

# THE STAR OF THE NORTH.

R. W. Weaver, Proprietor.

Truth and Right—God and our Country.

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## THE STAR OF THE NORTH

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## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Read in both Houses of Congress Dec-  
ember 11th, 1854.

Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and House of  
Representatives.

The past has been an eventful year, and I  
will be permitted to refer to it as a marked  
epoch in the history of the world. While  
we have been happily preserved from the  
calamities of war, our domestic prosperity  
has not been entirely uninterrupted. The  
crops, in portions of the country, have been  
nearly cut off. Disease has prevailed to a  
greater extent than usual, and the sacrifice  
of human life, through casualties by sea  
and land, is without parallel. But the pe-  
sistence has swept by, and sequestered salubrity  
invites the absent to their homes, and the  
return of business to its ordinary channels.  
If the earth has rewarded the labor of the  
husbandman less bountifully than in pre-  
ceding seasons, it has left him with abundance  
for domestic wants, and a large surplus  
for exportation. In the present, therefore, as  
in the past, we find ample grounds for reverent  
thankfulness to the God of grace and pro-  
vidence, for His protecting care and merciful  
dealings with us as a people.

Although our attention has been arrested  
by painful interest in passing events, yet  
our country feels no more than the slight vi-  
brations of the convulsions which have shaken  
Europe. As individuals, we cannot re-  
press sympathy with human suffering nor  
regret for the causes which produce it. As  
a nation, we are reminded that whatever in-  
terrupts the peace or checks our prosperity  
of any part of Christendom, tends, more or  
less, to involve our own. The condition of  
States is not unlike that of individuals. They  
are naturally dependent upon each other.—  
Amicable relations between them, and re-  
ciprocally good will, are essential for the pro-  
motion of whatever is desirable in their moral,  
social, and political condition. Hence it  
has been my earnest endeavor to maintain  
peace and friendly intercourse with all na-  
tions.

The wise theory of this government, so  
early adopted and steadily pursued, of avoid-  
ing all entangling alliances, has hitherto  
exempted it from many complications, in  
which it would otherwise have become in-  
volved. Notwithstanding this our clearly  
defined and well sustained course of action,  
and our geographical position so remote from  
Europe, increasing disposition has been man-  
ifested, by some of its governments, to  
interfere, and in certain respects, to direct  
our foreign policy. In plans for adjusting the  
balance of power among themselves, they  
have assumed to take as into account, and  
would constrain us to conform our conduct  
to their views. One or another of the pow-  
ers of Europe has, from time to time, under-  
taken to enforce arbitrary regulations, con-  
trary in many respects to established prin-  
ciples of international law. That law, the  
United States have, in their foreign intercourse  
uniformly respected and observed and they  
cannot recognize any such interpolations  
therein, as the temporary interests of others  
may suggest. They do not admit, that the  
sovereigns of one continent, or a particular  
community of states, can legislate for all  
others.

Leaving the transatlantic nations to adjust  
their political system in the way they may  
think best for their common welfare, the in-  
dependent powers of this continent may well  
assert the right to be exempt from all annoy-  
ing interference on their part. Systematic  
abstinence from intimate political connection  
with distant foreign nations, does not  
conflict with giving the widest range to our  
foreign commerce. This distinction, so  
clearly marked in history, seems to have  
been overlooked, or disregarded, by some  
leading foreign states. Our refusal to be  
brought within, and subjected to, their pecu-  
liar system, has, I fear, created a jealous  
distrust of our conduct, and indeed, on their  
part occasional acts of disturbing effect upon  
our foreign relations.

Our present attitude and past course gives  
assurances which should not be questioned,  
that our purposes are not aggressive, nor  
threatening to the safety and welfare of oth-  
er nations. Our military establishments, in  
time of peace, is adapted to maintain ex-  
terior defenses, and to preserve order among  
the aboriginal tribes within the limits of the  
Union. Our naval forces is intended only  
for the protection of our citizens abroad,  
and of commerce, diffused, as it is, over  
all the seas of the globe. The government of  
the United States being essentially pacific in  
policy stands prepared to repel invasion by  
the voluntary service of patriotic people,  
and provides no permanent means of for-  
ign aggression. These considerations should  
lay all apprehension that we are disposed  
to encroach on the rights, or endanger the  
security of other states.

Some European powers have regarded,

with disquieting concern, the territorial ex-  
pansion of the United States. This rapid  
growth has resulted from the legitimate ex-  
ercise of sovereign rights, belonging alike  
to all nations, and by many liberally exer-  
cised. Under such circumstances, it could  
hardly have been expected that those among  
them which have, within a comparatively  
recent period, subdued and absorbed an-  
cient kingdoms, planted their standards on  
every continent, and now possess, or claim  
the control of the islands of every ocean as  
their appropriate domain, would look with  
unfriendly sentiments upon the acquisitions  
of this country, in every instance honorably  
obtained, or would feel themselves justified  
in impeding our advancement to a spirit of  
aggression or to a passion for political pro-  
dominance.

Our foreign commerce has reached a man-  
nitude and extent nearly equal to that of the  
first maritime power of the earth, and ex-  
ceeding that of any other. Over this great  
interest, in which not only our merchants,  
but all classes of citizens, at least indirectly,  
are concerned, it is the duty of the execu-  
tive and legislative branches of the govern-  
ment to exercise a careful supervision, and  
to adopt proper measures for its protection.  
The policy which I have had in view in re-  
gard to this interest, embraces its future as  
its present security.

Long experience has shown that, in gen-  
eral, when the principal powers of Europe  
are engaged in war, the rights of neutral na-  
tions are endangered. This consideration  
led, in the progress of the war of our inde-  
pendence, to the formation of the celebra-  
ted confederacy of armed neutrality, a pri-  
mary object of which was, to assert the doc-  
trine that the free ships make free goods,  
except in the case of articles contraband of  
war, a doctrine which, from the very com-  
mencement of our national being, has been  
a cherished idea of the statesmen of this  
country. At one period or another, every  
maritime power has, by some solemn treaty  
stipulation, recognized that principle; and  
it might have been hoped that it would come  
to be universally received and respected as  
a rule of international law. But the refusal  
of one power presented this, and in the  
next great war which ensued, that of the  
French revolution, it failed to be respected  
among the belligerent states of Europe.—  
Notwithstanding this, the principle is gen-  
erally admitted to be a sound and salutary  
one; so much so that, at the commence-  
ment of the existing war in Europe, Great  
Britain and France announced their purpose  
to observe it for the present; not, however,  
as a recognized international right, but as a  
mere concession for the time being.

The co-operation, however, of these two  
powerful maritime nations in the interest of  
neutral rights, appeared to me to afford an  
occasion inviting and justifying, on the part  
of the United States, a renewed effort to  
make the doctrine in question a principle of  
international law, by means of special con-  
ventions between the several powers of Euro-  
pe and America. Accordingly, a proposi-  
tion, embracing not only the rule, that free  
ships make free goods, except contraband  
articles, but also the less contested one, that  
neutral property, other than contraband,—  
though on board enemy's ships, shall be ex-  
empt from confiscation, has been submitted  
by this government to those of Europe and  
America.

Russia acted promptly in this matter, and  
a convention was concluded between that  
country and the United States, providing for  
the observance of the principles announced,  
not only as between themselves, but also as  
between them and all other nations, which  
shall enter into like stipulations. None of  
the other powers have as yet taken final ac-  
tion on the subject. I am not aware, how-  
ever, that any objection to the proposed  
stipulations has been made; but, on the con-  
trary, the acknowledgment to be essential  
to the security of neutral commerce; and  
the only apparent obstacle to their general  
adoption is in the possibility that it may be  
encumbered by inadmissible conditions.

The king of the two Sicilies has expressed  
to our ministers at Naples his readiness  
to concur in our proposition relative to neu-  
tral rights, and to enter into a convention on  
that subject.

The king of Prussia entirely approves of  
the project of a treaty to the same effect,  
submitted to him, but proposes an addition-  
al article providing for the renunciation of  
privateering. Such an article, for most ob-  
vious reasons, is much desired by nations  
having naval establishments large in propor-  
tion to their foreign commerce. If it were adop-  
ted as an international rule, the commerce  
of a nation having comparatively a small  
naval force, would be very much at the mer-  
cy of its enemy, in case of war with a pow-  
er of decided naval superiority. The bare  
statement of the condition in which the United  
States would be placed, after having sur-  
rendered the right to resort to privateers, in  
the war with a belligerent of naval supremacy,  
will show that this government could never  
listen to such a proposition. The navy of the  
first maritime power in Europe is at least  
ten times as large as that of the United  
States. The foreign commerce of the two  
countries is nearly equal, and about equally  
exposed to hostile depredations. In war be-  
tween that power and the United States,  
without resort to our part to our mercantile  
marine, the means of our enemy to inflict  
injury upon our commerce would be tenfold  
greater than ours to retaliate. We could not  
extinguish our country from this unequal con-  
dition, with such an enemy, unless we at  
once departed from our present peaceful pol-

icy, and became a great naval power. Nor  
would this country be better situated in war  
with one of the secondary naval powers.—  
The naval disparity would be less, the greater  
extent, and more exposed condition of  
our wide-spread commerce, would give any  
of them a like advantage over us.

The proposition to enter into engagements  
to forego resort to privateers, in case this  
country should be forced into war with a  
great naval power, is not entitled to more  
favorable consideration than would be a  
proposition to agree not to accept the services  
of volunteers for operations on land.

When the honor of the rights of our coun-  
try require it to assume a hostile attitude, it  
confidently relies upon the patriotism of its  
citizens, not ordinary devoted to the mili-  
tary profession, to augment the army and the  
navy, so as to make them fully adequate to  
the emergency which calls them into action.  
The proposal to surrender the right to employ  
privateers is professedly founded upon the  
principle, that private property of unoffend-  
ing non-combatants, through enemies, should  
be exempt from the ravages of war; but the  
proposed surrender goes but little way  
in carrying out that principle, which equally  
requires that such private property should  
not be seized or molested by national ships  
of war. Should the leading powers of Euro-  
pe concur in proposing, as a rule of inter-  
national law, to exempt private property  
upon the ocean, from seizure by public armed  
vessels, as well as by privateers, the United  
States will readily meet them upon that  
ground.

Since the adjournment of congress, the ratifi-  
cations of the treaty between the United  
States and Great Britain, relative to coast  
fisheries, and to reciprocal trade with the  
British North American provinces, have been  
exchanged, and some of its anticipated ad-  
vantages are already enjoyed by us, al-  
though its full execution was to abide cer-  
tain acts of legislation not yet fully perform-  
ed. So soon as it was ratified, Great Brit-  
ain opened to our commerce the free naviga-  
tion of the river St. Lawrence, and our  
fishermen unmolested access to the shores  
and bays, from which they had been previ-  
ously excluded, on the coasts of her North  
American provinces, in return for which,  
she asked for the introduction, free of duty,  
into the ports of the United States, of the  
fish caught on the same coast by British fish-  
ermen. This being the compensation, stipu-  
lated in the treaty, for privileges of the  
highest importance and value to the United  
States, which were thus voluntarily yielded  
before it became effective, the request seem-  
ed to me to be a reasonable one; but it  
could not be acceded to, from want of au-  
thority to suspend our laws imposing duties  
upon all foreign fish. In the meantime, the  
treasury department issued a regulation, for  
ascertaining the duties paid or secured by  
bonds of fish caught on the coasts of the  
British provinces, and brought to our mar-  
kets by British subjects, after the fishing  
grounds had been made fully accessible to  
the citizens of the United States. I recom-  
mend to your favorable consideration a  
proposition, which will be submitted to you,  
for authority to refund the duties and cancel  
the bonds thus received. The provinces of  
Canada and New Brunswick have also anti-  
cipating the full operation of the treaty, by  
legislative arrangements, respectively, to ad-  
mit, free of duty, the products of the United  
States mentioned in the free list of the  
treaty; and an arrangement, similar to that  
regarding British fish, has been made for  
duties now chargeable on the products of those  
provinces enumerated in the same free list  
and introduced therefrom into the United  
States, a proposition for refunding which  
will, in my judgment, be in like manner  
entitled to your favorable consideration.

There is difference of opinion between the  
United States and Great Britain, as to the  
boundary line of the territory of Washing-  
ton adjoining the British possessions on the  
Pacific, which has already led to difficulties  
on the part of the citizens and local author-  
ities of the two governments. I recommend  
that provision be made for a commission,  
to be joined by one on the part of her Brit-  
anic Majesty, for the purpose of running  
and establishing the line in controversy.—  
Certain stipulations of the third and fourth  
articles of the treaty concluded by the United  
States and Great Britain in 1846, regard-  
ing the Hudson's Bay company, and property of the Hudson's Bay  
company, and property of the Hudson's Bay  
company, have given rise to serious  
disputes, and it is important to all con-  
cerned, that summary means of settling  
them amicably should be devised. I have  
reason to believe, that an arrangement can  
be made on just terms, for the extinguish-  
ment of the rights in question, embracing  
also, the right of the Hudson's Bay com-  
pany to the navigation of the river Columbia;  
and I therefore suggest to your consideration,  
the expediency of making a contingent ap-  
propriation for that purpose.

France was the early and efficient ally of  
the United States in their struggle for inde-  
pendence. From that time to the present,  
with occasional slight interruptions, cordial  
relations of friendship have existed between  
the governments and people of the two  
countries. The kindly sentiments, cherish-  
ed by both nations, have led to extensive  
social and commercial intercourse, which, I  
trust, will not be interrupted or checked by  
any casual event, nor apparently unsatisfac-  
tory character. The French consul at San  
Francisco was, not long since, brought into  
the United States district court at that place,  
by compulsory process, as a witness in favor  
of another foreign consul, in violation, as the

French government conceives, of his privi-  
leges under our consular convention with  
France. There being nothing in the transac-  
tion which could imply any disrespect to  
France or its consul, such explanation has  
been made, as I hope will be satisfactory.  
Subsequently, misunderstanding arose on  
the subject of the French government hav-  
ing, as it appeared abruptly excluded the  
American minister to Spain from passing  
through France on his way from London to  
Madrid. But that government has equivo-  
cally disavowed any design to deny the right  
of transit to the minister of the United States;  
and, after explanations to this effect, he has  
resumed his journey, and actually returned  
through France to Spain. I herewith lay  
before Congress the correspondence on this  
subject between our envoy at Paris and the  
minister of foreign affairs of the French  
government.

The position of our affairs with Spain re-  
mains as at the close of your last session.—  
Internal agitation, assuming very nearly the  
character of political revolution, has recent-  
ly convulsed that country. The late min-  
isters were violently expelled from power,  
and men, of very different views in relation  
to its internal affairs, have succeeded. Since  
this change, there has been no propitious  
opportunity to resume, and press on, nego-  
tiations for the adjustment of serious ques-  
tions of difficulty between the Spanish gov-  
ernment and the United States. There is  
reason to believe that our minister will find  
the present government more favorably in-  
clined than the preceding to comply with  
our just demands, and to make suitable ar-  
rangements for restoring harmony, and pre-  
serving peace between the two countries.

Negotiations are pending with Denmark  
to discontinue the practice of levying tolls  
on our vessels and their cargoes passing  
through the sound. I do not doubt that we  
can claim exemption therefrom, as a mat-  
ter of right. It is admitted on all hands,  
that the exaction is sanctioned not by the  
general principles of the law of nations,  
but only of special conventions, which most  
of the commercial nations have entered into  
with Denmark. The fifth article of our treaty  
in 1826, with Denmark, provides that  
there shall not be paid on the vessels of the  
United States and their cargoes when pass-  
ing through the sound higher duties than  
those of the most favored nations. This  
may be regarded as an implied agreement  
to submit to the tolls during the continuance  
of the treaty, and consequently may embar-  
rass the assertion of our rights to be released  
therefrom. There are also other provisions  
in the treaty which ought to be modified. It  
was to remain in force for ten years, and  
until one year after either party should give  
notice to the other of intention to terminate  
it. I deem it expedient that the contempla-  
ted notice should be given to the govern-  
ment of Denmark.

The naval expedition dispatched about  
two years since for the purpose of establish-  
ing relations with the empire of Japan, has  
been ably and skillfully conducted to a suc-  
cessful termination by the officer to whom  
it was entrusted. A treaty, opening certain  
of the ports of that populous country, has  
been negotiated; and in order give full ef-  
fect thereto, it only remains to exchange ratifi-  
cations, and adopt requisite commercial  
regulations.

The treaty lately concluded between the  
United States and Mexico settled some of  
our most embarrassing difficulties with that  
country, but numerous claims upon it for  
wrongs and injuries to our citizens remain-  
ed unadjusted, and many new cases have  
been recently added to the former list of  
grievances. Our legation has been earnest  
in its endeavors to obtain from the Mexican  
government, a favorable consideration of  
these claims, but hitherto without success.  
This failure is, probably, in some measure,  
to be ascribed to the disturbed condition of  
that country. It has been my anxious de-  
sire to maintain friendly relations with the  
Mexican republic, and to cause its rights  
and territories to be respected, not only by  
our citizens, but by foreigners, who have re-  
sorted to the United States for the purpose  
of organizing hostile expeditions against some  
of the states of that republic. The defence-  
less condition in which its frontiers have  
been left, has stimulated lawless adventurers  
to embark in these enterprises, and greatly  
increased the difficulty of enforcing our ob-  
ligations of neutrality. Regarding it as my  
solemn duty to fulfill, efficiently, these ob-  
ligations, not only towards Mexico, but oth-  
er foreign nations, I have exerted all the  
powers with which I am invested to defeat  
such criminal proceedings, and bring to  
punishment those who, by taking a part  
therein, violated our laws.

The energy and activity of our civil  
and military authorities have frustrated the  
designs of those who meditated expeditions  
of this character, except in two instances. One  
of these, composed of foreigners, was at  
first countenanced and aided by the Mexi-  
can government itself, it having been de-  
vised as to their real object. The other,  
small in number, eluded the vigilance of  
the magistrature at San Francisco, and suc-  
ceeded in reaching the Mexican territories;  
but the effective measures taken by this  
government compelled the abandonment of  
it of the undertaking.

The commission to establish the new line  
between the United States and Mexico, ac-  
cording to the provisions of the treaty of  
the 30th of December last, has been organ-  
ized, and the work is already commenced.—  
Our treaties with the Argentine confeder-  
ation, and with the republics of Uruguay

and Paraguay, secure to us the free naviga-  
tion of the river La Platte, and some of its  
larger tributaries; but the same success has  
not attended our endeavors to open the Am-  
azon. The reasons, in favor of the free use  
of that river, I had occasion to present fully  
in a former message; and, considering the  
cordial relations which have long existed  
between this government and Brazil, it  
may be expected that pending negotiations  
will, eventually, reach a favorable result.

Convenient means to transit between the  
several parts of a country, are not only de-  
sirable for the objects of commercial and  
personal communication, but essential to  
its existence under one government. Sepa-  
rated as are the Atlantic and Pacific coasts  
of the United States by the whole breadth  
of the continent, still the inhabitants of each  
are closely bound together by community  
of origin and institutions, and by strong at-  
tachment to the Union. Hence the constant  
and increasing intercourse, and vast inter-  
change of commercial productions, between  
these remote divisions of the Republic. At  
the present time, the most practicable and  
only commodious routes for communication  
between them, are by the way of the Ish-  
mus of Central America. It is the duty of  
the government to secure these avenues  
against all danger of interruption.

In relation to Central America, perplexing  
questions existed between the United States  
and Great Britain at the time of the cession  
of California. These, as well as questions  
which subsequently arose concerning inter-  
oceanic communication across the Isthmus  
were, as it was supposed, adjusted by the  
treaty of April 19, 1850; but, unfortunately,  
they have been reopened by serious mis-  
understanding as to the import of some of  
its provisions, a readjustment of which is  
now under consideration. Our minister at  
London has made strenuous efforts to ac-  
complish this desirable object, but has not  
yet found it possible to bring the negotia-  
tions to a termination.

As incidental to these questions, I deem  
it proper to notice an occurrence which hap-  
pened in Central America near the close  
of the last session of Congress. So soon as  
necessity was perceived of establishing in-  
ter-oceanic communications across the Isth-  
mus, a company was organized, under au-  
thority of the state of Nicaragua, but com-  
posed, for the most part, of citizens of the  
United States, for the purpose of opening  
such a transit way, by the river San Juan  
and Lake Nicaragua, which soon became an  
eligible and much used route in the trans-  
portation of our citizens and their property  
between the Atlantic and Pacific.

Meanwhile, and in anticipation of the  
completion and importance of this transit  
way, a number of adventurers had taken pos-  
session of the old Spanish port at the mouth  
of the river San Juan, in open defiance of  
the states of Central America, which, upon  
their becoming independent, had rightfully  
succeeded to the local sovereignty and juris-  
diction of Spain.

These adventurers undertook to change  
the name of the place from San Juan del  
Norte to Greytown, and, though at first pre-  
tending to act as the subjects of the Mosquito  
Indians, they subsequently repudiated the  
control of any power whatever, assumed to  
adopt a distinct political organization, and  
declared themselves an independent sov-  
ereign state. If, at some time, a faint hope  
was entertained that they might become a  
stable and respectable community, that hope  
soon vanished.

They proceeded to assert unfounded claims  
to civil jurisdiction over Punta Arenas, a  
position on the opposite side of the river San  
Juan, which was in possession, under a title  
wholly independent of them, of citizens of  
the United States, interested in the Nicara-  
gua Transit Company, and which was indis-  
pensable necessary to the prosperous opera-  
tion of this route across the Isthmus. The  
company resisted their groundless claims;  
whereupon they proceeded to destroy some  
of its buildings, and attempted violently to  
dispossess it.

At a later period they organized a strong  
force for the purpose of demolishing the  
establishment at Punta Arenas, but this mis-  
chievous design was defeated by the inter-  
position of one of our ships of war, at that  
time in the harbor of San Juan. Subse-  
quently to this, in May last, a body of men  
from Greytown crossed over to Punta Arenas,  
arrogating authority to arrest, on the  
charge of murder a captain of one of the  
steamboats of the Transit Company. Being  
well aware that the claim to exercise juris-  
diction there would be resisted than, as it  
had been on previous occasions, they went  
prepared to assert it by force of arms. Our  
minister to Central America happened to  
be present on that occasion. Believing that  
the captain of the steamboat was innocent,  
he witnessed the transactions on which the  
charge was founded, and believing, also, that  
the intruding party, having no jurisdic-  
tion there would be resisted than, as it  
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