

AMERICANISM AND EXPANSION.

BY THE EDITOR.

A MERICANISM is the principle of liberty, and expansion is growth. The United States have entered upon a new period in their development by acquiring new territory, some of which is situated in the distant Eastern Seas ; and we hear again, as on similar occasions in the past, from a great number of the people, the vigorous protest that expansion as such is opposed to Americanism. Expansion reaches out into new fields as a tree in growing spreads over into an adjoining garden ; and the question arises, Have we a right to acquire territory without the previous consent of the people who at present inhabit the territory into which, through the accident of historical occurrences, our power now extends ? The present situation is by no means the first one of the kind, but it is new in so far as the territories do not directly touch our present boundaries, and part of them belong to another continent over 8,000 miles away.

The United States began their history as thirteen small colonies, and their progress has been one of constant expansion. The Colonies dared to resist the oppressions of the English government on the principle that taxation requires the consent of the governed ; they established themselves as states, and laid down the maxims of their policy in the Constitution. There were from the beginning two parties, the Whigs, who were in power through having just succeeded in liberating the country and giving it independence, and the Federalists, who insisted upon a union of the states and a strong federal government. The Whigs are the men who shaped the principles of the new country, jealously guarding the liberty of the people, the independence of the states, and the self-government of every township ; their maxim found the tersest and best formulation in Lincoln's words, "A government of the

people, by the people, and for the people." The Whigs are, as it were, the negative side of the evolution of our country, stating the difference between the government of the United States and the systems of the Old World, and declaring what our country should not be.

The Federalists were suspected by the Whigs of being royalists, and were frequently, even in and before the days of Washington, treated in party debates as traitors to democratic principles. The first great leader of the Federalists was Hamilton, who gave expression to his more vigorous policy in *The Federalist*, a paper that was discontinued with the controversies which called it into existence.

The Federalists were very weak at the time when peace was made with England, and played then a very minor part in our politics; but they gained in importance when the Whig principles proved utterly unequal to conducting the business of the new republic.

The general interest in the common affairs of the United States was so weak that only with considerable difficulty could a quorum of the members of Congress be obtained to ratify the treaty of peace with England.

In 1785, Algiers declared war against the United States, and Congress recommended the building of five forty-gun ships of war; but Congress had only power to recommend, and since the Whigs saw danger in the growth of a strong government, the ships were not built, and the Algerians continued to prey with impunity upon American commerce. At the same time, England treated the new republic with such disrespect that she neglected even to send a minister to Washington, and as our historians briefly state, "The Federal Government was despised abroad and disobeyed at home."

It was dire necessity that compelled the people of the United States to listen to the representations of the Federalists; and under the strain of circumstances, by a loose construction of the Articles of Confederation, the United States Government rose in power, and assumed the leadership of the new republic.

It is needless to enter into a recapitulation of the history of our country, to tell the old story over again of how the Whigs adopted the name "Republicans," and later on became known as "the Democratic party," while the Federalists are at the present day represented by the Republicans. Further, we must bear in mind that, on the principles of the Whigs, the Southern States were perfectly justified in breaking away from the Union, and es-

tablishing a confederacy of their own ; and it is a matter of historical experience that liberty is always suppressed in the name of liberty, and slavery rests upon the maxim that everybody has the right to suppress his brother man, if only he has the power to do so. Nominally the South stood up for liberty, and the North for union, but practically the South insisted upon the right of slaveholding, while the North represented the ascendancy of free labor. Their difference was a difference of principle which has been decided by the sword. The cause of the real freedom of the North, in the face of the sham freedom of the South, remained victorious, and thus the confederacy of the United States changed into a union ; and now only the name United States became legitimate.

The idea prevailed among the founders of our nation that a weak government is the best guarantee for the liberty of the people, and on such grounds the Whig party and their heirs have always endeavored to prevent the increase of federal power ; and yet the noble principles of democracy have always been used as a shield for the boldest boodling and maladministration. All good citizens of the United States agree that while our federal government is upon the whole well conducted, and may be considered as the best republic on earth, the municipal administration of our great cities leaves much to be desired, and the problem presents itself, How shall we, with the least disturbance of democratic principles, change the methods of city government which at present are subject to just criticism ?

While it is true that American principles stand for liberty, we must not imagine in fond self-illusion that we have as yet discovered the proper method of realising the right use of liberty. So far, all progress and growth of the United States have been made in spite of the strict constructionists of the United States Constitution. A loose construction was adopted as a matter of necessity. The fact is that the United States are of a natural growth, and growth cares little for rules or regulations invented by theorists to prevent further expansion. The building up of our institutions has been guided by the principle of liberty, which upon the whole has been realised, but which if carried to extremes would simply have stopped the wheels of the machinery of our government.

The irony of fate, which is so often visible in history, placed the Anti-Federalists, led by Thomas Jefferson, in power, when, for the first time in the history of the United States, an independent action on the part of the government was required. James Monroe had been sent to France in 1803 as an official ambassador of the

United States, but when he reached Paris the political situation had been suddenly changed, and an unexpected opportunity for expansion offered itself which had to be acted upon at once. France was preparing for a renewed war with Great Britain, and offered to the United States for \$15,000,000 that large tract of territory then called Louisiana, covering the whole Mississippi Valley and extending northward to Canada. The war being imminent, the bargain had to be concluded at once or abandoned for good, and Mr. James Monroe transcended his instructions and accepted the offer. The president, who had been elected on Whig principles, did not hesitate to endorse Mr. Monroe's action, although it was fundamentally and directly opposed to his interpretation of the Constitution. He believed that it was in the interests of the liberty of the country to have a weak government, and that the Constitution gave the federal government no power to purchase foreign territory and make it a part of the Union; but he excused his conduct on the ground that "he acted like a guardian who makes an unauthorised purchase for the benefit of his ward, trusting that the latter will afterwards ratify it." He probably had the good intention of having the transaction ratified by the people of the United States, which, however, was never done. The only ratification consisted in the general acquiescence in it, but the inhabitants of "Louisiana" were never asked for their consent to being incorporated into the United States; nor have their wishes ever been considered; if they had been consulted at the time, there can be no doubt that the French population, at least a great part of it, would have voted as vigorously against it as the present Anglo-American and Anglicised inhabitants would vote for it. The fact is that whatever importance general principles may have, and I do not deny their great importance, the development of nations cannot be limited nor pre-determined by maxims, nor be confined within narrow limits; it is of a natural growth; and if there exist laws or institutions that hamper it or prevent the definite settlement of political issues, they will be shattered to pieces with the same power with which roots break the rock into which they descend.

The advantage of the Constitution of the United States consists in this, that it is, upon the whole, sufficiently elastic to allow expansion and to admit new interpretations under new conditions.

The question now arises whether under the present circumstances expansion is or is not in agreement with Americanism. Is it necessary to follow the maxims of the old Whig party who

wanted every American farmer to remain behind his plow, and not to bother himself with the people in the next township? Are we really so isolated that each community should be concerned only with its own affairs, and that all of them should not grow into a higher unity of state and national union? The spirit of the principles of the Whigs has always remained dominant in the evolution of the United States; but as soon as we would apply them in the sense of the strict constitutionists, whenever they would lead the country to wreck and ruin, they have been tempered by the ideals of the Federalists, who have always done good service in building up the institutions of this country, and giving it a strong and sometimes a very good government.

The truth is that a strong government is by no means dangerous to the liberties of the people, but on the contrary it is the best guarantee of them provided the general Whig sentiment of liberty prevails throughout the country. A strong government which respects Whig principles will never be in need of stooping to *coup d'états*, or assuring the continuance of its power by crooked means. It will unflinchingly stand for the right, and enforce justice. A weak government, however, as experience shows all over the world and at all times, does not shrink from using any means to remain in power,—a fact which is sufficiently proved in the republics and tyrannies of ancient Greece, in the autocratic countries of Turkey and Russia, and in the South American republics. The weakness of a government, as is proved by undeniable facts of history, is always a menace to the liberty of the people, while a government that is strong can afford to allow the people their full liberties, provided they do not infringe upon the liberties of their fellow-beings.

We have discussed the problem of the acquisition of Cuba in a former article,¹ and have proposed as a policy of the United States to make our new acquisitions, especially Cuba, confederate republics of the United States. The Cubans should enjoy perfect liberty at home; they should elect their own magistrates, and attend to the policing of the country by men of their own choice, of their own language, their own nationality, according to principles which they deem best. But while in their own affairs they should be as free as any State of the Union, the defenses of the island should not be left to the accidents of their home politics, but should remain in the strong hands of the forces which represent the insoluble alliance of our Union with Cuba, at the head of which is the

¹ In the November number of *The Open Court*.

President of the United States. Cubans should be freely admitted to the army and navy, in proportion to the number of their population; but there ought to be no danger of a rupture in times of war, which would endanger the United States and the Nicaragua Canal, so important to the trade of the United States.

The idea that the business of the United States is at home, and that the Illinois farmer has no interest beyond the territory which he plows, is a grave mistake. The world is one great organism, and if we want to stand up for our principles in contrast to European principles, we must not forget that for the defense of our own country and our ideals, we must be in possession of those points of strategic importance which shall enable us to weather a political crisis in the eventual evolution of the history of the world. There is no need of subjugating the Cubans or the Filipinos; we need not interfere with their home politics; we should give them, as a matter of course, as much liberty as they can stand; but it would be a crime to give up the positions of strategic importance which we have gained, and which may in the future prove the salvation of our institutions in their struggle with European institutions. If we love Americanism, if we believe in the principles of liberty, we should not only not be opposed to expansion, but enthusiastically hail it. There is no reason to oppose it, and we may safely follow the example of the great Whig leader, Jefferson, when against his own principles he absorbed into the United States the Valley of the Mississippi, without either the consent of its population or even of the United States.

The present crisis is an occasion in which we can prove whether or not our American principles are good for anything; if they cannot be applied to Cuba or the Philippines, we may be sure that they are not justified in the United States. True, it is not so easy to transplant them forthwith to peoples who are not yet accustomed to the bracing air of liberty; and the probability is that mistakes will be made before the desired end is attained. But it is wrong to censure our government for permitting the United States to carry the spirit of Americanism to other nations merely because they are not yet ripe for it.

The truth is that our present expansion is not a new departure, but a repetition of antecedents which in all national matters are exactly the same. To begin from the very beginning, did the Pilgrims ever ask the Indians for their permission to settle at Plymouth Rock? It appears that they went there because they were exiled from Europe and had to seek a new home, and perhaps

they had the same right to the country as the Indians. It appears that the earth is open everywhere, and those people who are strongest take possession of the earth. According to the old view, those people who are the strongest conquer their fellow-beings by force of arms ; but, according to the principles of a more highly developed humanity, those are the strongest who build their institutions upon the consent of the governed. It is therefore a matter of course that wherever the American flag is to be raised we shall endeavor to gain the consent of the governed. Should we within a reasonable time be unable to gain the confidence and good will of the inhabitants of the newly acquired territories, we should give them up, either abandoning them to themselves or to some other power who will be better able to administer their public affairs.

The policy of imperialism is a mistake, but for all that expansion is justified.

Because we believe that the safest foundation of any government is the consent of the governed, and that it is the duty of every government to allow full sway to the liberty of its citizens, it would be a very mistaken policy if for that reason our government would disarm and cease to protect itself against the armed governments of other nations. The new ideal of liberty as expressed in Americanism does not abolish the duty of looking out for our defenses, and of being ready to defend our principles in case they are attacked.

And what should we do with the Philippines if the policy of expansion be wrong? All Americans agree that it would be unfair to return them to Spain. Shall we then leave them to themselves, and allow them to adjust their own affairs according to their own pleasure? There can be no doubt that the result would be an internecine war which would be more bloody than the present struggle between the United States and Aguinaldo's forces. And in reply to those who have made themselves the advocates of the Filipinos, especially of Aguinaldo, we have to say that his ambition for Philippine independence would probably mean the suppression on the one hand of the white colonists, and on the other hand of the mountain tribes of the interior. That Aguinaldo's government would be just to other nationalities who are inhabitants of the islands cannot be expected, and the result would after all not be the independence of the Filipinos, but the interference of European governments on behalf of their colonists. As soon as we withdrew, leaving the Filipinos and the German colonists to their fate, Germany or some other power would acquire a perfectly

just title to interference. The result would be that the Philippines would fall into the hands of another power, and we should have no right to complain, if we had turned from them in Pharisaic self-righteousness.

We should renounce expansion only if we believe that the American principles are for home consumption only, and are not applicable to other nations.

The expansion of the United States has not come by our own choice, but through the development of historical events; it has been forced upon us, and as the situation is at present, we must deeply regret that Aguinaldo has ventured upon a war with the United States. But there can be no doubt that it is the duty of the United States to re-establish order in the conquered territory, unless the Americans as a nation have lost faith in their competency to accomplish the task.

It is possible that the United States government has made some mistakes while assuming control of the Philippines; but we abstain from criticising its measures because it is all but impossible to judge of proceedings which have taken place at such a distance. At any rate, we must insist upon the justifiability of expansion and go even so far as to say that should the nation as such oppose it, it would amount to a self-condemnation and imply that Americanism, or rather the spirit of liberty that pervades our institutions, has no right to exist except within the narrow limits of the United States of America.

Our policy toward the Filipinos implies more difficulties than have been anticipated, and a protracted war is unavoidable. But in spite of their hostile attitude we should not lose sight of the hope to give them the liberty for which they are fighting now and allow them to constitute themselves as a Filipino Republic.

We might divide the country according to the nature of the population into various states with constitutions adapted to the conditions of the people. The city of Manilla might form a free city after the pattern of the Hanse towns; the Mohammedans might enjoy the privilege to live in accord with their traditions; the Filipinos and mountain tribes might choose a government that would suit them best; yet all of them, independent in local affairs, would be subject to the authority of the United States who would interfere only when the laws or administrations of the various people would seriously collide with the principles of humaneness as established in civilised countries.

The easiest way of governing people, be they colonists or a

conquered race, is by giving them local self-government. The more independent they feel the more satisfied they will be. The most convenient way of maintaining order is by allowing them to do their own policing, by men of their own kind. This consideration alone should induce us to hand the responsibilities of administration in all local affairs over to men of the people's own choice.

The easiest, the cheapest, the most practical, method of governing Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippine Islands will be to give them as much independence as possible. We cannot (at least not at present) make of the Filipinos citizens of the United States, but we can make of all the conquered territories federal republics which stand under the protectorate of the United States.