

THE KEY WEST COLLECTORSHIP.

WHY WAS COL. FRANK N. WICKER REMOVED FROM OFFICE?

LOCKPORT, N. Y., May 17.—Col. Frank N. Wicker, lately removed by the President and Senate from the position of Collector of Customs at Key West, Fla., has returned to his old home at Lockport for a brief stay, and was today spoken to by the correspondent of THE TIMES in regard to the questions that seem to have influenced his removal from office. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that, as Col. Wicker is a Lockport man born and bred, Lockport people naturally feel an interest in the record that he has made thus far in the military and civil service of the United States, and in the present question of his displacement. Col. Wicker had an honorable service in the Twenty-eighth New-York Volunteers as First Lieutenant, and afterward in the United States Signal Corps, and at the close of the war was sent to Alaska as Special Agent of the Treasury Department. In 1870 he was sent to Key West as Collector of Customs, and filled that position up to the time of his late removal. He naturally points with some pride to the fact that he was considered a good enough officer under Grant, Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur down to the date of his removal, and he thinks that there must be some sinister influence which has effected his displacement. In all that Col. Wicker says he is very reticent as to his relations with the Government. "I have served the United States faithfully for more than 20 years," he said, "and I supposed that I was entitled to fair treatment. I find myself dismissed from office without the least cause or justification. Secretary Folger has promised me an investigation, and I await that with the utmost confidence that my action will be approved, and that I will be reinstated as Collector of Customs at Key West. Further than this I ought not to say."

If an inquiry be ordered the people of the United States will probably be treated to a new sensation as to the relations between our Government and Spain in regard to Cuba. The press has treated the Agüero invasion of Cuba as a serious matter, as something that in the end might lead to the independence of Cuba, or to its annexation to the United States, and reports from roundabout sources have been received indicating great gains and promising successes to the insurrectionists. The statement of Col. Wicker, which may well be assumed to be the same that he will deliver under oath before any investigating commission that Secretary Folger may order, is to the following effect: That the Cuban invasion is a farce. It is worse than a farce. There was some dignity and decency about the Lopez and Crittenden invasions of 1850-51, and about the Cuban rebellion of 1867, and later, because blood was shed in those tumults, and men asserted their principles with arms in their hands; but about this filibustering expedition of Agüero there was never the pretense of either revolution or rebellion. It seems absurd to those who know the cause and the inception of the Agüero raid in Cuba to suppose that it could lead to bloodshed. If it did it would be by accident. Nobody encouraging or controlling it ever supposed that there was any blood in it. Agüero was an adventurer in Cuba, a mere tool of one of the political parties there. The whole matter of a Cuban invasion was suggested and promoted in Cuba, and was undertaken and carried out for political purposes, and for nothing else. Col. Wicker states of his own knowledge that Agüero left Key West in a dinky-boat, with eight companions; that the Spanish Consul to Key West was aboard the boat before it sailed, and that he would not believe that the craft had any unfriendly designs toward Cuba. Further, that Agüero was arrested before his departure, was taken before a United States Commissioner, and discharged for lack of evidence. It was after all this and after the departure of Agüero that Col. Wicker was called on from Washington to take cognizance of the matter.

The inference that your correspondent gathers from all this is, that the lofty tone of the diplomatic correspondence of Spain with our State Department probably demanded a victim, and Col. Wicker was seized upon by our State Department as the most available victim. President Arthur cannot have had a more faithful, a more devoted, nor a more willing officer than Frank N. Wicker. His loyalty to the Administration was never impugned. Yet he is made the scapegoat to satisfy the demands of a foreign power, although those demands are utterly without merit.