

though he may refuse and thus maintain peace.

What the moving cause is in the minds of Congressmen is in a measure left to conjecture. It may be a general sentiment of sympathy for a people struggling for political freedom, added to a feeling of strong condemnation of Spain's methods; or it may be in consequence of the financial interests that are affected by the contest on the island; and it may be that the senators perceive that Spain cannot hold Cuba much longer and in dire distress may sell it to England rather than let it go under the influence of the United States; or that if Cuba frees herself a Mexican protectorate may be established there; perhaps a combination of these causes may be operating. In any event, there is no mistaking the fact that this government is on the verge of taking decisive action, let consequences be what they may. The President may block the way for a time, but it cannot be for long unless existing conditions change.

With the recognition of Cuban independence possible as one of the first events of the new year, a contemplation of the results of that action is foremost in the public mind. If it were the ordinary recognition that comes when a new government is able to assert itself, there would not be so much concern; for that would only mean that Cuba would have the same rights in American waters as Spain has; that she could find temporary refuge for her ships, could purchase supplies, or float bonds, or transact any business that a nation is able to engage in. But in this case the recognition of the United States means that this government must guarantee Cuba's independence—that her army and navy must be in service against the Spanish on the island, just as it was in behalf of Texas in the war of 1845—for Cuba yet has no government to stand alone.

That Spain will enter into a conflict with the United States in case of the recognition, there is little doubt. It is the only hope the reigning dynasty has of retaining its place at the head of Spanish affairs; for a republic in Cuba means a republic in Spain—which the European nations do not look upon with favor. The republican movement is strong in Spain, and if Cuba is lost without a struggle with the United States, then the Spanish virtually will say the government that could not hold a colony against insurrection is not strong enough to rule. The result would be an upheaval, and a new republic in Europe. The royal house of Spain would submit to the hardest kind of a thrashing from the United States, if that would avert dethronement.

As to the outcome of a war between this country and Spain, there is no question from a natural point of view. Unprotected as the coast of the United States is, comparatively, against a maritime power like England, it is amply guarded against anything Spain has the ability to do, and it would be easier for the United States to carry the war into Spain than for the latter country to make headway on this land. So the result that far is a foregone con-

clusion. But it is just probable that England and some other European nations might wish to say something when the United States is involved in war, and then the end is beyond the power of man to discern.

There are in this country a great many people who believe that the only road to good times is through a war. They would prefer that European nations should engage in it, as that would help trade on this side of the water; they are even willing for a little trouble with Spain, thinking that the chief advantage still would come to business here. This belief has something to do with the war sentiment, although not the chief moving power. The proposed action of Congress may bring about more of war than appears in immediate prospect. In any event it augurs a situation of extreme seriousness which renders it possible that from the action of this government, grow out of a sympathy with Cuba which found earliest lodgment in the Southern States and from there spread over the country, war may be "poured out upon all nations."

### THE LANGUAGE OF OUR LORD.

Recent investigations to ascertain what language our Savior spoke, when on earth, establish the fact that it was Aramaic and not Hebrew, as once commonly supposed. Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis, who some time ago discovered the ancient Syriac text of the four gospels in the monastery at Mount Sinai, in an article in *The Century* gives some reasons for this view.

There are, for instance, numerous Aramaic phrases in the text of the New Testament, represented as literal quotations from the sayings of Christ, such as "Ephphata" (Be opened); "Talitha cumi" (Maiden, arise), and the cry of agony on the cross, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?" Then names of places and persons are often given in their Syriac form, as "Bar" (son), instead of the Hebrew "Ben," in Bartholomew, Barabbas, Bar-Jesus, Bar-Jona, Barnabas, Bar-Timæus. There are further "Cepha" (a stone), "Boanerges" (sons of thunder), "Sapphira" (the beautiful), "Thoma" (the twin), "Martha" (the mistress), "Talitha" (the girl), "Bethsaida" (house of fishing), "Nazareth" (watch), "Gethsemane" (oil press), "Golgotha" (place of a skull), and "Aceldama" (the field of blood), all of which are of Syriac origin. The words "mammon," "raca" and "abba" are also Syriac.

Another very strong argument is advanced. Mrs. Lewis calls attention to the fact that Semitic peoples delight in puns and assonances, or jingles of words. The Koran, for instance, derives much of its supposed sanctity from this cause alone. In the Syriac version of Christ's discourses, this genuine Semitic characteristic is prominent, although it is, of course, lost in the translations. For instance in the saying: "He who committeth sin is the slave of sin," the words for "commit" and "slave" are but different forms of one word. A similar play on words is noticed in this passage: "I

say to my slave do this, and he doeth it."

The practical importance of this question is seen in the interpretation of some difficult sentences in the New Testament. In the parable of the unfaithful servant in Matthew 24, it is said, "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites." The objection is hardly avoidable that in the parable the punishment seems out of all proportion to the offense. No Jewish householder would have cut a servant to pieces for the neglect of duty mentioned. In the Syriac found on Mount Sinai it appears that the word translated "cut in pieces" is a word which also means "divide or appoint a portion," and if this is the expression used by our Lord, the meaning is that the portion of the servant was appointed with the hypocrites.

Another of Christ's sayings, which by the way has caused much ridicule among unbelievers and difficulties among theologians, is Matt. 8:22: "But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." How can the dead bury the dead? The Syriac versions read: "Let the buriers [i. e. the gravediggers or undertakers] bury their dead." The probability is that the young man in the gospel narrative, when asked to follow Jesus, suggested that he would like to stay at home, like other Jews, as long as his father lived and until he had paid his last filial duties to the remainer, and that after that he would become a disciple; to which our Lord replied that the care of the mortal part in man was of secondary importance. A grave digger could attend that. The first duty was to preach the kingdom of God.

It seems likely, too, that if the point be established that the language daily spoken by the Lord and His disciples was the Aramaic it follows that we must suppose that at least some of the four gospels were originally written in this dialect, and that consequently the Greek copies now extant must be regarded as translations of earlier documents. This point will be thought of greatest importance for biblical criticism. A council held by Protestants in Switzerland in 1875 declared that the Bible "is the single and uncorrupted rule of our faith and life, by whose standard, as by a touchstone, all versions which exist, whether Eastern or Western, must be tried, and wherever they vary, be made conformable to it." But this was claimed, as far as the New Testament is concerned, for the Greek version. And this is substantially the position of the Protestants today. But if some of the gospels can be proven to be translations from earlier Aramaic versions, it is evident that these, not the Greek, would be the standard.

The old Aramaic language was, as far as known, originally spoken in Syria and Mesopotamia. It is the mother tongue of Chaldean as spoken in Babylon and of the later Aramaean, spoken in Syria. The Aramaean spoken at the time of our Lord in Palestine was no doubt a mixture of Hebrew and Syrian dialects. A