

## THE CUBAN REVOLUTION.

**Correspondence [of the State Department in Relation to the Revolution in Cuba—Atrocities of the Spanish Soldiery—Murder of American Citizens by Volunteers—Spain Guarantees Reforms When the Revolution is Quelled—The Gunboats Needed to Suppress Piracy.**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20, 1869.

The President to-day transmitted to the Senate a voluminous document in reply to the resolution calling for information with regard to Cuba.

Vice Consul General Hall, in a letter to Secretary Seward, November 18, 1868, quoted the views of a conservative Cuban—namely, the news of the Spanish revolution is enthusiastically received in Cuba—and stating the views of the Cubans as to slavery are diverse. Some desire immediate and others the gradual abolition of slavery, while not a few desire the continuance of the institution. The insurrection in the Eastern and Central Departments is represented to be formidable. Mr. Hall adds that good order prevails in his department. In another letter dated December 17, 1868, he says that the insurrection is gaining strength. The condition at Matanzas is general distrust and paralysis. In February, 1869, he transmitted a letter from the consular agent at Sagua la Grande; the state of things there is much exaggerated and he sends particulars. Mr. Hall transmits to the Secretary of State, Mr. Washburne, March 11, 1869, what purports to be a decree of the insurgents' assembly, abolishing slavery. Mr. Hall, March 27, 1869, transmits to the Second Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Hunter, the decree of the Captain General, dated March 24, authorizing captures on the high seas of vessels carrying men, arms, munitions or effects in aid of the insurgents and directing the execution, as pirates, of persons so captured.

Secretary Fish informs Minister Roberts that United States citizens have the right to carry on the high seas articles destined for the enemies of Spain, subject to seizure of such as may be contraband of war or to capture for a violation of a lawfully established blockade. It is consequently hoped the proclamation will be recalled, or such instructions given as will prevent its illegal application to citizens of the United States or their property. A contrary course might endanger the friendly and cordial relations between the two governments, which it is the sincere desire of the President should be maintained.

Mr. Hall, under date of April 2, 1869, transmits a letter from Remedios, and says the majority of American merchants agree with the writer, who states that American born citizens were well treated by the Spanish authorities.

Minister Roberts addresses Secretary Fish on the 5th of April. He says:—"Attempts are made by false and exaggerated statements and public meetings to create sentiment in favor of Cuba. Persons in New York style themselves 'the independent government of Cuba,' and despatch expeditions and arms in aid of the insurgents."

Secretary Fish, in reply to Mr. Roberts, April 17, says he does not perceive the necessity or propriety of issuing such proclamation. When President Fillmore's proclamation was issued peace prevailed in Cuba, but an armed invasion was threatened from the United States. Now a portion of the people of Cuba are in insurrection to redress alleged wrongs, and no expeditions are leaving the United States. Mr. Roberts, he adds, admits that whenever called upon the officers of the United States have interfered effectually to prevent violations of law. The United States are still suffering from the effects of precipitate recognition of belligerent rights, which was done by foreign nations a little more than two months after the outbreak of insurrection in this country. This government, from its very origin, has been foremost in the assertion of neutral rights and in setting the example of enforcing a strict neutrality. This government does not intend, at present, to depart from its traditional policy, but will execute in good faith the wise and efficient laws that have been enacted for the observance of its international duties of neutrality and friendship. The sympathy of the United States is with people striving to secure the right of self-government and with all efforts to free this continent from transatlantic control; but they desire to maintain friendly relations with governments still claiming control over neighboring possessions. They will not abridge the right of free discussion, but will limit their interference to preventing the unlawful acts in infraction of their obligations to Spain and other friendly powers.

Mr. Hall to Secretary Fish, April 22, transmits the decree of April 11, 1869, prohibiting alienation of property except with the assent of the government.

Secretary Fish to Minister Roberts, April 30, says:—"The President has seen with regret the decree, and hopes it may be modified so as not to be applicable to property of citizens of the United States."

Mr. Hall to Secretary Fish, April 30, transmits Count Valmaseda's proclamation of April 4, that every man over fifteen found away from home may be shot; that every unoccupied house and every house not flying a white flag may be burned, and that women living at home or with their relations may be carried forcibly to Jiquani or Bayamo; also informing the department that Count Valmaseda was moving his forces into the country.

Secretary Fish, May 10, 1869, protests, in the interest of civilization and humanity, against Count Valmaseda's proclamation.

Secretary Fish to Mr. Hall, May 11, directs him to make representations to the Spanish government against Count Valmaseda's proclamation.

Mr. Hall to Assistant Secretary of State Davis, May 18, transmits a letter giving an account of military operations near Nuevitas.

Consul General Plum to Secretary Fish, May 23, transmits a copy of the authorization of a loan of \$5,000,000 in Havana for suppressing insurrection. This money is understood to be nearly exhausted. The principle is recognized that Cuba is to bear the expenses arising from the situation. Also transmitting a copy of the decree of the Captain General authorizing the seizure of horses.

Mr. Plumb to Secretary Fish, June 2, states that the volunteers have forced General Dulce to resign.

Mr. Hall informs Secretary Fish, June 3, of the lawless conduct of the volunteers at Matanzas.

Mr. Plumb, June 4, acquaints Secretary Fish of the deposition of the Captain General. The insurgents, he says, are mostly Creoles. The Spanish residents, with the business and prosperity identified with the island, are dissatisfied with the conduct of the government. They wish the war was ended. Those who conduct the war and hold the offices are sent out from Spain and have no interest in the islands. The Spanish residents, though disagreeing as to the future, have desposed General Dulce. They may do the same with the new Captain General if dissatisfied. The volunteers number about 30,000 on the island. Two thousand of them are in Havana. They are unpaid and furnish their own arms. The government depends upon them to enforce its decrees. The organization is officered by men of position; the men in the ranks are reckless. The volunteers are intensely loyal. At present it is reported that negotiations are pending between the Captain General and the Cubans. Mr. Plumb speaks of the violence of the volunteers, their collisions and insubordinations, and gives an account of the events that preceded the resignation of General Dulce and his speculations upon what may follow.

Mr. Plumb, June 24, encloses a letter to Secretary Fish from Mr. Phillips, Acting Consul at Santiago de Cuba, giving information of the summary execution of Charles Speakman and Albert Wyeth, citizens of the United States, and their dying declarations.

Secretary Fish, August 10, instructs Minister Siskles to demand compensation for the families of Speakman and Wyeth; to require that citizens of the United States shall be invested with as broad rights as those of other countries, and to protest in the name of the President against longer carrying on the war in this barbarous manner.

Minister Siskles encloses a copy of his note, September 8, to Mr. Bercevia, as to Speakman and Wyeth, &c. Under the instructions in Secretary Fish's note a report has been called for in these cases, and reparation will be made if the facts are as alleged. Mr. Siskles encloses a copy of Mr. Silveira's note and of his rejoinder. The Spanish Min-

ister says Speakman was executed in conformity with law.

Secretary Fish, July 16, addressed a communication to Minister Roberts, calling attention to the Captain General's proclamation of July 7, as to the rights claimed over vessels of the United States on the high seas under treaty of 1795, &c. It assumes power over the commerce of the United States that can only be permitted in time of war. The United States will not yield the right to carry contraband of war in time of peace; will not permit their vessels to be interfered with on the high seas, except in time of war. The treaty of 1795 confers no rights over vessels of the United States in time of peace. If Spain is at war it should be known, in order that notice be immediately given of the restrictions that such state entails upon the commerce of the United States. Mr. Fish asks whether Spain recognizes a state of war as existing, and states that the continuance of the decree or an attempt to enforce it will be regarded as a recognition by Spain of a state of war with Cuba.

Mr. Plumb to Secretary Fish, July 21, transmits the modification of the Governor General's decree of July 7, as to the search of vessels on the high seas; also the general order of the Captain General for the conduct of the war with more humanity.

Minister Siskles, August 12, to Secretary Fish, communicates his conversation with the Spanish Minister, saying:—"The Minister, interrupting me, as if he thought I had gone quite far enough—for the present at least—acknowledged the sincere and legal manner in which the government of the United States had fulfilled its international duties in regard to the Cuban insurrection. In former days, when the pro-slavery party held the reins of power, there was some anxiety from time to time lest the recklessness of filibusters should involve the two nations in difficulty; but since the victory of the national cause the laboring people of Spain have come to regard the United States as their national friend. The common question was one of the utmost gravity and delicacy. It was the intention of the Spanish liberals, who initiated and executed the revolutionary movements which have given to Spain its new political life, to make at the earliest moment provision for guaranteeing self-government to Cuba; but this fatal insurrection broke out the very moment when it was becoming possible to give to Cuba all the rights she desired. The cry of 'Death to Spaniards' was heard in Spain and it became impossible in the face of civil war to carry out the beneficent plan they had formed. The liberal party in Spain finds itself, to its own infinite regret, forced to a seeming sympathy with the revolutionary party of Cuba, and the liberals of Cuba who ought to be its firm friends are converted by the fatality of the situation into its bitterest enemies. There is no sentiment dearer to the hearts of the liberal leaders than that of 'freedom to all men;' yet they showed before the world in this Cuban conflict as opposed to self-government and resisting the abolition of slavery. He considered the insurrection as a most deplorable misfortune and mistake both for Cuba and Spain. If a way could be found to settle all these questions in such a manner as to do justice to Cuba without infringing upon the honor of Spain the government would be greatly gratified. There is no intention again to work the island of Cuba on the old or desire among the liberals of Spain ever slavery system. It has been their constant wish to grant the Cubans the administration of their own affairs and the full favor of their own liberty, preserving their commercial connection and some shadow of their political relations."

Minister Siskles to Secretary Fish, August 14, encloses article 108 of the Spanish constitution, about Cuba. Mr. Silveira regards it as preventing action upon Cuba till Cuban deputies arrive at the Cortes.

Minister Siskles also communicates August 20, a conversation he had with General Prim, in which the latter said with great earnestness and emphasis, "Let the United States be assured of the good faith and the good disposition of Spain. Formidable as the insurrection may become, it has not yet reached the proportions of any of those conflicts in which governments have found themselves constrained to treat during hostilities. The Cuban insurgents hold no city or fortress. They have no port, no ships. They have no army. They do not presume to offer or accept battle, and now, before the period arrives for active operations, when Spain will send the ample reinforcements she holds in readiness, it is only necessary for the Cubans to accept the assurance of the United States, given on the faith of Spain, that they may have their independence by laying down their arms, electing their deputy and declaring their right to be free by a vote of the people."

Minister Siskles again writes to Secretary Fish, August 21:—"The President of the Council said there is a vast difference between the present insurrection in Cuba and the revolutionary movements by which the republics of the American Continent gained their independence. In those days negotiations were resorted to after campaigns had been fought and battles lost and gained. They had armies in the field and organized governments supporting them. We see nothing of this in Cuba. Only mere roving bands, who fly when they are pursued and have never been found in number sufficient to give or accept battle. It is very possible that in the lapse of time the insurrection may become more formidable. It may raise armies, it may take cities and fortified towns, it may demonstrate what it has not before demonstrated—that it is supported by a majority of the population. In that case Spain will have something tangible to treat with. But we hope to avoid all this bloodshed, disorder and ruin by making some amicable arrangements now."

Minister Siskles to Secretary Fish, August 24, says:—"In general I find less susceptibility to the idea of a transfer of the island to the United States than to a concession of the independence of Cuba. There is an apprehension that the persons and property of the Spaniards in Cuba would not be safe under Cuban control. This impression, I hear, prevails in Catalonia."

Mr. Roberts to Mr. Fish, September 18, submits various considerations and arguments against what he understands to be the settled purpose of the United States to accord belligerent rights to Cuban insurgents.

Mr. Fish replies, under date of October 13, and after stating that Mr. Roberts' letter was not received until September 25, when just leaving Washington, says:—"It might be sufficient answer to say that no intention to grant belligerent rights has been announced. It is a more perfect answer to say that no such intention has been reached by the United States. Mr. Fish is pleased that Mr. Roberts draws his authorities from the history and the statesmen of the United States, and reminds him that Spain conceded belligerency to the South sixty-six days after the bloodless assault on Sumter. The United States had eloquently remonstrated, in the interest of humanity, against the manner in which the Cuban conflict is waged. The present state of affairs cannot be indefinitely prolonged, and the United States reserve the right of future action. Unlawful expeditions in aid of the Cuban insurgents have been planned, and one succeeded; but the United States has always been ready to act on information furnished by Mr. Roberts, and has acted on such information, even when it has proved erroneous."

Minister Siskles telegraphs to Secretary Fish, September 25, that the volunteers are to be disbanded on the cessation of hostilities, scandalous executions to be stopped, slavery to be gradually abolished, and liberal reforms to be granted without waiting for the termination of the war.

Mr. Davis, September 8, transmits the substance of Siskles' telegram to Mr. Plumb, and instructs him to inquire into and report on the same.

Mr. Plumb to Mr. Davis, October 21, reports that he does not think the disarmament of the volunteers practicable, and sees no intention to cease hostilities before the insurrection is suppressed. The rulers in Cuba desire to stop the effusion of blood, and the general opinion is that abolition should be gradual; but none think it should be deferred over five years.

A mass of correspondence is given relating to the decree of the Governor General concerning passenger vessels and its modification procured by Mr. Plumb.

Minister Siskles, on October 18, transmitted to Secretary Fish a copy of a decree according liberty of worship in Cuba; also a copy of Silveira's note desiring the President to use his influence with Cuban refugees to secure a less savage character to the war, and to release the Spanish gunboats, which are neither intended to operate against Peru nor Cuba, but to defend the coast against filibusters and pirates.

Consul Plumb to Secretary Fish, October 15, states that Sibanicu, a hamlet, and Guaimaro, a village of 508 inhabitants, are the only places occupied by the insurgents; and on the 2d of November informs him that both the places have been destroyed. At the same time Consul Plumb encloses a circular inciting the negroes to burn the estates, forwarded by the consul at Matanzas and said by him to have been probably printed in New York.

Minister Siskles informs Secretary Fish, November 14, that no reforms for Cuba will be brought forward till the hostile bands are dispersed, and subsequently advises him of the progress and consummation of various reforms for Porto Rico.

December 3, Mr. Siskles telegraphed Mr. Fish as follows:—"The Foreign Secretary wishes to assure the United States government that Spain now desires the most friendly relations with all the American republics, and intends in her colonial policy to begin immediately the most liberal reforms."

Copies of a number of affidavits submitted by Messrs. Lowry and Everts to establish the existence of a state of war and an independent government in Cuba are furnished with a letter dated December 15, from Mr. Lowry to Mr. Fish, stating that the Attorney General had declined to consider said affidavits good evidence, and had clearly expressed the purpose of the government.

Attorney General Hoar, under date of December 16, gives his opinion that it is not proper for the United States to libel the Spanish gunboats under the statute of 1823, and informs Mr. Fish that the government has acted on this opinion.