

THE PROPOSED QUADRUPLE ALLIANCE.

Speedy Recognition of Cuba Predicted—The Tripartite Alliance of 1852—Our Relations to Cuba.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Sept. 16, 1869.

The reported quadruple alliance on the part of England, France, Austria and Spain to guarantee the latter in the possession of Cuba against the wishes of the United States, forms the most interesting subject of discussion here just now. Very conflicting rumors are afloat, some of them quite startling, and if only true, certain to eventuate in a collision between our own and some of the leading governments of Europe. To add to the excitement, our own American Minister of Foreign Affairs is just now afflicted with a very severe attack of official reticence. He won't say one word about the "ever faithful," and, of course, people construe the extraordinary caution thus practised into a confirmation of the alarming telegram from Madrid yesterday. Then again, Señores Lemus and Ruiz, the Cuban representatives, are unusually secretive. They confess to a solemn confab with Mr. Fish yesterday, and though they refuse to disclose the precise nature, still declare that only a few days will elapse before the world hears some news that will be eminently favorable to Cuba. Does this mean that Mr. Fish has at last concluded that it will be idle to paraver any longer with Spain about mediation and purchase, and that he is about to grant what Cuba has so long sighed for—belligerent rights and recognition of Cuban independence?

Judging from the elation displayed by Lemus & Co. one would suppose that this is the "eminently favorable news" that is to astonish the world in a few days. But your correspondent has so often before heard of these sanguine predictions that he is slow to believe that the moment has at last come when our government is about to take a stand in sympathy with the national feeling and in conformity with our national interests. It is certain, however, that something is brewing, though precisely what it is difficult to ascertain.

Should the Madrid telegram turn out to be based upon actual facts it would seem that the course to be pursued by our government is very plain and simple, if we adhere to our repeatedly announced policy in times past relative to European intervention on the American Continent. The views so boldly put forth by Mr. Everett in 1852, and long anterior to that date by other American statesmen, that "the government of the United States would not see with indifference the island of Cuba fall into the possession of any other European Power than Spain," and that this government had an interest in Cuba not to be compared with the interests of England, France or any other European Power, and that we could consent to no treaty binding ourselves never to take possession of the island, would seem to have committed us irrevocably over seventeen years ago to a great and consistent national policy on this subject. Circumstances have since then greatly changed; our interest in Cuba is twenty-fold greater; and should a European alliance be consummated, with the object of perpetuating the Spanish yoke upon the Cubans, after the undoubted evidence of the desire of the Cubans for independence and annexation, of course much stronger language and more decided action on the part of our government would be justifiable than those which resulted in the rejection of the tripartite alliance proposed by England and France on April 8, 1852.

That project, it will be remembered, grew out of the filibustering expeditions that prevailed at that time. What the convention proposed is contained in its first article, which at this time is worthy of republication. It is as follows:—

ARTICLE I. The high contracting parties hereby severally and collectively disclaim, both now and for hereafter, all intention to obtain possession of the island of Cuba, and they respectively bind themselves to discountenance all such attempts to that effect on the part of any Power or individual whatever. The high contracting parties declare severally and collectively that they will not obtain or maintain for themselves, or for any one of themselves, any exclusive control over the said island nor assume nor exercise any dominion over the same.

To this proposition, which was simultaneously made to Mr. Webster by the English and French Ministers, Webster replied on April 29, 1852, that our government would give it due consideration, at the same time reminding them of the policy of the United States "to avoid alliance or agreements with other States, and keep itself free from national obligations, except such as affected directly the interests of the United States themselves."

Webster soon after died, and Everett succeeded him in the State Department.

Everett, under date of December 1, 1852, replied to both Crampton and de Sartiges, the English and French Ministers, rejecting the proposed tripartite alliance on the part of the United States. In his letter occurs the following language:—

The Island of Cuba lies at our doors. It commands the approach to the Gulf of Mexico; it bars the entrance to that great river which drains half the American Continent, and, with its tributaries, forms the largest system of internal water communication in the world; it keeps watch at the doorway of our intercourse with California by the Isthmus route. If an island like Cuba, belonging to the Spanish crown, guarded the entrance to the Thames or the Seine, and the United States should propose a convention like this to England and France, those Powers would assuredly feel that the disability assumed by ourselves was far less serious than that which we asked them to assume.