

## The President's Message and Congress on Cuban Affairs.

Everybody was taken by surprise on seeing the message of the President on Cuban affairs published on the very morning of the day when the whole question relating to Cuba was coming up in Congress. It appears that this message was sent to Congress rather late in the afternoon of Monday, and it is said the President hesitated to sign it until two o'clock, one hour before it was despatched to the Capitol. The motive for sending the message at that particular time is apparent to every one. General Banks was to make his report and there was to be a discussion on Cuban affairs the following day (yesterday), and the President was anxious, no doubt, to place his policy and position relative to Cuba in the most favorable light. It was a sort of *coup d'état* to head off any possible action of Congress that might prove inconvenient or embarrassing to the administration.

The real point of the President's argument in his message is that the Cubans have not established such a position in the war as to entitle them to recognition by this government as belligerents, and that to accord to them such recognition would lead to embarrassments between the United States and Spain, and possibly to war. General Grant has apprehension of trouble and wants peace. His language on this subject is directly to the point. He says in the message: "If it be war between Spain and Cuba, and be recognized, it is our duty to provide for the consequences which may ensue in the embarrassment of our commerce and interference with our revenue. If belligerency be recognized the ships of the commercial marine of the United States become liable to search and to seizure by the commissioned cruisers of both parties, and they become subject to the adjudication of prize courts. Our large coastwise trade between the Atlantic and the Gulf States, and between both and the Isthmus of Panama and the States of South America, engaging the larger part of our commercial marine, passes, of necessity, almost in sight of Cuba. Under the treaty with Spain of 1795, as well as by the laws of nations, our vessels will be liable to visits on the high seas. In the case of belligerency the carrying of contraband, which now is lawful, becomes liable to the risks of seizure and condemnation." The President says nothing about an American policy in this hemisphere, the Monroe doctrine, the diffusion of republican ideas and institutions, the rights of a colonial people struggling for independence, or of the sympathies and interests of the American people in the struggle of the Cubans, except in general terms in the commencement of his message he refers to the "feelings and sympathies of the people and government of the United States for the people of Cuba as for all peoples struggling for liberty and self-government." He confines himself strictly to his view of the condition of the war and the dangers that beset the United States, in case of favoring the Cuban cause.

"Let us have peace" is the motto of the President, and in this the American people will say amen, so long as the dignity, honor and cherished policy of the country are not in question. Some may doubt if Spain would venture to make an issue or go to war with the United States, should our government recognize the belligerency of the Cubans or otherwise favor the cause of Cuban independence; but the President ought to know best, and he being the Executive his opinion should have due respect. No one can doubt the valor of General Grant, but it must be remembered that "prudence is sometimes the better part of valor." We are a great nation, doubtless, and in American affairs we ought to be and can be supreme; but we have had enough of war lately. The President wants peace, and under that to pay the enormous debt of the nation. This is his policy. The Spanish government, we suppose, has spoken very plainly and decidedly to ours, and we, who are not behind the scenes, must give due credit to the administration for its apprehensions. We are told by the President, however, that energetic remonstrances have been made to the government at Madrid against the atrocities of the war in Cuba, the murder of American citizens and the gross insults to the American flag. We know, too, that the Secretary of State many months ago officially described all these in his despatches to our Minister at Madrid. But the administration has, no doubt, some assurances, or, at least, some hope, that Spain will act more like a civilized nation in the war, and will give ample satisfaction for the murder of American citizens and insults to the flag. At any rate the policy is to attend to our own affairs at home and to let Cuba work out her destiny as she best can, with the full expectation that in time, by some means or other, that island and all the rest of the Antilles will fall into the lap of the United States.

The subject in Congress on General Banks' Cuban resolutions, and particularly the ardent speech of the General himself, has aroused a great deal of feeling. The Secretary of State was severely attacked, and through him the President indirectly. The message of the President even was said to have been prepared by a well known agent of the Spanish government, who happens to occupy a distinguished position at Washington as a lawyer and former Cabinet Minister. General Banks and other prominent men in the republican party have come to a direct issue with the administration on this Cuban question, and there is no saying what may be the consequences. Party considerations and necessity are strong, and, Congress being overwhelmingly republican, the administration may carry through its policy. However, the fight is not over in Cuba nor the question in this country. The Cuban cause has received a heavy blow, the Spanish government has reason to be thankful and grateful, and the prospect is that General Grant's cherished peace policy will not be endangered.