

JAMES BUCHANAN
MR. BUCHANAN'S
ADMINISTRATION

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ON THE
EVE OF THE REBELLION.



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P R E F A C E .



THE following historical narrative of the events preceding the late rebellion was prepared soon after its outbreak, substantially in the present form. It may be asked, Why, then, was it not published at an earlier period? The answer is, that the publication was delayed to avoid the possible imputation, unjust as this would have been, that any portion of it was intended to embarrass Mr. Lincoln's administration in the vigorous prosecution of pending hostilities. The author deemed it far better to suffer temporary injustice than to expose himself to such a charge. He never doubted the successful event of the war, even during its most gloomy periods. Having drawn his first breath soon after the adoption of the Federal Constitution and the Union which it established, and having been an eye-witness of the blessed effects of these, in securing liberty and prosperity at home, and in presenting an example to the oppressed of other lands, he felt an abiding conviction that the American people would never suffer the Great Charter of their rights to be destroyed. To the Constitution, as interpreted by its framers, he has ever been devoted, believing that the specific

powers which it confers on the Federal Government, notwithstanding the experience of the last dreary years, are sufficient for almost every possible emergency, whether in peace or in war. He, therefore, claims the merit—if merit it be simply to do one's duty—that whilst in the exercise of Executive functions, he never violated any of its provisions.

It may be observed that no extensive and formidable rebellion of an intelligent people against an established Government has ever arisen without a long train of previous and subsidiary causes. A principal object of the author, therefore, is to present to the reader a historical sketch of the antecedents ending in the late rebellion. In performing this task, the eye naturally fixes itself, as the starting point, upon the existence of domestic slavery in the South, recognized and protected as this was by the Constitution of the United States. We shall not inquire whether its patriotic and enlightened framers acted with wise foresight in yielding their sanction to an institution which is in itself a great social evil, though they considered this was necessary to avoid the still greater calamity of dissolving the Convention without the formation of our Federal Union.

The narrative will prove that the original and conspiring causes of all our future troubles are to be found in the long, active, and persistent hostility of the Northern Abolitionists, both in and out of Congress, against Southern slavery, until the final triumph of their cause in the election of President Lincoln; and on the other hand, the corresponding antagonism and violence with which the advocates of slavery resisted these efforts, and vindicated its preservation and extension up till the period of secession. So excited were the parties, that had they