

Cuba—The Great Opportunity of General Grant.

The great opportunity of General Grant to save his administration from public disfavor, to perpetuate his own popularity and to secure lasting fame as a statesman is in treating the Cuban question in accordance with popular sentiment, a broad American policy and the interests of the country. This is really the most important question of the day. It involves vast commercial interests, the sympathies of the American people, the cause of republican liberty in America, the natural growth and progress of this republic and the position we are to occupy hereafter with regard to all questions pertaining to this Continent. If the government should resolve to ignore Cuba and either to permit the Cubans to be crushed or the island devastated it will abandon the cherished principles upon which our own independence was claimed and secured, it will become the friend and ally of European despotism on American soil, it will do violence to the feelings, sentiments and love of freedom of the American people; it will renounce the Monroe doctrine, it will degrade the country in the eyes of the world, and will, for the first time in our history, inaugurate a policy inimical to republican institutions and in the interests of monarchical and European governments. If, on the other hand, the government should determine to seize the opportunity afforded by the insurrection in Cuba to promote the cause of republican freedom on American soil, to extend our influence, power and commerce in this hemisphere, and to sever the bonds that hold a part of the American people and territory under European rule, that would be a fresh starting point for a grand and comprehensive policy in accordance with our growth and destiny. It would show Europe that we comprehend our high position as one of the foremost nations of the earth and the law of our existence, and must in the end inspire the respect of the whole world.

Hence we said the Cuban question is the most important one of the day. More than that, it is the only one that presses for immediate solution. Reconstruction of the South, upon which Congress and the public mind have been occupied, is about finished; the various questions pertaining to the national finances require time for consideration and have not become urgent, because neither the revenue nor country will suffer from the necessary delay; the Alabama claims will not, and, perhaps, cannot, be brought to a decision for some time to come, and they are used only as a political hobby by Mr. Sumner and Mr. Secretary Fish; all other questions of domestic or foreign policy are either not pressing or can be solved without difficulty. The only live, urgent and important question at present is that of Cuba.

The initial American policy in the case of Cuba, for such we may call it, reaches far beyond that island or the present time. It is the key of our destiny over the whole of the Antilles, Mexico and Central America, and, in a measure, over South America also. It will fix in the public mind of both this country and of Europe what is to be the future course or policy of the American republic in this hemisphere, and especially as concerns European domination, influence or rule here. There never has been a more determined or heroic struggle for republican freedom, and against the most atrocious European despotism in America, than that which the Cubans are making; no, not in any of the South American States; and there never was better ground or as good a reason for this country to recognize the independence of an American people. The course of the government, therefore, in the case of Cuba will be regarded as the policy that is to be pursued hereafter on all American questions in which European nations are concerned or choose to interfere. It will teach the population and States of the American Continent and its islands either to lean upon this great republic and to look to it for support and guidance, or it will disgust and drive them to seek closer relations, commercial and political, with Europe. Not the brave Cubans only, but all the people of the two continents of America are watching with intense interest the course of our government with regard to Cuba. Shall we abdicate the high position we have all through our history taken? Shall we, in the day of our might and strength, when no nation has the power or dares to thwart our policy or destiny, abandon the cause of republican freedom in America? To do so will be to dishonor the fathers of the republic and our statesmen of former times, and will bring everlasting disgrace upon the country.

General Grant in his heart sympathizes with these views, we have no doubt, for they are American, republican, national and liberal, and throughout his whole public career he has shown the most elevated patriotism and broad American views. But in the case of Cuba he has been trammelled, there is reason to fear, by the weakness and narrow-minded policy of the Secretary of State, and perhaps, also, by the senseless prejudices of other members of his Cabinet. Possibly Mr. Sumner, in the excess of his vanity about his Alabama claims speech and from his desire to make political capital out of that, may have had some influence over members of the Cabinet, and, indirectly, over the President. It is lamentable to think that a great question of public policy which the American people have at heart, and which concerns so intimately the interests of our country and the progress of republican freedom, should be obstructed by a few men to gratify their vanity or prejudice, or for some doubtful political object. Will not the President emancipate himself from these influences? Will he not see the current of public sentiment, and either dismiss his weak and prejudiced advisers or act independently of them? Let him follow the good advice of his wise friend, the lamented General Rawlins, the impulses of whose noble soul were right in accordance with the sentiments of the American people, and who had a proper view of the duty and destiny of his country, and let him ignore the miserable subterfuges of Sumner, Fish, Hoar and others on this Cuban question, and he will become as popular in the Presidency as he was in the war. We have the best reasons for believing that Mr. Hoar failed to be confirmed in the Senate as Judge of the Supreme Court were on account of his narrow-minded and

prejudiced course relative to Cuba than for anything else. This ought to be a warning to the President, for no man, however exalted in position, can safely act in defiance of public opinion in this country. General Grant has now the opportunity of doing a glorious thing in securing the independence and annexation of Cuba, the most valuable possession in the world, and of establishing a broad American policy that will make him the most popular man as well as one of the most famous statesmen in history. Cuba is the great question of his administration. Will he understand that? If he follows the dictates of his heart and common sense he will do right and reap the glory. If he submits to the shortsighted and weak men around him he will assuredly lose his popularity, and the American people may forget his war services in the failure of his administration.