

Spain and Cuba—The Real Position.

There is a singular similarity, though an apparent contradiction, in the positions occupied respectively by Spain and Cuba, which, though ignored by the parties aiming to assist the Spanish agents in this country to rivet and preserve the last links of colonial despotism in America, must exercise an important influence in the final settlement of the contest in the Antilles. The revolution of September last in the Iberian peninsula drove out the ancient dynasty and derogated the ancient form of government. By an almost unanimous uprising of the people these acts were confirmed, and to-day the Cortes is sitting in special convention for the purpose of deciding what form of government shall rule the nation. No man in Spain or out of it presumes to question the right of the Spanish people to decide this important question, and all the arguments presented in behalf of a monarchical or a republican system expressly recognize the right of the people to determine the matter. In accordance with our usual practice the representative of the United States in Madrid was the first to recognize the popular government, and of the great Powers of the world ours is probably the only one whose government and diplomatic agents are not actively at work to influence the decision of the national representatives in Spain.

The motive and reason of the Spanish revolution were the tyranny and corruption of the Bourbon rule. Without concert of action with the Spanish people, but animated by the same feelings, the people of Cuba determined to throw off the same despotism which enthralled them, and, with but little difference of time, they began the movement. The colonial government, under Captain General Lersundi, refused to recognize alike the acts of the Spanish people and of those of Cuba. To the last moment of his power in Cuba he held friendly communication with the exiled Queen. When superseded, the new Captain General was not permitted by the Spanish traders in Havana to recognize any popular rights in Cuba, and the government there was committed to a course antagonistic to every idea that is to-day proclaimed in Spain. Under false representations (for the people of Spain know little of what is passing in Cuba) several thousands of men have been induced to volunteer for service in the island. A thousand of these, from Cataluña, arrived recently in Havana, and when they learned the antagonistic character of the conflict numbers of them began to express dissatisfaction. Great efforts were made, however, with banquets and speeches and triumphal arches, to suppress this feeling, and to a great extent it succeeded sufficiently to get them off to the field.

It is a significant fact, however, that a portion of the officers refused to embark further in the service and have returned to Spain. Our private advices from Havana state that the same feeling has already spread to a remarkable extent among the resident Spaniards there, and should the government forces receive any serious check in the field it may show itself on the surface to an extent little suspected at the present moment. The people of Spain and Cuba are to-day each claiming the right to establish their form of government, and the logic

of this great fact will enforce its recognition. If it is right in Spain it must be right in Cuba also. This is the view, and the only view, which should be permitted to control the action of our government in the question. There is no other safe position; none which will not lead to complications innumerable and results disastrous. A few short-sighted and selfish partisans are calling for an enforcement of the neutrality laws, and it is worth while to examine what these laws are and upon what principle it is sought to apply them to the suppression of the great American principle of the right of the people.

The neutrality laws as they exist to-day upon our statute books are a disgrace to us as a nation, and are not paralleled by the laws or the practice of any other great Power. They are the growth of the era of cowardice which marked the administration of the elder Adams at the close of the last century, reaffirmed and strengthened in 1818, when the country experienced a temporary reaction from the spirit which laid the embargo of 1809 and made the last war with England in 1812-15. The country, on each occasion of their enactment, had just gone through a long period of commercial depression and disaster, and was a hungered for commerce. As a prudential measure in the era of our national babyhood they have done their work and are now unworthy of our material and moral position among the nations. The declaration of President Monroe, known as the Monroe doctrine, was a national reaction against them, and represents the true spirit which animates the country and guides its policy. Any administration which ignores this great fact and permits itself to be guided by the moral cowardice which enacted the neutrality laws will consign itself to failure in its diplomacy and to ignominy in the appreciation of the country.

There is but one path to success open to the administration of President Grant. It must show itself equal to the requirements and power of the United States of 1869, and not undertake to fulfil its mission in the spirit that animated our fathers in moments of depression two generations ago. We are now a great and united Power, and any position that we take is to-day considered by the nations of the world. The time has gone never to return when the Powers of Europe could take a determination in an American question without waiting to know what the United States might think or wish in the matter. At this moment the Cabinets of Europe are passive on the Cuban question, waiting to know and asking what view does General Grant take and what will he do. In deciding this matter he will receive the support of the country and the respect of the world in proportion as his administration approximates to the spirit that animated the declaration of Monroe. We have recognized the right of the people of Spain to change their dynasty and their form of government, and we must accord the same right to the people of Cuba. Any other course will be treason to the principles that guide the American people and treason to that self-respect which should animate our policy as a free and powerful nation.