

Our Expansion Southward.

The question of our expansion southward is pressing upon us in various shapes, with greater or lesser urgency, according to the quarter from which the pressure comes, and it is time the government should shape its policy and recognize the work it has to do. Cuba is clamoring to us in the stress of revolution for the recognition of her independence; St. Domingo has a formal proposition for peaceful admission to the Union, and one of the party generals and leaders in Hayti openly avows his correspondence with the Secretary of State at Washington with a view to annexation and protection. Since the abolition of slavery in our Southern States the question of a political union with the great republic has made wonderful progress in the islands of the American Mediterranean. Communities which before that event were in a state of semi-hostility to us now look to our government as their only hope for security, peace and prosperity.

Our late war has taught us a lesson in this connection which we should do well to heed. The islands of Bermuda, Bahama, St. Domingo and Cuba form a powerful line of picket posts along our Atlantic coast and the outlet of the Mississippi valley. During the rebellion they were held by Powers hostile to us, and were converted into ports of refuge for blockade runners. The war supplies which these carried into the South very materially lengthened the struggle and involved the nation in an expenditure of fully three thousand millions of dollars—more than would have been requisite to put down the rebellion if these maritime picket posts along our shore had been in our possession. More than that, Havana was the base upon which the French occupation of Mexico turned, and that movement was a part of the general scheme of the Western Powers of Europe to assist the breaking up of the American Union. Had they not been in possession of these islands their efforts would have been the futile aims of vain desire. If the blockade runners had found it necessary to cross the Atlantic instead of the narrow strip of water between these islands and the main shore there would not have been one where we found a hundred to annoy us.

In the event of a foreign war these maritime picket posts would become of equal if not of greater importance to us. We should be compelled either to take possession of them, without time to consolidate our power there, or to see them bristling with forts to defend hostile fleets, which at any moment might choose their point of attack on our line of shore. We are, therefore, under the necessity of contemplating the policy of arming against them, or providing against the contingencies of the future by following the natural impulse of our southward expansion.

As a point of national policy and of natural connection we should hold possession of all of these West India islands. This was felt more imperatively during the late war than ever before or since, and for this very reason it becomes our government and the statesmen who lead in Congress to take advantage of every circumstance which presents itself favorably to the policy of our southward expansion. The friendly feeling now developed in St. Domingo should be cultivated, and if that republic seeks admission by treaty or other peaceful act,* by all means let it be accorded to her. The struggle now going on in Cuba, which is, in fact, a social revolution for the overthrow of slavery there, and a political revolution for a change from a tyrannical to a free government, merits our warmest sympathies and support. We hope, therefore, to see the early passage of the Banks resolution authorizing the President to recognize the republican government of Cuba whenever in his opinion it is fit so to do.

These two steps, which are now urged upon us by every consideration of policy and interest, once taken, the path for the accomplishment of the rest of our natural southward expansion will be clear and facile. Should England refuse an honorable adjustment of the Alabama and other pending claims Bermuda and the Bahamas would be the first points we might be compelled to look after. We could not permit her to hold picket posts on our frontier, and without the friendly ports of her ally, Spain, to flee to we could establish safety along our whole coast. Congress should take all these things into consideration now, and determine its line of policy in support of our southward expansion. Events and feelings in the West Indies coincide alike at this time to favor us, and our first duty as a people is to take care of our own household.