

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

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GOVERNOR OF IOWA.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWO HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

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GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND  
FELLOW-CITIZENS :

Nearly one hundred years have passed since the Declaration of American Independence, and soon our people will be busy with preparation for a proper celebration of the hundreth anniversary of the nation's birth. The period of our national existence has been one of vast advancement in science, in the arts, in invention, and in appliances for human comfort and convenience. It has been remarkable for improvements in the speed and convenience of locomotion, and in the celerity of communication ; for a development of the wonderful powers of steam, so little known a century ago that the countless uses of that motor to-day make it practically a new agent brought into subjection to man ; for the discovery that the mightiest and subtlest force known to exist in the physical universe can be made, as in the electric telegraph, to do man's bidding. The sun, too, has been made his servant, and its rays are grasped and trained to preserve for him the semblance of his loved ones. Improvements in machinery have characterized the century, which have at once lessened the severity of labor, increased its returns, and multiplied the comforts of the great mass of the people in all civilized nations. Education has been more generally diffused than ever before ; and the printing-press, that great educator, has made more rapid strides than

all the previous centuries of its history, and to-day there are publishing-houses, any one of which could, in a given time, almost duplicate all the work of all the presses of the world, in the same period of time, one hundred years ago. In short, the century now closing may be safely said to have witnessed a larger advance in human knowledge, greater improvement in man's condition socially, and mightier progress in every department of human activity and inquiry, reaching all classes of society, and affecting all the nations of the earth, than any similar period in the world's history. Among the many causes that have tended to bring about this great advancement, one of the most powerful, in my judgment, has been the existence of this republic, and the growth and prosperity of this people. To a review of this growth and prosperity, and the development and progress of the nation and our own state, I have thought it not inappropriate, in this the centennial year of the republic's life, to devote a portion of the formal address required by custom on this occasion.

Nearly a century ago, our forefathers laid the foundations of our national political edifice; and they laid them broad and deep. Yet, when, after a hard and weary struggle they had achieved the independence for which they had risked so much and fought so well, this handful of people—some three millions in all, scattered in a narrow belt along the Atlantic coast—found that the bond of union that had held them together during the conflict with the mother country was exceedingly weak when the common danger had passed; while local jealousies and conflicting interests menaced total disruption. They were poor, and were burdened with the debts which the states, both separately and unitedly, had incurred during the war for independence. Although admitted to the family of nations, they were tolerated rather than welcomed; and their expressed devotion to the principles of civil liberty was regarded by the advocates of monarchy as evidence of either sickly sentimentality or political heresy. The statesmen of the old world, trained in the school of monarchy, admitted, although with

hesitation and reluctance, that a republican form of government might be maintained in, and suffice for, a poor and sparsely inhabited country like Switzerland, but they utterly denied that it could be maintained in, or would suffice for, a great and powerful nation. The territory of which our forefathers were the acknowledged owners, and upon which this experiment was to be tried, reached on the north, as now, to Canada, on the west the Mississippi river defined its limit, and on the south the thirty-first parallel of latitude cut it off entirely from the Gulf of Mexico, and left the mouth of the Mississippi wholly in the hands of another power. Thus supplied with nothing but territory and prospects—the former perhaps abundant, but the latter, in the opinion of the world's wise men, discouraging enough, and not at all dazzling even to the most sanguine of its founders—our republic commenced its career.

To-day that territory has expanded southward until we hold the northern line of the Gulf coast to the Rio Grande, and westward until it includes the Pacific coast from near the thirty-second parallel to Cape Flattery, not counting our recently acquired possession of Alaska. The Mississippi, formerly our western boundary, is now east of the center of our domain. Our thirteen states have increased to thirty-seven, with territory enough left for nine or ten more, each as large as some of the more powerful European kingdoms; and our three millions of people, a large proportion of whom were slaves, have grown to forty millions—all, thank God! freemen. We have had the fortune common to all nations—harmony and contention, prosperity and adversity, peace and war; yet I think it true that no other nation, during the last hundred years, has prospered as has ours, and in no other land have the people as a whole enjoyed nearly so great a degree at once of liberty, of order, of safety, and of comfort; while our system of government, supposed to be lacking in unity and force, has been found to be able not only to endure the strain of foreign war, but to suppress utterly and unconditionally a rebellion the most extensive, the most

powerful, and in all respects the most formidable the world has known.

I have said, and I repeat it, that in my judgment our existence and prosperity, as a government and people, have had much, more perhaps than any other one cause, to do with the improved condition of the masses of the people in all civilized nations. The monarchists of the old world, while, as before remarked, doubting, or affecting to doubt, man's capacity for self-government, except in isolated cases, yet looked with suspicion and distrust upon the attempt to establish here what has since been so happily called by one of the purest and wisest men the world has produced, "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people;" and they feared, not unreasonably, that, if such attempt should perchance be successful, the example would cause disquiet amongst their own people, who had no share in administering the governments under which they lived. This anticipation has been realized. Our example has had its influence for good upon the people of other lands. Seeing that here liberty is compatible with order, that here men may govern themselves, that here bayonets are not necessary to the stability of the government, although when danger menaces millions of brave and willing hearts are found to rally to its defense, our oppressed brethren of the old world have striven, and are striving, to relieve themselves of the burdens they have so long borne, and to assert the inherent and inalienable rights of man. The truth of the doctrine, that "all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," is steadily taking stronger hold on the minds of the common people of Europe, and is slowly but surely removing their burdens, enlarging their liberties, and increasing the scope of their comforts. This consideration should add to the zeal and earnestness with which we guard, protect, and cherish the system of government to which, under God, we owe the blessings we enjoy.

Our own state has a history of remarkable growth and development.

When our national government was formed Iowa was a part of the immense domain held in America by Spain—a possession which, for extent of territory, variety of climate, fertility of soil, and measureless though then unsuspected wealth of mineral resources, was undoubtedly the most magnificent any nation has ever held. What is now Iowa was then as little known to the people of the thirteen colonies as Alaska is to-day to us. It was transferred with other territory by Spain to France, and by France to the United States in 1803. It formed at one time part of the Louisiana territory, then of the Missouri territory, then was attached to the territory of Michigan, more recently was a part of the territory of Wisconsin, was (with most of the present state of Minnesota and of the territory of Dakota) constituted the territory of Iowa in 1838, and was admitted as a state in 1846. In 1838 our population was 22,859; in 1846 it was 97,538; and in 1875 it was 1,350,544. By the census of 1850, we were entitled to two representatives in Congress; by that of 1870, we have nine. The debt of our state is but nominal in amount. We have provided suitable homes for our afflicted unfortunates—the insane, the deaf and dumb, the blind—and are properly caring for them. We are paying a small part of our debt of gratitude by supporting and educating the children of our dead soldiers who need such care. We have established a home and school for the reformation of juvenile offenders, hoping thereby to win them back to the pleasant path of virtue; as well as institutions for the punishment and reclamation of older wrong-doers. We support schools open to all for the education of all, with colleges and a university for those seeking the higher branches of learning; seeking in these and other ways to show our gratitude to God for his goodness to us by caring for his children and our brethren.

I cannot permit this occasion to pass without a brief reference to the part taken by Iowa in our civil war. She was ever true as steel to the good cause. Although yet in her nonage, having existed as a state less than fifteen years when the war commenced, she did her duty faithfully

and thoroughly. We, occupying this wilderness of thirty years before, sent to the field forty-five regiments and two battalions of infantry, nine regiments of cavalry, and four batteries of artillery; besides companies, detachments, and individuals in the regiments of other states and in the regular army. We gave in all to the service over 75,000 men; and I but give utterance to what you all know when I say that among the hosts of brave and good men who rallied to the defense of the flag, none were found braver or better than the men of Iowa. There is not, I think, a single one of the states which so insanely sought our ruin and their own, in whose soil Iowa has not deposited, as the best of evidence of her devotion to the Union, the ashes of some of her heroic dead. May they rest in peace, and may their example lead us and those who will come after us to guard with devotion and reverence that for which they so patiently suffered and so nobly died.

Iowa has had a large measure of growth and prosperity; yet she has but fairly entered upon her career, and our eyes have been permitted to behold only the beginnings, dazzling though they are, of her glory. We have hitherto been mainly an agricultural people, and doubtless will ever remain so; but capital is accumulating amongst us. This must shortly seek investment in manufactures, and as these are established and prosper, our population and wealth will increase still more rapidly.

Yet, as I have said, agriculture will, for many years to come, and I think for all time, be the leading pursuit of our people and our greatest source of wealth. We have in our state substantially no waste or untillable land. Our soil is fertile and easy of cultivation beyond even the conception of those who have not seen and tried it; and, what seems incredible to the people of the Eastern States, our uplands are as fertile and easy of cultivation as the bottom lands of our streams. Our winters are at times severe, but our climate is eminently healthful. The wealth of a state is at last measured by its population, and I feel entirely safe in saying that no state in our Union of equal area can

support from its own resources a population as large as can draw a bountiful living from our soil.

Senators and Representatives: To you for the time being has been committed the grateful task of guarding and fostering the well-being of our State so far as the same may be affected by the law making power. Yours is a post of great honor and great responsibility. My predecessor has laid before you, in detail, such information as his position has enabled him to acquire and such recommendations as his judgment and experience have suggested to him. They will doubtless receive your careful consideration. • Coming as I do, like yourselves, fresh from private life, and having no means of procuring information not open to all of you as to the condition and wants of the state, it cannot reasonably be expected that I shall bring to your notice questions other than those of the most general interest, or that I shall discuss them except in the most general way.

The subject of general education has been, and must continue to be, one of great interest. The intelligence of our people measures, to a large extent, the wisdom of the laws under which we live, and also of the administration of those laws. It likewise, to a great degree, measures the rapidity of our growth in wealth, for the reason that all pursuits which yield wealth are productive in proportion to the degree of intelligence with which they are managed. Aside from these obvious and powerful reasons for providing the means of education for all the youth of the state, there is another reason, less obvious perhaps, but certainly important. Our population comes from all parts of our own country and from almost all the nations of Europe, and all are alike welcome. Many of those of foreign birth come to us in mature years, with their manners and customs, their habits and sentiments, formed and fixed by the surroundings of their childhood and youth. It cannot be expected that they will, to any great degree, change their own for our manners and customs, our habits and sentiments; but it may be expected, and it is certainly desirable, that their children and our children shall so far as

possible be combined into one mass with manners, customs, habits, and sentiments, partaking perhaps to some extent of the characteristics of the different nationalities, but alike, and in the main American. The common school, bringing together the children of the native-born and foreign-born in the same school-room, engaging them together in the same studies, mingling them together in the same sports and pastimes, will be a potent means to bring about this desired result, and to make of all our nationalities one people.

Fears have of late been freely expressed in certain states, and to some extent in our own, that it is a settled purpose with some to divert the school-fund from its legitimate object, and use it, at least partially, for the maintenance of private and sectarian schools, and thus eventually to destroy the school system. I hope this is a groundless fear, or, that if such purpose has been entertained, it will be abandoned. Persistence in it will certainly place those engaged in it in direct hostility to the settled and cherished policy of the state, and it is worthy their grave consideration whether they shall assume that attitude. It belongs to you to inquire whether any ground exists for the fears I have indicated as subsisting; and if so to do what may be needed to guard against any probable or possible danger.

It is found to be a part of the criminal law of the state that a person convicted of crime, after a fair and impartial trial in the proper court, may have his conviction set aside because of some informality or irregularity in the formation of the grand jury by which the indictment against him was presented. I consider this a serious defect in our criminal law, and recommend that the statute be so changed that upon the impaneling of grand juries the proper officers shall certify of record to the regularity of all the proceedings, and that such certificate shall be conclusive.

I also recommend to your careful consideration the question whether it would not be wise to repeal the provisions of the criminal law which require that the evidence given before the grand jury, on which an in-

dictment has been found, with the names of the witnesses giving it, and also the names of any other witnesses the attorney for the state may intend to produce on the trial, with the substance of the evidence expected from each, shall be furnished to the party accused before trial. I do not think such provisions necessary for the protection of an innocent person accused of crime, and I am confident they are often the means by which guilty parties escape conviction and punishment.

The question of cheap transportation is one of great importance to our people. Our surplus products are generally bulky and heavy in proportion to their value, and the cost of transportation makes a large percentage of the price we receive for them. Before the advent of railroads all the internal transportation and travel of the country was done on common highways, turnpikes, navigable rivers, and canals. All these were open to all. Any person could place on the land-lines his wagon, or on the water-lines his boat, and engage in the business of carrying persons and property. Since the building of railroads all this is changed. Now a large part of the internal transportation, and substantially all the travel, of the country are done by rail, and undoubtedly better done and more speedily than by the old method. But with the new system another important change has been brought about. Combination has taken the place of competition. No one is allowed to engage in carrying persons and property over the railroads except those who own or lease the lines; while those who own or lease what should be, and what were intended to be, competing lines, by combining among themselves, destroy competition. The result is, that, unless the people can in some way prevent it, the companies controlling the main through lines of railroad have it in their power to fix the price of carrying persons and property at just such sum as, in their own judgment of what is to their own interest, seems to them proper. To-day, four gentlemen in Chicago, representing the four through lines of railroad from that city to the Missouri river, can, at their own will and pleasure, add to or take from the value

of every bushel of grain and of every head of live stock in the State of Iowa. The same condition of affairs obtains in Chicago with the four main lines leading to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.

This state of things, the knowledge that this power was claimed and exercised by the railroad companies, has for a few years past challenged the close attention of the country; and legislation has been invoked to protect the people from the abuses and extortions practiced by these corporations. At the last session of the General Assembly of this state, a law was passed intended to limit and control, to some extent, the privileges and powers of railroad companies.

The purpose of this law is to fix rates, beyond which they shall not charge for carrying passengers and freight; but, as I understand, the law was only designed to operate within the limits of our own state, because it has been supposed the state has not the power to limit or control the charges for carrying outside the state limits.

The states of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota have passed similar laws. In this state some of the railroad companies have promptly complied with the requirements of the law. Others have resisted it and carried the matter into the United States courts, claiming that the state has not the power to limit, even within its own boundary, their charges as carriers, and similar suits have been brought in the other states named.

These suits have been in all cases, I believe, decided in favor of the validity of the state law—certainly so in this state,—and are now pending for final decision and soon to be decided in the supreme court of the United States.

The law of this State must of necessity have been to a great extent experimental. The subject was a new one; it involved many difficult questions and much of detail. I recommend to you a careful examination of the law in the light of the experience of its effects since its adoption. If you shall find that in any of its provisions it works unjustly and unfairly to the railroad companies, or that it fails to afford

to the people that degree of protection to which they are fairly and justly entitled, such defects should be remedied. I do not recommend the repeal of the law. On the contrary, I advocate its retention on our statute-books with such amendments as your wisdom may suggest as calculated to do justice, both to the people and to the railroad companies. I also recommend to you a careful examination of the question whether you cannot by law prevent the combination among what should be competing lines, to which I have already alluded.

I also recommend the appointment of a board of railroad commissioners, whose duty, among other things, it shall be to collect and lay before the General Assembly at each regular session such information in regard to the railroads of the state as will enable future General Assemblies to act with reference to them with a knowledge of many particulars that cannot be otherwise obtained. I think it important that the question of the power of the states to limit the charges of railroad companies within their respective boundaries, and the power of congress to limit such charges on inter-state trade, shall be settled by the Supreme Court of the United States, so that, in case this power shall be held to reside in the state and national authorities respectively, we may go on and perfect such legislation as may be found necessary and proper for ourselves, and the federal congress be urged to exercise its authority in the prevention of abuses in the great carrying trade of the country.

Various modes have been suggested by which the public interest can be protected in this regard, if it shall be found we cannot do so by statutory enactment. Among these, the opening up, by the general government, of lines of water communication through the country, and the building of one or more trunk lines of freight railroads the use of which shall be open to all, have been advocated. Either of these plans would involve the expenditure of more money than our government is now well prepared to spend. But, if in no other way the end can be gained, this difficulty will be overcome.

Let us examine this question in all its parts, calmly and carefully, without passion and without prejudice. Our people are not hostile to railroads or railroad companies. On the contrary, we appreciate fully and concede freely the great benefits our state has gained from these works, and we have always contributed freely of our means to their prosecution. We know, too, that our future prosperity depends largely upon their maintenance and success. But, to the claim of their managers that they, like other business men, must be allowed to manage their business affairs in their own way, without interference or dictation by the state, we answer: First, that their business so directly and vitally affects the interest of every citizen, that it is the duty of the state to see to it that the privileges granted to them for the public good, and the power they claim to have, are not abused to the public injury; and, second, that they do not manage their business affairs in the same way as other business men do. I think I am safe in saying that if the managers of these roads will, in fact and in good faith, abandon the system of combination, if the companies will depend for success, as other business enterprises do, upon the skill and courtesy of their agents, upon the facilities they offer for the transaction of their business, and upon the cheapness with which they can do it, they will find active and earnest friendship instead of jealousy and hostility, and that in their case, as in all others, the right way to do anything is the best way to do it.

When, twelve years ago, I retired from the office the duties of which I am again about to assume, our country was convulsed by civil war, brought on by the most causeless rebellion the world has ever known. That struggle has happily ended, and the difficult and delicate task of restoring to their proper places the states and the people who sought the overthrow of our government has been accomplished. The bitterness and angry feeling caused by that conflict have in a great measure subsided, and it is the part of wisdom not to revive them. But we must not forget that in that terrible contest there was a right

side and a wrong side; that either we who fought for the preservation of the Union were right and they who fought for its destruction were wrong; or that they were right and we were wrong; and we should see to it that when we have passed away those who will follow us in the care and control of the government which at so great cost we have saved and bequeathed to them, shall have from us at least correct teaching on that point. We should so shape our course and conduct as to show them unmistakably that we knew and recognized the distinction between loyalty and treason, that we loved the one and hated the other, that one brought honor, the other disgrace. We should make sure, so far as we can make sure, that their reverence and love shall be given to Lincoln and Grant and Sherman and Thomas and Sheridan, and not to Davis and Lee and Johnson and Beauregard and Forrest. To do this we must show them that our love and honor are given to the men who, in council and in action, labored for the preservation of the Union, and not for those who plotted and fought for its destruction. I have sometimes feared that in our extreme desire for peace and conciliation we have failed to keep this consideration properly in view.

The political situation at the seat of our national government is at this time interesting and peculiar. The political party which administered the government during the rebellion and succeeded in suppressing that rebellion still control one branch of the national legislature. The other, the popular branch, the House of Representatives, is controlled by a party of which men who were actual and active rebels compose a powerful minority, if not a controlling majority.

The centennial year of our national existence will be made remarkable by a determined struggle for the control of our government in all its political branches by a party composed of those who a few years since used every effort to destroy it and of those who during the struggle for its preservation opposed all effort to preserve it. This condition of things furnishes food for grave reflection.

The financial condition of the country is not so favorable as we could desire, but perhaps as much as we can reasonably expect. We borrowed during the civil war, and in consequence of it, nearly or quite three thousand millions of dollars, and spent the money, as all nations must in war times, lavishly. A million or more of men in both armies were withdrawn from productive pursuits and were engaged in consuming and destroying the products of the labor of those not in the field. The government bought our products with bonds and paper money at high prices, and we had during the war, and for a short time after its close, what many of us called good times, but our then good times were good only in the sense that an individual would have good times who should mortgage his property heavily and spend the money in extravagant living. The money raised by us on our national mortgage was spent rapidly and lavishly. We received for it, it is true, that boon of priceless value, a restored Union; but did not secure anything of marketable money value. In the latter sense the money spent was lost. The so-called good times caused extravagance in expenditure by the national government, by the state and municipal governments, and by ourselves individually. When at last the time came that the money was spent, that our soldiers returned to their homes and became producers instead of consumers, that the government was no longer the purchaser of our surplus products and we were obliged to commence the process of paying instead of continuing the more easy one of spending,—the times began to grow hard. The first interest to feel the pressure was that of agriculture, the leading one of our state. Our surplus products, increased by the labor of our returned soldiers, and no longer needed for the support of our armies, had to seek a market abroad, and their value there was measured by the standard of the world's currency—coin.

The consequence was a great and rapid decline in the prices of all we had to sell. The prices of all we had to buy did not decrease in proportion. The manufacturers and others undertook the hopeless task

of keeping the prices of their products and their labor above a proper relation to the prices of our products, and for a time succeeded. The result to us was at first disastrous; but the evil worked out its own cure. Our ability to buy was limited by the amount we received for our surplus products, and by the prices we had to pay for the goods we wished to purchase. We necessarily bought less, and the manufacturers found themselves compelled to carry large stocks of unsold goods. Slowly but surely the laws of trade asserted their power. The prices of what we wished to buy, in most cases, fell to a proper proportion to the prices of what we had to sell, in some cases below that proportion, and the pressure upon us was lightened and transferred to those not engaged in agricultural pursuits. As we were the first to suffer so we have been the first to get relief. We are doing reasonably well,—our state is fairly prosperous; God has blessed our labors with fair returns; we buy at fair prices what we need, and get fair prices for what we sell. The process of adjusting the business of the country to the changed order of things is going on gradually and steadily, and if that process shall not be disturbed we may soon confidently expect renewed activity and prosperity throughout the land. Some of our people, remembering the era of apparent prosperity caused by the war prices, are disposed to establish another such era by placing a second mortgage on the national farm in a new and abundant issue of paper-money. This would, in my judgment, be a great misfortune. It might, for a short time, produce a feverish activity and a temporary advance in prices, but this activity would be unhealthy and disastrous, and as surely as day and night follow each other, so surely the inevitable result must ensue, and we would soon be called upon to endure again the troubles from which we are now so happily emerging. It seems to me the course we should pursue is plain and clear. We owe a heavy national debt. That debt was incurred for a most worthy object which has been happily effected. As honest men we must pay it. To that end we must practice industry, thrift, and economy, for the reason that

by these means, and these means only, can we prosper. We must insist upon strict and rigid economy in administering the affairs of the national government, and of our state government, and we must practice the same economy in our private affairs. This is the way, a sure way, and the only way to certain and permanent prosperity.

Senators and Representatives: Much of your legislative work will, under the constitution, begin to have force and effect with the republic's new century. Let us be inspired by this consideration to make our actions worthy of the illustrious following in which we find ourselves. The America and the Iowa of to-day tell how well those who have gone before us have done their part in the council, in the field, on the farm, in the mine, on the bench of the mechanic, and in the mart of trade. But to do as well as they have done, we must do better. With the benefit of their experience as well as that of all the ages before them, in the fruition of their labors which they themselves were not permitted to enjoy, in a day of superior intellectual light, we must do our work. While our opportunity is enlarged, our responsibility is vastly increased. How we use that opportunity, and how we meet that responsibility, will be best judged by those who will stand in our places in the years to come; and if we may look so far forward as to the end of another century of American history let us hope that he who will then stand in my stead in the palace now rising on the fair hill that overlooks the beautiful capital of Iowa, shall say of us that we honestly tried to do all our duty, and the people's acclaim shall be, "They did it well."

SAMUEL J. KIRKWOOD.