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As the Chicago Chronicle puts it, Speaker Reed is now in session.

President McKinley's message to Congress, particularly in its review of the war with Spain, is an exceptionally impressive state paper. This is attributable to its admirable composition. Of ministerial English, it is a model. While rhetorically expansive and rotund, it is nevertheless exceedingly simple. The art of making readers see things from the writer's point of view was never more perfectly practiced.

In other respects also the message is a superior production. But to this there are exceptions. When in the preamble the president allows himself to go into ecstasies over the prosperity of the people, it is evident that he has been influenced by the joy of his monopoly cronies more than by the misery of the millions who perceive no practical distinction between the prosperity to which they have attained and the hard times through which they have passed.

And one must be somewhat of a stoic to suppress a smile at some passages in the message, so suggestive are they of unsophistication. One of these is the complacent reference to the small allotments of war bonds, as if they indicated a wide distribution of the war debt among the people. Is it not notorious that a large proportion of these small allotments went to big investors under cover of the bids of employes? Mr. Gage caught Armour in the trick, but he didn't catch everybody who played it. Still

further evidence of unsophistication appears in the president's grave assumption that the Spanish fleet at Manila was "formidable!"

The message almost escaped one blemish. We refer to the display of Mr. McKinley's characteristic cant. But room was made for that in one short paragraph. The president thanks God for His services in the war, in the same spirit in which the war heroes are thanked. Readers are made to feel that in Mr. McKinley's estimation the loving Father of all men was a most useful American partisan in the conflict, who, since he cannot be promoted ought at least to receive honorable mention. It is a bit of pietistic idolatry more appropriate to a tribe of pagans than to a nation of Christians.

But few important recommendations are made in the message. Such as are made are almost without exception either in the interest of the plutocratic elements of the country or otherwise contrary to the spirit of democracy. Chief among these is the proposition to set aside a trust fund in gold for the redemption of greenbacks, and to reissue redeemed greenbacks only in exchange for gold. The object of that policy is to reduce the volume of government money by the amount of the greenbacks in existence, and thus to open the way to the national banks to control the supply to that extent of the circulating medium. Retirement of the greenbacks is what this recommendation by the president means.

Another objectionable recommendation relates to extradition. In extradition treaties it is common to provide that neither of the contracting nations shall be bound to sur-

render its own citizens to the other upon charges of crime; and our courts hold that under such treaties the president has no power to surrender an American citizen. Mr. McKinley now asks that this power be conferred. His request is for authority to do in his discretion what the treaty making power established by the constitution refuses to allow him to do. It is not for the president alone, but for the president and the senate together, to decide who shall be surrendered for criminal trial abroad, and upon what terms the surrender shall be made; and there is reason to doubt the constitutional power of congress to confer upon the president the power he solicits. But whether constitutional or not, such an extension of his discretionary power would be another step in the direction of making of the president an absolute monarch. That is in itself an all-sufficient reason for denying the request.

Worst of all the president's recommendations is that for a fourfold increase of the standing army. This is something which European experience and our own traditions warn us against. Large standing armies afford opportunists at critical moments for suppressing popular movements and putting dangerous men on horseback. One is needed by us for no other purpose. What we lacked in the Spanish war, for example, was not an army, but supplies for the army. And we should not have been lacking in that respect if the president had appointed West Point graduates instead of civilians with a "pull," to places of military authority. If we have a large standing army it will itch for a chance to practice, and in default of foreign foes will practice upon the people at home. Standing armies, like loaded pistols, are most dangerous to those who carry them.

While the president in his message gives details of battle casualties, he makes no allusion to the mismanagement of the war, to the suffering of soldiers with sickness and their death from disease, nor to the inquiry which he is prosecuting through Gen. Dodge's committee. His attitude regarding the question of newly acquired territory is treated in an article on another page entitled, "Our New Possessions."

It is not long since British approval of anything American, instantly condemned it in republican eyes. British approval of a message of Cleveland's, for instance, would have been regarded as shocking evidence of treason in the white house. But something must have happened, for republican papers and statesmen are clapping their hands enthusiastically at the British approval of McKinley's message.

Admiral Sampson's report, made public the latter part of last week, goes far to confirm a suspicion as to Gen. Shafter's campaign in Cuba which other sources of information had aroused and strengthened. It was from the first inconceivable to the non-military mind that a competent general in Shafter's situation should in good faith have marched into the interior, out of the reach of naval support, and invited such casualties, apparently useless, as those which Shafter suffered the 1st and 2d of July. The obvious point of attack would have seemed to be upon the fortifications at the harbor entrance, with the navy clearing the way as the army advanced along the southern coast.

Shafter has given four reasons for not adopting that course. He has said that the line of march would have been through poisonous undergrowth; that the army could not have availed itself of the streams for water; that the Spanish position at the mouth of the harbor was so strong that it could have been carried only with great loss to the assailants; and that the Spanish would have had an

open line of retreat from Santiago to the north and west.

Most of these explanations do not explain. As all the streams referred to emptied into the waters of the southern coast it is not easy to see how they offered better facilities for water supply in the interior than nearer the sea, unless the tides affected them, in which case water from the transports might have been safely depended upon. The plea that the Spanish would have an open line of retreat is also flimsy. Their open line of retreat would have led them into a devastated country from which hunger would have soon driven them back. Of the dangers of a march through poisonous undergrowth, the non-military mind is of course incompetent to form an opinion. But Gen. Shafter appears to have been alone in scenting that danger; and it may be inferred, not unreasonably, that the danger might have been encountered by the soldiers with as much fortitude as a galling Spanish fire from entrenchments against which heavy guns could not be brought to bear. As to the comparative impregnability of the Spanish defenses at the mouth of the harbor, Admiral Sampson does not agree with Gen. Shafter. Quoting from his own official dispatch of July 14, the admiral says: "I have been ready at any time during the last three weeks to silence works, to clear entrance of mines, and to enter harbor whenever the army will do the part which the proper conduct of war assigns to it." The "proper conduct" of the army which Admiral Sampson contemplated, was a land attack, by way of the coast, upon fortifications at the harbor entrance. This could have been made under the protection and with the aid of the great guns of the fleet, which would have cleared the way for an almost bloodless advance of the army. The successful accomplishment of such an attack would have put Shafter in control of the mine fields in the harbor and made it prudent for Sampson to move up the channel. After that, the army and navy, in further coopera-

tion, could have placed Cervera's fleet and the city of Santiago at once at their mercy.

But in the execution of that programme the navy must have shared honors with the army; and for that reason, apparently—at any rate, no other plausible reason appears—Shafter, whether of his own notion or under orders from Washington is not yet clear, plunged far into the interior. Beyond the possibility of naval assistance, without guides, without scouts, without artillery, he there made upon the strongest and least exposed of the Spanish intrenchments a disordered infantry attack which occasioned enormous loss; and which, but for the reckless bravery of his troops, would have culminated in complete disaster. It was an attack, too, which, even when victorious, could have accomplished nothing but for the unexpected folly of Cervera's fleet. Had Cervera staid where he was, Shafter would still have been obliged, after his bloody victory in the interior, to capture the entrance fortifications and secure control of the field of mines for Sampson, before a substantial victory could have been gained.

It may be presumptuous to criticise Gen. Shafter in this way, but as the criticism, one that in substance we made long ago, is now buttressed by Admiral Sampson's official report, we may venture to repeat it.

Besides criticising the Shafter campaign we have had the temerity also to criticise the condition of affairs at the camp at Montauk, where many a soldier died from neglect and maltreatment and many another was barely rescued by friends before it was too late. These criticisms were based upon the best information; but if the testimony of Dr. Forwood be true, we owe an apology for them to some one.

The burden of the complaints as to Montauk Point was that, although this camp was within 60 miles of the American metropolis, where any of