

PURPOSE OF THE NATION IN THE PRESENT WAR.

Cuba's Position in the History of the United States.

[S. F. Post, July 20th.]

The following article—"The Purpose of the Nation in the Present War"—was written by W. H. Mills for discussion by the Chit Chat Club, which numbers among its members many of the brightest men in San Francisco.

In entering upon an important enterprise the final purpose of the individual may have complete definition, because the purpose is formed and controlled by an individual will.

The leaders of the colonial rebellion which resulted in the separation of the British colonies in America from their mother country declared that the armed resistance they were about to begin had no other purpose than the redress of grievances.

The Saxon genius for government which arises out of the Saxon love of independence and liberty is the true standard by which the original purpose must be judged.

The secession of the slave States left the Federal Government in the control of the free sections of the country.

In these cases we have historical illustrations of the fact that the real purpose of a nation in any great undertaking can only be understood by observing the political trend from the original impetus in its momentum.

JUSTIFYING THE WAR. The nation is engaged in a war with Spain. To the superficial observation the current war appears to be an innovation upon our whole history.

Another earnest and thoughtful minister has declared that: "This is the explanation of history for centuries of cruelty and barbarism practiced by an old world monarchy."

"By this war the responsibility of nations concerning the welfare of the human family in every part of the world receives higher interpretation, and the pathway of national duty takes a higher plane."

Further down the line of intellectual and moral growth we encounter the revengeful interpretation of "Remember the Maine." The governmental authorities have offered for popular contemplation the suggestive association of the destruction of the Maine by printing a picture of the ill-fated battleship upon the war revenue stamps.

This war did not gather on the national horizon in a day. It was not the result of events happening in the immediate past. It has its place in the entire historical trend of the nation. It is the legitimate outgrowth of national life and development.

tional development throughout the world. It is encountered in its appropriate time and at its appropriate place.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY. The political geography of the world has resulted from national conflict. War has been waged to outline national boundaries and to maintain national jurisdiction over the territory acquired.

But, aside from the military or strategic value which attaches to portions of adjacent territory, there are commercial considerations influencing the desire of the nation for territorial aggrandizement.

The United States, in 1803, acquired the province of Louisiana from Napoleon. This purchase of the United States acquired the Gulf coast line between the Sabine and the west bank of the Mississippi River.

OUR RELATIONS WITH SPAIN. The diplomatic relations between Spain and the United States began in 1792 during the administration of President Washington, and resulted in the treaty of 1795.

These treaty obligations were not observed, and an equal disregard was shown by Spain for her treaty obligations.

The citizens of the United States had sustained injuries entitling them to indemnity to the amount of \$5,000,000, and the purchase price for East and West Florida was paid on the part of the United States by assuming these liabilities.

CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY INDISPENSABLE. A retrospect of these events with the map of the country before us justifies the theory that contiguous territory is sometimes indispensable to the territorial and political integrity of a nation.

The commercial and industrial expansion of the United States demanded the acquisition of the Mississippi Valley and the Florida Peninsula, and the commercial and industrial considerations were strongly reinforced by the military and strategic necessities of the situation.

Mr. Adams' views concerning Cuba. Mr. Adams' views concerning Cuba were expressed at a date prior to the expression of Mr. Jefferson already quoted.

NATURAL EXPANSION OF THE DOMAIN. The fortuitous circumstances which enabled us to acquire the province of Louisiana without the expense of war have already been referred to, but we acquired the Floridas at the narrow hazard of conflict, and acquired Texas and the Pacific Coast States and Territories as the actual result of war.

At this point in our history the policies underlying each instance of territorial acquisition appears to have run on parallel lines. Each of these acquisitions related to contiguous territory and extended by natural expansion of the national domain.

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dispensable to the territorial and political integrity of the country. From a very early period, however, and after the acquisition of the Mississippi Valley and the entire northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico from Cape Sabine to the mouth of the Rio Grande, the island of Cuba had been regarded by leading statesmen in this country as a natural geographical and political part of the territory of the United States.

LAW OF POLITICAL AND PHYSICAL GRAVITY. This declaration of the existence of a law of political as well as physical gravitation, as applied to Cuba, permeates the literature of American diplomacy in all periods of our history.

OPINIONS OF STATESMEN. Mr. Van Buren, Secretary of State, writing to Mr. Van Ness, October 2, 1823, said: "The Government has always looked with the deepest interest upon the fate of those islands, but particularly of Cuba."

Mr. Forsythe, Secretary of State, under date of July 15, 1840, said: "The United States will resist at every hazard any attempt of any foreign Power to wrest Cuba from Spain."

Mr. Buchanan, Secretary of State, under date of June 13, 1847, said: "The United States will not tolerate any invasion of Cuba by citizens of neutral States."

Mr. Crittenden, Acting Secretary of State, under date of October 22, 1851, said: "The geographical position of the island of Cuba, in the Gulf of Mexico, lying at no great distance from the mouth of the River Mississippi, and in the center of the Gulf of Mexico, would become, in the hands of any powerful European nation, an object of just jealousy and apprehension to the people of this country."

These islands, from their local position, are natural appendages of the North American Continent, and one of them (Cuba), almost in sight of our shores, from a multitude of considerations has become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our Union.

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ened attack upon the island by France, or attempts on the part of the inhabitants of Cuba to assume their independence, the temporary occupation of Havana by the British might be among the probable expedients.

It is not necessary to point out the numerous contingencies by which the transition from a temporary and fiduciary occupation to a permanent and proprietary possession may be effected.

But there are laws of political as well as of physical gravitation; and if an apple, severed by the tempest from its tree, cannot chafe from its stem but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only toward the North American Union, which, by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off from its bosom.

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The acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands, embracing 31,000 square miles, is an event of yesterday. It follows the precedent of annexing non-contiguous territory established in the case of Alaska, but is unprecedented in the feature of absorbing distant islands, acquired mainly for their strategic value and future possible commercial importance.

From the earliest period in our history the position of Cuba, commanding as it did the commerce of the Gulf of Mexico, and to pass from the possession of Spain to the hands of a more powerful commercial rival, was a subject of apprehension in the minds of American statesmen and a prolific source of irritation and annoyance, as well as a constant menace of armed conflict.

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