

Reasons Why Spain Should Sell Cuba to the United States.

[From the London Post, August 21.]

Whether there be any foundation or not for the report that the government of the United States have been in negotiation for the purchase of Cuba there are certainly a variety of circumstances which invest it with an air of great probability. That the United States are anxious to acquire "the pearl of the Antilles" there can be no doubt, and the present relationship between Spain and her colony is just of that nature which would suggest the idea of "a deal" to hard-headed Yankee statesmen. America for the Americans has been a favorite sentiment on the other side of the Atlantic from the days of President Monroe, and since the termination of the civil war the government of the republic have on more than one occasion proved the earnestness of their desire to give to it the practical effect. It must, however, be said of the Americans that if they seek to extend their dominion it is by the most commonplace and business like of modes. Annexation in the sense in which that term has been too often employed in Europe has not yet found a place in the American vocabulary. If the Americans so far violate the decalogue as to covet their neighbors' property, they at least offer a fair equivalent for its acquisition, and do not, after the manner of some of the older States of the Eastern hemisphere, avail themselves of superior strength to effect the desired transfer. It is unnecessary to refer with any particularity to the circumstances under which the Danish Island of St. Thomas, in the West Indies, and the Russian possessions in the northwestern corner of the American continent, passed under the dominion of the government at Washington. St. Thomas was undoubtedly needed, because the American government were desirous of having a station for their ships of war in the West Indies; but Alaska was purchased apparently with no other object than that of diminishing the number of foreign Powers holding possessions on the American continent. In both cases the transaction was of a purely pecuniary kind, and was concluded, as we may presume, to the satisfaction of all concerned. Denmark had nothing to gain by retaining her footing on a small island at the opposite side of the Atlantic, and the little encouragement she received in defending her more substantial possessions in Europe doubtless exercised no little influence in inducing her to sell a colony which she would have been powerless to defend. As to Alaska, the Czar was very glad to obtain a good round sum for a barren tract of territory extending into the frozen regions, and which, by no possibility, could ever be worth a third of the sum for which it was sold. That the Americans on their side are equally contented we may rest assured; and having thus ousted two Powers from any plea for intervention in American affairs, or any excuse for trading on American soil, they no doubt desire to push still further that policy which until now has proved so successful.

It will no doubt be in the recollection of the public that some months ago, and immediately after the accession of President Grant, we called attention to what seemed to be an intention on the part of the government of the United States to intervene in the Cuban insurrection. Many circumstances tended to give rise to this surmise, and no secret was made by the President and his advisers of their desire to see Cuba admitted within the American Union. Sufficiently close to the mainland to admit of being regarded as in American waters, the Monroe doctrine unquestionably pointed to its acquisition, if such acquisition were possible. Under these circumstances we pointed out that, although the property of Spain, France and England had a direct interest in preventing Cuba being wrested from its present possessors, and that any attack on it would in effect be an attack on Jamaica and Martinique. If an excuse were made to-day for appropriating the Spanish colony it was reasonable to assume that at no distant day a pretext would be found for laying hands on those islands which now owe allegiance to Great Britain and France. Without for one moment suggesting that the intentions of the Cabinet at Washington were other than perfectly honest, or that they were in any degree modified by the prospect of this contingency, it is sufficient to say that no attempt at interference in Cuban affairs was made by the American government, and the strictest neutrality was observed by the United States as between the established government in Cuba and the insurgents. Thus matters continued till the other day, when it was currently reported that the government of the United States had offered to purchase Cuba from the Spaniards for the round sum of \$20,000,000.

Dismissing for the moment all notice of the somewhat equivocal contradiction which this allegation has met with, we may at once state what our opinion of the transaction would be, assuming that it has in fact been contemplated by the two Powers. If Spain chooses to sell Cuba she has, of course, the same undoubted right to do so that Denmark had to part with St. Thomas, and we can only say that in the event of the sale we hope we shall continue on as neighbourly and friendly terms with the Cubans under the new government as we have been with them under the old sovereignty. If the United States have a desire to purchase as many of the outlying islands on the American coast as the present possessors are willing to part with they are perfectly welcome, so far as we are concerned, that they should do so. The acquisition of those islands under such circumstances would furnish no color for an attempt to annex by violent means any of our colonies, and we can therefore afford to watch with indifference transactions in which for all practical purposes we are uninterested. As to Spain, we entertain a shrewd suspicion that the best thing she can do is to close with the American government. Not only does she gain nothing by Cuba in its present unsettled state, but she loses annually sums which she can ill afford. Apparently not strong enough to stamp out the insurrection, she is nevertheless obliged by a false sentiment of honor to continue attempts as costly as they are unavailing. Even if she were able to restore tranquillity in the island, a considerable time would elapse before she would reap the full fruits of her success, and probably before that result had been attained the flames of rebellion would break out afresh. These are considerations, which, if we mistake not, will have weight with the government to which the destinies of Spain are for the moment entrusted; and, notwithstanding the demand which the rumor in question has met with, we should not be surprised at hearing ere long that the purchase and sale of Cuba have been effected.