

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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 it has been maintained at the world's highest standard. Military service under a common 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.

## Failure of Autonomy in Cuba.

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. 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.

The ensuing month brought little sign of real progress toward the pacification of Cuba by the autonomous administration. No tangible relief was afforded the vast numbers of unhappy reconcentrados, and by the end of December the mortality among them had frightfully increased. With the acquiescence of the Spanish authorities a scheme was devised for relief by charitable contributions raised in this country. Thousands of lives were thus saved, but the war continued on the old footing without comprehensive plan. No alternative save physical exhaustion of either combatant and therewithal the practical ruin of the island lay in sight.

## Destruction of the Maine.

At this juncture, on the 15th of February, occurred the destruction of the battleship Maine, while rightfully lying in the harbor of Havana—a catastrophe, the suspicious nature and horror of which stirred the nation's heart profoundly. Yet the instinct of justice prevailed and 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.

All these things carried conviction to the most thoughtful, even before the findings 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. The details of the hurried preparation for the dreaded contingency is told in the reports of the Secretaries of War and of the Navy. It is sufficient to say that, when the break of war, when it did come, found our nation not unprepared to meet the conflict.

## Negotiations with Spain.

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 struggle. Negotiations to this object continued actively with the Government of Spain, looking to the immediate conclusion of a six months' armistice in Cuba, with a view to effect the recognition of her people's right to independence. Negotiations continued for some little time at Madrid, resulting in offers by the Spanish Government which could not be regarded as adequate. Grieved 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 reviewed the alternative course of action which I had proposed, concluding that the only one consonant with international policy and compatible with our fringed historical traditions was intervention as a neutral to stop the war and check the hopeless sacrifice of life.

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.

## Congress Declares War.

The response of the Congress, after nine days of earnest deliberation, during which the almost unanimous sentiment of your body was developed on every point save as to the expediency of compelling 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, April 19, 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 war.

This resolution was approved by the executive on the next day, April 20. 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 therefrom,

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.

The demand, although, as above shown, officially made known to the Spanish executive 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 joint resolution the act of "equivalent to an act of declaration of war" had ordered its minister in Washington to withdraw, thereby breaking off diplomatic relations between the two countries, and causing all official communication between their respective representatives. Gen. Woodford thereupon demanded his passports and quitted Madrid that day.

Spain, however, thus denied the demand of the United States and initiated that which amounted to a state of war, the executive powers authorized by the resolution were at once used by me to meet the enlarged contingency of actual war between Spain and the United States. April 22 I proclaimed a blockade of the northern coast of Cuba, and on the 23d I called for volunteers to execute the purpose of the resolution. 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 Congress accordingly voted on the same day that act approved April 25, 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 22, directing the President to use all the armed forces of the nation to carry that act into effect.

Due notification of the existence of war as aforesaid was given April 25 by telegraph to all the governments with which the United States maintains relations. 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, the exercise of the right of subjects and the immunity of neutral flags and neutral goods under enemy's flag. A similar proclamation was made by the Spanish Government.

## Preparations for the War.

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 for 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 was increased to the limit of 15,000 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. Paul, St. Louis, New York and Paris—were chartered. In addition to these the revenue cutters and light-house tenders were turned over to the Navy Department and became temporarily a part of the military navy.

Much more 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. The auxiliary navy patrolled the coast and the establishment of a second arm of defense. Under the direction of the chief of engineers submarine mines were placed at the most exposed points. The aggregate number of mines placed was 1,535, at the principal harbors from Boston to San Diego.

The Signal Corps was promptly organized and performed service of 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 in 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. With a total force of over 1,500 the loss was, by disease in camp and field, officers and men included, only five. The national defense \$30,000,000 fund was expended in large part by the army and navy, and the objects for which it was expended are fully shown in the reports of the several secretaries. This fund, being inadequate to the requirements of equipment and for the conduct of the war, the patriotism of the Congress provided the means in the war revenue act of June 12 by authorizing a 3 per cent. national loan not to exceed \$400,000,000, and by levying additional imposts and taxes.

## Salient Features of the War.

It is not within the province of this message to narrate the history of the extraordinary war that followed the Spanish declaration of April 21, but a brief review of its more salient features is appropriate. The first encounter of the war in point of date took place April 27, when a detachment of the blockading squadron made a reconnaissance in force at Matanzas, shelled the harbor and forts and destroyed several new works in construction.

The next engagement was destined to mark a memorable epoch in maritime warfare. The Pacific fleet, under Commodore George Dewey, had lain for some weeks at Hong Kong. Upon the colonial proclamation of neutrality being issued and the customary twenty-four hours' notice being given, it repaired to Mirs Bay, near Hong Kong, whence it proceeded to the Philippine Islands under telegraphed orders to capture or destroy the formidable Spanish fleet then assembled at Manila. At daybreak on the 1st of May the American force entered Manila Bay, and after a few hours' engagement effected the total destruction of the Spanish fleet, consisting of ten warships and a transport, besides capturing the naval station and forts at Cavite, thus annihilating the Spanish naval power in the Pacific Ocean and completely controlling the Bay of Manila, with the ability to take the entire western coast of the island, our ships, the wounded only numbering seven, while not a vessel was materially injured.

The effect of this remarkable victory upon the spirit of our people and upon the fortunes of the war was instantaneous and of invincibility thereby attached to our arms, which continued throughout the struggle. Re-enforcements were hurried to Manila under the command of Major General Merritt and finally established within sight of the capital, which lay helpless before our guns. Only reluctance to cause needless loss of life and property prevented the early storming and capture of the city, and

therewithal the absolute military occupancy of the whole group. The insurgents meanwhile had resumed the active hostilities suspended by the uncompleted truce of December, 1897. Their forces invested Manila from the northern and eastern side, but were constrained by Admiral Cervera and General Merritt from attempting an assault. It was fitting that whatever was to be done in the way of decisive operations in that quarter should be accomplished by the strong arm of the United States alone.

Following the comprehensive scheme of general attack, powerful forces were assembled at various points on our coast to invade Cuba and Porto Rico. Meanwhile naval demonstrations were made at several exposed points. May 11 the cruiser Wilmington and torpedo boat Winslow were unsuccessful in an attempt to silence the batteries at Cardenas and Matanzas, Worth, Bagley and four sea-mines falling.

Meanwhile the Spanish naval preparation had been pushed with great vigor. A powerful squadron under Admiral Cervera, which had assembled at the Cape Verde Islands before the outbreak of hostilities, had crossed the ocean, and by its erratic movements in the Caribbean Sea delayed the operations of our blockade, the pursuit of our fleets. Not until Admiral Cervera took refuge in the harbor of Santiago de Cuba about May 9 was it practicable to plan a systematic military attack upon the Antillean possessions of Spain.

Several demonstrations occurred on the coast of Cuba and Porto Rico in preparation for the larger event. On May 13 the North Atlantic squadron shelled San Juan de Porto Rico. On May 30 Commodore Schley's squadron bombarded the forts guarding the mouth of Santiago harbor. Neither attack had any material result.

## Hobson's Luring Act.

The next act in the war thrilled not alone the hearts of our countrymen, but the world, by its exceptional heroism. On the night of June 3 Lieutenant Hobson, aided by seven devoted volunteers, blocked the narrow outlet from Santiago harbor by sinking the collier Merrimac in the channel, under a fierce fire from the shore batteries, escaping with their lives as by a miracle, but falling into the hands of the Spaniards. They were subsequently exchanged July 1.

By June 7 the cutting of the last Cuban cable isolated the island. Thereafter the invasion was vigorously prosecuted. On June 10, under a heavy protecting fire, a landing of 60 marines from the Oregon, and a detachment of the United States Cavalry, landed on the beach of Guantánamo Bay, where it had been determined to establish a naval station. This important and essential port was taken from the enemy after severe fighting by the marines, who were the first organized force of the United States to land in Cuba. The position soon was held despite desperate attempts to dislodge our forces. By June 16 additional forces were landed and strongly entrenched. On June 22 the advance of the invading army under Major General Shafter, which had been delayed by the capture of Santiago, was accomplished under great difficulties, but with marvelous dispatch. On June 23 the movement against Santiago was begun. On the 24th the first serious engagement took place, which was a bloody and fierce cavalry and the First United States Volunteer Cavalry. General Young's brigade of General Wheeler's division, participated, losing heavily. By nightfall, however, ground within five miles of Santiago was completely in our hands. The next day increased. On July 1 a severe battle took place, our forces gaining the outlook of Santiago; on the 2d El Caney and San Juan were taken after a desperate charge, and the investment of the city was completed. The city was surrounded by shelling the town and coast forts.

## Destruction of Cervera's Fleet.

On the day following this brilliant achievement, the Spanish fleet, which occurred the decisive naval combat of the war. The Spanish fleet, attempting to leave the harbor, was met by the American squadron, under command of Commodore Sampson. In less than three hours the Spanish fleet was completely destroyed, the two torpedo boats being sunk and the Maria Teresa, Almirante Oquendo, Vizcaya and Cristobal Colon driven ashore. The Spanish admiral and over thirteen hundred men were taken prisoner. The remainder of the fleet was completely destroyed, 600 perishing. On our side but one man was killed, on the Brooklyn, and one man seriously wounded. Although our ships were repeatedly struck, not one was seriously injured. The Spanish fleet was completely annihilated themselves, from the commanders to the gunners and the unnamed heroes in the boiler-rooms, each and all contributing toward the achievement of this astounding victory, for which neither admiral nor sailor was less deserving. 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