

## Spain, Cuba and the United States.

[From the London Times, August 9.]

When we ventured a short time ago to conclude our remarks on the relations between Spain and Cuba by a hint as to the expediency of a compromise between two foes, neither of whom had anything to hope from a prolongation of hostilities, we only gave utterance to a conviction springing from our impartial survey of the case, without claiming the least knowledge as to any transaction of the nature we recommended being actually in contemplation. Since then, however, rumors have been afloat, grounded, we suppose, on something more solid than our original speculation, inducing a belief that negotiations for a cession of Cuba have been for more than two months, and still are, pending. Spain, it is stated, is not unwilling to part with that island, and with the rest of her West India possessions, "for a consideration." The price she sets upon these colonies is put down at a round sum of £10,000,000, and she has already received offers to the extent of £15,000,000 and £20,000,000. The scheme, it is added, consists in opening a subscription among the wealthiest classes in Cuba to raise the sum required to redeem their island from Spanish thralldom and to constitute it into an independent state. The government at Washington would take upon itself the stipulation of the terms of the contract, and give security for its fulfilment. The manoeuvres by which so complicated a piece of business would have to be brought to a happy and speedy termination could not remain long a secret, nor could they get wind without raising such an uproar as might considerably mar, without, however, averting the ultimate issue. "The rumor of the intended sale of Cuba," we are told, "has excited great discontent in the Spanish army," while, on the other hand, "the Cuban Junta (at New York) have formally protested against the proposed purchase." This is entirely according to precedent. The Spanish army is in honor bound to shed the last drop of its blood to enforce the right of the crown of Castile to the "Pearl of the Antilles," and the Cuban Junta, as representatives of the insurgent cause in the island, are justified in contending that the emancipation of a people should be wrought out with steel, and not with gold. But, between the military punctilio of the former and the patriotic fanaticism of the latter, there are the interests of both countries and of their inhabitants to be consulted; and, above the mere impulse of passion, there ought to be the control of sound reason. If it can be proved, as is indeed evident, that a separation of the colony from the mother country is an unavoidable and by no means remote consummation it seems the height of madness to carry on hostilities fraught with ruin to either side.

Independently of her arduous enterprise in subjugating Cuba, Spain has such desperately hard work on hand as may well task her strength beyond its not very extensive limits. No revolution ever more miserably collapsed from sheer impotence than the movement which, nearly a twelvemonth ago buried Queen Isabella from her throne. A bad government was, at that crisis, overthrown by a small fraction of the nation; but the whole nation has ever since been unable to substitute another government in the place of the fallen one. General Izquierdo, the Captain General of Madrid, and one of the leaders of the September pronunciamiento, formally intimates to the Ministry that unless a king is elected, he will resign his office, "despairing of the revolution." The mere proclamation of a king, however, would not bring about the cure of the evil. The sovereign might "reign," but there would still be the same lack of a man to "govern." Of all the men placed by the late change at the head of the Spanish administration, General Prim alone was credited with sufficient energy, yet hopeless corruption appears to have been discovered in his own military department. The necessity for the promotion of so-called

"deserving patriots" and the anxiety to muster devoted partisans about the government have led to an indiscriminate lavishness of patronage which has raised ill-will in the army while it has lowered its tone. People have been distracted of late by alarms about Carlist disturbances, the defection of garrisons, the mutinous bearing of the artillery and engineer corps. What, however, constitutes the government's weakness equally baffles the efforts of the opposition. It is the complete apathy and supineness of the nation in Spain that gives the army all its ascendancy. The expulsion of the Queen has led to no innovation whatever on that point. It has only effected the substitution of Prim for O'Donnell or Narraez. For the sake of peace, it is desirable that whoever has power should retain it. But Prim's policy under difficulties cannot be said greatly to differ from that of the Marshal's, his predecessor. Like them, he shoots, he transports, he goes back to the most murderous edicts of 1821 for a sufficiently stringent martial law. In other respects it would be difficult to point to any step in advance made by revolutionized Spain either in the theory or in the practice of government. And yet, improvident and helpless as Prim's government may be, it can safely be proclaimed the best that Spain could have under present circumstances; and its chances of improvement lie in the power it may have of directing all its energies to domestic organization and reform, undisturbed by foreign or colonial complications. But strip such a government of its best troops by sending them on distant expeditions, drain its resources for an internecine struggle with a kindred race, and then tell us whether any amount of genius, character or good will can raise its members to a level with the difficulties of their situation.

On the other hand, there is in Cuba an insurrection which could never rely on its own strength either for a successful or even for a sustained effort. An island intended by nature for an Eden, turned by civil strife into a field of blood, has become the rendezvous of adventurers interested not in the issue of the contest one way or another, but simply in its indefinite prolongation. Without the filibusters Cuba would have lain forever in its helpless prostration. With the filibusters it can never work out its regeneration; but neither will it ever be brought back to that state of quiescence which is necessary for its prosperity. The many political and social knots of which time and reason ought to have brought about the solution are cut by the sword of a party warfare unexampled for its ruthlessness in the annals of mankind. The slaves, whom a provident law ought to prepare for gradual emancipation, are roused into a mutiny which will ensure their own as well as their masters' downfall. Yet one season more of the exploits of Cespedes, Quesada and Jordan, and Cuba will cease to be an apple of discord either for her own people or for aliens; and, if admitted into the American Union, it will take rank with some of those ravaged Southern States whose restoration to something like their former existence constitutes the great problem of American policy.

Under such circumstances we need not wonder that Prim should have listened to the first proposals of a bargain which, without compromising the honor of Spain, procured for her, besides a relief from heavy sacrifices, the gain of considerable material advantages. Again and again, from their places in the Cortes, with that frankness which characterizes some of them, the present Spanish rulers have declared, in the midst of a consciously silent Assembly, that "the loss of Cuba was but a question of time." The most fanatical member of the opposition is well aware that all the exertions of Spain can only temporarily crush, but not permanently subdue, the rebellious spirit of the colony. It must take no little frantic enthusiasm to advise the continuance of a conflict in which during the last eight months so many thousands of Spain's best soldiers and so many millions of Spain's scanty dollars have been wasted in vain. Were the mother country to be quit of the colony without the least compensation *Te Deums* for the happy riddance might well be sung in every church throughout the Peninsula. But if a large sum—say only £15,000,000 or £20,000,000—is to be got into the bargain, if Cuba, which is so much worse than useless, is to supply Spain with the means of confronting her most urgent financial difficulties, and to enable her to live from day to day till a government can be installed capable of giving her resources a full development, the Spaniards cannot be too thankful. Out of the many blows which adverse fortune has dealt to that long suffering nation, this severing of one of the last links which bound it to the destinies of its transatlantic possessions would have done it not only no real harm, but have been a most welcome deliverance. *The last French campaign in Mexico ought to have made it manifest that there is neither honor nor profit to gain for the Powers of the Old Continent by meddling with the affairs of the New.* Those who have no open accounts there had better try no new ventures, and those who have ought to deem themselves fortunate if allowed to wind them up on the first opportunity.