

## The Reported Tripartite Alliance and the Cuban Question.

Whenever the tide of events in Europe or America runs particularly strong the old idea that animated the Holy Alliance is sure to crop out upon the surface, and we hear grand announcements of a combination of Powers which, by triple alliance, is to control all action and stop the course of events. This was the scheme of the Holy Alliance originated at Paris in 1815, and assented to by all the European dynasties of that day except England and the Pope of Rome. Its ostensible object was "to regulate the States of Christendom on principles of Christian amity;" but its real purpose was to counteract the spirit of propagandism and revolution which the birth of the American republic had started on its mission among the nations, and to preserve existing dynasties which, at the period when the Holy Alliance scheme was invented, had just triumphed over the fruits of the French revolution and consigned Napoleon to perpetual imprisonment.

The old scheme received a deadly blow through that famous declaration of Canning, which, by preventing the intervention of the allied Powers in behalf of Spain against her rebellious colonists, called all Spanish-America into national existence; and the old alliance was finally buried to rise no more by the French revolution of 1830. It was when Mr. Canning was making his fight with the anti-liberalism of the original scheme that Mr. Monroe came to his aid with the declaration of the American principle known as the Monroe doctrine. But no sooner does any people in Europe or America move in behalf of freedom than straightway comes a project of a new holy, or, as the modern phrase expresses it, tripartite alliance, to preserve some existing tyranny. The most notable recent examples are the celebrated tripartite treaty proposition which followed the Ostend Conference, under which England, France and the United States were to guarantee Spain against any development of the free idea in Cuba, and the alliance between France, Spain and England, ostensibly to collect certain debts of Mexico, but really to abolish free government there.

As a check on revolution in Western Europe these tripartite alliances are useful things to the dynasties. They form an organized opposition to modern political propagandism, and at the same time serve each at home as a diversion against local troubles. It is a notable fact in the tone and temper of modern thought that the people of every nation sympathize with all rebels except their own. Against this impulse the moral weight of dynastic alliances and their concomitant legislation in the shape of neutrality laws and similar enactments affords a very convenient foil at home. We may sympathize, but we must respect the laws and public treaties. This is the case with Spain at this moment. She occupies the anomalous position of establishing a rebellious government at home and defending the ancient tyranny in Cuba. It is not principles but dynastic rights she claims to defend. The agitation of the tripartite treaty question and dynastic rights over their own rebels is a very useful foil to the revolutionary government in Madrid, counteracting as it does the propensity to further revolution which is so strong among all the political parties in the Spanish peninsula to-day.

But such combinations can never have any permanent effect in America. The theory of government founded on popular consent is too firmly rooted in the New World to be checked or thwarted here by dynastic combinations. Every attempt of that kind since 1776 has not only failed, but by its failure has weakened dynastic power in Europe and given new vigor to the ideas there which are steadily preparing the impending fall. Our material development has been so enormous and so rapid, and at the same time so entirely independent of European aid or influence, that we are beginning to exercise a corresponding counter influence on the views of cabinets and the schemes of dynasties. We now form a most important part of that world outside of Europe which is steadily belittling the ancient and venerable idea called "the balance of power in Europe." We are uniting the world with the bands of trade and the ties of material interests. China, Japan, Australia and Russia in Asia are throwing their commercial interests into the scale, and the balance of power in the world is the coming rule of international diplomacy.

A tripartite treaty, therefore, between two or three of the dynasties of Western Europe on the Cuban question is a matter of small importance to us except in one respect. It shows us that our government should have a guiding policy. Antiquated politicians may wait to see what England or France thinks upon any question before they make up their minds as to what they will think, but they belong to our period of national babyhood. The coming American statesman will base his ideas upon American needs. The nation has a policy enshrined in the popular heart, and it is the Monroe policy. This is well known in Europe, and many of our readers will remember the excitement caused there by the congress of American Ministers at Ostend fifteen years ago, when it was supposed that the Cabinet at Washington would accept the conclusions of that congress as the cardinal points of American diplomacy. But the administration of poor Pierce was only equal to letting "I dare not wait upon I would." Whenever we have an administration equal to the occasion of announcing that our action will be governed by our interests, and that it will be in accordance with American ideas and American impulses, we shall hear no more of the nonsense of the tripartite alliances in Europe to shape and control events in the New World. The Monroe policy is the natural antagonist of the Holy Alliance and all its brood. The nation is equal to its requirements, and hopes for statesmen that will not betray the national aspirations.