

Spain and Cuba—Our National Duty to Ourselves.

What is to be the attitude of the United States with reference to Cuba and Spain? This is a question not only of vital interest to North America, but to the whole of South America. Expediency and self-protection enter largely into our national views of the subject. Much of the future progress of fifteen republics and the fate of one empire hang upon the wisdom of our action. What is Cuba? It is a great natural fortification, unequalled as a base of operations for European Powers against any country in the New World. It is not only self-supporting, but so rich that it gives thirty-three million dollars of revenue to the decrepit monarchy that domineers it. From this military and naval base have been launched nearly all the expeditions which have struck at the mainland since Hernan Cortez invaded Mexico in 1519. From 1810 to 1829 it served for the complete desolation of every Spanish-American country on the Continent. Havana was the rendezvous for the English, French and Spanish expedition against Mexico during our civil war. Again it became at once the purse and the stronghold of the Spanish fleet under Admiral Nunez for the desolation of the Pacific coast of South America and the late barbaric bombardment of Valparaiso.

Were the movement of the world eastward instead of westward how long would Europe permit us to hold a fortified island in the English Channel or a point like Gibraltar at the entrance of the Mediterranean? And yet this is an inferior comparison to what Cuba is to this Continent; inferior even to what Cuba is with reference to our own Atlantic coast and our Mississippi valley.

No national or international laws can be laid down to cover questions which are born of progress and the times. National expediency becomes the irresistible lever forcing national action. It is so in the history of our great mother England, and, were there space, we might make a tour around the world and point out numerous illustrations of territory seized and held by her in spite of treaties. In the history of nations honor and force are synonymous; for force is the result of great progress; great progress is honor. If a nation, progressing beyond its fellows, finds itself cramped and threatened by one of retrograde tendencies, it becomes not only expedient but right to sweep away the obstacle, be it a fortification, an island, or both. It is this which not only our progress but that of the Continent calls upon us to do with reference to Cuba as held by Spain. It is upon this broad ground we would announce to Spain that she can no longer cover our coast with her guns. We would not make war under a petty subterfuge, for the game at which we shoot flies higher. We are great enough and strong enough to frankly acknowledge our necessities. Let us not disgrace ourselves by descending to the European method of covering up a great national objective point under the smoke of a pistol shot, the seizure of a vessel, or the confiscation of a contraband cargo of war material. All these should be secondary, not primary, causes of war in the Cuban question. As secondary causes they are powerful. The seizure of two men from the deck of an American vessel, the *Lizzie Majors*, while on the high seas, is a parallel case with that of our Trent difficulty with England. It is a sufficient cause of war if Spain refuses reparation and apology. But in declaring war we would announce the higher reason we have mentioned.

How well Cuba may serve to make war against us is best shown by the constant warfare indirectly waged upon us from Havana after the Spanish concession of belligerent rights to the "Confederate" rebels. Can Secretary Fish be so puerile as to now make a proposition to the country to purchase Cuba, when shot and shell were rained upon us from that fortification for four years? Who would lower his national dignity by paying hard cash for a four years' insult? "Negotiate with Spain for Cuba!" Where is President or Cabinet that dares propose it? How long since our people began to swallow insults and pay for the privilege? Mr. Fish thinks that "it will be more economical" to buy instead of to make war for the acquisition of the island; that "war with Spain, coupled with England and France, would involve us in vast outlays and require new and great sacrifices from our people, who already suffer quite enough." "Economy" at the expense of national degradation! What splendid stuff this Premier is made of that he hints at such a thing. Is this the material of which our new Cabinet is composed? Doubtless the large fleet now concentrating in Cuban waters is for the purpose of protecting the island for Spain until the negotiations for its purchase may be concluded. In the now pending question of the Alabama claims with England we advise our British rivals to take the hint that the great republic has already become so decrepit that "economy" is the keynote of national action. We are even ready to pay for the favor done to us by the English pirates, and any order drawn upon us by England will be honored at sight.

Now is the moment for the enunciation of a national policy. The United States in 1860 were an uncemented chaos of localisms. Our war set the particles in motion and like gravitated towards like all over the country. When Richmond fell we found ourselves, for the first time, a nation. The work has heretofore been almost entirely internal. We have ignored external issues and continental questions. We have been absolutely without a foreign policy; and in the lack of this we have caused the countries to the south of us numberless revolutions with attendant misfortunes to them and to ourselves. We are bold, therefore, to advocate that the time has come for us to look beyond our own frontiers. The Cuban question is of the first importance to the whole Continent. Others must quickly follow in its train; for up to this time everything has been ignored. He who has not travelled to the southward has but little idea how the Spanish American republics hang upon our motions. When we grasp Cuba we shall send them twenty years ahead in the orbit of republicanism. We ourselves shall then be doubly compact, and our power for offensive and defensive war be infinitely increased.