

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

PRESIDENT HARRISON

Called from a retirement which I had supposed was to continue for the residue of my life, to fill the Chief Executive office of this great and free nation...

It was the remark of a Roman Consul, in an early period of that celebrated Republic, that a most striking contrast was observable in the conduct of candidates for offices of power and trust...

Although the fiat of the People has gone forth, proclaiming me the Chief Magistrate of this glorious Union, nothing upon their part remaining to be done...

When the Constitution of the United States first came from the hands of the Convention which formed it, many of the sternest republicans of the day were alarmed at the extent of the power which had been granted to the Federal Government...

The broad foundation upon which our Constitution rests, being the people—a breath of theirs having made, as a breath can unmake, change, or modify it...

As, however, one mode of correction is in the power of every President, and consequently in mine, it would be useless, and perhaps injurious to enumerate the evils of which, in the opinions of many of our fellow-citizens, this error of the sages who framed the Constitution may have been the source...

The boasted privilege of a Roman citizen was to him a shield only against a petty provincial ruler, whilst the proud democrat of Athens could console himself under a sentence of death for a supposed violation of the national faith...

Notwithstanding the limited sovereignty possessed by the People of the U. States, and the restricted grant of power to the Government which they have adopted...

sonal liberty secured to the citizen. As was to be expected, however, from the defect of language, and the necessarily sententious manner in which the Constitution is written, disputes have arisen as to the amount of power which it has actually granted...

But the great danger to our institutions does not appear to me to be in a usurpation, by the Government, of power not granted by the People, but by the accumulation, in one of the Departments, of that which was assigned to others...

I proceed to state, in as summary manner as I can, my opinions of the sources of the evils which have been so extensively complained of, and the correctives which may be applied.

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When this corrupting passion once takes possession of the human mind, like the love of gold, it becomes insatiable. It is the never-dying worm in his bosom, grows with his growth, and strengthens with the declining years of his victim.

But if there is danger to public liberty from the acknowledged defects of the constitution, in the want of limit to the continuance of the executive power in the same hands, there is, I apprehend, not much less from a misconstruction of that instrument as it regards the powers actually given.

that any portion of these is not included in the whole.

It may be said, indeed, that the Constitution has given to the Executive the power to annul the acts of the legislative body by refusing to them his assent. So a similar power has necessarily resulted from that instrument to the Judiciary; and yet the Judiciary forms no part of the Legislature.

And it is superfluous to suppose that a thought could for a moment have been entertained against the President, placed at the Capital, in the centre of the country, could better understand the wants and wishes of the people than their own immediate representatives...

There is another ground for the adoption of the veto principle which had probably more influence in recommending it to the convention than any other. I refer to the security which it gives to the just and equitable action of the legislature upon all parts of the Union.

A person elected to that high office, having his constituents in every section, State, and subdivision of the Union, must consider himself bound by the most solemn sanctions, to guard, protect, and defend the rights of all, and of every portion, great or small, from the injustice and oppression of the rest.

And I believe, with Mr. Madison, that repeated recognitions under varied circumstances, in all of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Government, accompanied by indications in different modes of the concurrence of the general will of the nation, as affording to the President sufficient authority for his considering such disputed points as settled.

exhibit made of the operations of each of its Departments, of the powers which they respectively claim and exercise, of the collisions which have occurred between them, or between the whole Government and those of the States, or either of them.

This state of things has been in part effected by causes inherent in the Constitution, and in part by the never-failing tendency of political power to increase itself. By making the President the sole distributor of all the patronage of the Government, the framers of the Constitution do not appear to have anticipated at how short a period it would become a formidable instrument.

It was certainly a great error in the framers of the Constitution, not to have made the officer at the head of the Treasury Department entirely independent of the Executive. He should at least have been removable only upon the demand of the popular branch of the Legislature.

There is no part of the means placed in the hands of the Executive which might be used with greater effect, for unallowed purposes, than the control of the public press. The maxim which our ancestors derived from the mother country, that "the freedom of the press is the great bulwark of civil and religious liberty," is one of the most precious legacies which they have left us.

the experience of other countries, that golden shackles, by whomsoever or by whatsoever pretence imposed, are as fatal to it as the iron bonds of despotism.

Upon another occasion I have given my opinion, at some length, upon the impropriety of Executive interference in the legislation of Congress. That the article in the Constitution making it the duty of the President to communicate information, and authorizing him to recommend measures, was not intended to make him the source of legislation, and in particular, that he should never be looked to for schemes of finance.

Connected with this subject is the character of the currency. The idea of making it exclusively metallic, however well intended, appears to me to be fraught with more fatal consequences than any other scheme, having no relation to the personal rights of the citizen, that has ever been devised.

Amongst the other duties of a delicate character which the President is called upon to perform, is the supervision of the government of the Territories of the U. States. Those of them which are destined to become members of our great political family, are compensated by their rapid progress from infancy to manhood, for the partial and temporary deprivation of their political rights.

The people of the District of Columbia are not the subjects of the people of the States, but free American citizens. Being in the latter condition when the Constitution was formed, no words used in that instrument could have been intended to deprive them of that character.

I have spoken of the necessity of keeping the respective Departments of the Govern-

ment, as well as all the other authorities of our country within their appropriate orbits. This is a matter of difficulty in some cases, as the powers which they respectively claim are often not defined by very distinct lines.

The cement which was to bind it, and perpetuate its existence, was the affectionate attachment between all its members. To insure the continuance of this feeling, produced at first by a community of dangers, of sufferings and of interests, the advantages of each were made accessible to all.

It may be observed, however, that organized associations of citizens, requiring compliance with their wishes, too much resemble the recommendations of Athens to her allies—supported by an armed and powerful fleet. It was, indeed, to the ambition of the leading States of Greece, to control the domestic concerns of the others, that the destruction of that celebrated confederacy, and subsequently of all its members, is mainly to be attributed.

Our Confederalty, fellow-citizens, can only be preserved by the same forbearance. Our citizens must be content with the exercise of the powers with which the Constitution clothes them. The attempt of those of one State to control the domestic institutions of another, can only result in feelings of distrust and jealousy, the certain harbinger of disunion, violence, civil war, and the ultimate destruction of our free institutions.

In consequence of the embarrassed state of business and the currency, some of the States may meet with difficulty in their financial concerns. However deeply we may regret any thing imprudent or excessive in the engagements into which States have entered for purposes of their own, it does not become us to disparage the State Governments, nor to discourage them from making proper efforts for their own relief; on the contrary, it is our duty to encourage them to the extent of our constitutional authority, to apply their best means and cheerfully to make all necessary sacrifices and submit to all necessary burdens to fulfil their engagements and maintain their credit for the character and credit of the whole country.

Unpleasant and even dangerous as collisions may sometimes be, between the constituted authorities of the citizens of our country, in relation to the lines which separate their respective jurisdictions, the results can be of no vital injury to our institutions, if that ardent patriotism, that devoted attachment to liberty, that spirit of moderation and forbearance, for which our countrymen were once distinguished, continue to be