

Prefatory Note

This volume, the fifth of the series, comprises a period of twelve years. It includes the four years' term of the Taylor-Fillmore Administration and the full terms of Presidents Pierce and Buchanan. This brings the history down to March 4, 1861, the beginning of the late war between the States. These twelve years form an important and eventful epoch in the affairs of our country, as they immediately precede the war and cover the official utterances of the Executives during this period. Some of the more important events and incidents of these twelve years are the Bulwer-Clayton treaty with Great Britain for a joint occupancy of the proposed ship canal through Central America; the compromise measures of 1850; the admission of California, Minnesota, Oregon, and Kansas as States; the Gadsden purchase, by which the United States acquired 45,535 square miles of territory, being portions of Arizona and New Mexico; the Kansas-Nebraska legislation; the famous Dred Scott decision; the John Brown insurrection, and the disruption of the Democratic party in the national campaign of 1860.

This volume contains several veto messages which are interesting. By President Pierce, vetoes of "An act making a grant of public lands to the several States for the benefit of indigent insane persons;" of six acts relating to internal improvements; of an act for a subsidy for ocean mails, and of an act for the ascertainment and allowance of French spoliation claims. By President Buchanan, vetoes of an act granting lands for agricultural purposes; of two acts relating to internal improvements, and of a homestead act.

Interesting reading is furnished in the protests of President Buchanan against the action of the House of Representatives in ordering the appointment of a committee to investigate the conduct of the President.

The careful reader will find in this volume errors which the compiler could not correct. For instance, on page 410 certain figures are given

from a report of the Postmaster-General, which when added do not produce the total given. The error may arise from the failure to make the proper addition, or it may be that the total is correct and that the figures first given are incorrect. The original message contains the same error. Similar errors occur elsewhere in the compilation. These matters are, however, trivial and perhaps need not have been mentioned.

JAMES D. RICHARDSON.

JULY 4, 1897.