
The Hawaiian, or Sandwich Islands

by Eugene V. Debs

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Daring the year of 1778, Capt. James Cook, a celebrated English navigator, discovered the Hawaiian or Sandwich islands. There are eight islands in the group, having an area of about 6,000 square miles. These islands are situated between 18 and 22 degrees north latitude and are about 2,000 miles southwest from San Francisco.

Their products are tropical, and semi-tropical, such as coffee, sugar, tobacco, arrow-root, cocoa, zano, wheat, sandalwood, and taro. Cattle and sheep are numerous.

When Capt. Cook discovered the islands, 115 years ago, their inhabitants were savages and cannibals, and numbered, it is estimated, about 800,000.

Capt. Cook having become involved in a dispute with the natives, they murdered him on St. Valentine's Day, 1779, and probably cooked him.

Some years after the discovery of the islands, the missionary spirit, particularly of the United States, centered largely in the interest of the heathen Hawaiians, and it was found that they, with exceptional readiness, received instruction, and when about 50 years had elapsed the Hawaiians had been converted to Christianity. Here and there an old timer had an idol hidden away, and a few retained a relish for human steaks and choice roasting pieces, but as a general thing they had abandoned their savage customs, and adopted civilized ways.

But as is seen by the rapid decrease of native population, civilization did not agree with them, since in less than one hundred years of civilizing methods, the nation has decreased from 800,000 to about 35,000, and the remaining remnant, as the auctioneers say, are "going," and in another 50 years will be gone.

According to the census of 1890, the population of the Hawaiian group, “consisted of 34,436 natives, 6,186 half castes, 7,495 born in Hawaii of foreign parents, 15,301 Chinese, 12,360 Japanese, 8,602 Portuguese, 1,928 Americans, 1,344 British, 1,034 Germans, 227 Norwegians, 70 French, 588 Polynesians, and 419 other foreigners, in all, 89,990 souls.” The proposition now is to annex these islands to the United States, to make them one of the Territories of the American Republic, and eventually constitute them a state of the union.

Speaking of the products of the islands, it is proper to remark that leprosy commands special attention, so much so that one island is entirely given up to its transplantation from other islands where it is permitted to develop and go to seed and the crop is annually increasing.

Of the 89,990 souls on the Hawaiian Islands not more than 2,675 would make desirable citizens, leaving 86,315 souls that ought never to be annexed to the United States under any circumstances. The Chinese, Japanese, and Polynesians are simply so many slaves who do the work of the islands, and the annexation would, therefore, not only afford no outlet to American labor, but would serve to degrade labor, as it is everywhere degraded in all tropical and semi-tropical lands, and it might therefore be prudent for organized labor to be heard upon the subject of annexation.

It is believed by some people who profess to be students of cause and effect, and of coming events, that in due time, and at no distant day, all of North America will be under the jurisdiction of the “Star Spangled Banner,” sometimes called “Old Glory,” and it may be, in addition, that Cuba will be included; but this thing of going 2,000 miles to sea to secure 6,000 square miles of volcanic islands, is not thought to be “manifest destiny,” but up to the present “manifest destiny” is a puzzle no one is able to solve; hence there is no telling what will occur, should Uncle Sam find himself the victim of a well developed case of annexing fever. But this thing of annexing about 30,000 Chinese, Japanese, and Polynesians to get 6,000 square miles of lava beds and the largest volcano in the world, ought not to be done with a hop, skip, and jump for the gratification of a few millionaires who alone will be the beneficiaries.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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