

THE CUBAN INVESTMENT.

There may be a few Spaniards of common sense in Cuba who have managed, notwithstanding, to keep out of jail, but we would not like to commit ourselves to any precise statement of their number. If such there be, they must have seen straight from the start that the question of the island was the very simple one whether it should choose the United States for protector or should hold to Spain. No man with sight or foresight could have quite believed in the absolute independence of its unschooled, heterogeneous elements. Cubans who had the welfare of their cause most at heart were never unmindful of the insane example of some of their well-meaning, but rather reckless, neighbors. It is far from our intent to say that the pious toils and sacrifices of any struggling people can be in vain, or that any new nation, with proper self-knowledge and self-possession, and a greater faith in God and in the moral code than in the astuteness of men, may not assume and sustain independence. Our fear with regard to Cuba is that she does not know herself well enough to stand alone, and has not sufficient intelligence and moral unity among her common people to fortify the most independent and important position which she can hold before the world. The Cubans may have what virtue is necessary to endure a long and bitter war, and rather see their island ruined in that way than be put to a lingering death by the tortures of Spanish rule. They may keep up the elusive warfare they have begun and fret the soul out of their angry and not too sagacious or over-daring enemies. We would like to see more abundant proof, direct from the provinces of the rebellion, that they are bound to do this, while, at the same time, we are earnest in our constant suspicion that anything said to the contrary by the Captain-General of the island and his inveterate toadies of the Havana press partakes more or less of the nature of hard lying. For one reason or other, the question of the actual situation and strength of the Cuban war has been so much befogged upon both sides, that we are now quite at the climax of anxiety to know the whole truth about it. We have considerable faith in the facts that the Cubans lack no gall to make their oppression bitter, and that they have a strong principle of cohesion in the hearty and ineradicable hatred they bear to Spaniards. Nevertheless, it is time that whatever unbelief

remains in the public mind should be helped a little. There is equal reason to discredit Gen. Dulce's story that the rebellion is practically conquered, and its rival story that the insurgents hold more towns than the island contains. We do, indeed, want the truth, and as much as we can possibly get of the whole truth—and we do not think that public sympathy will necessarily suffer thereby for want of a stimulant. Meanwhile, the public and private opinion of Cuba leaves us certain of one proposition—that if the war is fought out to its natural end the island will be ruined, no matter who conquers. There are enough signs of devastation in the west and center to admonish us that this is fast becoming the case. As the last bad consequence of a desperate guerrillero system of warfare, the robber may return, as in Mexico, to collect taxes from society just when Government cannot. In other words, with the ruin of a country we may have to see the dregs of a people.

Few more stupid governments, certainly few more obtuse and blind in any moral point of view, have ever existed than the one which now grinds, bleeds, slays Cuba. It is possible that the Captain-General is doing the best he can for his employers, but that best is mean. The machine of Spanish Government may be compared to the rack. We, who have the blessing of enlightened liberty, find it hard to understand sympathetically that Cuba is ruled by notions a century behind the time, and by dense ignorance of her real needs as a territory or a people. Much and unbearable suffering is required to make any people seek absorption by aliens rather than remain with their own kindred. Spain is less cruel to-day than she was in the bloody days of Calleja, but she is practically not a whit wiser now than then. The problem for her to solve at the outset was whether Cuba should be emancipated right speedily, and the rebellion thus disarmed of its powerful weapon of abolition, and secondly, whether the island should be allowed an easy and productive autonomy by Spain, or should have to seek the same principle among the United States. A few good Spaniards in Cuba and elsewhere confess the folly of the means with which they have tried to rescue their Cuban possession. They have attempted it in gross violation of every saving principle of policy, and in outrage against nature. Men must breathe to live, and nations now-a-days must have some form of self-rule or stifle. The old practice of bleeding has died out of medicine—it has not died out of Spain. Mr. Emilio Castelar, perhaps the most advanced Republican of Spain, early told his countrymen the truth, when he said, in effect, that to war upon the American principle was like taking up arms against the deluge. Yet we have no doubt that Spanish misrule will not cease to be less stupid till it has shed more blood.

We are not, however, convinced that Spain is determined to carry the Cuban war out to the most painful extremity. Many fine words have been written in the Spanish press of the unintermittent gallantry of the volunteers, whose business it appears to be to butcher the Havaneses at measured intervals. The brute earnestness of the Spaniards in their aim to put down the rebellion, and the fierce desire of their veterans to meet their enemy, is probably not overstated. But the counter fact that Spain is asking very large loans in Europe at oppressive rates, is of some importance. She is now spending upon Cuba at the rate of double the enormous budget of the island, while all the estates thereof are mortgaged and threatened by the war, and while the Government bank at Havana has paper issues to the extent of \$30,000,000 against a small quantity of specie. The prospect of the ruin of the island and many millions of debt, and the possible contingency of revolution in Spain, cannot be agreeable. Therefore we attach some significance to the rumor that Spain is willing to sell her possession, and save her valor with the least possible expense to her pride. What would remain for the United States to consider in an imaginable event would be whether it would pay us better to accept Cuba as the gift of the ruined Cubans or buy it of the ruined Spaniards.