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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

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

The Constitution requires that the President shall, from time to time, not only recommend to the consideration of Congress such measures as he may judge necessary and expedient, but also that he shall give information to them of the state of the Union. To do this fully involves exposition of all matters in the actual condition of the country, domestic or foreign, which essentially concern the general welfare. While performing his constitutional duty in this respect, the President does not speak merely to express personal convictions, but as the executive minister of the government, enabled by his position, and called upon by his official obligations, to speak with an impartial eye the interests of the whole, and of every part of the United States.

Of the condition of the domestic interests of the Union, its agriculture, mines, manufactures, navigation, and commerce, it is necessary only to say that the internal prosperity of the country, its continuous and steady advancement in wealth and population, and in private as well as public well-being, attest the wisdom of our institutions, and the predominant spirit of intelligence and patriotism, which, notwithstanding occasional irregularities of opinion or action resulting from popular freedom, has distinguished and characterized the people of America.

In the brief interval between the termination of the last and the commencement of the present session of Congress, the public mind has been occupied with the care of selecting, for another constitutional term, the President and Vice President of the United States.

The determination of the persons, who are of right, or contingently, to preside over the administration of the government, is, under our system, committed to the States and the people. We appeal to them, by their voice pronounced in the forms of law, to call whosoever they will to the high post of Chief Magistrate.

And thus it is that as the senators represent the respective States of the Union, and the members of the House of Representatives the several constituencies of each State, so the President represents the aggregate population of the United States. Their election of him is the explicit and solemn act of the sole sovereign authority of the Union.

It is impossible to misapprehend the great principles which, by their recent political action, the people of the United States have sanctioned and announced.

They have asserted the constitutional equality of each and all of the States of the Union as States; they have affirmed the constitutional equality of each, and all of the citizens of the United States as citizens, whatever their religion, wherever their birth, or their residence; they have maintained the inviolability of the constitutional rights of the different sections of the Union; and they have proclaimed their devoted and unalterable attachment to the Union and to the constitution, as objects of interest superior to all subjects of local or sectional controversy, as the safeguard of the rights of all, as the spirit, and the essence of the liberty, peace and greatness of the Republic.

In doing this, they have, at the same time, emphatically condemned the idea of organizing in these United States mere geographical parties; of marshalling in hostile array from each other, the different parts of the country, North or South, East or West. Schemes of this nature, fraught with incalculable mischief, and which the considerate sense of the people has rejected, could have had countenance in no part of the country, had they not been disguised by suggestions plausible in appearance, acting upon an excited state of the public mind, induced by causes temporary in their character, and it is to be hoped, transient in their influence.

Perfect liberty of association for political objects, and the widest scope of discussion, are the received and ordinary conditions of government in our country. Our institutions, framed in the spirit of confidence in the intelligence and integrity of the people, do not forbid citizens, either individually or associated together, to attack by writing, speech, or any other methods short of physical force, the Constitution and the very existence of the Union. Under the shelter of this great liberty, and protected by the laws and usages of the government, they assail, associations have been formed, in some of the States, of individuals, who, pretending to seek only to prevent the spread of the institution of slavery into the present or future inhospitable States

of the Union, are really inflamed with desire to change the domestic institutions of existing States. To accomplish their objects, they dedicate themselves to the odious task of depreciating the government organization which stands in their way, and of calumniating with indiscriminate invectives not only the citizens of particular States, but those laws they find fault, but all others of their fellow citizens throughout the country, who do not participate with them in their assaults upon the Constitution, framed and adopted by our fathers, and claiming for the privileges it has secured, and the blessings it has conferred, the steady support and grateful reverence of their children. They seek an object which they well know to be a revolutionary one. They are perfectly aware that the change in the relative condition of the black and white races in the slaveholding States, which they would promote, is beyond that lawful authority; that to them it is a foreign object; that it cannot be effaced by any peaceful instrumentality of theirs; that for them, and the States of which they are citizens, the only path to its accomplishment is through burning cities and ravaged fields, and slaughtered populations, and all there is most terrible in foreign, complicated with civil and servile war; and that the first step in the attempt is the forcible disruption of a country embracing in its broad bosom a degree of liberty, and an amount of individual and public prosperity, to which there is no parallel in history, and substituting in its place hostile governments driven at once and inevitably into mutual devastation and fratricidal carnage, transforming the now peaceful and telegraphic brotherhood into a vast permanent camp of armed men like the rival monarchies of Europe and Asia. Well knowing that such, and such only, are the means and the consequences of their plans and purposes, they endeavor to prepare the people of the United States for civil war by doing everything in their power to deprive the Constitution and the laws of moral authority, and to undermine the fabric of the Union by appeals to passion and sectional prejudice, by indoctrinating its people with reciprocal hatred, and by educating them to stand face to face as enemies, rather than shoulder to shoulder as friends.

It is by the agency of such unwarrantable interference, foreign and domestic, that the minds of many, otherwise good citizens, have been so influenced into the passionate condemnation of the domestic institutions of the southern States, as at length to pass insensibly to almost equally passionate hostility towards their fellow citizens of those States, and thus finally to fall into temporary fellowship with the avowed and active enemies of the constitution. Ardently attached to liberty in the abstract, they do not stop to consider practically how the objects they would attain can be accomplished, nor to reflect that, even if the evil were as great as they deem it, they have no remedy to apply, and that it can be only aggravated by their violence and unconstitutional action. A question, which is one of the most difficult of all the problems of social institutions, political economy and statesmanship, they treat with uncaring intemperance of thought and language. Extremes beget extremes. Violent attack from the North finds its inevitable consequence in the growth of a spirit of angry defiance at the South. Thus in the progress of events we had reached the consummation which the voice of the people has now so pointedly rebuked of the attempt, of a portion of the States, by a sectional organization and movement, to usurp the control of the government of the United States.

I confidently believe that the great body of those, who inconsiderately took this fatal step, are sincerely attached to the Constitution and the Union. They would, upon deliberation, shrink with unaffected horror from any conscious act of disunion or civil war. But they have entered into a path, which leads nowhere, unless it be to civil war and disunion, and which has no other possible outlet. They have proceeded thus far in that direction, in consequence of the successive stages of their progress having consisted of a series of secondary issues, each of which professed to be confined within constitutional and peaceful limits, but which attempted indirectly what few men were willing to do directly, that is, to act aggressively against the constitutional rights of nearly one half of the thirty six States.

In the long series of acts of indirect aggression, the first was the strenuous agitation, by citizens of the northern States, in Congress and out of it, of the question of negro emancipation in the Southern States.

The second step in this path of evil consisted of acts of the people of the northern States, and in several instances of their governments, aimed to facilitate the escape of persons held to service in the Southern States, and to prevent their extradition when reclaimed according to law and in virtue of express provisions of the Constitution. To promote this object, legislative enactments and other means were adopted to take away or defeat rights which the constitution solemnly guaranteed. In order to nullify the then existing act of Congress concerning the extradition of fugitives from service, laws were enacted in many States, forbidding their officers, under the severest penalties, to participate in the execution of any act of Congress whatever. In this way that system of harmonious co-operation between the authorities of the United States, and of the States, for the maintenance of their common institutions, which existed in the early years of the Republic, was destroyed; conflicts of jurisdiction came to be frequent; and Congress found itself compelled, for the support of the Constitution, and the vindication of its power, to authorize the appointment of new officers, charged with the execution of its acts, as if they and the officers of the States were the ministers, respectively, of foreign governments in a state of mutual hostility, rather than fellow magistrates of a common country, peacefully subsisting under the protection of one well constituted Union. Thus here, also, aggression was followed by reaction; and the attacks upon the Constitution at this point did but serve to raise up new barriers for its defence and security.

The third stage of this unhappy sectional controversy was in connection with the organization of territorial governments, and the admission of new States into the Union. When it was proposed to admit the State of Maine, by separation of territory from that of Massachusetts, and the State of Missouri, from a portion of the territory ceded by France to the United States, representatives in Congress objected to the admission of the latter, unless with conditions suited to particular views of public policy. The imposition of such a condition was successfully resisted. But, at the same period, the question was presented of imposing restrictions upon the residue of the territory ceded by France. That question was, for the time, disposed of by the adoption of a geographical line of limitation.

In this connection it should be remembered, that France, of her own accord, resigned, for considerations of the most far-sighted sagacity, to cede Louisiana to the United States, and that accession was accepted by the United States, the latter expressly engaged that the inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States; and in the meantime they shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, with a right then to pass into the condition of States on a footing of perfect equality with the original States.

The enactment, which established the restrictive geographical line, was acquiesced in, rather than approved by the States of the Union. It stood on the statute book, however, for a number of years; and the people of the respective States acquiesced in the re-enactment of the principle as applied to the State of Texas.

Thereupon this enactment ceased to have binding virtue in any sense, whether as respects the North or the South; and so in effect it was treated on the occasion of the admission of the State of California, and the organization of the territories of New Mexico, Utah and Washington.

Such was the state of this question when the time arrived for the organization of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska. In the progress of constitutional inquiry and reflection, it had now at length come to be seen clearly that Congress does not possess constitutional power to impose restrictions of this character upon any present or future States of the Union. In a long series of decisions, on the fullest arguments, and after the most deliberate consideration, the Supreme Court of the United States had finally determined this point, to every man under which the question could arise, whether as affecting public or private rights in questions of the public domain, of religion, of navigation, and of servitude.

The several States of the Union are, by force of the Constitution, co-equal in domestic legislative power. Congress cannot change a law of domestic relation in the State of Maine; no more can it in the State of Missouri. Any statute which proposes

to do this is a mere nullity; it takes away no right, it confers none. If it remains on the statute book unexecuted, it remains there only as a monument of error, and a beacon of warning to the legislator and the statesman. To repeal it will be only to remove impurity from the statutes, without affecting, either in the sense of permission or of prohibition, the action of the States, or of their citizens.

Still, when the nominal restriction of this nature, already a dead letter in law, was in fact repealed by the last Congress, in a clause of the act organizing the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska, that repeal was made the occasion of a widespread and dangerous agitation.

It was alleged that the original enactment being a compact of perpetual moral obligation, its repeal constituted an odious breach of faith.

An act of Congress, while it remains unexecuted, more especially if it be constitutionally valid in the judgment of those public functionaries whose duty it is to pronounce on that point, is undoubtedly binding on the conscience of each good citizen of the Republic. But in what sense can it be asserted that the enactment in question was invested with perpetuity and entitled to the respect of a solemn compact? Between whom was the compact? No distinct confining powers of the government, no separate sections of the Union, treating as such, entered into treaty stipulations on the subject. It was a mere clause of an act of Congress, and like any other, controverted matter of legislation, received its final shape and was passed by compromise of the conflicting opinions or sentiments of the members of Congress. But if it had moral authority over men's consciences, to whom did this authority attach? Not to those of the North, who had repeatedly refused to confirm it by extension, and who had zealously striven to establish other and incompatible regulations upon the subject. And if, as it thus appears, the supposed compact had no obligatory force as to the North, of course it could not have had any as to the South, for all such compacts must be mutual and of reciprocal obligation.

It has not unfrequently happened that law givers, with undue estimation of the value of the law they give, or in the view of imparting to it peculiar strength, make it perpetual in terms; but they cannot thus bind the conscience and judgment, and the will of those who may succeed them, invested with similar responsibilities, and clothed with equal authority. More careful investigation may prove the law to be inassailable in principle. Experience may show it to be unimpaired in detail and unimpeachable in execution. And then both reason and right combine not merely to justify, but to require its repeal.

The Constitution, supreme as it is over all the departments of the government legislative, executive, and judicial, is open to amendment by its very terms; and Congress or the States may, in their discretion, propose amendment to it, solemnly compact through it in truth is between the sovereign States of the Union. In the present instance, a political enactment, which had ceased to have legal power or authority of any kind, was repealed. The position assumed, that Congress had no moral right to enact such repeal, was strange indeed, and singularly so in view of the fact that the argument came from those who openly refused obedience to existing laws of the land, having the same popular designation and equal quality as compromise acts—namely, more, who unapologetically disregarded and condemned the most positive and obligatory injunctions of the Constitution itself, and sought, by every means within their reach, to deprive a portion of their fellow citizens of the equal enjoyment of those rights and privileges guaranteed alike to all by the fundamental compact of our Union.

This argument against the repeal of the statute line in question, was accompanied by another of ungenial character, and equally with the former destitute of foundation in reason and truth.

Of course, these imputations on the intentions of Congress in this respect, conceived as they were in prejudice, and disseminated in passion, are utterly destitute of any justification in the nature of things and contrary to all the fundamental doctrines and principles of civil liberty and self government.

While therefore, in general, the people of the northern States have never, at any time, arrogated for the federal government the power to interfere directly with the domestic condition of persons in the southern States, but on the contrary have disavowed all such intentions, and have shrunk from conspicuous affiliation with those few who pursue their fanatical objects avowedly through the contemplated means of revolutionary change of the government, and with

acceptance of the necessary consequences, a civil and servile war—yet many citizens have suffered themselves to be drawn into one evanescent political issue of agitation after another, pertaining to the same set of opinions, and which subsided as rapidly as they arose when it came to be seen, as it uniformly did, that they were incompatible with the compact of the Constitution and the existence of the Union. Thus, when the acts of some of the States to nullify the existing extradition law imposed upon Congress the duty of passing a new one, the country was invited by agitators to enter into party organization for its repeal; but that agitation speedily ceased by reason of the impracticability of its object. So, when the statute restriction upon the institutions of new States, by a geographical line, had been repealed, the country was urged to demand its restoration, and that project also died almost with its birth. Then followed the cry of alarm from the North, against imputed southern encroachments; which cry sprang in reality from the spirit of revolutionary attack on the domestic institutions of the South, and after a troubled existence of a few months, has been rebuked by the voice of a patriotic people.

Of this last agitation, one lamentable feature was, that it was carried on at the immediate expense of the peace and happiness of the people of the Territory of Kansas. That was made the battle-field, not a much of opposing factions or interests within itself, as of the conflicting passions of the whole people of the United States. Revolutionary disorder in Kansas had its origin in projects of intervention, deliberately arranged by law for the organization of the Territory. And when propagandist colonization of Kansas had thus been undertaken in one section of the Union, for the systematic promotion of its peculiar views of policy, there ensued, as a matter of course, a counter-action with opposite views, in other sections of the Union.

In consequence of these and other incidents, many acts of disorder it is needless to say, have perpetrated in Kansas, to the occasional interruption, rather than the permanent suspension, of regular government. Aggressive and most reprehensible incursions into the Territory were undertaken, both in the North and the South, and entered it on its northern border by the way of Iowa, as well as on the eastern by way of Missouri; and there has existed within it a state of insurrection against the constituted authorities not without countenance from inconsiderate persons in each of the great sections of the Union.

Imputed irregularities in the elections had in Kansas, like occasional irregularities of the same description in the States, were beyond the sphere of action of the Executive. But incidents of actual violence or of organized obstruction of law, pertinaciously renewed from time to time, have been met as they occurred, by such means as were available, and as the circumstances required; and nothing of this character now remains to affect the general peace of the Union. The attempt of a part of the inhabitants of the Territory to erect a revolutionary government, though solemnly encouraged and supplied with pecuniary aid from active agents of disorder in some of the States has completely failed. Bodies of armed men, foreign to the Territory, have been prevented from entering or compelled to leave it. Predatory bands, engaged in acts of rapine, under cover of the existing political disturbances, have been arrested or dispersed. And every well disposed person is now enabled once more to devote himself in peace to the pursuits of prosperous industry, for the prosecution of which he undertook to participate in the settlement of the Territory.

It affords me unmingled satisfaction thus to announce the peaceful condition of things in Kansas, especially considering the means to which it was necessary to have recourse for the attainment of the end, namely, the employment of a part of the military force of the United States. The withdrawal of that force from its proper duty of defending the country against foreign foes or the savages of the frontier, to employ it for the suppression of domestic insurrection, is, when the exigency occurs, a matter of the most earnest solicitude. On this occasion of imperative necessity it has been done with the best results, and my satisfaction in the attainment of such results by such means is greatly enhanced by the consideration, that, through the wisdom and energy of the present Executive of Kansas, and the prudence, frankness and vigilance of the military officers on duty there, tranquillity has been restored without one drop of blood having been shed in its accomplishment by the forces of the United States.

The restoration of comparative tranquillity in that Territory furnishes the means of

observing calmly, and appreciating at their just value, the events which have occurred there, and the discussions of which the government of the Territory has been subject.

We perceive that controversy concerning its future domestic institutions was inevitable; that no human prudence, no form of legislation, no wisdom on the part of Congress, could have prevented this.

It is idle to suppose that the particular provisions of their organic law were the cause of agitation. Those provisions were but the occasion, or the pretext of an agitation, which was inherent in the nature of things. Congress legislated upon the subject in such terms as were most consonant with the principle of popular sovereignty which underlies our government. It could not have legislated otherwise without doing violence to another great principle of our institutions, the inalienable right of equality of the several States.

We perceive, also, that sectional interests and party passions, have been the great impediment to the salutary operation of the organic principles adopted, and the chief cause of the successive disturbances in Kansas. The assumption that because in the organization of the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas, Congress abstained from imposing restraints upon them to which certain other Territories had been subject, therefore disorders occurred in the latter Territory, is emphatically contradicted by the fact that none have occurred in the former. Those disorders were not the consequence, in Kansas, of the freedom of self-government conceded to that Territory by Congress, but of unjust interference on the part of persons not inhabitants of the Territory. Such interference, wherever it has exhibited itself, by acts of insurrectionary character, or of obstruction to processes of law, has been repelled or suppressed, by all the means which the Constitution and the laws place in the hands of the Executive.

In those parts of the United States where by reason of the inflamed state of the public mind, false rumors and misrepresentations have the greatest currency, it has been assumed that it was the duty of the Executive not only to suppress insurrectionary movements in Kansas, but also to see to the regularity of local elections. It needs little argument to show that the President has no such power. All government in the United States rests substantially upon popular election. The freedom of elections is liable to be impaired by the intrusion of unlawful votes, or the exclusion of lawful ones, by improper influences by violence, or by fraud. But the people of the United States are themselves the all sufficient guardians of their own rights, and to suppose that they will not remedy, in due season, any such incidents of civil freedom, is to suppose them to have ceased to be capable of self government. The President of the United States has had to interpose in elections to see to their freedom, to canvass their votes, or to pass upon their legitimacy in the Territories any more than in the States. If he had such power the government might be republican in form, but it would be a monarchy in fact, and if he had undertaken to exercise it in the case of Kansas, he would have been justly subject to the charge of usurpation, and of violation of the dearest rights of the people of the United States.

Unwise laws, equally, with irregularities at elections, are in periods of great excitement, the occasional incidents of even the freest and best political institutions. But all experience demonstrates that in a country like ours, where the right of self-constitution exists in the completest form, the attempt to remedy unwise legislation by resort to revolution, is totally out of place; inasmuch as existing legal institutions afford more prompt and efficacious means for the redress of wrong.

It is confidently trusted that now, when the peaceful condition of Kansas affords opportunity for calm reflection and wise legislation, either the legislative assembly of the Territory, or Congress, will see that no act shall remain on its statute book violative of the provisions of the provisions of the Constitution, or subversive of the great objects for which that was ordained and established, and will take all other necessary steps to assure to its inhabitants the enjoyment, without obstruction or abridgment, of all the constitutional rights, privileges, and immunities of citizens of the United States, as contemplated by the organic law of the Territory.

Full information is relation to recent events in this Territory will be found in the documents communicated herewith from the Departments of State and War.

I refer you to the report of the Secretary of the Treasury for particular information concerning the financial condition of the government, and the various branches of

the public service connected with the Treasury Department.

During the last fiscal year the receipts from customs were, for the first time, more than sixty-four million dollars, and from all sources, seventy-three million nine hundred and eighteen thousand one hundred and forty-one dollars; which, with the balance on hand up to the 1st of July, 1855, made the total resources of the year to amount to ninety-two million eight hundred and fifty thousand one hundred and seventeen dollars. The expenditures, including three million dollars in execution of the treaty with Mexico, and excluding some paid on account of the public debt, amounted to sixty million one hundred and seventy-two thousand four hundred and one dollar; and including the latter, to seventy-two million one hundred and forty-eight thousand seven hundred and ninety-two dollars, the payment on this account having amounted to twelve million seven hundred and seventy-six thousand three hundred and ninety dollars.

On the 4th of March, 1856, the amount of the public debt was sixty-nine million one hundred and twenty-nine thousand nine hundred and thirty-seven dollars. There was a subsequent increase of two million seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the debt of Texas—making a total of seventy-one million eight hundred and seventy-nine thousand nine hundred and thirty-seven dollars. Of this the sum of forty-five million five hundred and twenty-five thousand three hundred and ninety dollars, including premium, has been charged, reducing the debt to thirty million seven hundred and thirty-seven thousand one hundred and twenty-nine dollars, all which might be paid within a year without embarrassing the public service, but being not yet due, and only redeemable at the option of the holder, cannot be pressed to payment by the government.

On examining the expenditures of the last five years, it will be seen that the average, deducting payments on accounts of the public debt and ten millions paid by treaty to Mexico, has been but about forty-eight million dollars. It is believed that, under an economical administration of the government, the average expenditure for the ensuing five years will not exceed that sum, unless extraordinary occasions for its increase should occur. The acts granting bounty lands will soon have been executed, while the extension of our frontier settlements will cause a continued demand for lands and augmented receipts, probably, from that source. These considerations will justify a reduction of the revenue from customs, so as not to exceed forty-eight or fifty million of dollars. I think the exigency for such reduction is imperative, and again urge it upon the consideration of Congress.

The amount of reduction, as well as the manner of effecting it, are questions of great and general interest; it being essential to industrial enterprise and the public prosperity, as well as the dictate of obvious justice; that the burden of taxation be made to rest as equally as possible upon all classes, and all sections and interests of the country.

I have heretofore recommended to your consideration the revision of the revenue laws; prepared under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, and also legislation upon some special questions affecting the business of that department, more especially the enactment of a law to punish the abstraction of official books or papers from the files of the government; and requiring all such books and papers and all other public property to be turned over by the outgoing officer to his successor; of a law requiring disbursing officers to deposit all public money in the vaults of the treasury or in other legal depositories, where the same are conveniently accessible, and a law to extend existing penal provisions to all persons who may become possessed of public money by deposit or otherwise, who shall refuse or neglect on due demand, to pay the same into the treasury. I invite your attention anew to each of these objects.

The army, during the past year, has been so constantly employed against hostile Indians in various quarters, that it can scarcely be said, with propriety, of having been a peace establishment. Its duties have been so satisfactorily performed, and we have reason to expect, as a result of the year's operations, greater security to the frontier inhabitants than has been hitherto enjoyed. Extensive combinations among the hostile Indians of the Territories of Washington and Oregon, at one time threatened the devastation of the newly formed settlements of that remote portion of the country. From recent information, we are permitted to hope that the energetic and successful operations conducted there will prevent such combinations in future, and assure to those Territories an opportunity to make steady progress in the development of their agricultural and mineral resources.