

THE CONDITION OF SPAIN.

REPORT OF LIEUT. CHARLES C. CORNWELL, U. S. NAVY, UNDER ADMIRAL CASE'S GENERAL ORDER NO. TWO.

UNITED STATES SHIP WACHUSETT, }
MESSINA, SICILY, July 15, 1873. }

Sir: Having had a leave of absence of two weeks, I have the honour to submit the following, in accordance with your General Order No. 2:

When this vessel reached Cadiz I was called away to be with a sick friend at Barcelona and had no opportunity of making any important inquiries or observations in regard to military or naval science, but I noted something of the political and social state of affairs in the country through which I travelled.

In travelling over the country from Cadiz to Valencia, the government consider it so unsafe that they send a company of the Guardia Civil, the finest and best corps of the Spanish army, in each train, and along the route are distributed a series of reliefs. This led me to inquire into the cause of any fear which might be entertained for I was under the impression that the Carlists had not made their appearance so far south and west. In this I found myself correct, for it seems that there are bands of marauders going through the country, who have mostly made their appearance since the republic was proclaimed, and who have troubled the country people particularly.

There have been a number of well authenticated cases in which men in the interior of Spain, and in the mining districts particularly, have been detained by these bands and obliged to pay heavy ransom for their life. This relic of barbarism is the first effect of the last revolution, for how ever great and noble is the true sentiment, which is the the foundation of republicanism, yet this sentiment is certainly not instilled into the minds of the greater part of the Spanish people; for personal observation has convinced me that it is understood to be equal rights without respect to law, and the general distribution of property.

Outrages of all descriptions are encouraged throughout the country, by the fact that the laws are not carried into effect, and crime remains almost entirely unpunished.

In the army the most painful demoralization exists, and at the time when it should be most united to put down the civil war in the north, insubordination of the most frightful character is constantly occurring and the control of the officers over the men is in reality only nominal. This is without exaggeration, for one of the most celebrated of the Spanish regiments, stationed at Barcelona some few weeks ago, refused obedience to their officers, and the colonel, in attempting to pacify the revolters by argument and entreaty, was killed by his own soldiers. Nor is this the only case, for many officers have been shot by their own men, and many others have given up their commissions entirely.

In almost all the principal cities, and particularly in Catalonia, volunteers have been organized into regiments for the more especial purpose of making war against the Carlists. This corps is composed of the very scum of society, and from all that I could gather, they do more harm than good.

In the province of Barcelona the volunteers are at an expense to the provincial government, by whom they are supported, of twenty-eight thousand dollars a month, and

there is not a case on record in which they have performed any valuable service.

The peasantry fear the volunteers more than they do the Carlists, for they quarter themselves in the villages and steal and destroy and ravage to an unlimited extent; and the law is not sufficiently well executed to bring offenders to punishment.

The Carlists have stopped the direct line of railroad between Barcelona and Madrid, and have caused considerable trouble on the line to Tarragona, though it is still running. From all reports that can be gathered, they are in a much better state of discipline than the regular Spanish army; although they enter villages and towns and levy contributions on those holding property which they use threats and force to have paid, yet they are far from being robbers and murderers, as many have thought. They stop diligences and all other conveyances for travellers, but search only for government papers, and allow passengers with their property to pass unharmed. In many places where arms have been powerless to quell; and on some occasions those who have the power have acted ignominiously.

There was an order issued at Seville a few days ago, by order of the governor, for the disbanding of certain volunteers to whom arms had been given; but they intimidated the governor to such a degree by threatening to take complete control of the city, and exercise the rights of communism that on the following day he issued a proclamation annulling the former, saying it was all a mistake, and apologizing to those whom it was intended to strike. At Malaga the state of affairs is still worse, and those holding positions of trust are perfectly powerless to carry out the duties of office.

The financial condition there is so poor, on account of the people at large refusing to pay duties and taxes, that heavy contributions have been levied upon the rich which they are compelled to pay, and to that end are prevented from leaving the city. The alcalde of Malaga, as well as the one at Valencia, was foully murdered by the mob, and still there is not a single instance in which any of these people have been brought to justice. In Barcelona murders are of frequent occurrence, and all that is heard of them is that may be seen in the papers the following day, that "a certain person was murdered last night at a certain place." Only a week ago the mob forced themselves into the Diputacion, the building of the provincial government, and demanded a room in which they could hold a meeting.

They were obliged to give it to them, and then they demanded certain submissions which amounted to nothing less than communism. The mob was finally forced to disperse by calling in the aid of the military governor. This same set of people demanded the disbandment of the Guardia Civil, the only truly loyal corps in the army while I was in Barcelona, but they were not able to force its execution.

The revolution in feeling against the clergy is very great, and, whereas the church had such a power in Spain under the old government, it is now degraded to the very opposite extreme.

Churches are turned into barracks for soldiers, and are desecrated to the use of balls and public meetings. Nor is this confined to the lower class, for at a ball given in one of the principal churches in Barcelona the governor and other high officials encouraged it by their presence. Where formerly almost every other man to be met on

the streets was a priest, not one can now be seen in canonicals, for the feeling against them is so great that they fear for their lives.

The association calling themselves the "International" has caused a great deal of trouble, and refusing to stop work upon the demand of the association are treated with unusual cruelty, and sometimes killed.

On this account numbers of the factories and foundries about Barcelona have stopped work entirely and closed up. Barcelona, being the most commercial city of Spain, has suffered very much in its interests on account of the closeness of the money market. Men of property have left the place by hundreds, drawing from the banks all available money, and gold has become so scarce that it has affected all classes of merchants. One of the chief features in the commerce of Spain is that very little business is done except by cash payments, and the use of promissory notes is almost entirely unknown, so that, by the scarcity of ready money under the present circumstances, business has fallen off almost entirely. The wealth of the mining districts has drawn foreigners to the country, especially from England, and thus, were the government sufficiently strong to protect its own interests, the influx of the foreign capital into the country would produce a wealth of revenue. The principal obstruction to the advancement of the present republican form of government is the extensive and incredible want of education. This does not exist only in the lower classes, but even to people who hold a certain position in society, the ignorance displayed is at least intensely surprising. The Government of the United States is held up as a model to all those who are crying out for a republic, but even many of those in authority at the present time scarcely know even that we speak the English language, or that we are governed by any other law than our own personal desires. General information is greatly wanting in Spain, and they are trying to construct a form of government after a model of which they scarcely know anything at all. The government is called a federal republic, but in some of the provinces they want to be thoroughly independent of any central control, and form separate and distinct States. I know this to be the case in Catalonia, for I have frequently conversed with men in authority on the subject.

There are men at the present moment in the Cortes at Madrid who can neither read nor write, and, as an example, I cite the representative from Cadiz. The reason of this is evident, for men of any standing whatever very frequently withdraw from the elections, either through fear or disgust, and leave the controlling power in the hands of ignorant men. The state of affairs in Spain at present is certainly of the most distressing character, and even Spaniards themselves have suggested the idea of foreign interference. This is not an idea suggested by my own mind, but by what I have heard spoken of several times by those who are directly interested Spaniards. Our Minister, General Sickles, is the only foreign ambassador at present in Madrid—all the others have made excuses to visit their own homes. However we may congratulate the Spanish people upon the foundation of a republic, we have very little reason to congratulate them upon the state of the country under the present republican government, for it is certainly in a most unenviable condition!—*United States Army and Navy Journal.*