

Cuba, flanked by Peru and Chile, looms up in our southern prospect with dark threatenings of a war with Spain, to be carried on within the waters of the Atlantic. The memory of the bombardment of Valparaiso and of the attack on Callao by a Spanish fleet has not faded from the minds of Spanish Americans, and the chances for retaliation which are offered by the revolutionary movement in Cuba are too good to be readily abandoned. Negotiations for peace between the South American republics and Spain have been initiated under the auspices of our government, and the representatives of the belligerents are to meet in a few weeks in Washington to consider the terms. In view of the recent recognition of the belligerent rights of the Cuban republic by Peru and Chile we do not consider that the chances for a peace with Spain are very promising, while it seems evident that both the Spanish American States are ready to admit a different result.

This complication of affairs gives an increased importance to the efforts of the Cubans to throw off the yoke of Spain, and a new element is now brought into the field by the action of the armed Spanish mob which has taken possession of the government in Havana. We give little importance to the rumor that the volunteers who have driven General Dulce from Cuba intend to establish a separate autonomy in the island, under a triumvirate, or that they contemplate preventing the landing of the coming Captain General Rodas, or proclaiming the ex-Queen Isabella or her son, or in any way seek to sever the ties which bind them to the mother country. It seems to us more likely that events in the western portion of Cuba will take a grave domestic aspect, which may weaken still further the precarious hold Spain retains upon her American possessions. The avowed motive of the usurpation is the corruption of the officials who have recently come from Spain, the accusation being that they have sold victory to the patriots and robbed the revenues of the government, leaving the treasury without means to prosecute the war.

In this condition of affairs the temporary government of Havana is seeking to inaugurate renewed activity by ordering all the troops to the field and garrisoning the towns with the volunteers, as will be seen by our telegraphic despatches to-day. Such a course requires more money than the government now possesses, and the volunteers will soon find that they must split upon the rock of poverty in the treasury, or resort to some new plan to obtain supplies. These cannot be found in the exhausted treasury of Spain, and the only possible resort will be impressment of supplies and forced contributions of money. When we remember the bitterness with which the volunteers reviled General Dulce on every occasion when he sought to observe the public law of nations, either in the delivery to foreign representatives of parties arrested or the liberation of others who had been pronounced innocent by the courts, we cannot look for any very nice discrimination in their seizure of goods or their demands for money; and we believe if the Spanish Minister at Washington to-day were asked if his government would respond to ours for the safety of American lives, or the security of American interests in Havana, under the present state of affairs, he would be forced to acknowledge that the power of Spain has ceased to be respected in Cuba, and could in no wise be brought to account for what may occur there.

Thus we have upon our immediate border the questions of a foreign war and domestic anarchy. If such a conjunction were to occur in any country in Europe the Cabinets of contiguous nations would not only demand guarantees from the fomenters of disorder, but would prepare to interfere in the interests of human kind. The question is a purely American one, and we are the controlling Power in America. Should England or France intervene we should at once protest and prepare to protect our own interests. With such duties and such impulses it becomes us to inquire what steps has the administration taken to be prepared for future contingencies. There is but one answer. Mr. Fish has made himself active in listening to the complaints of the Spanish Minister about the shipment of a few rusty small arms; Secretary Boutwell has busied himself with stopping steamships engaged in legal traffic, and the politicians in the Cabinet and around it are scheming to raise the cry of a war with England, in the hope to catch the Fenian vote and sway the fall elections. Such ignoring of great events at our own door and magnifying distant molehills into mountains would be ludicrous if it were not contemptible.

When the echoes from the guns of the Spanish and Peruvian iron-clads in American waters shall waken our Rip Van Winkles in Washington to a contemplation of the rude facts of the present day, when the gathering fleets of France and England in the West Indies shall show them the estimation in which European statesmen hold the present great question of America, then will they come to a knowledge of the opportunity they have lost, and perhaps recognize the fact that the pen of a live statesman might have controlled events of the highest importance to the future of this country. We say again to our very respectable head of the State Department, war is brooding within the echo of our own shores, anarchy is rampant where the lives of many of our citizens and millions of their interests are at stake, and it behooves you to act, and to act with energy and decision. Our home squadron must be augmented, our representatives at the scene of events must be instructed and sustained, and the government must be prepared to accept the changed relations of Cuba to ourselves and to the world.