

The brief telegram from Madrid, published yesterday, to the effect that preliminaries of a treaty for the cession of Cuba to the United States had been signed, is said to be based on reliable authority. The statement comes pretty direct, and is expressed in unequivocal language, but, to use an old proverb, we fear it is too good to be true. Yet to make a treaty with the United States for the cession of Cuba would be the most sensible thing the Spanish government could do, as well as the easiest and most profitable way of settling the Cuban difficulty. As a wise policy, and for the sake of humanity and those liberal principles which the Spanish people themselves appealed to when they deposed Queen Isabella, it ought to be true. Still, we have more fear of the pride and obstinacy of the Spanish government in this matter than confidence in its wisdom.

To give up a colony which has been so valuable to Spain, which has been a mine of wealth to Spanish office-holders and to that particular governing class which alone has the power to cede or give independence to the island, is not so easy. The Spaniards have squeezed and tasted the luscious fruit too long not to have a keen appetite for it, and, even with the prospect that it may turn to ashes in their mouths, they will be as loath to part with it as the Egyptians of old were to part with the Israelites or the Southerners their slaves. That being the case it may be difficult to make them see the true condition of things in Cuba or their own interests. They may hope against hope and cling to their colony till it is utterly ruined and nothing left but thousands of men uselessly slain and the legacy of a costly war. If we may judge from the representations, or, rather, gross misrepresentations, of the Spanish press and Spanish authorities in Cuba the government at Madrid can have but little knowledge of the strength and prospects of the Cuban insurrection, and, as a consequence, may continue to rush blindly on to useless slaughter till stopped by defeat and humiliation.

Yet if the present government of Spain—itsself the offspring of revolution—would listen to the voice of reason and the opinion of the world it would give up Cuba before any more blood is shed. The leading press of England and France and of Europe generally see the difficulty, if not impossibility, of Cuba being held as a Spanish colony, and advise the Madrid government to make a virtue of necessity and give freedom to the island, or, what would be the same thing, to cede it to the United States. Spain may be well assured that this advice of the European press is not given out of love for the United States or desire to see the power and aggrandizement of this republic increased, but from a conviction that Cuba at no distant day is destined to become free and a part of our American republican system. Then it is not possible for Spain to hold Cuba when the voice of the American people has declared it shall be free and when the American government has plainly pointed out its destiny. The unanimous expression of the House of Representatives at Washington in favor of Cuban independence was in accordance with the sentiment of the American people. Even our slow, timid and shortsighted Secretary of State has declared that Spain cannot hold Cuba. President Grant, it is known, cordially sympathizes with the Cubans and is decided in making the acquisition of Cuba a part of his policy, notwithstanding the

timid conservatism of Secretary Fish. And no doubt that Congress, as soon as it reassembles, will take positive ground in accordance with the views of the President and wishes of the people. Can Spain resist the opinion of the world, the desire and fixed purpose of the American people and government, as well as the determination of the brave Cubans to conquer their independence? That is the question. We are convinced she cannot. She must yield to public opinion and the force of circumstances, as she was compelled to yield in the case of her other American colonies, and as England had to yield in the case of this country.

If the Spanish government would save the proud name of Spain from everlasting infamy it will listen to the American government and stop at once the frightful slaughter in Cuba. The manner in which the war is conducted is shocking to any civilized country and a disgrace to this enlightened age. It appears from the news published yesterday that eight prominent and highly respectable Cuban gentlemen who were prisoners and under escort and a number of their friends were cruelly murdered and their remains ferociously mangled by the Spanish soldiers having them in charge. Similar atrocities have been occurring ever since the war commenced. It makes one shudder to read of such barbarities. It is a crime against humanity generally, and is enough to make Spain execrated by the whole civilized world. Public sentiment in Europe, which has now found expression through the press in favor of Cuba being ceded to the United States, must soon denounce such barbarous warfare, and Spain will sink under universal obloquy, while in this country it will become so intensified as to demand the expulsion of the Spaniards at any cost. In every point of view, then, it is for the honor, good name and interest of Spain to stop the war and to give up a possession that can no longer be valuable as a dependency and that may be of some value to her commerce if independent or annexed to the United States. We know not what the terms may be upon which our government propose to negotiate with Spain for Cuba; but the best thing Spain can do is to let the island go on any conditions. The Spanish Regency is in a position to do this, and the government that will succeed it may not be. Now is the time for action. We hope General Grant and his advisers will see that, and will let the Spanish government know that under any circumstances Cuba must be free.

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