

The Cuban Question—Duty of the Administration.

The resolution passed by the House of Representatives on Saturday last by the large vote of 98 yeas to 24 nays is a clear and truthful exposition of the feeling entertained by the people of the United States in regard to the revolution now in progress in the Island of Cuba. Its words are these:—

Resolved, by the House of Representatives, That the people of the United States sympathize with the people of Cuba in their patriotic efforts to secure their independence and establish a republican form of government guaranteeing the personal liberty and the equal political rights of all the people; and the House of Representatives will give its constitutional support to the President of the United States whenever, in his opinion, a republican government shall have been in fact established and he may deem it expedient to recognize the independence and sovereignty of such republican government.

Had time permitted in the short session of Congress which has just closed that the resolution should have been offered in the Senate it would no doubt have been passed by an equally large vote in that body. The passage of this resolution by the Senate would have strengthened its record before the people, but could have added nothing to the strength of the resolution nor to the duty incumbent upon the administration to recognize the wish of the country and to act in accordance with it.

In all great questions of national polity the instinct of the people is always in advance of the politicians and place men; and these are successful in administration in proportion only as they recognize the ideas of their age and act in accordance with them. The Cuban question is the touchstone of President Grant's administration. He will succeed or fail in proportion as he exhibits capacity or incapacity to grasp the problem now presented to him. If he fail to comprehend the true grandeur and power which attend the march of the American idea, and waste in diplomatic parley and inaction the precious moments, when "from the nettle danger" he should "pluck the flower safety," he will forfeit the high confidence which the country has reposed in him and consign his administration from its very start to the distrust and doubt of the people of America and to the contempt of the statesmen of the world. The resolution offered yesterday by Assistant Alderman Stephen Roberts, and so promptly passed by the Common Council of New York city, is the true echo of the popular voice to the House resolution we have quoted above, and we hope, and the whole country hopes, that the President will listen to the call of duty and prove himself equal to the task of its requirements.

The first step for him to take is to lay down a bold and national line of policy for his administration in this great question, and to require every member of his Cabinet to live up to it. When the fires of civil war were lighted in this Union the cabinets of Western Europe did not hesitate to show their sympathy with the rebellion, and England, France and Spain in rapid succession proclaimed their neutrality between the contending parties, which was in fact a proclamation of their sympathy with the rebellion. Upon the heels of this announcement came the great fact that the harbors of England and Spain in the islands of the American Mediterranean were converted into nests for blockade runners, while France undertook the still grander rôle of establishing an empire in Mexico. From all these points war was actively made upon us, and the conflict was greatly prolonged, and our sacrifices of treasure and of blood were enormously increased in consequence. When victory perched upon our banners our first step was to drive the French out of Mexico. This we did, not because the contending parties in Mexico had no right to invite French intervention there, but because France made that intervention a part of the war of Western Europe against the integrity of the American Union.

The march of events leaves us no choice in taking the next step in this truly American policy. Spain converted Cuba into a picket post hostile to us during the late rebellion, and now, that the natural development of American ideas and the love of freedom has led the Cubans to proclaim their independence, we owe it to ourselves and to the cause of humanity and civilization to throw the moral weight of our sympathy and favor in their behalf. The war which Spain is to-day waging in Cuba is much more a war against us than was French intervention in Mexico. It is a war to perpetuate African slavery. It is a war to perpetuate a hostile position on our coast, from which to annoy and harass us whenever occasion shall offer. It is a war to stay the march of American preponderance in America. We should accord to the Cubans at once the belligerent rights which Spain hastened to accord to the rebels. When the Sumter ran out from New Orleans to inaugurate the rebellion upon the sea had she run into Havana she would have been perfectly safe, and the lives of her crew secure under the proclamation of the Spanish government. It was the activity of our own cruisers in those waters only that closed the ports of Cuba to Semmes. When a few Cubans boldly captured a Spanish steamer on the high seas, a few days since, had they taken refuge in an American port they would have been subject to trial and execution as pirates; and if the friends of free Cuba now buy a few arms from us to help the cause of freedom they subject themselves to fine and imprisonment, while the agents of Spain are allowed free access to our workshops and private arsenals and are liberally availing themselves thereof to arm their troops and their mad volunteers.

Let an end be put to this anomalous state of things, and let us confer upon the patriots of Cuba the rights of belligerents by proclamation. They have earned these rights by a successful prosecution of war for six months; by a conquest of more than one half of the territory of the island; by pouring out their blood and treasure freely in behalf of freedom; and by their indomitable resolution in burning their towns and the seat of their free government, when the tide of war has swept adversely to them. Let the administration be bold and courageous enough to proclaim to the world that it will not hold every man who chooses to risk his life in freedom's battle to be a robber and a pirate and entitled to none of the rights of honorable warfare. Let it be true to the instincts and aspirations of the American people, as so well announced by the resolution of the House of Representatives, and be it not afraid to let the whole world know that it loves liberty and will hail with satisfaction the triumph of American ideas and of freedom.