

Cuba or San Domingo?

It is strange how any man who advocates the recognition of Cuban independence or belligerency, or looks forward to the annexation of that island, can oppose the acquisition of San Domingo. No one can fail to see that the latter is only a step toward the former; and that meanwhile it secures at a cheaper rate many if not all of the advantages promised by the other. Let us consider: Cuba might cost us a war, in which, though we should undoubtedly acquire that island, our commerce would inevitably be attacked by privateers, as it was during the rebellion, and inevitably with the same results. The expense of the war could not be less than hundreds of millions, while San Domingo is offered to us without a war and for a million and a half of money. Cuba has a population of one million five hundred thousand, of whom about half are white, and one-fifth of these of Spanish birth, the latter nearly all males, and bitterly hostile to the creoles, as well as to annexation; of the blacks, two-thirds are slaves. Among these various populations a civil war now rages almost unparalleled in barbarity on both sides. In San Domingo the population does not exceed a hundred thousand, more than two-thirds of whom are either black or colored. In the one case we should have to deal with the mixed races, and might find especial difficulty with those of Latin origin, as well as with those who would then be recently emancipated slaves; in the other case, we find a single race of colored men accustomed to freedom, and anxious to be received by us. The various and numerous populations of Cuba would constitute a new and difficult problem for our statesmen to solve, and doubtless complicate our politics; the few thousand voters whom San Domingo would bring into the Union would be lost in the overwhelming majority of natives of the United States who would rush to the island when once a firmly-established Government and free trade invited the influx of immigration.

Then, too, Cuba offers us no such harbor as Samana. That of Havana, although fine, is not comparable in any respect to the famous port in San Domingo. The one is not more than three or four miles across in any direction; the other is thirty miles deep and ten miles wide; while in location Samana is infinitely preferable for the purposes of the United States. Vessels bound for Central America, the Caribbean Sea, Venezuela, Colombia or the Isthmus, would be obliged to deviate nearly a thousand miles from their course, to coal or repair at Havana, while Samana is directly on their road.

The question is, whether to secure all these great advantages proffered by San Domingo, at a nominal expense, and with the certainty of no serious disadvantages afterward to set them off—or to incur the risk of a war and all its attendant evils and expenses, and subsequently a train of political complications, in order to obtain possession of a territory which has not been offered us, and a large portion of whose inhabitants are known to be intensely opposed to annexation. Cuba may, and doubtless will, eventually come to us, but she is not now ripe for this, nor are we ready to receive her. San Domingo is knocking at our door, and every distant or possible advantage promised by the possession of the one is almost certain to accrue immediately from the acquisition of the other.