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INAUGURAL SPEECH.

WASHINGTON CITY, MARCH 6.

Yesterday, at 12 o'clock, on taking the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, the following Speech was delivered by JAMES MONROE, President of the United States :

FELLOW-CITIZENS :

I shall not attempt to describe the grateful emotions which the new and very distinguished proof of the confidence of my fellow citizens, evinced by my reelection to this high trust, has excited in my bosom. The approbation which it announces of my conduct, in the preceding term, affords me a consolation which I shall profoundly feel through life. The general accord with which it has been expressed, adds to the great and never-ceasing obligation which it imposes. To merit the countenance of this good opinion and to carry it with me into my retirement, as the solace of advancing years, will be the object of my most zealous and unceasing efforts.

Having no pretensions to the high and commanding claims of my predecessors, whose names are so much more conspicuously identified with our revolution, and who contributed so pre-eminently to promote its success, I consider myself rather as the instrument than the cause of the union which has prevailed in the late election. In surmounting, in favor of my humble pretensions, the difficulties which so often produce division in like occurrences, it is obvious that other powerful causes, indicating the great strength and stability of our Union, have essentially contributed to draw you together. That these powerful causes exist, and that they are permanent, is my fixed opinion; that they may produce a like accord in all questions, touching, however remotely, the liberty, prosperity, and happiness, of our country, will always be the object of my most fervent prayers to the Supreme Author of all Good.

In a government which is founded by the people, who possess exclusively the sovereignty, it seems proper that the person who may be placed by their suffrages in this high trust, should declare, on commencing its duties, the principles on which he intends to conduct the administration. If the person, thus elected, has served the preceding term, an opportunity is afforded him to review its principal occurrences, and to give such further explanation respecting them as, in his judgment, may be useful to his constituents. The events of one year have influence on those of another; and, in like manner, of a preceding on the succeeding administration. The movements of a great nation are connected in all their parts. If errors have been committed, they ought to be corrected; if the policy is sound, it ought to be supported.—It is by a thorough knowledge of the whole subject that our fellow-citizens are enabled to judge correctly of the past, and to give a proper dissection to the future.

Just before the commencement of the last term, the United States had concluded a war with a very powerful nation, on conditions equal and honorable to both parties. The events of that war are too recent, and too deeply impressed on the memory of all, to require a development from me. Our commerce had been, in a great measure, driven from the sea; our Atlantic and inland frontiers were invaded in almost every part; the waste of life along our coast, and on some parts of our inland frontiers, to the defence of which our gallant and patriotic citizens were called, was immense; in addition to which, not less than one hundred and twenty millions of dollars were added at its end to the public debt.

As soon as the war had terminated, the nation, admonished by its events, resolved to place itself in a situation, which should be better calculated to prevent the recurrence of a like evil, and, in case it should recur, to mitigate its calamities. With this view, after reducing our land force to the basis of a peace establishment, which has been further modified since, provision was made for the construction of fortifications at proper points, through the whole extent of our coast, and such an augmentation of our navy force, as should be well adapted to both purposes. The laws, making this provision, were passed in 1815 and 16, and it has been, since, the constant ef-

fort of the Executive, to carry them into effect.

The advantage of these fortifications, and of an augmented naval force, in the extent contemplated, in point of economy, has been fully illustrated, by a Report of the board of Engineers and Naval Commissioners, lately communicated to Congress, by which it appears, that an invasion by twenty thousand men, with a correspondent naval force, in a campaign of six months only, the whole expense of the construction of the works would be defrayed by the difference in the sum necessary to maintain the force which would be adequate to our defence with the aid of those works, and that which would be incurred without them. The reason of this difference is obvious. If fortifications are judiciously placed on our great inlets, as distant from our cities, as circumstances will permit, they will form the only points of attack, and the enemy will be detained there by a small regular force, a sufficient time to enable our militia to collect, and repair to that on which the attack was made. A force adequate to the enemy, collected at that single point, with suitable preparation for such others as might be menaced, is all that would be requisite. But, if there were no fortifications, then the enemy might go where he pleased, and, changing his position, and sailing from place to place, our force must be called out and spread in vast numbers along the whole coast, and on both sides of every bay and river, as high up in each as might be navigable for ships of war. By these fortifications, supported by our navy, to which they would afford like support, we should present to other powers an armed front from St. Croix to the Sabine, which would protect, in the event of war, our whole coast and interior from invasion, and even in the wars of other powers, in which we were neutral, they would be found eminently useful, as, by keeping their public ships at a distance from our cities, peace and order in them would be preserved, and the government protected from insult.

It need scarcely be remarked, that these measures have not been resorted to in a spirit of hostility to other powers.—Such a disposition does not exist towards any power. Peace and good will have been, and will hereafter be cultivated with all, and by the most faithful regard to justice. They have been dictated by a love of peace, of economy, and an earnest desire to save the lives of our fellow-citizens from that destruction, and our country from that devastation, which are inseparable from war, when it finds us unprepared for it. It is believed, and experience has shown, that such a preparation is the best expedient that can be resorted to, to prevent war. I add, with much pleasure, that considerable progress has already been made in these measures of defence, and that they will be completed in a few years, considering the great extent and importance of the object, if the plan be zealously and steadily persevered in.

The conduct of the government in what relates to foreign powers, is always an object of the highest importance to the nation. Its agriculture, commerce, manufactures, fisheries, revenue; in short, its peace, may all be affected by it. Attention is, therefore, due to this subject.

At the period adverted to, the powers of Europe, after having been engaged in long and destructive wars with each other, had concluded a peace, which happily still exists. Our peace with the powers with whom we had been engaged, had also been concluded. The war between Spain and the colonies in South America, which had commenced many years before, was then the only conflict that remained unsettled. This being a contest between different parts of the same community, in which other powers had not interfered, was not affected by their accommodations.

This contest was considered, at an early stage, by my predecessor, a civil war, in which the parties were entitled to equal rights in our ports. This decision, the first made by any power, being formed on great consideration of the comparative strength and resources of the parties, the length of time, and successful opposition made by the colonies, and of all other circumstances on which it ought to depend, was in strict accord with the law of nations. Congress has invariably acted on this principle, having made no change in our relations with either party. Our attitude has, therefore, been that of neutrality between them, which has been maintained by the government with the strictest impartiality.—No aid has been afforded to either, nor has any privilege been enjoyed by the one, which has not been equally open to the other party; and every exertion has

been made in its power, to enforce the execution of the laws prohibiting illegal equipments, with equal rigor against both.

By this equality between the parties, their public vessels have been received in our ports on the same footing; they have enjoyed an equal right to purchase and export arms, munitions of war, and every other supply—the exportation of all articles whatever being permitted under laws which were passed long before the commencement of the contest; our citizens have traded equally with both, and their commerce with each has been alike protected by the government.

Respecting the attitude which it may be proper for the United States to maintain hereafter between the parties, I have no hesitation in stating it as my opinion, that the neutrality heretofore observed, should still be adhered to. From the change in the government of Spain, and the negotiation now depending invited by the Cortes and accepted by the colonies, it may be presumed that their differences will be settled on the terms proposed by the colonies. Should the war be continued, the United States, regarding its occurrences, will always have it in their power to adopt such measures respecting it, as their honor and interest may require.

Shortly after the general peace, a band of adventurers took advantage of this conflict, and of the facility which it afforded, to establish a system of buccaneering in the neighbouring seas, to the great annoyance of the commerce of the U. States, and, as was represented, of that of other powers. Of this spirit, and of its injurious bearing on the United States, strong proofs were afforded, by the establishment at Amelia Island, and the purposes to which it was made instrumental, by this band in 1818, and by the occurrences which took place in other parts of Florida, in 1818, the details of which, in both instances, are too well known to require to be now recited. I am satisfied, had a less decisive course been adopted, that the worst consequences would have resulted from it. We have seen that these checks, decisive as they were, were not sufficient to crush that piratical spirit. Many culprits, brought within our limits, have been condemned to suffer death, the punishment due to that atrocious crime. The decisions of upright and enlightened tribunals fall equally on all, whose crimes subject them, by a fair interpretation of the law, to its censure. It belongs to the Executive not to suffer the executions, under these decisions, to transcend the great purpose for which punishment is necessary. The full benefit of example being secured, policy, as well as humanity, equally forbids that they should be carried further. I have acted on this principle, pardoning those who appear to have been led astray by ignorance of the criminality of the acts they had committed, and suffering the law to take effect on those only, in whose favor no extenuating circumstances could be urged.

Great confidence is entertained, that the late treaty with Spain, which has been ratified by both parties, and the ratifications whereof have been exchanged, has placed the relations of the two countries on a basis of permanent friendship. The provision made by it for such of our citizens as have claims on Spain, of the character described, will, it is presumed, be very satisfactory to them; and the boundary which is established between the territories of the parties, westward of the Mississippi, heretofore in dispute, has, it is thought, been settled on conditions just and advantageous to both. But, to the acquisition of Florida, too much importance cannot be attached. It secures to the United States a territory important in itself, and whose importance is much increased by its bearing on many of the highest interests of the Union. It opens to several of the neighbouring states a free passage to the ocean, through the province ceded, by several rivers, having their sources high up within their limits. It secures us against all future annoyance from powerful Indian tribes. It gives us several excellent harbors in the Gulf of Mexico for ships of war of the largest size. It covers by its position in the Gulf, the Mississippi and other great waters within our extended limits, and thereby enables the United States to afford complete protection to the vast and very valuable productions of our whole western country, which find a market through those streams.

By a treaty with the British government bearing date on the twentieth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and eighteen, the convention regulating the commerce of the United States and Great Britain concluded on the third of July, one thousand eight hundred and fifteen, which was about expiring, was revived and continued for the term of ten

years from the time of the expiration.—By that treaty, also, the differences which had arisen under the treaty of Ghent, respecting the right claimed by the United States for the citizens to take and cure fish on the coast of his Britannic Majesty's dominions in America, with other differences on important interests, were adjusted, to the satisfaction of both parties. No agreement has yet been entered into respecting the commerce between the United States and the British dominions in the West Indies, and on this continent. The restraints imposed on that commerce by Great Britain, and reciprocated by the United States, on a principle of defence, continue still in force.

The negotiation with France for the regulation of the commercial relations between the two countries, which, in the course of the last summer, had been commenced at Paris, has since been transferred to this city, and will be pursued, on the part of the United States, in the spirit of conciliation, and with an earnest desire that it may terminate in an arrangement satisfactory to both parties.

Our relations with the Barbary powers are preserved in the same state, and by the same means, that were employed when I came into this office. As early as 1801, it was found necessary to send a squadron into the Mediterranean, for the protection of our commerce, and no period has intervened, a short term excepted, when it was thought advisable to withdraw it. The great interest which the United States have in the Pacific, in commerce and the fisheries, have also made it necessary to maintain a naval force there. In disposing of this force, in both instances, the most effectual measures in our power have been taken, without interfering with its other duties, for the suppression of the slave trade, and of piracy in the neighboring seas.

The situation of the United States, in regard to their resources, the extent of their revenue, and the facility with which it is raised, affords a most gratifying spectacle. The payment of nearly sixty-seven millions of dollars of the public debt, with the great progress made in measures of defence, and in other improvements of various kinds, since the late war, are conclusive proofs of this extraordinary prosperity, especially when it is recollected that these expenditures have been defrayed, without a burthen on the people, the direct tax and excise having been repealed soon after the conclusion of the late war, and the revenue applied to these great objects having been raised in a manner not to be felt. Our great resources, therefore, remain untouched, for any purpose which may affect the vital interests of the nation.—For all such purposes they are inexhaustible. They are more especially to be found in the virtue, patriotism, and intelligence, of our fellow-citizens, and in the devotion with which they would yield up, by any just measure of taxation, all their property, in support of the rights and honor of their country.

Under the present depression of prices, affecting all the productions of the country, and every branch of industry, proceeding from causes explained on a former occasion, the revenue has considerably diminished; the effect of which has been to compel Congress either to abandon these great measures of defence, or to resort to loans or internal taxes, to supply the deficiency. On the presumption that this depression, and the deficiency in the revenue arising from it, would be temporary, loans were authorized for the demands of the last and present year. Anxious to relieve my fellow-citizens in 1817, from every burthen which could be dispensed with, and the state of the Treasury permitting it, I recommend the repeal of the internal taxes, knowing that such relief was then peculiarly necessary, in consequence of the great exertions made in the late war. I made that recommendation under a pledge that should the public exigencies require a recurrence to them at any time while I remained in this trust, I would, with equal promptitude, perform the duty which would then be alike incumbent on me. By the experiment now making it will be seen, by the next session of Congress, whether the revenue shall have been so augmented as to be adequate to all these necessary purposes. Should the deficiency still continue, and especially should it be probable that it would be permanent, the course to be pursued appears to me to be obvious. I am satisfied, that under certain circumstances, loans may be resorted to with great advantage. I am equally well satisfied, as a general rule, that the demands of the current year, especially in time of peace, should be provided for by the revenue of that year. I have never dreaded, nor have I ever shunned, in any situation in

which I have been placed, making appeals to the virtue and patriotism of my fellow-citizens, well knowing that they could never be made in vain, especially in times of great emergency, or for purposes of high national importance. Independently of the exigency of the case, many considerations of great weight urge a policy having in view a provision of revenue to meet, to a certain extent, the demands of the nation, without relying altogether on the precarious resource of foreign commerce. I am satisfied that internal duties and excises, with corresponding imposts on foreign articles of the same kind, would, without imposing any serious burthens on the people, enhance the price of produce, promote our manufactures, and augment the revenue, at the same time that they made it more secure and permanent.

The care of the Indian tribes within our limits has long been an essential part of our system, but, unfortunately, it has not been executed in a manner to accomplish all the objects intended by it. We have treated them as independent nations without their having any substantial pretension to that rank. The distinction has flattered their pride, retarded their improvement, and, in many instances, paved the way to their destruction. The progress of our settlements westward, supported, as they are, by a dense population, has constantly driven them back, with almost the total sacrifice of the lands which they have been compelled to abandon. They have claims on the magnanimity, and, I may add, on the justice of this nation, which we must all feel. We should become their real benefactors, we should perform the office of their Great Father, the endearing title which they emphatically give to the Chief Magistrate of our Union. Their sovereignty over vast territories should cease, in lieu of which the right of soil should be secured to each individual, and his prosperity, in competent portion, and, for the territory thus ceded by each tribe, some reasonable equivalent should be granted, to be vested in permanent funds for the support of civil government over them, and for the education of their children, for their instruction in the arts of husbandry, and to provide sustenance for them until they could provide it for themselves. My earnest hope is, that Congress will digest some plan, founded on these principles, with such improvements as their wisdom may suggest, and carry it into effect as soon as it may be practicable.

Europe is again unsettled, and the prospect of war increasing. Should the flame light up, in any quarter, how far it may extend, it is impossible to foresee. It is our peculiar felicity to be altogether unconnected with the causes which produce this menacing aspect elsewhere.—With every power we are in perfect amity, and it is our interest to remain so, if be practicable on just conditions. I see no reasonable cause to apprehend variance from any power, unless it proceed from a violation of our maritine rights. In these contests, should they occur, and to whatever extent they may be carried, we shall be neutral; but, as a neutral power, we have rights which it is our duty to maintain. For light injuries it will be incumbent on us to seek redress in a spirit of amity, in full confidence that, injuring none, none would knowingly injure us. For more immediate dangers we should be prepared, and it should always be recollected that such preparation, adapted to the circumstances, and sanctioned by the judgment and wishes of our constituents, cannot fail to have a good effect, in averting dangers of every kind. We should recollect, also, that the season of peace is best adapted to these preparations.

If we turn our attention, fellow-citizens, more immediately to the internal concerns of our country, and more especially to those on which its future welfare depends, we have every reason to anticipate the happiest results. It is now rather more than forty-four years since we declared our independence, and thirty-seven since it was acknowledged. The talents and virtues which were displayed in that great struggle, were a sure presage of all that has since followed. A people who were able to surmount, in their infant state, such great perils, would be more competent, as they rose into manhood, to repel any which they might meet in their progress. Their physical strength would be more adequate to foreign danger, and the practice of self-government, aided by the light of experience, could not fail to produce an effect, equally salutary, on all those questions connected with the internal organization. These favorable anticipations have been realized. In our whole system, national and state, we have shunned all the defects which unceasingly preyed on the vitals and destroyed the ancient republics. In them, there were