

Cuba in the Cabinet.

The Cabinet, upon the return of the President to Washington, have taken up the Cuban question with some earnestness, and have given us at least a definite idea of the situation as it is known in government circles. It is satisfactory to learn that although—as our despatches state—"nothing was done," still a good many of the stories concerning General Sickles' negotiations with the Spanish government have been exploded. It is not said that his note was repudiated by our administration, nor that he himself recalled the note under instructions from Washington, nor, indeed, that any of the rumors from Madrid were true, except that General Sickles declares, in a recent despatch, that the Spanish Regency has respectfully declined the proposed mediation of the United States between Spain and Cuba. We may conclude, therefore, that the bargain-making business is at an end, which we think is a bad thing for Spain. She has had a magnificent opportunity of realizing a fair price for the island, the payment to be guaranteed by this country—a nation whose word is as good as its bond. If Spain wants to press the matter to the ultimatum of war it is understood that the Cabinet is willing to meet her. However, while it is evident that the Cuban question cannot be settled except with the sanction of this country, and in accordance with its wishes and interests, it does not follow that it must be done by means of war. Spain and her advisers have enough to do in Europe to stave off the complications which the present aspect of things in France, Prussia and Austria would seem to threaten. There is, in fact, more danger of a conflict between the Powers of Europe than between Spain and the United States, whatever may turn up in the Cuban matter. If Spain should get belligerent just now it is not likely that she would find many allies on the Continent of Europe willing to back her up with contingents on land and sea; and any attempt to make war upon us under these circumstances would be crushed out in thirty days. We opine that the Regency knows its position very well, and that all talk of war is mere bombast.

The annexation of Cuba to this country, whether by revolutionary strife on the part of its own people or by purchase, is a foregone conclusion; and it might as well be gracefully admitted by Spain and the other foreign Powers as not. Free Cuba would come to us with that bone of contention, of fear and of distrust, slavery, altogether removed; so that the veriest radical cannot grumble on that point. We find in the letter of Mr. Lemus, the Cuban Envoy, a positive assurance that article twenty-five of the Cuban constitution provides "that all the inhabitants of the island of Cuba are absolutely free." This, of course, includes negroes, and was so designed by the patriots who framed the constitution; that, in accordance with this clause of the constitution, all slaves coming within the lines of the Cuban army are at once emancipated, as well as those who are included in the territory occupied by the Cuban forces, and that a great many of the Cuban planters outside the lines of the Cuban army have emancipated their slaves, and this in defiance of the Spanish authorities. Free Cuba would, therefore, become a part of our domain, in case of annexation, unqualifiedly free in her domestic as well as in her political institutions, even if our own laws did not make the existence of slavery an impossibility.

The late Cabinet meeting has dispelled a good deal of the fog which hung about our relations with the Spanish government. Spain is mullish, but mules sometimes are taught wisdom. Our administration is evidently disposed to be firm. We believe that it will be consistent also.