

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE.

To the Honorable the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth.

FELLOW CITIZENS.—In discharge of the duty which the Constitution and laws of this Commonwealth have imposed upon me, I have assembled to discharge the important and responsible duties that devolve upon you. To protect the rights and privileges of the people, advance their interests, and promote the welfare and prosperity of the State, should be the aim and end of all your legislation. In the discharge of my duties, it will be a pleasure to cooperate with you in the accomplishment of these objects.

The past year has been one of unusual prosperity. The bounties of a kind Providence have not been withheld from our Commonwealth. A plentiful harvest has rewarded the labor of the husbandman. Honorable industry, in all its departments, has been encouraged. No financial embarrassments—no commercial distress—no political or social evils, have interrupted the progress, or checked the energies of the people. The great interests of education, morality, and religion, have been cherished and sustained. Health and peace, with their attendant blessings, have been ours. To Him "who rules the Nations by his power, and from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift," are we indebted for these mercies, and to Him should be given the homage of our devout gratitude and praise.

The financial condition of the Commonwealth is highly satisfactory. Every demand upon the Treasury has been promptly met and paid, without the aid of loans. The operation of this department will be exhibited in detail in the report of the State Treasurer.

For the fiscal year ending November 30, 1856, the receipts at the Treasury (including the balance in the Treasury on the first day of December, 1855, of \$1,245,697 33) have been \$6,621,937 64. The total expenditures for the same period were \$5,377,142 22. Balance in the Treasury, December 1, 1856, \$1,244,795 42.

Excluding the balance in the Treasury on the first of December, 1855, the receipts from all sources, were \$5,378,240 33. The ordinary expenditures for the same period, were \$4,113,144 77, showing an excess of receipts over ordinary expenditures of \$1,265,095 56.

The extraordinary payments for the same year, were \$1,263,397 45, as follows, viz:—To the completion of the Portage railroad, and for the payment of debts previously contracted on that work, \$181,422 11; to the North Branch extension, \$129,723 62; to re-lease the south track of the Columbia railroad, \$207,000 00; for motive power in 1855, \$118,049 42; to enlarge the Delaware division of the Pennsylvania canal, \$13,960 00; for general repairs in 1855-56, \$63,965 11; to domestic creditors, \$151 63; to old claims on the main line, examined by the commissioners, and paid under the act of May 22, 1855, \$130,512 09; to the redemption of loans, \$127,824 47; and relief notes cancelled, \$38,217 00.

The interest on the funded debt, which fell due in February and August last, was then paid, and that which became due in February next, will be paid with equal promptness, out of available means now in the Treasury. The punctuality with which the interest on the public debt has been paid, and the ability of the Treasury to meet all legitimate demands upon it, have inspired public confidence in our securities, and contributed largely to establish and sustain the credit of the Commonwealth.

The Commissioners of the Sinking Fund report the sum of \$722,432 93 as due by the Treasury to that fund. This amount will be applied to the redemption of relief notes now in circulation, and to the payment of the funded debt. Heretofore the available means in the Treasury have been applied, to some extent, in payment of outstanding temporary loans, which bear an annual interest of six per centum; but being deemed advisable as a matter of economy to pay these loans, rather than the funded debt, which bears a much less rate of interest. It is expected that the balance of the temporary loans will be paid before the close of the current year, and the operation of the sinking fund resumed and continued as directed by law.

The funded and unfunded debt of the State, including temporary loans, on the first day of December, 1855, as per reports of the Auditor General and State Treasurer, was as follows:

Table with columns for funded debt (Total funded debt \$39,007,799 97) and unfunded debt (Total unfunded debt \$1,160,194 25). Includes sub-totals for interest certificates, domestic creditors, and various loans.

It thus appears that during the past fiscal year the sum of three hundred and sixty-six thousand one hundred and fifty-eight dollars and fifty-seven cents has been paid in liquidation of the public debt. This, taken in connection with the fact that during the year ending November 30, 1855, six hundred and thirty thousand six hundred and nine dollars and two cents were paid on the same account, exhibits the gratifying fact, that the process of reducing the public debt has commenced, and unless checked by reckless mismanagement and extravagant expenditures, must continue until the people and the Commonwealth are relieved from the debt and taxation with which they are burdened. In addition to the reduction of the public debt, large appropriations and payments were made for the completion of the Portage railroad and for debts previously contracted on that work; for old and

unsettled claims recently adjusted by the commissioners appointed under the act of last session; for re-leasing the south track of the Columbia railroad; for enlarging the Delaware division of the canal, and for other purposes. These extraordinary demands upon the Treasury have ceased, or will soon cease, and thus leave a still larger portion of the revenues to be applied in payment of the public debt.

A careful examination of the financial condition of the Commonwealth—her sources of revenue and the probable future expenditures, has inspired the hope that the time is not far distant when the public debt will be fully paid, and this without increasing the subjects or ratio of taxation. It has already been shown that the revenues of the past year exceeded the ordinary expenditures one million two hundred and sixty-five thousand ninety-five dollars and fifty-six cents. The estimated receipts and expenditures for the current year, which will be presented to you in the report of the State Treasurer, show that the excess of receipts over ordinary expenditures may reach the sum of one and a half million of dollars. These estimates, although approximations, will not be far from the true result. Allowing, then, four hundred thousand dollars for annual extraordinary expenditures—and under a wise system of economy in no probable contingency can they exceed that sum—we will have at least one million of dollars to be appropriated annually for the payment of the public debt. With the rapid development of the wealth and resources of the Commonwealth—the increase of population—the value of real estate, and of the amount and value of property of every description, the revenues must and will continue to increase. This natural and necessary increase of revenue will supply every deficiency and every demand upon the Treasury that fall within the range of probability. If, then, the sum of one million dollars be appropriated annually in liquidation of this debt, and the accruing interest on the unsunk paid to be applied in the manner of a sinking fund, the entire indebtedness of the Commonwealth will be extinguished in less than twenty-three years. If these premises are correct—and their correctness can only be impaired by unwise legislation, or the imprudent management of our finances—the truth of the proposition is susceptible of the clearest demonstration. Assuming the public debt on the first day of December, 1856, to be, in round numbers, forty millions five hundred thousand dollars, and that at the end of each fiscal year one million dollars, with the accruing interest on former payments, will be paid, unerring calculation will determine the result to be as before indicated. Thus, before the expiration of the year 1873, Pennsylvania may stand redeemed from the oppression of her public debt, and her people be released from a taxation imposed to meet its accruing interest, and to maintain the faith and credit of the Commonwealth. These views are not utopian. By practicing strict economy in all departments of the government—avoiding extravagant expenditures—refusing to undertake any new schemes of internal improvement, and holding to a rigid accountability the receiving and disbursing agents of the State, their realization may be anticipated with confidence.

I must again call the attention of the Legislature to a subject referred to in my last annual message; in the following terms:— "By the thirty-eighth section of the act of the 16th of April, 1845, entitled 'An Act to provide for the ordinary expenses of Government, the repair of the canals and railroads of the State, and other claims upon the Commonwealth,' the Governor was authorized to cause certificates of State stock to be issued to all persons or bodies corporate holding certificates for the payment of interest on the funded debt of the State, which fell due on the first day of August, 1842, the first days of February and August, 1843, and the first days of February and August, 1844, in an amount equal to the amount of certificates so held upon their delivering up said certificates to the Auditor General. In pursuance of the authority thus given, certificates of State stock to the amount of four millions one hundred and fifty thousand, one hundred and fifty dollars and twenty cents, bearing interest at the rate of five per cent, per annum, payable semi-annually, on the first days of February and August, in each year, and redeemable on or after the first day of August, 1855, were issued. The minimum period fixed by law for the redemption of these certificates, expired on the first day of August, 1855. No provision has been made for their renewal or redemption.

Although by the terms of the act authorizing these certificates of State stock, as also by the conditions of the certificates issued in pursuance thereof, the time of payment, after the expiration of the minimum period, is optional with the debtor, the Commonwealth, yet a due regard for the credit of the State requires that provision should be made for their renewal or redemption. To redeem these certificates, a loan would become necessary, and as a loan cannot be effected, in the present financial condition of the country, on terms more favorable to the State than those on which these certificates were issued, I would recommend that authority be given to issue the bonds of the Commonwealth in renewal of said certificates bearing interest at the rate of five per cent, per annum, payable semi-annually, and redeemable on or after the expiration of twenty years; and that the bonds be issued with coupons or certificates of interest attached, in sums equal in amount to the semi-annual interest thereon, payable on the first days of February and August in each year, at such place as may be designated. This change in the form and character of the certificates, it is believed, will be so advantageous to the holders, without increasing the liabilities of the Commonwealth, as to induce a willing and prompt exchange, at a premium for the bonds proposed to be issued."

The report of the Canal Commissioners will be laid before you, and will exhibit in detail the condition of the public works—their general operation, and the receipts and expenditures for the past fiscal year.

The total receipts at the Treasury, from the public works, for the year ending November 30, 1856, were \$2,006,015 66, being an increase of \$63,638 95. Of this sum \$1,813,589 16 were canal and bridge tolls, and \$192,426 50, tolls of the Columbia and Portage railroads. The aggregate expenditures for the same year were \$1,943,896 22, being an increase over those of the previous year of \$103,105 64. The revenues exceeding the expenditures only \$62,119 44.

The increase of the revenues from these works would be encouraging, were it not for the fact that the expenditures have increased in a still greater proportion—the expenditures, ordinary and extraordinary, exhausting almost the entire revenues from this source. The system must be defective, or more care and economy should be exercised in its management. The receipts at the Treasury from the several districts, were as follows, viz:—

Table showing receipts from various districts: M. L. \$1,220,272 86; Susquehanna North Branch \$426,620 57; West Branch \$319,922 29; Total receipts \$2,006,815 72.

The extraordinary payments made during the year, amounted to \$868,892 16; ordinary expenditures, \$1,137,004 01; net revenue, excluding extraordinary payments and for marine law, \$871,011 00.

On the main line the tolls received at the

Treasury from the Columbia road, were \$991,501; expenditures \$528,084 86; the balance in the division of canal, from C. L. and B. L. \$1,119,718 86; expenditures \$80,048 50; receipts from the Junction at Pittsburg, including the Portage railroad, \$1,177,778 00; ordinary expenditures, \$304,702 22. The total receipts on the main line were \$1,220,272 86; aggregate expenditures, (excluding \$207,000 00 paid for re-leasing the south track of the Columbia railroad, and \$153,049 42 for motive power in 1855, and after December 1st 1856,) were \$885,835 63, being an excess of revenue over ordinary expenditures of \$334,437 21.

Although the receipts from the Delaware division are less than those of the previous year, yet the general result of its operations is satisfactory. The net revenue at the Treasury was \$244,095 40. Its management has been characterized by a degree of economy seldom practiced on some of the lines of our improvements.

However important this division may be to the trade and business of that portion of the State, its proposed enlargement should not be undertaken, unless demanded by reasons of over-ruling necessity. The experience of the past, as connected with the Allegheny Portage railroad, and the North Branch extension, should warn us against undertaking, without great caution, any new measure of improvement, which may drain the Treasury, without aiding materially, if at all, the public interests. If kept in good order by efficient and timely repairs, its capacity will be fully equal to all the demands of its trade and business.

The Portage railroad is not fully completed. A small additional appropriation may yet be required to complete, for the fourth time, this road. It is anxiously hoped that this improvident measure may soon cease its enormous demands upon the Treasury. Every year's experience more clearly reveals the impolicy of the State in undertaking this work. It gives me no ordinary pleasure to inform you that the North Branch extension of the Pennsylvania canal has been so far completed, that boats freighted with coal and other products, were successfully passed through its entire length from Pittston to the Junction canal. This work was commenced in 1836—suspended in 1841—resumed in 1849, and finished in 1855; although its completion was officially announced in 1853. It extends from Pittston to the New York State line, a distance of about ninety-four miles, following the valley of the Susquehanna to Athens, and thence along the Chemung river to the State line, where it joins the "Junction canal," and is thus connected with the New York improvements.

The importance and value of this improvement cannot easily be over-estimated. Passing through one of the richest mineral and agricultural portions of the State, it offers to the immense and valuable products of that region, a safe and cheap transit to the markets of New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. In the completion of this canal the difficulties, both of cost and labor, to be performed, were great. Both these, to a great extent, have been accomplished under the superintendency of Wm. R. Mallet, Esq., to whom this work was assigned.

This canal, although completed, and before the close of navigation, used for the purpose of transportation, is not perfect. Sinks in the bottom, from the nature of the formation and soils through which it passes, slides from the hills, and breaches may occur, but these, after a few years of well applied labor, will be diminished, and by vigilance and care entirely prevented.

This improvement, although subject to the rivalry of competing railroads, if kept in good condition, under proper management, will receive its full share of coal and other tonnage. It is anticipated that the revenues, for the current year, will equal, if not exceed the expenditures; and increasing with the facilities afforded, and the rapid development of trade, will, instead of its heretofore increasing demands upon the Treasury, take precedence in revenue over any canal in the Commonwealth.

In relation to the propriety and policy of the sale of the main line of our public improvements, my opinion has not changed. Every consideration of public policy, of present and future interest, requires the separation of the State from the management and control of these works. The expenditures on that portion of the line, between the Junction and Pittsburg, largely exceed the revenues. The excess averaging annually not less than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars; and causes are in constant operation that will still more increase this deficiency. This continual drain upon the Treasury, to sustain a work so unproductive, should at once be checked. A sale of the main line, for a fair consideration, and upon terms just and liberal to the purchasers, is the proper remedy. Such sale, on terms amply protective of the rights and interests of the people, can, by proper legislation, be effected. In connection with the payment of the public debt, this question becomes deeply important. The safe and sound constitution new era in the financial history of the State, and assure a still more speedy reduction of the public debt, than that to which reference has been made. The subject is earnestly recommended to your favorable consideration.

The subject of banks and banking capital in its relation to the currency—the general interests of trade and commerce, and the industrial pursuits of the citizen, deserve your careful attention. My views expressed in my former communication remain unchanged. The incorporation of new, or the re-charter of old and solvent banks, when actually necessary, and demanded by the wants of legitimate trade in the community where located, should be favored; under no other circumstances should either be permitted. In the creation of banks, the interests of the State and people should be consulted, and a just discrimination as to number, locality and the demands of trade be exercised.

The rapid increase of population, the importance and value of our home and foreign commerce, the constant development of the material wealth of the State, the extent of our manufacturing, mechanical and agricultural industry, the fact that the State is flooded by a depreciated currency introduced by private bankers and brokers, might justify, under the restrictions and limitations indicated, a judicious increase of banking capital within our Commonwealth. This, whilst it would aid the operations of trade, and supply the real business wants of the people, would, at the same time, remedy, to some extent, the evils of a depreciated foreign and illegal currency.

of that class, whose profits are largely dependent upon the introduction into the State of such a currency. In many instances the notes of our own banks are collected by private bankers and brokers, and with these, or with the specie withdrawn from the banks issuing them, they purchase depreciated and foreign bank paper which is paid out at par at their counters. By others large loans are negotiated with banks out of the State, at less than the usual rate of interest, and their notes, often of a less denomination than five dollars, and always at a discount, brought into the State and put into circulation in the manner indicated, and this, too, under an agreement with the bank making the loan, that the notes thus paid out shall be kept in circulation. The effect of this system of private banking has been to limit the circulation of the paper of our own banks, and substitute in its place a foreign, depreciated, and often a worthless currency. In justice to the bank, trust and insurance companies, paying a heavy annual tax to the Commonwealth for their privileges, and for the protection of the people against these evils, either the provisions of the thirtieth section of the act of 1850, should be repealed, or further extended so as to embrace private individuals and associations, who may monopolize and control, to the detriment of the public, this traffic in depreciated bank paper, without restraint and without taxation.

The report of the Superintendent of Common Schools, will exhibit to you the number and condition of the schools—the number of teachers and scholars, and the general operations of the system during the past year. To the valuable statistical information of the report, and the useful suggestions for the improvement of the system, I invite your early and intelligent consideration.

From a small and comparatively unimportant incident of the State Department, the care and management of the public schools of the Commonwealth, with their seventeen hundred districts, ten thousand directors, twelve thousand teachers, and over five hundred thousand scholars, have been the most important and laborious branch of that Department. The increased and increasing business of the system has been met by a corresponding increase of zeal, labor and efficiency in the officers to whom the law has committed its general direction and supervision. They should be sustained by fair and generous legislation. The magnitude and importance of the system, in its political, social and moral relations to the present and future of the people, require that this should be done. The guardianship of the mind of the State should occupy a distinct and prominent place among the public institutions of the Commonwealth. It should receive the efficient aid and encouragement of the government, and be sustained by a virtuous and intelligent people. If the revenue and resources of the State—her public improvements—her lands and her titles, require and deserve the marked and distinctive care of the government, how much more should her mental and intellectual treasures, richer than gold—the social and moral improvement of her people, more valuable than canals and railroads—the riches of her youth to the boundless fields of knowledge, higher than any of earth, or might growing out of its ownership, claim an honorable position, and receive a care and aid commensurate with their greater value and usefulness.

The County Superintendent, wherever it has been committed to faithful and efficient men, has fully vindicated the wisdom and policy of that measure. It is slowly, but surely removing the prejudices and gaining the confidence of the people. Whatever defects time and experience may develop, in this or any other branch of the system, should be promptly corrected. But until the necessity for change is established, the system, in its unity and integrity, should be maintained; and if changed, changed only to render more certain the accomplishment of its noble purposes and objects.

A sufficient number of competent and well trained teachers is the great want of the system. In its structure and organization it is as perfect, if not more so, than any of the systems of our sister States. But the teacher is wanted to give it proper vitality and efficiency—to develop its true force and value—to secure the great object of its creation, the thorough education of the youth of the Commonwealth. How can this want be supplied? How are teachers to be trained and provided to meet this educational demand? Must we be dependent upon the training schools of other States? Must our system be jeopardized, and its success perilled, by waiting the slow and unaided efforts of voluntary associations to furnish the much needed teacher? Voluntary associations of common school teachers have accomplished much in their disinterested and noble efforts to remedy this defect. They are worthy the highest commendation—they deserve every encouragement. They can and will do more; but unaided they cannot accomplish the object desired. The Legislature must provide the remedy—they can supply the deficiency. It should be done promptly and effectually. No subject of greater interest can occupy your attention as legislators—no one appeals more earnestly to duty and patriotism.

In a former communication to the Legislature the establishment of State Normal schools, for the education of teachers, was urged as indispensably necessary to the perfection of the system. With full confidence in their ability and necessity, I again recommend them. These institutions, with their poor professors, and applicants, supported by the State, would meet the wants and elevate the character of our common schools.

Teachers' Institutes, as auxiliary to Normal Schools, when in operation, and supplying their place till established, should be aided by the State. One such institute in each county, meeting annually, under the fostering care of the government, would be productive of most beneficial results. Whilst it would improve teachers and prepare them for their important and responsible duties, it would elevate and dignify a profession too long neglected and undervalued by those most deeply interested in their honorable labors. These measures, as also an addition to the annual State appropriation for common schools, in an amount limited only by the necessities of the Treasury, would give energy to the system—increase its efficiency—and thus promote the true interests of the people and the Commonwealth.

Our educational, charitable and reformatory institutions have strong claims upon the bounty of the people, and I cordially commend them to your care and liberality.

The State Lunatic Asylum at Harrisburg, and the Western Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, and other kindred purposes at Pittsburg, are noble charities, and deserve the aid and encouragement of the State. The annual reports of these institutions will be laid before you, and will exhibit, in detail, their operations during the past year.

The House of Refuge at Philadelphia, and the Western House of Refuge near Pittsburg, are institutions of great excellence, and their results clearly establish the wisdom of the policy that founded and sustains them. They ought not to be neglected; nor should the aid of the Commonwealth be withheld from them.

The "Deaf and Dumb Asylum" at Philadelphia; and the "Pennsylvania Training School for idiot and feeble minded children," are institutions that afford relief and sorrow to the best and purest feelings of the heart, and ask your sympathy and aid. They should receive a generous share of the benefactions of the State.

Agriculture, in its varied departments, is the great interest of the Commonwealth. It is the basis alike of financial and commercial success, and of State and National prosperity. An interest so important should be fostered by the State, and honored by all classes of society. Its promotion and success all should cheerfully contribute. In a former communication I recommended the establishment of an Agricultural Bureau, in connection with some one of the State Departments, to give efficiency to the collection and diffusion of useful knowledge on this subject, and to encourage scientific and practical agriculture. Science, with wondrous energy, has aided the husbandman in his honorable vocation, and professors still more help. The State should nerve his arm and cheer him onward in this, the first and noblest pursuit of man. This subject, in connection with an appropriation to the "Farmers High School of Pennsylvania"—an institution destined to be an honor to the Commonwealth—is recommended to your honorable consideration.

The "Polytechnic College of Pennsylvania," established by the enterprise and liberality of some of the patriotic citizens of Philadelphia, as a school of the applied sciences, deserves honorable mention, and should receive the confidence and patronage of the public. In the teachings of this institution, literature, science and art, in happy union, meet to prepare our young men for the practical business of life, for mining, mechanical and civil engineering, and for promoting intelligently and efficiently the great interests of manufacturing and agricultural industry.

The laws on the statute book regulating manufacturing and improvement companies, require revision. They are unnecessarily stringent in many of their provisions, and thus defeat the object of their enactment. They drive capital from the State, instead of inviting its investment here; and instead of encouraging individual and associated enterprise and energy in the development of our immense natural resources, they bind and crush both by severe restrictions, unwise limitation and personal liabilities. The subject deserves careful attention and liberal legislation.

I have so frequently expressed my views in relation to local, special and "omnibus" legislation, that their reiteration now becomes unnecessary. Legislation, so far as practicable, should be general and uniform. Local and special legislation, when the object desired can be secured by general laws, or by the action of the courts, should be avoided. "Omnibus legislation" cannot under any circumstances, be justified or approved. Too much legislation is an evil that prevails extensively in legislative halls. Its avoidance would not be injurious to public or private interests.

The practice of delaying the passage of the general appropriation bill until the last days of the session, and incorporating in it provisions incompatible with its general character, and obnoxious, when standing alone, to insurmountable objections, is highly censurable and should be discontinued. The passage of legislation, by a species of legislative legerdemain, the passage of objectionable measures through the Legislature, and compel their sanction by the Executive, has been too often successful. The practice cannot be too strongly condemned; it cannot receive my sanction.

The militia law of the State is imperfect in many of its provisions, and should be revised. The powers and duties of the Command-in-Chief should be more clearly defined; as also of the other officers connected with the military organization of the Commonwealth. This is necessary to prevent a conflict of jurisdiction with other departments of the government, and to give greater efficiency to our military system. Volunteer companies should be reformed, and made to occupy that honorable position which from its importance and necessity it deserves.

Near the close of the last session of the Legislature, I transmitted to that body an ordinance passed by the select and common councils of the city of Philadelphia, approved by the Mayor on the 7th of April, 1856, and officially communicated to me, proposing to convey to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania a lot of ground in that city, for the purpose of erecting thereon a State arsenal. Want of time alone prevented action on the proposition then submitted. The ground thus offered to the State is valuable, and its location most eligible for the purpose intended. The conditions of the proposed grant are favorable to the State, and highly creditable to the municipal authorities of Philadelphia, evincing a liberality and public spirit worthy of all commendation. The necessity of a State arsenal in that city is so apparent, that the subjects needs no elaboration in this communication. After the sale of the State arsenal in Philadelphia the public arms were deposited in an old building, or out house, unsafe and unfit as a depository of public property. The sum of \$30,000 00, realized from that sale, is now in the Treasury; and by the fifty-fifth section of an act passed the 19th day of April, A. D. 1853, entitled "An Act to provide for the ordinary expenses of government," &c., the Governor was authorized to apply the same to the purchase of a lot of ground and to the erection of an arsenal thereon. This sum was found insufficient for these purposes, and consequently the object intended by the appropriation has not been accomplished. By the cession of this lot, the State will be relieved from the expenditure of any money for the purchase of suitable grounds; and the entire sum of \$30,000 00 may be applied to the erection of the necessary buildings; to which sum can be added, if deemed advisable, the amount that may be realized from the sale of the arsenal at Meadville and Harrisburg, as recommended in my last annual message. These sums would be amply sufficient to accomplish this object.

I would, therefore, again recommend the immediate passage of a bill recommending the conveyance of the said lot of ground from the city of Philadelphia, for the purposes and upon the terms and conditions contained in the ordinance; and that the sum of \$30,000 00 be appropriated for the erection of a State arsenal thereon.

On the 6th day of October, 1855, I approved and signed a bill, entitled "An Act to repeal the charter of the Erie and North East railroad company, and to provide for the disposal of the same." In pursuance of its provisions, Hon. Joseph Casey was appointed to take possession and have the charge and custody of the road. Before possession was taken, application was made by the company, to one of the judges of the Supreme Court of Pa., for an injunction to restrain the agent of the State from taking possession; and subsequently a cautionary order was made by the Supreme Court, in favor of the proceedings under the act. The questions then pending before the court were determined in favor of the Commonwealth—the constitutionality of the act sustained, and the application for an injunction refused. Possession of the road was then taken by the agent of the State as directed by law.

and confirmed; and certain changes in the road were directed to be made, and other provisions of the act of the 22d of April, 1856, a writ of error, in the cases adjudicated by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, has been issued at the suit of the company by the Supreme Court of the United States, and is now pending in that court.

The commissioner first appointed having resigned, A. K. McClure, Esq., was appointed in his place. The duties of both officers were ably and faithfully performed. Copies of their correspondence and reports, herewith submitted to the House of Representatives, for the use of the Legislature, will furnish information in detail on the subject now under consideration. It is sincerely desired that good faith and honesty of purpose may characterize the conduct of this company in the discharge of the duties assumed by their acceptance of the act of 22d of April last, and that this much vexed question will not again disturb the harmony or retard the prosperity of the city of Erie, or any other portion of this Commonwealth.

The resolution proposing amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth, have been published as directed by that instrument. It will be your duty to take such action in reference to these amendments as will, in your judgment, be most consistent with the wishes of the people. An appropriation will be required to pay the expenses of their publication, and to this your earliest attention is requested.

The important duty of districting the State for the election of Senators and Representatives, will devolve upon you. This duty should be performed faithfully, and with strict reference to the interests and rights of the whole people. Returns of taxables, required to be made by the different counties, have not all been forwarded to this Department, as by law directed. Circulars have been issued to the officers charged with these duties, urging their speedy performance, and the returns will, as soon as received, be transmitted to you.

The elective franchise is the highest and most responsible privilege enjoyed by the American citizen. Involving in its exercise the sovereignty of the people, and constituting as it does the substratum of our free institutions, it cannot be too highly appreciated or carefully guarded. The ballot-box, through which the people speak their will, should be preserved from violation at every hazard and sacrifice. Upon its purity and integrity depend the existence of our republican government, and the rights and privileges of the citizen. Every legal voter, whatever may be his political opinions or party predilections, is deeply interested in this question. Any attempt to subvert its purity, or impair its efficacy, whether by violence or fraud, should be sternly resisted and severely punished. Illegal voting, whether founded on forgery or perjury or both; or false assessments, or false and forged certificates of naturalization, is an evil that deserves the severest condemnation. It represents an honest expression of the popular will, corrupts the sources of legitimate power and influence, and strikes a fatal blow at the cherished rights of freedom. These evils are not confined to our large cities, but are too general in our large counties, and too numerous in our rural districts, to require any more than a few lines from such corrupting abuses. A remedy, as extensive as the evil, should be provided. Every defence should be thrown around the ballot-box, and whilst the rights of legal voters should be secured and protected, fraud in every form should be prevented and punished. Whilst a judicious registry law, or some other measure of reform, advances to the necessities of the case, should be adopted, it is referred to the wisdom of the Legislature.

As appropriate to this subject, the reform of the naturalization law—the prevention, by the National Government, of the importation of foreign criminals and paupers, and a more careful, rigid and personal examination, by our Courts, of all persons coming before them as applicants for admission to the rights of citizenship, would, to some extent, correct existing abuses, and relieve the ballot-box from the pressure of corrupting and dangerous influences.

To the policy and acts of the National Government, affecting, as they do, the rights and interests of the Commonwealth, the people of the State cannot be indifferent. Pennsylvania, occupying a high and conservative position in the sisterhood of States—devoted to the Constitution and the Union, in their integrity and harmony, has been, and will ever be, as ready to recognize the rights of her sister States as to defend her own. These sentiments she has never abandoned—these principles she has never violated. Pledged to the maintenance of the rights of the north, as well as those of the south—sincerely desirous to promote the peace, harmony and welfare of our whole country—and disclaiming all intention or desire to interfere with the Constitutional rights of the States, or their domestic institutions—the people of this Commonwealth viewed with alarm and apprehension the repeal of the Missouri Compromise—a compromise rendered sacred in public esteem by its association and connection with the great cause of national harmony and union—regarding it as a palpable violation of the pledged faith and honor of the nation, and as an unwarrantable attempt to extend the institution of domestic slavery to territories then free. This reckless and indefensible act of our National Congress, has not only aroused sectional jealousies and renewed the agitation of vexed and distracting questions, but, as a consequence, it has filled Kansas with blood, and violence and strife has stained her soil with blood, and by a system of territorial legislation, justly styled "Bleeding Kansas," has made freedom of speech and of the press, a felony, and perilled the great principles of liberty and equal rights. If the doctrine of "popular sovereignty" is in good faith to be applied to that Territory, as the people thereof are to be left perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States, then the obstruction of the great National highway to the northern empire—and the employment of the National force, and the enactment of law and justice alike by the officials in Kansas and Washington, to force slavery upon an unwilling people, cannot be too severely condemned.

Freedom is the great centre truth of American Republicanism—the great law of American Nationality; slavery is the exception—It is local and sectional; and its extension beyond the jurisdiction creating it, or to the free territories of the Union, was never designed or contemplated by the patriot founders of the

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