

SHALL THE UNITED STATES HAVE COLONIES?

"Arbitrary governments may have territories and distant possessions because arbitrary governments may rule them by different laws and different systems. . . . We can do no such thing. They must be of us, part of us, or else strangers."
—Daniel Webster.

This topic of course, involves the recent acquisition by the United States of an extraordinary assortment of distant islands and alien peoples. Having acquired these islands and peoples by our recent wars, we must determine upon a course of action in respect to them. Three courses are open to us. First, we may let them go, securing by treaty all proper privileges in return for some measure of protection from outside aggression. Second, we may incorporate them into our body politic, holding them by force in subjection without representation. Third, we may incorporate them into our body politic, conceding to them the inalienable rights of freedom with representation.

Those who would adopt the first course, letting the islands go, believe that their people are not fitted to share with us the privileges and duties of American citizenship; and that, whatever others may do, it is not open to us to deny to men of any race or place equality of personal rights. They who thus believe do not undervalue trade. They do not wish to restrict American influence. They desire to hold their country true to the course which has exalted her among the nations and made her prosperous beyond compare. They believe that we can secure through treaties, cordially entered into by native governments, all privileges of trade and intercourse with their peoples which we should ask.

Those who would let the islands go, hold that, if the natives are incompetent to maintain public order by means of governments of their own choice suited to their conditions, they are unfit for incorporation into our body politic on whatever terms. They who so hold are unwilling to provide a place beneath their country's flag for others than citizens. They remember the tremendous sacrifices made by a passing generation to efface the stain of human slavery from the American name. They would not re-introduce inequality of rights into a nation that was "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." They would hold America true to the ideals of liberty and human rights which inspired her national life, which constitute her real glory, which form the basis of her most splendid vision.

Those who, with Benjamin Harrison, would "limit the use of power of territorial expansion to regions that may safely become part of the United States, and to peoples whose American citizenship may be allowed," do not question

the power of the American people—whom they distinguished from the American government, their agent—as a nation to do as respects acquired territory what other nations may do. They deny that it is open to a people, organized to secure and maintain self-government for themselves and their posterity, to question or deny the right of another people to self-government. They say that a people, who for more than a century have repudiated and denied the doctrine of absolutism, are estopped to assume and exercise absolute power over other peoples. They hold that a crowd acting the role of despot is even less open to reason than is the individual despot. They no more desire to exercise despotic power over others than to be themselves the victims of despotism.

The second course open to us, the incorporation of the island peoples into our body politic, to be held in subjection without representation, is but a reversion to the Roman method of nation-making. It involves the re-introduction into our system of the doctrine of inequality. It means the government of millions of men by force. It marks a clear departure from the hitherto consistent course in the pursuit of which we have achieved national greatness and worldwide influence. Until now our every acquisition of territory was made to expand the domain of equal rights, to extend the area of constitutional liberty. Each successive expansion of our territory enlarged a republic of self-governing men. The inhabitants of every such acquisition became citizens, sharing with us the rights of American citizenship.

This natural growth of a self-governing nation has until our time satisfied the aspirations of American statesmanship. Those, who from time to time exercised the authority of the nation, have been content to "limit the use of the power of territorial expansion to regions that might safely become part of the United States, and to peoples whose American citizenship might be allowed." Without preliminary discussion and by a course each step of which was declared not to involve the next, we have been committed to what is at last conceded to be a departure from our traditional policy, to what is called a colonial policy. We have by wars of conquest acquired distant territories fully peopled by millions of men not qualified for American citizenship. Our government, which is without inherent powers and is but the expression of the will of a self-governing people, has assumed and today exercises despotic power over these unhappy peoples. We have flatly denied to them the inalienable "rights of human nature" for which the revolution was fought. We have despoiled them of their native land and made them mere subjects of a distant republic. We

have relegated them to a status of slavery. Benjamin Harrison, referring to them in January last, said: "The man whose protection from wrong, rests wholly upon the benevolence of another man or a congress, is a slave—a man without rights." Mr. Justice Harlan, in the Downes' case, says: "The idea that this country may acquire territories anywhere upon the earth, by conquest or treaty, and hold them as mere colonies or provinces, and the people inhabiting them to enjoy only such rights as congress chooses to accord to them, is wholly inconsistent with the spirit and genius as well as with the words of the constitution."

This policy, though within the power of the greatest of republics, is suicidal. John Fiske, in discussing its failure at Rome, says: "The essential vice of the Roman system was that it had been unable to avoid weakening the spirit of personal independence and crushing out local self-government among the people to whom it had been applied. It owed its wonderful success to joining Liberty with Union, but as it went on, it found itself compelled gradually to sacrifice liberty to union, strengthening the hands of the central government and enlarging its functions more and more, until by and by the political life of the several parts had so far died away, that under the pressure of attack from without, the Union fell to pieces and the whole political system had to be painfully reconstructed."

"The Roman method of nation making lacked the principle of representation What was needed was the introduction of a fierce spirit of personal liberty and personal self-government."

There is a third course open to us, the incorporation of the island peoples into body politic with the equal rights of American citizenship. This is the tried American method of nation-making. It is founded on the great principle of representation. Until with professions of humanity on our lips we entered upon wars of conquest, we had not dreamed that a self-governing people might extend its national boundaries by other means. It assumed that governments derive their just powers only from the consent of the governed. It did not prevent national expansion. It limited such expansion to regions and peoples that might safely be admitted into a self-governing nation. The admission of acquired territory, as states was only delayed for sufficient population to maintain all the institutions of constitutional liberty. In the meantime the personal rights of American citizenship were protected by the constitution and everywhere respected. In the words of the supreme court, in a case decided in 1895, even aliens were "entitled to the benefit of the guaranties of life, liberty, and property, secured by the