

THE SPANISH ARMADA.

A Review of the Situation—The United States Marshal in Full Possession—Orders and Instructions from Washington—Surmises as to What Spain Means With a Fleet in New York Harbor—The Application to Bond the Gunboats.

It is not necessary to draw upon one's imagination to give this affair of the Spanish gunboats any sensational coloring. The facts connected with their seizure and all the circumstances surrounding it are, in all truth, weighty enough to make it the prominent sensation of the time. It is not alone the magnitude of the money value of the objects seized—thirty new gunboats, with their tackle, apparel, engines and furniture—but more so the extent and ramifications of the interests involved, the high political importance, at home as well as abroad, of the questions raised for decision and which it may be difficult to avoid, and further, also, the present uncertainty as to the attitude which the government of Regent Serrano, in Spain, may assume should their wishes in the matter be thwarted. All this taken in connection renders this complication of the Spanish gunboats one of the most serious the American government has had to meet for years past. There are several parties interested, and in order to place the whole matter in its true light before the public a short reference will suffice.

First—The government of Spain determined to crush out the revolution of the Cubans at all hazards and at any cost. That government, it will be recollected, has courteously, but firmly, declined the offer of the good offices of the American government to mediate between Spain and the insurgents in Cuba. The Spanish appear to believe that their national honor and dignity were involved in the case, and are said to have declared their unchangeable resolution not to part with the possession of Cuba at the beck of revolution, nor to allow, so far as in their power lies, any interference between the Spanish government and its colony on the part of a foreign government. They have urged the speedy completion of these gunboats; for they affect to believe, and probably do believe, that with the aid of these vessels they could suppress in a very short time all organized resistance to their rule on the island, which event is a thing of necessity for them, since the home government of Spain is in need of funds, and Cuba has hitherto most lavishly replenished the Spanish treasury, while now, since the revolution, the colony costs vast sums of money for armament and other war expenses. It is therefore a matter of serious concern with Spain to obtain the release of these boats in order that they may be used for the purpose they were destined to effect.

Second—The people of Cuba, or at least that portion of them which is in open revolt against Spain, have now for over a year maintained themselves, with varying results, and according to a sworn statement in the hands of District Attorney Pierrepont, "exercised exclusive jurisdiction and control throughout the greater part of the island, to wit, the district extending from Santiago de Cuba, on the Caribbean Sea, to Baracoa, on the Atlantic Ocean, and from Baracoa to Sagua, on the Atlantic Ocean, and from Sagua to Cienfuegos on the Caribbean Sea, and thence to Santiago de Cuba." And the people of this district and their sympathizers, "aiders and abettors" all over the island feel that Spain in possession of these gunboats, would materially alter the present relations between the revolutionists and that country, that the chances of the ultimate success of the former would be considerably lessened, and the time for ousting monarchical rule and erecting the island into an independent republic indefinitely postponed.

Third—The American people, who have that innate fondness, so characteristic of all generous-hearted nations for sympathizing with the weak against the strong, and especially when the weak struggle for liberty and independence, as is the case in Cuba. When, in the early part of the present century, the first throes of revolutionary uprisings in the Spanish-American provinces were perceived the voice of Henry Clay only gave utterance to the general sentiment of the country in favor of the recognition of these nascent republics. And the popularity gained among Americans by the self-sacrificing patriotism of Miranda is not yet forgotten. The American people of to-day are possessed of the same republican instincts and liberal impulses as they were fifty and sixty years ago, and hence their sympathies with the struggling Cubans. Yet

Fourth—The administration at Washington is no less affected by these events than are Spain, the Cubans and the American people. The administration is the constitutional and authoritative head of the nation and speaks and acts in its name. It has, as a matter of course in a representative popular government, to feel the public pulse to ascertain the public will and shape its policy in accordance with the public demand. But it is not permitted to act upon this alone. It must take into consideration questions of international law, of international comity, and weigh the events of the day in the scale of law, justice and oftentimes also of expediency. And herein lies the great difficulty in the present instance. During the rebellion of the Southern States France made a similar offer of her good offices at mediation, and the offer was politely declined, just as Spain has now declined the late offer of the United States. It was then claimed by the American government that the revolt of a part of the people was simply and exclusively a domestic affair; that the territorial jurisdiction of the government remained intact, and that for a foreign government to recognize any other within the established limits of the country was viewed in the light of an "unfriendly act," and upon this was based the oft-repeated complaints against England of conceding belligerent rights to the South. This is exactly the position advanced by Spain now and relied upon by her government at home and her official representatives in this country to discountenance any act intended, howsoever remotely, to aid the Cubans. Besides this question of international law, as expounded and insisted on by the American government since 1861; besides this question of international comity pressed by Spain there comes into play the neutrality laws of Congress as enacted in 1818. From all this it will be seen that the situation, viewed impartially from all sides, is an exceedingly embarrassing one, demanding the exercise of wisdom and statesmanship in the highest degree.

WHAT JUDGE PIERREPONT SAYS.

Such is the situation of this affair at present. And it was in full view of these several interests involved, and the bearing of the several questions which enter into the consideration of this matter of the Spanish gunboats, that Judge Pierrepont remarked yesterday that it was more of a political than of a legal question; that it will depend upon the way in which the administration may treat it whether it shall become its most popular act or its weakest point; that he himself did not pretend to possess sufficient wisdom to advise the course which ought to be taken, but he would faithfully and promptly carry out whatever instructions he should receive from his superior officers.

MARSHAL HARLOW IN FULL POSSESSION.

As was reported in these columns yesterday, United States Marshal Barlow took possession late on Wednesday afternoon of all the thirty boats. Aboard the dock, at the foot of Thirteenth street, lay moored the United States gunboat Maria, Ensign John Bleeker commanding, which had been stationed there to watch the boats and prevent their leaving. In the evening Marshal Harlow visited Admiral Godon, at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, in order to make some temporary arrangement for the continuance of that vessel at her post until further orders should have been received from Washington. The Maria remained there, in consequence of this appointment, during Wednesday night. Yesterday morning Admiral Godon received instructions from the Navy Department to place a sufficient force at the disposal of the United States District Attorney to keep guard of the gunboats. The Navy Yard tug Catalpa was at once ordered into service, under command of Ensign Kelley, who reported for duty to the District Attorney, and he again placed the boat under the order of the United States Marshal. The armament and ammunition of the Maria were transferred to the tug Catalpa, and the former vessel relieved of duty at nine o'clock yesterday morning. At five o'clock in the afternoon the Marshal, undoubtedly under orders, had made other arrangements. He had chartered the tug Martin Kalbfleisch, said to be owned by C. H. Delamater, placed her in charge of officers of his own, ordered the armament and ammunition transferred from the Catalpa to the Kalbfleisch, and discharged the Navy Yard tug from further service. The Catalpa obeyed orders and steamed back to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, thus ceasing all connection of the naval authorities with the safe keeping of the Spanish gunboats, leaving Marshal Harlow in exclusive and full possession of them.

WORK ON THE BOATS TO BE RESUMED TO-DAY.

It was also stated yesterday that upon the seizure

of the boats on Wednesday work upon them was at once stopped. Mr. Delamater applied to continue as heretofore the work necessary for the fitting out of the boats for sea; but Marshal Harlow said that he must first confer with the District Attorney. He did so yesterday morning, and Judge Pierrepont, not wishing to increase the hardship attending the seizure by any unnecessary severity, promptly gave the Marshal written instructions to that effect. Mr. Delamater was notified of this, and was preparing yesterday afternoon to resume work on the unfinished boats this morning, and to proceed as usual until the case shall have been decided one way or the other.

THE AMENDED LIBEL.

Yesterday morning Judge Pierrepont received from the proper department at Washington letters of instruction upon various points involved in the case; but upon that most important of all—whether the fact that these gunboats are to be employed by Spain in carrying on hostilities against a "colony, district or people," with which the United States are at peace—to wit, the "colony, district or people" of Cuba—should be presented to the court in an amended libel and as an additional ground for the seizure—the authorities at Washington seem as yet undecided, for no definite instructions have reached the District Attorney on this point, and he is unwilling to act on his own responsibility and precipitate matters without the consent of the administration, though he has laid the foundation for an amended libel, with this additional count, in the affidavit of Ignacio Alfaro, which fully covers the point. The supplemental libel is already prepared, and whenever the government at Washington decides to proceed against the gunboats for this ground also a brief telegram to Judge Pierrepont will bring it at once into court.

WILL THE GUNBOATS BE BONDED?

It is understood that an application will in all probability be made this forenoon to Judge Blatchford, either by Mr. Delamater or by the representatives of Spain that the vessels seized be released on bonds given, that they shall not be used, on leaving New York, in violation of the Neutrality act. Inquiry was made yesterday afternoon of Judge Pierrepont whether he would oppose the application on behalf of the government. His answer was evasive, being simply "I don't know yet." He is awaiting instructions from Washington how to act, and since he looked upon it as being a matter rather of political than of legal import, to the political authorities of the country, to the administration at present, and to Congress when it shall have met, must be left the final decision.

THE "COMING" FLEET.

Some stir has been created in certain circles by the sensational announcement that a formidable Spanish fleet, under the command of Admiral Malcampo, is under orders to assemble in New York harbor, and by the insane outbursts of wrath and fury of a Spanish sheet published in this city. "If it be true," said a prominent federal officer yesterday to a representative of the HERALD, "if it be true, as some of the Spaniards allege, that this announced arrival of a strong naval force is intended as a demonstration it may complicate matters very much. American spirit and spunk is not given to tolerate any such menaces from a foreign Power; and if the courts should decree the release of the gunboats under such circumstances there will not be few who may consider it as a submission to threats—a thing quite unpopular with the American people."

Half a Dozen Spanish Men-of-War on Their Way to New York—A Few First Class United States Iron-Clad Monitors Ordered to Our Harbor "Just to Look at the Strangers"—No Change in the Spanish Minister's Views—The Peruvian Minister at the State Department.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 23, 1893.

The interest in the Spanish gunboat excitement received a fresh impetus here to-day from the receipt by the government of information to the effect that six Spanish men-of-war were really on their way to New York. This fully substantiated the statement which appeared in the HERALD of yesterday. The source from which the government received its information has not been made known, but it is deemed entirely trustworthy. Numerous were the conjectures in official circles as to the object of such a large number of war vessels belonging to a foreign Power making their appearance in American waters. That their destination should be New York just at this particular time, too, was calculated to excite suspicion, if not alarm. The news was confined to a limited circle, and officials were very reticent on the subject, only looking wise when questioned closely as to the object of the Spanish fleet. "No matter what they may be after; we will take care of them," said one official, with a defiant shake of the head. "And," he added, "if they go cutting up any capers they'll get more than they bargained for." The Spaniards said there was no harm intended; that the ships were only coming up from Cuba for repairs and to convoy the mosquito fleet to its destination in case of their surrender by our authorities. The "big" fleet of Spanish vessels, they said, would come and go as quietly and peacefully as pleasure yachts. It was insisted, however, in some quarters that the Spanish fleet meant business, and that it was coming to New York to release the Spanish gunboats by force, if necessary. Many officials were of opinion that under the circumstances, while the case of the gunboats was under adjudication in the courts, the presence of so many vessels of war belonging to Spain in the harbor of New York would be a sort of menace, a threat intended to overawe our government.

Whatever may be the object of the visit of these vessels, it is evident that our government is not disposed to give them too much credit on the score of good intentions. The Spaniards may be as harmless as doves, but the government will undoubtedly act on the principle of "forewarned is forearmed." You need not be surprised, therefore, if you see a few of our first class iron-clad monitors making their appearance in the harbor of New York just about the time the Spaniards arrive. They will be ostensibly on a trial trip; but they will probably remain in port as long as the Spanish vessels—only to look at the strangers.

A letter to the following effect was sent from the Navy Department to-day soon after the receipt of the news of the intended visit of the Spanish fleet:—"To the Proper Officer—It is necessary that the Miantonomoh be sent to New York as soon as possible." A similar letter was despatched to Boston, where the iron-clad Terror is being fitted for sea. Both these vessels will turn up at New York within the next few days, and probably others of similar calibre. In addition, it is stated that one of the new torpedo boats which has been sitting out at the Navy Yard here will also make a trial trip to New York about the same time. Admiral Porter, who has been giving considerable attention to the fitting out of these torpedo boats, prides himself a good deal on their capacity for mischief among a fleet of vessels, whether they be made of iron or of wood. The Navy Department officials think it will do no harm to let the Spanish officers take a peep at these vessels, and they will hardly get a better opportunity than they will have in New York harbor. The truth is, the government is determined to be ready at all points for whatever emergency may arise; and while the ordering of these vessels to New York is only precautionary it shows that there are some apprehensions of trouble.

It was expected that something would transpire to-day regarding the interview between Minister Roberts and Secretary Fish, referred to in my despatches last night; but I can obtain nothing at all that can be regarded as reliable. The rumor fabricators are doing their business very industriously, just as yesterday, and they manage to get afloat some highly exciting stories. But it is safe to assert that they have no grounds for any of their alarming stories. I have reason to know that Minister Roberts has not changed his views since Tuesday last on the subject of the gunboats, and then he was very decidedly of the opinion that Spain could have nothing to do with the business; that the legal proceeding was one between our government and the constructors of the vessels, and could not as yet, at all events, be made the basis of diplomatic messages or interviews. Mr. Roberts' relations with our government, it may be added, are of the most friendly character.

The Peruvian Minister, Colonel Freyre, had an interview with Secretary Fish to-day respecting the seizure of the Spanish gunboats. It is not known what occurred, except to this extent, that the Peruvian Minister considers, from what Mr. Fish disclosed, that everything is very favorable to Cuba. This, if it means anything, must mean that our government intends not to yield to any demands for the surrender of the gunboats.