

OUR RELATIONS WITH SPAIN.

The Offer of Mediation Between Spain and Cuba—Its Secret History—General PRIM the Prime Mover—Why He Changed His Position—The Rumors of Coming Trouble.

From a Special Correspondent.

WASHINGTON, Tuesday, Oct. 10, 1869.

The latest dispatches received from General SICKLES announce the withdrawal of the offer of mediation between Spain and Cuba, made by the United States some two months ago. The negotiations being thus finally closed, the State Department has abandoned its attitude of reserve, and inquiry in the proper quarters has elicited the following facts in regard to the matter: The offer of mediation was founded upon an unofficial intimation received at Washington from General PRIM himself that such an offer would be acceptable to Spain. Mr. PAUL FORBES, of New-York, an old and intimate friend of the Count of REUS, was the medium through which the intimation was conveyed to General GRANT. Mr. FORBES was furnished with the views of this Government, and returned to Madrid to arrange the details of the bases to be agreed upon between the two Governments. Soon after he sailed, General SICKLES was appointed Minister, and furnished with full instructions. His first instructions comprehended a full statement of the impressions of the United States Government in regard to the war in Cuba, and the bases upon which the mediation of the United States was offered. These were, in brief,

1. The independence of Cuba.
2. An indemnity to be paid by the Cubans to the Spanish Government, secured by a lien upon their revenues—the United States to guarantee the payment of this sum, in a fiduciary capacity.
3. An armistice pending the arrangement of these details.

These were embodied in a dispatch which General SICKLES was to read to the Minister of State, and of which he was to give him a copy. Before he sailed, however, he received further instructions, authorizing him to consult with Mr. FORBES on arriving at Madrid, and to be governed by the situation at the time being in regard to the manner in which he should present the views of the Government.

Mr. FORBES had been in Madrid a few days before the General arrived. He had seen and conversed with PRIM, and found this distinguished soldier and diplomat far less open and frank than formerly. In fact, PRIM had probably come to the conclusion that the terms he had himself proposed were such as would not be acceptable to the jealous, ignorant and utterly unreasonable public sentiment of Spain. The result has proved how correct was this surmise. He pronounced the basis proposed by Mr. FORBES, which were the same as those contained in SICKLES' instructions, impossible to be accepted.

SICKLES, informed of this state of things, used the discretion allowed to him, and did not immediately present the note of Secretary FISH, but offered the good offices of the United States to terminate the war, to check the effusion of blood, to give a more civilized aspect to the struggle, and urged upon the Spanish Government an immediate armistice to arrange terms of final settlement. He had long, cordial and frequent interviews with the Minister of State, Mr. SILVEIRA, and with General PRIM, President of the Council and Minister of War. These gentlemen, while accepting formally the good offices of the United States in a humanitarian point of view, were nevertheless unwilling to consent to an official diplomatic mediation of any foreign Power in a matter purely domestic—as they called the Cuban question. The State Department of Madrid confined itself to this view of the case—but General SICKLES continued his confidential negotiations with General PRIM, who, in point of fact, was almost absolute in the Government, and at last succeeded in eliciting from him a statement of the bases on which the Cabinet of Madrid would accept the mediation of the United States. These bases were:

1. The insurgents, under the advice of the American Government, to lay down their arms.
2. An immediate general amnesty and disarmament of the Volunteers.
3. Election of Deputies to the Spanish Cortes.
4. Plebiscite by free suffrage on the question of independence.
5. If the Cubans desire independence, indemnity to be paid to Spain under guarantee of the United States.

These bases were telegraphed by General SICKLES to the United States. Secretary FISH promptly replied, rejecting them as utterly impracticable, and directing General SICKLES to insist upon the terms originally proposed by the United States. At the same time, about the first of September, as I am informed by members of the diplomatic body here, Mr. FISH sent for Mr. ROBERTS, the Spanish Envoy, and informed him that unless the propositions of the American Government were immediately accepted by Spain, that recognition of the Cuban insurgents as belligerents would promptly follow.

This startling summons was at once transmitted to the Government at Madrid, and reached them about the time General SICKLES presented his note. This, I learn, was not the dispatch of Mr. FISH, *ipsis verbis*, but contained not only that dispatch but the additions and modifications of it which had been made by subsequent dispatches.

The substance of these communications having transpired in Madrid, the free Press of the country lashed itself into a white heat of fury over the occurrence. Don Quixote mounted his Rosinante again and challenged the world and all its windmills to do battle. The War Department bestirred itself to send "vast and overwhelming" reinforcements to Cuba—and some 3,000 actually sailed, who will be greatly needed before long at home. The Government, which really wanted to get rid of Cuba if possible, was struck with consternation by the popular clamor, and for a while joined with the current. RONKERS was directed to make threatening demonstrations at Washington in case the Spanish gunboats at New-York were not released—or in case the insurgents were recognized as belligerents.

While this tempest was blowing the Minister of Foreign Affairs sent for General SICKLES, and informed him that the Government had no lot nor part in this clamor; that they desired the friendly offices of the United States in the termination of this Cuba question, but that in the present state of popular feeling in Spain, the bases proposed by the American Government could not be accepted by the Cortes or the people. They, therefore, begged that his note might be withdrawn.

General SICKLES, while declining to withdraw his note, which contained the mature and conscientious view of the United States Government upon the war in Cuba, and was offered in a spirit of friendship to both Spain and Cuba, promised to inform his Government of the views of the Cabinet of Madrid.

Upon this the Secretary of State, on consultation with President GRANT, directed General SICKLES to withdraw the offer of mediation tendered by the United States; which it seems has been done; the United States not retiring any expression it has made of its views, either written or verbal, but simply withdrawing its tender of friendly offices, because they were not accepted on the bases required by the Government of Washington, and reserving for future eventualities its full liberty of action.

As to other rumors, of European alliances with Spain in case of war, &c., the State Department is informed by General SICKLES that these are utterly without foundation, and were probably invented in New-York for gold speculation. If Spain wants to pick a quarrel with us she will do it alone, and no one knows this better than Spain.