

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE

NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

OF THE

STATE OF IOWA,

BY

GOVERNOR S. J. KIRKWOOD,

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the Senate and

House of Representatives:—

As this is the first time in the history of our State that the same person has been twice elected to the office, the duties of which I have for the second time just assumed, and as the transmission to you of a Message in writing, communicating the condition of the State and recommending such matters as seemed to me expedient, was among the last of the official acts of my first term of service, it was for some time a question with me whether it was proper for me in commencing my second term to conform to the custom heretofore acted on by incoming Governors of delivering an Inaugural Address. Upon reflection, I did not feel at liberty to disregard what is a well established, and what is considered a useful custom.

When two years ago I first assumed the duties of my present office, I saw, and in my Inaugural Address alluded, to the bitter and exasperated feelings existing in certain portions of our country, which have since resulted in the present Rebellion, and pointed out what seemed to me to be some of the exciting causes of that feeling. The people of our country were then about entering upon one of those political contests by which the policy of our General Government is for a time determined—and I expressed the belief that this angry and excited feeling would not result in an appeal to arms, but that a people taught as ours have been to yield almost instinctively to the fairly expressed will of the majority, would, when the feeling engendered by its contest had passed away, again permit the calm dictates of reason to resume their sway, and that we would again become a contented and happy nation. Time has shown that my belief was erroneous, and yet it seems to me it was a reasonable and just belief. All men know well that the Government against which Rebellion would be made, if raised at all, was

the Government which made the least exactions and conferred the most benefits upon its people of any Government in the world. All men knew well and none better than those now in Rebellion that the Administration whose accession to power their opponents declared they would consider cause for revolt, could not during their term of office, even if so disposed, inflict upon the defeated party any wrong. And it seemed then, and seems yet to me to be a reasonable and just belief that no portion of a people, so intelligent as ours has claimed to be, could revolt against a Government which had conferred upon them only benefits, and against an Administration powerless to injure them. All men know, too, that Rebellion must bring upon those engaged in it terrible calamities, if not sure destruction, and it did seem reasonable and just to believe that sane men would not bring upon themselves such results without cause.

Yet there were other things bearing upon this question which we did not know. We did not know—even although we were so told by some far-sighted men; it seemed too monstrous for our honest and loyal hearted people to believe; that men whom they had delighted to honor, men upon whom they had conferred the high places—even the highest place of honor, and profit, and trust under our Government—could, whilst yet holding these places and pledged in the sight of God and before men faithfully to discharge their trust, and with professions of love and attachment to our Government yet warm upon their lips, deliberately conspire to overthrow and destroy that Government which they were so strongly bound to protect and defend. I repeat it, our honest and loyal hearted people could not believe these things to be true: they were to them too monstrously infamous for their belief. They had not yet learned the bitter lesson that honesty, truth, good faith and loyalty, were but mere words used by these men as a cover under which to deal, as they hoped, a fatal stab to that Government from which they had derived all they ever had of honor or importance. Had this not been so (and although its truth has produced such terrible results, I thank God our people could not then believe it possible,) I am well convinced we would to-day have no Rebellion. Had the occupant of the Presidential chair for the year preceding the 4th day of March, 1861, and his advisers, been true men, and had they done their duty as such, and stricken Rebellion one, honest, downright blow when first it reared its hateful head, we would

have to-day, a peaceful and united Nation. But this unfortunately was not so. Treason and imbecility sat in our high places, and surrendered one after another the outposts of the citadel of our strength into the hands of Rebels, until emboldened by success, they believed the citadel itself to be within their grasp. In this way the Rebellion was encouraged and strengthened, and thousands of men were induced to array themselves upon its side from the conviction that the government was powerless to protect its friends or punish its enemies.

At last, but too late, came a change of Administration. Our Government asserted its rights, and gave evidence of its will and power to maintain them, and then came the civil war that is now upon us.

I need not undertake to point out to you the primary cause which has led to this disastrous issue. Although there may have been many minor causes, all tending to the same end, such as the disappointed ambition of bad men, and the lust for power, the clear common sense of our people has seen and accepted the fact that the one great controlling cause of this wicked rebellion, and of all the fearful consequences which have followed and must follow from it, is the system of Human Slavery. Sophistry cannot disguise this fact, nor argument illustrate it. It is patent, tangible, and sooner or later it must be accepted by our rulers as well as by our people, and acted on by all. This baneful system, which has wrought such terrible results, was accepted with great reluctance by our fathers as an existing but most unfortunate fact, and its existence recognized and protected by them as such; but surrounded at the same time by influences such, as they confidently hoped, would soon eventuate in its total and peaceful extinction. That hope has been sadly disappointed. This system, so reluctantly admitted into our form of Government, and so antagonistic to its vital principles, has, like a foreign substance in the human body, been to the body politic a source of constant irritation, and has been the real cause of all the heart-burnings and ill-will among our people. Circumstances, not foreseen at the beginning, have fostered and encouraged it. It has been defended, protected, and nourished by its votaries with a devotion almost unparalleled, until it has acquired a strength and power which enabled it, at first by stealthy approaches, and then by bold attack, to seize the reins of Government, and control the policy of our people. And when peacefully and constitu-

tionally it was driven from its usurped seat of empire, and the determination expressed that for the future it should be kept in the subordination for which it was originally intended, it revolted and by civil war has sought to destroy the Republic it could no longer control, and from the remains to build a new one in which its empire should be absolute and undisputed.

I have said that our people have seen and accepted these facts, and that the time must come, sooner or later, when our rulers too, must see them, and when all, rulers and ruled, must act upon them. It is not for us to determine what that action shall be. That is the right and duty of others. But it is for us—it is our right and duty—to advise with those others, and to point out to them the course which in our best judgments, should be pursued. Understand me rightly. I freely accept and have cordially acted upon the theory that it is for our rulers to determine the policy to be pursued, and for us to sustain them, even if that policy should not meet our approbation. But it does not follow that we must not advise a change of policy, if our judgment teaches, or experience has shown such change to be necessary.

What, then, if anything, have we to advise? Let us see where we stand, and what are our surroundings. More than twelve months ago this War upon our Government was begun, and it has been prosecuted up to this moment on the one side with fierce vindictiveness, and terrible earnestness. Nothing, literally nothing, has been allowed to stand in the way of the advancement of the cause for which this war has been waged, by those who advocate that cause. Officers of the Army and Navy, to advance that cause have deserted their flag. Statesmen, to advance it have betrayed their trusts. Among all ranks, acts of fraud, words of falsehood and deeds of violence have been held good and honorable service, if thereby this cause might be advanced, and the entire energies of its advocates have been directed to that single end. The sole question they have asked has been: "What thing can we do which will most effectually and speedily break the strength of our adversaries?" And when that question has been answered, they have as one man done that thing. How have they been met? Until the 4th day of March last past, not only were no steps taken to arrest their progress, but many of those who now are not of and with them, insisted that coercion should not be used to arrest it. After that date although the new Administration took prompt and vigorous steps

to meet the crisis, many people in the loyal States still protested against coercive measures to suppress Rebellion, and many others sought, as if expecting to find, some neutral ground on which to stand, some middle ground between loyalty and treason, as if a citizen could be loyal to his Government who did not lend his hand to defend it when rebels sought to destroy it. But time passed on until Sumter fell and our nation awoke from what had appeared to be the slumber of death. With fiery zeal and generous emulation, the young men of all classes and all parties in the loyal States rallied around the Government, until to-day we have under our banner the best army the world has ever seen; ready and eager to meet in battle all enemies who seek the destruction of the Union. And yet it seems to me that we do not bring to this conflict the same directness, the same unity of purpose and action our adversaries do. It seems to me we do not ask ourselves what one thing can we do that will most effectually and speedily break the strength of our enemies? and when that question is answered, do that thing. It seems to me the idea still pervades and controls the minds of many of us that our duty requires of us not only the preservation and protection of the Union, but the preservation and protection of Slavery; that we have sometimes feared to strike an earnest blow against Rebellion, lest that blow should fall on the head of Slavery; that we regard Slavery as an essential part of the Union itself, and that the Union would not be worth preserving, unless Slavery could be preserved with and remain part of it.

If these things be so, we are yet far from the path that will lead to success. Slavery, the leading cause of this rebellion, is an element of strength or of weakness to the rebels, just as we will it shall be. If we say to the slaves of rebels, we are your enemies, they will remain with their masters and be to them a strength and support. If we say to them, we are your friends, come to us and you shall be free, they will seek to come by thousands, and the armies now standing in battle array against our soldiers, will be needed at home to restrain them. Take the case of South Carolina. Our soldiers are to-day upon her soil. She has a population of about 700,000 souls, more than one-half of whom are slaves. Experience, the best of teachers, has shown that these slaves want freedom, that they look upon our soldiers as friends, and would, if encouraged so to do, flock to our camps by thousands. As the slaves of rebel masters, their labor in the field and in the camp, furnishes the rebel

troops with food, and does for them much of that severe camp labor which exhausts the energies of the soldiers and brings sickness upon them. Thus rebellion is strengthened by Slavery. Shall we continue to leave it this strength? shall we do more than this? Shall we continue to drive back to their rebel masters these unfortunates, and compel them to be our enemies although they wish to be our friends? Shall we continue to require of our brave soldiers who have gone forth to fight our battles, those exhausting labors that have brought sickness and death to so many of them, when these people stand ready and willing to relieve them if allowed?

It may be said that if we proclaim freedom to slaves of rebel masters, Slavery must suffer and may be extinguished. I reply: So be it. The friends of Slavery have in its supposed interest thrust this war with all its evils upon the country, and upon them and upon it be the consequences. It may be said the slaves of loyal masters will escape and thus loyal men will suffer loss. This may be, probably will be so. But if we shall be successful in preserving our Government, and putting down this rebellion, we can and will make good all losses caused to them by the acts of the Government for its preservation. Besides, it is their misfortune and not our fault that they live in sections of our country in which the war is carried on and in which either a majority of the people are rebels, or the loyal men in the majority have suffered themselves to be prostrated and trampled on by the rebel minority. We regret their condition, we pity their misfortunes, we will make good their losses caused by our acts for the preservation of the Union, but we cannot allow the Union to be stricken down because efforts for its preservation may work them present injury. War necessarily brings suffering and loss to the people among whom it is waged. This war brings suffering and loss to the loyal people of all our States, and we all must bear as well and as patiently as we may, until the end, when it will be our duty to repair so far as we may, the losses sustained by loyal men because of their devotion to their country.

I will not be misunderstood. This war is waged by our Government for the preservation of the Union, and not for the extinction of Slavery, unless the preservation of the one shall require the extinction of the other. If the war were so prosecuted that on to-morrow the preservation of the Union were effected and secured, I would not now wage the war another day. I would not now spend further treasure or further life to effect the extinction of

Slavery, although I might regret that the war of its own producing had left in it enough of life to leave it to be our bane and pest in the future as it has been in the past. But while this is true, it is also true that if I had the power on to-morrow to end this terrible strife and preserve our Union by the extinction of Slavery, while to preserve both would require a month's, or a week's or a day's or an hour's further war; the spending of a single additional dollar or the loss of a single additional life; so surely as the Lord lives, this war would close to-morrow. No wife should mourn her husband, no mother her son, no maiden her lover, slain in a war protracted by me a single hour to preserve to rebels that which caused them to commence and which enables them to maintain rebellion. I would not believe that I had, nor do I believe that others have the right, although they may have the power to protract this war in order to preserve that which has caused the war. My deliberate convictions are that to prosecute this war successfully, we must strike directly at Slavery, and that the time must soon come when every man must determine for himself which he loves most, the Union or Slavery, and must act accordingly.

In the meantime, and at all times, it is our duty to rally around and support the Government. We are not of those whose loyalty is doubtful or conditional. We do not say we will support the Government if it adopts our views and carries out our plans, and if not, we will become neutral or join the enemy. We support it with hearts and hands and means, although we may doubt its policy, trusting time will demonstrate the correctness of our views, and bring about their adoption if found correct. The giving of honest counsel and the rendering of faithful service make up the duty of all true men.

The war has brought on us severe trials, and others are yet to come. Many of our best and bravest have died upon the battlefield or in the Hospital, and many more must die. Our business operations have been interrupted, our markets have been closed, the prices of the products of our industry have been lessened, we have been compelled to wholly forego or materially to curtail the use of some luxuries which, by use, had become to us comforts of life, and these things must continue to be. They are the inevitable attendants of war, and must be borne as they have been borne, bravely, unflinchingly, and cheerfully. Life is valuable, but it is intended to be useful; and how can any one make his life more useful than

by giving it for his country? Could our own brave men who died at Wilson's Creek, Blue Mills, and Belmont, have used their lives in any other way to better purpose than by losing them on those bloody but glorious battle fields? Their names will live after them, embalmed in the hearts of our children and our children's children, as the names of men who died for their country, and their example will fire the hearts of generations yet to come to deeds of equal and as noble daring.

We are eminently a peaceful and peace loving people, and the interruption of our peaceful avocations by War and its incidents bears hardly upon us; but we must remember that the only way to bring back and make permanently secure to us that peace we love so well, is to convince those who have thrust this War upon us and to convince all others that although we love peace much, we love our country's honor and the perpetuity of our Union more. But do we not exaggerate the evils of our condition? I am well convinced there is not in the world a people of equal numbers, all of whom enjoy to day so many of the necessities and of the comforts of life as are enjoyed by our people. In our own State our cause of complaint is not that we have not enough of the necessities of life, but that we cannot get high enough prices for what we can spare of our superabundance; not, that we have not food but that we can not sell to advantage food, we do not need!

But we will have to pay heavy taxes. True, we will and it is equally true we can. We have to do but one thing, and that thing we must do. We must give up the idea of money making to a great extent until this war is over. We must be content to devote to the preservation of the country a portion or all of the surplus we have been accustomed to lay up in years gone by. We may be required to return to customs and expedients for many years abandoned. We may be compelled to do as our fathers and mothers did, clothe ourselves as they did with the products of their own farms and their own hands. What then? Our men will be none the less brave, loyal, and loving; our women none the less true hearted, lovely, and beloved. We may be required to do and may do all these things and yet suffering and want still be far from us. We may be required to do and may do all these things, and yet will not have done nearly so much as our fathers did to hand down to us the rich inheritance we are now striving to transmit unimpaired to our children. And if required, will we not do it promptly and cheerfully?

There may be amongst us a few men who know no impulse of patriotism, have no love of country, and can see nothing but sordid gain! There may be amongst us a few others who, blinded by prejudice, engendered by former political strife, cannot forget that the Government is guided in this struggle for its life by the hands of political opponents and who would rather see it perish than have it saved by their hands, who will cry peace when there is no peace, and who will endeavor to turn us from the prosecution of this war by continually dwelling upon and exaggerating the misfortunes it has brought and will bring upon us. But these men are few in number and weak in influence. The great mass of our people see clearly and know well that no peace can be permanent which is made by compromising with armed rebels, and which will leave our present territory divided between jealous and hostile nations by such boundaries as it must be if not preserved in its integrity.

I cannot close this Address without paying a well deserved tribute to the brave men who represent our State in the great army collected to do battle for our country. We may well be proud of them. We here as Officers, and all our people as citizens, should feel that there is much for us to do to maintain that high reputation they have won for our State.

Trace the Iowa first on their weary way to Springfield; see them ragged and hungry but cheerful and ready; listen to their marching song as it rolls along the column, lending new vigor to themselves and their tired comrades; hear their fierce shouts and witness their daring deeds on the field where Lyon fought and fell; witness the heroic spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice with which the Iowa Third at Blue Mills, attacked and the bravery with which they fought the enemy in overpowering numbers to delay that enemy's retreat until expected reinforcements could arrive. See the Iowa Seventh on the Bloody field of Belmont, heading the attack and covering the retreat; witness the cheerful endurance, the untiring energy, the indomitable valor of all our troops whenever and wherever tried, and who does not feel proud that he too is an Iowan? We owe these gallant men much. The rank and file of our Regiments have never been surpassed. I doubt very much if they have ever been equaled. There is not a company in any of our Regiments which does not contain in its ranks men who, in intelligence and moral worth, are the peers of any man who hears me. They have left behind them the comforts and endearments of home, their

business, their friends, their all, and have taken their places as privates in the ranks with nominal pay and almost without a hope for honor and distinction. This is patriotism, and I repeat it "to these men we owe much." It is due to them, at least, that all shall be done that our circumstances will allow to promote their health and comfort and I doubt not you will see to it that the debt is paid.

When the war commenced many of us hoped that by this time it would have been completed, or that at least we would be able to see the beginning of that desirable end. But we have been disappointed. The rebellion had greater strength than we had supposed. Obstacles have arisen that we had not anticipated, and the end is not yet. But these things should not discourage and I am glad to say they have not discouraged us. As the greater strength of the rebellion has been developed we have promptly furnished the greater needed strength to put it down, and if need be Iowa can yet send forth many Regiments as brave, as loyal, and as true as those that have already gone. As obstacles have arisen they have been met as brave men meet them. They have been trampled upon and we have passed on. And now when as it seems to us here that all things are ready we are waiting patiently, but with beating hearts, for the day when the great battle shall be fought—listening intently, and oh! how anxiously, for the battle shout, "God for the right," which will on that day roll over that battle field from the brave men who will be privileged there to rally around our dear old flag and strike in its defence, and trusting humbly and confidently that because they will strike for the right, the God of battles will give us the victory!