

Inaugural address
of
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Inaugural Address

THE HONORABLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF VERMONT:

Gentlemen,

Having been elected by the freemen of Vermont to the office of Chief magistrate, and taken the oaths of office and assumed that trust, it becomes alike my duty and pleasure to address you on the present occasion, and present for your consideration such matters of public interest, as properly fall within the jurisdiction of the Legislature.

Recognizing that Divine Providence which has guarded our State and National Institutions, and continued to the citizens of this commonwealth the blessings of health and peace and plenty, we assembly to-day, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, to assume the responsibilities, and exercise the high functions of Legislators.

In the discharge of the important trust imposed upon us by the constitution, and by our oaths of office, we are responsible agents. As Legislators and Magistrates, we hold our office and exercise authority, not by virtue of any inherent right, - not by any privilege of birth, or blood, or wealth. The functions of office are defined by the Constitution; but the offices we hold are conferred upon us by the people, to be again surrendered into their hands at the expiration of our Constitutional term; and, in the exercise of the powers thus conferred on us, we shall be chargeable with moral delinquency, and unfaithfulness to the most solemn trust, should we fail to act solely in view of the public welfare.

In the enactment or repeal of laws, or in the adoption of any measures proposed for our consideration, it becomes us to be guided by those high principles of right, which are incapable of being contaminated with schemes for private aggrandizement or partisan promotion; but which are effective in aid of whatever will promote the highest moral and intellectual culture of the body politic, and of whatever is essential to the encouragement of its industrial interests, and the security of the rights and property of each individual of the commonwealth.

It is obvious to remark that the tendency, in most deliberative bodies, is to legislate too much rather than too little; and although there may be no danger that an intelligent assembly, delegated to enact laws as well for their own observance as for that of their constituents, will compromise the interest or rights of the people; yet, in view of the tendency above stated, too great caution can hardly be exercised in adopting measures of reform or change. Much inconvenience and perplexity necessarily arise from too frequent changes in our statute laws; and not unfrequently enactments, salutary in their tendency, and calculated to be of great utility, fail to be effective, or to demonstrate their true character, because they have been repealed or essentially modified, before they have gone into general effect.

The history of our past legislation records comparatively few ultra or unsound enactments. Our laws, in the main, have been eminently just, adapted to the security of the public peace and the protection of individual rights; but we have not always been exempt from the embarrassment consequent upon unstable legislation. I doubt not that these considerations will be duly observed by you, and that you will adopt reformatory changes, only in view of necessity or obvious expediency.

The duty will devolve upon you, gentlemen, to elect a United States Senator, for the six years next succeeding the preset Senatorial term of the Hon. Jacob Collamer.

In the matter of expenditures I recommend the same scrupulous regard to economy which has generally characterized the legislation and the administration of this State, and the avoidance of all measures tending, unnecessarily, to the accumulation of a permanent public debt. Such economy need not degenerate into parsimony, but is consistent with reasonable appropriations for objects of public utility, and the usual provisions for educational and charitable purposes.

The rebuilding of the Capitol, necessitated by the burning of the former edifice, has made it expedient to resort to temporary loans for defraying the expense; and it may be necessary and advisable to make further provisions for the purpose of liquidating bills yet uncanceled, and of reimbursing the sums which have been advanced.

By the report of the Auditor of Accounts, it will be seen that the present liabilities of the State are as follows:

Notes Funded,	\$175,000 00
Due the Safety Fund,	13,125 00
Due towns for U.S. Deposits,	4,113 04
Orders unpaid,	7,198 16

	\$199,436 20

Its resources are as follows:

Taxes uncollected,	\$73,689 56
Amount in the Treasury,	10,599 74
Balance outstanding,	115,146 90

	\$199,436 20

Under the Act of 1859, appropriating two thousand dollars for the purpose of procuring Mead's Statue of Ethan Allen, orders have been drawn on the Treasurer for sums amounting to one thousand dollars. It is understood that the artist has been successful in the design, and that the work is progressing satisfactorily.

The number of State Beneficiaries at the present term of the American Asylum for Deaf and Dumb, at Hartford, is twenty-four. The charge per annum, for board and tuition, is one hundred dollars each; and as several of them have been allowed a sum not exceeding twenty dollars, for clothing, the expenditure for the ensuing year will be nearly equal to the annual appropriation of three thousand dollars. This is considerably more than the average annual expenditure for several years past. There are but five State Beneficiaries at the New England Institution for the instruction of the Blind, in Boston, the charges for whom will be considerably less than the annual appropriation of twelve hundred dollars.

No public State charity is more worthily bestowed than the annual appropriation for the Insane Poor at the Vermont Asylum for the Insane, at Brattleboro. This Institution, under the management of its excellent and devoted Superintendent, Dr. Rockwell, has been eminently successful. It is believed that few institutions of the kind have been managed with equal sagacity and skill, and the results, as a whole, are highly encouraging. Since its commencement, three thousand one hundred and sixty-eight patients have been admitted, and two thousand seven hundred and ninety-one have recovered. During the past year, one hundred and forty-three have been admitted, and one hundred and thirty-eight discharged, of whom fifty-eight have recovered. The present number of patients is four hundred and thirty-six.

Agreeably to act of November 21, 1859, proposals have been solicited for printing the Report of the State Geologist, which have been responded to by different parties. The Report, which will be presented to the Legislature at an early day, is a document of permanent value, and I doubt not the question of printing will receive your favorable consideration.

The Report of the Bank Commissioner is creditable to the management of our State Banks, showing the soundness of our currency, and the abundant security of bill holders and depositors, under any contingency.

The education of youth has been justly regarded by political economists of all civilized nations, as one of the most important elements of national security and prosperity; and in all representative and liberal governments, provision for a proper system of instruction is recognized as one of the first duties of the State. The cause of education, and especially the institution of Common Schools, has engaged the attention, and secured the active labors of our greatest statesmen and our ablest legislators. The spirit of liberty and the patriotism which achieved our national independence, and bequeathed to us our excellent form of government, is referable, in no inferior degree, to the system of education early instituted by the fathers of New England; and

it is only as the youth of the country shall be properly instructed, morally and intellectually, for the duties of citizens, that our free institutions, in the hands of the coming and future generations, are to be preserved intact.

It is with much satisfaction that I refer to the practical working of our present school law, and to the efficiency and well directed efforts of the Secretary of the Board of Education, in connection with Teacher's Institutes. A sound policy would indicate the undesirableness of any essential change, until sufficient time shall have elapsed to develop more fully the working of our present system.

In this connection, I desire to commend to your particular favor the elaborate Report of the Secretary, Mr. Adams. The mass of statistics, the extracts from correspondence with the town Superintendents, and the compendium of the decisions of the Supreme Court, in cases arising under our school laws, indicate great industry and devotion on the part of the Secretary, and an amount of labor far exceeding that required of any other officer of the government. The report is a document of great value, which should be extensively circulated among the citizen of the State.

The voluntary organization of the State Teachers' Association has proved a useful adjunct to the Board of Education and Teachers' Institutes; and, as it embraces a large number of experienced teachers and friends of education, who volunteer much time and expense, it may be worthy of your consideration whether to authorize the Board of Education to appropriate a small sum, annually, for defraying the expense of postage, and of printing the notices and reports of the Association.

It was remarked by Governor Hall, in his last Executive Message, that "Our laws prohibiting the traffic in intoxicating liquors have become the settled and approved policy of the State."

It is questionable whether further legislation on this subject is expedient at the present time. Every good citizen is presumed to be law-abiding. Still, there are those in the community who in violation of law, continue the traffic, to the deep injury of many families, and the demoralizing of many of our youth.

If further enactments are thought to be necessary for the security and peace of the community, it may be worthy of your consideration whether to provide by law that the illegal vendor of intoxicating liquors shall be made responsible to injured parties for the consequences of his illegal traffic.

The question of the establishment and maintenance of one or more House of Correction, or Reformatory Schools, within the State, for the employment of juvenile delinquents and others convicted of minor offences, is one of very grave importance, and which I desire to commend to your deliberate consideration. The experience of other States has shown that these institutions are eminently adapted to the conservation of morals, and the reclamation of those just entering upon a career of crime.

I desire respectfully to propose for your consideration the expediency of providing by law for the election, by a plurality of votes, of Town Representatives, and of all officers chosen by the General Assembly, – as being in conformity with the system prevailing in most of the States of the Union, and with our own in the election of State Senators and County Officers. It is conceived that the law which required a majority of votes to constitute an election, is often productive of embarrassment, and a needless waste of time and money, to say nothing of its demoralizing influence in leading to venality in the exercise of the elective franchise.

The Constitution of this State authorizes the organization and "arming of its inhabitants, for its defence, under such regulations, restrictions and exceptions, as Congress, agreeably to the Constitution of the United States, and the legislature of this State, shall direct." Under this provision of the Constitution, the Legislature has, from time to time, enacted laws for the enrollment, organization and discipline of the militia; and the frequent modifications and changes which have been made in our military code, indicate at once the importance which has been attached to this subject, and the difficulties which have been found to exist in the practical working of the system. Our present militia laws are undoubtedly an improvement upon former legislation, as being less onerous and more simple and effective. I am not informed whether further provisions or reforms are desirable or expedient. Public opinion and the spirit of the age point to an enlightened economical policy in relation to this department of the body politic, whereby to simplify the duties of the uniformed militia, moderate its expenses, and at the same time provide for its practical efficiency and discipline.

In compliance with the act of November 21, 1859, the Quarter master General has disposed of certain arms and military property belonging to the State, and made purchases of military equipments, of which transactions he will make report to the Legislature.

In the early part of the present year, much alarm was created in Massachusetts, and other parts of New England, in consequence of the appearance of the cattle disease – *pleuro-pneumonia* – and it being a well attested fact that the disease is both contagious and infectious, and in most cases fatal, fears were justly entertained that it might spread to other parts, and become general throughout the country. The Legislature of Massachusetts, at its special session, convened for the purpose, enacted laws providing for the isolation of herds supposed to have been exposed to the contagion; and prohibiting the exportation or importation of cattle, except under certain restrictions and provisions. The subject has also enlisted the attention of the Legislature of Connecticut and New Hampshire.

It is not known that any cases of the disease have occurred in this State; and it has been checked, if not entirely eradicated in Massachusetts, where it first appeared. It may be doubted whether any special legislation is expedient at the present time, touching this subject, except it be to provide for sanitary regulations by the selectmen of towns, when authorized by vote of their respective towns.

It is a matter of congratulation that in every part of the State is seen the evidence of thrift and prosperity. It is observable among all classes of our citizens, and in all our industrial interests; but the remark is especially applicable to the department of Agriculture.

From an abstract of the seventh United States Census, it appears that in 1850, there were in this State, two million six hundred and one thousand four hundred and nine acres of improved land, – a quantity exceeding that of any other New England State; and that our agricultural products for that year exceeded in quantity those of any of the same states, in the articles of live stock, butter, cheese, wood, wheat, oats, potatoes, hay and a variety of other crops. The value of live stock, as shown by that census, was twelve million six hundred forty-three thousand two hundred and twenty-eight dollars, and the aggregate of farming productions for that year, shows a valuation, including live stock of about twenty-five millions of dollars, being nearly equal to eighty dollars for each individual of our population.

The well known industry of our citizens, engaged in agricultural pursuits, and the capabilities of our soil, have been made available for increasing the amount of these products, under the stimulus of augmented prices, consequent upon the opening of railway communication with the markets. It may therefore be assumed that this department of industry has not only maintained its relative importance, but that it has, during the intervening years, since the above date, experienced a constant and healthful growth and increase; still it is conceived that it is capable of far greater development, and a much more abundant increase.

Vermont is essentially an Agricultural State. The great body of its citizens are engaged in agricultural pursuits. The salubriousness of its climate, - the richness of its soil, and the variety of its physical structure, adapt it to the cultivation of the most essential and profitable crops, and to the successful prosecution of cattle and sheep husbandry. Other important interests exist and are successfully prosecuted; but it is to this essentially, that we are to look for the most marked and healthy growth of the State in wealth and prosperity.

In the exercise of that fostering care which it becomes the Legislature ever to maintain over the industrial interest of the State, I respectfully invite your attention to the question of providing for an Agricultural Bureau, or Board of Agriculture; having for its object the collection of statistical and other information relating to agriculture, to be embraced in annual reports, for distribution throughout the State. It is not desirable that such a department should be made expensive to the State. Little need be required except to provide for the salary of its Corresponding Secretary and the publication of its reports.

Our manufacturing interests, though not extensive, are prosperous and increasing; but next in importance to our agricultural pursuits, as a source of wealth and material development, may be reckoned our quarries of marble, slate and soapstone. These quarries, inexhaustible in quantity and unsurpassed in quality, remained unavailable, except to a limited extent, until developed and brought into contiguity with the markets by our railways. They are now being extensively worked, by responsible and enterprising companies, which find a ready and increasing market for their productions in various parts of the United States.

On the subject of National Politics, the people of Vermont have ever held a high and conservative position:

Venerating the Constitution as the palladium of our civil rights, and yielding always implicit obedience to all laws which do not controvert its principles, – they will never submit to encroachment upon its high prerogatives, nor yield assent to those modern theories which distort its meaning, and controvert the opinions of the fathers of the Republic – its early expounders:

Warmly attached to the Union of the States, and pledged by every principle of patriotism, to preserve inviolate the sacred bond, – they can never be compromised with schemes for its dissolution, but will resist the hand that dares to “calculate its value,” and will invoke, if necessary, the national arm for its preservation:

National in their views of political economy, and in sympathy with the free productive labor of the country – they, advocate, as a catholic principle, the protection of American industry, by reasonable discriminations in the tariff of duties on imported articles, and judicious appropriations for the improvement of our harbors and navigable rivers:

Honest in their demand for economical expenditure in the administration of the National Government, and jealous of an undue centralization of power in the hands of the National Executive, – they deprecate the increased and constantly increasing extravagance of the General Government, and view with jealous concern the evidence of executive malversation in the disbursement of the public money:

Firm and unyielding in their views of human freedom, they nevertheless accord to other States the constitutional right to regulate their own domestic institutions, and disclaim any participation with those who would invalidate that right:

Believing and maintaining that slavery can exist only by virtue of law, they repudiate with firmness the claim that property in human beings must be recognized and protected, as such, beyond the limits of the States which have legalized it:

Adhering to the principles established by the enactment and resolutions of Congress, and the decisions of the United States Courts, during more than half a century of our early history, – they protest against the authority of an extra-judicial opinion, controverting those principles, promulgated by a majority of the present Judges of the Supreme Court.

It were but a common remark to speak of the growing greatness of our country. It becomes us, with a high recognition of an overruling Providence, to observe the development of its resources, its progress and its destiny.

Its agricultural products are largely in excess of the home consumption, notwithstanding the constant influx of foreign immigrants, and the large proportion of its population, not producers, who are engaged in the various departments of commerce, manufactures and mechanical trades:

Its mineral resources are unequalled by those of any other country for their richness, extent and variety; and its vast public domain invites the enterprise of the citizens of every State and affords a home for the thousands from other shores who are to become naturalized citizens:

Its manufacturing establishments are upon the most extensive scale, producing massive and ingenious machinery, and all the useful and most substantial fabrics, of a style and quality not excelled:

Its naval architecture excites the admiration of nautical men, of our own and other countries; and its railroad form a network in the older States, and are being extended in every direction through the new States and Territories, connecting the Atlantic with the Mississippi, and reaching onwards towards the Pacific:

Its destiny is onward. Its institutions and form of government are adapted to the highest development of national strength, improvement and prosperity, securing to all classes the enjoyment of the right to pursue their various employments unmolested, and affording ample protection from foreign aggression and domestic insubordination.

Intending to retire from office at the close of my present constitutional term, it is fitting that I should avail myself of the present occasion, to express, through you, my thanks to the freemen of the State, for the

confidence they have reposed in me, in calling me from the common walks of life, to the honorable and responsible office of Chief Magistrate.

Looking for Divine counsel and direction, it shall be my effort to cooperate with you in measures for the general welfare, during the term of our official relations; and until the close of my official term, to exercise all the functions of the Executive office with reference to the best interests and the highest improvement of the people of the commonwealth.

May that Divine Being, who controls the affairs of States and Nations, guide you in your deliberations, and preserve your lives, your dwellings and your families, until you shall have executed the high trust committed to your hands, and won for yourselves, from an intelligent and discriminating constituency, the plaudit of "Well done, good and faithful servants."