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**Compilation of the Messages and  
Papers of the Presidents William  
McKinley, Messages,  
Proclamations, and Executive  
Orders Relating to the  
Spanish-American War**

William McKinley

# Imprint

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## **William McKinley**

William McKinley, the twenty-fifth President of the United States, was born in Niles, Trumbull County, Ohio, January 29, 1843. His ancestors on the paternal side, who were Scotch-Irish, came from Scotland and located in Pennsylvania. His great-grandfather, David McKinley, after serving in the Revolution, resided in Pennsylvania until 1814, when he went to Ohio, where he died in 1840, at the age of 85. The grandmother of the President, Mary Rose, came from a Puritan family that fled from England to Holland and emigrated to Pennsylvania with William Penn. The father of the President, William McKinley, sr., was born in Pine Township, Mercer County, Pa., in 1807, and married Nancy Campbell Allison, of Columbiana County, Ohio, in 1829. Both the grandfather and father of the President were iron manufacturers. His father was a devout Methodist, a staunch Whig and Republican, and an ardent advocate of a protective tariff. He died during his son's first term as governor of Ohio, in November, 1892, at the age of 85. The mother of the President passed away at Canton, Ohio, in December, 1897, at the advanced age of 89. William McKinley was educated in the public schools of Niles, Union Seminary, at Poland, Ohio, and Allegheny College, at Meadville, Pa. Before attaining his majority taught in the public schools. At the age of 16 became a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. At the beginning of hostilities in the War between the States Mr. McKinley, who was a clerk in the Poland post-office, volunteered his services, and on June 11, 1861, was enlisted as a private in the Twenty-third Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Participated in all the early engagements in West Virginia, and in the winter's camp at Fayetteville received his first promotion, commissary-sergeant, on April 15, 1862. In recognition of his services at Antietam, Sergeant McKinley was made second lieutenant, his commission dating from September 24, 1862, and on February 7, 1863, while at Camp Piatt, he was again promoted, receiving the rank of first lieutenant. In the retreat near Lynchburg, Va., his regiment marched 180 miles, fighting nearly all the time, with scarcely any rest or food. Lieutenant McKinley conducted himself with gallantry, and at Winchester won additional honors. The Thirteenth West Virginia Regi-

ment failed to retire when the rest of Hayes's brigade fell back, and, being in great danger of capture, the young lieutenant was directed to go and bring it away, which he did in safety, after riding through a heavy fire. On July 25, 1864, at the age of 21, McKinley was promoted to the rank of captain. The brigade continued its fighting up and down the Shenandoah Valley. At Berryville, Va., September 3, 1864, Captain McKinley's horse was shot from under him. Served successively on the staffs of Generals R.B. Hayes, George Crook, and Winfield S. Hancock, and on March 14, 1865, was brevetted major of United States Volunteers by President Lincoln for gallantry in the battles of Opequan, Cedar Creek, and Fishers Hill. Was detailed as acting assistant adjutant-general of the First Division, First Army Corps, on the staff of General Samuel S. Carroll. At the close of the war was urged to remain in the Army, but, deferring to the judgment of his father, was mustered out of the service July 26, 1865, and returned to Poland. At once began the study of law under Glidden & Wilson, of Youngstown, Ohio, and later attended the law school in Albany, N.Y. Was admitted to the bar in March, 1867, at Warren, Ohio, and the same year removed to Canton, Ohio, which has since been his home. In 1867 his first political speeches were made in favor of negro suffrage. In 1869 was elected prosecuting attorney of Stark County, and served one term, being defeated two years later for the same office. Mr. McKinley took an active interest in State politics, and made speeches in many of the campaigns. On January 25, 1871, married Miss Ida Saxton. Two daughters were born to them, both of whom died in early childhood. In 1876 was elected a member of the National House of Representatives, and for fourteen years represented the Congressional district of which his county was a part, except for a portion of his fourth term, when he was unseated late in the first session. While in Congress served on the Committees on the Judiciary, Revision of the Laws, Expenditures in the Post-Office Department, Rules, and Ways and Means. As chairman of the last-named committee in the Fifty-first Congress, reported the tariff law of 1890. At the beginning of this Congress was defeated in the caucus of his party for the Speakership of the House. In the meantime, his district having been materially changed, he was defeated for reelection to Congress in November, 1890, though he largely reduced the usual majority against his party in the counties of which the new district was constituted. In 1891

was elected governor of Ohio by a plurality of 21,500, and in 1893 was reelected by a plurality of 80,995. In 1884 was a delegate at large to the Republican national convention, and supported James G. Blaine for President; was a member of the committee on resolutions, and presented the platform to the convention. Also attended the convention of his party in 1888 as a delegate at large from Ohio, supporting John Sherman for President, and as chairman of the committee on resolutions again reported the platform. In 1892 was again a delegate at large from Ohio, and supported the renomination of Benjamin Harrison, and served as chairman of the convention. At that convention 182 votes were cast for him for President, although he had persistently refused to have his name considered. On June 18, 1896, was nominated for President by the national convention of his party at St. Louis, receiving on the first ballot 661-1/2 out of a total of 922 votes. Was chosen President at the ensuing November election by a plurality in the popular vote of over 600,000, and received 271 electoral votes, against 176 for William J. Bryan, of Nebraska.



## **SPECIAL MESSAGE.**

EXECUTIVE MANSION, *May 17, 1897.*

*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:*

Official information from our consuls in Cuba establishes the fact that a large number of American citizens in the island are in a state of destitution, suffering for want of food and medicines. This applies particularly to the rural districts of the central and eastern parts.

The agricultural classes have been forced from their farms into the nearest towns, where they are without work or money. The local authorities of the several towns, however kindly disposed, are unable to relieve the needs of their own people and are altogether powerless to help our citizens.

The latest report of Consul-General Lee estimates six to eight hundred Americans are without means of support. I have assured him that provision would be made at once to relieve them. To that end I recommend that Congress make an appropriation of not less than \$50,000, to be immediately available, for use under the direction of the Secretary of State.

It is desirable that a part of the sum which may be appropriated by Congress should, in the discretion of the Secretary of State, also be used for the transportation of American citizens who, desiring to return to the United States, are without means to do so.

WILLIAM McKINLEY.



## FIRST ANNUAL MESSAGE.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, *December 6, 1897.*

The most important problem with which this Government is now called upon to deal pertaining to its foreign relations concerns its duty toward Spain and the Cuban insurrection. Problems and conditions more or less in common with those now existing have confronted this Government at various times in the past. The story of Cuba for many years has been one of unrest, growing discontent, an effort toward a larger enjoyment of liberty and self-control, of organized resistance to the mother country, of depression after distress and warfare, and of ineffectual settlement to be followed by renewed revolt. For no enduring period since the enfranchisement of the continental possessions of Spain in the Western Continent has the condition of Cuba or the policy of Spain toward Cuba not caused concern to the United States.

The prospect from time to time that the weakness of Spain's hold upon the island and the political vicissitudes and embarrassments of the home Government might lead to the transfer of Cuba to a continental power called forth between 1823 and 1860 various emphatic declarations of the policy of the United States to permit no disturbance of Cuba's connection with Spain unless in the direction of independence or acquisition by us through purchase, nor has there been any change of this declared policy since upon the part of the Government.

The revolution which began in 1868 lasted for ten years despite the strenuous efforts of the successive peninsular governments to suppress it. Then as now the Government of the United States testified its grave concern and offered its aid to put an end to bloodshed in Cuba. The overtures made by General Grant were refused and the war dragged on, entailing great loss of life and treasure and increased injury to American interests, besides throwing enhanced burdens of neutrality upon this Government. In 1878 peace was brought about by the truce of Zanjón, obtained by negotiations between the Spanish commander, Martínez de Campos, and the insurgent leaders.

The present insurrection broke out in February, 1895. It is not my purpose at this time to recall its remarkable increase or to character-

ize its tenacious resistance against the enormous forces massed against it by Spain. The revolt and the efforts to subdue it carried destruction to every quarter of the island, developing wide proportions and defying the efforts of Spain for its suppression. The civilized code of war has been disregarded, no less so by the Spaniards than by the Cubans.

The existing conditions can not but fill this Government and the American people with the gravest apprehension. There is no desire on the part of our people to profit by the misfortunes of Spain. We have only the desire to see the Cubans prosperous and contented, enjoying that measure of self-control which is the inalienable right of man, protected in their right to reap the benefit of the exhaustless treasures of their country.

The offer made by my predecessor in April, 1896, tendering the friendly offices of this Government, failed. Any mediation on our part was not accepted. In brief, the answer read: "There is no effectual way to pacify Cuba unless it begins with the actual submission of the rebels to the mother country." Then only could Spain act in the promised direction, of her own motion and after her own plans.

The cruel policy of concentration was initiated February 16, 1896. The productive districts controlled by the Spanish armies were depopulated. The agricultural inhabitants were herded in and about the garrison towns, their lands laid waste and their dwellings destroyed. This policy the late cabinet of Spain justified as a necessary measure of war and as a means of cutting off supplies from the insurgents. It has utterly failed as a war measure. It was not civilized warfare. It was extermination.

Against this abuse of the rights of war I have felt constrained on repeated occasions to enter the firm and earnest protest of this Government. There was much of public condemnation of the treatment of American citizens by alleged illegal arrests and long imprisonment awaiting trial or pending protracted judicial proceedings. I felt it my first duty to make instant demand for the release or speedy trial of all American citizens under arrest. Before the change of the Spanish cabinet in October last twenty-two prisoners, citizens of the United States, had been given their freedom.

For the relief of our own citizens suffering because of the conflict the aid of Congress was sought in a special message,<sup>1</sup> and under the appropriation of May 24, 1897,<sup>2</sup> effective aid has been given to American citizens in Cuba, many of them at their own request having been returned to the United States.

The instructions given to our new minister to Spain before his departure for his post directed him to impress upon that Government the sincere wish of the United States to lend its aid toward the ending of the war in Cuba by reaching a peaceful and lasting result, just and honorable alike to Spain and to the Cuban people. These instructions recited the character and duration of the contest, the widespread losses it entails, the burdens and restraints it imposes upon us, with constant disturbance of national interests, and the injury resulting from an indefinite continuance of this state of things. It was stated that at this juncture our Government was constrained to seriously inquire if the time was not ripe when Spain of her own volition, moved by her own interests and every sentiment of humanity, should put a stop to this destructive war and make proposals of settlement honorable to herself and just to her Cuban colony. It was urged that as a neighboring nation, with large interests in Cuba, we could be required to wait only a reasonable time for the mother country to establish its authority and restore peace and order within the borders of the island; that we could not contemplate an indefinite period for the accomplishment of this result.

No solution was proposed to which the slightest idea of humiliation to Spain could attach, and, indeed, precise proposals were withheld to avoid embarrassment to that Government. All that was asked or expected was that some safe way might be speedily provided and permanent peace restored. It so chanced that the consideration of this offer, addressed to the same Spanish administration which had declined the tenders of my predecessor, and which for more than two years had poured men and treasure into Cuba in the fruitless effort to suppress the revolt, fell to others. Between the departure of General Woodford, the new envoy, and his arrival in Spain the statesman who had shaped the policy of his country fell by the hand of an assassin, and although the cabinet of the late premier still held office and received from our envoy the proposals

he bore, that cabinet gave place within a few days thereafter to a new administration, under the leadership of Sagasta.

The reply to our note was received on the 23d day of October. It is in the direction of a better understanding. It appreciates the friendly purposes of this Government. It admits that our country is deeply affected by the war in Cuba and that its desires for peace are just. It declares that the present Spanish government is bound by every consideration to a change of policy that should satisfy the United States and pacify Cuba within a reasonable time. To this end Spain has decided to put into effect the political reforms heretofore advocated by the present premier, without halting for any consideration in the path which in its judgment leads to peace. The military operations, it is said, will continue, but will be humane and conducted with all regard for private rights, being accompanied by political action leading to the autonomy of Cuba while guarding Spanish sovereignty. This, it is claimed, will result in investing Cuba with a distinct personality, the island to be governed by an executive and by a local council or chamber, reserving to Spain the control of the foreign relations, the army and navy, and the judicial administration. To accomplish this the present government proposes to modify existing legislation by decree, leaving the Spanish Cortes, with the aid of Cuban senators and deputies, to solve the economic problem and properly distribute the existing debt.

In the absence of a declaration of the measures that this Government proposes to take in carrying out its proffer of good offices, it suggests that Spain be left free to conduct military operations and grant political reforms, while the United States for its part shall enforce its neutral obligations and cut off the assistance which it is asserted the insurgents receive from this country. The supposition of an indefinite prolongation of the war is denied. It is asserted that the western provinces are already well-nigh reclaimed, that the planting of cane and tobacco therein has been resumed, and that by force of arms and new and ample reforms very early and complete pacification is hoped for.

The immediate amelioration of existing conditions under the new administration of Cuban affairs is predicted, and therewithal the disturbance and all occasion for any change of attitude on the part

of the United States. Discussion of the question of the international duties and responsibilities of the United States as Spain understands them is presented, with an apparent disposition to charge us with failure in this regard. This charge is without any basis in fact. It could not have been made if Spain had been cognizant of the constant efforts this Government has made, at the cost of millions and by the employment of the administrative machinery of the nation at command, to perform its full duty according to the law of nations. That it has successfully prevented the departure of a single military expedition or armed vessel from our shores in violation of our laws would seem to be a sufficient answer. But of this aspect of the Spanish note it is not necessary to speak further now. Firm in the conviction of a wholly performed obligation, due response to this charge has been made in diplomatic course.

Throughout all these horrors and dangers to our own peace this Government has never in any way abrogated its sovereign prerogative of reserving to itself the determination of its policy and course according to its own high sense of right and in consonance with the dearest interests and convictions of our own people should the prolongation of the strife so demand.

Of the untried measures there remain only: Recognition of the insurgents as belligerents; recognition of the independence of Cuba; neutral intervention to end the war by imposing a rational compromise between the contestants, and intervention in favor of one or the other party. I speak not of forcible annexation, for that can not be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression.

Recognition of the belligerency of the Cuban insurgents has often been canvassed as a possible, if not inevitable, step both in regard to the previous ten years struggle and during the present war. I am not unmindful that the two Houses of Congress in the spring of 1896 expressed the opinion by concurrent resolution that a condition of public war existed requiring or justifying the recognition of a state of belligerency in Cuba, and during the extra session the Senate voted a joint resolution of like import, which, however, was not brought to a vote in the House of Representatives. In the presence of these significant expressions of the sentiment of the legislative

branch it behooves the Executive to soberly consider the conditions under which so important a measure must needs rest for justification. It is to be seriously considered whether the Cuban insurrection possesses beyond dispute the attributes of statehood, which alone can demand the recognition of belligerency in its favor. Possession, in short, of the essential qualifications of sovereignty by the insurgents and the conduct of the war by them according to the received code of war are no less important factors toward the determination of the problem of belligerency than are the influences and consequences of the struggle upon the internal polity of the recognizing state.

The wise utterances of President Grant in his memorable message of December 7, 1875, are signally relevant to the present situation in Cuba, and it may be wholesome now to recall them. At that time a ruinous conflict had for seven years wasted the neighboring island. During all those years an utter disregard of the laws of civilized warfare and of the just demands of humanity, which called forth expressions of condemnation from the nations of Christendom, continued unabated. Desolation and ruin pervaded that productive region, enormously affecting the commerce of all commercial nations, but that of the United States more than any other by reason of proximity and larger trade and intercourse. At that juncture General Grant uttered these words, which now, as then, sum up the elements of the problem:

A recognition of the independence of Cuba being, in my opinion, impracticable and indefensible, the question which next presents itself is that of the recognition of belligerent rights in the parties to the contest.

In a former message to Congress<sup>3</sup> I had occasion to consider this question, and reached the conclusion that the conflict in Cuba, dreadful and devastating as were its incidents, did not rise to the fearful dignity of war. \* \* \* It is possible that the acts of foreign powers, and even acts of Spain herself, of this very nature, might be pointed to in defense of such recognition. But now, as in its past history, the United States should carefully avoid the false lights which might lead it into the mazes of doubtful law and of questionable propriety, and adhere rigidly and sternly to the rule, which has

been its guide, of doing only that which is right and honest and of good report. The question of according or of withholding rights of belligerency must be judged in every case in view of the particular attending facts. Unless justified by necessity, it is always, and justly, regarded as an unfriendly act and a gratuitous demonstration of moral support to the rebellion. It is necessary, and it is required, when the interests and rights of another government or of its people are so far affected by a pending civil conflict as to require a definition of its relations to the parties thereto. But this conflict must be one which will be recognized in the sense of international law as war. Belligerence, too, is a fact. The mere existence of contending armed bodies and their occasional conflicts do not constitute war in the sense referred to. Applying to the existing condition of affairs in Cuba the tests recognized by publicists and writers on international law, and which have been observed by nations of dignity, honesty, and power when free from sensitive or selfish and unworthy motives, I fail to find in the insurrection the existence of such a substantial political organization, real, palpable, and manifest to the world, having the forms and capable of the ordinary functions of government toward its own people and to other states, with courts for the administration of justice, with a local habitation, possessing such organization of force, such material, such occupation of territory, as to take the contest out of the category of a mere rebellious insurrection or occasional skirmishes and place it on the terrible footing of war, to which a recognition of belligerency would aim to elevate it. The contest, moreover, is solely on land; the insurrection has not possessed itself of a single seaport whence it may send forth its flag, nor has it any means of communication with foreign powers except through the military lines of its adversaries. No apprehension of any of those sudden and difficult complications which a war upon the ocean is apt to precipitate upon the vessels, both commercial and national, and upon the consular officers of other powers calls for the definition of their relations to the parties to the contest. Considered as a question of expediency, I regard the accordance of belligerent rights still to be as unwise and premature as I regard it to be, at present, indefensible as a measure of right. Such recognition entails upon the country according the rights which flow from it difficult and complicated duties, and requires the exaction from the contending parties of the strict observance of their rights and obli-

gations. It confers the right of search upon the high seas by vessels of both parties; it would subject the carrying of arms and munitions of war, which now may be transported freely and without interruption in the vessels of the United States, to detention and to possible seizure; it would give rise to countless vexatious questions, would release the parent Government from responsibility for acts done by the insurgents, and would invest Spain with the right to exercise the supervision recognized by our treaty of 1795 over our commerce on the high seas, a very large part of which, in its traffic between the Atlantic and the Gulf States and between all of them and the States on the Pacific, passes through the waters which wash the shores of Cuba. The exercise of this supervision could scarce fail to lead, if not to abuses, certainly to collisions perilous to the peaceful relations of the two States. There can be little doubt to what result such supervision would before long draw this nation. It would be unworthy of the United States to inaugurate the possibilities of such result by measures of questionable right or expediency or by any indirection.

Turning to the practical aspects of a recognition of belligerency and reviewing its inconveniences and positive dangers, still further pertinent considerations appear. In the code of nations there is no such thing as a naked recognition of belligerency, unaccompanied by the assumption of international neutrality. Such recognition, without more, will not confer upon either party to a domestic conflict a status not theretofore actually possessed or affect the relation of either party to other states. The act of recognition usually takes the form of a solemn proclamation of neutrality, which recites the *de facto* condition of belligerency as its motive. It announces a domestic law of neutrality in the declaring state. It assumes the international obligations of a neutral in the presence of a public state of war. It warns all citizens and others within the jurisdiction of the proclaimant that they violate those rigorous obligations at their own peril and can not expect to be shielded from the consequences. The right of visit and search on the seas and seizure of vessels and cargoes and contraband of war and good prize under admiralty law must under international law be admitted as a legitimate consequence of a proclamation of belligerency. While according the equal belligerent rights defined by public law to each party in our ports disfavors would be imposed on both, which, while nominally equal, would

weigh heavily in behalf of Spain herself. Possessing a navy and controlling the ports of Cuba, her maritime rights could be asserted not only for the military investment of the island, but up to the margin of our own territorial waters, and a condition of things would exist for which the Cubans within their own domain could not hope to create a parallel, while its creation through aid or sympathy from within our domain would be even more impossible than now, with the additional obligations of international neutrality we would perforce assume.

The enforcement of this enlarged and onerous code of neutrality would only be influential within our own jurisdiction by land and sea and applicable by our own instrumentalities. It could impart to the United States no jurisdiction between Spain and the insurgents. It would give the United States no right of intervention to enforce the conduct of the strife within the paramount authority of Spain according to the international code of war.

For these reasons I regard the recognition of the belligerency of the Cuban insurgents as now unwise, and therefore inadmissible. Should that step hereafter be deemed wise as a measure of right and duty, the Executive will take it.

Intervention upon humanitarian grounds has been frequently suggested and has not failed to receive my most anxious and earnest consideration. But should such a step be now taken, when it is apparent that a hopeful change has supervened in the policy of Spain toward Cuba? A new government has taken office in the mother country. It is pledged in advance to the declaration that all the effort in the world can not suffice to maintain peace in Cuba by the bayonet; that vague promises of reform after subjugation afford no solution of the insular problem; that with a substitution of commanders must come a change of the past system of warfare for one in harmony with a new policy, which shall no longer aim to drive the Cubans to the "horrible alternative of taking to the thicket or succumbing in misery;" that reforms must be instituted in accordance with the needs and circumstances of the time, and that these reforms, while designed to give full autonomy to the colony and to create a virtual entity and self-controlled administration, shall yet conserve and affirm the sovereignty of Spain by a just distribution

of powers and burdens upon a basis of mutual interest untainted by methods of selfish expediency.

The first acts of the new government lie in these honorable paths. The policy of cruel rapine and extermination that so long shocked the universal sentiment of humanity has been reversed. Under the new military commander a broad clemency is proffered. Measures have already been set on foot to relieve the horrors of starvation. The power of the Spanish armies, it is asserted, is to be used not to spread ruin and desolation, but to protect the resumption of peaceful agricultural pursuits and productive industries. That past methods are futile to force a peace by subjugation is freely admitted, and that ruin without conciliation must inevitably fail to win for Spain the fidelity of a contented dependency.

Decrees in application of the foreshadowed reforms have already been promulgated. The full text of these decrees has not been received, but as furnished in a telegraphic summary from our minister are: All civil and electoral rights of peninsular Spaniards are, in virtue of existing constitutional authority, forthwith extended to colonial Spaniards. A scheme of autonomy has been proclaimed by decree, to become effective upon ratification by the Cortes. It creates a Cuban parliament, which, with the insular executive, can consider and vote upon all subjects affecting local order and interests, possessing unlimited powers save as to matters of state, war, and the navy, as to which the Governor-General acts by his own authority as the delegate of the central Government. This parliament receives the oath of the Governor-General to preserve faithfully the liberties and privileges of the colony, and to it the colonial secretaries are responsible. It has the right to propose to the central Government, through the Governor-General, modifications of the national charter and to invite new projects of law or executive measures in the interest of the colony.

Besides its local powers, it is competent, first, to regulate electoral registration and procedure and prescribe the qualifications of electors and the manner of exercising suffrage; second, to organize courts of justice with native judges from members of the local bar; third, to frame the insular budget, both as to expenditures and revenues, without limitation of any kind, and to set apart the revenues