

Cuba—The Position of the President and Probable Action of Congress.

Our Washington correspondence published yesterday gives an account of a long interview which a delegation of Cubans, representing the Junta and the Cuban government, had with President Grant. The President received this delegation very cordially, and listened, as the despatch says, with profound attention to what the gentlemen comprising it, headed by Mr. Fesser, had to state. The Cubans argued well their claims to recognition as belligerents by the United States government, and when the President remarked that there was this important difference between Spain and Cuba, that the former was a recognized government and the latter was not, Mr. Fesser replied that it was this difference which he and his compatriots desired to see removed, and that was the object of their appeal to the government. "The United States," he said, "make use of the *incubus vitiosus* in dealing with the question. They say we are no government because we are not recognized, and that we are not recognized because we are no government. The United States tie one of our hands behind our back and allow Spain to have both hands free, and then expect us to fight on such unequal terms. Give us the most ordinary fair play, which is all we ask, and then let the strongest win." He argued that this great republic should not aid a European power to crush out the aspiration of a noble people, struggling heroically to obtain their independence. "The course at present pursued by the United States government," he said, "was entirely one-sided. The Spaniards were allowed every privilege; they were permitted to get everything here necessary to carry on the war, while poor, struggling Cuba was denied the same privilege. There was hardly an ounce of powder used on Cuban soil by the Spaniards that was not supplied through some port of the United States; yet the Cubans were not allowed to send to their country ships, ammunition or provisions." At the conclusion of the interview the President said he "could do nothing in his position as Chief Magistrate but to execute the laws; but that Congress would soon assemble and no doubt would take the matter into prompt consideration and adopt the best course that could be followed under the circumstances."

Although the President was very guarded in his expressions to the Cuban delegation, his reception of it and his cordial and long interview with it must be regarded as significant, and especially so when we consider that just now he is very much occupied in the preparation of his message and in other work connected with the assembling of Congress. But his expression that Congress would no doubt take the Cuban question into prompt consideration and adopt the best course that could be followed under the circumstances is full of meaning. It implies that the President expects Congress will act upon the matter very soon; that he is already informed of the sentiments of members, and that he prefers to throw the responsibility upon that body. So far so good. But the President has not shown in this Cuban business that moral courage which he had shown on former occasions during his public career, and which the country has given him credit for. The House of Representatives passed a resolution unanimously last spring, expressing sympathy with the Cubans and assuring the President of the support of Congress in the official recognition of Cuba whenever he might think proper to take such action. Though this resolution was passed at the last hours of the session and when the Senate had not time to act upon it, there can be no doubt that the Senators agreed with the Representatives. Then the people of the country throughout every section concurred with Congress in the sentiment and views expressed. The Republican State Convention of New York last September passed resolutions, unanimously, in favor of the Cubans and recommended their recognition by the administration. Other public and representative bodies in the different States have acted similarly. The President, then, ought not to have had any hesitation in according belligerent rights, at least, to the Cubans on the ground of public opinion or authority from Congress. He has simply refused to act on his own responsibility and against the wish of both the people and of their representatives.

And why has the President taken this strange and unpopular course? It could not be because the Cubans had not actually acquired the character of belligerents, for all the world knows, and General Grant might have known, that the Cubans have carried on a most heroic struggle for more than a year; that they have been gaining ground from the beginning of the revolution; that Spain, with all her troops, ships of war and other resources, has been losing ground, and that the patriots have shown their ability and determination to sustain the war for independence. Has not the President, against his own feelings and convictions, submitted to the timid representations, or misrepresentations, of members of his Cabinet? Indeed, we can hardly resist the conviction that misrepresentations have reached him through the influence of interested parties—through Americans near his advisers who are Spanish agents, and one of whom, it is said, received a fee of forty thousand dollars from the Spanish government. If this be so, and there is reason to believe it, what a blot upon the character of the administration. What a want of penetration and judgment. The pro-Spanish policy of the government and almost persecution of the Cubans could hardly have sprung from regard for Spain, for it is known that Spain joined the other European Powers in endeavoring to break up the republic at the commencement of our civil war. On the 7th of June, 1861, less than two months after the confederates fired upon Sumter, the Spanish

government issued a decree forbidding the United States, to fit out or to obtain ships in Spanish ports, and our war vessels were prohibited from remaining in any such ports for more than twenty-four hours, except in stress of weather or from absolute necessity—the shortest time accorded to a belligerent Power in such cases—and arms or other supplies of war were also expressly forbidden. This was aimed directly against the United States, for the Confederates at that time had no ships. And it is well known how the rebel blockade runners and cruisers afterwards found shelter and protection in ports belonging to Spain. Our government, then, certainly did not owe Spain any favors in the present case of Cuba. But it is on higher ground than this the United States should have acted, and ought now to act, in recognizing the Cubans as belligerents, or their independence. This country is deeply interested in the establishment and development of republican institutions on this Continent and over the islands pertaining to it, in the enlargement of our relations and commerce with all the people of America, and in excluding the despotic rule of European nations from this hemisphere whenever a favorable and reasonable opportunity occurs, such as that which is now presented in the case of Cuba. We might speak of the noble and generous impulses of Americans for a people like the Cubans, struggling for their independence, but we put the question of recognition on the ground simply of a broad national policy.