

RESPONSE OF

HON. CHARLES SUMNER HAMLIN,

Assistant Secretary U. S. Treasury,

TO THE TOAST:

“Our National Administration,”

AT THE

JACKSON DAY BANQUET,

HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATS OF THE  
MIDDLE STATES,

At the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago,

JANUARY 8, 1897.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN :

The courteous invitation to address you this evening was to me both an agreeable surprise and a call to duty in the name of Democracy which no loyal Democrat could ignore.

We meet to-day to pay our tribute of affection, respect, and honor to a typical American; one who achieved great and deserved fame; who was prominent before the people as a judge, legislator, a distinguished soldier, and President of the United States. No American ever lived who was nearer or dearer to the people of the country. No one was ever more devoted by precept and practice to what he believed to be the people's cause than was Andrew Jackson.

His life was marked by a fearless determination to do what he conceived to be his duty; however much we may differ from him as to the propriety or expediency of individual acts, we must all concede to him rigid honesty of purpose and high integrity of character.

Whether we consider the Nullification Proclamation, the war against the United States Bank, the French spoliation message, the Specie circular, or the Gold Bill, we find the same evidence of strength of will and determination of purpose. In his message to Congress concerning the recognition of the independence of Texas, he rises to lofty statesmanship rarely surpassed in our state papers.

In honoring him let us also render honor to other illustrious statesmen who, in the present, as was Jackson in the past, are leaders of our political faith. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts vies with the State of Illinois in its affection for that great leader, John M. Palmer. It also extends its grateful thanks to the Commonwealth of Kentucky for the services rendered by another statesman in our recent struggle to preserve the honor and credit of our country—Simon B. Buckner. They stand forth to-day pre-eminently as representing courage and conscience in politics. They fought a noble fight, and though defeated, as was to be expected, their defeat was but a stepping-stone to a victory of sound principles of finance and a vindication of our National honor. By their courage and patriotism they have claims upon the gratitude of all our people, and especially those who have earned the right, by practice as well as profession, in the present as in the past, to call themselves National Democrats.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky has given us another eminent statesman—one of her brightest jewels, the intellectual peer of any living public man—that faithful public servant, the Secretary of the Treasury, John G. Carlisle. True to his chief, our great President, regardless of personal consequences, he flung himself into the breach in the recent conflict, and by his intellectual vigor, his cogent reasoning and his brilliant oratory, did perhaps more than any other man to insure the preservation of our National honor.

Massachusetts at different periods in our country's history has presented to the Nation great men. The name of Adams will never be forgotten. The whole country acknowledges the ability and statesmanship of Daniel Webster; we cherish the memory of Charles Sumner; with equal pride we present the name of another citizen, the worthy successor of Clay, Webster, Marcy and Seward—the present Secretary of State, Richard Olney.

We gather here this evening as Democrats to do honor to Democrats. Let us renew our allegiance to the great principles of our faith, and to the illustrious leaders of our party from Madison to Grover Cleveland. Let us with renewed vigor press forward with perfect confidence that in the future as in the past these principles will lead us to victory.

We believe all men are free and equal; that sovereign power is vested in the people; that the greatest good of the greatest number should be the chief maxim of government. These principles are as simple as they are grand; as old as they are true; cherished for generations, they have been handed down from father to son as a sacred heritage. We point to them as the justification of our course in the past; we here announce that we shall follow them implicitly in the future.

The National Democratic party, accepting these principles as the basis of its political faith, becomes at once welded together into a common unity of purpose. It can be bounded by no sectional limitations, by no Mason and Dixon's line, other than the common boundaries of our country. It represents liberal, progressive ideas as opposed to narrow conservatism. Its motto is forward, not backward. Its path is that of progress, not decadence. Its song is one of hope, not of reminiscence, a song of promise.

The toast, "Our National Administration," has been responded to again and again in the hearts of the people during the last few months. The administration of our great leader, the people's leader, President Cleveland, has been true to the principles of the Democratic faith. He has carried the banner of Democracy aloft with unsullied hands. With a firmness and strength of purpose almost unknown in our history he has,

with the able co-operation of the Secretary of the Treasury, maintained in the United States the gold standard of value, the standard of the civilized world, originally given to this country in 1834 by Andrew Jackson. Unmindful of personal criticism and abuse which might well have made a strong man hesitate, he has steadfastly kept in view the one end—the greatest good of the greatest number of our people.

The Democratic National platform, adopted at Chicago in 1892, demanded the repeal of the Federal election laws, the McKinley tariff law and the Sherman silver purchase law. True to that platform the Federal election laws were repealed. The McKinley Tariff Act was swept from the statute book and the present law substituted. While this present law is not all that we had hoped for, yet it is at least a step in the right direction. So far from our markets being flooded with imports under the new law, as predicted by our political opponents, we find our Republican friends criticizing the measure because it does not produce sufficient revenue to support the Government, which is merely another way of stating that under its operation there have not been imported enough foreign goods to raise the revenue we need.

The purchasing clauses of the so-called Sherman silver purchasing law were also repealed with Republican assistance, and thus was removed that menace to the industrial prosperity of our country.

The public credit has been fearlessly maintained, and this in the face of a diminished surplus and a consequent dwindling gold reserve. That surplus, it would seem, was unwisely reduced by the last administration by purchase, at a premium, of the public debt at a time when expenditures were increasing and revenues tending to decrease. The present administration in issuing bonds to protect the gold reserve, has in effect but reissued those bonds which the last administration unwisely purchased and canceled.

Passing from domestic to foreign relations the Administration has certainly achieved most notable successes. By the treaty with Japan we were the first to recognize that country as a civilized Nation. Chile acknowledges complete restoration of friendship. We have exercised a watchful care over Americans in Armenia. We have confidence that history will applaud the withdrawal of the treaty of annexation with Hawaii—a treaty which, if ratified, would have given incidentally a pension of \$20,000 a year for life to the "barbarous beheading" Hawaiian queen, a Senator Hoar politely characterized her, and the further sum to her daughter of \$150,000, all to be raised by taxation upon the American people.

The long-standing Mora claim against Spain has been settled.

The attitude of the Administration towards the Cuban revolt, so clearly laid down in the President's recent message to Congress, is so fresh in your memories that it need not be alluded to here. It may be well, however, to recall one historical parallel.

On December twenty-one, 1836, President Jackson sent a message to Congress in relation to Texas. The two Houses of Congress, at the preceding session, had passed resolutions favoring the acknowledgment of Texan independence whenever it had in operation a civil government capable of performing the duties and fulfilling the obligations of an independent power.

Having investigated the matter, Jackson sent a message to Congress advising against recognition. I quote the following:

"It is true that, with regard to Texas, the civil authority of Mexico has been expelled, its invading army defeated, the chief of the Republic himself captured, and all present power to control the newly-organized government of Texas annihilated within its confines. But, on the other hand, there is in appearance at least, an immense disparity of physical force on the side of Texas. The Mexican Republic, under another executive, is rallying its forces under a new leader, and menacing a fresh invasion to recover its lost dominion.

Upon the issue of this threatened invasion, the independence of Texas may be considered as suspended; and were there nothing peculiar in the relative situation of the United States and Texas, our acknowledgment of its independence at such a crisis could scarcely be regarded as consistent with that prudent reserve with which we have heretofore held ourselves bound to treat all similar questions. But there are circumstances in the relations of the two countries which require us to act on this occasion with even more than our wonted caution."

He then states that these circumstances consist in the fact that a large majority of the civilized inhabitants are emigrants from the United States; that the government of Texas is of the same form as our own; and that admission to the Union is openly desired by the residents there.

He continues:

"Prudence, therefore, seems to dictate that we should still stand aloof, and maintain our present attitude, if not until Mexico itself, or one of the great foreign powers, shall recognize the independence of the new Government, at least until the lapse of time, or the course of events shall have proved beyond cavil or dispute, the ability of the people of that country to maintain their separate sovereignty and to uphold the Government

constituted by them. Neither of the contending parties can justly complain of this course. By pursuing it, we are but carrying out the long-established policy of our Government—a policy which has secured to us respect and influence abroad and inspired confidence at home."

Thus spoke "Old Hickory," the hero of New Orleans, the valiant soldier who knew no fear. His words are commended to those who would impair our influence abroad and ruin all domestic confidence by their desire for precipitate ill-advised action at the present time.

It is unnecessary here more than to refer in passing to the Venezuelan boundary dispute, and to the great message of the President, followed by the proposed treaty of arbitration to decide the differences between Venezuela and Great Britain. We are, further, apparently on the threshold of a general treaty of arbitration between Great Britain and the United States, and it is safe to say that if such a treaty is enacted into law, it will be one of the grandest achievements in the history of the human race.

Underneath the foreign policy of the President lies the deep conviction that the Government of the United States is great enough and strong enough to do what is right. He has sought for his country "all that National prosperity," again to quote Jackson, "which can be derived from an intercourse with foreign nations, guided by those eternal principles of justice and reciprocal good will, which are binding as well upon states as the individuals of whom they are composed."

The study of international law should teach us that the selfish idea of national prosperity, that what is one nation's gain is another's loss, is gradually giving way to a broader and grander conception. Statesmen now realize that with nations as with individuals the permanent prosperity of one is best achieved by the prosperity of all; that the interdependence of man upon man, of nation upon nation, makes progress permanent and not ephemeral. Every law or treaty which interferes with this interdependence points to retrogression, which, carried to its logical end, would array nation against nation, people against people, class against class, and finally man against man.

It is painful indeed to realize that during the late struggle former comrades were opposed to us. But we must not forget that they are still our brothers, united to us by bonds growing out of the real underlying principles of our political faith upon which they and we agree and for which in the good old times together we have fought. Forgetful, therefore, of the past, and mindful only of the future, let us stretch out our hands to them and beg them to turn from the false light—the will o' the wisp—of Populism and face towards the sacred fires of Democracy which we have kept burning and share with us their warm, beneficent glow.

In the present condition of public affairs we should steadfastly proclaim and practice the principles of true Democracy. Let us pledge ourselves to render to the new coming Administration patriotic assistance to secure needed reforms in our financial system. Let us here announce that whenever a call is made upon us to help sustain the honor and credit of our Government, that call will not be made in vain. The safety of the State is to us the supreme law. In the recent struggle we but responded to the toast given once by Jackson, "Our Federal Union, it must be preserved."

We should not forget, however, that we are Democrats and not Republicans. We should not seek as Democrats to dictate to our Republican friends their future political course. The responsibility for that rests with them, and will be passed upon by the people two years from now. In a spirit of kindness let us only hope that they will not be carried to such excesses of party zeal as shall make non-partisan unity of action in future emergencies difficult if not impossible.

As I speak, my mind is unconsciously filled with memories of the past, of those good old days when shoulder to shoulder we marched against the Republican forces, united by a common purpose, and filled with enthusiasm and vigor which no defeat could quell. Some of those valiant leaders have been taken from us by death, but the inspiration of their leadership we can never forget.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts mourns to-day for one of its most distinguished sons. The memory of William E. Russell will be forever green, and his grave will be for all time a sacred shrine for the Democracy of his native State. He gave his very life-blood for his party.

Let us march forward inspired by the thoughts of Jefferson, Jackson, Cleveland, Carlisle, Palmer, and Russell. We have work ahead to do. Let us maintain the principles of the Indianapolis platform. Let us insist in the future as in the past that taxation should be limited by the necessities of Government economically administered; let us reform our financial system. Let us, further, repeal the barbarous navigation laws which have swept our foreign commerce from the seas. Our sailors, once the heroes of our songs, are now toilers in our workshops, and the beautiful sea, once covered by our snow-white sails, is now a closed reservation, along which our people may build houses, but upon which they are not permitted to encroach.

But a change I believe will soon be at hand. Let every Democrat gird up his loins and, dropping wild vagaries born of unrest and discontent, fight for the principles of Jefferson, Jackson, and Cleveland, and victory again will be ours.