

CUBA.

Sharp Letter from Cassius M. Clay to Governor Palmer, of Illinois—The Duty of Americans in Aiding an Oppressed People—Defined.

The following is a reply of Cassius M. Clay, President of the Cuban Charitable Aid Society, to Governor Palmer, of Illinois:

NEW YORK, April 1, 1870.

DEAR SIR:—Your letter of the 26th of March, ultimo, is received. I regard it as an evidence of the growing popularity of our cause that you feel the necessity of vindicating, by an appeal to the public, your refusal to act as vice president of the Cuban Charitable Aid Society. I cannot admit the force of your distinction between the duties of Governors and private citizens here; for if a Governor would be wrong in aiding an oppressed people to recover their right of self-government then all of us are wrong in doing so. If you are right in assuming that we cannot aid the Cubans because our government is at peace with Spain then, as we are at peace with all nations and people, there is nowhere on the earth an injustice and tyranny which you could aid in overthrowing, and France and other European countries and subjects did wrong in aiding our fathers in 1776 against British oppression, which was paternal and beneficent compared with the tyranny of Spain over Cuba. On the contrary, I hold that every honest man, the world over, owes every other man his moral support and pecuniary and physical aid, so far as may be consistent with his own self-preservation, against every wrong of the aggressor.

It is true the foreign relations of this republic are entrusted to the federal officers; but those officers are themselves but the creatures and representatives of the people, and are bound, in reason and in constitutional law, to carry out the well defined and intelligent public will. This republic is no disturber of the peace of nations or intrusive propagandist of its principles. But when an oppressed people rise in arms to vindicate the very foundation principles of our government, following the beneficent example which we have set them, it is not only our right but our duty to refrain from aiding and abetting their enemies, but also to give them our cordial sympathy and support in all legal ways. That we intend to violate no "laws of Congress" we have pledged ourselves in the circular which we made a part of our invitation, and you will find it hard to make the American people believe that we are not the men who will stand truly to our pledges.

The noblest sentiment which our distinguished and patriotic President ever uttered was, "Let us have peace;" and I think you will, on reflection, regret that you have attempted to keep alive the enmities and distrusts of the late unhappy rebellion by your allusion to the past life of General Jordan, who is now Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban forces. I prefer to attribute to him higher purposes and the noblest reparation that can be made for his attempt to enslave our people in the self-sacrifice he is now making in the liberation of another.

By the constitution of the 10th of April, 1869, article twenty-fourth, "all the inhabitants of the republic of Cuba are absolutely free." This constitution has been certified as genuine by the Cuban Junta here, men whose honor is above question; and the demand for the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery itself on the part of the Cuban delegation to Madrid, in 1866, proves that this is no new thought to serve a fraudulent purpose. I prefer to attribute your distrust of the Cuban purposes of emancipation to your want of knowledge of the facts in the case rather than to that meanest of calumnies, which some have resorted to, of pretending to believe a falsehood to cover up their own dereliction of duty. The conclusion of your letter leaves us to hope that you will yet put the nobler sentiments of your letter in unison with our cause, which begins to be the cause of the whole people without regard to party, and which, representing eternal rights must, under the providence of God, at last triumph.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

C. M. CLAY, President, &c.

His Excellency JOHN M. PALMER, Governor of Illinois.