

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Chief Executive Devotes Much Space to Spanish War.

Importance of the Nicaraguan Canal Strongly Presented and Congress Urged to Take Immediate Action—Our Foreign Relations Generally Touched Upon.

Washington, D. C. Dec. 5, 1898.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

Notwithstanding the added burdens rendered necessary by the war our people rejoice in a very satisfactory and steadily increasing degree of prosperity evidenced by the largest volume of business ever recorded. Manufacture has been productive, agricultural pursuits have yielded abundant returns, labor in the fields of industry is better rewarded, revenue legislation, passed by the present congress, has increased the treasury's receipts to the amount estimated by its authors; the finances of the government have been successfully administered and its credit advanced to the first rank; while its currency has been maintained at the world's highest standard. Military service, under a command flag and for a righteous cause, has strengthened the national spirit, and served to cement more closely than ever the fraternal bonds between every section of the country.

A review of the relations of the United States to other powers, always appropriate, is this year of primary importance in view of the momentous issues which have arisen, demanding in one instance the ultimate determination by arms and involving far-reaching consequences which will require the earnest attention of the congress.

THE CUBAN QUESTION.

In my last annual message very full consideration was given to the question of the duty of the government of the United States toward Spain and the Cuban insurrection, as being by far the most important problem with which we were then called upon to deal. The considerations then advanced and the exposition of the views therein expressed disclosed my sense of the extreme gravity of the situation. Setting aside as logically unfounded or practically inadmissible, the recognition of the Cuban insurgents as belligerents, the recognition of the independence of Cuba, national intervention to end the war by imposing a rational compromise between the contestants, intervention in favor of one or the other party, and forcible annexation of the island, I concluded it was honestly due to our friendly relations with Spain that she should be given a reasonable chance to realize her expectations of reform to which she had become irrevocably committed. Within a few weeks previously she had announced comprehensive plans which it was confidently asserted would be efficacious to remedy the evils so deeply affecting our own country, so injurious to the true interests of the mother country as well as to those of Cuba, and so repugnant to the universal sentiment of humanity.

The ensuing month brought little sign of real progress toward the pacification of Cuba. The autonomous administration set up in the capital and some of the principal cities appeared not to gain the favor of the inhabitants, nor to be able to extend their influence to the large extent of territory held by the insurgents, while the military arm, obviously unable to cope with the still active rebellion, continued many of the most objectionable and offensive policies of the government that had preceded it. No tangible relief was afforded the vast numbers of unhappy reconcentrados despite the reiterated professions made in that regard and the amount appropriated by Spain to that end. The proposed expedient of zones of cultivation proved illusory; indeed, no less practical nor more delusive promises of succor could well have been tendered to the exhausted and destitute people, stripped of all that made life and home dear and herded in a strange region among unsympathetic strangers hardly less necessities than themselves. By the end of December the mortality among them had frightfully increased. Conservative estimates from Spanish sources placed the deaths among these distressed people at over 40 per cent. from the time Gen. Weyler's decree of reconcentration was enforced. With the acquiescence of the Spanish authorities a scheme was adopted for relief by charitable contributions, raised in this country and distributed under the direction of our consular general and the general consuls, by individual citizens, and also through the organized agencies of the American Red Cross. Thousands of lives were thus saved, but many thousands more were inaccessible to such forms of aid.

DESTRUCTION OF THE MAINE.

At this juncture, on the 15th of February last, occurred the destruction of the battleship Maine, while rightfully lying in the harbor of Havana on a mission of international courtesy and good will—a catastrophe, the suspicious nature and horror of which, stirred the nation's heart profoundly. It is a striking evidence of the poise and sturdy good sense distinguishing our national character that this shocking blow, falling upon a generous people, already touched by preceding events in Cuba, did not move them to an instant, desperate resolve to tolerate no longer the exercise of a condition of danger and disorder at our doors, that made possible such a deed, by whomsoever wrought. Yet the nation anxiously awaited the result of the searching investigation at once set on foot. The finding of the naval board of inquiry established that the origin of the explosion was external by a submarine mine, and only halted through lack of positive testimony to fix the responsibility of its authorship.

STRAINED RELATIONS WITH SPAIN.

All these things carried conviction to the most thoughtful, even before the finding of the naval court that a crisis in our relations with Spain and toward Cuba was at hand. So strong was this belief that it needed but a brief executive suggestion to the congress to receive immediate answer to the duty of making instant provision for the possible and perhaps speedily probable emergency of war, and the remarkable, almost unique, spectacle was presented of a unanimous vote of both houses, on the 9th of March, appropriating fifty million dollars "for the national defense and for such and every purpose connected therewith, to be expended at the discretion of the president." That this act of provision came none to soon was disclosed when the application of the fund was undertaken. Our coasts were practically undefended. Our navy needed large provision for ammunition and supplies, even numbers, to cope with any sudden attack from the navy of Spain which comprised modern vessels of the highest type of continental perfection. Our army also required enlargement and men and munitions. The details of the hurried preparation for the dread contingency is told in the reports of the secretaries of war and of the navy, and need not be repeated here. It is sufficient to say that the outbreak of war which it did come, found our nation not unprepared to meet the conflict.

Nor was the apprehension of coming war strictly confined to our own country. It

was felt by the continental powers which on April 6th, through their ambassadors, addressed to the executive a hope that moderation might mark the course of this government and that further negotiations would lead to an agreement, which while securing the maintenance of peace, would afford all necessary guarantees for the re-establishment of order in Cuba. In responding to that representation I said I shared the hope the envoys had expressed that peace might be preserved in a manner to terminate the chronic condition of disturbance in Cuba, so injurious and menacing to our interests and tranquility, as well as shocking to our sentiments of humanity, and while appreciating the humanitarian and disinterested character of the communication they had made on behalf of the powers, I stated that the confidence of this government for its part that equal appreciation would be shown for its own earnest and unselfish endeavors to fulfill a duty to humanity by ending a situation, the indefinite prolongation of which had become insufferable.

Still animated by the hope of a peaceful solution and obeying the dictates of duty, no effort was relaxed to bring about a speedy ending of the Cuban trouble. Negotiations to this objective continued actively, looking to the immediate conclusion of a six months' armistice in Cuba, with a view to effect the recognition of her people's rights to independence. Besides this the instant revocation of the order of reconcentration was asked so that the sufferers returning to their homes and aided by united American and Spanish people might be put in a way to support themselves again, by orderly resumption of the well-nigh destroyed productive enterprises of the island, and contribute to the restoration of its tranquility and well being. Negotiations continued for some little time at Madrid, resulting in offers by the Spanish government which could not be regarded but as inadequate. It was proposed to convoke the preparation of peace to the insular parliament, yet to be convened under the autonomous decrees of November 10, 1897, but without impairment in any wise of the constitutional powers of the Madrid government, which, to that end, would grant an armistice, if solicited by the insurgents, for such time as the general in chief should see fit. How and with what scope of discretionary powers the insular parliament was expected to set about the "preparation" of peace did not appear. If it were to be by negotiation with the insurgents, the issue seemed to rest on the one side with a body chosen by a fraction of the electors in the districts under Spanish control and on the other with the insurgent population holding the interior country, unrepresented in the so-called parliament and debilitated at the suggestion of suing for peace.

Grrieved and disappointed at this barren outcome of my sincere endeavors to reach a practical solution, I felt it my duty to remit the whole question to the congress. In the message of April 11, 1898, I announced that with this last overture in the direction of immediate peace in Cuba, and its disappointing reception by Spain, the effort of the executive was brought to an end. I again reviewed the alternative courses of action which I had proposed, concluding that the only one compatible with international policy and consistent with our firm-set positions, was intervention as a neutral to stop the war and check the hopeless sacrifice of life, even though that resort involved "hostile" constraint upon both the parties to the contest as well as to enforce a truce as to guide the eventual settlement.

The grounds justifying that step were the interests of humanity; the duty to protect life and property of our citizens in Cuba; the right to check injury to our commissioners and people through the devastation of the island; and most important, the need of removing at once and forever the constant menace and the burdens entailed upon our government by the uncertainties and perils of the situation caused by the unbearable disturbance in Cuba. I said:

"The long trial has proved that the object for which Spain has waged the war cannot be attained. The fire of insurrection may flame or may smoulder with varying seasons, but it has not been, and it is plain that it cannot be, extinguished by present methods. The only hope of relief and repose from a condition which can no longer be endured is the enforced pacification of Cuba. In the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in behalf of endangered American interests, which give us the right and the duty to speak and act, the war in Cuba must stop."

ACTIVE INTERVENTION.

In view of all this the congress was asked to authorize and empower the president to take measures to secure a full and final termination of hostilities between Spain and the people of Cuba, and to secure in the island the establishment of a stable government, capable of maintaining order and exercising the rights of the people, insuring peace and tranquillity and the security of its citizens as well as our own, and for the accomplishment of those ends to use the military and naval forces of the United States as might be necessary with added authority to continue generous relief to the starving people of Cuba.

The response of the congress, after nine days of earnest deliberation, during which the almost unanimous sentiment of your body was expressed upon every point save as to the expediency of coupling the proposed action with a formal recognition of the republic of Cuba as the true and lawful government of that island—a proposition which failed of adoption—the congress, after conference, on the 19th of April, by a vote of 42 to 35 in the senate and 311 to 6 in the house of representatives, passed the memorable joint resolution declaring:

"First—That the people of this island of Cuba are and of right ought to be free and independent."

"Second—That it is the duty of the United States to demand and the government of the United States does hereby demand that the government of Spain at once relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters."

"Third—That the president of the United States be and is hereby directed and empowered to use the entire land and naval forces of the United States and to call into the active service of the United States the militia of the several states to the extent as may be necessary to carry the resolution into effect."

"Fourth—That the United States hereby disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said island except for the pacification thereof and asserts its determination when that is accomplished to leave the government and control of the island to its people."

This resolution was approved by the executive on the 20th of April. A copy was at once communicated to the Spanish minister at this capital who forthwith announced that his continuance in Washington had thereby become impossible and asked for his passports, which were given him. He thereupon withdrew from Washington, leaving the protection of Spanish interests in the United States to the French ambassador and the Austro-Hungarian minister. Simultaneously with its communication to the Spanish minister, Gen. Woodford, the American minister at Madrid, was telegraphed confirmation of the text of the joint resolution, and directed to communicate it to the government of Spain, with the formal demand that it at once relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba and withdraw its forces there, coupling this demand with announcements of the intentions of this government as to the future of the island in conformity with the fourth clause of the resolution and giving Spain until noon of April 23, to reply.

That demand, although as above shown was officially made known to the Spanish envoy here was not delivered at Madrid. After the instruction reached Gen. Woodford on the morning of April 21 but before he could present it, the Spanish minister of state, notified him that upon the president's approval of the resolutions the Madrid government regarded the act as "equivalent to a declaration of war," had ordered its

minister in Washington to withdraw, thereby breaking off diplomatic relations between the two countries and ceasing all official communication between their respective governments. Gen. Woodford thereupon demanded his passports and quitted Madrid the same day.

THE DECLARATION OF WAR.

Spain having thus denied the demand of the United States and intimated that relations had ceased, other powers, authorized by the resolutions, were need to meet the contingency of actual war between sovereign states. On April 22, I proclaimed a blockade of the north coast of Cuba, including ports on said coast between Cardenas and Bahá Honda and the port of Cienfuegos on the south coast of Cuba; and on the 23rd I called for volunteers to execute the purpose of the resolutions. By my message of April 25 the congress was informed of the situation and I recommended formal declaration of the existence of a state of war between the United States and Spain. The resolutions were voted on the same day the act approved April 23, 1898, declaring the existence of such war from and including the 21st day of April and re-enacted the provision of the resolution of April 20 directing the president to use all the armed forces of the nation to carry that act into effect. No notification of the existence of war as aforesaid was given April 25 by telegraph to all the governments with which the United States maintain relations in order that their neutrality might be assured during the war. The various governments responded with proclamations of neutrality, each after its own methods. It is not among the least gratifying incidents of the struggle that the obligations of neutrality were impartially discharged by all, often under delicate and difficult circumstances.

In further fulfillment of international duty, I issued, April 26, a proclamation announcing the treatment proposed to be accorded to vessels and their cargoes as to blockade, contraband, and the exercise of the right of search and the immunity of neutral flags and neutral goods under enemy's flag. A similar proclamation was made by the Spanish government. In the conduct of hostilities the rules of the declaration of Paris including abstention from resort to privatering, have accordingly been observed by both belligerents, although neither was a party to that declaration.

THE WAR PREPARATIONS.

Our country thus after an interval of half a century of peace with all nations found itself engaged in deadly conflict with a foreign enemy. Every nerve was strained to meet the emergency. The response to the initial call for 125,000 volunteers was instant and complete as was also the result of the second call of May 25 for 75,000 additional volunteers. The ranks of the regular army were increased to the limits provided by the act of April 26. The enlisted force of the navy on the 15th day of August, when it reached its maximum, numbered 24,123 men and apprentices. One hundred and three vessels were added to the navy by purchase, one was presented to the government, one leased and the four vessels of the International Navigation Company, the St. Louis, St. Paul, New York and Paris were chartered. In addition to the regular fleet of battleships and light house tenders were turned over to the navy department and became temporarily a part of the auxiliary navy.

The maximum effective fighting force of the navy during the war, separated into classes, was as follows:

Four battleships of the first class; one battleship of the second class; two armored cruisers; six coast defense monitors; one armored ram; twelve protected cruisers; three unprotected cruisers; eighteen gun boats; one dynamite cruiser; eleven torpedo boats; fourteen old vessels of the old navy, including monitors, Auxiliary navy: Auxiliary cruisers 28; converted yachts 27; converted tugs 19; converted colliers 15; revenue cutters 6; four lighthouse tenders and 19 miscellaneous vessels.

Much alarm was felt along our entire Atlantic seaboard lest some attack might be made by the enemy. Every precaution was taken to prevent possible injury to our great cities lying along the coast. Temporary garrisons were provided, drawn from the state militia; infantry and light batteries were drawn from the volunteer forces. About 12,000 troops were thus employed. The coast signal service was established for observing the approach of an enemy's ship to the coast of the United States and the life saving and lighthouse services cooperated which enabled the navy department to have all portions of the Atlantic coast from Maine to Texas under observation. The auxiliary navy was created under the authority of congress and was officered and manned by the naval militia of the several states. This organization patrolled the coast and performed the duty of a second arm of defense.

Under the direction of the chief of engineers submarine mines were placed at the most exposed points. Before the outbreak of the war permanent mining casements and cable galleries had been constructed at all important harbors. Most of the torpedo material was not to be found in the market and had to be specially manufactured. Under date of April 19, district officers were directed to take all preliminary measures for the laying and laying out of mines to the cables and on April 22, telegraphic orders were issued to place the mined mines in position. The aggregate number of mines placed was 1,535 at the principal harbors from Maine to California. Preparations were also made for the planting of mines at certain other harbors. The Spanish fleet these mines were not placed. The signal corps was promptly organized and performed service of the most difficult and important character. Its operations during the war covered the electrical connection of all coast fortifications, the establishment of telephonic and telegraphic facilities for the camps at Manila, Santiago and Porto Rico. There were constructed 300 miles of line at ten great camps, thus facilitating military movements from those points in a manner heretofore unknown in military administration. Field telegraph lines were established and maintained under the enemy's fire at Manila and later the Manila-Hong Kong cable was re-opened.

In Porto Rico cable communications were opened over a discontinued route and on land the headquarters of the commanding officer was kept in telegraphic or telephonic communication with the division commanders on four different lines of operations. There was placed in Cuban waters a completely outfitted cable ship, with war cables and cable gear suitable both for the destruction of communications belonging to the enemy and the establishment of our own. Two ocean cables were destroyed under the enemy's batteries at Santiago. The day previous to the landing of Gen. Shafter's corps at Camanera, within twenty miles of the landing place, cable communications were established and cable stations opened, giving direct communication with the government at Washington. This service was invaluable in directing the operations of the army and navy. With a total force of over 1,300, the loss was by disease in camp and field officers and men included only five.

The national defense, under the \$50,000,000 fund, was expended in large part by the army and navy and the objects for which it was used are fully shown in the reports of the several secretaries. It was a most timely appropriation, enabling the government to strengthen its defense and making preparations greatly needed in case of war. This fund, being inadequate to the requirements of equipment and for the conduct of the war, the patriotism of congress provided the means for the advance act of June 13, by authorizing a 3 per cent. popular loan, not to exceed four hundred million dollars and by levying additional imposts and taxes. Of the authorized loan two hundred millions were offered and promptly taken, the subscriptions far exceeding the call as to cover it many times over, while preference being given to the smaller bids, no single allotment exceeded the thousand dollars. This was a most encouraging and significant result, showing

the vast resources of the nation and the determination of the people to uphold their country's honor.

TEMPORARY CUBAN GOVERNMENT.

As soon as we are in possession of Cuba and have pacified the island, it will be necessary to give aid and decision to its people to form a government of themselves. It should be undertaken at the earliest moment consistent with safety and assured success. It is important that our relations with these people shall be of the most friendly character and our commercial relations close and reciprocal. It should be our duty to assist in every proper way to build up the waste places of the island, encourage the industry of the people, and assist them to form a government which shall be free and independent, thus realizing the best aspirations of the Cuban people.

Spanish rule must be replaced by a just, benevolent and humane government, capable of performing all international obligations and which shall encourage thrift, industry and prosperity, and promote peace and good will among all of the inhabitants, whatever may have been their relations in the past. Neither revenge nor passion should have a place in the new government. Until there is complete tranquillity in the island and a stable government inaugurated military occupation will be continued.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

With the exception of the rupture with Spain, the intercourse of the United States with the great family of nations has been marked with cordiality and the close of the eventful year finds most of the issues that necessarily arise in the complex relations of sovereign states adjusted or presenting no serious obstacle to a just and honorable solution by amicable agreement.

A long unsettled dispute as to the extended boundary between the Argentine Republic and Chile, stretching along the Andean crest from the southern border of the Atacama desert to Magellan straits, nearly a third of the length of the South American continent, assumed an acute stage in the early part of the year and afforded to this government occasion to express the hope that the resort to arbitration, already contemplated by existing conventions between the parties, might prevail, despite the grave difficulties arising in its application. I am happy to say that arrangements to this end have been perfected, the questions of fact upon which the respective commissioners were unable to agree, being in the course of reference to her Britannic majesty for determination. A residual difference, touching the northern boundary line across the Atacama desert, for which existing treaties provided no adequate adjustment, bids fair to be settled in like manner by a joint commission, upon which the United States minister at Buenos Ayres has been invited to serve as umpire in the last resort.

CABLE TREATIES.

I have found occasion to approach the Argentine government with a view to removing differences of rate charges imposed upon the cables of an American corporation in the transmission between Buenos Ayres and the cities of Uruguay and Brazil through messages passing from and to the United States. Although the matter is complicated by exclusive concessions by Uruguay and Brazil to foreign companies, there is strong hope that a good understanding will be reached and that the important channels of commercial communication between the United States and the Atlantic cities of South America may be freed from an almost prohibitory discrimination. In this relation I may be permitted to express my sense of the fitness of an international agreement whereby the interchange of messages over connecting cables may be regulated on a fair basis of uniformity. The world has seen the postal system developed from a congeries independent and exclusive service into a well ordered union, of which all countries found the manifold benefits. It would be strange were the nations not in time brought to realize that modern civilization, which owes so much of its progress to the annihilation of time by the electrical force, demands that this all important means of communication, a heritage of all people, be administered and regulated in their common behalf. A step in this direction was taken when the international convention of 1864, for the protection of submarine cables, was signed, and the day is, I trust, not far distant, when this medium for the transmission of thought from land to land may be brought within the domain of international concert as completely as in the material carriage of commerce and correspondence upon the face of the waters that divide them.

RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL AMERICA.

The events in Central America deserve more than passing mention. A menacing rupture between Costa Rica and Nicaragua was happily composed by the signature of an agreement at a convention between the parties, with the concurrence of the Guatemalan representative as a mediator; the act being negotiated and signed on board the United States steamer Alert, then lying in Central American waters. It is believed that the good offices of our envoy and commander of that vessel contributed toward this gratifying outcome.

In my last annual message the situation was presented, with respect to the diplomatic representations of this government in Central America, created by the association of Nicaragua, Honduras and Salvador, under the title of the Greater Republic of Central America, and the delegation of their international functions to the diet thereof. While the representative character of

the diet, was recognized by my predecessor and has been confirmed during my administration by receiving its accredited envoy and granting exequaturs to consuls commissioned under its authority, that recognition was qualified by the distinct understanding that the responsibility of each of the competent sovereign republics toward the United States remained wholly unaffected.

This proviso was needful inasmuch as the compact of the three republics was at the outset an association whereby certain representative functions were delegated to a tripartite commission rather than a federation possessing centralized powers of government and administration. In this view of their relation and the relation of the United States to several republics, a change in the representation of this country in Central America was neither recognized by the executive nor initiated by Congress; thus leaving one of our envoys accredited as heretofore separately to two states of the Greater Republic, Nicaragua and Salvador, and to a third state, Costa Rica, which was not a party to the compact; while our other envoy was similarly accredited to the Union stated as Honduras, and a non-union stated as Guatemala. The result has been the presentation of credentials only to the president of Costa Rica, the other having been received by the government of Guatemala.

Subsequently the three associated republics entered into negotiations for making the steps forecast in the original compact. A convention of their delegates framed for them a federal constitution under the name of the United States of Central America, and provided for a central federal government and legislature. Upon ratification by the constituent states the first of November last was fixed for the new system to go into operation. Within a few weeks thereafter, the plan was severely tested by revolutionary movements arising, with a consequent demand for unity of action on the part of the military power of the federal states to suppress them. Under this strain the new union seems to have been weakened through the withdrawal of its more important members. This government has not officially advised of the installation of the federation and has maintained an attitude of friendly expectancy, while in no wise relinquishing the position held from the outset that the responsibilities of the several states towards us remained unaltered by their tentative relation among themselves.

NICARAGUAN CANAL.

The Nicaraguan canal commission, under the chairmanship of Rear Admiral John G. Walker, appointed July 24, 1897, under the authority of a provision in the sundry civil act of June 4th of that year, has nearly completed its labors, and the results of its exhaustive inquiry into the proper route, the feasibility and the cost of construction of an interoceanic canal by a Nicaraguan route will be laid before you. In the performance of its task the commission received all possible courtesy and assistance from the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, which thus testified their appreciation of the importance of giving a speedy and practical outcome to the great project that has for so many years engrossed the attention of the respective countries.

As the scope of the recent inquiry embraced the whole subject, with the aim of making plans and surveys for a canal by the most convenient route, it necessarily included a review of the results of previous surveys and plans, and in particular those adopted by the Maritime Canal company under its existing concessions from Nicaragua and Costa Rica, so that to this extent those grants necessarily held an essential part in the deliberations and conclusions of the canal commission as they have held and must needs hold in the discussion of the matter by congress. Under these circumstances and in view of overtures made to the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica by other parties for a new canal concession, predicated on the assumed approaching lapse of the present contracts of the Maritime Canal company with those states, I have not hesitated to express my conviction that considerations of expediency and international policy as between the several governments interested in the construction and control of an interoceanic canal by this route require the maintenance of the status quo until the canal commission shall have reported and the United States congress shall have had the opportunity to pass finally upon the whole matter during the present session, without prejudice by reason of any change in the existing conditions. Nevertheless, it appears that the government of Nicaragua, as one of its last sovereign acts before merging its powers in those of the newly formed United States of Central America, has granted an optional concession to another association, to become effective on the expiration of the present grant. It does not appear what surveys have been made or what route is proposed under this contingent grant, so that an examination of the feasibility of its plans is necessarily not embraced in the report of the canal commission.

All these circumstances suggest the urgency of some definite action by congress at this session if the labors of the past are to be utilized and the linking of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by a practical water-way is to be realized. That the construction of such a maritime highway is now more than ever indispensable to that intimate and ready inter-communication between our eastern and western seaboard, demanded by the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands and the prospective expansion of our influence and commerce in the Pacific, and that our national policy now more imperatively than ever calls for its control by this government, are propositions which I doubt not the congress will duly appreciate and wisely act upon.