

THE CUBAN QUESTION.

Attitude of the United States—Important Correspondence Between Secretary Fish and Minister Sickles.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21.—The President today transmitted to the House of Representatives a large mass of documents in reply to a resolution of that body on the subject of Cuban affairs. It gives the letters and telegrams which passed between Minister SICKLES and Secretary FISH in relation to an armistice and purchase of Cuba, &c., the particulars of which has heretofore been published from documents sent to the Senate. Minister SICKLES, on the 16th of October, transmits to Secretary FISH a copy of his official note withdrawing the offer of the good offices of the United States, and also a copy of SILVELA'S reply to it. SILVELA, it appears, regarded the withdrawal of the offer of the good offices as the withdrawal of the note itself; but Minister SICKLES refuses to receive such a note, and the reply was so modified as to state the offer of good offices was withdrawn. On the 17th of November General SICKLES dined with the President of the Cortes. He met there the Secretaries of State, of the Colonies, Mr. SILVELA and others. Mr. MARTOS, Mr. BECERRA and Mr. RIVAS, each said their remarks to General SICKLES were to be considered official as well as personal. He therefore reports them. It was said that Spain desired intimate relations with the United States, and would extend free institutions to Cuba; that the Cubans were prepared for free institutions; that the Government had been asked to order immediate elections for the Cortes in Cuba, but had refused because the native population could not participate; that of Cuban questions could not be considered in the Cortes while Cuba was in rebellion, but that the Government were prepared to recommend the largest liberty. General SICKLES urged the immediate promulgation of their plan as the best way to terminate the difficulties. In reply, they said they would soon be ended.

The probability of an armistice was discussed. It was regarded as impracticable. They stated that the Cuban question would be settled when the war was ended, on the basis of self-government and commercial reciprocity, and that slavery would be gradually abolished. The native Cubans were a majority of the inhabitants, and their wishes ought to be respected in the determination which the Government should make. They desired the President should know Spain is no longer governed by the reactionary and antiquated ideas of the BOURBONS.

Minister SICKLES transmits to Secretary FISH, Dec. 24, a further statement as to the army of Cuba, and alludes to the anxiety manifested in Spain as to the course of the United States. The Winter campaign in Cuba is regarded as a failure; despondency is apparent in all except official circles. The changes in Porto Rico were to include the abolition of slavery. This may decrease in Cuba the resistance to independence.

Minister SICKLES to Secretary FISH, Jan. 9, sees no objection to the publication of all his correspondence. He prefers it should be communicated to the public.

Secretary FISH addressed Minister SICKLES Jan. 26, that the public interest felt in the United States in Cuban affairs has decreased since the flagrant violations of law by the agents of the insurgents had become known, and had alienated the public sympathy. Had the Junta expended their money and energy in sending to the insurgents arms and munitions of war as they might have done consistently with our own statutes, and with the law of nations, instead of devoting them to a deliberate violation of the laws of the United States, and had they in lieu of the illegal employment of persons within the domains of the United States to go armed in bands to Cuba, proceeded thither themselves to take a personal part in the struggle for independence, it is possible the result would have been different in Cuba, and it is certain that there would have been a more ardent feeling in the United States in favor of their cause, and more respect for their own sincerity and personal courage. It becomes more apparent every day that the contest cannot terminate without the abolition of slavery. This Government considers the Government at Madrid as committed to this result. You have several times received positive assurances to this effect from more than one member of the Cabinet. You will, therefore, frankly state that this Government, relying upon the assurances so often given, will expect steps to be taken for the emancipation of the slaves in the Spanish colonies as well as for the early initiation of the promised reforms. The Secretary further instructs Minister SICKLES to report at Madrid that this Government has maintained its freedom of action against great pressure; that its action will be governed by facts as they occur. The President reserves complete liberty of action in case Spain fails to restore peace.