

CUBA AS AN ALLIED REPUBLIC OF THE UNITED STATES.¹

BY THE EDITOR.

ANY AMERICAN who has lived in the political atmosphere of this country during the last year, must know that the war with Spain was undertaken with the purest intentions; that whatever jingos and other advocates of war may have done, prior to the tragic fate of the *Maine*, they had comparatively little influence on the final decision. We may even say that the war was undertaken in spite of the declamations of yellow journalism.

The declaration of President McKinley that our intention was to free Cuba, however undiplomatic it may have been, truly expressed the sentiment of the nation. It was undiplomatic, for it bound the hands of our government, and it pledged the United States to a definite policy towards Cuba, after its liberation from the Spanish yoke. This lack of diplomacy on our part is in one respect an honor to us, for it shows the naïveté with which we acted. We have so little experience in dealing with other nations, in considering all possible complications of future emergencies, and guarding against intrigues, that we have remained children in diplomacy. The Spaniards are by far our superiors in diplomacy, and have thereby succeeded in securing for themselves the sympathies of Europe, with the exception of England, and in creating prejudices against us which have no foundation. President McKinley's declaration was undiplomatic, because, in the first place, there was no necessity to inform the world what we would do, and, secondly, he could not foresee all the changes that might, and did, actually occur within a few months, among which the possibility of Euro-

¹This article was suggested by Dr. E. F. Rodriguez's letter which appears in the present number of *The Open Court*.

pean interference in American politics loomed up threateningly. There are many Americans who deem the thought of a war with a European power, be it Germany, or France, or Italy, or Russia, a ridiculous absurdity.

But it seems now plain that had not the American navy proved extraordinarily efficient, we might have been implicated in a European war, and the powers might have interceded as they did in Crete after the Graeco-Turkish war. The possibility of European interference renders our relation to Cuba very complicated. While the citizens of the United States wish nothing more than friendly commercial relations with Cuba and its inhabitants, while they have not the slightest intention of interfering with their internal affairs, or of ruling their country, and while, at the same time, it would be extremely unwise to attempt any meddling interference with Cuba's home politics, we must recognise that the natural situation of Cuba, with its wonderful harbors, which are naturally fortified and easily defended, may become a threatening danger to the United States if any foreign power should seize them at a critical moment. Havana is a convenient base of naval operations, from which sudden and harassing sallies can be made upon the coast of the United States. The duty of watching them would employ an entire navy. It would thus tie up a number of our best and greatest ships in an eventual war and render them useless for aggressive operations. But that is not all. Some day the Nicaragua Canal, perhaps also the Panama Canal, will connect the two greatest oceans of the world, and then the commercial and strategic importance of Cuba will be of still more vital importance to the United States, because Cuban harbors afford a good basis to a squadron that attempt to blockade or attack either of these canals.

For these reasons it would be a crime against the United States to allow the harbors of Cuba to remain in weak or in unfriendly hands, which might enable hostile powers to entrench themselves there and gain a foothold for warlike operations against the United States.

It was the moral duty of the German government to keep the fortresses of Metz and Strassburg, not for the sentimental arguments frequently adduced in favor of annexation that these cities formerly belonged to Germany, but for the very obvious reason that these fortresses are the very doors of Germany, from which the French may invade Baden without being obliged first to seize any German stronghold. It cost the Germans a number of severe battles to conquer these positions, and their possession is indis-

pensable to German interests, for guarding the peace, and for the protection of the South German states. In the same way, we must consider the possibility of future wars, and of European interference. We must be on our guard lest any power might at a critical moment take by force possession of the Panama or Nicaragua canal. We must forestall international complications, and keep these most important strategic points, upon the possession of which the fate of our nation and its future development depends.

What, then, shall be done in order to keep the pledge given at the outbreak of the war, and to be faithful to the just interests of the American people? In our opinion, there is but one solution of the problem, which is: Let Cuba be an independent republic, with an independent government, and leave her citizens free in the arrangements of their home politics. But let the government of free Cuba be in inseparable alliance with the United States; let the United States be responsible for the defence of Cuba, and act as a direct protector in case of foreign complications with Cuba. If, for instance, a case should occur like the Lüder case of Hayti, a foreign power should be obliged to press their demands through the United States, and not treat directly with Cuba. This relationship would prevent the possible invasion of American territory by European powers, and would thus be of mutual benefit to Cuba and the United States.

The freedom of Cuba with a full-fledged home government is perhaps an ideal that cannot be realised at once, and it is a matter of course that the United States should introduce the system of home government gradually by first administering the affairs of the country through officers appointed by our national government, in the same way, for instance, as the District of Columbia is governed directly by the United States government. The inhabitants of Cuba would, presumably, be quite satisfied with such an arrangement, for while in the United States the administration of cities where everything is left to election leaves much to be desired and shows corruption in its ugliest forms, every administration which has been executed directly by the United States government has proved very efficient and satisfactory. The city of Washington is perhaps the best-governed city in the United States, and there is no one at Washington who shows any anxiety to have the system changed.

While the home politics of Cuba should be left to the management of the Cubans, the natural harbor defences of the island should be declared federal strongholds, to be held by the allied

forces of the United States and Cuba under the command of the President of the United States.

What the final outcome of the fate of Cuba will be is still doubtful, but it seems that this is the sole solution of the problem. It leaves Cuba independent, and yet gives to the United States of America the possession of those strategic points which in the future history of the world will naturally and necessarily become of importance to our country; and the Cubans will find it in their own interests that these points are held by the strong hands of the United States, in preference even to their own, because the possibility of their being wrested from them by a sudden *coup* might be fatal to the interests of the government of free humanity in the western hemisphere.