DIPLOMATIC ANTICS.

Some Lively Extracts from the Virginius Correspondence.

How Fish Stormed for Reparation at First.

SICKLES VS. CARVAJAL.

Passage at Arms Between Our Minister and the Haughty Hidalgo.

PASSPORTS DEMANDED

Sickles Soured Over the Discovery That Fish Was Settling with Polo.

The Reparation That Could Have Been Had from Spain.

Lame Excuse for the Back Down by the State Department.

Below are given some *verbatim* extracts from interesting portions of the correspondence between Spain and America on the Virginius question:—

THE MOST AMPLE REPARATION.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 7, 1873.

To General SICKLES:—

The capture on the high seas of a vessel bearing the American flag presents a very grave question, which will need investigation, and the summary proceedings resulting in the punishment of death with such rapid haste will attract attention as inhuman and in violation of the civilization of the age. And if it proved that an American citizen has been wrongfully executed this government will require most ample reparation. FISH.

WHAT MR. FISH PRESUMED.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11, 1873.

To General SICKLES:—

An official bulletin published in Havana on 5th announced the capture of the Virginius on 31st October, and that the prisoners were being tried by a competent court. Hall reports telegraphic communication with Santiago interrupted, and no further details received. The vessel was captured on 31st. Her not being brought in until 4th November needs investigation, and the announcement of trial by a competent court seems not to have been true, and needs explanation. *It is presumed that Spain will voluntarily restore the ship and tender full reparation*, but until accurate report of all particulars is received no positive demand will be made. FISH.

STRONG CONDEMNATION.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 12, 1873.

To General SICKLES:—

Hall telegraphs that Havana papers of this morning published statements, apparently from official source, that the Captain and 36 of the crew of the Virginius and 16 others were shot on the 7th and 8th inst.

It is hoped the report of such butchery and murder may prove inaccurate. You will ask of Minister confirmation or denial of the report. The alleged date is subsequent to the orders said to have been sent from Madrid forbidding any punishment.

I have telegraphed for further intelligence. If the report be confirmed you will protest, in the name of this government and of civilization and humanity, against the act as brutal, barbarous and an outrage upon the age, and will declare that this government will demand the most ample reparation of any wrong which may have been committed upon any of its citizens or upon its flag. You are confidentially informed that grave suspicions exist as to the right of the Virginius to carry the American flag, as also with regard to her right to the American papers which she is said to have. Investigation is being made. You will bear this in mind in what you may say to the Ministry. FISH.

THE DEERHOUND CASE IN POINT.

UNITED STATES LEGATION IN SPAIN, MADRID, Nov. 12, 1873. (Received Dec. 8.)

To Mr. FISH:—

SIR—The case of the Deerhound, of which I cabled a brief statement this morning, was not settled without considerable hesitation and delay on the part of this government. Mr. Carvajal insisted for some time that it was a proper subject for the decision of a prize court, and that until the judgment of that tribunal should be given no diplomatic reclamation could be entertained. This ground was not satisfactory to Great Britain. It was replied that no declaration of war had been made by Spain; that the parties to the contest had not been recognized as belligerents; that no jurisdiction over such a capture could be acquired by a prize court in time of peace; that the act of the Spanish cruiser was a mere trespass on the high seas, from which no right of condemnation could possibly follow. Great Britain therefore urged that the matter was in the exclusive and sole cognizance of the executive authorities, and considering that the facts of the case and the principles of public law applicable to them were indisputable and clear, the immediate release of the vessel, passengers and crew was demanded. The Spanish government at length yielded to the arguments ably presented by Mr. MacDonell, the British Chargé d'Affaires, and made ample reparation. D. E. SICKLES.

CASTELAR ANXIOUS TO SETTLE.

UNITED STATES LEGATION IN SPAIN, MADRID, Nov. 12, 1873. (Received Dec. 8.)

To Mr. FISH:—

SIR—Night before last I called at the Executive Mansion and was received by President Castelar with his usual amiability. His Excellency had scarcely welcomed me when he exclaimed, "How deeply I deplore the execution of the four prisoners at Santiago de Cuba! What a misfortune that my order was not received in time to prevent such an act! It was against the law, and the only excuse offered is that a sentence of death had already been pronounced against these men."

Interrupted for a moment, the President continued:—"Such scandals must cease. A conservative deputation was here this morning, and I told them frankly that we must put an end to slavery in Cuba—it brutalizes all it touches!"

I replied that so grave an offence against civilization should, indeed, have a great atonement, and in the abolition of slavery the cause of these barbarities would disappear.

His Excellency proceeded to state, in reply to a reference to my interview with Mr. Carvajal, that, in conformity with our understanding, a series of interrogatories had been put by cable to the Captain General, the replies to which would afford the information necessary to a just appreciation of the case in any international aspect it might have.

The government of the Republic had every disposition to treat the matter dispassionately and to come to a resolution in harmony with the law of nations and the friendly relations it desired to preserve with the United States.

In reply to my request for early intelligence of the action proposed to be taken, Mr. Castelar assured me that I would receive a communication from himself or Mr. Carvajal as soon as the answer of the Captain General could be considered by the council of Ministers. D. E. SICKLES.

THE SECRETARY RED HOT FOR REPARATION.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Nov. 12, 1873.

To General SICKLES:—

SIR—You will receive by the mail of this date a copy of the telegrams which have been sent to you with reference to the capture of the Virginius, and also of those from you relating to the same subject, as they have been received and deciphered here. The first intelligence was received here late in the evening of the 5th inst., from Mr. Hall, acting Consul General in Havana. I was absent from Washington the 6th, returning on the evening of the 6th. Your telegram was received announcing the instructions of the Madrid government not to inflict any penalties until the matter should have been reported there.

On the 7th the public journals announced the execution on the 4th of four persons who had been captured on the vessel, one of whom was represented to be an American, who is said to have entered the military service of the insurrectionists in Cuba and who claimed to hold a military commission from the insurrectionary authorities and to have been in actual military service on the island. The execution, as it is called, of those persons was forced on with indecent and barbarous haste, and in defiance of all humanity and regard to the usages of the civilized world. It was perpetrated in advance of the knowledge of the capture reaching Havana or Madrid, and it would seem to have been thus precipitated in cold blood and vindictiveness, to anticipate and prevent the interposition of any humane restraints upon the ferocity of the local authorities from the government at Madrid or its representative in Havana.

This is but another instance in the long catalogue of the defiance of the home government by those entrusted with authority in Cuba, and adds another page to the dark history of bloody vengeance and cruel disregard of the rules of civilized war and of common humanity which the military and other officials in Cuba have but too frequently made part of the history of Spain's government and of its colony.

The promptness with which the Madrid government responded to your suggestion, and forwarded instructions to the Captain General to await orders before inflicting any penalties on the passengers or crew of the Virginius, is accepted as evidence of their readiness to administer justice, and gives promise of the promptness with which they will condemn and punish the hot thirst for blood and vengeance which was exhibited at Santiago-de Cuba.

Condemnation, disavowal and deprecation of the act will not be accepted by the world as sufficient to relieve the government of Spain from participation in the just responsibility of the outrage. There must be a signal mark of displeasure and a punishment to which the civilized world can point, and which other subordinate or local officials will have cause to look at as a beacon on a dangerous rock, to be forever after avoided.

You will represent this to the government at Madrid, and you will further very earnestly, but avoiding any just cause of offended sensibility, represent that the failure of some speedy and signal visitation of punishment on those engaged in this dark deed cannot fail to be regarded as approval of the act, and in view of the orders given to abstain from any punishment which the home government had passed upon them, will be regarded as admission of the inability of the government of the peninsula to control the affairs of the Island of Cuba. The omission to punish the acts of the 4th of November, in Santiago de Cuba, will be a virtual abandonment of the control of the island, and cannot be regarded otherwise than a recognition that some power more potent than that of Spain exists within that colony.

You may read what precedes to the Minister, and you may say that this government has confidence in the sincerity and good faith of the present government at Madrid, and of its desire to have executed in Cuba the promises made in Madrid. We fear, however, that unaided Spain has not the power to control the resistance of its authority under the attitude and profession of loyalty and of support which is more formidable than the insurrection of Yara to her continued ascendency. The rebellion and insurrection of the Casino Español and its prætorian volunteers present the most formidable opposition to the authority of the Peninsula.

With regard to the Virginius, we are still without information as to the particulars of her capture. There are conflicting representations as to the precise place of capture, whether in British waters or on the high seas, and we have no information as to whether she was first sighted within Spanish waters, and the chase commenced there, or whether it was altogether in neutral waters. Mr. Hall has been requested to furnish full particulars, and a vessel of the navy has been despatched thither. Mr. Hall informs me that telegraphic communication between Havana and Santiago de Cuba has been interrupted.

There is also some doubt as to the right of the Virginius to carry the American flag, or of her right to the papers which she unquestionably carried. This is being investigated, and, of course, no admission of doubt as to the character of the vessel can be allowed, until it becomes apparent that the government cannot sustain the nationality of the vessel, while the doubt imposes on the government the necessity of caution in ascertaining the facts before making a positive demand.

While writing this instruction, a telegram from Mr. Hall mentions that Havana papers of this morning published a statement, apparently from official sources, that the Captain and 36 of the crew of the Virginius and 16 others were shot on the 7th and 8th insts. Such wholesale butchery and murder is almost incredible; it would be wholly incredible but for the bloody and vengeful deeds of which Cuba has been the theatre. No government deserves to exist which can tolerate such crimes. Nature cries aloud against them. Spain will be loud and earnest in punishing them or she will forfeit her past good name.

Your request to the government that our Consul be permitted to see and confer with American citizens who may be prisoners at Santiago de Cuba was considerate and is approved; but it had been anticipated through the Havana Consulate. HAMILTON FISH.

NOTICE OF DEMAND.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, MADRID, Nov. 14, 1873.

To Mr. JOSE DE CARVAJAL:—

The undersigned, in obedience to the orders of his government, has the honor to invite the attention of His Excellency the Minister of State to the fact that the Havana papers published on the morning of the 12th inst. a statement, apparently derived from official sources, that the Captain and 36 of the crew of the Virginius, and 16 other persons taken on board that vessel, were shot on the 7th and 8th of the present month by the order and sanction of the Spanish authorities at Santiago de Cuba. The verbal communication made to the undersigned last evening by Mr. Carvajal, at the Ministry of State, coinciding in substance with the information received at Washington, must be regarded as a confirmation of the report published in Havana and in Madrid on the day before yesterday. The undersigned is, therefore, directed to protest, and, in the name of his government and of humanity, he does hereby protest against the said act of the authorities in Cuba as barbarous and brutal and an outrage upon this epoch of civilization; and the undersigned is likewise ordered to declare to His Excellency the Minister of State that the government of the United States will demand the most ample reparation of any wrong which may have been committed upon any of its citizens or upon its flag. D. E. SICKLES.

WAITING ANXIOUSLY FOR AN ANSWER—THE DEMANDS.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, MADRID, Nov. 15, 1873.

To Mr. CARVAJAL:—

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, on the 6th of this month in a private communication, and afterwards on the 8th instant in an official conference with Mr. Carvajal, had the honor to invite the attention of the government of Spain to the capture of the American ship Virginius by the Spanish armed cruiser Tornado, on the 31st of October last, on the high seas, and the subsequent taking of the said vessel, with her officers, crew and passengers, to the port of Santiago de Cuba, a place within the Spanish jurisdiction. The undersigned then intimated to His Excellency the Minister of State that the government of the Union withheld any formal request for reparation in the case, trusting that it would seem to the government of this country becoming and proper to offer to the United States at once the most complete satisfaction in its power for this offence to their dignity and the inviolability of their flag.

More than 15 days have passed since the Virginius was captured. The undersigned has waited more than eight days for a communication from His Excellency the Minister of State, signifying that this government was prepared to make due atonement for the wrong and injury done, and of which complaint was made as aforesaid.

Meanwhile the officials purporting and claiming to exercise authority in Cuba, not restrained by the supreme government, have inflicted summary, cruel and bloody punishments on the captain, officers and crew of the Virginius, and on a number of her passengers, and this pending the amicable representations of the undersigned to His Excellency the Minister of State, having for their object the considerate and honorable adjustment of any questions involved in the capture.

The undersigned has now, in the name of the President, to demand the restoration of the Virginius, and the release and delivery to the United States of the persons captured in her who may yet survive; and that the flag of the United States be at the same time saluted in the port of Santiago de Cuba; and also that the Spanish government manifest, by signal punishment to be inflicted on them, its sense of the misconduct of those of its servants who were concerned in the capture of the said vessel and in the execution of the passengers and crew thereof.

The undersigned hopes to have the pleasure of communicating to his government without delay a satisfactory reply to this note. D. E. SICKLES.

SICKLES ON OFFENSIVE COMMUNICATIONS.

UNITED STATES LEGATION IN SPAIN, MADRID, Nov. 16, 1873. (Received December 8.)

To Mr. FISH:—

SIR—I have the honor to forward herewith a copy and a translation of a note from the Minister of State, received yesterday, at two o'clock in the morning, in reply to the protest which, in obedience to your orders, I had addressed to this government on the 14th inst., respecting the slaughter at Santiago de Cuba. You will, perhaps, deem it proper to take some notice of this offensive communication, and I, therefore, in addition to the translation, send a copy of the original. I also enclose a copy of my own reply to Mr. Carvajal, which, I hope, may have your approval. You will observe that I have confined my observations to a correction of such of the misapprehensions of the Minister as seemed to require immediate notice. In this relation I likewise forward for your perusal a copy and translation of a leading article in *El Imparcial* of the 14th inst. The view taken by this journal is precisely that presented by Mr. Carvajal, and one is at a loss to determine whether the Minister inspired the editorial or the editor wrote the note. I may remark that the press of Madrid, and, indeed, of Spain, divides its space between denunciations of the United States, including their representative at Madrid, and praise of the authorities in Cuba for their zeal and fidelity in the discharge of their duty in all this matter of the Virginius. SICKLES.

THE ILL-TEMPERED SPANISH NOTE.

MINISTRY OF STATE, MADRID, Nov. 14, 1873.

To General Sickles:—

SIR—I have just received your note dated to-day, protesting, in the exercise of your office, in the name of the government of the United States, and assuming on your own account the voice of humanity, the representation of which does not belong to you exclusively, by reason of the executions which took place in Santiago de Cuba on the 7th and 8th days of this month. The protest having been presented in general terms, and without relation to any wrong (*agravio*) inflicted on the American Union, the government of the Spanish Republic cannot recognize your competency to make it, even as Spain would have had no such right with respect to the sanguinary acts which have happened in our own day, as well in the United States as in other nations of the old and new continents. The protest being thus rejected with serene energy, I have to fix my attention upon the harshness of style, and upon the heated and improper words you used to qualify the conduct of the Spanish authorities. If the document subscribed by you lacks the solemnity which might be lent to it by the right to address it to me, the temperance of its form ought at least to have demonstrated that it was not dictated by passion.

I would touch lightly upon this matter if I had only to occupy myself with the sting of the insult (*ofensa*), but comprehending its intent, the government cannot consent that, in anticipation of its own judgment, the representative of a foreign nation, even though friendly, should characterize the Spanish authorities in other terms than those which the government itself deems just; an interference always inadmissible, but still more strange when neither the Cabinet of Washington nor that of Madrid, nor yourself, has at the present hour sufficient data upon which to ground a complaint, whether concerning the seizure of the Virginius or in relation to the subsequent occurrences.

Your qualificatory terms cannot even be repeated here, for they would impair the measured tone of this communication; but you will note that, without a knowledge of the facts, it would have been at all times an act of temerity to pass judgment upon the authorities, and that until such knowledge is acquired, it befits the elevation of character you have attained to consider those as guardians and representatives of the law, while the persons shot were rebels seeking to trample the law under foot, enemies of the country and disturbers of the peace and of the rule of a sister Republic.

Disregarding mere impressions, you should have suspended your opinions, as the government of the Republic has suspended its own, for it does not wish to expose itself to the stigma of being hasty and light in such delicate and complex matters. In this attitude it will continue to remain until it acquires full certitude; and you may rest assured that its spirit will not be altered by any kind of pressure whatever, neither will it be exasperated by your note to the extremity of forgetting what is alike due to the dignity of this country and to that respect for the laws which is above all mere expediency and national susceptibilities. You conclude by declaring, also by order of your government, that it will demand ample reparation for any offence committed upon American citizens or upon its flag. It is to be regretted that you have not maintained, under this point of view of problematical reality, the attitude adopted in the verbal conferences to which you make direct reference. In them you confided to the spontaneity and the cordial sentiments of the Spanish government the solution to be given to this incident, which you now, prematurely and with querulous anticipation, bring to the official arena, wherein I shall not fail to maintain steadfastly that the government of the Republic is resolved that the law shall be complied with, as well in Spanish territory as in our international relations, and that no disparagement of any right will be tolerated. J. DE CARVAJAL.

THE GOOD-TEMPERED SICKLES' REPLY.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, MADRID, Nov. 15, 1873.

To Mr. CARVAJAL:—

The undersigned had the honor, at two o'clock this morning, to receive the reply of His Excellency the Minister of State to the written protest made by the undersigned, in behalf of his government, against the proceedings of the authorities at Santiago de Cuba, in putting to death, in a sudden, cruel and unusual manner, a large number of persons illegally captured on the high seas on board the American ship Virginius. The communication from His Excellency the Minister of State will be forwarded by the next post to Washington for the consideration and action of the government of the undersigned. The undersigned, nevertheless, hastens to remove a misapprehension which seems to have led His Excellency to suppose that the language of the protest, and especially the words used to characterize the conduct of the authorities at Santiago de Cuba, were chosen by the undersigned in the expression of his own appreciation of the acts in question. It is, indeed, quite indifferent how the undersigned may describe such events, since the civilized world will not be slow to brand, as it deserves, a violation of human and divine justice, and history will not fail to record the verdict. It may, however, be interesting to His Excellency, Mr. Carvajal, to know that the language of the protest to which he takes exception is a precise transcript from the instructions received by the undersigned from his government.

And if the undersigned ventures to correct another involuntary error betrayed in the reply of His Excellency it is only because in so doing something may, perhaps, be contributed to a more discriminating estimate of the question at issue between the two governments. When Mr. Carvajal asserts that this government is not in possession of sufficient information respecting the capture of the Virginius by a Spanish cruiser, and the execution of more than 50 of the persons comprising the crew and passengers on board the vessel, it must be admitted that his authority for the statement is indisputable. But when His Excellency proceeds to affirm that neither the government of the United States nor the undersigned are sufficiently informed of the nationality of the Virginius or of the circumstances attending her capture and the punishments inflicted on her officers, crew and passengers by the authorities of Santiago de Cuba to warrant a reclamation or a protest against those acts, the undersigned can do no less than point out to the Minister of State that he thus assumes to speak of matters not within his cognizance and beyond his means of knowledge. It is not, therefore, surprising that His Excellency, while declaring that this government is without the necessary data to determine whether or not the Spanish naval and military authorities have acted within the line of their duty and of public and municipal law, at the same moment denounces the unfortunate victims of a cruel and sanguinary administration as criminals deserving instant death, and applauds the chief actors in the bloody tragedy.

In conclusion, the undersigned must observe that His Excellency is also singularly unfortunate in misapprehending the forbearance of the government of the United States in deferring the presentation of a formal demand for reparation in this transaction. It was not, as Mr. Carvajal seems to suppose, because the government of the undersigned was unable to measure the atonement due to it, but rather for the reason, twice stated to His Excellency, that the President wished to afford an opportunity to the government of the Republic, unembarrassed by any exigency save its own sense of duty and moved only by a noble sentiment of justice, to make such ample reparation to a friendly Power as the law and usages of nations required.

The undersigned is grateful to His Excellency, the Minister of State, for the assurance that the law will be vindicated and maintained in Cuba. The government of the United States has never ceased to enjoin upon the undersigned to make every appeal and omit no effort that might convince the government of Spain of the urgent need of such measures as would stop the demoralization and ameliorate the situation of that unhappy island. And if at last, under the good auspices of Mr. Carvajal, with the aid of that serenity that is unmoved by slaughter and that energy that rejects the voice of humanity, which even the humblest may utter and the most powerful cannot hush, this government is successful in restoring order and peace and liberty where hitherto, and now, all is tumult and conflict and despotism, the fame of this achievement, not confined to Spain, will reach the continents beyond the seas and gladden the hearts of millions who believe that the New World, discovered by Columbus, is the home of freemen and not of slaves. D. E. SICKLES.

CALLING FOR HIS PASSPORTS.

UNITED STATES LEGATION IN SPAIN, MADRID, Nov. 26, 1873.—(Received Dec. 23.)

To Mr. FISH:—

SIR—I have the honor to forward herewith a copy of a note of this date, which, in compliance with your previous instructions, I addressed to the Minister of State, asking for my passports. It was placed in the hands of the Minister at the palace this afternoon, a few minutes after two o'clock, by the Secretary of Legation, Mr. Adee. Mr. Carvajal stated that a communication had been made to me of this date, and desired to know whether it had reached me before my note was sent to him. Mr. Adee replied that up to the moment when he left the Legation nothing had been received from His Excellency. Subsequently I informed the Minister that in view of his communication, which was delivered at the Legation at half-past two P. M., he might defer any reply to my request until it should be renewed, if, unhappily, the negotiations now resumed on fresh bases failed and I should be constrained again to take the same step. Your latest instruction on this point, dated yesterday, was not received here until half-past four this afternoon. D. E. SICKLES.

GENERAL SICKLES TO MR. JOSE DE CARVAJAL.

MADRID, Nov. 26, 1873.

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, reserving to his government such observations as it may see fit to make on the several communications addressed to the undersigned by His Excellency the Minister of State, respecting the matter of the Virginius and the penalties inflicted on her crew and passengers, is instructed to terminate his mission and leave Spain, taking with him the archives of this legation. The undersigned has, therefore, to request that his Excellency the Minister of State will kindly grant him the usual safe conduct to the Spanish frontier for himself and the Secretary of Legation, including the household and effects of the undersigned.

The undersigned avails, &c., D. E. SICKLES.

SICKLES SUSPECTS.

MADRID, Nov. 26, 1873.

To Mr. FISH:—

At two this morning I have a message from President Castelar that a note will be sent to me to-day recognizing the principles on which our demand is based, and promising to make the reparation we require on or before the 25th of December, if the facts elicited by the investigation now being made by this government show that the Virginius was a regularly documented American ship.

In reply I expressed my apprehension that the proposed delay would not be acceptable, and suggested that this government should receive our declaration of the nationality of the ship and make the reparation immediately. Nevertheless, I said that on receipt of such a communication to-day I would inform you of it and assume the responsibility of deferring my departure until the further orders of the President.

My belief is that the real object of this overture is to give time to strengthen the Spanish fleet in the Gulf of Mexico and send troops to Cuba, and that at last some pretext will be found to evade the reparation. The fall of Cartagena, which is daily looked for, is expected to liberate the home squadron and the besieging army. SICKLES.

PROPOSITIONS IN MADRID.

MADRID, Nov. 26, 1873.

To Mr. FISH:—

At half-past two this afternoon, half an hour after I had asked for my passports, I received a note, dated to-day, from Minister of State, in which he says:—

First—If it appear on or before the 25th of December next that the Virginius rightly carried the American flag and her documents were regular, Spain will declare the seizure illegal, salute the flag as requested and return the ship, with the surviving passengers and crew.

Second—If it be proved that the authorities of Santiago de Cuba, in their proceedings and sentences pronounced against foreigners, have essentially infringed Spanish legislation or treaties, this government will arraign those authorities before competent tribunals.

Third—Any other reclamations growing out of the affair, which either of the respective governments may have to present, will be considered diplomatically, and, if no agreement be reached, they will be submitted to the arbitration of a third Power named by mutual consent.

Fourth—If the 25th day of December shall have expired without the Spanish government having resolved, in so far as comes within its province, the questions arising out of the demand for reparation, it will hold itself bound to accord such reparation the same as if the right of the United States to require it were recognized, and such reparation will be given in the form specified in the first and second paragraphs. SICKLES.

TWO-SIDED DEALING.

MADRID, Nov. 28, 1873.

To Mr. FISH:—

Last night it was agreed here informally that, accepting my declaration of the nationality of the Virginius, reparation would be made in accordance with our demand of the 15th inst. This was ratified by the Council of Ministers at three this morning, and I was promised an official communication in that sense to-day. I am now informed in a note from the Minister of State that yesterday you authorized the Spanish Minister in Washington to convey to this government a different proposition on the part of the United States, and that it has been accepted, of which you have been notified through Admiral Polo. Please let me know whether that statement is true. The only instruction I have had from you since my four telegrams of the 26th is a copy of the Senate resolution passed in 1856. SICKLES.

RAPPING SICKLES OVER THE KNUCKLES.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Dec. 31, 1873.

To Mr. ADEE:—

SIR—On the 26th ult. General Sickles' No. 893 arrived at this department during my absence for the holidays. In it he states that it was informally agreed, on the night of the 27th of November last, that on a declaration made by him of the American nationality of the Virginius, the vessel and surviving passengers and crew would be delivered up, the flag saluted, and the other measures of reparation accorded in conformity with our demands of the 15th inst. It is greatly to be regretted that General Sickles did not state with whom this informal agreement was made.

The note of Mr. Carvajal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, which accompanies General Sickles' despatch, does not convey the idea that he had been a party to that agreement, but does intimate that he would have discussed some of the points received in General Sickles' note but for the arrangement which was made here.

General Sickles further says, that at noon on the 28th of November Mr. Carvajal sent him a copy of a telegram from Admiral Polo containing what purported to be a fresh proposal from me respecting the Virginius, which General Sickles appears to have supposed was in conflict with the informal arrangement of the previous evening.

Without more accurate information concerning the person with whom the informal arrangement was made, I cannot permit myself to think that the Spanish government receded from any undertaking which it had once assumed.

So far, however, as General Sickles' statement may be supposed to affect this government, it is proper to say that the changes from the original demands of the United States, which were agreed to in the protocol of the 29th of November, were adopted on the suggestion of the Spanish government, under the belief that they did affect the principles upon which our demands were founded, and were calculated to promote a peaceful settlement of the unfortunate differences which had arisen between the two Powers.

Spain having admitted (as could not be seriously questioned) that a regularly documented vessel of the United States is subject on the high seas in time of peace only to the police jurisdiction of the Power from which it receives its papers, it seemed to the President that the United States should not refuse to concede to her the right to adduce proof to show that the Virginius was not rightfully carrying our flag. When the question of national honor was adjusted it also seemed that there was a peculiar propriety in our consenting to an arbitration on a question of pecuniary damages.

This happy adjustment of the differences between two sister Republics on a basis honorable to both fortunately makes the matters referred to by General Sickles of little importance. I have thought it right, however, to correct the misapprehensions under which his despatch seems to have been written. HAMILTON FISH.

THE PRESS OF MADRID.

The *Federalist* publishes a letter, which will be found below. It is from the pen of the ex-Governor of Madrid and ex-Minister of War, Señor Don Nicolas Estebanez y Murphy, in reply to a committee of Cubans in the Spanish capital, who requested his interference on behalf of the Virginius prisoners. He says:—

MY DEAR FRIENDS—I write to thank you for the letter of the 6th (November) which you honored me with. I am very grateful for your having thought of me while seeking aid to save the lives of some compatriots; but I am infinitely sorry for the uselessness of my suggestions, although I am sure that any other person would not have been more fortunate.

The brave, chivalrous, generous Bembetta has been immolated on the altar of fanaticism, with his companions.

You lament the death of your countrymen and friends. I, like yourselves, am sorry for them, because they were republicans, because they were Cubans and because they were men; but, above all, because every grave which is opened in that beautiful country—once the object of my greatest cares; to-day of my dearest remembrances—deepens the abyss of hate and makes a reconciliation impossible between brothers who are struggling like wild beasts.

You weep for the irreparable loss of your friends, and let me weep, unhappy Spaniard that I am, the misfortunes of Cuba and the blunders of Spain.

By my own desire, and to comply with the honored request with which your letter favored me, I spoke to a large number of deputies of all parties in the Congress, and nearly all of them gave me their signatures to the exposition which I had the honor to deliver to the Presidents of the executive power and of the Cortes.

It would be unjust if I did not declare that both Presidents have done all they could to prevent the execution of our brothers of the Virginius, and certainly both have learned with painful surprise the unfruitfulness of their measures, and with profound sorrow the execution of those unfortunate men.

In order that you, judging by vain appearances and by certain articles that have been published, do not incur the error of thinking Spain a nation of assassins, I would say that one of the editors of the paper apparently the most inhumane congratulated me for having taken the initiative steps in favor of Barnabe (Varona), and told me with regret in his paper he would treat me very badly.

I finish, as I began, giving you many thanks for your remembrance of me and the distinction conferred. I am always at the disposal of those who suffer, and with much pleasure when they who suffer are Americans.

Adieu, my friends. Comfort your spirits with hope. Envy, as I do, those who are martyrs to their own faith, and never deny the mother country. I am, always, yours, NICOLAS ESTEBANEZ Y MURPHY.

CUBAN AFFAIRS IN THE CITY.

The Virginius Prisoners—The Cuban Agent on the Situation in Spain and the Progress of the Insular War.

Matters seem to have assumed their wonted course around the headquarters of the Friends of Cuba, in Exchange place. Some of the Virginius prisoners are still to be found sauntering in and out, like men under the influence of a happy dream from which they are unwilling to awake. The fact of their fortunate release is one that seems almost beyond their power to fully realize. These poor fellows, who were snatched so opportunely from the edge of the grave, are nearly all young men or lads. The most of them evince a quiet, retiring disposition, but here and there are to be found a few irrepressible spirits who seem not at all averse to the little honizing bestowed on them in a small way since their arrival in this city. They are all, as formerly reported, being comfortably cared for and provided with everything necessary to their wants. Some few grumblers have been found among them, who complain of not being more sumptuously provided for; but these two or three irrationals probably think that the Junta ought to have ordered a carriage and pair in waiting to convey them to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and fed them on champagne dinners ever since disembarking from the Juniata. It is right to add that fortunately the discontented are very few. Nearly all the men seem anxious as ever to risk life and limb for the sake of Cuba. It would not be surprising to hear of them again being actively engaged in honorable, if dangerous, service.

Mr. Aldama was found among his compatriots, immersed in papers and seemingly employed on the important patriotic mission, which absorbs much time and attention. The HERALD man asked the Cuban agent what he thought of Spanish affairs as bearing on the question of Cuba.

"I think," said the gentleman, "that the fall of Castelar involves that of the Spanish Republic. No intelligent man, who knows the people of Spain, could believe them capable of establishing a republic among them. The return to Madrid of Serrano, Topete and others was the signal for the overthrow of Castelar. The pear was ripe and the fruit gathered. Serrano will now establish a military government in harmony with the views and wishes of the Alfonsists. The fact that the so-called Republic still retains the crown on the national arms shows that the republicans were either too few in number to have the decrees of Congress executed or too insincere to do it. The Prince of Asturias, Don Alfonso, will soon be recalled to Spain and a monarchical form of government re-established."

"Who do you think will be regent? Serrano,"

"No, Serrano will not be regent; but the Duke of Montpensier will. He is the intended regent. The thing was arranged all in Paris more than eleven months ago."

"Will Isabella return to Spain?"

"I believe not. She is too fond of Paris, and the gay life she leads there. Besides, there are several other reasons that stand in the way of her return to Madrid."

"What effect will these political changes in the mother country have on the cause of Cuba?"

"They will be the means of keeping alive the civil war in Spain; for the true republicans will now join the intransigentes, and the party throughout Europe will probably support the men of Cartagena, so that Prince Alfonso—who is to marry a daughter of the Duke de Montpensier—will find some difficulty in peacefully establishing the united branch of the Spanish Bourbons. These complications and combinations will require all the money and men that Spain can raise for some time to come, and she will be unable to send reinforcements to Cuba. But, whether she does or not, the result will be the same—Cuban independence. With large reinforcements the Spaniards might, for a while, succeed in driving our troops back again into the mountains, where they can live for years unmolested. Wanting more troops—that, I believe, cannot be sent out—the question will be sooner decided in our favor. Even the Spaniards themselves now frankly admit the gravity of the situation. The last review of the situation by the *Diario de la Marina* is a full confession that the Cubans are making unprecedented headway. Another thing is that the downfall of Castelar's government will bring about a change of policy on the part of the United States towards Spain. Mr. Fish will find a vast difference between dealing with Castelar and Serrano or Montpensier. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Cushing may not go to Madrid. At all events, whether or not the Cubans will never cede an iota from the position which they have battled for during more than five years, and with increasing success each succeeding twelvemonth.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR'S DEBUT.

An Enormous Audience Greets Him on the Occasion of His First Lecture.

An enormous audience, which filled every available seat in Association Hall, greeted Professor Richard A. Proctor, the great English astronomer, last evening on the occasion of his first lecture on the "Sun." Mr. Proctor is a large man, above the middle height, with a fine, well shaped broad head, brown hair, an aquiline nose, clear, open eyes and the time-honored English whiskers. How little they thought, he said, when they looked up to the sun, that he was pouring forth supplies of light and heat infinitely greater than were necessary for this earth. If this earth were represented by an orb one inch in diameter the sun's globe would have to be represented by an orb three yards in diameter. These were their relations of size. Travelling with the rapidity of an Armstrong cannon ball it would occupy 13 years in reaching the sun.

Even light, which travelled 200,000 miles in a second, occupied eight minutes in reaching them from the sun, so that they saw the sun not as it actually was, but as it was eight minutes ago. Mr. Proctor gave a great many interesting figures like these. The sun's gravity acted instantaneously, even more quickly than light. Even light occupied some time in travelling, but the sun's gravity acted instantaneously—a wonderful power, of which science could give no satisfactory explanation. In England he was generally wont to compare the size of Great Britain, which seemed to the people there such a large country, with that of the sun, but he was afraid England would not appear a very large country to an American audience. (Laughter.) He had even heard that an American gentleman in England, when informed of the size of that kingdom, went at once to the most central counties, and was even there afraid to go out, thinking that peradventure he might fall off the island and into the sea. (Laughter.)

The quantity of the sun's heat received by a square mile of the earth would be sufficient to melt in an hour 26,000 tons of ice. But only a two hundred and twenty-seven millionth part of the sun's heat was received by the earth and all the other planets. It was almost as if a merchant who was worth $2,000,000 were to use only one cent of his money. The sun's surface was marked with dark spots. Four photographic diagrams of the sun were then shown, with the various aspects of the spots. A number of other pictures also illustrated this part of the lecture, giving a vivid idea of the features of the various spots.

Professor Proctor then gave a minute account of the results of spectroscopic discoveries. He showed the spectrum as given by gaseous and incandescent bodies. The chemist had only to ascertain the character of the lines produced in the spectrum in order to understand the character and sources of the light. Professor Proctor then spoke of the period during which the solar spots waxed and waned. There was an intimate connection between the spots and the conditions of the earth's magnetism. Professor Proctor then showed the nature of the solar prominences by means of very vivid photographic pictures, most of which were taken at the Cambridge University. The course of the ruddy, glowing heat from these prominences was minutely traced and every detail described with graphic clearness.

The lecture was frequently interrupted by applause, and was undoubtedly a great success.

THE PARSONS AT PRAYER.

A Remarkable Prayer Meeting—The Beecher, Buddington and Storrs Reconciliation Scene at the Church of the Pilgrims.

The following particulars in regard to the remarkable Buddington, Beecher and Storrs controversy are obtained from an authoritative source, and present the reconciliation scene in a melodramatic light:—

Mr. Taft, a lawyer, a member of the Clinton avenue church, a friend of his pastor and a friend of Mr. Beecher, went to the Plymouth preacher and asked him if he would have an interview with the two other clergymen. Mr. Beecher said that he had no objection whatever to meeting and discussing the points of difference on Congregational polity; but as to the wretched Bowen and Tilton business, he would have nothing to say about it; he had his own views on that subject; he had made up his mind as to how he would act about it, and would not change his mind or his action; he would talk of it with nobody. The two—Taft and Beecher—then sought Dr. Buddington, and the three, after friendly salutations, moved upon the Church of the Pilgrims in the following order:—Mr. Beecher occupied the centre, supported on the right wing by the pastor of the sister church of Clinton avenue, and on the left wing by the legal peace maker. The march was beguiled by genial intercourse, and passing citizens who had recently read the newspapers were surprised at the smiling and merry outward signs of a cordial, even joyous alliance. At Dr. Storrs' study, which adjoins his church, no resistance was offered to the invading triad. Indeed, the citadel was captured in the absence of the garrison, the attendant announcing that Dr. Storrs had gone out, but would presently return. While awaiting his arrival, Dr. Buddington suggested the propriety of prefacing business with prayer. To this Mr. Beecher assented, requesting his reverend brother of the sister church to begin and agreeing to follow. Before Mr. Beecher had finished his supplication Dr. Storrs entered, and contemplated the scene with such amazement as may be conjectured. His astonishment was not diminished when the pastor of the Plymouth sister church, with characteristic readiness, began praying directly at him, and in Mr. Beecher's own words, "gave it to him strong." The conversation that ensued was quite friendly, but its result wholly personal, each minister disclaiming any authority to speak for his congregation or to pledge his committee. Official action by the sister churches is therefore now in order.

THE THIRD AVENUE CAR FATALITY.

Coroner Croker yesterday held an inquest in the case of Mr. Isaac L. Davis, late of No. 546 Ninth avenue, whose death, it is alleged, was the result of injuries received on the 27th ult., by having been forcibly ejected from car No. 28, of the Third avenue line, in the Bowery, near Grand street, by the conductor.

Mr. T. H. Darlington, of No. 251 East Sixty-first street, who was a passenger on the car, deposed that he saw deceased in the car sit down in a gentleman's lap; he pushed him away, when deceased sat down in another gentleman's lap, who also pushed him away; the conductor then told deceased that he must get off the car, and he said he would not until he got his fare back