

Fear in the Cabinet—The Stumbling Block of the Administration.

Secretary Fish is the stumbling block in the path of President Grant's administration. He sympathizes with the struggling Cubans, but is opposed to the granting of belligerent rights to them. He is willing they should fight it single-handed, and just as willing that they shall be hung or shot. He is afraid that England and France will combine with Spain and whip not only Cuba, but us too, if we show any sympathy for Cuba. In these puerile sentiments and inane fears we are glad to see that he is alone in the Cabinet and that the President and every other member is wisely in favor of a vigorous policy in the Cuban question. Mr. Fish is no doubt a very worthy old Knickerbocker, but as a statesman he is far behind the times, and his duty to the President and to the country calls him to resign at once the post he is not fit to fill. The position he has taken on the first live question presented to the Cabinet is one which, if maintained, will disgrace the administration and place it before the world in the ridiculous attitude of making Andy Johnson's administration respectable by comparison, just as Buchanan made the administration of poor Pierce respectable. Ex-Secretary Seward, compared with and measured by Secretary Fish, becomes a perfect fire-eater. If we look back over the past eight years of Seward's administration we see that he had some comprehension of the march of the American republic, and that he labored to prepare the ground for our absorption of the whole archipelago of the West Indies.

To-day the question presents itself to us in a living and urgent form, and Secretary Fish is afraid, forsooth—is afraid that it may involve us in a war with France and England. While we do not share these childish fears we cannot but perceive that at the present juncture in our domestic affairs a war with England and France would be the greatest good that could happen to the United States. Thanks to one or two English privateers, under the Confederate flag, we have been deprived of that large and remunerative share in the ocean carrying trade of the world which once was our boast and our pride. The American flag driven from the sea has left our shipyards without employment and our mariners without occupation. A naval war with England and France would restore us to our equal position upon the ocean, and nothing else will do it. Give our seamen but the shadow of a chance and they will soon make the ocean as unsafe to the British and French flags as the British privateers made it a few years since to the American. Our shipyards would leap to a new life, and our docks would throng with prizes before whose numbers the Alabama claims would sink into the merest insignificance.

But the man who to-day aspires to direct the foreign relations of the United States of America must lay aside all such childish fears. He must address himself to higher motives of action. Our great questions of public relations must be considered in their relation to the rights, interests and dignity of the nation and of Christian civilization. And herein is where Mr. Fish shows himself to be incompetent to the post he fills and to the duty he is called to discharge. The patriot Cubans are to-day bravely treading the wine press which our fathers so nobly trod before them. By their sacrifices and their deeds of arms they have raised a great American question, and we are called upon to decide it, not by the standard whether Spain is a friendly Power or not, but whether they are entitled to the justice they ask at our hands. And in matters of purely American interest Spain has no claim to friendship from us. In these she has ever proved hostile to the American Union and to the principles of freedom which it cherishes. But beyond all this we are called by every impulse of Christian charity and of civilization to withdraw our friendly countenance from the bloodthirsty and furious practices of the Spanish volunteers in Cuba. They are a shame and a disgrace to the Power that practices them, and still more so to the Power that, without the incentive of either anger or ambition, palliates and excuses them.

When Mr. Fish acknowledges that he would falter in the path of duty, through fear of complications in our relations with France and England, he brings a blush of shame to every American cheek and casts a dark shadow across the hopes the country has entertained of the administration of President Grant. Rather would we trust the honor of the republic to the truly national impulses of the daring Admiral Porter than to the timid fears of a Secretary of State who seems to belong to the age of our grandfathers, and to be inspired in his counsels with the fears that animated the public mind seventy years ago. It was of such men that John Randolph declared they had to be kicked into a war with England. The sooner President Grant purges his Cabinet of such cowards the better will it be for him and for his administration. Let him judge the spirit of the country to-day not by the cold-blooded fears of a Fish, but by the overpowering vote of the House of Representatives on the Cuba resolution, and the still more patriotic vote of the Senate of the United States, where but one man was found to vote for the ratification of the inane treaty with England for the settlement of the Alabama claims.

As for our relations with Spain and Cuba, we call upon the President to recognize at once the wishes of the people of the whole country, and comply with them by an immediate proclamation of neutrality between the belligerents. This will place those who are now struggling in Cuba, alone and unarmed, for that freedom which is so dear to all men, within the pale of honorable warfare, and save them from the fate of robbers and pirates. He should then entrust the maintenance of those neutral relations to the Secretary of the Navy, who is so ably assisted by Admiral Porter, and whenever Spain demands the reasons for our action let them be given by Admiral Hoff. But let us hear no more of the fears of the antediluvian Fish in the counsels of government, if it wishes to keep us out of disgraceful wars and save the honor of the nation. If he will not retire from the Cabinet modestly and as becomes an ancient fossil, as he is, we advise President Grant to shelve him in the antiquarian department of the Patent Office as a warning to all our rising statesmen.