

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives.

Being suddenly called in the midst of the last session of Congress, by a painful dispensation of Divine Providence, to the responsible station which I now hold, I contented myself with such communications to the Legislature as the exigency of the moment seemed to require.

Nations, like individuals in a state of nature, are equal and independent, possessing certain rights, and owing certain duties to each other, arising from their necessary and unavoidable relations; which rights and duties there is no common human authority to protect and enforce.

Among the acknowledged rights of nations is that, which each possesses of establishing that form of government which it may deem most conducive to the happiness and prosperity of its own citizens, of changing that form, as circumstances may require; and of managing its internal affairs according to its own will.

In our domestic policy, the Constitution will be my guide; and in questions of doubt, I shall look for its interpretation to the judicial decisions of that tribunal, which was established to expound it, and to the usage of the Government, sanctioned by the acquiescence of his country.

Some unavoidable delay has occurred, arising from distance and the difficulty of intercourse between this Government and that of Nicaragua, but, as intelligence has just been received of the appointment of an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of that Government to reside at Washington, whose arrival may soon be expected, it is hoped that no further impediments will be experienced in the prompt transaction of business between the two Governments.

The Government of the United States is a limited Government. It is confined to the exercise of powers expressly granted, and such others as may be necessary for carrying those powers into effect, and it is at all times an especial duty to guard against any infringement on the just rights of the States. Over the objects and subjects intrusted to Congress, its legislative authority is supreme.

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portion of the country from another. The beauty of our system of Government consists, and its safety and durability must consist, in avoiding mutual collisions, and encroachments, and in the regular separate action of all, while each is revolving in its own distinct orbit.

The Constitution has made it the duty of the President to take care that the laws be faithfully executed. In a Government like ours, in which all laws are passed by a majority of the representatives of the people, and these representatives are chosen for such short periods, that any injurious or obnoxious law can very soon be repealed, it would appear unlikely that any great numbers should be found ready to resist the execution of the laws.

I am happy in being able to say that no unfavorable change in our foreign relations has taken place since the message at the opening of the last session of Congress. We are at peace with all nations, and we enjoy in an eminent degree the blessings of that peace, in a prosperous and growing commerce, and in all the forms of amicable national intercourse.

A convention was negotiated between the United States and Great Britain in April last, for facilitating and protecting the construction of a ship canal between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and for other purposes. This instrument has been ratified by the contracting parties, the exchange of ratifications has been effected, and proclamation thereof has been duly made.

In addition to the stipulations contained in convention, two other objects remain to be accomplished between the contracting powers.

First, the designation and establishment of a free port at each end of the canal.

The company of citizens of the United States who have acquired from the State of Nicaragua the privilege of constructing a ship canal between the two oceans, through the territory of that State, have made progress in their preliminary arrangements. The treaty between the United States and Great Britain, of the 19th of April last, above referred to, being now in operation, it is to be hoped that the guarantees which it offers will be sufficient to secure the completion of the work with all practicable expedition.

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Citizens of the United States have undertaken the connexion of the two oceans by means of a Railroad across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, under grants of that Republic. It is understood that a thorough survey of the course of the communication is in preparation and there is every reason to expect that it will be prosecuted with characteristic energy, especially when that Government shall have consented to such stipulations with the Government of the United States as may be necessary to impart a feeling of security to those, who may embark their property in the enterprise.

By the last advices from Mexico it would appear, however, that that Government entertains strong objections to some of her stipulations which the parties concerned in the project of the railroad deem necessary for their protection and security. Further consideration, it is hoped, or some modification of terms, may yet reconcile the differences existing between two Governments in this respect.

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Although the negotiations with Portugal for the payment of claims of citizens of the United States against that Government, have not yet resulted in a formal treaty, yet a proposition made by the Government of Portugal for the final adjustment and payment of those claims, has recently been accepted on the part of the United States. It gives me pleasure to say that Mr. Clay, to whom the negotiation on the part of the United States had been entrusted, discharged the duties of his appointment with ability and discretion, acting always within the instructions of his Government.

It is expected that a regular convention will be immediately negotiated for carrying the agreement between the two Governments into effect.

I refer you to the report of the Secretary of the Treasury for a detailed statement of the finance.

The total receipts into the Treasury, for the year ending 30th of June last, were fortyseven million four hundred and twenty-one thousand seven hundred and forty-eight dollars and ninety cents, (\$47,421,748 90.)

The total expenditures during the same period were forty-three million two thousand one hundred and sixty-eight dollars and ninety cents, (\$43,002,168 90.)

By the 19th section of the act of 28th January, 1847, the proceeds of the sales of the public lands were pledged for the interest and principal of the public debt. The great amount of these lands subsequently granted by Congress for military bounties will, it is believed, very nearly supply the public demand for several years to come and but little reliance can, therefore be placed on that hitherto fruitful source of revenue.

Aside from the permanent annual expenditures, which have necessarily largely increased, a portion of the public debt, amounting to eight million seventy-five thousand nine hundred and eighty-six dollars and fifty-nine cents (\$8,075,986 59) should be provided for within the next two fiscal years. It is most desirable that these accruing demands should be met without resorting to new loans.

All experience has demonstrated the wisdom and policy of raising a large portion of revenue for the support of Government from duties on goods imported. The power to lay these duties is unquestionable, and its chief object, of course, is to replenish the treasury. But if, in doing this, an incidental advantage may be gained by encouraging the industry of our own citizens, it is our duty to avail ourselves of that advantage.

A duty laid upon an article which cannot be produced in this country—such as tea or coffee—adds to the cost of the article, and is chiefly or wholly paid by the consumer. But a duty laid upon an article which may be produced here stimulates the skill and industry of our own country to produce the same article, which is brought into the market in competition with the foreign article, and the importer is thus compelled to reduce his price to that at which the domestic article can be sold, thereby throwing a part of the duty upon the producer of the foreign article. The continuance of this process creates the skill, and invites the capital, which finally enable us to produce the article much cheaper than it could have been procured from abroad, thereby benefiting both producer and consumer at home.

A higher tariff can never be permanent. It will cause dissatisfaction and will be changed. It excludes competition, and thereby invites the investment of capital in manufactures to such excess, that when changed it brings distress, bankruptcy and ruin upon all who have been misled by its faithless protection. What the manufacturer wants, is uniformity and permanency that he is not to be ruined by sudden changes. But to make a tariff uniform and permanent, it is not only necessary that the law should not be altered, but that the duties should not fluctuate. To effect this, all duties should be specific, wherever the nature of the article is such as to admit of it.

The gross revenues of the Department for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1850, amounted to \$5,552,971 48, including the annual appropriation of \$200,000 for the franked postage of the departments, and excluding the foreign postages collected for and payable to the British Government.

The expenditures for the same period were \$5,212,953 43—leaving a balance of revenue over expenditures of \$340,018 05.

I am happy to find that the fiscal condition of the Department is such as to justify the Postmaster General in recommending the reduction of our inland letter postage to three cents the single letter when prepaid, and five cents when not prepaid. He also recommends that the prepaid rate shall be reduced to two cents whenever the revenues of the Department, after the reduction, shall exceed its expenditures by more than five per cent for two consecutive years; that the postage upon California and other letters sent by our ocean steamers shall be much reduced; and that the rates of postage on newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, and other printed matter shall be modified, and some reduction thereon made.

More than three-fourths of our population are engaged in the cultivation of the soil. The commercial, manufacturing, and navigating interests are all to a great extent, dependent on

the agricultural. It is, therefore, the most important interest of the nation, and has a just claim to the fostering care and protection of the Government, so far as they can be extended consistently with the provisions of the Constitution. As this cannot be done by the ordinary modes of legislation, I respectfully recommend the establishment of an Agricultural Bureau, to be charged with the duty of giving to this leading branch of American industry the encouragement which it so well deserves. In view of the immense mineral resources of our country, provision should also be made for the employment of a competent mineralogist and chemist, who should be required, under the direction of the head of the bureau, to collect specimens of the various minerals of our country, and to ascertain, by careful analysis, their respective elements and properties, and their adaptation to useful purposes.

The annexation of Texas and the acquisition of California and New Mexico have given increased importance to our Indian relations.—The various tribes brought under our jurisdiction by these enlargements of our boundaries are estimated to embrace a population of one hundred and twenty-four thousand.

Texas and New Mexico are surrounded by powerful tribes of Indians, who are a source of constant terror and annoyance to the inhabitants. Separating into small predatory bands, and always mounted, they overrun the country, devastating farms, destroying crops, driving off whole herds of cattle, and occasionally murdering the inhabitants or carrying them into captivity. The great roads leading into the country are infested with them, whereby traveling is rendered extremely dangerous, and immigration is almost entirely arrested. The Mexican frontier, which, by the 11th article of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, we are bound to protect against the Indians within our border is exposed to these incursions equally with our own. The military force stationed in that country (although forming a large proportion of the army) is represented as entirely inadequate to our own protection and the fulfilment of our treaty stipulations with Mexico.

For further suggestions on this subject and others connected with our domestic interests, and the defence of our frontier, I refer you to the report of the Secretary of the Interior and of the Secretary of War.

I am gratified in being able to state, that the estimates of expenditure for the navy in the ensuing year are less, by more than one million of dollars, than those of the present, excepting the appropriation which may become necessary for the construction of a dock on the coast of the Pacific, propositions for which are now being considered, and on which a special report may be expected early in your present session.

There is an evident justice in the suggestion of the same report, that appropriations for the naval service proper should be separated from those for fixed and permanent objects, such as building docks and navy yards, and the fixtures attached; and from the extraordinary objects under the care of the Department which, however important, are not essentially naval.

At the close of the last fiscal year, the length of the inland mail routes in the United States (not embracing the service in Oregon and California) was 178,672 miles; the annual transportation thereon 46,541,423 miles; and the annual cost of such transportation \$2,724,426.

The increase of the annual transportation over that of the preceding year, was 3,997,354 miles, and the increase in cost was \$342,440.

The number of post offices in the United States, on the first day of July last, was 18,417—being an increase of 1670 during the preceding year.

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I cannot be doubted that the proposed reductions will, for the present, diminish the revenues of the department. It is believed that the deficiency, after the surplus already accumulated shall be exhausted; may be almost wholly met, either by abolishing the existing privileges of sending free matter through the mails, or by paying out of the Treasury to the Post Office Department a sum equivalent to the postage of which it is derived by such privileges. The last is supposed to be the preferable mode, and will, if not entirely, so nearly supply that deficiency as to make any further appropriation that may be found necessary so inconsiderable as to form no obstacle to the proposed reductions.

I entertain no doubt of the authority of Congress to make appropriations for leading objects in that class of public works comprising what are usually called works of internal improvement. This authority I suppose to be derived chiefly from the power of regulating commerce with foreign nations, and among the

States, and the power of laying and collecting imposts. Where commerce is to be carried on, and imposts collected, there must be ports and harbors, as well as wharves and custom-houses. If ships, laden with valuable cargoes, approach the shore, or sail along the coast, light-houses are necessary at suitable points for the protection of life and property. Other facilities and securities for commerce and navigation are hardly less important; and those clauses of the Constitution, therefore, to which I have referred, have received from the origin of the Government a liberal and beneficial construction. Not only have light-houses, buoys, and beacons been established, and floating lights maintained, but harbors have been cleared and improved, piers constructed, and even break waters for the safety of shipping; and sea walls to protect harbors from being filled up, and rendered useless, by the action of the ocean, have been erected at very great expense. And this construction of the Constitution appears the more reasonable from the consideration, that if these works, of such evident importance and utility, are not to be accomplished at all. By the adoption of the Constitution the several States voluntarily parted with the power of collecting duties of impost in their own ports; and it is not to be expected that they should raise money, by internal taxation, direct or indirect, for the benefit of that commerce, the revenues derived from which do not, either in whole or in part, go into their own treasuries. Nor do I perceive any difference between the power of Congress to make appropriations for objects of this kind on the ocean and the power to make appropriations for similar objects on lakes and rivers, wherever they are large enough to bear on their waters an extensive traffic.

The magnificent Mississippi and its tributaries, and the vast lakes of the north and the northwest, appear to me to fall within the exercise of the power, as justly and as clearly as the Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. It is a mistake to regard expenditures judiciously made for these objects as expenditures for local purposes. The position, or site of the work, is necessarily local; but its utility is general. A ship canal around the falls of St. Mary, of less than a mile in length, though local in its construction, would be national in its purpose and its benefits, as it would remove the only obstruction to a navigation of more than a thousand miles, affecting several States, as well as our commercial relations with Canada.

So, too, the Breakwater at the mouth of the Delaware is erected, not for the exclusive benefit of the States bordering on the bay and river of that name, but for that of the whole coastwise navigation of the United States, and to a considerable extent, also, of foreign commerce.

If a ship be lost on the bar at the entrance of a southern port for want of sufficient depth of water, it is very likely to be a northern ship; and if a steambot be sunk in any part of the Mississippi, on account of its channel not having been properly cleared of obstructions, it may be a boat belonging to either eight or ten States. I may add as somewhat remarkable, that among all the thirty-one States, there is none that is not, to a greater or less extent, bounded on the ocean, or the Gulf of Mexico, or one of the great lakes, or some navigable river.

In fulfilling our constitutional duties, fellow-citizens, on this subject, as in carrying into effect all other powers conferred by the Constitution, we should consider ourselves as deliberating and acting for one and the same country, and bear constantly in mind, that our regard and our duty are due, not to a particular part only, but to the whole.

I therefore recommend that appropriations be made for completing such works as have been already begun, and for commencing such others as may seem to the wisdom of Congress to be of public and general importance.

It was hardly to have been expected the series of measures passed at your last session, with view of healing the sectional difference which had sprung from the slavery and territorial question, should once have realized their beneficial purpose. All mutual concession in the nature of a compromise necessarily be unwelcome to men of extreme opinion. And though without such concessions our Constitution could not have been formed and cannot be permanently sustained, yet we have seen them made the subject of bitter controversy in both sections of the Republic. It required many months of discussion and deliberation to secure the concurrence of a majority of Congress in their favor. It would be strange if they had been received with immediate approbation by people and States, prejudiced and heated by the exciting controversies of their representatives. I believe those measures to have been required by the circumstance and condition of the country. I believe they were necessary to allay asperities and animosities that were rapidly alienating one section of the country from another, and destroying those fraternal sentiments which are the strongest supports of the Constitution. They were adopted in the spirit of reconciliation, and for the purpose of conciliation. I believe that a great majority of our fellow-citizens sympathize in that spirit, and that purpose, and in the main approve, and are prepared, in all respects, to sustain these enactments. I cannot doubt that the American people, bound together by kindred blood and common traditions, still cherish a paramount regard for the Union of their fathers; and that they are ready to rebuke any attempt to violate its integrity, to disturb the compromises on which it is based, or to resist the laws which have been enacted under its authority.

The series of measures which I have alluded to are regarded by me as a settlement, in principle and substance—a final settlement, of the dangerous and exciting subjects which they embraced. Most of these subjects, indeed, are beyond your reach, as the legislation which disposed of them was, in its character, final and irrevocable. It may be presumed, from the position which they all encountered, that none of those measures was free from imperfections, but in their mutual dependence and connection they formed a system of compromise, the most conciliatory, and best for the entire country, that could be obtained from conflicting sectional interests and opinions.

For this reason I recommend your adherence to the adjustment established by those measures, until time and experience shall demonstrate the necessity of further legislation to guard against evasion or abuse.

By that adjustment we have been rescued from the wide and boundless agitation that surrounded us, and have a firm, distinct and legal ground to rest upon. And the occasion, I trust, will justify me in exhorting my countrymen to rally upon and maintain that ground as the best, if not the only means, of restoring peace and quiet to the country and maintain inviolate the integrity of the Union.