

THE ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

(Written immediately after President McKinley sent the Hawaiian Treaty to the Senate, June 16, 1897.)

Midway between the Golden Gate and Yokohama, but far outside a line drawn from the northwestern to the southwestern extremities of the Republic, lies the archipelago known on the map as the Sandwich Islands, set like a cluster of gems in the immeasurable azure of the Pacific, where one hundred years ago Captain Cook found half a million natives living in a state of feudal communism, without laws or morals or industry, their simple wants supplied by Nature beneath a sky that was cloudless, and in a year that had no winter.

Civilization bequeaths to weaker races only its vices. The Indian, the Negro, the Chinese, the Hindoo, the Polynesian, are illustrations of the blessings which Christian nations bestow upon their victims. Since 1778, the date of discovery, the native population, under the benign influences of alcohol and disease, has constantly declined till but a fraction remains. In the twenty-five years following the landing of Cook fully one-half of the original inhabitants perished from these causes, and the diminution has since steadily progressed. Their final extinction or absorption is the decree of destiny.

The fertile lands, the harbors, the political functions, meanwhile have been acquired by foreigners, who control the commerce, the agriculture, and the government of the islands, and desire to make them a colony, a territory, or a dependency

of the United States. Treaties to this end have repeatedly been considered, and the latest is now pending (June, 1897) for ratification by the Senate.

It must be conceded that our policy hitherto has been strictly continental from the beginning. We have rejected all efforts to extend our boundaries outside the North American continent. We have permitted the other great Powers to establish naval stations in the West Indies, which are a menace to every seaport upon our Atlantic coast. The hunger for the horizon seemed to have been satiated, but the instinct for conquest, which is such a powerful passion in our race, has been inactive, not because it was extinct, but because we had enough. The Louisiana and Florida Purchase, the annexation of Texas, the robbery of Mexico, satisfied from time to time the appetite of the pioneer. But at last we have abolished the frontier and subjugated the desert. The public domain is exhausted. The struggle for life is becoming more intense. Competition is more bitter and strenuous. Society is now in a hand-to-hand contest with the destructive forces which civilization itself has engendered, and it is evident that we are entering a new epoch in our history. If we do not prey upon others, we may prey upon ourselves.

The indications also are that England, France, Spain, Germany, and Russia are yielding to the time spirit which manifests itself in the sullen discontent of the poor and the fatal satiety of the rich, and seeking new fields for adventure and new markets for trade.

We have come in the United States to the fork of the roads. Our industrial competitors and rivals have entered upon a career of stupendous rapacity. In Africa, Asia, China, the Philippines, in every abode of inferior races, they are engaged

in schemes of plunder and depredation as savage and brutal as the ravages of the Huns or the descent of the Goths and Vandals.

Directly in the pathway of our commerce with Australia, the Orientals, and the Northern Pacific, the inevitable route of the ocean cable, the *rendezvous* of fleets and navies, lies this little insular domain whose fate within the next thirty days is to be determined by the votes of ninety men behind the closed gates of the Senate of the United States. That the Sandwich Islands will belong to us or to some unfriendly power in the immediate future may be taken for granted. They can not stand alone. They have neither the population nor the wealth to hold their own in the family of nations.

The fundamental question before the American people, therefore, is not so much whether it will be to our advantage to annex them, as to whether it will be to our disadvantage to have England annex them; whether with thirty-five hundred miles of vulnerable frontier on the north, with the fortifications of Halifax and Vancouver at either end on the Atlantic and Pacific, we can afford to have this blustering ruffian of the world build another Gibraltar in mid-ocean, where her ships can assemble and menace our sea-front from the Columbia River to the Nicaragua Canal.

It needs no soothsayer to predict that the next theatre of industrial and commercial activity will be in the Eastern Hemisphere. The unprecedented energy of Japan, the extension of the Russian railroad system through the Asiatic Continent, and the subsequent development of its navy and commercial marine, the gold exodus of the valley of the Yukon, the enormous value of the forests and fisheries of the Northwest, and the new highways and centers of exchange that

will result from the completion of the Isthmus Canal, and the practical partition of China with its four hundred million inhabitants, unerringly point to a revolution that will make the twentieth century the most marvellous in the annals of mankind.

In this great theatre of action Hawaii is a focal point of transcendent importance. It is the key of the Pacific. That the treaty of annexation is opposed to the traditions of the Republic can be conceded. But we are opening a new volume in the world's history. The westward path of empire has made the circle of the globe, and it must retrace its footsteps or go on to the goal whence it started. New times demand new manners and new men. Tradition was opposed to the purchase of Louisiana by Jefferson from Napoleon; to the acquisition of Florida; to the Alaskan treaty with Russia. There was no warrant in the Constitution for either, but they were sanctioned by public opinion. Alaska is not contiguous to our territory, and the Klondike is practically more remote than Honolulu. With cable communication, which will soon be established, the question of distance will disappear, the ocean will be no barrier, and time will be annihilated.

The suggestion that the people of Hawaii are not in favor of annexation, and that the existing Government is a usurpation, is not borne out by any facts that have appeared since Mr. Cleveland's ludicrous effort to lower the American flag and restore the monarchy by diplomatic methods that would have disgraced a rural pettifogger in an attempt to secure fictitious co-respondents in a divorce case.

The constitutional difficulty of establishing some form of government not inconsistent with our institutions is more

fanciful than real. It could be made a county of the State of California, with the consent of that commonwealth. It could be attached for judicial and municipal purposes, under the same conditions, to Oregon or Washington. It is further out than the Isles of Shoals from New Hampshire, or Nantucket from Massachusetts, but the conditions are the same. It could be declared a military reservation, or it might be governed by commissioners under a code like the District of Columbia. It would not be indispensable for the preservation of liberty and self-government that Hawaii should be admitted into the Union as a separate and independent State.

Mr. James Bryce has written an article for *The Forum* upon "The Policy of Annexation for America," in which he expresses the opinion that we should not increase our territory nor enlarge our navy, nor incorporate populations not homogeneous and similar. He fears we might be compelled to maintain two powerful fleets, one in the Pacific and one in the Gulf of Mexico, to defend Cuba and Hawaii from foreign attack, if, as he is apprehensive we may, we should annex these islands. He deprecates the "earth hunger" which rages among European states, and hopes we will wait until the appetites are fully satiated. This eminent Englishman is the author of an exceedingly valuable and interesting work on "The American Commonwealth," and the people of the United States will greatly appreciate his solicitude for their welfare. The information he conveys as to our "mission" is also novel and instructive, and will have great weight in determining our conduct in the future. His advice concerning our duty and our policy in this crisis ought to be the subject of early consideration by the President and his Cab-

net, lest we descend from our pedestal of "wise and pacific detachment," whatever that may be.

The Professor is wiser in his day and generation than the children of light. His attitude of lofty and patronizing superiority from any other source would seem like unwarranted and insufferable impertinence. Coming from a citizen of the nation which has habitually trampled on the rights of the feeble and helpless in the four quarters of the earth, the chartered bully of the seas, it has elements of the grotesque. He admits incautiously that the "lanx for coloring new territories British on the map" has had something to do with these recent extensions of British authority, but feels that it would be unfortunate should the United States be led into any similar courses. Quite so, Professor. But the analysis which detects in the annexation of Hawaii any resemblance to the subjugation and plunder of India, or the Rhodes conspiracy in South Africa, is neither philosophical nor accurate. It lacks perspective. Should Professor Jones, of Harvard, or Professor Smith, of Chicago University, print in *The Nineteenth Century* such a lecture to the people of England on their mission, their duty, and their policy, it would be treated with contemptuous derision as an ill-mannered exhibition of Yankee impudence.

Of course, if we take Hawaii, we must keep it. That goes without saying. If it is attacked, we must defend it. By fleets and fortresses we must make it impregnable. All this is implied. If we get down from the pedestal on which the Professor has placed us, and enter into competition for markets for our surplus products and areas for our surplus population, we must go armed. Bibles and missionaries and missals and treaties of arbitration will not do.

We talk of Christian civilization, but when the Venezuela boundary question was up a few months ago, the passion of the people broke out into a hoarse roar for blood. General Schurz points out the danger in *Harper's Weekly*. His experience as a soldier gives his opinion great value. He never believed in taking any risks. He regards our position now as safe, and shrinks from exposure. He is courageous enough, however, to admit that Hawaii can be defended if the people are willing to pay the bills. This is the opinion also of the retail grocer and the proprietor of the ninety-nine cent bargain-counter.

Speaker Reed says we can wait. So we can. The trouble is that the other nations will not wait. The Speaker has not in other emergencies been wanting in aggression. Patience is one of the cardinal virtues, but the Speaker has not been a companion of Job hitherto. His great fame has derived none of its lustre from patience. He says there is no need of hurry in aggrandizement, and that as we grow we will spread fast enough, which is perspicacious; as we grow older we shall increase in years. It has been said that everything comes to him who waits, but this is not true of nations. Of them it may be said, as of the Kingdom of Heaven, that the violent take it by force.

From the economic standpoint, the soil of Hawaii is fertile, the climate incomparable. To its spontaneous products have been added sugar, potatoes, indigo, coffee, and wool. It can readily support a population of a million and afford large customs and excise revenues to the Government far beyond any possible cost of maintenance. Mingling with the large patriotic and strategic considerations is the sugar tariff, which may at last be the decisive factor in

the vote on the treaty. The Dingley Bill, by increasing the duty on sugar, has stimulated the culture of the sugar beet, especially in the semi-arid and upland regions of the West, where agricultural depression has been most severe and disastrous, and political aberration most excessive. Never much enamored with high duties hitherto, these interests have now organized a formidable opposition to Hawaiian annexation on the ground that free cane sugar will interfere injuriously with the infant beet sugar industry. And it cannot be doubted that the same sentiment is supporting the Spaniards in the Cuban insurrection. That the senators from the West will be wholly insensible to these influences is not to be expected. It would not be creditable if they were. They represent their constituencies as well as the Nation. The future of parties is uncertain, and in the contests for succession they must reconcile conflicting interests and appeal to that public opinion which is the tribunal of last resort. It would be strange, but not unprecedented, if, after all, the fate of the Treaty of Annexation and the Reciprocity Treaty, under which for several years sugar has been admitted free of duty, should hinge upon matters relatively of little more consequence than the reckoning of a tapster's arithmetic.

They will do well to remember that for nations, as for men,

"Emulation has a thousand sons
That one by one pursue. If you give way,
Like to an entered tide, they all rush by
And leave you hindmost."