

PEARL RIVER HARBOR.

The proposition of the Senate Foreign Committee to renew the Hawaiian reciprocity treaty for another period of seven years in accordance with President ARTHUR'S agreement, still lacking sanction, provided an exclusive right is ceded to our country over the harbor of Pearl River, revives interest in a long-cherished project of the Navy Department.

Wholly apart from the question of sugar imports and remitted duties involved in the treaty which went into effect in 1876, the character and possibilities of Pearl River Harbor as a naval station are of national importance. About two-thirds of the territorial area of the Hawaiian group is contained in the island of Hawaii, and the remaining third is nearly all found in the three islands of Kauai, Maui, and Oahu, although there are a dozen islets belonging to the archipelago. Oahu has by far the finest roadsteads. On this island is Honolulu, the capital, and eight miles west of the town is Pearl River, at whose mouth lies the harbor whose cession is now proposed. With the exclusive right to enter the harbor and to establish and maintain there a coaling and repair station would be joined authority to improve the harbor at will for this purpose.

This project is so far from being a new one that long ago our naval officers fully surveyed the harbor and coast. The treaty now seeking renewal was to continue seven years, and thereafter until the expiration of a year after a notice of either Government to the other of its wish to terminate it. Just before this treaty was negotiated Admiral PENNOCK reported to the Navy Department that while many of the Sandwich Islanders favored annexation to the United States, more desired a reciprocity treaty whose consideration should be the cession of Pearl River Harbor and the adjacent territory. This he declared to be a fine, commodious haven, requiring only a little deepening at the entrance, which could be done at a price very small compared with the value of possessing forever "the only harbor of these islands which can be well defended, and where vessels will be entirely out of reach of bombardment from the sea." He added that possession of the harbor and adjacent islands would give a virtual control of all Oahu Island, and thus secure to the United States a decisive influence in determining the ultimate possession of the whole group. Careful surveys of the region were accordingly made and filed with the department; yet, after all, the treaty was made without any provision for ceding a naval station.

Despite this neglect or blunder the question of Pearl River Harbor has lost nothing in importance. In fact, this importance has increased in view of the steady absorption by European powers of the strategic and commercial vantage points in the Pacific. And the question, too, is really just as important whether the reciprocity treaty is renewed or not. The ground on which the Ways and Means Committee of the House recently advised its abrogation was that the country is losing millions annually in its revenues by the remission of duties on the imported Sandwich Island sugar crop. One calculation is that this loss up to the present time has aggregated over \$23,000,000, which would greatly surpass any correlative gains in the remission of duties on our exports to Hawaii granted under the treaty. But on the other side it might be argued that save for the free entry there would have been no such amounts of Sandwich Island sugar imported, and, in fact, the annual crop has multiplied eightfold under the introduction of coolie labor and of new machinery, all following the treaty. Without the stimulus given to the industry by the free entry there might have been a much smaller crop upon which to estimate the loss of revenue.

But leaving entirely aside the question of the commercial advantages and disadvantages of the treaty, which the sugar refiners of the East and the sugar growers of the South will sufficiently present, as against the sugar importers of the Pacific coast, the naval, political, and strategic importance of Pearl River Harbor can hardly be questioned, even if we do not go to the length of the opinion of the *London Times* that "the maritime power that holds Pearl River Harbor and moors her fleet there holds the key of the North Pacific." The English say their own treaty with Hawaii empowers them to "enter into all harbors, rivers, and places to which the ships of war of other nations are or may be permitted to come." It might be well, therefore, in considering the acquisition of Pearl River Harbor, either under a reciprocity treaty or as a separate undertaking, to find out how