

Ballou Maturin Murray

History of Cuba: or, Notes of a Traveller in the Tropics



Maturin Ballou

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of a Traveller in the Tropics**

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History of Cuba; or, Notes of a Traveller in
the Tropics / Being a Political, Historical,
and Statistical Account of the Island, from
its First Discovery to the Present Time

PREFACE

The remarkable degree of interest expressed on all sides, at the present time, relative to the island of Cuba, has led the author of the following pages to place together in this form a series of notes from his journal, kept during a brief residence upon the island. To these he has prefixed a historical glance at the political story of Cuba, that may not be unworthy of preservation. The fact that the subject-matter was penned in the hurry of observation upon the spot, and that it is thus a simple record of what would be most likely to engage and interest a stranger, is his excuse for the desultory character of the work. So critically is the island now situated, in a political point of view, that ere this book shall have passed through an edition, it may be no longer a dependency of Spain, or may have become the theatre of scenes to which its former convulsions shall bear no parallel.

In preparing the volume for the press, the author has felt the want of books of reference, bearing a late date. Indeed, there are none; and the only very modern records are those written in the desultory manner of hurried travellers. To the admirable work of the learned Ramon de la Sagra, – a monument of industry and intelligence, – the author of the following pages has been indebted for historical suggestions and data. For the privilege of consulting this, and other Spanish books and pamphlets, relative to the interests and history of the island, the author is indebted to the Hon. Edward Everett, who kindly placed them at his disposal. Where statistics were concerned, the several authorities have been carefully collated, and the most responsible given. The writer has preferred to offer the fresh memories of a pleasant trip to the tropics, to attempting a labored volume abounding in figures and statistics; and trusts that this summer book of a summer clime may float lightly upon the sea of public favor.

M.M.B.

CHAPTER I

The Island of Cuba – Early colonists – Island aborigines – First importation of slaves – Cortez and his followers – Aztecs – The law of races – Mexican aborigines – Valley of Mexico – Pizarro – The end of heroes – Retributive justice – Decadence of Spanish power – History of Cuba – The rovers of the Gulf – Havana fortified – The tyrant Velasquez – Office of captain-general – Loyalty of the Cubans – Power of the captain-general – Cupidity of the government – The slave-trade – The British take Havana – General Don Luis de las Casas – Don Francisco de Arranjo – Improvement, moral and physical, of Cuba.

The island of Cuba, one of the earliest discoveries of the great admiral, has been known to Europe since 1492, and has borne, successively, the names of Juana,¹ Fernandina, Santiago and Ave Maria, having found refuge at last in the aboriginal appellation. Soon after its discovery by Columbus, it was colonized by Spaniards from St. Domingo, but was considered mainly in the light of a military depôt, by the home government, in its famous operations at that period in Mexico. The fact that it was destined to prove the richest jewel in the Castilian crown, and a mine of wealth to the Spanish treasury, was not dreamed of at this stage of its history. Even the enthusiastic followers of Cortez, who sought that fabulous El Dorado of the New World, had no golden promise to hold forth for this gem of the Caribbean Sea.

The Spanish colonists from St. Domingo found the island inhabited by a most peculiar native race, hospitable, inoffensive, timid, fond of the dance and the rude music of their own people, yet naturally indolent and lazy, from the character of the climate they inhabited. They had some definite idea of God and heaven; and were governed by patriarchs, or kings, whose word was law, and whose age gave them precedence. They had few weapons of offence or defence, and knew not the use of the bow and arrow. Of course, they were at once subjected by the new comers, who reduced them to a state of slavery; and, proving hard taskmasters, the poor, over-worked natives died in scores, until they had nearly disappeared, when the home government granted permission to import a cargo of negroes from the coast of Africa to labor upon the ground, and to seek for gold, which was thought to exist in the river-courses.² Thus early commenced the slave-trade of Cuba, a subject to which we shall have occasion more fully to refer.

Cuba became the head-quarters of the Spanish power in the west, forming the point of departure for those military expeditions which, though inconsiderable in numbers, were so formidable in the energy of the leaders, and in the arms, discipline, courage, ferocity, fanaticism and avarice, of their followers, that they were amply adequate to carry out the vast schemes of conquest for which they were designed. It was hence that Cortez marched to the conquest of Mexico, – a gigantic undertaking – one a slight glance at which will recall to the reader the period of history to which we would direct his attention. Landing upon the continent, with a little band, scarcely more than half the complement of a modern regiment, he prepared to traverse an unknown country, thronged by savage tribes, with whose character, habits and means of defence, he was wholly unacquainted. This romantic adventure, worthy of the palmiest days of chivalry, was crowned with success, though checkered with various fortune, and stained with bloody episodes, that prove how the threads of courage and ferocity are inseparably blended in the woof and warp of Spanish character. It must be remembered, however,

¹ In honor of Prince John, son of Ferdinand and Isabella. Changed to Fernandina on the death of Ferdinand; afterwards called Ave Maria, in honor of the Holy Virgin. Cuba is the Indian name.

² "Thus," exclaims the pious Arrati, "began that gathering of an infinite number of gentiles to the bosom of our holy religion, who would otherwise have perished in the darkness of paganism." Spain *has* liberal laws relative to the religious instruction of the slaves; but they are no better than a dead letter.

that the spirit of the age was harsh, relentless and intolerant; and, that if the Aztecs, idolaters and sacrificers of human victims, found no mercy at the hands of the fierce Catholics whom Cortez commanded, neither did the Indians of our own section of the continent fare much better at the hands of men professing a purer faith, and coming to these shores, not as warriors, with the avowed purpose of conquest, but themselves persecuted fugitives.

As the first words that greeted the ears of the Plymouth colonists were "Welcome, Englishmen!" uttered by a poor native, who had learned them from the fishermen off the northern coast, so were the Spaniards at first kindly welcomed by the aborigines they encountered in the New World. Yet, in the north-east and south-west the result was the same: it mattered little whether the stranger was Roman Catholic or Protestant; whether he came clad in steel, or robed in the garments of peace; whether he spoke the harsh English, the soft French, or the rich Castilian tongue. The inexorable laws which govern races were rigidly enforced; the same drama was everywhere enacted, the white race enjoying a speedy triumph. There were episodical struggles, fierce and furious, but unavailing; here Guatimozin, there Philip of Pokanoket – here a battle, there a massacre.

The Spanish general encountered a people who had attained a far higher point of art and civilization than their red brethren of the north-east part of the continent. Vast pyramids, imposing sculptures, curious arms, fanciful garments, various kinds of manufactures, the relics of which still strangely interest the student of the past, filled the invaders with surprise. There was much that was curious and startling in their mythology, and the capital of the Mexican empire presented a singular and fascinating spectacle to the eyes of Cortez. The rocky amphitheatre in the midst of which it was built still remains unchanged, but the vast lake which surrounded it, traversed by causeways, and covered with floating gardens, laden with flowers and perfume, is gone. The star of the Aztec dynasty set in blood. In vain did the inhabitants of the conquered city, roused to madness by the cruelty and extortion of the victors, expel them from their midst. Cortez refused to flee further than the shore; the light of his burning galleys rekindled the desperate valor of his followers, and Mexico fell, as a few years after did Peru under the perfidy and sword of Pizarro, thus completing the scheme of conquest, and giving Spain a colonial empire more splendid than that of any other power in Christendom.

Of the agents in this vast scheme of territorial aggrandizement, we see Cortez dying in obscurity, and Pizarro assassinated in his palace, while retributive justice has overtaken the monarchy at whose behests the richest portions of the western continent were violently wrested from their native possessors. If "the wild and warlike, the indolent and the semi-civilized, the bloody Aztec, the inoffensive Peruvian, the fierce Araucanian, all fared alike" at the hands of Spain, it must be confessed that their wrongs have been signally avenged. "The horrid atrocities practised at home and abroad," says Edward Everett, "not only in the Netherlands, but in every city of the northern country, cried to Heaven for vengeance upon Spain; nor could she escape it. She intrenched herself behind the eternal Cordilleras; she took to herself the wings of the morning, and dwelt in the uttermost parts of the sea; but even there the arm of retribution laid hold of her, and the wrongs of both hemispheres were avenged by her degeneracy and fall."

So rapid a fall is almost without a parallel in the history of the world. Less than three centuries from the time when she stood without a rival in the extent and wealth of her colonial possessions, she beheld herself stripped, one by one, of the rich exotic jewels of her crown. Her vice-regal coronet was torn from her grasp. Mexico revolted; the South American provinces threw off her yoke; and now, though she still clutches with febrile grasp the brightest gem of her transatlantic possessions, the island of Cuba, yet it is evident that she cannot long retain its ownership. The "ever-faithful" island has exhibited unmistakable symptoms of infidelity, its demonstrations of loyalty being confined to the government officials and the hireling soldiery. The time will surely come when the last act of the great drama of historical retribution will be consummated, and when, in spite of the threatening batteries of the Moro and the Punta, and the bayonets of Spanish legions, *siempre fiel* will no longer be the motto of the Queen of the Antilles.

The history of Cuba is deficient in events of a stirring character, and yet not devoid of interest. Columbus found it inhabited, as we have already remarked, by a race whose manners and character assimilated with the mild climate of this terrestrial paradise. Although the Spanish conquerors have left us but few details respecting these aborigines, yet we know with certainty, from the narratives of the great discoverer and his followers, that they were docile and generous, but, at the same time, inclined to ease; that they were well-formed, grave, and far from possessing the vivacity of the natives of the south of Europe. They expressed themselves with a certain modesty and respect, and were hospitable to the last degree. Their labor was limited to the light work necessary to provide for the wants of life, while the bounteous climate of the tropics spared the necessity of clothing. They preferred hunting and fishing to agriculture; and beans and maize, with the fruits that nature gave them in abundance, rendered their diet at once simple and nutritious. They possessed no quadrupeds of any description, except a race of voiceless dogs, of whose existence we have no proof but the assertion of the discoverers.

The island was politically divided into nine provinces, namely, Baracoa, Bayaguitzi, Macaca, Bayamo, Camaguey, Jagua, Cueyba, Habana and Haniguanica. At the head of each was a governor, or king, of whose laws we have no record, or even tradition. An unbroken peace reigned among them, nor did they turn their hands against any other people. Their priests, called *Behiques*, were fanatics, superstitious to the last degree, and kept the people in fear by gross extravagances. They were not cannibals, nor did they employ human sacrifices, and are represented as distinguished by a readiness to receive the Gospel.

The capital of the island was Baracoa,³ erected into a city and bishopric in 1518, but both were transferred to Santiago de Cuba in 1522. In the year 1538, the city of Havana was surprised by a French corsair and reduced to ashes. The French and English buccaneers of the West Indies, whose hatred the Spaniards early incurred, were for a long time their terror and their scourge. Enamored of the wild life they led, unshackled by any laws but the rude regulations they themselves adopted, unrefined by intercourse with the gentler sex, consumed by a thirst for adventure, and brave to ferocity, these fierce rovers, for many years, were the actual masters of the gulf. They feared no enemy, and spared none; their vessels, constantly on the watch for booty, were ever ready, on the appearance of a galleon, to swoop down like an eagle on its prey. The romance of the sea owes some of its most thrilling chapters to the fearful exploits of these buccaneers. Their *coup de main* on Havana attracted the attention of De Soto, the governor of the island, to the position and advantages of the port at which the Spanish vessels bound for the peninsula with the riches of New Mexico were accustomed to touch, and he accordingly commenced to fortify it. It increased in population by degrees, and became the habitual gubernatorial residence, until the home government made it the capital of the island in 1589, on the appointment of the first Captain-general, Juan de Tejada.

The native population soon dwindled away under the severe sway of the Spaniards, who imposed upon them tasks repugnant to their habits, and too great for their strength.

Velasquez, one of the earliest governors of the island, appears to have been an energetic and efficient magistrate, and to have administered affairs with vigor and intelligence; but his harsh treatment of the aborigines will ever remain a stain upon his memory. A native chief, whose only crime was that of taking up arms in defence of the integrity of his little territory, fell into the hands of Velasquez, and was burned alive, as a punishment for his patriotism.⁴ It is no wonder that under such treatment the native population disappeared so rapidly that the Spaniards were forced to supply their places by laborers of hardier character.

³ Here Leo X. erected the first cathedral in Cuba. Baracoa is situated on the north coast, at the eastern extremity of the island, and contains some three thousand inhabitants, mixed population.

⁴ The words of this unfortunate chief (Hatucy), extorted by the torments he suffered, were, "*Prefiero el infierno al cielo si en cielo ha Españoles.*" (I prefer hell to heaven, if there are Spaniards in heaven.)

We have seen that the office of captain-general was established in 1589, and, with a succession of incumbents, the office has been maintained until the present day, retaining the same functions and the same extraordinary powers. The object of the Spanish government is, and ever has been, to derive as much revenue as possible from the island; and the exactions imposed upon the inhabitants have increased in proportion as other colonies of Spain, in the western world, have revolted and obtained their independence. The imposition of heavier burthens than those imposed upon any other people in the world has been the reward of the proverbial loyalty of the Cubans; while the epithet of "ever-faithful," bestowed by the crown, has been their only recompense for their steady devotion to the throne. But for many years this lauded loyalty has existed only in appearance, while discontent has been fermenting deeply beneath the surface.

The Cubans owe all the blessings they enjoy to Providence alone (so to speak), while the evils which they suffer are directly referable to the oppression of the home government. Nothing short of a military despotism could maintain the connection of such an island with a mother country more than three thousand miles distant; and accordingly we find the captain-general of Cuba invested with unlimited power. He is, in fact, a viceroy appointed by the crown of Spain, and accountable only to the reigning sovereign for his administration of the colony. His rule is absolute; he has the power of life and death and liberty in his hands. He can, by his arbitrary will, send into exile any person whatever, be his name or rank what it may, whose residence in the island he considers prejudicial to the royal interest, even if he has committed no overt act. He can suspend the operation of the laws and ordinances, if he sees fit to do so; can destroy or confiscate property; and, in short, the island may be said to be perpetually in a state of siege.

Such is the infirmity of human nature that few individuals can be trusted with despotic power without abusing it; and accordingly we find very few captain-generals whose administration will bear the test of rigid examination. Few men who have governed Cuba have consulted the true interests of the Creoles; in fact, they are not appointed for that purpose, but merely to look after the crown revenue. An office of such magnitude is, of course, a brilliant prize, for which the grandees of Spain are constantly struggling; and the means by which an aspirant is most likely to secure the appointment presupposes a character of an inferior order. The captain-general knows that he cannot reckon on a long term of office, and hence he takes no pains to study the interests or gain the good-will of the Cubans. He has a two-fold object in view, – to keep the revenue well up to the mark, and to enrich himself as speedily as possible. Hence, the solemn obligations entered into by Spain with the other powers for the suppression of the African slave-trade are a dead letter; for, with very few exceptions, the captains-general of Cuba have connived at the illegal importation of slaves, receiving for their complaisance a large percentage on the value of each one landed on the island; for, though the slavers do not discharge their living freights at the more frequented ports, still their arrival is a matter of public notoriety, and it is impossible that, with the present system of espionage, the authorities can be ignorant of such an event. Nor can we imagine that the home government is less well-informed upon the subject, though they assume a politic ignorance of the violation of the law. Believing that the importation of slaves is essential to the maintenance of the present high revenue, Spain illustrates the rule that there are none so blind as those who do not wish to see. It is only the cheapness of labor, resulting from the importation of slaves, that enables the planters to pour into the government treasury from twenty to twenty-four millions of dollars annually. Of this we may speak more fully hereafter.

In 1760, the invasion and conquest of the island by the British forms one of the most remarkable epochs in its history. This event excited the fears of Spain, and directed the attention of the government to its importance in a political point of view. On its restoration, at the treaty of peace concluded between the two governments in the following year, Spain seriously commenced the work of fortifying the Havana, and defending and garrisoning the island generally.

The elements of prosperity contained within the limits of this peerless island required only a patriotic and enlightened administration for their development; and the germ of its civilization was

stimulated by the appointment of General Don Luis de las Casas to the post of captain-general. During the administration of this celebrated man, whose memory is cherished with fond respect by the Cubans, The Patriotic Society of Havana was formed, with the noble idea of diffusing education throughout the island, and introducing a taste for classical literature, through his instrumentality, while the press was also established in the capital, by the publication of the *Papel Periodico*.

In the first third of the present century, the *intendente*, Don Alejandro Ramirez, labored to regulate the revenues and economical condition of the country, and called the attention of the government to the improvement of the white population. But the most important concession obtained of the metropolitan government, the freedom of commerce, was due to the patriotic exertions of Don Francisco de Arranjo, the most illustrious name in Cuban annals, "one," says the Countess Merlin, "who may be quoted as a model of the humane and peaceful virtues," and "who was," says Las Casas, "a jewel of priceless value to the glory of the nation, a protector for Cuba, and an accomplished statesman for the monarchy." Even the briefest historical sketch (and this record pretends to no more) would be incomplete without particular mention of this excellent man.

He was born at Havana, May 22d, 1765. Left an orphan at a very early age, he managed the family estate, while a mere boy, with a discretion and judgment which would have done honor to a man of mature age. Turning his attention to the study of the law, he was admitted to practice in the mother country, where for a considerable period he acted as the agent for the municipality of Havana, and, being thoroughly acquainted with the capabilities of the island, and the condition and wants of his countrymen, he succeeded in procuring the amelioration of some of the most flagrant abuses of the colonial system. By his exertions, the staple productions of the island were so much increased that the revenue, in place of falling short of the expenses of the government, as his enemies had predicted, soon yielded a large surplus. He early raised his voice against the iniquitous slave-trade, and suggested the introduction of white laborers, though he perceived that the abolition of slavery was impracticable. It was owing to his exertions that the duty on coffee, spirits and cotton, was remitted for a period of ten years, and that machinery was allowed to be imported free of duty to the island.

The *Junta de Fomento* (society for improvement) and the Chamber of Commerce were the fruits of his indefatigable efforts. Of the latter institution he was for a long time the Syndic, refusing to receive the perquisites attached to the office, as he did the salaries of the same and other offices that he filled during his useful life. While secretary of the Chamber, he distinguished himself by his bold opposition to the schemes of the infamous Godoy (the Prince of Peace), the minion of the Queen of Spain, who, claiming to be protector of the Chamber of Commerce, demanded the receipts of the custom-house at Havana. He not only defeated the plans of Godoy, but procured the relinquishment of the royal monopoly of tobacco. His patriotic services were appreciated by the court at Madrid, although at times he was the inflexible opponent of its schemes. The cross of the order of Charles III. showed the esteem in which he was held by that monarch. Yet, with a modesty which did him honor, he declined to accept a title of nobility which was afterwards offered to him. In 1813, when, by the adoption of the constitution of 1812, Cuba became entitled to representation in the general Cortes, he visited Madrid as a deputy, and there achieved the crowning glory of his useful life, – the opening of the ports of Cuba to foreign trade. In 1817 he returned to his native island with the rank of Counsellor of State, Financial Intendente of Cuba, and wearing the grand cross of the order of Isabella. He died in 1837, at the age of seventy-two, after a long and eminently useful life, bequeathing large sums for various public purposes and charitable objects in the island. Such a man is an honor to any age or nation, and the Cubans do well to cherish his memory, which, indeed, they seem resolved, by frequent and kindly mention, to keep ever green.

Fostered by such men, the resources of Cuba, both physical and intellectual, received an ample and rapid development. The youth of the island profited by the means of instruction now liberally placed at their disposal; the sciences and belles-lettres were assiduously cultivated; agriculture and

internal industry were materially improved, and an ambitious spirit evoked, which subsequent periods of tyranny and misrule have not been able, with all their baneful influences, entirely to erase.

The visitor from abroad is sure to hear the people refer to this "golden period," as they call it, of their history, the influence of which, so far from passing away, appears to grow and daily increase with them. It raised in their bosoms one spirit and trust which they sadly needed, – that of self-reliance, – and showed them of what they were capable, under liberal laws and judicious government.

CHAPTER II

The constitution of 1812 – Revolution of La Granja – Political aspect of the island – Discontent among the Cubans – The example before them – Simon Bolivar, the Liberator – Revolutions of 1823 and 1826 – General Lorenzo and the constitution – The assumption of extraordinary power by Tacon – Civil war threatened – Tacon sustained by royal authority – Despair of the Cubans – Military rule – A foreign press established – Programme of the liberal party – General O'Donnell – The spoils – Influence of the climate.

When the French invasion of Spain in 1808 produced the constitution of 1812, Cuba was considered entitled to enjoy its benefits, and the year 1820 taught the Cubans the advantage to be derived by a people from institutions based on the principle of popular intervention in public affairs. The condition of the nation on the death of Ferdinand VII. obliged Queen Christina to rely on the liberal party for a triumph over the pretensions of the Infante Don Carlos to the crown, and to assure the throne of Donna Isabella II., and the *Estatuto Real* (royal statute) was proclaimed in Spain and Cuba. The Cubans looked forward, as in 1812 and 1820, to a representation in the national congress, and the enjoyment of the same liberty conceded to the Peninsula. An institution was then established in Havana, with branches in the island, called the Royal Society for Improvement, already alluded to in our brief notice of Don Francisco Arranjo. The object of this society was to aid and protect the progress of agriculture and commerce; and it achieved a vast amount of good. At the same time, the press, within the narrow limits conceded to it, discussed with intelligence and zeal the interests of the country, and diffused a knowledge of them.

In 1836 the revolution known as that of La Granja, provoked and sustained by the progressionists against the moderate party, destroyed the "Royal Statute," and proclaimed the old constitution of 1812. The queen-mother, then Regent of Spain, convoked the constituent Cortes, and summoned deputies from Cuba.

Up to this time, various political events, occurring within a brief period, had disturbed but slightly and accidentally the tranquillity of this rich province of Spain. The Cubans, although sensible of the progress of public intelligence and wealth, under the protection of a few enlightened governors, and through the influence of distinguished and patriotic individuals, were aware that these advances were slow, partial and limited, that there was no regular system, and that the public interests, confided to officials intrusted with unlimited power, and liable to the abuses inseparable from absolutism, frequently languished, or were betrayed by a cupidity which impelled despotic authorities to enrich themselves in every possible way at the expense of popular suffering. Added to these sources of discontent was the powerful influence exerted over the intelligent portion of the people by the portentous spectacle of the rapidly-increasing greatness of the United States, where a portion of the Cuban youths were wont to receive their education, and to learn the value of a national independence based on democratic principles, principles which they were apt freely to discuss after returning to the island.

There also were the examples of Mexico and Spanish South America, which had recently conquered with their blood their glorious emancipation from monarchy. Liberal ideas were largely diffused by Cubans who had travelled in Europe, and there imbibed the spirit of modern civilization. But, with a fatuity and obstinacy which has always characterized her, the mother country resolved to ignore these causes of discontent, and, instead of yielding to the popular current, and introducing a liberal and mild system of government, drew the reins yet tighter, and even curtailed many of the privileges formerly accorded to the Cubans. It is a blind persistence in the fated principle of despotic domination which has relaxed the moral and political bonds uniting the two countries, instilled gall

into the hearts of the governed, and substituted the dangerous obedience of terror for the secure loyalty of love. This severity of the home government has given rise to several attempts to throw off the Spanish yoke.

The first occurred in 1823, when the Liberator, Simon Bolivar, offered to aid the disaffected party by throwing an invading force into the island. The conspiracy then formed, by the aid of the proffered expedition, for which men were regularly enlisted and enrolled, would undoubtedly have ended in the triumph of the insurrection, had it not been discovered and suppressed prematurely, and had not the governments of the United States, Great Britain and France, intervened in favor of Spain. In 1826 some Cuban emigrants, residing in Caraccas, attempted a new expedition, which failed, and caused the imprisonment and execution of two patriotic young men, Don Francisco de Agüero, y Velazco, and Don Bernabé Sanchez, sent to raise the department of the interior. In 1828 there was a yet more formidable conspiracy, known as *El Aguila Negra* (the black eagle). The efforts of the patriots proved unavailing, foiled by the preparation and power of the government, which seems to be apprised by spies of every intended movement for the cause of liberty in Cuba.

We have alluded to the revolution of La Granja, in Spain, and we have now briefly to consider its effects on the island of Cuba, then under the sway of General Don Miguel Tacon. We shall have occasion to refer more than once, in the course of our records of the island, to the administration of Tacon; for he made his mark upon Cuba, and, though he governed it with an iron hand and a stern will, as we shall see, yet he did much to improve its physical condition, even as Louis Napoleon, despot though he be, has already vastly beautified and improved the sanitary condition of the city of Paris.

The first place on the island which received intelligence of the revolution of La Granja, and the oath to the constitution of 1812 by the Queen-Regent of Spain, was Santiago de Cuba, the capital of the eastern department. It was then commanded by General Lorenzo, who immediately assembled the authorities, corporations and functionaries, in pursuance of the example of his predecessors, – who, without waiting for the orders of the higher authority of the island, had, under similar circumstances, prepared to obey the supreme government of the nation, – and proclaimed through his department the Code of Cadiz, without any opposition, and to the general joy of Spaniards and Cubans. His first acts were to reëstablish the constitutional *ayuntamiento*, the national militia, the liberty of the press, and all other institutions, on the same footing as in 1823, when King Ferdinand recovered absolute authority, and made arrangements for the election of deputies to the new Cortes.

Tacon, who was not a friend to liberal institutions, and who was fixed in his idea that the new constitution would convulse the country, notwithstanding his knowledge of the state of things when this law was actually in force in Cuba, was quite indignant when he heard what had transpired. Knowing that he could not compel General Lorenzo to abrogate the constitution he had proclaimed, he forthwith cut off all communication with the eastern department, and formed a column to invade it, and to restore the old order of things by force. This was a bold, impolitic and dangerous move, because this resolve was contrary to the wishes of the supreme government and public opinion, which would not fail to see treason in the act of Gen. Tacon, against the mother country.

Although the royal proclamation which announced to Tacon the establishment of the constitution in Spain intimated forthcoming orders for the election of deputies in Cuba to the general Cortes, still he considered that his commission as captain-general authorized him, under the circumstances, to carry out his own will, and suppress at once the movement set on foot by General Lorenzo, on the ground of its danger to the peace of the island, and the interests of Spain. The royal order, which opened the way for his attacks upon the Cuban people, after a confused preamble, confers on the captain-general all the authority appertaining in time of war to a Spanish governor of a city in a state of siege, authorizing him in any circumstances and by his proper will to suspend any public functionary, whatever his rank, civil, military, or ecclesiastical; to banish any resident of the

island, without preferring any accusations; to modify any law, or suspend its operations;⁵ disobey with impunity any regulation emanating from the Spanish government; to dispose of the public revenues at his will; and, finally, to act according to his pleasure, winding up with recommending a moderate use of the confidence evinced by the sovereign in according power so ample.

Although the captains-general of Cuba have always been invested with extraordinary power, we believe that these items of unlimited authority were first conferred upon Vivez in 1825, when the island was menaced by an invasion of the united forces of Mexico and Columbia. In these circumstances, and emanating from an absolute authority, like that of Ferdinand VII., a delegation of power which placed the destinies of the island at the mercy of its chief ruler might have had the color of necessity; but to continue such a delegation of authority in time of peace is a most glaring and inexcusable blunder.

Meanwhile Tacon assembled a column of picked companies of the line, the provincial military and rural cavalry, and placed them, under the orders of General Gascue, in the town of Guines, hoping by this great parade and preparation to impose on General Lorenzo, and strike terror into the inhabitants of the whole island. He also adroitly worked by secret agents upon the forces at Santiago de Cuba, and thus by cunning and adroitness brought about quite a reaction in the public sentiment.

Under these circumstances, if General Lorenzo, master of the eastern department, with two regiments of regular troops, all the national militia, all devoted to the new order of things and ready to obey his will, had marched upon Puerto Principe, the capital of the centre, where the garrison was not strong enough to oppose him, and had there proclaimed the constitutional code through the authority of the royal *Audiencia*, Gen. Tacon would unquestionably have desisted from his opposition, and relinquished the command of the island. Cuba would then have enjoyed the same political rights as the rest of Spain, and have escaped the horrors of tyranny which have since weighed her down. But Gen. Lorenzo proved weak, let slip the golden opportunity of triumphing over Tacon, and returned to Spain in the vain hope that the supreme government would sustain him. In the mean time, Tacon sent his body of soldiery to Santiago, their arrival being signalized by the establishment of a military commission to try and punish all who had been engaged innocently in establishing the fallen constitution. The commandant Moya presided, and the advocate Miret was held as counsel.

No sooner had this barbarous tribunal commenced its proceedings, than no Creole belonging to families of influence could look upon himself as safe from persecution, since nearly all of them had hastened to obey the orders of General Lorenzo, and, like him, taken oath to the constitution. Many men of rank, reputation and education, including several respectable clergymen, fell under the ban of the military commission. Some were thrown into the prisons of Santiago de Cuba, some banished for a given period, and many emigrated to avoid the horrors of a Spanish dungeon, and the greater part in one way or another were torn from the bosoms of their families. Of the soldiers who faithfully obeyed their officers, about five hundred were condemned to work in the streets of Havana, with their feet shackled. Such are the measures meted out by despotism to those who have the misfortune to live under its iron yoke.

Tacon triumphed, yet the Cubans did not utterly despair. They cherished the hope that the Spanish government would recognize the legality of their proceedings in the eastern department; but they were doomed to disappointment. The Cuban deputies presented themselves in the Spanish capital, and offered their credentials. But they were referred to a committee of men profoundly

⁵ "En su consecuencia da S.M. á V.E. la mas ámplia é ilimitada autorizacion, no tan solo para separar de esa Isla á las personas empleadas ó no empleadas, cualquiera que sea su destino, rango, clase ó condicion, cuya permanencia en ella crea prejudicial, ó que le infunda recelos su conducta pública ó privada, reemplazandolas interinamente con servidores fieles á S.M. y que merezcan á V.E. toda su confianza, sino tambien para suspender la ejecucion de cualesquiera órdenes ó providencias generales espedidas sobre todos los ramos de la administracion en aquella parte en que V.E. considere conveniente al real servicio, debiendo ser en todo caso provisionales estas medidas, y dar V.E. cuenta á S.M. para su soberana aprobacion." —*From the Royal Ordinance conferring unlimited powers on the Captains-general of Cuba.*

ignorant of the feelings, opinions and condition, of the Cuban people, or deriving what few notions they possessed from those interested on the side of Tacon. The deputies were not allowed a seat in the Cortes, and the government decided that the provisions of the constitution should not apply to Cuba, but that it should be governed by special laws. Since then, the island has been ruled by the arbitrary will of the captains-general, without intervention of the Spanish Cortes, without the intervention of the island, and, what is almost inconceivable, at first thought, without the direct action even of the sovereign authority.

Tacon, now that the royal authority had sustained his action, was more despotic than ever. It is true that he introduced some legal and municipal reforms; that he embellished the capital, and improved its health; but under him the censorship of the press was almost prohibitory. The local *ayuntamientos*, which, at the most despotic epoch, had frequently produced happy effects, by representing to the sovereign the wants of the country, were shorn of their privileges, and their attributes confined to the collection and distribution of the municipal funds. Tacon is also charged with promoting the jealousies naturally existing between Spaniards and Creoles, and with completely subjecting the civil courts to military tribunals.

"In a state of agitation in the public mind, and disorder in the government," says the author of an able pamphlet entitled "*Cuba y su Gobierno*," to whom we are indebted for invaluable information that could only be imparted by a Creole, "with the political passions of Spaniards and Cubans excited; the island reduced from an integral part of the monarchy to the condition of a colony, and with no other political code than the royal order, conferring unlimited power upon the chief authority; the country bowed down under the weighty tyranny of two military commissions established in the capitals of the eastern and western departments; with the prisons filled with distinguished patriots; deprived of representation in the Cortes; the *ayuntamientos* prohibited the right of petition; the press forbidden to enunciate the state of public opinion, closed the administration of General Don Miguel Tacon in the island of Cuba, the most calamitous, beyond a question, that this country has suffered since its discovery by the Spaniards."

The liberal party of Cuba, denied the expression of their views in the local prints, and anxious to present their wants and their grievances before the home government, conceived the ingenious idea of establishing organs abroad. Two papers were accordingly published; one at Paris, called "*El Correo de Ultramar*" and one at Madrid, entitled "*El Observador*," edited by distinguished Cubans.⁶ It is scarcely necessary to say that these produced no favorable result, and the people of the island became convinced that the mother country was resolved to persevere in the plan of ruling Cuba with a rod of iron, indifferent alike to her tears and her remonstrances.

The programme of the liberal party was exceedingly moderate, petitioning only for the following concessions: 1st, That a special ministry, devoted to Cuban affairs, should be established at Madrid; 2d, That a legal organ of communication between Spain and Cuba should be established in the island, to represent the well-defined interests of the metropolis and the colony; 3d, That some latitude should be given to the press, now controlled by a triple censorship; 4th, That efficacious means should be adopted for the complete suppression of the barbarous traffic in African slaves; 5th, That the government should permit the establishment of societies for the improvement of the white inhabitants; 6th, That the island should be relieved of the enormous weight of the contributions now levied upon her. None of these privileges, however, have been conceded to suffering Cuba by the home government.

The first successor of General Tacon ruled Cuba with a spirit of moderation and temperance, seeking to conciliate the liberals, and giving hopes of great reforms, which as yet have never been

⁶ "La Verdad," a paper devoted to Cuban interests, established in New York in 1848, and conducted with signal ability, is distributed gratuitously, the expense being defrayed by contributions of Cubans and the friends of Cuban independence. This is the organ of the annexation party, organized by exiles in this country.

accomplished. During the administration of the Prince de Aglona, a superior tribunal, the Royal Pretorial Audience, was established in Havana, to take cognizance of civil suits in cases of appeal, and to resolve the doubts which the confused system of legislation produces at every step in the inferior tribunals. Gen. Valdes was the first and only official who granted free papers to the emancipated negroes who had served out their term of apprenticeship, and who opposed the African trade. He showed, by his example, that this infamous traffic may be destroyed in the country without a necessary resort to violent measures, but by the will of the captain-general.

General O'Donnell, as captain-general,⁷ instead of repressing, encouraged the slave-trade, and a greater number of the unfortunate victims of human avarice were introduced into the island, during his administration, than during any like term since the conclusion of the treaty of 1817. Of course he vacated his post vastly enriched by the spoils, having doubtless received, as was declared, from one to two doubloons per head on every slave landed upon the island during his administration; a sum that would alone amount to a fortune.

Of events which transpired during the administration of Roncali and Concha we may have occasion to speak hereafter, but with this more modern chapter in the history of the island the general reader is already conversant. It appears almost incredible that an intelligent people, within so short a distance of our southern coast, constantly visited by the citizens of a free republic, and having the example of successful revolt set them, by the men of the same race, both in the north and south, weighed down by oppressions almost without parallel, should never have aimed an effectual blow at their oppressors. It would seem that the softness of the unrivalled climate of those skies beneath which it is luxury only to exist has unnerved them, and that the effeminate spirit of the original inhabitants has descended in retribution to the posterity of the *conquistadores*.

⁷ General Leopold O'Donnell was appointed governor-general in 1843, continuing a little over four years to fill the lucrative position. His wife was a singular and most avaricious woman, engaged in many speculations upon the island, and shamefully abusing her husband's official influence for the purposes of pecuniary emolument.

CHAPTER III

Armed intervention – Conspiracy of Cienfuegos and Trinidad – General Narciso Lopez – The author's views on the subject – Inducements to revolt – Enormous taxation – Scheme of the patriots – Lopez's first landing in 1850 – Taking of Cardinas – Return of the invaders – Effect upon the Cuban authorities – Roncali recalled – New captain-general – Lopez's second expedition – Condition of the Invaders – Vicissitudes – Col. Crittenden – Battle of Las Pozas – Superiority of courage – Battle of Las Frias – Death of Gen. Enna – The fearful finale of the expedition.

We have noticed in the preceding chapter, the anomaly of the political condition of Cuba, increasing in prosperity and civilization, imbibing liberal ideas from its geographical position, and yet denied participation in the few shadowy rights which the peninsular subjects of the enfeebled, distracted and despotic parent monarchy enjoyed. We have seen that, in later years, the adoption of more liberal ideas by Spain produced no amelioration of the condition of the colony; and that, on the other hand, a conformity to the legal enactments of the mother country was punished as treason. The result of the movement in the western department, under Tacon, showed the Cubans that they had nothing to hope from Spain, while the cruelties of General O'Donnell increased the great discontent and despair of the people. They now became satisfied that the hope of legal reform was but a chimera; and a portion of the liberal party, seeing no issue from their insufferable position but that of revolution, boldly advocated the intervention of arms.

In 1848 a conspiracy was formed, in Cienfuegos and Trinidad, with the purpose of throwing off the Spanish yoke; but it was soon discovered, and crushed by the imprisonment of various individuals in the central department. The principal leader in this movement was General Narciso Lopez, who succeeded in effecting his escape to the United States, where he immediately placed himself in communication with several influential and liberal Creoles, voluntary and involuntary exiles, and established a correspondence with the remnant of the liberal party yet at liberty on the island, at the same time being aided in his plans by American sympathy. The result of the deliberations of himself, his correspondents and associates, was to try by the chances of war for the liberation of Cuba. The disastrous result of the expedition boldly undertaken for this purpose is already well known.

Before sketching the principal features of this attempt, we may be permitted to declare that, although we deplore the fate of those of our countrymen who perished in the adventure, though we readily concede that many of them were actuated by lofty motives, still we must condemn their action, and approve of the vigorous measures adopted by the federal government to suppress that species of reckless adventure in which the *flibustiers* engaged. No amount of sympathy with the sufferings of an oppressed people, no combination of circumstances, no possible results, can excuse the fitting out of a warlike expedition in the ports of a nation against the possessions of a friendly power. The flag which has waved unstained in peace and war over a free land for more than three quarters of a century, must remain spotless to the last. The hopes of every free heart in the world are centred on our banner, and we must see to it that no speck dims the dazzling lustre of its stars. No degree of pride at the daring gallantry displayed by the little handful of invaders of Cuba, – a gallantry inherited from a brave ancestry who displayed their valor in the holiest of causes, – must blind our eyes to the character of the adventure which called it forth. We have tears for the fallen, as brothers and men; but our conscience must condemn their errors. While, individually, we should rejoice to see Cuba free, and an integral portion of the Union, nothing will ever induce us to adopt the atrocious doctrine that the ends justify the means. But let us pass to a consideration of the recent events in the records of the island.

Many of the leading patriots of the island undoubtedly believed that the government of the United States would second their efforts, if they should decide to unite themselves to our republic, and boldly raise the banner of annexation. A portion of the Cuban liberals adopted the motto, "Legal Reform or Independence;" and these two factions of the patriots did not henceforth act in perfect concert with each other – a most fatal error to the interests of both. Time and circumstances favored the war and annexation party; the people were more than ever discontented with a government which so oppressed them by a military despotism, and by the enormous weight of the unjust taxation levied upon them. We may here remark that the increase of the public revenue, in the midst of so many elements of destruction and ruin, can only be explained by the facility with which the captain-general and royal stewards of the island invent and arrange taxes, at their pleasure, and without a shadow of propriety, or even precedent.

The *consuming* population of Cuba amounts to about eight hundred thousand souls, and the total amount of taxes and contributions of various forms is more than twenty-three millions of dollars, in specie, per annum! It is hardly conceivable that such a sum can be extorted from a population whose wealth is precarious, and whose living is so costly. With this revenue the government pays and supports an army of over twenty thousand Peninsular troops in the island; a vast number of employés, part of the clergy and half the entire navy of Spain; the diplomatic corps in the United States and Mexico; many officials of rank at home in Spain; and the surplus is remitted to Spain, and spent on the Peninsula on matters entirely foreign to the interests of the island itself. A precious state of affairs!

The colored population of the island, both slaves and free, hated the Spaniards, for good reasons. The war party, moreover, reckoned on the genius of a leader (Lopez) trained to arms,⁸ equal in talents to any of the Spanish generals, and beloved by the Spanish troops, as well as by the Cuban population; and they relied, also, as we have said, on the sympathy and ultimate aid of the United States government. It is undoubtedly true that interested parties in this country, prompted by mercenary motives, increased this latter delusion by false reports; while the Cuban conspirators, in turn, buoyed up the hopes of their friends in the United States, by glowing accounts of the patriotic spirit of the Creoles, and the extent of the preparations they were making for a successful revolt. General Lopez was actively arranging the means for an invasion, when, in 1849, the United States government threw terror into the ranks of the *flibustiers*, by announcing its determination to enforce the sacredness of treaty stipulations. This, for a time, frustrated the intended invasion.

In 1850 Lopez succeeded in effecting his first descent upon the island. Having succeeded in baffling the vigilance of the United States government, an expedition, consisting of six hundred and fifty-two men, was embarked on board two sailing-vessels and the steamer Creole, which conveyed the general and his staff. In the beginning of July the sailing-vessels left New Orleans, with orders to anchor at Contoy, one of the Mugeris Islands, on the coast of Yucatan; the general followed, on the Creole, on the 7th. At the time when the troops were embarked on the Creole at Contoy, fifty-two of the number, who had been deceived as to the nature of the expedition, refused to follow the general, and were left on the island, with the intention of returning to the United States in the two schooners. General Lopez, after gaining some information from a fisherman he encountered, resolved to land at Cardenas, on the northern coast of the island, a hundred and twenty miles east of Havana. He calculated that he could surprise and master the garrison before the captain-general could possibly obtain intelligence of his departure from New Orleans. His plan was, to master the town, secure the authorities, intimidate the Spaniards, and then, sustained by the moral influence of victory, proceed to Matanzas by railroad.

Roncali, the captain-general, having received intelligence of the landing at Contoy, despatched several ships-of-war in that direction, to seize upon the general and his followers. The latter, however,

⁸ His reputation as a cavalry officer was very distinguished, and he was commonly recognized as *La primera Lanza de España* (the first lance of Spain). —*Louis Schlesinger's Narrative of the Expedition.*

escaped the snare, and effected his landing on the 19th. The garrison rushed to arms, and, while a portion of the troops, after immaterial loss, retired in good order to the suburbs, another, under the command of Governor Ceruti, intrenched themselves in the government-house, and gave battle to the invaders. After a sharp skirmish, the building being set on fire, they surrendered; the governor and two or three officers were made prisoners, and the soldiers consented to join the revolutionary colors! Meanwhile, a body of one hundred invaders seized upon the railroad station. The engines were fired up, and the trains made ready to transport the invading column to Matanzas.

But now came a pause. General Lopez, seeing that the native population did not respond to his appeal, knew that as soon as the news of the taking of Cardenas should be circulated, he would be in a very critical situation. In fact, the governor of Matanzas was soon on the march, at the head of five hundred men. General Armero sailed from Havana in the Pizarro, with a thousand infantry, while two thousand five hundred picked troops, under the command of General Count de Mirasol, were sent from Havana by the railroad. Lopez saw that it would be madness to wait the attack of these formidable columns, unsupported save by his own immediate followers, and accordingly issued his orders for the reëmbarkation of his band, yet without relinquishing the idea of landing on some more favorable point of the island.

That portion of the garrison which, in the beginning of the affair, had retreated to the suburbs, finding itself reinforced by a detachment of cavalry, attempted to cut off the retreat of the invading general; but the deadly fire of the latter's reserve decimated the horse, and the infantry, dismayed at their destruction, took to rapid flight. The Creole accordingly left the port without molestation, and before the arrival of the government steam-frigate Pizarro. The Spanish prisoners were landed at Cayo de Piedras, and then Lopez, discovering the Pizarro in the distance, made for the American continent, where the steamer was abandoned. General Lopez was arrested by the authorities of Savannah, but liberated again, in deference to the public clamor. The Creole was seized, confiscated and sold. The invaders disbanded; and thus this enterprise terminated.

A less enterprising and determined spirit than that of General Lopez would have been completely broken by the failure of his first attempts, the inactivity of the Cubans, the hostility of the American government, and the formidable forces and preparations of the Spanish officials. He believed, however, that the Cubans were ripe for revolt; that public opinion in the United States would nullify the action of the federal government; and that, if he could once gain a foothold in the island, the Spanish troops would desert in such numbers to his banners that the preponderance of power would soon be upon his side; and, with these views, he once more busied himself, with unremitting industry, to form another expedition.

Meanwhile, the daring attack upon Cardenas, while it demonstrated the determination of the invading party, caused great anxiety in the mind of General Roncali. True, he had at his disposal an army of more than twenty thousand regular troops; but he was by no means sure of their loyalty, and he therefore determined to raise a local militia; but, as he suffered only Spaniards to enlist in it, he aroused the jealousy of the Cuban-born inhabitants, and thus swelled the force of opposition against the government. General Lopez was informed of this fact, and based new hopes upon the circumstance.

The Spanish government, having recalled Roncali, appointed Don José de la Concha captain-general of the island, and the severity of his sway reminded the inhabitants of the iron rule of Tacon. It was during his administration that Lopez effected his second landing at Playitas, sixty miles west of Havana. Several partial insurrections, which had preceded this event, easily suppressed, as it appears, by the Spanish government, but exaggerated in the accounts despatched to the friends of Cuba in the United States, inflamed the zeal of Lopez, and made him believe that the time for a successful invasion had at length arrived.⁹ He was so confident, at one time, of the determination and ability of

⁹ "The general showed me much of his correspondence from the island. It represented a pervading anxiety for his arrival, on the

the Cubans alone to secure their independence, that he wished to embark without any force, and throw himself among them. It was this confidence that led him to embark with only four hundred ill-armed men on board the little steamer Pampero, on the 2d of August, 1851. This force consisted mostly of Americans, but embraced forty-nine Cubans in its ranks, with several German and Hungarian officers; among the latter, General Pragay, one of the heroes of the Hungarian revolution, who was second in command to General Lopez on this occasion.

Many of the foreign officers spoke little, if any, English, and mutual jealousies and insubordinations soon manifested themselves in the little band. They were composed of fierce spirits, and had come together without any previous drilling or knowledge of each other. It was not the intention of the commander-in-chief to sail direct for Cuba, but to go to the neighborhood of St. John's river, Florida, and get a supply of artillery, ammunition, extra arms, etc. He then proposed to land somewhere in the central department, where he thought he could get a footing, and rally a formidable force, before the government troops could reach him. But, when five days out, Lopez discovered that the Pampero was short of coal; as no time could be spared to remedy this deficiency, he resolved to effect a landing at once, and send back the Pampero for reinforcements and supplies. At Key West he obtained favorable intelligence from Cuba, which confirmed his previous plans. He learned that a large portion of the troops had been sent to the eastern department; and he accordingly steered for Bahia Honda (deep bay). The current of the gulf, acting while the machinery of the boat was temporarily stopped for repairs, and the variation of the compass in the neighborhood of so many arms, caused the steamer to run out of her course on the night of the 10th; and when the morning broke, the invaders found themselves heading for the narrow entrance of the harbor of Havana!

The course of the steamer was instantly altered; but all on board momentarily expected the apparition of a war steamer from the channel between the Moro and the Punta. It appeared, afterwards, that the Pampero was signalized as a strange steamer, but not reported as suspicious until evening. The Pampero then made for the bay of Cabañas; but, just as she was turning into the entrance, a Spanish frigate and sloop-of-war were seen at anchor, the first of which immediately gave chase, but, the wind failing, the frigate gave it up, and returned to the bay to send intelligence of the expedition to Havana. The landing was finally effected at midnight, between the 11th and 12th of August, and the steamer was immediately sent off to the United States for further reinforcements. As it was necessary to obtain transportation for the baggage, General Lopez resolved to leave Col. Crittenden with one hundred and twenty men to guard it, and with the remainder of the expedition to push on to Las Pozas, a village about ten miles distant, whence he could send back carts and horses to receive it. Among the baggage were four barrels of powder, two of cartridges, the officers' effects, including the arms of the general, and the flag of the expedition. From the powder and arms they should not have separated, but have divided that, against contingency.

In the mean time, seven picked companies of Spanish troops of the line had been landed at Bahia Honda, which force was strengthened by contingents drawn from the neighborhood. The march of the invading band to Las Pozas was straggling and irregular. On reaching the village, they found it deserted by the inhabitants. A few carts were procured and sent back to Crittenden, that he might advance with the baggage. Lopez here learned from a countryman of the preparations making to attack him. It was no portion of his plan to bring the men into action with regular troops, in their present undisciplined state; he proposed rather to take a strong position in the mountains, and there plant his standard as a rallying-point, and await the rising of the Cubans, and the return of the Pampero with reinforcements for active operations.

part of the Creole population. His presence alone, to head the insurrection, which would then become general, was all they called for; his presence and a supply of arms, of which they were totally destitute. The risings already made were highly colored in some of the communications addressed to him from sources of unquestionable sincerity." —*Louis Schlesinger's Narrative of the Expedition.*

As soon as Lopez learned the news from Bahia Honda, he despatched a peremptory order to Crittenden to hasten up with the rear-guard, abandoning the heavy baggage, but bringing off the cartridges and papers of the expedition.

But the fatal delay of Crittenden separated him forever from the main body, only a small detachment of his comrades (under Captain Kelly) ever reaching it. The next day, while breakfast was being prepared for them, the soldiers of the expedition were suddenly informed, by a volley from one of the houses of the village, that the Spanish troops were upon them. They flew to arms at once, and the Cuban company dislodged the vanguard of the enemy, who had fired, at the point of the bayonet, their captain, Oberto, receiving his death-wound in the spirited affair. General Enna, a brave officer, in command of the Spanish troops, made two charges in column on the centre of the invaders' line, but was repulsed by that deadly fire which is the preëminent characteristic of American troops. Four men alone escaped from the company heading the first column, and seventeen from that forming the advance of the second column of attack. The Spaniards were seized with a panic, and fled.

Lopez's force in this action amounted to about two hundred and eighty men; the Spaniards had more than eight hundred. The total loss of the former, in killed and wounded, was thirty-five; that of the latter, about two hundred men killed, and a large number wounded! The invaders landed with about eighty rounds of cartridges each; the Spanish dead supplied them with about twelve thousand more; and a further supply was subsequently obtained at Las Frias; the ammunition left with Crittenden was never recovered. In the battle of Las Pozas, General Enna's horse was shot under him, and his second in command killed. The invaders lost Colonel Downman, a brave American officer; while General Pragay was wounded, and afterwards died in consequence. Though the invaders fired well and did terrible execution, they could not be prevailed upon to charge the enemy, and gave great trouble to the officers by their insubordination. The night after the battle, Captain Kelly came up with forty men, and announced that the Spanish troops had succeeded in dividing the rear-guard, and that the situation of Crittenden was unknown. It was not until some days afterwards that it was ascertained that Crittenden's party, attempting to leave the island in launches, had been made prisoners by a Spanish man-of-war. They were taken to Havana, and brutally shot at the castle of Atares.

About two o'clock on the 14th of August, the expedition resumed its march for the interior, leaving behind their wounded, who were afterwards killed and mutilated by the Spaniards. The second action with the Spanish troops occurred at the coffee-plantation of Las Frias, General Enna attacking with four howitzers, one hundred and twenty cavalry, and twelve hundred infantry. The Spanish general attacked with his cavalry, but they were met by a deadly fire, thrown into utter confusion, and forced to retreat, carrying off the general mortally wounded. The panic of the cavalry communicated itself to the infantry, and the result was a complete rout. This was the work of about two hundred muskets; for many of Lopez's men had thrown away their arms on the long and toilsome march.

The expedition, however, was too weak to profit by their desperate successes, and had no means of following up these victories. Plunging into the mountains, they wandered about for days, drenched with rain, destitute of food or proper clothing, until despair at last seized them. They separated from each other, a few steadfast comrades remaining by their leader. In the neighborhood of San Cristoval, Lopez finally surrendered to a party of pursuers. He was treated with every indignity by his captors, though he submitted to everything with courage and serenity. He was taken in a steamer from Mariel to Havana.

Arrived here, he earnestly desired to obtain an interview with Concha, who had been an old companion-in-arms with him in Spain; not that he expected pardon at his hands, but hoping to obtain a change in the manner of his death. His soul shrank from the infamous *garrote*, and he aspired to the indulgence of the *cuatro tiros* (four shots). Both the interview and the indulgence were refused, and he was executed on the first of September, at seven o'clock in the morning, in the Punta, by that mode of punishment which the Spaniards esteem the most infamous of all. When he landed at Bahia Honda, he stooped and kissed the earth, with the fond salutation, "*Querida Cuba*" (dear Cuba)! and

his last words, pronounced in a tone of deep tenderness, were, "*Muero por mi amada Cuba*" (I die for my beloved Cuba).¹⁰

The remainder of the prisoners who fell into the hands of the authorities were sent to the Moorish fortress of Ceuta; but Spain seems to have been ashamed of the massacre of Atares, and has atoned for the ferocity of her colonial officials by leniency towards the misguided men of the expedition, granting them a pardon.

At present it may be said that "order reigns in Warsaw," and the island is comparatively quiet in the presence of a vast armed force. To Concha have succeeded Canedo and Pezuelas, but no change for the better has taken place in the administration of the island. Rigorous to the native population, insolent and overbearing to foreigners, respecting no flag and regarding no law, the captains-general bear themselves as though Spain was still a first-rate power as of yore, terrible on land, and afloat still the mistress of the sea.

¹⁰ General Lopez was born in Venezuela, South America, in 1798; and hence, at the time of his execution, must have been about fifty-two years of age. He early became an adopted citizen of Cuba, and espoused one of its daughters.

CHAPTER IV

Present condition of Cuba – Secret treaty with France and England – British plan for the Africanization of the island – Sale of Cuba – Measures of General Pezuela – Registration of slaves – Intermarriage of blacks and whites – Contradictory proclamations – Spanish duplicity – A Creole's view of the crisis and the prospect.

Cuba is at present politically in a critical and alarming condition, and the most intelligent natives and resident foreigners live in constant dread of a convulsion more terrific and sanguinary than that which darkened the annals of St. Domingo. Those best informed of the temper, designs and position of Spain, believe in the existence of a secret treaty between that country, France and England, by which the two latter powers guarantee to Spain her perpetual possession of the island, on condition of her carrying out the favorite abolition schemes of the British government, and Africanizing the island. Spain, it is supposed, unable to stand alone, and compelled to elect between the loss of her colony and subserviency to her British ally, has chosen of the two evils that which wounds her pride the least, and is best calculated to secure the interests of monarchical Europe. All the recent measures of the Captain-general Pezuela are calculated to produce the conviction that the Africanization of Cuba has been resolved upon; and, if his alarming proclamation of the third of May has been somewhat modified by subsequent proclamations and official declarations, it is only because the Spanish government lacks the boldness to unmask all its schemes, while the Eastern war prevents France and Great Britain from sending large armaments to Cuba to support it; and because the national vessels and troops destined to swell the government forces in the island have not all arrived. But for the existence of the war in the East, the manifestoes of the captain-general would have been much more explicit. As it is, they are sufficiently bold and menacing.

A peaceful solution to the question of Cuba, by its sale to the United States, is not regarded as probable by the best-informed Creoles. They say that, even if the queen were disposed to sell the island, it would be impossible to obtain the consent of the Cortes. The integrity of the Spanish domain, including all the islands, is protected by legal enactment; and it would require the abrogation of a fundamental law before it could be consummated.¹¹ Now, the Spanish subjects well understand that they would not be likely to be gainers by the sale of Cuba, however large a sum the United States might be willing to pay for it, while the monopoly to trade, the bestowal of lucrative insular offices on Spaniards alone, and other incidental advantages, give them a direct interest in the maintenance of the present order of things. Those who take this view of the question say that if Spain has not promptly rejected the overtures supposed to have been made by our minister at Madrid, this delay indicates only a conscious weakness, and not any hesitation of purpose. It is simply a diplomatic trick – a temporizing policy. Why, they ask, if Spain had any idea of parting with the island, would she be making naval and military preparations on a grand and costly scale, at home, while in the island she is making large levies, and enrolling colored troops, not as militia, as the government has falsely given out, but as regulars? We are reluctant to abandon the hope of our purchasing the island, but candor compels us to state the plausible arguments of those who assert that no success can possibly attend the plan for its peaceable acquisition.

Within a brief space of time, the administration of General Pezuela has been signalized by measures of great significance and importance: The decree of the third of May; the order for the registration of slaves introduced into the island in violation of the treaty of 1817; the decree freeing more than fifteen thousand *emancipados* in the space of a fortnight; that of May 25th, enrolling and

¹¹ The administration of Bravo Murillo fell in an attempt of this kind, and did not rise again.

arming negroes and mulattoes; the project for importing negroes and mulattoes from Africa, under the name of free apprentices; the institution of free schools for the instruction of the blacks, while the whites are abandoned to their own resources; and, finally, the legalization of the intermarriages of blacks and whites, which last measure has actually been carried into effect, to the indignation of the Creoles, – all these measures show the determination of the Spanish government to bring about the emancipation of slavery, and the social equalization of the colored and white population, that it may maintain its grasp upon the island, under penalty of a war of races, which could only terminate in the extinction of the whites, in case of a revolutionary movement.

The proclamation of the third of May, alluded to above, and disclosing some of the abolition plans of the government, produced a startling sensation. In it the captain-general said: "It is time for the planter to substitute for the rapid but delusive advantages derived from the sale of human flesh, safer profits, more in harmony with civilization, religion and morals;" and that "the time had come to make the life of the slave sweeter than that of the white man who labors under another name in Europe." The proclamation, coupled with that conferring exclusive educational advantages on colored persons, roused even the Spaniards; some of the wealthiest and most influential of whom held secret meetings to discuss the measures to be adopted in such a crisis, in which it was resolved to withhold all active aid from the government, some going so far as to advocate the making of common cause with the Creoles. The mere hint of a fusion between the Spaniards and Creoles, whom it has been the policy of the colonial government to alienate from each other, was sufficient to excite the fears of the captain-general; and accordingly, on the 31st of May, he published a sort of explanatory manifesto, designed to allay the alarm of the Spaniards, and conflicting, in several points, with that of the 3d. "Her Majesty's government," says the document of the 31st, "is well aware that the unhappy race (the Africans), once placed among civilized men, and protected by the religion and the great laws of our ancestors, is, in its so-called slavery, a thousand times happier than other European classes, whose liberty is only nominal." If this assertion were true, what becomes of the famous declaration, in the former proclamation, that the time had arrived to make the life of the slave happier than of the white European laborer? If this assertion were true, that "good time" had not only arrived, but passed away, and his measures for the improvement of the involuntary bondmen were actually supererogatory. The owners of slaves are, moreover, assured that they shall not be disturbed in the possession of their "legitimate property," and that the government will conciliate a due regard for such property "with the sacred fulfilment of treaties."

It is very evident that the Creoles are doomed to be the victims of Spanish duplicity. It is notorious that many thousands of slaves have been introduced into the island, for a series of years, with the connivance of the government, when they had it in their power, at any time, to stop the traffic altogether. The vigilance of the British cruisers was baffled by the assurance that the Africans thus brought over were apprentices, Spain never hesitating to deceive an ally; and now, when compelled to keep faith, in a desperate emergency, she betrays her own subjects, and throws the penalty of her own bad faith on them.

A gentleman residing in Cuba writes: "No one can be here, and watch the progress of things, without being convinced that the ultimate object is the emancipation of the slaves of the island transported subsequent to the treaty of 1820, which will comprise four-fifths of the whole number; and no one who is an attentive observer, and with his ears open, but must be satisfied that there is some other powerful influence brought to bear on the subject besides Spain. Take, for instance, the late order for the registration of the slaves. The British consul openly says that the British government have been, for a long time, urging the measure. But it is not only in this, but in every other step taken, that the British finger is constantly seen. A thousand corroborative circumstances could be cited. Cuba is to-day indebted to Russia for being free from this calamity. But for the emperor's obstinacy, there would have been an English and French fleet that would have enabled them to carry out all the measures they have in contemplation."

With relation to the intermarriage of blacks and whites, our informant says, "Many marriages have been performed since the date of the circular," – that of the Bishop of Havana to the curates of the island, by the authority of the captain-general.

"The captain-general," says the same authority, "is now exerting his influence for the admission of blacks into the university, to prepare them for clerical orders. Should this system be adopted, I fear it will lead to bad consequences. It will, of course, be strenuously opposed. The indignation of the Creoles has been difficult to restrain, – at which you cannot be surprised, when their daughters, wives and sisters, are daily insulted, particularly by those in uniform. I fear a collision may take place. If once commenced, it will be terrific."

The decree authorizing the celebration of marriages between blacks and whites has probably produced more indignation among the Creoles than any other official acts of the captain-general. It was directed to the bishop in the form of a circular, and issued on the 22d of May. On the 29th of the same month, the bishop transmitted copies of it to all the curates within his jurisdiction; and, as we have seen, many of these incongruous marriages have been already solemnized. Notwithstanding these notorious and well-authenticated facts, the official organ of the government, the *Diario de la Marina*, had the effrontery to publish a denial of the transaction, asserting it to be mere idle gossip, without the slightest foundation, and ridiculing the idea in a tone of levity and *persiflage*.

This may teach us how little dependence is to be placed on the declarations of the Spanish officials; and we shall be prepared to receive with incredulity the denial, in the name of the queen, of the existence of a treaty with England, having for its base the abolition of slavery, as a reward for British aid in preserving Cuba to Spain. The captain-general says that she relies not on foreign aid to maintain her rights, but on her powerful "navy and disciplined army; on the loyalty of the very immense (*inmensísima*) majority of her vigorous native citizens (Creoles); on the strength imparted to the good by the defence of their hearths, their laws and their God; and on the hurricanes and yellow fever for the enemy."

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