

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

— OF —

ALBINUS NANCE,

GOVERNOR,

— TO THE —

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA.

FIFTEENTH SESSION, 1879.

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GOVERNOR'S INAUGURAL.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives :

The Executive authority vested in me by the people of the State of Nebraska, brings with it duties and responsibilities of a grave character, and while I can not hope that I may at all times discharge those duties wisely and well, I shall be governed by a desire to promote the best interests of our young State. And with this purpose in view, permit me, gentlemen, to express the wish that the Legislative and Executive Departments of the State Government may work together harmoniously in the right use of the power delegated to the respective departments.

LEGISLATION.

With you, in your legislative capacity, rests the responsibility of originating measures and perfecting laws affecting the varied interests of more than 400,000 people, in a state that is yet in the first stages of development. Contemplating the possibilities of the future, we realize the magnitude of the trust committed to those who, by legislative enactments, shall give enduring character to the society, business interests, and institutions of the State.

SETTLEMENT OF UNOCCUPIED LANDS.

As yet, only about one-third of the State is populated and not more than one-tenth of its area is under cultivation. It is safe to predict that as the unoccupied lands in the western part of the State are taken up and improved, they will be found more productive than they have heretofore been represented.

This result is foreshadowed by the uniform experience of settlers in Nebraska. The Great American Desert recedes as the frontier line of settlers advances. When the whole vast area of

tillable land within our borders is added to that which is now cultivated, Nebraska will be, agriculturally, second to no other State in the Union; and there will yet remain a large amount of land which will be devoted solely to grazing purposes.

PROGRESS PAST AND FUTURE.

Gratifying as our progress has been thus far, I confidently look forward to a more prosperous future for the people of Nebraska. The changes that must occur in reaching the state of development here suggested will create new conditions of business and social life, and originate new industries which will require the regulating power of law in harmonizing conflicting interests.

Happily for you and for me, we begin our official duties at a period in the history of the State that is marked by general prosperity. Our people have been favored during a series of years with abundant harvests. The destitution and want that rendered us in a measure dependent upon the generosity of older communities have wholly disappeared, and we are blessed with an abundance of the necessaries of life.

Financially, the people of Nebraska are exceptionally prosperous. The natural result of this prosperity is a steadily growing immigration movement from over-crowded Eastern States to our productive prairies. The vast influx of new settlers from day to day adds largely and perpetually to the volume of currency circulating among us. In consequence of these favorable conditions the financial depression that prevails in the East is scarcely felt here.

The prosperity and happiness of a people thus favorably situated may be still further assured by a wise and liberal system of legislation, which will foster and protect all branches of industry, perfect our educational system, and secure order and the full enjoyment of all rights of citizenship. In these respects we have been highly favored and have only to continue the wise policy

adopted by our predecessors to place our young Commonwealth upon a plane of permanent prosperity. This State, which before its birth was, by wise men, declared to be a desert, enters into a generous rivalry with neighboring agricultural states, and the wonderful productiveness of our soil is universally acknowledged. We are essentially an agricultural people, and the prominence of the position that we shall occupy among the States of the Union depends largely upon the development of our agricultural resources. We should, therefore, guard with special care the agricultural interests of our people, placing no unnecessary burdens upon the industrial classes, and conducting the business of the State with that intelligent exercise of economy which forbids the reckless appropriation of public money, but allows no vital interest to suffer in order to make a false show of economy, I earnestly suggest, in harmony with this view, your most critical judgment be exercised in determining the purposes for which the public funds may be legitimately appropriated. The State of Nebraska is now virtually out of debt, and with judicious economy in the use of public money, may be forever free from burdensome taxation. In making these economical suggestions, I consider it my duty to recommend and urge the exercise of a large degree of liberality in all legislation affecting the agricultural and horticultural interests of the State.

AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE.

Our agricultural pursuits are subject to a variety of circumstances and conditions that do not exist in older communities. These new conditions must be studied and understood in order that the best results may follow the labors of those engaged in cultivating the soil. The same is true in regard to the subject of horticulture.

Farmers and fruit growers are experimenting in a new field. Their experience in many cases is valuable, and should be widely disseminated.

The prominence Nebraska has already obtained as a fruit-growing State is mainly due to the enterprise of individuals, whose efforts should be supplemented and encouraged by judicious legislation.

STOCK RAISING—PROTECTION OF SETTLERS.

In connection with the foregoing suggestions, I may here properly invite attention to a new industry which, within the last decade, has assumed gigantic proportions in the western part of the State, and afforded a profitable field for the investment of a large amount of capital. I refer to the business of herding and stock raising. Nebraska, as a cattle producing state, has a world-wide reputation, and with immense tracts of land that are suitable for grazing purposes, will continue to be a source from which the principal beef markets of the world will draw a large portion of their supplies. The lives and property of those engaged in this important industrial pursuit are frequently in peril from hostile savages and lawless white men who infest the frontier. The protection afforded for capital thus invested is often precarious. Additional means of protection should be provided by State authority for those engaged in stock raising and herding, and also for those who are enduring the hardships and perils of frontier life in opening up to settlement and cultivation the hitherto unoccupied acres of our western frontier. It has been customary to allow the hardy frontiersmen to rely on themselves mainly for protection against Indian depredations. It is a custom that is as unreasonable as it is unjust. The power of the State Government and of the Government of the United States should be available for the protection of settlers thus isolated and exposed. Suggestions coming from some of the most intelligent and enterprising of our fellow-citizens prompt me to recommend that special attention be given to the subject of immigration. The rapid settlement of the central and southern portions of the State has been very satisfactory. Beyond these limits and espec-

ially in the northern part of the State and along our western frontier there is a large scope of country equally rich and productive, which is sparsely settled, and with proper efforts on our part would soon be occupied by thrifty farmers and stock raisers. An immigration act framed to meet the necessities of our State in this matter, and direct attention to the undeveloped resources of these unoccupied lands, is demanded, and in connection with a measure of this character, in my opinion, there should be a specific and well-guarded provision authorizing County Commissioners to make appropriations for immigration purposes.

EDUCATION.

The legislation of Nebraska on the subject of education has been uniformly liberal, and the result of this policy is perceptible in the high standard of instruction that has been reached in our schools. Our common school endowment, equivalent to nearly \$20,000,000, is by our Constitution sacredly set apart for school purposes, the principal to remain forever inalienable and the interest to be disbursed exclusively for the benefit of the schools.

It is our duty to exercise a watchful care over this legacy, and I suggest, for your consideration, that the subject of disposing of school lands should receive your careful attention for the purpose of determining whether existing regulations secure the largest practicable returns without retarding the development of the State.

STATE FINANCES.

The financial standing of our people is excellent, and we should be able to obtain money for legitimate purposes at low rates of interest. In no part of the United States can money be invested more profitably, but the interest and commissions charged by agents of Eastern capitalists place heavy burdens on those who borrow and materially retard the development of the State.

In the absence of unfriendly legislation towards either borrower or lender, there is no reason why the rates of interest should

not be as low in Nebraska as in less productive and less prosperous states, whereas they are uniformly higher, suggesting the conclusion that our interest laws are fundamentally wrong. I invite your attention to this subject as one of the utmost importance, and suggest that our interest laws be amended so as to give ample protection to borrowers, and at the same time strengthen the confidence of capitalists who are disposed to invest their money in Nebraska securities.

CRIME.

The prevalence of crime, and the inefficacy of legal enactments for the prevention of crime and punishment of criminals, are subjects that should receive your considerate attention. In the new settlements of the West there is too often a disposition to deny the supremacy of law. This tendency should be counteracted and overcome by the speedy and certain punishment of criminals. The evil here complained of is not confined to the western frontier. It prevails in a greater or less degree throughout the State, and is in fact a national evil. Nebraska may set a wise example for sister states in re-asserting the supremacy of law.

So long as I am clothed with the chief executive authority of the State I shall endeavor to exercise that power for the maintenance of law and order; in no case permitting a false sympathy for criminals to interfere with the duty of firmly executing the laws; and I have no hesitation in saying that the pardoning power shall be exercised with a regard for the public welfare rather than in obedience to sympathy for individuals, however well founded and strong the appeal for executive clemency may be. Allow me to express the hope that the results of your deliberation here may be the enactment of wise and beneficent laws, tending to the full development and highest prosperity of this great young commonwealth. Any further suggestions that may be necessary to make will be communicated by special message.