

The Public

First Year.

CHICAGO, SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 1898.

Number 3.

LOUIS F. POST, Editor.

Entered at the Chicago, Ill., Post-Office,
as second-class matter.

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SUBSCRIPTION, ONE DOLLAR A YEAR.

Free of postage in United States, Canada and Mexico; elsewhere, postage extra, at the rate of one cent per week.

SINGLE COPIES, FIVE CENTS EACH.

Published Weekly by **THE PUBLIC PUBLISHING CO.**
at Room 622, Schiller Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Post Office Address:
**THE PUBLIC, Box 687,
CHICAGO, ILL.**

N. B.—Payment of subscription is acknowledged up to the date in the address label on the wrapper.

SUBSCRIPTION AGENT FOR WESTERN RESERVE.
OHIO: **OTTO PFISTER**, 316 American Trust Bldg.
(Telephone Main 1069), Cleveland, Ohio.

EDITORIALS

President McKinley's indefensible position on the Cuban question, as declared in his message upon which we commented last week, has been reversed by congress. Thus the republicans in congress, in the face of the demands of the president, of the speaker, and of the syndicate cabinet which rules at the white house, have undertaken to redeem the promise respecting Cuba which the republican platform made.

That platform committed the party to sympathy with the Cuban revolutionists, and the country—so far as the republican party could control it—to recognition of the independence of the Cuban republic. But the president, obedient to the strong men who have him in tow, disregarded that

pledge, in his message to congress, and asked for irresponsible authority to make war, not in behalf of the Cuban insurgents, not even vaguely for Cuban independence, but for the purpose of ending hostilities in the island by imposing, as he expressed it, hostile restraint upon both Spain and Cuba.

The ultimate purpose of this request the world may never know. It may have been to establish the plutocratic "insular" government which Spain had already undertaken to set up in the island. It may have been to adapt the Hawaiian scheme to Cuba and make that island a territory of the United States in the interest of favored investments. It may have been to lay the foundation for government in Cuba by an American syndicate under American protection. But whatever the purpose may have been, it certainly was not to redeem the pledge of the republican platform by recognizing the existing Cuban republic as an independent nation. The president, as far as in him lay, repudiated that pledge.

Had his party in congress adopted the suggestions of his message, the good faith of republican platforms would, as we said last week, be hereafter seriously questioned. And not that alone, but, as we also said last week, this country would have been carried on into a terrible war not for liberty but against it. But from this act of bad faith the republicans in congress have saved their party, and from this war against liberty they have saved their country. The resolution which they forced upon the president—forced upon him in the face of enormous difficulties in the partisan sense—is nothing short of a recognition of the Cuban insurgents.

That the congressional resolution does recognize the Cuban insurgents, notwithstanding the fact that the Turpie amendment which made that recognition specific was left out, is evident upon examination. Speaker

Reed so understood it when he sulkily refused to sign the resolution on the night of its adoption. He realized that he and the president had been beaten by their party in congress, and that the resolution as it passed, instead of repudiating the republican platform and endorsing the president, repudiated the president and obeyed the platform.

When the two houses agreed to retain the clause which declared that the people of Cuba "are and of right ought to be free and independent," they thereby decided to recognize the independence of the Cuban republic as now organized. It was for that reason so hard a fight was made by Reed to keep out the little words, "are and." With those words out, the declaration would have been no more than that the people of Cuba "of right ought to be free and independent," which would have left the way clear for the organization by the administration, of almost any kind of government in Cuba that the pecuniary interests of Senators Hanna and Elkins and their plutocratic compeers demanded. But with those words retained, there is a distinct recognition of an existing independent government in Cuba.

Since no such thing is known to nations as an actually free and independent people who have no independent government organization, it is impossible to place upon that clause of the resolution which declares that the people of Cuba "are and of right ought to be free and independent," any other construction than that the existing republic is an independent government. There is no other government organization in Cuba to which those words can apply. They cannot apply to the Spanish government. Neither can they apply to the "insular" government, which is a Spanish side show. They must apply therefore to the Gomez government. Besides these three there is none on the island. The words amount either to a recognition of the Gomez government, or they are mean-

ingless; and they cannot be regarded as meaningless when the two houses of congress held out far into the night over the question of retaining or rejecting them.

Upon the face of the resolution then, the United States has recognized the independence of the existing Cuban republic; and the executive is bound, in using the military and naval power of the United States to expel Spain from the island, to do so for the purpose of relieving the already existing Cuban republic from the barbarities of Spanish warfare.

Nor does this construction depend merely upon a form of words. The question of Cuban independence has been a live question before the American people—in political conventions, in congressional debates and votes, in state papers, in newspapers—for more than two years. At no time during that period has it been an abstract question. It has all the time and in all connections been a question of the independence of a certain organized government—of the government whose armies Gomez commands. No one has thought of Cuban territory when speaking of Cuban independence. No one has thought of the Cuban people irrespective of their government organization. Everyone has thought of the organized revolutionary government which is at war with Spain. That and that alone has been the object of American sympathy. And when the American people, through their law-making power, assert officially that the Cuban people “are and of right ought to be free and independent,” they can mean nothing but that the revolutionary government of Cuba actually is as well as ought to be both independent and free. The words are so indissolubly associated with the agitation in behalf of the Cuban republic which has led up to the resolution in which they occur, that they admit of no other interpretation.

As the matter now stands, we are to go to war not to impose by our power a stable government upon both parties to the contest in Cuba, as the president would have it. We are to go to war not regardless of liberty, which is the only cause that could

justify our going to war at all. We are to go to war not under the reasonable suspicion of the civilized world, which the president's message aroused, that we are seeking a conquest of new territory. On the contrary, we are to go to war to protect from foreign oppression a free and independent neighbor; and in doing so we distinctly disclaim all intention of seeking our own national aggrandizement. Inasmuch as war is to be forced upon us, this is certainly matter for congratulation.

We may well wish to avoid war. We may wish to avoid it for its inevitable horrors, for its destruction of life and property, for its excitation of brutal instincts, for its interference with the development of those sentiments of justice out of which alone real freedom and that universal interdependence which is the only true independence, can grow. We may also wish to avoid it because war can be depended upon to determine nothing but questions of brutal superiority. But if war must be, let it at any rate have on our part disinterested motives to account for it, and be in the aid of liberty. This is the character which the congressional resolution has given to our impending conflict with Spain. The president's message, which also invited war, would have given it a very different character. For this the president is to be condemned. But let it not be forgotten that his own party in congress has officially denounced him and is entitled to the credit of having done it.

There is something sublime in the patriotism of the tobacco manufacturers who so generously announce their willingness to bear the burden of a heavy war tax on manufactured tobacco. To appreciate the sublimity of their patriotism it is necessary to remember that tobacco users and not tobacco manufacturers will have to pay the tax. Nor should the fact be overlooked that in thus generously agreeing that tobacco users may be taxed through them to carry on the war, these manufacturers specially request that the tax be not made effective on tobacco already manufactured. That is a fine stroke. Not only would the manufacturers take credit for paying a tax which they

collect from tobacco users, but they would also put themselves in position to charge higher prices for untaxed tobacco already manufactured. Oh, patriotism—business patriotism—verily thy name is humbug!

The Cuban controversy has brought again to the surface a claim on the part of the president, which ought in some way to be overruled by congress before, by being repeatedly asserted, it crystalizes into a recognized executive right. We refer to the claim that the power to recognize new governments is a presidential prerogative. Nothing could be clearer than that this claim has no foundation in the constitution. There is not a word in that instrument to make it even colorable, except in Article II, Section II, Paragraph 2, which empowers the president to make treaties and appoint ministers and consuls, and in Section III. of the same article, which commands him to receive ministers. But these provisions really confer no power to decide upon the admission of new governments into the sisterhood of nations.

The authority to make treaties with and appoint ministers and consuls to foreign nations—an authority which can be exercised only in conjunction with the senate—conveys no implication of authority to select the nations. Like the authority conferred upon congress by Article I, Section VIII, Paragraph 3, “to regulate commerce with foreign nations,” it decides nothing as to national selection. A foreign nation being recognized by us as independent, the president then, and not till then, has power to make treaties with it, subject to approval by the senate, and to nominate officials to represent us in its jurisdiction; but the constitutional provision which gives him these powers cannot be reasonably construed to vest in him the antecedent power of national recognition.

Still less can the claim in question be based upon his duty to receive diplomatic officials from foreign countries. That in the exercise of this function he may decline to receive a particular person, is quite true, and he might thereby prevent diplomatic intercourse between this country and any