

which this Government is invariably engaged, press an ever-ready for its political power of the people, themselves, when the true character of its capacity to regulate, according to its will and its interests, and the interests of its favorites, its aims and production of the labor and property of every man in this extended country, had been so fully and fearfully enveloped when it was notorious that all classes of this great community had, by means of the power and influence it thus possessed, been infected to madness with a spirit of headless speculation when it had been seen that, secure in the support of the combination of influences by which it was surrounded, it could violate its charter, and set the laws at defiance with impunity; and when, too, it had become most apparent that to believe that such an accumulation of powers can ever be granted without the certainty of being abused, was to indulge in a fatal delusion?

To avoid the necessity of a permanent debt, and its inevitable consequences, I have advocated, and endeavored to carry into effect, the policy of confining the appropriations for the public service to such objects only as are clearly within the constitutional authority of the Federal Government; and of excluding from its expenses those imprudent and unauthorized grants of public money for works of internal improvement, which were so wisely arrested by the constitutional interposition of my predecessor, and which, if they had not been so checked, would long before this time have involved the finances of the General Government in embarrassments far greater than those which are now experienced by any of the States; of limiting all our expenditures to that simple, unostentatious, and economical administration of public affairs, which is alone consistent with the character of our institutions; of collecting annually from the customs, and the sales of public lands, a revenue fully adequate to defray all the expenses whatsoever, but under no pretence whatsoever, to impose taxes upon the people to a greater amount than was actually necessary to the public service, conducted upon the principles I have stated.

In lieu of a national bank, or a dependence upon banks of any description, for the management of our fiscal affairs, I recommended the adoption of the system which is now in successful operation.—That system affords every requisite facility for the transaction of the pecuniary concerns of the Government; will, it is confidently anticipated, produce in a short time many of the benefits which have been from time to time expected from the creation of a national bank, but which have never been realized; avoid the manifold evils inseparable from such an institution; diminish, to a greater extent than could be accomplished by any other measure of reform, the patronage of the Federal Government—a wise policy in all Governments, but more especially so in one like ours, which works well only in proportion as it is made to rely for its support upon the unbiased and unadulterated opinions of its constituents; do away forever, all dependence on corporations, either in the raising, collecting, safekeeping, or disbursing the public revenues; and place the Government equally above the temptation of fostering a dangerous and unconstitutional institution at home, or the necessity of adapting its policy to the views and interests of a still more formidable money-power abroad.

It is by adopting and carrying out these principles, and by giving to the most ardent and disinterested of the nation, the most successful, to demonstrate to the people of the United States that a national bank at all times, and a national debt, except it be incurred at a period when the honor and safety of the nation demand the temporary sacrifice of a policy, which is not only essential to its such exigencies, are not merely unnecessary, but in direct and daily hostility to the principles of their Government, and to their own permanent welfare.

The progress made in the development of these positions, appears in the preceding sketch of the past history and present status of the financial concerns of the Federal Government. The facts there stated fully authorize the assertion, that all the purposes for which this Government was instituted, have been accomplished during four years of greater pecuniary embarrassment than were ever before experienced in the time of peace, and in the face of opposition as formidable as any that was ever before arrayed against the policy of a administration; that this has been done when the ordinary revenues of the Government were generally decreasing, as well from the operation of the laws, as the operation of the country; without the creation of a permanent public debt, or incurring any liability, other than such as the ordinary resources of the Government will speedily discharge, and without the agency of a national bank.

If this view of the proceedings of the Government for the period it embraces, be warranted by the facts as they are known to exist; if the army and navy have been sustained to the full extent authorized by law, and which Congress deemed sufficient for the defence of the country and the protection of its rights and its honor; if its civil and diplomatic services have been equally sustained; if ample provision has been made for the administration of justice and the execution of the laws; if the claims upon public credit are being promptly met, and faithfully discharged; if there have been no failures in defraying the very large expenditures growing out of that long-continued and salutary policy of peacefully removing the Indians to regions of comparative safety and prosperity; if the public faith has at all times, and every where, been most scrupulously maintained by a prompt discharge of the numerous, extended, and diversified claims on the

Treasury;—if all these great and important objects, with many others that might be stated, have, for a series of years, been accomplished by a series of measures, which have been successfully accomplished without a resort to a permanent debt, of the kind of a national bank; have we not a right to expect that a policy, the object of which has been to sustain the public service independently of either of these fruitful sources of disaster, will receive the final sanction of a people whose unbiased and fairly elicited judgment upon public affairs is never ultimately wrong?

That embarrassments in the pecuniary concerns of individuals, of unexampled extent and duration, have recently existed in this as in other commercial nations is undeniably true. To suppose it necessary now to trace these reverses to the sources, would be a reflection on the intelligence of my fellow-citizens. Whatever may have been the obscurity in which this subject was involved during the earliest stages of the revolution, there cannot now be any by whom the whole question is not fully understood.

Not desiring it within the constitutional powers of the General Government, to repair private losses sustained by reverses in business having no connexion with the public service, either by direct appropriations from the Treasury, or by special legislation designed to secure exclusive privileges and immunities of individuals or classes in preference to, and at the expense of, the great majority necessarily debarred from any participation in them, no attempt to do so has been either made, recommended, or encouraged, by the present Executive.

It is believed, however, that the great purposes for the attainment of which the Federal Government was instituted have not been lost sight of. Entrusted only with certain limited powers, cautiously enumerated, distinctly specified, and defined with a precision and clearness which would seem to defy misconstruction, it has been my constant aim to confine myself within this limits so clearly marked out, and so carefully guarded.

Having always been of opinion that the best preservative of the union of the States is to be found in a total abstinence from the exercise of all doubtful powers on the part of the Federal Government, rather than in attempts to use them by a loose construction of the constitution, or an ingenious perversion of its words, I have endeavored to avoid recommending any measure which I had reason to apprehend would, in the opinion even of a considerable minority of my fellow-citizens, be regarded as transgressing on the rights of the States, or the provisions of the hallowed instrument of our Union. Viewing the aggregate powers of the Federal Government as a voluntary concession of the States, it seemed to me that such only should be exercised as were at the time intended to be given.

I have been strengthened, too, in the propriety of this course, by the conviction that all efforts to go beyond this, tend only to produce dissatisfaction and distrust, to excite jealousies, and to provoke resistances. Instead of adding strength to the Federal Government, even when successful, they must ever prove a source of irreparable weakness, by alienating a portion of those whose adhesion is indispensable to the great aggregate of united strength, and whose voluntary attachment is, in my estimation, far more essential to the efficiency of a government, strong in the best of all possible strength—the confidence and attachment of all those who make up its constituent elements.

Thus believing, it has been my purpose to secure to the whole people, and to every member of the confederacy, by general, salutary, and equal laws alone, the benefit of those republican institutions which it was the end and aim of the constitution to establish, and the impartial influence of which is, in my judgment, indispensable to their preservation. I cannot bring myself to believe that the lasting happiness of the people, the prosperity of the States, or the permanency of their Union, can be maintained by giving preference or priority of any class of citizens in the distribution of benefits or privileges, or by the adoption of measures which enrich one portion of the Union at the expense of another; nor can I see in the interference of the Federal Government with the local legislation and reserved rights of the States a remedy for present, or a security against future, dangers.

The first, and assuredly not the least, important step towards relieving the country from the condition into which it had been plunged by excesses in trade, banking, and credits of all kinds, was to place the business transactions of the Government upon a solid basis; giving and receiving in all cases value for value, and neither countenancing nor encouraging in others that delusive system of credits from which it has been so long so difficult to escape, and which it has left nothing behind it but the wrecks that mark its fatal career.

That the financial affairs of the Government are now, and have been during the whole period of these wide-spread difficulties, conducted with a strict and invariable regard to this great fundamental principle, and that by the assumption and maintenance of the stand thus taken on the very threshold of the approaching crisis, more than by any other cause or cause whatever, the community at large has been shielded from the inevitable evils of a general and indefinite suspension of specie payments, and a consequent annihilation, for the whole period it might have lasted, of a just and invariable standard of value, will, it is believed, at this period, scarcely be questioned.

A steady adherence, on the part of the Government, to the policy which has produced salutary results, aided by judicious State legislation, and what is not less important, by the industry, enterprise, perseverance, and economy of the American people, cannot fail to raise the whole coun-

try, in a very short time, to a state of comparative prosperity; and, in the meantime, to prevent the possibility of a relapse into the same condition, to be maintained by the adoption of a sound and permanent system of a national bank, it is for the people, and their representatives, to decide whether or not the Government of the country, which is the great concern of all, shall be carried back to a condition of things which fostered those contradictions and expansions of the currency, and those reckless abuses of credit, from the baleful effects of which the country has so deeply suffered—a return that can promise, in the end, no better results than to reproduce the embarrassments the Government has experienced; and to remove from the shoulders of the present, to those of fresh victims, the bitter fruits of that spirit of speculative enterprise to which our countrymen are so liable, and upon which the lessons of experience are so unavailing. The choice is an important one, and I sincerely hope that it may be wisely made.

A report from the Secretary of War, presenting a detailed view of the affairs of that department, accompanies this communication.

The desultory duties connected with the removal of the Indians, in which the army has been continually engaged on the northern and western frontiers, and in Florida, have rendered it impracticable to carry into full effect the plan recommended by the Secretary for improving its discipline. In every instance where the regiments have been concentrated, they have made great progress; and the best results may be anticipated from a continuance of this system. During the last season, a part of the troops have been employed in removing the Indians from the interior to the territory assigned them in the west—a duty which they have performed efficiently, and with peaceably humanity; and that portion of them which has been stationed in Florida continued active operations there throughout the heats of summer.

The policy of the United States in regard to the Indians, of which a succinct account is given in my message of 1833, and of which I am fully satisfied, has been continued in active operation throughout the whole period of my administration.—Since the spring of 1837, more than forty thousand Indians have been removed to their new homes west of the Mississippi; and I am happy to add, that all accounts concur in representing the result of this measure as eminently beneficial to that people.

The emigration of the Seminoles alone has been attended with serious difficulty, and occasional bloodshed; hostilities having been commenced by the Indians in Florida, under the apprehension that they would be compelled, by force, to comply with their treaty stipulations. The execution of the treaty of Payne's Landing, signed in 1832, but not ratified until 1834, was postponed, at the solicitation of the Indians, until 1835, when they again renewed the agreement to remove peacefully to their new homes in the west.

In the face of this solemn and renewed compact, they broke their faith, and commenced hostilities by the massacre of Major Dade's command, the murder of their agent, General Thompson, and other acts of cruel treachery. When this alarming and unexpected intelligence reached the seat of Government, every effort appears to have been made to reinforce General Clinch, who commanded the troops then in Florida. General Easton was dispatched with reinforcements from Charleston; troops were called out from Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia, and Gen. Scott was sent to take the command with ample powers and ample means. At the first alarm, General Gaines organized a force at New Orleans, and, without waiting for orders, landed in Florida, where he delivered over the troops he had brought with him to General Scott.

Governor Call was subsequently appointed to conduct a summer campaign, and at the close of it, was replaced by Gen. Jesup. These events and changes took place under the administration of my predecessor.

Notwithstanding the exertions of the experienced officers who had commanded there for eighteen months, on entering upon the administration of the Government I found the Territory of Florida a prey to Indian atrocities. A strenuous effort was immediately made to bring these hostilities to a close; and the army, under General Jesup, was reinforced until it amounted to ten thousand men, and furnished with abundant supplies of every description. In this campaign a great number of the enemy were captured and destroyed; but the character of the conquest only was changed. The Indians, having been defeated in every engagement, dispersed in small bands throughout the country, and became an enterprising, formidable, and ruthless banditti. General Taylor, who succeeded General Jesup, used his best exertions to subdue them, and was seconded in his efforts by the officers under his command; but he, too, failed to protect the Territory from their depredations. By an act of signal and cruel treachery, they broke the truce made with them by General Macomb, who was sent from Washington for the purpose of carrying into effect the expressed wishes of Congress, and have continued their devastations ever since.

General Armstrong, who was in Florida when General Taylor left the army, by permission, assumed the command, and, after active summer operations, was met by propositions for peace; and, from the fortunate coincidence of the arrival in Florida, at the same period, of a delegation from the Seminoles who are happily set-

tle, it was possible to bring to a close the hostilities which had been maintained for so long a period. The Territory, without further delay, has been restored to its former condition. These happy results have been rendered throughout the whole of the Territory, and the contest has endured so long, it is to be attributed to causes beyond the control of the Government. Experienced generals have had the command of the troops; officers and soldiers, have alike distinguished themselves for their activity, patience, and enduring courage; the army has been constantly furnished with supplies of every description; and we must look for the causes which have so long protracted the issue of the contest, in the vast extent of the theatre of hostilities, the almost insurmountable obstacles presented by the nature of the country; the climate, and the wily character of the savages.

The sites for marine hospitals on the rivers and lakes, which I was authorized to select and cause to be purchased, have all been designated; but the appropriation not proving sufficient, conditional arrangements only have been made for their acquisition. It is for Congress to decide whether these conditional purchases shall be sanctioned, and the humane intentions of the law carried into full effect.

The navy, as will appear from the accompanying report of the Secretary, has been usefully and honorably employed in the protection of our commerce and citizens in the Mediterranean, the Pacific, on the coast of Brazil, and in the Gulf of Mexico. A small squadron, consisting of the frigate Constellation and the sloop-of-war Boston, under Commodore Kearney, is now on its way to the China and Indian seas, for the purpose of attending to our interests in that quarter, and Commodore Anlick, in the sloop-of-war Yorktown, has been instructed to visit the Sandwich and Society Islands, the coast of New Zealand and Japan, together with other parts and islands formerly visited by our vessels, for the purpose of giving them protection and protection, should they be required. Other smaller vessels have been, and still are, employed in prosecuting the surveys of the coast of the United States, directed by various acts of Congress; and those which have been completed will shortly be laid before you.

The exploring expedition, at the latest date, was preparing to leave the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, in further prosecution of objects which have, thus far, been successfully accomplished. The discovery of a new continent, which was first seen in latitude 57° 2' south, longitude 154° 27' east, and afterwards in latitude 63° 11' south, longitude 153° 40' east, by Lieutenant Wilkes and others, for an extent of eighteen hundred miles, but on which they were prevented from landing by vast bodies of ice which encompassed it, is one of the honorable results of the enterprise. Lieutenant Wilkes bears testimony to the zeal and good conduct of his officers and men; and it is but justice to that officer to state that he appears to have performed the duties assigned him with an ardor, ability, and perseverance, which give every assurance of an honorable issue to the undertaking.

The report of the Postmaster General, herewith transmitted, will exhibit the service of that department the past year, and its present condition. The transportation has been maintained during the year to the full extent authorized by the existing laws; some improvements have been effected, which the public interest seemed urgently to demand, but not involving any material additional expenditures; the contractors have generally performed their engagements with fidelity; the postmasters, with few exceptions, have rendered their accounts and paid quarterly balances with promptitude; and the whole service of the department has maintained the efficiency for which it has for several years been distinguished.

The acts of Congress establishing new mail routes, and requiring more expensive services on others, and the increasing wants of the country, have, for three years past, carried the expenditures something beyond the accruing revenues; the excess having been met, until the past year, by the surplus which had previously accumulated. That surplus having been exhausted, and the anticipated increase of the revenue not having been realized, owing to the depression in the commercial business of the country, the finances of the department exhibit a small deficiency at the close of the last fiscal year. Its resources, however, are ample; and the reduced rates of compensation for the transportation service, which may be expected on the future lettings, from the general reduction of prices, with the increase of revenue that may reasonably be anticipated from the revival of the commercial activity, must soon place the finances of the department in a prosperous condition.

Considering the unfavorable circumstances which have existed during the past year, it is a gratifying result that the revenue has not declined, as compared with the preceding year, but on the contrary exhibits a small increase, the circumstances referred to having had no other effect than to check the expected income.

It will be seen that the Postmaster General suggests certain improvements in the establishment, designed to reduce the weight of the mails, cheapen the transportation, ensure greater regularity in the service, and secure a considerable reduction in the rates of letter postage—an object highly desirable. The subject is one of general interest to the community, and is respectfully recommended to your consideration.

The suppression of the African slave trade has received the constant attention of the Government. The brig Dolphin and schooner Grampus have been employed during the last season on the coast of

Africa, in the prosecution of this important and humane service. These vessels were sent to the coast of Africa, after cruising on the coast of the United States, and have since been designated on a similar service.

From the reports of the commanding officers, it appears that the trade is now principally carried on under Portuguese colors; and they express the opinion that the apprehension of their presence on the slave coast has, in a great degree, arrested the prohibition of the American flag to this inhuman purpose. It is hoped that, by continuing to maintain this force in that quarter, and by the exertions of the officers in command, much will be done to put a stop to this nefarious traffic, which may have been carried on under the American flag, and to prevent its use in a trade which, while it violates the law, is equally an outrage on the rights of others and the feelings of humanity.

The efforts of the several Governments who are anxiously seeking to suppress this traffic must, however, be directed against the facilities afforded by what are now recognized as legitimate commercial ports, before that object can be fully accomplished. Supplies of provisions, water-casks, merchandise, and articles connected with the prosecution of the slave-trade, are, it is understood, freely carried by vessels of different nations to the slave factories; and the effects of the factors are transported openly from one slave station to another, without interruption or punishment by the officers of the nations to which they belong, engaged in the commerce of that region.

I submit to your judgment whether this Government, having been the first to prohibit, by adequate penalties, the slave-trade—the first to declare it piracy—should not be the first, also, to forbid to its citizens all trade with the slave factories on the coast of Africa, giving an example to all nations in this respect, which, if fairly followed, cannot fail to produce the most effective results in breaking up those dens of iniquity.

M. VAN BUREN.
Washington, December 5, 1841.

STANDING COMMITTEES
IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.
Committee of Elections.—Messrs. River, Finney, Aldrich, Aaron V. Brown, Truman Smith, Bots, Philip S. Thomas, and John R. Hunter.
Committee of Ways and Means.—Messrs. John W. Jones, K. L. Atwater, Van Ness, Connor, M. A. Cooper, Mason, Satterthwaite, and Hubbard.
Committee of Claims.—Messrs. Russell, Dawson, Banks, Giddings, Jared W. Williams, Gentry, John Hill of N. O., Galbraith, and Milroy.
Committee on Commerce.—Messrs. Curtis, Hillen, Bucke, Toland, Habersham, Pariss, Bots, Weller, and Winthrop.
Committee on Public Lands.—Messrs. Morrow, Lincoln, Cray, Juo, White, Fisher, Garland, Jacob Thompson, Casey, and Chapman.
Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads.—Messrs. McKay, Hopkins, Briggs, Marvin, Leadbetter, Jos. L. Williams, Albert C. Brown, Reynolds, and John B. Thompson.
Committee for the District of Columbia.—Messrs. W. Cost, Johnson, Christopher H. Williams, Beirne, Clark, Davis, Graham, Cranston, Hawkins, and McCarty.
Committee on the Judiciary.—Messrs. Saragant, Hoffman, Parney, Samuels, Bernard, Stanley, Turnbull, Sauson, H. Butler, and Starkweather.
Committee on Revolutionary Claims.—Messrs. Randolph, Hall, Tallaferrro, Parmelee, Montgomery, E. J. Swearingen, James, and N. J. Daniel Jones.
Committee on Public Expenditures.—Messrs. Bond, Duncan, Crockett, Waterson, McCulloch, Green, Baker, Brackenridge, and McClure.
Committee on Private Land Claims.—Messrs. Calhoun, Dellet, Wick, Wm. S. Hastings, Jameson, Cross, Warren, Vroom, and Boardman.
Committee on Manufactures.—Messrs. Adams, Nisbet, Slade, Tillinghast, Worthington, Dromgoolle, Mitchell, Eastman, and John Davis.
Committee on Agriculture.—Messrs. Deberry, Dennis, McCallan, John Smith, Hammond, Shaw, Doug, Hook, and Ridgway.
Committee on Indian Affairs.—Messrs. Bell, Lewis Williams, Alfred, China, Lucas, Hunt, John W. Davis, Parrish, and Ryall.
Committee on Military Affairs.—Messrs. Waddy Thompson, Miller, Colea, Kemble, John W. Allen, Monroe, Sumter, Goggin, and Wm. O. Butler.
Committee on the Militia.—Messrs. Keim, Darter, Griffin, D. D. Wagoner, Gode, Edward Rogers, Triplett, P. J. Wagoner, and Wm. R. Cooper.
Committee on Naval Affairs.—Messrs. F. Thomas, Reed, Grinnell, Anderson, Proffit, Naylor, Shepard, Dickerson, and Montague.
Committee on Foreign Affairs.—Messrs. Pickens, Cushing, Dromgoolle, Granger, Hawes, Everett, Clifford, Lee, and Fine.
Committee on the Territories.—Messrs. Pope, Jenifer, Wm. B. Campbell, Stuart, Brewster, Garret Davis, Jas. Cooper, Morgan, and Dana.
Committee on Revolutionary Pensions.—Messrs. Tallaferrro, Carr, Andrews, Stierrod, E. Davies, Brockway, Taylor, Hand, and Peck.
Committee on Invalid Pensions.—Messrs. S. Williams, C. Morris, Chalmers, Doan, Strong, S. W. Morris, Patten, Sweeney, and Edwards.
Committee on Roads and Canals.—Messrs. Ogle, Carroll, Hill, of Virginia, Tross, Smith, Rayner, Blackwell, Underwood, Crab, and Albert Smith.
Committee on Patents.—Messrs. Fletcher, Beatty, Prentiss, Newhard, and Paynter.
Committee on the Public Buildings and Grounds.—Messrs. Partrick, Leonard, Keim, John Hastings, and Osborne.
Committee on Naval and Unfinished Business.—Messrs. Peck, Parrish, Jackson, James, and Kille.
Committee on Accounts.—Messrs. Joseph Johnson, Charles Johnston, Marchand, Floyd, and Andrews.
Committee on Mileage.—Messrs. Thomas W. Williams, Henry Williams, Henry, Jackson, Allen, and Kentonhall.
The six Standing Committees of Expenses in the Department were, under the Rules, appointed at the last session, to continue