

Inaugural address
of
Frederick Holbrook
As it appears in the
Journal
of the
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Tuesday, October 22, 1861
Inaugural Address

Gentlemen of the Senate

and House of Representatives: –

It was a great disappointment to me to be disabled by sickness from entering upon my official duties at the opening of the session of the Legislature. Rising so recently from an attack of illness, without the opportunity or physical strength to investigate to any considerable extent the public requirements of the State, I cannot make this communication so practical in detail, or complete in statement, as might perhaps under other circumstances have been realized. The deficiency, however, is of little consequence, inasmuch as Vermonters are proverbial for the good management of their public affairs, and a quick sense of the proprieties of things in all public transactions.

The returning autumnal season has again brought together the General Assembly to consult for the public welfare, and enact laws to promote the same. Looking abroad over the State, we observe that the bounties of Providence have been most generously dispensed, and we are surrounded with the evidences of plenty in mart, in field, flock and herd; that the people have prospered in their undertakings of industry; that we have been exempt from pestilence or the ravages of wasting sickness, and that the domestic security of society has been undisturbed. For these and other blessings, our public acknowledgments are eminently due, and should be gratefully expressed to the great Lawgiver of the Universe.

The inhabitants of Vermont have doubtless preserved as much of our early American character and of the simplicity and purity of free institutions, as those of any State. They are nowhere excelled for the blessings of just and equal laws, by general intelligence well administered, and for a remarkably equal distribution of property, accompanied by that frugality and thrift, which ensures comfortable homes and substantial independence to a large proportion of the population. On somewhat stubborn, but strong and retentive soil, our bracing climate, and the necessity which nature here imposes for industrious, persistent labor, combine to train a people capable of much physical endurance, and of heroic and manly deeds; and the influences of climate, of mountain scenery and the aspects of physical nature generally, stimulate the imagination, refine the sensibilities and exalt the mind. "Freedom and Unity" is their motto, and they drink in the spirit of liberty with the air they breathe.

From a statement by the Treasurer, published in the Report of the Auditor of Accounts, I gather the following facts in regard to the standing of the State Finances on the 45h of September, 1861:

RESOURCES		
Balance in the treasury and due from Banks,		\$36,517 30
Due on Taxes voted before 1860,	\$2,458 87	
" " Tax of 1860,	26,421 25	
	-----	28,880 12
" " " payable Oct. 15, 1861,		90,645 97
Balance due from H.M. Bates,		48,431 74

		\$204,475 13
LIABILITIES		
Due Banks for contributions to Safety Fund,		\$13,125 00
Balance due Towns for U.S. Surplus Money,		5,163 04
Loan of 1857, due Nov. 1, 1862,		100,000 00
" 1859 " Nov. 21, 1864,		75,000 00
" 1860 " July. 1, 1862,		10,000 00
" 1860 " July. 1, 1861,		5,000 00

		\$208,288 04

The Treasurer states that it will be necessary to provide means for the payment of the loan of 1857, of \$100,000 00, at the present session of the Legislature.

In his recent valedictory address, my predecessor states that up to and including the 4th of October, 1861, the amount of Warrants drawn by him upon the Treasury is

\$512,362 59

The Treasurer informs me that since the 4th of October last, warrants have been drawn, in addition to the above, to the amount of

58,904 25

Amount thus far expended in recruiting and fitting out regiments for the service,

\$571,266 84

From this may be deducted the amount reimbursed By the Secretary of the United States Treasury which my predecessor states is

123,000 00

Leaving the sum of

448,266 84

To this may be added the extra pay of \$7 per month thus far disbursed by the Treasurer,

28,920 36

And the amount disbursed on Governor's warrants in aid of soldier's families,

1,866 13

\$479, 053 33

There are other liabilities outstanding, incurred for military purposes, the amount of which cannot now be definitely stated.

In attempting to make an approximate estimate of the military expenses of the current year, I remark that each soldier of Vermont, in the service of the United States by authority of the State, is to receive from this State the sum of \$7 per month or \$84 00 annually. The amount to be paid them the current year will be about as follows:

Five regiments of infantry, namely: second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth regiments, supposed to average about one thousand men each at \$84 each, the year,

\$420,000 00

The regiment of cavalry recruited by Col. Platt, under a commission from the War Department, if by act of the Legislature authorized to come under the provisions of the act for raising six regiments for the service, passed at the special session in April last, and thus counted as a part of the quota to be furnished by Vermont, will add about one thousand men, at \$84 each,

84,000 00

If, in order to make up the State's quota, two more regiments should be authorized, there will be about two thousand men thus added at \$84 each,

168,000 00

Also, the expenses of recruiting, furnishing and fully preparing them for service, say about \$100,000 each regiment,

200,000 00

Making a total military outlay of about

\$872,000 00

To the above may be added the State's quota of the United States tax on real estate, imposed by congress in August last,

211,068 00

Making an estimated total expenditure for the current year, above the ordinary expenses of the State, of about,

\$1,083,068 00

The above expenses may be lightened by further reimbursements from the United States Treasury. In offset, Congress may impose an additional tax at its coming session. Of these matters, however, I am not a present sufficiently informed to speak advisedly; and yet it is deemed proper to direct the attention of the Legislature to them.

From the above figures, not claimed to be an absolutely correct statement, but supposed to approximate thereto, and bearing in mind the amount already expended since the appropriation made at the special session of the Legislature in April last, it will be seen that if more troops are to be sent into the service, a further appropriation by the present Legislature will necessary.

As before remarked, Vermont has now five regiments of infantry in the service of the United States. There is a regiment of cavalry now recruited in the State, by authority of the War Department at Washington, which, if authorized by special act of the present Legislature to come under the provisions of the act passed at the special session in April last, for raising six regiments, will complete the number of regiments then authorized to be raised. There is also one full company of sharpshooters from the State, now in the service; and there are one or two other companies of like character now recruiting. If it is deemed advisable to place these companies on the footing as to extra pay, &c. already authorized for other troops, further legislation will be necessary. The State's full quota of the national army, as at present indicated by Government, is about eight regiments. As but six regiments have yet been authorized, further legislation will be required before additional regiments can be raised and prepared for service. I shall be happy to co-operate with the Legislature in any plans they may adopt in this direction, and respectfully suggest the propriety of raising at least two more regiments for the United States service.

The militia laws of this State are not such as the times demand. They are diffuse, of doubtful construction, and quite too unwieldy and inefficient. Recent events clearly demonstrate that no community, however free, can afford to repose in so defenceless a condition as the people of Vermont have been content with of late years. There is abundant talent in the Legislature to investigate and compare the best known systems, and to perfect a compact, perspicuous and effective law, out of which shall grow a military organization that will be an honor and defence to our State.

In August last, Congress passed an act imposing a direct tax of \$20,000,000 annually upon the United States, to be levied upon real estate, setting to the State of Vermont the sum of \$211,068 00 as its quota thereof. The act provides for the assessment and collection of the tax by United States officers. But it also authorizes any State, through its own officers and in its own way, to assess, collect and pay its quota of the tax into the United States Treasury; and any State which shall, on or before the second Tuesday of February next, and at that time in each subsequent year, give proper notice to the Secretary of the Treasury of its intention to assume, collect and pay its quota of said tax, shall be allowed fifteen per cent. deduction thereon, conditioned that such payment shall be made on or before the last day of June in the year to which such payment relates. I should suggest that you adopt the requisite measures to collect and pay the States's quota of said tax, thereby saving the fifteen per cent. proposed in that case to be deducted by the National Government.

A new census of the United States having been recently taken, articles four and twenty-three of amendment of our State Constitution require the Legislature to make a new apportionment of the Senators to the several counties, and they also prescribe certain rules regarding such apportionment.

I congratulate you, gentlemen, upon the completion of the Statue of Ethan Allen, by our promising young artist, Mead, and upon its safe erection in a fitting place. The superior quality of the material of which the Statute is made, illustrates the riches of Vermont in her statuary marble. It is a rare honor to the State to have furnished from among her sons the genius and talent that conceived and elaborated this finished work of art. We can hardly look at the noble statue without feeling our patriotism kindled anew; and observing the striking and expressive face, the majestic port and uplifted hand of the old hero, imagination pictures him commanding the present enemies of his country to cease their attempt to overthrow its Government, and bidding its benign institutions to descend perpetually to posterity.

The Reports of the Trustees and Superintendent of the Asylum for the Insane indicate that this institution is in its usually flourishing condition. During the past summer the wings of the Asylum have all been raised

another story, by which a large number of cheerful and commodious rooms have been supplied, for the better classification and accommodation of the patients. The unostentatious and untiring devotion of the Superintendent to the interests of the Asylum and the comfort and welfare of its inmates, afford as complete an illustration of active, practical benevolence and sympathy for a most unfortunate portion of society, as it has ever been my fortune to observe.

The Report of the Bank Commissioner gives assurance that the Banks of the State are safely managed. After speaking of the judicious operations of these institutions, in adapting their business to the present times, the Commissioner remarks: "A currency that can withstand such a financial revulsion as that which we have witnessed during the past year, is certainly entitled to great public confidence."

The Report of the Directors of the State Prison informs us of the excellent management of the Superintendent of the institution. It appears from the Report of the Superintendent that, agreeably to an act of the legislature approved October 30, 1860, appropriating \$2,500 for the rebuilding of the east shop of the institution, a substantial brick building, one hundred by thirty-four feet, two stories, with slate roof, has been erected, as a cost of \$2,473 84.

Our free institutions are based upon the virtue and intelligence of the people. They cannot stand upon any other foundation. Hence the Education of our youth is entitled to rank among the first objects of legislative attention. The plan of placing our educational system under the special agency of a Board of Education, appears to be wise, and the operations of the system thus organized seem to have been sufficiently successful to warrant an undisturbed continuance. The zeal and ability with which the Secretary of the Board has discharged his laborious duties, are honorable to him and worthy of our respect and approbation.

In ordinary times I should, in such a communication as this discuss somewhat at length the promotion of Agriculture, the commanding interest of Vermont, and the favorite pursuit of my life. But the peculiar state of public affairs now induces me to forbear entering upon the subject. The same reason causes the omission of several other topics of general interest.

The freemen of Vermont quite generally united recently in a political action expressive of their conviction that party predilections must, in this hour of our country's cause. We may hail their action as the harbinger of that practical union of patriotic men throughout the loyal States, which will ensure the ultimate triumph of our Government in this war.

Failing of an honest, hearty, united political action, the people of the free States would fall ignobly below the grandeur of the issues now upon them, and prove themselves unequal to the defence and preservation of free institutions. Succeeding in such action, they guarantee the success our country's cause; and we of this generation shall have the honor of proving man's capacity for self government. We shall prove that free institutions, so far from being a failure, possess that inherent moral power, and can at all times command that physical and material force, requisite for their stability and perpetuity.

The causes of the war now upon us are so well understood by the people of our State, that it would be superfluous here to rehearse them. They also comprehend the magnitude of the issues involved in the war. They see in the struggle a contest for national existence – for that constitutional liberty and its attendant blessings bequeathed to us by the fathers, and which we are bound by every principle to transmit, unimpaired, to those who come after us. They are willing to expend their blood and treasure, if need be, to the fullest extent of their means, to aid the National Government in crushing this causeless rebellion.

If this war, brought on by those who are striving to introduce in this fair land the reign of chaos and elder night, where all has heretofore been so bright and beneficent, shall ultimately recoil upon themselves, blotting out the institution of slavery, of which they are the apologists and defenders, such an effect may be accepted as a natural result of their madness and guilt.

Senators and Representatives:

Life at the present time is to us indeed a sacred and important trust. Responsibilities of the gravest character fall upon the American citizen in this hour of the Republic's peril. Doubtless we are to be sifted and purified by

the trials through which we are passing, to be purged from the dross engendered by a long period of peace and prosperity, to prize more fully the blessings of constitutional liberty, and feel and give expression to a purer and more earnest love of country, and a more defined and emphatic nationality of view and sentiment, than we have heretofore experienced. Let us, then, trusting in the God of our fathers, courageously welcome the trials that are to prove of what stuff our manhood is made. Let us collectively move forward in concord and unity for the defence of our country, and individually do our whole duty, as becomes citizens living under the most beneficent Government the world ever saw. We are not permitted to lift the veil which conceals the future, nor can we fathom the deep designs of the Almighty in the events now transpiring in our country, but we will not doubt that His overruling Providence is with us now, as with our fathers of old, and in these events is

“From seeming evil still educing good.”

FREDERICK HOLBROOK.