

The Sickles Note on the Cuban Question—Is It Withdrawn or Not?

So much has been said and so many contradictory statements made about General Sickles' note to the Spanish government on the Cuban question and it having been withdrawn, that, in order to put the public right on the matter, we can state on good authority what was done and the present condition of the case. First, the United States government tendered, through General Sickles, its good offices to aid in bringing the Cuban war to a close on a basis satisfactory to Spain and Cuba. Second, the Spanish government was indisposed to accept foreign mediation in a domestic question. Third, the offer of good offices was, therefore, withdrawn. Fourth, no communications that have passed between the two governments have been withdrawn. Here there appears to be a sort of diplomatic puzzle or fiction. But the explanation makes it clear. When our Minister found that the friendly offer of mediation was not accepted he simply sent a note to the Madrid government, saying, in effect, "Very well; then I withdraw the offer." But the written communications that passed are not withdrawn, and remain in the archives. So when Rivero, the President of the Cortes, declared in open council that the note had been withdrawn, and that there remained no cause of newspaper hostility to General Sickles and his government, he said the truth in a diplomatic way and to cover a diplomatic fiction. So is Sickles right as to the simple fact that the note was not actually withdrawn. People may take which view they please. It may be said that there is no difference in the meaning; but there is. If the note had been actually withdrawn that would have implied offence, either in the offer of mediation or in the rejection of it. As it is, no offence was given or taken on either side. Amicable relations still exist, and there is no bar to the United States government renewing its offer, or another one, should our Minister see a disposition in the Spanish government to accept its mediation. This is the state of the case as it now stands. We hope the Spanish people and Regency will have the good sense to view this Cuban question in its true light, and to give the United States another opportunity to propose such a settlement of it as will be satisfactory to all parties.