

# CUBA.

Underground Special Despatch from the Insurgent Camp.

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KEY WEST, April 14, 1873.

The following letter, in the handwriting of Mr. James J. O'Kelly and signed by him, reached me by underground conveyances. The original I mail in a steamer leaving in the morning, via Nassau. It will reach New York next Saturday. I telegraph it in full:—

MR. O'KELLY'S LETTER.

RESIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT, CUBA LIBRE, March 10, 1873.

If any should complain that the above address is somewhat general I must protest the old rule, which directs that when we are in Rome we must do as Rome does. Besides it would scarcely add to the information of the readers of the HERALD to give

THE NAME OF A SMALL CLEARING

In the midst of a wild mountain district, only known to a few skilled guides. However, before I finish this letter, I shall make the locality of the present residence of the government approximately known to all interested in so grave a matter. This can be done without any breach of confidence, as, before this letter leaves the encampment, the residence, like the palaces in the Chattrain fairy tales, will have taken wings to parts that for the moment must remain unknown. In order to prevent misapprehension, it is necessary to say that

THE MYSTERY AS TO THE WHEREABOUTS of the residence of the government exists only for the outside world. Any of the Cuban chiefs could place an ambassador or commissioner in contact with President Cespedes in the time requisite for the journey from his camp to the temporary residence of the President. Even the common soldiers, to my surprise, were not alone aware of the immediate place of residence of President Cespedes but also of the district to which the government was about to be transferred. The reason why I mention these circumstances is an idea I found very prevalent

AMONG THE SPANISH OFFICERS that Cespedes and his government were as much a mystery to Cuba Libre as they are to the rest of the world. I have, in my anxiety to announce the successful fulfilment of the most important part of my mission, passed over events that I consider of sufficient im-

portance to be treated of here, in order to say that I have

SEEN AND SPOKEN WITH PRESIDENT CESPEDES.

To the representative of the HERALD has fallen the honor of being the first commissioner from the outside world that has penetrated to the seat of government and held communication with a new Power, that amid all difficulties and dangers, has been able to maintain itself for four years in despite of the efforts made to crush it by the Spanish government. Having claimed this honor

FOR THE ENTERPRISE OF THE HERALD,

I refer to the natural course of my history. For reasons which I shall afterwards explain, I must pass over in silence the events of the 19th, 20th and part of the 21st of February. Three days were occupied in my passage from Santiago de Cuba through the Spanish lines to the outlying Cuban encampment, where I entered for the first time that Cuba Libre which I had hitherto sought unsuccessfully. The feeling of pleasure and satisfaction experienced amid

THE FEW HUTS OF STRAW AND PALM LEAVES at the successful termination of the fatigues and dangers of the preceding days cannot be conveyed to the general reader, but such as have passed through similar experiences will understand them.

MY FIRST CARE WAS TO WRITE

a few lines to the HERALD, in the hope that, by means of the slow and difficult communication of the Cubans with the outer world, the news of my safe passage through the Spanish lines should be communicated to the HERALD. I was the more anxious to do this immediately, as I feared that, owing to the escape of my horse in the mountains and his probable return to Santiago de Cuba,

A REPORT WOULD GET AROUND THAT I WAS DEAD.

This was rendered the more probable by the constantly repeated warnings given by the Spanish officers and others that my solitary expeditions to the country would in all probability terminate fatally. Now that the danger is passed, I am free to confess that had I fully recognized the risk incurred in the constant excursions I made to the country I would probably

NOT HAVE VENTURED SO OFTEN

into lonely and uninhabited districts. The Cubans whom I first met told me frankly that had I appeared on horseback alone in the neighborhood of the encampment, in all probability I would have been

SHOT ON SIGHT,

under the impression that I was a Spaniard. The man who told me so, with the approbation of his auditors, had been himself the victim of an occurrence of this nature, and was slowly recovering from the effects of a shot which had passed through both his legs. He had suddenly found himself in presence of

TWO AMBUSHED SPANIARDS,

who had fired immediately on recognizing him as an insurgent. Neither this man nor his companions would have waited to scrutinize too closely a well-dressed and well-mounted stranger. The garb would have been sufficient, and

THE MACHETE WOULD HAVE FINISHED

speedily and without question the work of the bullet. My character, however, once recognized, I felt as safe among these people as I ever did in the most polished centre of civilization. It would be impossible to show more consideration and respect to a sovereign than has been shown to me during my residence among the Cuban insurgents. It is true that they have no delicacies to offer, and their hospitality to one accustomed to what we call comfort cannot fail to appear somewhat rude; but what they have is

GIVEN FREELY AND GRACEFULLY,

so that if they were not constantly reminding me of the good things they cannot give me, I would forget them in the enjoyment of the little they possess. From the moment of my arrival in the Cuban lines on the 21st of February until I reached the headquarters of

GENERAL CALIXTO GARCIA YNIGUEZ,

on the 26th, little of importance transpired. General Garcia was not in camp when I arrived, as he did not expect me for some days, having despatched

AN ESCORT OF TWENTY RIFLERS

to Camaguey to convey me to headquarters. In the meantime, however, I had left the encampment of Tampe, accompanied by Comandante Vegas and some thirty of his battalion, and, having taken a different route, missed the riflers. General Maximo Gomez, however, and General Calvar were at the headquarters, and received me in the absence of the General commanding the troops, who soon after appeared and

EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT MY ARRIVAL

in the Cuban lines, where I had been for some time expected. General Calixto Garcia Yniguez is a young man, rather tall and very slightly built. He is thirty-three years of age, and, though his hair is prematurely tinged with gray, scarcely appears so old. In his manner he is affable and not wanting in grace and a certain distinguished air. He speaks rapidly and at times imperatively. In character he is nervous, energetic and astute, and evidently possesses the properties of mind necessary for a leader in the peculiar class of wars waged by the Cubans. Like the majority of the Cuban officers, he has not had the advantage of a military education, and knows little about the science of war, except what he has learned during the four years' struggle for independence. The fundamental

PRINCIPLES OF GUERRILLA WARFARE

are well understood by the Cuban officers, thanks to the instruction of

TWO DOMINICANS, GENERALS GOMEZ AND DIAZ.

General Gomez is a war-worn soldier, brave, energetic and of a character of iron. He is, however, wanting in the higher education of an officer, and he has apparently received a general education less broad than his pupil, Calixto Garcia. He had, however, the advantage of a very long experience of war and a thorough practical knowledge of irregular warfare. In great part the successful resistance of the Cubans during the first years of the war was due to the constancy and unwavering resolution of Diaz and Gomez, and, whatever may be the final issue of the struggle, these two men must occupy a prominent position in the history of Cuba. The news of the establishment of

THE REPUBLIC IN SPAIN

was the chief topic of discussion. There seemed to be a very general agreement of opinion that it would be of short duration and would share the fate of most other Spanish governments, after a more or less prolonged

struggle. As I was anxious to know how the change of form of government was likely to affect the conduct of the insurgent leaders I asked General Garcia whether, in the event of the definite establishment of the Republic in Spain, the insurgents would be content to allow Cuba to remain an integral portion of the Spanish dominions? To this the General replied:—

GENERAL GARCIA YNIGUEZ ON CUBAN INDEPENDENCE.

"The well known instability of Spanish governments gives us no guarantee that the Republic, even if definitely established, would exist for any length of time. The same insubordinate spirit that has overthrown the government of Amadens this month may overthrow the government of the Republic next month. We might accept the Republic to-day; but who will say that before many weeks we might not be called upon to

RECOGNIZE ALFONSO OR THE REACTIONARY DON CARLOS,

or some other form of monarchical government. If we remain a part of the Spanish dominions we must accept every revolutionary change, however reactionary it may be; must be subject to constant variations of policy and the general wants of confidence which results from them. We do not wish this. We are too far separated from Spain by distance and by interests to submit to be

DRAGGED AFTER HER IN THE NEVER-RECURRING CONSPIRACIES

and revolutions by which her government is marked. We desire to be independent, but if this is impossible we wish to attach ourselves to some strong government that will be able to guarantee us our liberty and order, so that we may develop in peace the resources of our country. But, above all things, we desire first to achieve independence; and I believe I express the opinion of the immense majority of the Cubans who have arms in their hands when I say that all

RECONCILIATION WITH SPAIN IS IMPOSSIBLE,

except on the basis of independence. The only terms we have to offer are that the Spaniards shall go away and leave Cuba to take care of its own future. It appears to me that there exists a large party in favor of annexation to the United States. In the Central Department the annexationists have always been very strong, but in the Eastern Department the main idea has been independence.

ENGLAND'S PLAN TO AID CUBA.

"In the beginning of the war the English sympathized with us a good deal, and even afforded us some slight aid. They suggested the formation of a confederation of the Antilles, and were strongly opposed to the idea of annexation. Indeed, they warned us strongly against thinking of it, and hopes were held out that England would abandon Jamaica as she had abandoned the Ionian Islands, in order to facilitate the formation of

THE CONFEDERATION OF THE ANTILLES.

"In the Eastern Department this project has been received with most favor, especially on account of the manner in which the United States acted toward us during our struggle for independence. Many of the strongest annexationists have become disgusted. However, we are all pretty well agreed that before adopting any project for the future it is necessary to achieve our independence."

THESE VIEWS WERE ACCEPTED

with slight modification by all present, and though I conversed with all the prominent and a large number of the subordinate officers, I did not meet one man willing to accept a reconciliation with Spain on the condition of Cuba remaining an integral part of the Spanish dominion. Rather than do so it seemed to be pretty generally resolved to continue the war until the

CUBANS OR THE SPANIARDS WERE EXTERMINATED.

In the course of conversation General Garcia referred to the

REPORT PUBLISHED BY MR. HENDERSON

in the HERALD of an interview with President Cespedes. He said:—"We were much amused by reading Mr. Henderson's account of the President. Unfortunately, however, for the correctness of the description, President Cespedes

HAS WORN ALL HIS HEAD

for some time, though at the time he was in Camaguey, some eighteen months before, he went clean-shaven. Mr. Henderson evidently saw the cavalry of Camaguey, but at the time he says he met President Cespedes with Agramonte, in the Central Department, the President was with me; so that it was impossible that MR. HENDERSON COULD HAVE SEEN HIM."

I expressed regret that any correspondent of the HERALD should have been guilty of making so unfounded a statement, but assured the General that as soon as the falsehood was known to the proprietor of the HERALD

THE PUBLIC WOULD BE AT ONCE INFORMED

of it. The General strongly approved of this course, as he said the Cuban cause had nothing to gain from falsehood. General Garcia informed me that he was about to undertake some

OPERATIONS OF IMPORTANCE.

I told him that I desired especially to accompany him as a reporter and a neutral, and, as it was not exactly certain that President Cespedes had not set out on a projected visit to another district, it was agreed that

A SPECIAL MESSENGER

should be sent to him, advising him of my safe arrival, and requesting that he should indicate a point where I would be certain to meet him. At the time of my arrival at the headquarters of General Garcia, who had lately been raised to the rank of

MAJOR GENERAL COMMANDING THE EASTERN DEPARTMENT,

there were not more than two hundred armed men in camp. The information was tendered me that the troops were concentrating, and that in a few days there would be detachments from the forces of Holguin, Santiago de Cuba and Jiguani, which, with Guantanamo, constitute the command of Calixto Garcia Yniguez. On the 1st of March the last of the troops arrived, under the command of

COLONEL PERALTA,

a brother of General Peralta, who perished in one of the ill-fated Cuban expeditions. The Colonel had been wounded on the road and was obliged to be carried in an improvised hammock. His battalion consisted of over two hundred men, more than half of whom, in addition to the *convoyeros*, were unarmed. In the evening

A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE TROOPS

was held, when over four hundred men appeared on parade. About one-third of the whole number were armed with breech-loading

rifles, the balance with Springfield and Enfield muzzle-loading rifles. Some of the battalions presented a tolerably decent appearance, while others were in

A FRIGHTFULLY RAGGED CONDITION.

Falstaff's army of ragamuffins presented a respectable appearance in comparison, at least so far as the clothes were concerned. Measured by the standard of my expectations, the force was well clothed and equipped; for the Spanish officers had told me so many stories of the wretched condition of the Cubans that I expected to find soldiers and officers in uniforms closely resembling that of

OUR FIRST PARENT ON LEAVING PARADISE.

So far from this being true, I was astonished to find all the officers well dressed, and some of them even tastefully. There was no attempt at uniformity, but nearly all were scrupulously clean. In the ranks there was more diversity, and many of the soldiers were not alone ragged, but very nearly naked.

ONE STRAPPING BROWN MAN

struck my imagination as the impersonation of heroic patriotism. His costume consisted of the rim of a straw hat, through which appeared the crown of a woolly head, and something resembling a ragged and scanty dishcloth was bound around his loins. A rifle and a *cartouchiere* completed this patriot's equipment. To the eye accustomed to the neatness and order of regular troops it would have been impossible to present a sight more ridiculous than that varied line of troops presented, and it was with difficulty I repressed a smile as I walked down the line; but though to the eye the scene was grotesque, to the imagination and

TO THE INTELLECT IT WAS SUBLIME.

Shoelless, blanketless; in many cases without coats, often with a piece of ragged linen doing service as a uniform, these men support the hardships and fatigues of an unequal struggle with a patience and courage that have seldom been equalled and never excelled.

IF WE WOULD RESPECT THE CUBAN CHARACTER

we must see it here in the camps. Between the men in the field and the effeminate and cowardly race of the towns there is a separation so wide and so distinct that I can scarcely believe that they are of the same blood; yet they assure me that the change has been made in the war, and that four years ago they were like the men whom I cannot help despising. About

ONE-THIRD OF THE FIGHTING MEN ARE WHITE,

and the majority of the other two-thirds are of color other than black. The most perfect equality exists, the officers taking precedence by rank, and though the majority of the officers are white, a very large proportion are colored.

On the 3d of March General Garcia broke up camp and

MARCHED IN A WESTERLY DIRECTION

through a wild and deserted country, more level than usual, and presenting at intervals savannas of considerable extent. The heat, passing through the tall Guinea grass, was suffocating, and was aggravated by the

ABSENCE OF DRINKABLE WATER.

With the exception of one small stream we had to depend for our supply on a few wells, the quality of the water being detestable. In the afternoon we halted at a wooded hill called Canadon, about

FOUR MILES FROM JIGUANI,

a town of considerable importance. In front of this hill there is a considerable open space, surrounded on all sides by woods through which the road from Jiguani to Dos Bocas passes. The forces under General Garcia occupied the hill of Canadon, with the flanks resting in the woods on either side commanding the road. The timber on the face of a considerable portion of the hill was felled, and

A SLIGHT PARAPET ERECTED

at the head of the clearing. I was informed by General Garcia that the motive for this preparation was his intention

TO PROVOKE THE SPANISH FORCES TO BATTLE,

in the hope that they would attack him in this advantageous position. When we left the encampment of Dos Bocas in the morning the force mustered 520 men. We were afterwards joined by three companies of the forces of General Calvar, which numbered about one hundred men. I do not know if there were other troops; but it appeared to me that there were some

SEVEN HUNDRED ARMED MEN

on the ground, in addition to some four or five hundred *convoyeros*, who were unarmed. As it was expected the Spanish troops would attack the position, the officers of the staff were anxious to put down the fighting strength of the Cuban forces to its lowest figure, and they admitted there were present over six hundred men. In the night a force of about one hundred and thirty men were sent on a reconnoissance to Jiguani with

ORDERS TO FIRE ON THE SOLDIERS

in order to induce them to pursue the party. Whether the Spaniards were advised or not I am unable to say; but when the Cuban detachment arrived everything was as still as death in the town. A scout was sent forward twice, and he reported the houses abandoned as far as the *trinchera*, or fortifications. The detachment, which was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Saladrios,

ENTERED THE TOWN IN THREE DIVISIONS,

and arrived close to the barricade occupied by the Spaniards. As the Cuban troops entered the Spanish soldiers were crying the *alerta*, and nothing transpired to indicate that they were aware of the presence of the Cubans until

THE SENTINELS ON THE BARRICADE CHALLENGED

the advancing parties. Not receiving a satisfactory reply the guards fired with deadly effect, especially on one division, that, disobeying orders, had advanced too close to the barricade.

THE CUBANS REPLIED TO THE FIRE AND RE-TREATED

rapidly, carrying off their dead and wounded. When the divisions reunited it was found that two men had been killed and eight wounded, two of the latter mortally. The only compensation for this severe loss was a few articles of clothing found in the deserted houses. This check seemed in no way to dampen the spirits of the troops, and the hope was constantly expressed that the garrison would be encouraged by their success to pursue the party. In this the Cubans were

FATED TO BE DISAPPOINTED,

as, owing either to the smallness of the garrison or a knowledge of the design of the Cuban generals, the Spaniards contented themselves

with sending out a small reconnoitering party, that contented itself with advancing a few miles from the town. Next day a detachment was

SENT TO KILL CATTLE

in a *potrero* or cattle farm close to the town, a service they accomplished without interruption. It was evident from this circumstance that the Spaniards would not come out to attack the position at Canadon, so a force of some three hundred armed men and about one hundred and fifty *convoyeros* and servants were sent to complete the destruction of the cattle farm, with instructions to carry off as many of the cattle as they could catch, and in any case to kill as many as possible of the animals, so as to

DEPRIVE THE TOWN OF ITS CHIEF MEANS OF SUPPORT.

These orders were faithfully carried out by Colonel Sanchez and the troops under his command. By half-past eight the *potrero* was in flames for a distance of a league, and the cattle either dead or driven into the woods. The soldiers and the unarmed men were

LADEN WITH THE MEAT,

and orders were given to form a line of march to return to the encampment. At the entrance of the *potrero* the road is slightly depressed, and a wood extending in the direction of the town forms a semicircle commanding completely the outlet from the *potrero*. The Cuban forces had reached this point when their bugles sounded silence. Scarcely had the sound died away when a volley was delivered

FROM A SPANISH AMBUSCADE,

distributed in three divisions. By a miracle noone was touched, and the Colonel, dismounting, ordered the men to advance. In a moment the sacks of meat fell to the ground, and a rapid and well sustained fire was opened on the Spanish ambuscade. It was their turn now to be surprised; for the Cubans possessed plenty of ammunition, and were confident in their numbers. The Spanish forces did not number over one hundred and fifty, and by a strange freak of fortune

THEIR THREE BUGLES HAD BEEN SHOT,

one after another, as soon as they sounded an order. Notwithstanding the disparity of the forces

THE SPANIARDS FOUGHT WITH VALOR AND TENACITY,

as they always fight, but were obliged to give way before superior numbers. A movement of retreat in the face of a Cuban force is disastrous. The moment the soldiers perceived that the Spaniards were retreating they advanced with a rush, and the defeat was turned into a rout. Then

THE HORRORS OF THE SITUATION

were developed. The Spanish soldiers, lost in the woods in the darkness, fell an easy prey to their enemies. So dark was the night that it was necessary to inquire whether the person encountered was an enemy or a friend before striking.

THIS DID NOT LAST LONG,

for what remained of the Spanish troops were in full flight for the town, which, fortunately for them, was close at hand. The most terrible and inhuman feature of this awful warfare was, fortunately, hidden by the dark cloak of night.

THE WOUNDED SPANIARDS

who had fallen had crawled into the woods to save themselves from the vengeance of their foes. Here the Cubans followed them, groping in the dark and listening for the sigh or groan of the wretched men to direct them to where the helpless wounded lay. In most cases the unfortunates were discovered and the deadly machete finished the work of the rifle.

"AVE MARIA, ME MATAR!"

exclaimed one poor fellow as the heavy machete cut his cord of life, and the appeals for mercy of the helpless were the more heart-rending that they were made to ears that were deaf and to hearts steeled by the bloody memories of four years of war to the death. It was revolting and disgusting. My heart sickens when I think of it, and I am thankful that the sight was spared me. Is liberty worth such atrocity, I thought. It pains me to have to record deeds of such dreadful barbarity, but my mission is to tell the truth, plain and unvarnished. My instructions are to spare neither Spaniard nor Cuban.

WHEN CONDEMNATION IS DEMANDED,

as well as to award praise where deserved whether for Spaniard or Cuban. Therefore I must pronounce this butchery of helpless wounded and prisoners what it is—barbarous and inhuman.

THE MATERIAL RESULTS OF THE VICTORY

consisted in three bugles, seventeen rifles, the boots, clothes and other effects of the slain, and the sentiment that the men who had fallen a few nights before were amply avenged.

THE LOSS OF THE SPANIARDS

in dead was estimated at twenty-five killed on the spot and thirty wounded in the retreat, who had not been discovered in the darkness of the night, or owing to the proximity of the town had escaped. The Cuban loss was one officer killed, two wounded and six soldiers wounded. The morning after this success the Cubans quitted the encampment, according to their custom, so that when the Spanish troops should come to avenge their comrades they would find no one.

A COMMISSIONER ARRIVED FROM PRESIDENT CESPEDES.

bearing letters, in which he expressed satisfaction at the arrival of the HERALD commissioner, and indicating the point where I could meet him, as he had fortunately not set out on his intended journey. Under these circumstances

I TOOK LEAVE OF GENERAL GARCIA

and the officers of his staff, and set out in search of the President, escorted by a battalion of infantry. On the second day's march, having crossed the points deemed most dangerous, the battalion returned to join the forces of General Garcia, leaving me in charge of Colonel Ramirez and an escort of fifteen men. The route lay through

A FRIGHTFULLY GLOOMY COUNTRY,

the road passing through dense forests and over precipitous mountains. So dense were the woods that it was impossible to travel on horseback, and it was with the greatest difficulty and only by the constant use of the machete that a passage could be made for my horse. It is to me a marvel how the men succeeded in passing him, for the road at times lay through heaped up boulders of limestone formation, over which I climbed

WITH DIFFICULTY AND NOT WITHOUT SUFFERING.

The edges of the rocks were sharp as the points of *chacuz de frise*, and seemed to be placed by nature as an obstacle to advance in

this silent and awful region, where