

diminishing, there during the present century. The slave population of the island was estimated in 1792 at 84,000; in 1817 at 179,000; in 1827 at 286,000; and in 1843 at 436,000 (Ingram's "History of Slavery and Serfdom," p. 203). There were 500,000 slaves in 1873. But the Moret law of gradual emancipation began to operate in 1870; in 1885 slavery was "rapidly dying," and it was finally abolished by the Spanish government in 1886.

Only a few years ago, therefore, quite a third of the inhabitants of Cuba were slaves to the Spaniards. Since then the natives have been constantly struggling for freedom and self-government. Their efforts have been met with the regular devices of Spanish cruelty, and at length the infamous General Weyler hit upon the policy of deliberately starving the rural population, in order to prevent their "assisting the rebels." It is calculated that a quarter of a million men, women, and children have been slowly done to death in this way during the last five years. The suffering of these innocent and helpless people has been unspeakable.

Now, the island of Cuba is less than a hundred miles from the coast of the United States. Is it any wonder, then, that the American people are shocked beyond endurance at the story of this poor people's sufferings? Spain has had warning after warning, but she has lied, evaded, and procrastinated. The Cuban question has now come to a crisis, and Spain has no longer to shuffle diplomatic messages, but to face the armed and embattled indignation of the great American Republic. To this struggle there can be but one issue, unless Spain is able to obtain the assistance of Europe, and that is impossible while England bars the way. Cuba, therefore will be freed from the curse of Spain. Beautiful and fertile, and splendidly situated, this noble island will doubtless become the home of self-governing millions. It may join the United States, or remain under the great Republic's protection; in any case, America will never be foolish enough to let it pass under the control or influence of any European power.

