

Peru and the Spanish Complication.

Our very respectable and very slow Secretary of State, in his anxiety to avoid European complications, had lost sight of an American complication until a few days since, when he found it had grown to such magnitude that he took to his bed sick at heart. It will be remembered that not long since Peru and Chile were in a state of active war with Spain, during which the latter Power sent a fleet into the Pacific, bombarded Valparaiso and burnt a portion of the city, and then proceeded to Callao to effect the same purpose there. Driven off in this attack by the superior gunnery of the Peruvians, the fleet finally wended its way back to the Atlantic with small prize money and scanty honors. The war slumbered in a state of inaction, and the recent administration at Washington tendered to the belligerents its good offices as a mediator for the restoration of peace. These were accepted, and commissioners from the parties were to meet in Washington next month to arrange the preliminaries.

The only party to the scheme to whom peace is worth more than the value of a button is Spain. She entered upon the war with the the aggressive spirit of a Quixote, without waiting to examine if the point of honor for an imaginary affront in the case of a merchant ship was well taken, and, having struck her blow, is now willing to forget and forgive. To add to her wish in this respect it was the Cuban treasury which enabled her to strike the blow, the government at Havana being charged with the duty of paying the bills incurred by the Pacific fleet, and just now it is hardly in a position to repeat the act. But Time, who does not wait for negotiators or nations, has, meanwhile, brought to the South American belligerents the opportunity to strike back, and that, too, at the vital part which enabled Spain to assert her strength as a Power on the American side of this mundane ball. Cuba declares her independence, President Cespedes requests the antagonists of Spain to recognize the belligerent rights of the Cuban republic, and Peru and Chile do so with expressions of friendliness becoming nations at war.

Here the Spanish Minister comes upon the scene and claims from Mr. Fish that, as it is the duty of his office to attend to the peace making between Spain and the belligerent members of the American family of nations, he shall also undertake to keep them from hitting back while negotiations are going on. He furthermore assumes that the course of the republics in the Cuban question is discourteous to the United States, and to illustrate his position cites the case of a private quarrel between two gentlemen which is under arrangement by a third party, and which he assumes ends the quarrel from the moment the arrangement to enter upon negotiations had been accepted. According to his view the quarrel is now ours, and not Spain's.

Setting aside the fallacy which is contained in comparing national to individual powers, our friend, the Spanish Minister, makes another very great mistake in assuming that a consent to open negotiations amounts to a treaty of peace or even a truce. If he will take the trouble to read he will find the pages of history to abound in the contrary view, and we will cite one fact in American history for his easy reference: Our last war with Great Britain did not cease while peace negotiations were going on at Ghent, and the greatest battle of the whole war—that of New Orleans—was fought after the negotiations had been concluded and the treaty of peace had been signed. The little episode of the recognition of the belligerent rights of Cuba need not, therefore, interrupt the negotiations at Washington, and they can be kept up even amid the greater coming complications which time will no doubt exhibit between the belligerents.

To Mr. Fish we present these assuring facts, in the hope that they will help him to a speedy recovery of his health. But we have a few words to say to him in regard to these Spanish complications. The people of the United States have recognized the belligerent rights of the Cuban republic, and are fast taking an attitude which will vindicate our national rights and national duties amid the great events that attend us. They see, too, and comprehend the petty party policy which would make bluster about the Alabama claims cover up and hide your delinquency in the higher duties which attend you in the American questions now pressing for a solution. If you rouse yourself to the duty of the hour the statesman's pen can solve these difficulties and further the hopes of civilization and humanity. If you do not waken to it the difficulties will continue to gather around you until the Spanish complications open the grave of your reputation as a public man and of the hopes of the administration of which you are a part.