

AN INGENIOUS AND INGENUOUS DOCUMENT

In conformity with the constitution of the United States which commands, as President McKinley reminded the people at the opening of his now celebrated message, the giving to Congress by the President of information as to the State of the Union and the recommending of such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient, a document has been presented to Congress which may well be described as ingenious and ingenuous.

The President's message is of most ingenious construction and possessed of some subtlety, and yet it impresses the unbiased reader as a distinctly ingenuous, or open, fair and candid statement of facts and opinions from one who realizes his duty in a grave crisis, and desires to avoid precipitating his country into war, unless ample justification for same can be found by his immediate advisers.

In recapitulating the reasons why interference with Cuban affairs might be excusable, President McKinley says:—

"Since the present revolution began in February, 1895, this country has seen the fertile domain at our threshold ravaged by fire and sword in the course of a struggle unequalled in the history of the island and rarely paralleled as to the number of the combatants and the bitterness of the contest by any revolution of modern times where a dependent people, striving to be free, have been opposed by the power of the sovereign state."

But this eloquent outburst on behalf of liberty is immediately followed by the ingenuous complaint that, by reason of the disturbance created by these Cuban patriots, the trade of the United States with an island of exceptional productiveness has suffered cruel diminution. But let the President tell his own ingenuous tale:—

We have found ourselves constrained, in the perseverance of that strict neutrality which our laws enjoin, and which the laws of nations command, to police our own waters, and watch our own seaports in prevention of any unlawful act in aid of the Cubans. Our trade has suffered, the capital invested by our citizens in Cuba has been largely lost, and the temper and forbearance of our people have been so severely tried as to beget a perilous unrest among our own citizens, which has inevitably found expression from time to time, in the national legislature, so that issues wholly external to our own body politic engross attention and stand in the way of that close devotion to domestic advancement that becomes a self-contained commonwealth whose primal maxim has been the avoidance of all foreign entanglements.

Of course, a keen critic of the course of events on the coast of Cuba might claim that the attention given by the United States to the law of nations does not call for any particular admiration from Spain, however willing we may be to admit that the people of the self-contained commonwealth are ever ready to resent the placing of any obstacle in the way of their close devotion to domestic advancement.

With the particulars of the intervention of the United States in Cuban affairs, all the world is more

or less familiar; and President McKinley evidently only refers to the different offers and demands of his country, made at Madrid, for the purpose of refreshing the memories of Congressmen as to what led up to the present grave crisis. The reasons advanced by President McKinley for intervention are exceedingly well-presented, and they must extort our admiration for his ingenuous admission that he has been unable to prevent the filibustering which has assisted the revolutionary forces and caused so much of the consequent irritation to Spain. But the grounds for United States intervention, as stated in the fourth clause presented by the President, are not tenable, and we question the wisdom of the passage in which he expresses commiseration for American citizens having business in Cuba and exhibits a desire to protect their property. "The sworn testimony of several merchants (American citizens having close business connection with Cuba) might show subscriptions from their shipping firms and plantation owners in the United States to the so-called Cuban insurgent treasury for the purpose of saving their property from destruction by the followers of the San Domingan "General" Gomez.

There are not even sound and sensible reasons for intervention in the following extract from the President's message:—

"The present condition of affairs of Cuba is a constant menace to our peace, and entails upon this Government an enormous expense. With such a conflict waged for years in an island so near us, and with which our people have such trade and business relations, when the lives and liberty of our citizens are in constant danger, and their property destroyed and themselves ruined, where our trading vessels are liable to seizure, and are seized at our very door by warships of a foreign nation, the expedients of filibustering that we are powerless altogether to prevent, and the irritating question and entanglement thus arising, all these and others that I need not mention, with the resulting strained relations, are a constant menace to our peace, and compel us to keep on a semi-war footing with a nation with which we are at peace."

It would seem to be almost a pity that such a document should contain any reference to the loss of the battle-ship "Maine." Despite the report of the court of enquiry, the cause of the destruction of the "Maine" has not been clearly established, and the most feeble passage in the President's message to Congress is the statement that the "Maine" disaster from whatever cause shows that "the Spanish Government cannot assure safety and security to a vessel of the American navy in the harbour of Havana on a mission of peace."

Altogether, this long expected, ingenious and ingenuous document proves President McKinley to be a wise and prudent leader for a people whose temper and forbearance have been sorely tried, and who are now blinded by passion and in a condition of "perilous unrest," begotten of an unaccountable national disaster and the inflammatory appeals of a much too free press.

President McKinley and his immediate advisers