

THE CUBAN QUESTION.

The State of Our Relations with Spain—The Sickles Note, Its Object and Its Result—Friendly Relations Unimpaired—The Present Attitude of Our Government.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Oct. 12.—There have been so many rumors in connection with the facts relative to the Cuban question, that the real situation of affairs seems generally to be imperfectly understood. But it is known that ever since the present Administration came into power, efforts have been made in good faith to enforce the Neutrality laws, both against the Spanish Government and the agents of the Cubans in this country, on the presentation or reception of such official or other trustworthy information, either from our own officers or those acting for the Spanish Government, as justified proceedings in the premises. While sedulously endeavoring to strictly observe our treaty obligations with Spain, the Government has not been unmindful of those due by Spain to the United States. Our Government has frequently been approached by agents or alleged Ministers acting in behalf of the Cubans, desiring the recognition of belligerent rights; in other words, that they may be placed on the same national footing with Spain. And the United States Government has also been asked to follow the example of Mexico and Peru and other South American Republics, and thus officially encourage the Cubans in their struggle against Spain. The reasons for not acquiescing in such appeals are based on the law of nations; the condition of the island not justifying, in the opinion of the Administration, the recognition of the Cuban flag. Nor has any satisfactory evidence been produced to show that there is a *de facto* Government of the Cubans, possessing the powers essential to its maintenance and character.

The sympathy of the Government has always been with the Cubans, but this, under the peculiar circumstances attending the question, could not be distinctly manifested by official acts in connection with the movements in the field; but it is known that the Government has recently sought to induce Spain to consent to the independence of the island and thus avoid further bloodshed. There was not, as has been frequently stated, any offer of mediation by Minister SICKLES, as the use of that word would imply or suggest the existence of war between equally recognized Powers, and was therefore avoided in the correspondence and interviews with the Spanish Government. The "good offices" of the United States have been tendered, as they can always be employed between parties, one of whom is not acknowledged by the other, without the implication of any recognition of nationality or even belligerency. The tender of "good offices" was superinduced by certain parties who had visited the Spanish capital, in order to effect an accommodation. They represent to this Government that they had had interviews with some of the most influential statesmen and soldiers of the Regency, who were favorable to the proposed plan of adjustment, which contemplated the payment by the Cubans of the estimated value of the public buildings, fortifications, &c., and the abolition of slavery in the island. While there seemed to be an earnest and honest disposition to acquiesce in such an arrangement, it was suggested that the Cubans must lay down their arms before negotiations could be commenced. But to this preliminary the Cubans promptly refused to assent, for in such an event they would be at the mercy of the Spaniards, without a guarantee of securing their object—namely, their national independence. Rendered powerless by the surrender of their means of defence, their only alternative would be submission. Besides, some of those who, it was represented, favored the plan, did not feel at liberty to openly advocate the surrender of Cuba, as, in their opinion, it would be an admission that the Spanish Government was not sufficiently strong to deal with its rebellious subjects, and that such surrender would also serve to complicate the troubles already existing in Spain.

The note of Minister SICKLES tendering the "good offices" of the United States was courteous in its terms, with due respect to Spanish pride. It gave no offence, contrary to the assertions to that effect both in Europe and the United States. Nor is it true that the Spanish Government sought to influence foreign Powers in its behalf for the retention of Cuba. The reply of the Spanish Government to the note of Minister SICKLES was equally courteous. While it was deemed impolitic to entertain the proposition for parting with Cuba on the terms suggested, the Regency, nevertheless, expressed its thanks to the United States for the tender of their friendly offices. The tender having been declined, the note was withdrawn in conformity with diplomatic usage. The question, as a consequence, now stands exactly as it did before the offer was made, leaving no unkind feeling between the two countries, and nothing to regret on either side. Thus, the sympathy of the Administration was manifested, not in assisting the Cubans by facilitating reinforcements of troops and supplies of arms—for this would have been in violation of treaty obligations with Spain—but in a way justified by the law of nations and in the interest of peace.

This Government, notwithstanding the rejection of the tender of good offices, would doubtless renew it at a future time should circumstances justify the repetition. It will, meantime, pursue the course already indicated, namely, enforce the Neutrality laws and hold itself in readiness to serve the cause of Cuban independence in such manner as may not violate treaty obligations. But it will not allow itself to be drawn into complications with Spain or any other European Power, preferring to follow the path of peace as affording the best means of accomplishing all the ends desirable in republics and assisting those who struggle for independence.