

Cuba, England, France and Spain—The Diplomatic Flank Movement.

While the position taken by the administration of President Grant on the Cuban question is eminently satisfactory to the country an attempt is being made by the partisans of Spanish rule in America to get up a diplomatic flank movement, for the purpose of saving the crumbling colonial despotism of Spain. The opposition of the Powers of Western Europe to the liberation of Cuba is loudly proclaimed. A terrible war, in which all the great Powers are to be marshalled against America, is foreshadowed. Diplomatic notes of the gravest character are darkly hinted at, and England and France are represented as sharpening their swords and eager for the fray. All of this is simply a diplomatic flank movement, in which Cuba, the pretended point of attack, is merely a pretence to cover very different aims. It is true that Spain, whenever danger has threatened her possessions in America, has always sought to induce the governments of Europe to sympathize and aid her in a diplomatic way. The famous tripartite treaty, several years since, by which it was proposed that the United States, England and France should guarantee Cuba to her, was a case in point; and we are informed that notes on Spanish affairs have recently been exchanged with considerable activity between the European Cabinets, accompanied with whispers that Cuba was the subject under consideration.

But the game is a higher and a wider one. The situation of Europe is too critical and complicated to permit a side issue like Cuba to jostle it, though such a question may be readily availed of to promote other schemes. A retrospect of the historical field will best illustrate the tendency of present intrigues. The early years of present imperial power in France were sadly embarrassed with the steady refusal of Russia to recognize the Napoleonic government. On this question the Continent was filled with intrigues, and every reader will remember the strenuous efforts of Nicholas to enlist England in the anti-Napoleon movement. The Baltic, the Black Sea, the effects of "the sick man in Europe," and every other contingent prize were held up to diplomatic view. The danger was great, and Louis Napoleon played his game with masterly skill. La Valette, the French Minister at Constantinople, brought about a conflict between the Greeks and Turks, and the question of the holy places was agitated with unremitting energy. Russia undertook to help the Greeks and to claim intervention in the holy places. France sent a strong fleet into the Mediterranean; England's fears were aroused for her Indian possessions and the route to them, and had to send a fleet to the scene; the Crimean war was inaugurated with a combination of all Western Europe against Russia. Brought to conviction by the gathering forces against him and the fall of Sebastopol, Alexander recognized Napoleon by a private arrangement, the war suddenly ended, the diplomatic combination fell to pieces, and France brought her armies home covered with glory, while England was left in the lurch and diplomatically snubbed for becoming the tool to cut a dynastic issue between Louis Napoleon and Alexander.

A similar diplomatic combination was contrived to bring England into trouble and enable France to carry out her aims for the frontier of the Rhine. In this Mexico was mixed up, and the United States was to play the part Russia had acted in the previous scheme. Napoleon used every possible effort to induce England to assist in his Mexican plans and to recognize the Confederate government. He well knew that such a step would be followed by a war between the United States and England, and this would leave him to work the policy of Continental Europe to suit his views. Prussia would have lost the makeweight on her side, and Sadowa would not have been fought; for while England would have had her hands full with a war with us the weight of France in the diplomatic scale would have saved Austria and planted the French eagles on the Rhine. Wisely did the British statesmen keep out of the snare spread for them, and Louis Napoleon was forced to retrace his steps in his abandonment of the policy of his great uncle regarding America. This was his mistake. Neither the people of France nor the traditional Napoleonic policy have any feeling of antagonism to this country, nor does any anti-French feeling exist with us; but any effort to convert the United States into a makeweight in his continental schemes will surely fail.

This, however, is the part it is sought to make England play in the present state of European politics. France and Russia alike have aims against Prussia; but so long as England is free to throw her sword or purse into the scale the odds are far too even to be pleasant. If the fears of England can be roused on the Cuban question and she be induced to send a strong fleet into the American Mediterranean, on the plea of securing her own possessions, the course of events will assume a promising aspect. Louis Napoleon knows very well that an American and a French fleet could rub against each other for a generation and produce not only no explosion, but not even a spark. But let strong American and British fleets gather in American waters, and not only will sparks fly from constant collisions, but an explosion may be confidently anticipated. By next fall a flame of war would be brought out to consume English and American commerce, and neither the sword nor the purse of England would find time to employ its weight in continental diplomacy. The aims which were defeated in 1864 might be accomplished in 1869. With Russia as an ally France could then control Europe.

We have had one great war and know well what it costs in blood and treasure. Years must elapse before we recover from its evils. While, therefore, we do not desire another, at the same time we do not fear it. We know our power, and know better how to use it than we did ten years ago. For these reasons we would calmly advise the British people and British statesmen to beware of being made the tools of Napoleonic intrigue. If they will scan the field closely they will perceive that while he is contriving a collision between England and ourselves on the one hand, he is using the revolutionary movement in Cuba to prevent the accession of the younger Bourbon branch in the person of the Duke of Montpensier to the throne of Spain. The fear of a recognition of free Cuba by France is a potent argument in the anti-Bourbon contro-

versy. These Napoleonic schemes will not affect the march of the administration of President Grant, nor will they deprive it of the support of the country in its American policy; but they may seriously complicate the position of England in her continental relations.