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THE INFLUENCE OF CHARLES SUMNER ON EXPANSION.

By E. J. Kimble.

Sober and sane expansion is a law of human development and progress. The earliest glimpses of primitive man reveal to us activity, change, and migration. This hypothesis of evolution is now generally assumed in explaining any department of human life, and also for man's creation. It is now generally conceded, and especially since the election of 1900, that the isolation of the United States from the world's politics ceased with the close of the nineteenth century. After four hundred years of preparation for this new world mission, the United States regardless of any ethical question, or even the question of political expediency is destined to assume sober responsibilities as a world power. That our country will succeed in every respect in this new role is hardly to be expected. We have not succeeded perfectly in governing our home possessions. But our country with its glorious past; and let us hope with a grander future will meet these world responsibilities in a square, fair, Anglo-Saxon fashion.

In this paper it is proposed to consider the influence of Charles Sumner upon first, internal expansion; and, secondly, his influence upon external expansion in the United States.

As we recede from the period of the civil war and reconstruction we see more and more clearly that Mr. Sumner stood for all that is pure and holy in the elevated statesmanship. He courageously fought for the great guiding principles, which so profoundly stirred the hearts of men in those dark days. In greatness and nobility of character Mr. Sumner measures even to the shoulders of the great commoner.

In a resolution introduced in the Senate on June 23, 1870, Sen-

ator Sumner said that all European countries were destined to loose their colonies in the western hemisphere.¹ However, at the threshold of public life in Massachusetts he opposed the admission of Texas. Hardly had Texas thrown off the government of Mexico when Calhoun declared that the South should annex Texas to the Union. It is true that Mexico had abolished slavery in Texas in 1829. However, Texas had been settled by colonists from the Southwestern states. The emigrants carried with them their slaves and they proposed in this new country to set up anew the institution of slavery. So, then, when Texas became independent slavery really existed within her borders. Astute Sothern statesmen looked to the annexation of Texas as the best means of securing the safety of the South. Sumner was not opposed to the United States acquiring this vast empire if it could be accomplished by honorable methods. He opposed the admission of Texas in 1845 on moral grounds; and for the further reason that slaveholders desired to create new slave states out of this country when acquired. This would have given to the slave holding states the balance of power in the United States Senate and perpetuated the institution of human slavery. Sumner opposed the declaration of war against Mexico in Polk's administration with all the ardor of his nature. All his doctrines in regard to war were founded upon Franklin's celebrated saying, "There never was a good war or a bad peace." In November, 1845, Mr. Sumner wrote to a friend "The spirit of antislavery promises to absorb all of New England. Massachusetts will never give her vote for another slaveholder. The cotton lords will interfere but they will at last be borne away by the rising tide."²

¹ Congressional Goble, pp 5450-51.

² Memoirs and Letters 2, 670.

In 1868 all arrangements had been made for the transfer of St. Thomas and St. Johns to the United States. The prize was agreed upon as \$10,000,000. The islands were to be conveyed to the United States, provided, the people of the island gave their consent. This was secured. The treaty was ratified by the Danish Rigsdag and the King signed the treaty in January 1868. But the lower house of Congress considering the financial condition of the country would not vote the necessary money. A recent earthquake and hurricane in the island enabled the opponents to ridicule the undertaking.

All through the life of Sumner our relations with Spain and the attitude we should assume toward Cuba was a problem that loomed larger and larger on the horizon. The Southern statesmen many times attempted to grab Cuba and other West India islands on order that they might convert them into more slave territory. Mr. Sumner saw that ultimately that Spain must be driven from this continent, but he always maintained that "the true course of the United States" was "to avoid involving ourselves anyway," and that the best rule was "non-interference, except in the way of good offices." Always endeavoring to live up to his high ideals Mr. Sumner said that by international law "nations are not left to any mere caprice. There is a rule of conduct which they must follow, subject always to just accountability where they depart from it. "Under that law belligerence is a 'fact' attested by evidence. If the fact does not exist there is nothing to recognize."

Perhaps the admitting of new territories into the Union would bear somewhat on the theme of internal expansion. Senator Sumner regardless of any question of political expediency publicly avowed that

Frederic Bancroft, Life of Sumner II, 486.

territories should be admitted to the sisterhood of states as soon as they possess the requisite population. Provided further that the territory before submitting the bill to Congress had formed a republican form of government with a written constitution!

With the purchase of Alaska in 1867 the United States launched forth unwittingly upon its first foreign colonization and external expansion. With the acquisition of this northern country the names of Seward and Sumner are generally associated. To repeat again, Mr. Sumner had an unwavering belief that the whole of North America was to be ultimately occupied by the American republic. He said that he believed it to be "a visible step in the occupation of the whole of North American continent," and "unwilling to miss the opportunity of dismissing another European sovereign from our continent."² Mr. Sumner was also undoubtedly influenced in this matter by the fact that Russia had been friendly to us during the civil war. This was also the first expansion of territory where the slave aristocracy had not figured.

Alaska came to Russia by discovery and was held by her for more than a century. The country was governed by a monopoly known as the Russian American Company. To defend it in time of war with Great Britain or the United States was impossible. At the time the Crimean war broke out between Great Britain and Russia neutralized their possessions in the northwest territory. It is believed that if the Russian territory had been of use to England at this time she could have taken it.

¹ Congressional Record, July 27, 1866.

² Memoirs and Letters, I, 325.

The offer of cession of this vast country to the United States came from Russia. However, the question of the transfer of this territory had been considered as early as 1859 by a few persons in authority. Five million dollars was offered for the territory. Russia would not accept this pittance, and during the terrible struggle of the civil war the proposition was totally forgotten. But in eight years Russia and the United States were to come to terms. It is very important not to overlook the fact that Russia desired to sell; that the United States and Russia had always been friendly; and that our government felt grateful toward the Czar on account of his attitude during the civil war.

There was not much public discussion in the press or upon the platform concerning the purchase of Alaska. To many well informed men at Washington the purchase of this vast, wild, frozen region was a visionary scheme. The country was looked upon as a region with sparse animal and vegetable life; while its marvelous mineral resources were in part overlooked. The population was about ten thousand, "composed of a few Russians, Esquimaux, and the chief products polar bear and glaciers." The area is five times that of Arizona. The furs and the fishing were at that time the most valuable industries. This vast territory was sold to us before hardly a dozen citizens knew that the purchase had been consummated.¹ The little that had been done looking forward to the purchase of Alaska was initiated by a few persons on the Pacific Coast. For twenty years previous to 1859 San Francisco had received a large amount of ice from Russian America.²

¹ Fredric Bancroft, Life of Seward, II, 474

² H. H. Bancroft's History of Alaska, xxxII, 587

Our fisherman had also been engaged in the far northern Pacific. This industry increased from year to year. At the beginning of 1866 the territory of the then territory of Washington sent a petition to President Johnson setting forth therein that on abundance of codfish, halibut, and salmon had been found in the Russian American and that that our fishermen wished to visit the parts for the purpose of buying fuel, water, and provisions.

Now what part did Mr. Sumner play in the acquisition of this territory? On April 20, 1867, the Senate held a special session for executive business. At this session the treaty for the purchase of Alaska was ratified. The committee on foreign relations had reported favorably on the bill save Senator Fessenden. Senator Sumner supported the bill in one of the most elaborate arguments ever made before Congress. With his usual thoroughness he gathered information from every available source and delved into many foreign ^{languages} in setting forth his masterly exposition. To him belongs the honor of naming Alaska. It was his great speech, which so to speak, jammed the bill through Congress. However the controlling motive which caused Senator Sumner to lend his aid in acquiring this territory was the friendliness of Russia toward the United States during the civil war. He further could not resist the temptation of dismissing another European country from the continent. He believed firmly that all Europeans would be compelled to depart. He was opposed to expansion unless it could be brought about without aggrandizement, without war, and if possible without purchase. The only alternative left for expansion was the mutual consent of both parties with perhaps a consideration. He favored annexation with the free consent of the citizens residing in any territory that was to be acquired. Senator Sumner was lead to favor the annexation of

Alaska especially because there was practically no population to consult. He put it this way: "The immense country is without form, and without light without activity and without progress. Its life is solitary and feeble. Its settlements are only encampments of lodgments. But he sounded a note of warning in regard to expansion."

"The treaty must not be a precedent for a system of indiscriminate and costly annexation. Sincerely believing that republican institutions in the United States must embrace this whole continent I cannot disguise my anxiety that every stage in our predestined future shall be by natural process, without war, and I would add even without purchase. There is no territorial aggrandizement that is worth the prize of blood. Only under peculiar circumstances can it become the subject of pecuniary contrast. Our triumph should be by growth and organic ~~e~~ expression in obedience to preestablished harmony recognizing always the will of those who are to be our fellow citizens. All this must be easy if we are true to ourselves" Mr. Sumner had to take the responsibility of the defeat of the Alaska treaty ~~o~~ its success. If his influence had been in opposition, the treaty would have been defeated.

We have seen the attitude of Mr. Sumner in regard to the annexation of Texas and Alaska. The second attempt in the line of external expansion was the negotiations looking forward to the taking in of San Dominigo. The pure statesman Sumner and the warrior Grant met in an important political combat over this question. The San Domingo measure of Grant's administration caused a rupture between the Senator from Massachusetts and the President.

Quoted By Moorfield Storey in Life of Sumner in American Statesmen Series, 339, 340.

It appears by the record that in 1868 a revolutionist by the name of Boez controlled events in the island; but he was seriously threatened by another revolutionist named Cabral. Boez became president of the country and sought the protection of the United States. He sent his representative to this country asking that Congress annex the island. A resolution providing for the annexation of the island had been introduced in the House during Johnson's term. But when General Grant came to the White House Boez persuaded the President that annexation was desirable. From all the testimony that the writer is able to gather it is evident that the President attempted to annex the islands by military methods rather than legislative enactments of Congress.'

From President Grant's acts one would judge that he was going to secure control of the islands, and then he intended to have Congress confirm the proceedings. To go more into details. In July 1868 General Babcock was despatched with instructions and as the representative of Grant to inquire into the conditions of the islands. The Secretary of War under Grant placed a man-of-war at his service, and instructed the commander to give Babcock "the moral support of his guns." Shortly Babcock as the representative of the President carried out a treaty of annexation binding his country to pay \$1,500,000 to help defray San Domingo debts. The state-paper signed by the President's representative contained the following provision. That the President "promises privately to use his influence in order that the idea of annexing the Dominican republic to the United States may acquire such a degree of popularity among members of Congress as will be necessary for its accomplishment." The President assented to this action. There had been two treaties negotiated by the president without consulting Congress,--one for the annexation of the is-

land and the other for the lease of Samona Bay. The treaty which the President made with San Domingo guaranteed against foreign interference until the treaty was ratified by the Congress of the United States. Gen. Babcock made the declaration that he intended to take possession of Samona Bay. Now all these negotiations practically meant that the United States government would keep Boez in power as against Cabral, and until the treaty of annexation could be negotiated. From all the executive acts it is plain that the President was exceeding his prescribed authority; and it has been truly said that if it were not for his great popularity Congress would have impeached him.

The St. Thomas treaty had just previous to this time been rejected by the Senate. All the arguments against the annexation of St. Thomas applied with greater power to the question of the annexation of San Domingo. Admitting that the annexation of San Domingo was desirable the extra-executive methods of President Grant would never have been tolerated

All this explanation is necessary in order to understand Sumner's attitude toward Grant and his nefarious proceedings in attempting to annex the island. Sumner's high moral purposes, his pure patriotism, and his strict regard for the rights of other persons and nations would set his whole being against the forceful annexation of San Domingo. Up to this point Sumner had been an Administration man. However, he indicated frankly to President Grant that he could not support the measures in regard to the "Black Republic."

When the San Domingo treaties were taken up in the committee on foreign relations only one member of the committee had anything to say in its favor. When Senator Sumner learned of the methods that Grant had employed to annex the islands he was deeply disappointed and shocked. In a

speech of some length Mr. Sumner opposed the treaty on account of the character of the people; the bad example it would set for further forcible annexation; and that we were taking from the colored man his country without his consent. The San Domingo treaties were finally rejected by a close majority. Over this treaty Grant and Sumner were estranged. Grant not only punished Sumner, but also his friends. Mr. Motley, the picturesque historian, was recalled from the Court of St. James because he happened to be a friend of Mr. Sumner.

In the Alabama claims which grew out of the Civil War Senator Sumner thought that perhaps the controversy between the United States and Great Britian might end with the withdrawal of England from the western hemisphere, i. e., that she might convey to us Canada.

This was at the period in English history when the mother country was seriously debating whether she would retain her colonies or let them go. Sumner wrote in a private letter, that "England did not wish to keep Canada, but would not part with it without the consent of the population." Mr. Sumner expressed the belief that the Union between Canada and the United States would eventually be brought about, but by mutual consent

To sum up. Charles Sumner stood for that gradual healthy expansion, which is a fundamental law of human development. He was opposed to the extravagant world wide empire of the imaginative Seward. All European nations are to be dismissed from the New World. Sumner favored the annexation of Texas without slavery; the admission of new territories when they possess the requisite population; the purchase of Alaska. On the other hand, Sumner was stoutly opposed to the extra-constitutional and military methods of annexation used by President Grant. The Senator was also opposed to the acquisition of territory without the consent of the inhabitants residing therein. True expansion must be without war, without criminal aggression, and if possible without purchase.

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