

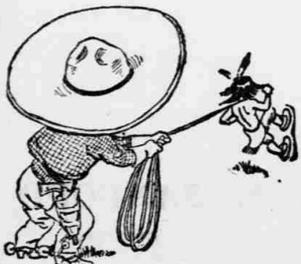
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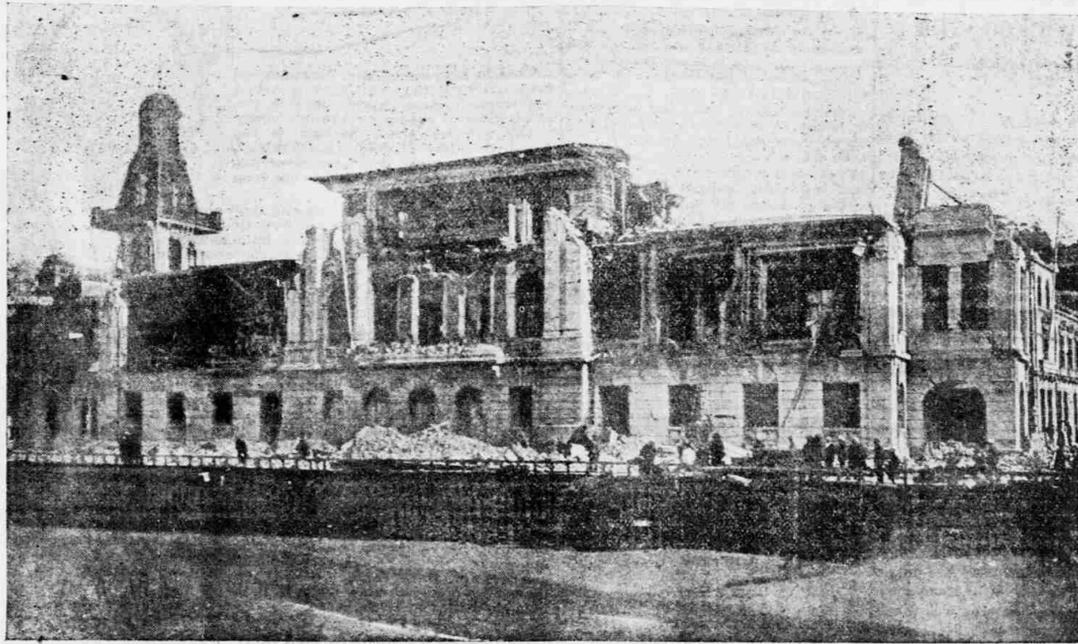
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VALPARAISO EARTHQUAKE—REMAINS OF NAVAL CLUB AND OFFICE OF CAPTAIN OF THE PORT.

THE ANNEXATION OF CUBA.

BY JOHN W. FOSTER, LL. D.,
Ex-Secretary of State.

(New York Independent, Oct. 25, 1906.)

The action of President Roosevelt in directing the intervention of the civil and military authorities of the United States in Cuba has met with the hearty and general approval of the country. In the recess of Congress there was no other course left open to him, in view of the obligations which we have assumed toward the Government and people of that island. To a proper understanding of the future relations of our Government toward them and to the part it may take in shaping the destiny of that island, it may be well to examine the character of the obligations we have assumed, and, in doing so, to recall some well-known facts.

The joint resolution of Congress of April 20, 1898, which was a virtual declaration of war against Spain, contained the following provision: "Fourth—That the United States hereby disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said island (Cuba), except for the pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people."

This enactment was not only a notice to Spain and to Cuba, but a declaration to the world of our determination and purpose.

After the war and when the United States was proceeding "to leave the government and control of the island to its people," Congress, in the act of March 2, 1901, to that end, adopted the following, being a part of what is known as the Platt Amendment: "III.—That the Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the Government of Cuba."

The primary object of the intervention thus authorized is "for the preservation of Cuban independence." It is to be noted in connection with the last clause just quoted that while in the treaty of Paris, Spain "ceded" to the United States the Philippine Islands and Porto Rico, it simply "relinquished" its claim of sovereignty over said title to Cuba; hence the United States has never acquired a permanent title to Cuba. At the instance of the United States Article III. was ratified by the

Cuban Government and attached to its constitution, with the other articles of the Platt Amendment. Additional solemnity was given to these articles by a treaty entered into between Cuba and the United States in 1903, two years after the independent government of Cuba had been established. Article VII, likewise provided that, "to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba," coaling or naval stations should be leased by Cuba to the United States; and in 1903 leases were made and signed by the Presidents of the two countries, in which the stipulation "to maintain the independence of Cuba" was recited and approved.

It is thus seen that the United States has in the most impressive and binding manner five times announced its determination and its duty to maintain the independence of Cuba: First, in the declaration of war against Spain; second, in the enactment by Congress of the Platt Amendment; third, in requiring the Cuban convention to make it a part of its constitution; fourth, in taking a lease of the naval stations; and fifth, in its formal treaty. It is gratifying to know that the executive department of our Government fully realizes determination and duty. Language could not be more explicit and decisive in this spirit than that used by President Roosevelt in his letter to Minister Quesada. The judicious conduct of Secretary Taft in seeking to avoid intervention made it clear that he was animated by this spirit. The proclamations of Secretary Taft and Provisional Governor Magoon, issued under the President's direction, show that the only purpose of the intervention forced upon them is "to maintain the independence of Cuba."

But there is danger, unless checked, that a hastily-formed and unwise popular sentiment may take possession of our country, and greatly embarrass the administration in its effort to keep faith with the people of Cuba and show to the world that we are animated by a policy of sincerity and disinterestedness. We read of statesmen high in public favor who announce that the American army now in Cuba will never leave it, and that the island is bound to be annexed to the United States, and is taken by many journals of influence, American planters, commercial men and promoters in Cuba seem anxious to have the United States assume outright and permanently the burdens of Cuban government. The advocates of "manifest destiny" believe the time is ripe to take one step further in southern expansion. These and other influences will oppose the withdrawal of our present control; and if another opportunity is given the Cubans to conduct an independent government and they again fall into disorder, the demand from these influences for permanent annexation may become almost irresistible.

Will such a demand be reasonable? Will it be consistent with our pledged faith and our publicly proclaimed purpose? Secretary Taft reached the heart of this question in his admirable address in the University at Havana. He made it clear that the Cubans should not be tested by the same standard of self-government as the people of the United States; that we had centuries of experience behind us and the Cubans were now for the first time being afforded an opportunity to govern themselves; and that if they stumbled and fell they must be helped up again and put on the road to self-government.

It is opportune to recall the experience of the Latin-American republics. Take the most successful of them, Argentina's history for fifty years—freedom, violent changes of rulers and defalcation in public obligations. Chile had much the same history, and only a

few years ago a President was displaced by revolutionary means and the country distracted by civil war. The turbulent condition of Mexico for fifty years following its independence is well known. The condition of anarchy became so great that President Buchanan requested Congress to confer authority on him to send, in his discretion, an army into Mexico, for the protection of the lives and property of American residents; but this Congress declined to do. Later, through our intervention, the French were required to leave Mexico, but their departure was followed by several years of civil disorder, and the present successful ruler of our neighboring republic came into power by revolutionary methods. The condition of affairs in Cuba does not approach the disorders through which Argentina, Chile and Mexico have passed, and it becomes us to be patient, forbearing and reasonable toward this youngest of American republics.

There seems to be a widespread feeling in this country that if Cuba makes another failure in government, the only alternative will be annexation. This conclusion takes it for granted that annexation is desirable and would be advantageous to the United States. Is not this at least a debatable question? Let us briefly make an examination of it. The considerations which enter into a decision of this question are of two kinds, political and economic.

The political considerations. Some of these are the following:

1. How are we to annex Cuba? By force and in violation of our public promises, or by the consent of its people freely given? If by the latter course then we must make the island a part of the territory of the Union and create out of it one or more States, for under no other conditions would the people of the island consent to annexation. It is true, we could disregard their wishes and our own public declarations, make of Cuba a dependency and govern it as we do the Philippines or Porto Rico. But are the American people so enamored of that policy that they desire to complicate the unsolved problem by adding new obligations and burdens in that direction?

2. Does Cuba contain a population which it is desirable to incorporate at this time into our Union? Out of its one million six hundred thousand people, only from one to two hundred thousand have any scholastic education. To the great mass of the voting population of today the common school is an unknown institution.

3. A large proportion of the population is of negro or mixed blood. Cuba was the last of the American countries to abolish slavery, the final act being in 1887. With the negro problem in our Southern States pressing upon us for solution, and (if we are to accept the conviction of one of their ablest and best informed Senators) a race war is there threatened, do we desire to aggravate the situation by adding a million more of the despised race to our voting population?

4. The people of Cuba are almost in their entirety the adherents of one religious faith. The Catholics in the United States are among our most patriotic and useful citizens, but it would not be desirable to have one or more of our States composed entirely of them. Our experience with Utah in the government of a hierarchy cautions us to avoid, for our own civil peace and credit, further experiments in that direction.

5. The annexation of Cuba without the consent of its people will make necessary the employment there for some years to come of a large contingent of our army, and even by any method of annexation, for many of its people have been in almost continuous insurrection for years, and it will require a strong military force to accustom them to the ways of peace and industry. Many of the peace-loving people of the United States lamented the necessity in the Philippines which called for an increase of the army, and they will lament still more a further increase on account of the annexation of Cuba.

The economic considerations. I shall only attempt a brief mention of some of these.



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