

DO WE WANT HAWAII?

If advices from Washington are authoritative, the president is heartily in favor of immediately annexing Hawaii, and to that end will use every effort. Jingoism of the Blaine type seems to have been absorbed very thoroughly by the little man from Indiana. How it is that Benjamin Harrison can sit in his office at the capital and determine in a few days that the United States wants the Hawaiian islands is more than anyone can see. The liberal papers of Honolulu, in every way familiar with the island government and her needs, are not sure yet that annexation would prove a remedy for them. It is a serious matter, this saddling of responsibility on a nation for all time. Surely there is no reason for waiving investigation unless Mr. Harrison considers the nearness of March 4 a reason.

Now that a few papers have declared against the popular cry for immediate annexation some facts are coming out that tend to show that even in Hawaii, where it is ever summer and sunshine, there are drawbacks to health, happiness and prosperity. One of the most earnest objectors to the plan of annexation is ex-Hawaiian Minister George W. Merrill, who will come out in the March *California* with an article showing reasons for at least putting off the question at this time. Mr. Merrill has been an observer of the islands for fifty years. In that time he has noted that nearly all of many annexation schemes in Hawaii have been broached by Americans with large holdings on the islands, the value of which would be appreciated by the adoption by the United States government. Webster, Everett and Marcy as secretaries rejected proposals of annexation, offering grounds that are as applicable today as they were thirty or forty years ago. There is a population of about 90,000 on the islands, only 2,000 of which are Americans. The rest are Chinese, Japanese, Portugese and natives, a class that will not be readily assimilated. Ex-Minister Merrill says that Admiral Porter was wrong in his epigrammatic assertion that without the islands our Pacific coast is defenseless; with them it can be able to cope with any attacking power. He says that they would not only not help us, but would be a burden in case of war. Then there is imported contract labor that this

there is imported contract labor that this country would have to dispose of. Mr. Merrill concludes his article with this language:

To any one acquainted with the climatic influences, the simplicity and wants of the native race, the aggressiveness of the Asiatic, the requirements of the staple industries and the peculiar labor conditions of that country, it must be apparent that the autonomy of Hawaii is far better adapted to the wants of its people than any other condition. While, on the other hand, so long as the United States maintains its present attitude—embracing that group within the Monroe doctrine—and keeps an eye of its eagle poised in the direction of Hawaii, the harbor privileges, naval station and cable will accomplish for us all that is desirable, without inflicting any injury on a friendly neighbor or violating the interests of the American people or shocking the principles of our government.

It may be that Mr. Merrill is perfectly right in his notion of the disadvantages that would attend annexation. On the other hand it appears to Americans that the islands would not long retain their present peculiarities of race mixture. If all that we hear of the wondrous fertility of the little group be true, whites soon would vastly outnumber all other races after a few years of American rule. Still there is argument on both sides of the question. Men who are fighting annexation, and statesmen who are clamoring for that act immediately do not know what they are talking about. Personal interest arouses the one, jingoism the other. There is but one proper way in which the question may be settled.

Send a commission to Hawaii.