected, even at this dull period of the year, proves the extraordinary extent of the contraband, previously carried on. Three of the custom house employes abandoned their posts and sailed in the last steamer for Spain, declaring that they could not live in this expensive country on their salaries only.

On the 17th inst. the Captain General issued a decree displacing the Board of Directors of the Havana Railroad, the administrator, the bookkeeper and the committee for examining the accounts; declared all the accounts kept since September 30, 1891, null and void, and named other directors, administrator, accountant and auditors, directing that new accounts be made from 1891 to the 17th inst. All the displaced officials are held responsible for their past acts. The new Board is composed of President Don Pedro Montalvo y Romero, Don Jose Maria Morales, Don Francisco Ortiz (Suplente), Don D. Nicolas Guirraz, Don Antonio Kessel y Don Julia Sagebien. The administrator General is his Excellency Senior General Don Rafael Clavijo, and the accountant is Don Juan Mantista Cantero. The old Board and officers are accused of neglecting the interests of the company and misappropriating the funds.