

SPAIN.

General Sickles' Diplomacy on the Cuban Question.

Spanish Ministerial Banquet and the Colonial Case "Talked Over" Quietly.

Position of Prim and President Rivero.

By mail from Europe we have the following special correspondence from Madrid in important detail of the progress of the United States diplomacy on the Cuban question, as conducted by General Sickles with the Spanish Cabinet, and the gradual approach of the Ministry to a consideration of the points of the American note which contemplates the acquisition of the island by sale or transfer.

The Cuban Question in Spain and Proposed American Mediation—What is Said of the Sickles Note and Its Withdrawal—Belligerent Rights—President Rivero and the United States Minister—What the English Think—Old Fogeyism—The Ex-Queen's Abdication—The Bishop of Havana.

MADRID, NOV. 16, 1893.

A short time ago all the Spanish papers rose up in arms and carried on quite a warfare against the United States respecting the proposed mediation in the painful question of Cuba. The Dons talked large, imagined their national pride wounded, their self-sufficiency doubted, and consequently refused any kind of interference even from their well known friends, the Americans; but Sickles' diplomatic note had no sooner been withdrawn when the Spaniards began to feel that they had made a mistake, and that the friendly offices of the United States ought not to have been slighted, but rather courted. Sensible, long-sighted politicians began to reflect, and soon saw that a false and, consequently unsafe, step had been taken. They took into consideration that the United States Congress would soon meet and most likely would recognize the Cubans as belligerents, for the great republic would refuse to consent to a barbarous and exterminating warfare being carried on for an indefinite length of time at their very doors. This the United States would do to put an end to the bloody warfare, both from humane motives and for the purpose of protecting their commercial interests.

The Spaniards know full well that if the United States once recognize the Cubans as belligerents Cuba would be lost to them for ever, and most likely not Cuba alone.

The following, which I copy from one of the Spanish papers, show pretty well the Spanish view of the matter. It is headed "The Cuban Question," and reads thus:—

Our correspondence from the United States informs us that the idea of a friendly mediation, for the purpose of putting an end to the lamentable war in Cuba, has not been altogether abandoned by the Cabinet of Washington. Although the Spanish government declined this intervention of a Power friendly, nevertheless foreign, when it was presented with conditions which Spain thought contrary to her rights and interests, the United States appearing not to have been influenced by any ambitious, much less hostile view towards our country, have thought that by modifying the form of this mediation they might still contribute to the welfare of Spain and our brethren in Cuba. This benefit, in the first place, would be to the United States, for we have already mentioned how much the commerce of that country suffers by the prolongation of such a disastrous war. Our Antilles form the great market of Spain as well as the United States, and its pacification is almost identical for both nations. If there be a founded hope of not meeting a repulse—which nations that respect each other are not expected to—the Cabinet of Washington will offer its good offices to procure the pacification of the island of Cuba in a manner that shall in no way prejudice the rights and interests of Spain. We, that from the commencement were favorable to the idea of a friendly mediation, like those which most nations have admitted on like occasions, cannot now reject those good offices if they were offered, as we hope they were, with noble loyalty upon honorable terms for our country and for the humane purpose of terminating a fratricide war. Two considerations lead us principally to adopt this attitude. The first is most important in a moral sense. The revolution is being got under and is daily losing ground, and Spain having sent considerable land and sea reinforcements, with which there are sufficient elements to crush the rebellion, it cannot be attributed by any one to want of strength whatever concessions we may make to those whom we cannot but consider as sons of the same country.

Europe, after the first impression, chiefly caused by the unhappy state of our country, having lately felt certain that Spain was sufficient to pacify the island of Cuba, would not see in our acceptance of the offer of the United States but a proof of deference, the fruit of a sincere desire to cultivate and nourish the good feeling that has existed for the last century between the great republic and the nation that discovered America, and whose merits are more preferable than any other European Power in the world of Columbus.

The second consideration, still more important, is the strength that the news of a perfect, friendly feeling existing between Spain and the United States would give to the Cabinet of Washington, in defending in Congress the policy of loyal friendship which it has shown towards our country during the Cuban war. If the Chamber meets in December under the impression that Spain has repelled all friendly overtures of the United States, and the war in greater or less proportion continues in the island of Cuba, there would be great danger of the Congress insisting on the recognition of the Cubans as belligerents, and that the Senate would demand the notes that have passed between the two governments and judge the matter itself. But if the proffered good offices be admitted, this danger will at once disappear and it will not be impossible for the ministers of President Grant to prevent the question from being vehemently agitated in the Congress of the United States. We call the attention of the new Minister of State and the Council or Ministers to these considerations. If our information turn out to be correct and if the Cabinet of Washington should again offer its good offices to loyally assist in the pacification of Cuba, we should consider it a very grave fault to object, provided always, that in accepting the said good offices Spain reserves to herself liberty of action and the security of the honor and interests of the country.

Besides the foregoing a rare occurrence took place in the House of Representatives that has not only been the subject of conversation and speculative guessing among the diplomatic corps, but all over Madrid generally. At the close of a debate in Congress, Rivero, the president of the House, accompanied by one of the deputies, went up to the diplomatic tribune, and, after saluting General Sickles in the most courteous manner, entered upon an earnest and animated conversation with that able diplomat, scarcely paying attention to any one else. The affair was so unusual and the attention so marked as to attract the notice of the whole house. Every eye was riveted upon them, every brain began to work in conjectures and every tongue began to wag. Whatever could be the meaning of this unheard of proceeding? The matter was discussed in political circles, saloons, clubs and cafes, a hundred guesses were ventured, and, perhaps, none hit near the mark; for the subject matter of the conversation remains unknown, and will so continue unless Rivero lets it out, for General Sickles is one of the closest diplomats I have ever known.

The following day the circumstance appeared in the morning papers, and now I have just read that President Rivero is going to give a splendid banquet to General Sickles.

The English representative strokes his whiskers, the Russian shrugs his shoulders, the Russian looks confused, the philosophic Dutchman peeps wisely over his spectacles; all look astonished and can't make it out. They scan the General's features, but read nothing in his unaltered visage. With that calm serenity he returns nod for nod, and with his well known piercing glance look for look.

I have just heard from good authority that the proposed banquet is not exclusively to General Sickles, as the papers imagine, but for the purpose of bringing the Diplomatic Corps and the new Minister of State together in a friendly party, perhaps acting on the old saying, "the nearest road to men's hearts is down their throats."

It has been an old established custom in Spain for Ministers out of office to receive a salary of \$1,500 a year, and there are now on the list between forty and fifty such unemployed Ministers. This allowance is called "cesantias." Señor Ramos Calderon brought a proposition before the House to suppress the said "cesantias", and when it was put to vote, notwithstanding that every Minister of the present Cabinet voted and worked hard to get a majority against the proposition, they could only muster fifty-six votes, while those in favor of the suppression number thirty-two votes. It was not supposed that the Ministers now in power would vote at all, but they did, every one of them, clearly showing that the saying, "Chacun pour soi et Dieu sur tout," holds as good here as on the other side of the Pyrenees.

Various have been the reasons given for the non-publication of the document signed by ex-Queen Isabella abdicating in favor of her son, Prince Alfonso. Some say that it was not published because the resignation of Silvela, Ardanaz and Topete did not break up the coalition; others on account of a division having taken place in the moderate party, while another paper states that this document was

read and discussed in the house of Conde de San Luis on Wednesday, and is to be published all over Europe on a given day.

The Bishop of Havana has arrived here from Cuba. He was sent from the island by order of the Captain General Caballero de Rodas. It appears that his Lordship at first refused to leave, but on consideration thought better to obey the order quietly. On arriving at Cadiz he tried to get off to Gibraltar, but was detained and forwarded to this capital to answer charges brought against him by the Captain General of Cuba.

Señor Orense (Marquis of Albaida), the patriarch of the republicans, has been acquitted of the charge brought against him on account of the late republican movement in Bejar, and has retired to France. Suñer, the atheist and leader of the movement in Gerona, has fared worse, for sentence of death has been decreed. He, however, escaped to France before his trial came on.

The Banquet to United States Minister Sickles—A Pleasant Mode of Colonial Conference—Report of the Ministerial Fete—Who were Present—General Sickles on the Cuban Question—Prim's Intended Compliment—What the Porto Ricans Ask.

MADRID, NOV. 17, 1893.

The splendid banquet given in honor of the gallant General Sickles, United States Minister on this mission, came off on Sunday evening.

As it was generally known in political circles that the invitation was semi-official, surprise was expressed that none of the other foreign ministers were invited. This, however, is easy to understand, as also why the banquet was given by the President of the House of Representatives instead of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. It is evident that this course was adopted so as to throw off official restraint and in order that the relations between the two countries and the important question of the Spanish colonies might be discussed in a free, easy, friendly way. It is also certain that as to what passed was intended to be kept secret, for although I have carefully scanned all the papers I can gather from them on other information than that the banquet came off and the names of the parties invited. The most detailed report is as follows:—

Last night, as we had announced, Señor Rivero gave a banquet to General Sickles, the representative of the United States to Spain. The parties present were Señores Martos, Secretary of State; Becerra, Minister for the Colonies; Colonel John Hay, Secretary of the United States Legation; Silvela, late Secretary of State; Valera, Romero Giron, Alonso, Carouel y Ortiz, Ollañeta and Gasset. It seems that the intimacy of Señor Rivero, the Minister and ex-Minister of State and the Minister for the Colonies with the representative of the United States will be the production of very satisfactory results.

A friend of mine, who rejoices in the fame of being an able politician, and from whom few secrets are kept, has informed me—under promise of not mentioning it here—that the session lasted from seven o'clock P. M. till midnight, that most of the conversation turned upon the Cuban question, and that the General, in the plainest terms, gave them the opinion of the United States touching that question. Some objections were raised, but in such a friendly manner as not in the least to alter thorough good feeling. General Sickles also indicated something respecting a new postal arrangement for the purpose of reducing the rate of postage between Spain and the United States, and though the exact answer was not heard, sufficient was noticed to conclude that the idea was favorably received. If the General succeeds in carrying out his proposition he will justly deserve the gratitude of the commercial world and thousands of others who have correspondence with Spain, for it is extremely difficult to drum into the Spaniard's head either the American scheme of small profits and large transactions or Peel's small profits and quick returns. The Honorable John P. Hale tried in vain to move the anti-protectionist government of the ex-Queen on this matter, but could never make them understand that two and two were equal to four; or, in other words, that if the postage were reduced the correspondence would be increased. And yet Rowland Hill's penny postage scheme when put in practice here gave such immediate and abundant proofs. I have no doubt that by this time Mr. Secretary Fish will have received a long despatch from the able pen of General Sickles giving full details of all that transpired at the banquet, and the government will do well in giving him every encouragement in carrying out his proposition, for a better season could not be chosen. The General is evidently the lion of the foreign diplomatic corps, and if the time to strike the iron is while it is hot, then hammer away at once, without loss of time, for the changes from heat to cold are very sudden at this capital.

I have been informed by an officer of rank in the army that Prim (the Minister for War) is going to get up a military review on an unusually large scale in honor of General Sickles, to be followed by a grand military ball, given at the Palacio de Godoy (the War Department), at which the General and his staff are to be specially invited.

I have never seen a diplomat more courted by all classes of society than General Sickles appears to be at the present moment. He is undoubtedly the right man in the right place. The attentions paid to him in political circles may be accounted for by reason of the delicate state of the Cuban question; but his very warm reception in the *beau monde* of Madrid has nothing to do with political views.

The Puerto Rico deputies have carried on an animated discussion in Congress, claiming for the inhabitants of the island all the rights and privileges enjoyed by the Spaniards of the Peninsula. They demanded a considerable reduction of taxes, and proposed many other reforms in the administration. They also very strongly urged the abolition of slavery, and related most barbarous cruelties committed by some of the slaveholders. They said that 600,000 inhabitants awaited the issue of their efforts in this matter with the greatest anxiety, and if the Cortes did not take up the slavery question, the Puerto Rico deputies would have to return to the island overwhelmed with shame.

Becerra, the Minister for the Colonies, replied that the inhabitants of Puerto Rico had undoubtedly right to the same privileges as Spaniards in the Peninsula, but that momentary difficulties had delayed the concession of the same. This, however, should be at once attended to. He said that he was a decided abolitionist, and he believed that every Spaniard was so too. He maintained, however, that it was a question of importance and required study, but that this great problem would be decided by the Cortes of 1895.

The *Imparcial*, taking up the matter with great warmth, exclaims:—

Slavery! Here is a horrible social crime, in which Spain has been an accomplice for some centuries past. Here is an institution condemned by the morals of every Christian religion, especially the Catholic; nevertheless, in the civilized world it is only sustained by countries eminently Catholic. Will the democratic revolution of 1869 put an end to this horrible traffic in human flesh? Will it not at least break the first links of the slaves' chains, so that soon he may have a prospect of enjoying his dignity as a man, the rights a father, husband, citizen, owner—in short, the rights of action, goods and labor?

The ex-Infante Don Enrique de Bourbon has been allowed to come to Madrid, and presented himself yesterday (at the royal palace) before his Highness the Regent of the Kingdom (Serrano).

General Cardova, Director General of Infantry, is very busy in Catalonia recruiting and organizing volunteer corps for the island of Cuba, and according to his account has no difficulty in obtaining the number of men he requires.