

The Question of Cuban Recognition at the State Department.

According to the Washington correspondents Mr. Secretary Fish has been ventilating a little the question of recognizing the belligerent rights of the Cubans. He was brought out, it seems, by the report that the British government contemplated such recognition as a good stroke of policy for the purpose of establishing British influence and promoting commerce with Cuba, and in a measure to head off the United States there. Mr. Fish has no information to confirm such a report and thinks such action on the part of England not at all probable. Our government, it is said—that is Mr. Fish, we suppose—believes that the British government would not be likely to take any step that would bring it into collision with Spain or any other European Power while the Alabama claims remain suspended over it. Then, it is said, so far from dreading the recognition of Cuban belligerent rights by England he would regard it as a favorable circumstance, and calculated to lead to the early acquisition of Cuba by this country and the injury to British commerce.

We take it for granted that these are the views of our Secretary of State, for they are characteristic and crude enough. We agree with him, and think it not likely that the British government is contemplating at present the recognition of Cuban belligerency, but not for the reasons he assigns. England is not afraid of a war with Spain or any other European Power for such action. There is not the least reason to fear. Spain is not in a condition to go to war and would not make that a cause of war. Nor would any other European Power trouble itself to maintain the authority of Spain over Cuba or interfere in the least in the matter. A war with Spain seems to be the bugbear in Mr. Fish's mind. He has not the least comprehension of the situation or limited power of Spain nor of the Cuban question in an international point of view. Though a respectable gentleman he is a timid old foggy and utterly unfit for Secretary of State of this mighty republic. Though, speaking of Spain going to war with England should the belligerent rights of Cuba be recognized by the latter, he evidently had in his timid mind the silly apprehension of such an event with this country should our government take the step first. Such puerility, timidity and want of comprehension in our Secretary of State are enough to make every American indignant and blush for shame for the humiliating position his country is placed in.

If even England were disposed to take the first step in recognizing the Cubans as belligerents there is no reason, as Mr. Fish justly says, to dread that. Indeed, we ought to look at it favorably. Nor do we think it would prevent the acquisition of Cuba by the United States hereafter; for that is written down in the book of manifest destiny. But England might gain great advantages both to her commerce and prestige in Cuba and throughout the Antilles, and in that point of view the British government is quite capable of comprehending its interests and acting upon them should no higher political considerations deter it from such action. England will never act from sympathy with the cruelly oppressed and struggling patriots of Cuba; but she might, from self-interest, should she see her way clear to head off the United States and to weaken our influence over the Cubans and throughout the Antilles. As a reproach to our timid and weak government we could almost wish that England would take the lead in recognizing the Cubans as belligerents. We could wish this were it not for the shame and damaging effect it would bring upon our country. Let us talk no more of the Monroe doctrine, of sympathy with any brave people struggling for their independence, of an American system of policy for the American Continent, or of the power and dominating grandeur of our great republic, if we do not promptly accord to the Cubans belligerent rights. There never was a worse and more cruel despotism than that of Spain over a people who are our neighbors, whose interests are closely united with ours, and who have no ties or sympathy with their rulers or the old European world; yet we hesitate to accord the boon of belligerent rights to them. The world will treat us with contempt for our weakness and stupidity; for we fail in magnanimity, in comprehending our own interests and in perceiving when the hour of destiny points so plainly to the opportunity and necessity for action. Would to heaven that we had at this particular time an American statesman like Bismarck or Napoleon at the helm of affairs. Then Cuba would soon be free and the foundation would be laid for a grand and progressive American policy worthy of a mighty nation.