



SUMNER ON IMPERIALISM.

An Unusual Lecture in the Phi Beta Kappa Course.

On Monday evening, January 16th, Professor William G. Sumner of Yale appeared for the second time in recent years on the public platform, in discussion of current economic and political problems. Since his illness of a few years ago, his public lectures have been almost entirely suspended. Two years ago he spoke to the members and friends of the University in College Street Hall on "Earth Hunger." On Monday his subject was "The Conquest of the United States by Spain." He spoke under the auspices of Phi Beta Kappa in College Street Hall.

It goes without saying that the audience taxed to the utmost the capacity of the hall. Members of the Faculty, residents of New Haven, and many ladies, as well as the students, were there. Professor Sumner spoke for an hour and a half, and at the close the attention of this somewhat heterogeneous but exacting audience was as close as on the opening sentence. The listeners remained in their seats for a considerable time after the lecture was closed in order to express their enthusiastic admiration. Those who differed diametrically from the conclusions of the address vied with the most zealous anti-imperialists in their applause and their admiring comments on the speech as an intellectual triumph. Professor Sumner was in excellent voice, and in manner, spirit and gesture showed at least all his old force.

With the limits of time and space it is only possible to indicate a few of the points. Spain, said the speaker, stood with us for a certain set of ideas and the United States for another set of ideas diametrically opposed to them. Spain was the first of modern imperialistic states; the United States the first of the nations which stood for revolt against the ideas, principles and practices of such a nation. In the war of 1808 the United States had overcome the military power of Spain, and now the Spanish political ideas were threatening to overcome the political ideas of the United States.

The speaker characterized the war as a move of partisan interests in a political strife at Washington, followed up by an appeal to the people on grounds of alleged patriotism and moral sentiment. It was not the part of statesmanship to go into that war without knowing anything more than we did as to the occasion for it. It was not the part of statesmanship to enter a war like that, knowing, as any one ought to know, that its results would be the acquisition of new territory, whose management would entail enormous difficulties.

"LIBERTY."

When we speak of liberty we think of ourselves as exemplifying it, and a nation like Russia as expressing the opposite of it. But Russia has liberty, if it is liberty for a few men at the central government, to decide what they want and then do it. A large part of liberty consists in the right of decision as to whether we shall do a thing or let it alone. We had no liberty in this case. What we must meet in the evolution of our own national character and fortunes and interests, is a necessary part of our national experience. What we go out of our way to seek in the way of trouble and burdens and problems is an unnecessary, unwise and criminal part of a nation's experience, and is a throwing away of its liberty.

After characterizing the daily and periodical literature of the country as partly hypocritical, falsely sentimental and largely hysterical, and saying that by this means patriotism was being worked into a condition of nervous intoxication, Professor Sumner took up the doctrine that we must accept what is before us; that we must not do anything about what has been done; that we must not cross bridges before we come to them, and that the past is irretrievable. He considered this a most convenient form of doctrine for those at the head of the Government. It relieved them from all responsibility.

Senator Foraker says that we are going to give the Philippines their independence as soon as they are ready for it. I do not know how he knows about it. If he is right, we are paying twenty million dollars for the privilege of tutoring the Tagals up to liberty and self-government. Some time ago there was no class of citizens who received such violent condemnation as those Southerners who did not believe in the principles of the Confederacy, but who "went with their states." It is just as well not to say much about that now. At the close of the debate in the Senate the other day, a member from the South congratulated a senator from Connecticut for a speech on this question of expansion, which was a complete justification for all the South had done for long years.

What the nation most needs to-day is moral courage: the press and the pulpit and even the university, which ought to be the last citadel against it, are succumbing to the vice of truckling for popularity.

The history of Spain was drawn upon, showing that she started with a large degree of liberty and prosperity, and that imperialism had meant for her glory and bankruptcy, a grand governmental system, armies and navies, and debts; a lot of money going into the national treasury, which was mistaken for national prosperity, whereas it meant that the people were paying more and more taxes.

OUR "MISSION."

All nations think they have missions for other nations. The French are sure that the eyes of the world are turned to Paris and that the ears of the universe listen to the French oracles on wisdom and taste. Germany is oppressed with a sense of her mission to the Americans, to free the nation from egoism and materialism. Modern Russian literature teems with passages on the grand work of civilization accomplished by the armies of the Czar, which, when translated, would pass for some of the finest passages in our own imperialistic journals. The Spanish themselves have been filled with the conviction that they were especially commissioned by the Almighty to spread Christianity over the globe. Each nation ridicules the other's pretensions, and the outlying people in whose behalf all these beneficent purposes are expressed, hate them all.

All these enterprises in respect to other peoples, in which it is said, "We know what is good for you and we will make you do it"—all are wrong, because they violate the essential principle of liberty. Why do we throw it away for the Spanish policy of dominion and the privilege of regulating other people's business?

This attitude of mind towards other peoples is the explanation for man's inhumanity to man. It accounts for the unspeakable cruelties of the Spanish in dealing with the aborigines; it accounts for the attitude of a large part of this people towards the negro; for the nation's treatment of the Indians. The

doctrine that all men are equal was set up particularly as a barrier to the idea that "it is liberty for you to be governed by us." It is rather a remarkable thing that our arms should carry this doctrine that all men are equal to the farthest isles of the sea, to be tested. It has been no sooner tested than discarded.

The speaker went into a careful analysis of the character of our federation of states. The real nature of this federation, he said, has been largely overlooked since the Civil War. From the nature of this federation he showed that it was the highest wisdom never to take into it a heterogeneous state. Now, as regards these new dependencies, we must, first, either rule them by force, denying to them the rights for which we wrote our Declaration, framed our Constitution and fought through the heroic period of our history; or, second, we must make these states a part of our federation, and ask them to assist in governing us, which we are not going to do and which we have no right to do; or, third, we must give them their independence and let them work out their own salvation, or go without it. No Spanish-American state has yet proved itself equal to the task of self-government. Hayti has been a theater for rebellion and bloodshed for all its national history. It is a serious question whether a single Spanish-American state would not have been better off remaining under Spain than in independence. We hear it said that Mexico is teaching a good deal now about self-government, and that we might learn from her, but Mexico has had a dictatorship for several years; it may be a different story when they resume governing themselves.

It was an enormous blunder of statesmanship to enter a war whose end meant such problems as these.

And now we want a standing army. Why? So we can do it again when the politicians decide the time has come around to do it again; when political ascendancy is threatened. Good old hard-headed Benjamin Franklin hit it right when he talked about the "pest of glory." The thirst for glory threatens every good thing for which this nation was built.

THE INTEGRITY OF THE STATE.

The great question of the day is the integrity of the state. The speaker presented the threatening difficulties of maintaining the integrity of the state when we applied our new policy of imperialism by laying aside the Constitution, and when in the consideration of the problems at home we threw it in the gutter and trampled on it. The accomplishment of this by imitating England is impossible. England has been at work since the Napoleonic wars in strengthening her governmental system, correcting abuses, and in training up a body of men for the public service who are given the highest education, the ripest experience and are animated by the highest motives. Besides all this advantage of a long struggle and a long development, her scheme is aristocratic, foreign to our system, and not to be assimilated.

The tremendous difficulty of taxation was taken up. We cannot tax these colonies for either our own good or to even bear a proportionate share of the burden of imperialism, without tearing our national history in shreds. Shall we go to the other extreme and let the colonies tax us, as England's colonies do?

The people who used to talk about building a Chinese wall around this country, and who would go farther and say they were willing to have a gulf of fire between us and the rest of the

world, now find out that by shutting the rest of the world out they have shut themselves in. Shall we extend protection to colonies? Then we shut out the rest of the world and get into trouble with other nations. Shall we order the open door, and they have free trade against our protection?

The speaker thought that the result of the war would be to break down our restrictive system. He said at the opening of the lecture that some of the results of the experiences of the year 1898 would be good, for all political results are a mixture of the good and the bad.

Referring to those who wanted the trade of these colonies simply for ourselves, he spoke of our spending three or four hundred million dollars for this trade with Porto Rico and the Philippines, when we might have obtained for nothing a trade of vastly more value to us by signing the reciprocity treaty with Canada. This, while we fought our terribly expensive war, we refused to take.

WHAT MILITARISM MEANS.

Professor Sumner spoke at length of the awful drain of militarism, which ate up the products of science and art. The absorption of the energies of the Continental nations in this connection is something fearful to contemplate. Militarism and republicanism are diametrically opposed. The best men of France know it, but France will give up anything before her military power, and militarism is now plainly the master of the situation. The conservative classes of Germany feel the awful oppression of their military system, but Germany will not give it up. Bismarck's refusal to take Bohemia was the most statesmanlike act of his life. When he later wrested Alsace and Lorraine from France, the beginning was made in the process of turning Europe into armed camps, and counteracting all the effect of science and art in ameliorating the condition of the people.

The most serious factor in the situation is the fact that the masses do not appreciate what militarism means. The great struggle of the twentieth century will be the struggle between plutocracy and democracy. Plutocracy is the greatest enemy of democracy and on its side will be ranged the forces of militarism.

After dwelling on the enormous advantage of our isolation, on which fact, as on a corner-stone our fathers built, he asked what it profited us to throw it all away and go out for a share of the trouble in the rest of the world? There is a consistency of character for a nation as for a man. Then the contrasts of the last three years were summed up; Venezuela and the Maine; the attitude towards England six months ago and to-day; our immigration laws and our voluntary assumption of eight million barbarians at a cost of twenty million dollars; the way we clamored for the rights of the negro, and the way we now hobnob with those who denied those rights.

"TIMES HAVE CHANGED."

People say times have changed. That only means that the phrase-makers have made a new set of phrases. "Americans can do everything." This is the final argument in favor of attempting the impossible. Then Professor Sumner enumerated some things that Americans cannot do. Mathematical impossibilities, like making two and two equal five; human impossibilities, like collecting two dollars a gallon tax on whiskey, which we have never succeeded in doing; political impossibilities, like decently governing a city of a hundred thousand inhabitants, such as New