

# Guba's Bloodless Battles.

## An Eye-Witness Describes the Captures of "Closely Guarded" Towns.

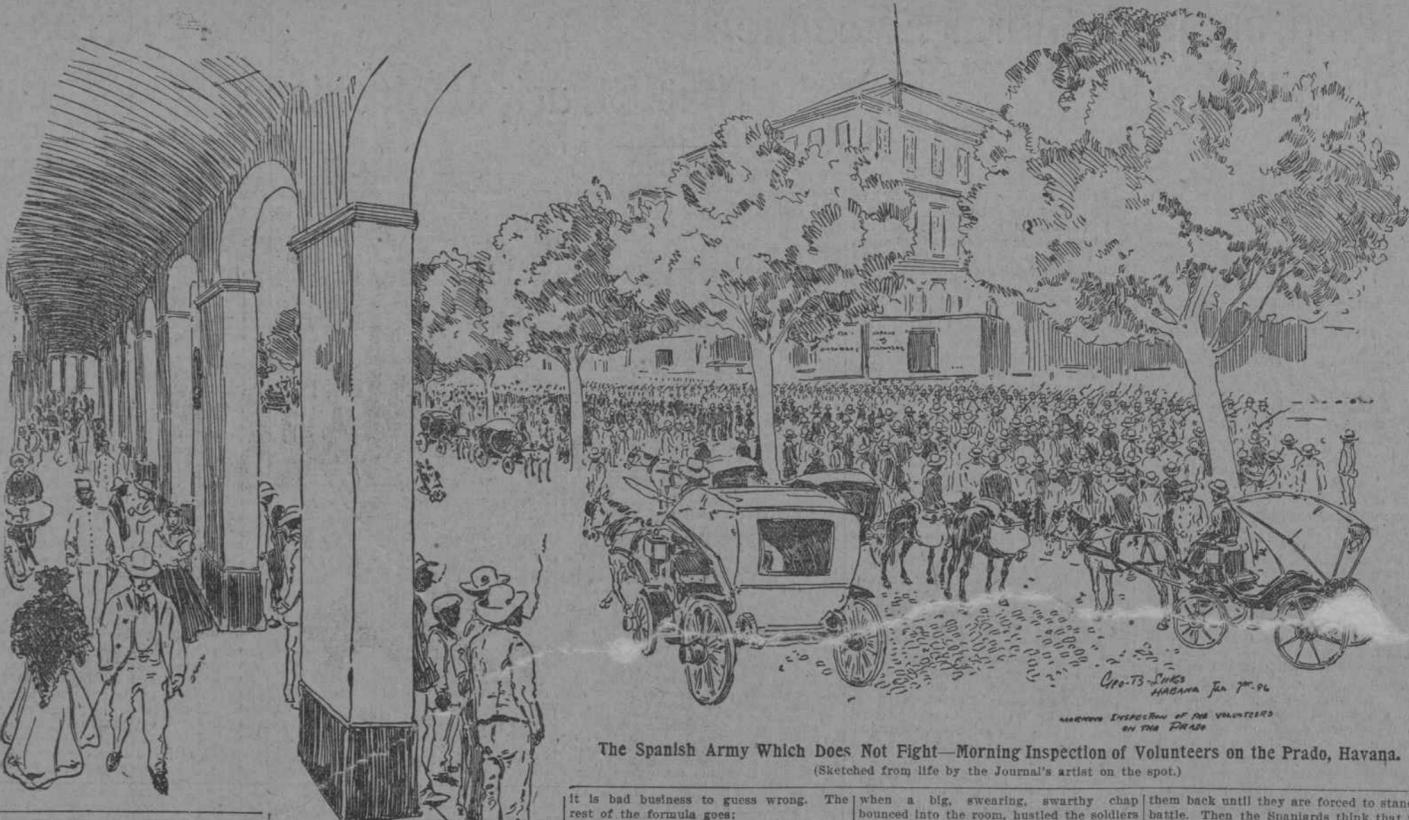
### Spanish Troops Never on Hand to Resist Entry, and the Natives Welcome the Insurgents.

### Destruction of Plantations and Mild Robbery of Shopkeepers the Worst Features of This Campaign.

### THE WHOLE COUNTRY SYMPATHIZES

### Their Dashing Gallantry Seems Attractive When Compared with the Sleepy and Silly Tactics of the Spanish Troops.

Havana, Jan. 7.—This was the problem in military science that confronted the Spanish generals in Cuba: Given an army of 150,000 or 200,000, of which over 100,000 are regulars, armed with the latest rifles, a sufficiency of artillery, with some cavalry, the possession of all railroad and telegraph facilities, how shall such an army be maneuvered so as to prevent the passage of an enemy consisting of 10,000 or 12,000 men, nearly all cavalry, variously armed and equipped, of being short of ammunition, devoid of artillery, and for the most part unaccus-



The Spanish Army Which Does Not Fight—Morning Inspection of Volunteers on the Prado, Havana. (Sketched from life by the Journal's artist on the spot.)

It is bad business to guess wrong. The rest of the formula goes: "Que gente?" "Buena."

Then you are allowed to get off your horse and explain your identity. Then you are allowed to pass—maybe.

At Guines were all the soldiers that had been at Palos, and some more. The people of Guines said that the rebels had been within rifle shot almost of Guines and had hoisted a beacon light on a palm to show their whereabouts, and that the General refused to lead his men against them. I guess this story is not true. The worst that can be said against the Spanish officers is that they do not seem able to strike the rebels. As for the Spanish foot soldier, he is the most patient, most enduring animal I ever saw.

I caught glimpses of the dusty, tired army trudging over trails along the way, and I saw them march into Guines, stretch their hammocks, or drop to sleep on the sidewalks without even waiting to eat, so tired were they; but I didn't hear a word of complaint. They were roused out at 6 o'clock in the morning and marched out toward the west. At half-past 9 they were back on the outskirts of the town, marching south. Maybe such manoeuvres as this may explain the failure to solve the military problem.

I figured on leaving Guines at daybreak, but had not reckoned on the Alcalde, who pompously forbade anybody leaving the town. It was noon before he relented, so I did not see the taking of Melina by the insurgents. Melina, of course, made no resistance, and suffered no damage except in the loss of the railroad depot, which the rebels burned, principally to break up railroad and telegraph communication.

At Guara, a little further west, they fared worse. In anticipation of the raid into Pinar del Rio, Nunez, who commanded the flying cavalry column that took these towns, began to provide a commissary department. He took away from Guara over a hundred pack-horse loads of canned goods, ham, tobacco, clothes and shoes, leaving the storekeepers frantic; but the rest of the population seemed rather to enjoy it. Then they struck off from the railroad toward the hills and finally galloped into San Antonio de las Vegas. The tiny force of volunteers and the single civil guardsman capitulated. One store on the outskirts of the town lost a lot of provisions, but that was all the damage done. The insurgent force—there were over 1,600 men—rested about town and some of them found their way to the inn and asked for beer and wine. The innkeeper was handing it out,

when a big, swearing, swarthy chap bounced into the room, hustled the soldiers out and banged on the counter with his fist. It was Nunez himself.

"If you give any of my men drink," he stormed, "somebody will be hanged."

Nunez's troops galloped away sober. About thirty of San Antonio's young men went with them as recruits, including some of the volunteers. The house at which I slept there had been deserted by the only son, and far into the night I heard the mother and sister scolding his father for having such a son. When I rode away in the morning the weary father was waiting on the outskirts of the town. He had gone before daybreak to escape from the women. But young Cabrera's case was not nearly as flagrant as that of the five sons of the Widow Hernandez. They went in a body, leaving the old lady absolutely alone. It was not surprising. Few spirited young chaps with a horse and a machete could escape the contagion of the tumultuous six-hundred that swept across country like a cyclone. Glory! how they did ride! Changing horses whenever they found a fresh one, only stopping to tie the cane or heap up the provisions on their pack train. You could trail them by the empty sardine boxes along their path, for they ate as they rode. I wanted to be at the line to watch them cross, but when I got there all I saw was a cloud of dust a league away, flung up by the galloping horsemen, and my own horse lay down by the railroad track and could not rise.

To Beluac the train was still running from Havana. There were about four thousand soldiers there by night, tired to death by their awful march in the wake of the enemy. We heard of the rebels at Gabriel and other places near by, but they were followed no further that night. They had crossed the line and were west of Havana, a part of the island which no previous revolution ever reached.

Since my return to Havana "official" news reports have been given out of plundering, burning, killing and outrages in Pinar del Rio by the invading troops. I do not believe it. On this side of the line there were no barbarities worse than the taking of provisions from the shops. The women of the towns stood at the doors and waved their aprons at the columns, and I never heard of one being badly treated in any way.

None of the townsmen except the shopkeepers spoke bitterly of the insurgent troops, though nearly every man among them lost his horse in the raid.

Now the Spanish propose to keep the insurgents west of the line and gradually drive

# Oldest Man in the World

## Time, Apparently, Has No Effect on Feodorovitch Konzmin.

### He Has Lived in a Remote Russian Town for One Hundred and Thirty-eight Years.

### The Czar's Government Has Investigated Him and Found His Story of His Age to Be True.

### HE LOOKS LIKE THOMAS C. PLATT.

### He Remembers Events of the Eighteenth Century Clearly and Is Still as Spry as a Colt.

The accompanying picture is not a portrait of Thomas Collier Platt, of Toga County, N. Y., on his way to the French ball in the disguise of an Ellis Island immigrant. It is the true likeness of Ivan Feodorovitch Konzmin, who is, according to the Russian authorities, the "oldest man in the world!" This seems a rather broad statement, but the records are there to show that Ivan first saw the light of day on October 21 (old style), 1757, which would make him 138 years of age next birthday. One hundred and thirty-eight years of age!

Late last September, Gospodin Lomonosoff, a member of the Moskovsk Viedomost editorial staff, happened to stop at a wayside inn near the village of Dukova, in the Government of Kostrama.



The Oldest Man in the World—Ivan Feodorovitch Konzmin, 138 Years Old. Drawn for the Journal from a photograph by V. Gribayadoff.

can judge of the probability of this programme being carried out by the fact that people in Havana climb to their roofs every day to see if the rebels are burning Toledo, a big plantation only six miles from the capital.

CHARLES MICHELSON.

While sipping his tea by the hissing samovar, debating in his mind whether to risk the hospitalities of the establishment over night, he was approached by an aged monk with a request for alms.

"Not for myself do I beseech your charity, bari," said the supplicant, "but for my poor old father, who has not tasted kasha (mush) these two days. May the saints bless you!"

The sum and substance of this episode was that Lomonosoff, with the true instincts of a journalist, determined to investigate the matter for himself. The beggar had disappeared for the nonce, but a day's search in the neighborhood resulted in his discovery, and also in that of his father. The two were found in a log house on the banks of the Wotuga River, and at first appeared to resent the intrusion, but a crisp one-rouble bill quickly dispelled the clouds on their brows. Since neither could read nor write his had led a hermit's existence for many decades, the task of questioning them as to the events of the past with view to ascertaining their respective ages proved no easy one. The old man appeared to remember events, however, that antedated by years the birth of the present century.

Having satisfied himself that Ivan Konzmin, for he it was, was telling the truth, and having obtained some data as to the aged peasant's probable birthplace, Lomonosoff set to work to discover, if possible, the entry of his baptism. This required an unusual amount of labor and research, but finally the church where this ceremony took place was found, and the archives containing the entry were brought to light. There was the full name and the date, and, curious to relate, an addenda by the officiating priest to the effect that God had blessed the child with the holy sign of the cross beneath the right shoulder blade, and had thus marked him for his own. A subsequent examination of old Ivan's body revealed this peculiar mark, a growth of warty substance, slightly resembling the Greek cross seen and described by all churches of the Eastern orthodox faith.

So there could be no mistake about it: Ivan Feodorovitch Konzmin was one hundred and thirty-seven years of age! The records showed it, and his own words told the story still more eloquently. Here was a veteran who, though entirely illiterate and barely able to understand more than the requirements of a peasant's daily routine, could, in his lucid moments, recall the happenings of a century ago. Ivan and his son, it may be said, very quickly benefited by their sudden bound to fame. When discovered by the Moscow journalist they were living practically like wild beasts, with a shirt, hemp trousers and an old sheepskin shouba for sole covering, not to mention the painful irregularity of their meals. This state of things was promptly ended by public subscription, so that our picture represents this modern Methuselah in the garb of a wretched peasant. Ivan is a most remarkable specimen physically. Or, although his skin is dry as parchment from extreme old age, his movements are comparatively quick and his eyesight almost perfect. He is the only man in the world who, in his own son, a man of four score and ten,



An Insurgent Scout.

(Sketched from life by the Journal's artists on the spot.)

ed to firearms? The line to be guarded from Havana to Batavano—crosses Cuba at its narrowest point. A railroad and telegraph line runs the entire distance. Wires are in possession of the Spanish, and there are forts and fleets at either end, and a small fort at every town. The length of the line is less than thirty miles.

I went out from Havana to see the insurgents attempt the passage into Pinar del Rio. I expected to see a swift, brilliant charge on some weak point of the Spanish line—a dreadful sacrifice of life to make a breach in a living wall. Failing this I expected to see the rebel army crawling in the dark of the moon through the cane fields and around the hills to slip unseen by sentries and forts. I didn't see anything of the sort, of course.

The rebels passed the line in three or more separate columns, cut the railroad and telegraph when they pleased, took what towns they passed, and all without the firing of a gun. They came with a rush and naturally rushed where the Spanish soldiers were not. With no hospitals for their wounded and the difficulty of getting ammunition, the rebels could not even victory too heavily if they fought much. But they did not have to fight. They marched by day and halted for meals and slept in camp at night, and where they passed everybody in the country knew.

Of course, there was nothing like the whole Spanish army in their way, but if the regiments are really as represented there must have been 40,000 or 50,000 within a radius of 50 miles.

It was New Year's Day when I left Havana. The insurgents were reported to be raiding and burning sugar cane near Union, and that was my objective point, but the rebels had already begun their westward march and the train could get no further than Palos, just about the eastern boundary of Havana province. There were soldiers at Palos, and they were watching a great cloud of white smoke which obscured the whole southern horizon. On the east there were other volcanoes, showing where a rear guard was marching, burning what the forerunners had left. Only one sugar plantation was grinding cane, and I waited with the proprietor for the arrival of the insurgents and the consequent burning of his fields.

The calmness of these Cubans in the face of catastrophe is paralyzing. This man—and he is not a rich man, either—waited for the destruction of his property without the slightest sign of irritation or distress. He saw his neighbors' fortunes going up in smoke, and he petted his dogs, smoked cigarettes and entertained his guest. Meanwhile there were tremendous military operations. General Echague, with 1,500 men, dashed away from Palos on a train bound east. General Aldecoa, with a strong



Spanish Troops So Worned by Useless Marches That They Sink into Instant Sleep Whenever the Chance Comes. (Sketched from life by the Journal's artist on the spot.)