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REMARKS,

On Mr. Wolcott's Address to the People of the United States.

No. VIII.

Particular transactions of the former administration, are the next objects of the criticisms of the committee, and of the defence of Mr. WOLCOTT. Of these, the first is their allegations that 'four navy yards were purchased without authority, and the money misapplied, which was paid for them.' Mr. Wolcott, in justification of these purchases, refers to the publication of Mr. Stoddert, dated May 1, 1802, and which has appeared in all those public papers, whose independence of the men in power does not lead them to keep back information from the people, which may injure their influence.

Mr. W. then observes:

"I can add nothing to the force of his arguments, which must be considered as conclusive, by all men who are not decided converts to the cry of specific appropriations: For the satisfaction of such minds, however, I take the liberty to state a fact, not noticed by Mr. Stoddert.

In March 1801, Congress expressly appropriated, "for the expenses attending" (not "completing," as mentioned by Mr. Gallatin) "six seventy-four gun ships; and for completing navy yards, docks and wharves, the sum of five hundred thousand dollars." It is proved by Mr. Stoddert, that the purchase was attended "with an obvious benefit to the United States." The whole expense has been expressly sanctioned by a subsequent, if not prior, appropriation. Upon principles, conceded by the committee, and upon which their system of specific appropriation rests, the whole transaction, therefore, stands completely justified. When will accusations against the former administration cease, if their conduct cannot be protected even by the acts of the legislature?"

It may not be amiss here to recall to the recollection of the public, by a very short abstract, the important principles and facts contained in the letter to Mr. Stoddert, to which Mr. Wolcott refers. These are—that an act of Congress directed six 74 gun ships to be built, "not built or purchased," as the Committee chose to misrepresent the act—that an act of Congress directing a thing to be done, and appropriating money for doing it, does confer "full and ample authority, not only to do the thing itself, but to do every thing incidental to it—every thing without which the thing directed could not be performed." As there was neither timber nor materials in the arsenals of the United States, for building six 74 gun ships, it cannot be doubted, therefore, that the act authorising them to be built, gave complete power to purchase the materials and timber. So of yards; there was not one yard, public or private, in the United States fit for building ships of such a size; it was essential such yards should be procured. The act, therefore, intended to give, and did give full power to procure them by hire or by purchase, as should best comport with public interest. The remaining observations of Mr. Stoddert, tending to shew, that the purchase of the navy yards was for the public benefit, and was "economical as well as legal," are so important that we shall present them entire.

"I know not how many years have elapsed, since Congress authorized the building of three frigates. At that time, the business of building ships of war of large size was new in this country; and it is not surprising that great errors were committed in making the arrangements for

building these ships. One very great error, and for which the public have severely paid, was, hiring instead of buying grounds, to build them upon. After hiring the ground, it was found indispensable that wharves and other improvements should be made on the ground so hired, and at the public expense. But the evil did not stop here, for the yards were too contracted, as all private yards are, to admit of such distribution of the enormous quantities of timber, required for large ships, as to enable the workmen to get at the pieces, hourly wanted in the progression of the ships; hence it became necessary to employ great numbers of labourers merely for the purpose of removing timber. I have not such accurate knowledge of the expense incurred in the improvements made on private property, and useful to the public when the ships were finished, and in the employment of labourers whose services, under a different system might have been dispensed with, as to pretend to exactness in stating the sum; but I have no hesitation in averring, that it exceeded the whole cost of the six navy yards purchased by me.

"With a full knowledge of these facts before me, would it have been a proper discharge of duty, to have fallen in the same error? Would it not have been a shameful sacrifice of the public interest, a wanton waste of the public money?—It is my pride that the error was avoided, and that such a course was pursued, as will restore to the public a large portion of the money expended on the yards, should a measure, so pregnant with folly and madness, be resorted to, as a sale of them."

A justification so complete and so honourable to the last administration leads us almost to commiserate the condition of this investigating committee, who were reduced to the necessity of either leaving their party wholly destitute of those official supports for their calumnies, of which they stood in so much need, and which was the sole object of the creation of this committee, or of misrepresenting proceedings, which, on examination, rebound so lightly to the honour of those whom it was their business to disgrace. Surely, if in indignation at the baseness of the design would permit, we might well pity men, who would condescend to give the credit of their names to the malicious inventions of unprincipled demagogues; who, content with the humble office of pioneers for detraction, had not ability to feel & instruments suited to their purposes, but seize only upon such as elevate those characters, which they undertook to prostrate.

The next object of the censure of the committee is the erection of certain buildings near Philadelphia, under the direction of the Secretary of War. They assert that these were "unauthorised,"—that "they have been carried on in a manner highly extensive, and are yet in an unfinished state—& that the expense "has been paid out of the appropriations heretofore made for the Quarter Master's Department; and declare their "opinion that this expenditure of money could not be justified at any time, but more particularly at a moment when the United States were borrowing money at a high rate of interest, to meet objects, which the legislature considered necessary and had sanctioned by law." These buildings may be "a laboratory, and arsenal, or a magazine." Their erection is justified upon the same general principle as the purchase of the navy yards;—but were necessary to the successful execution of measures enjoined by law." Concerning this necessity Mr. Wolcott remarks: "Before these buildings were erect-

ed, I believe there did not exist, in the United States, a single public building accessible by water transportation, in which arms, military stores, clothing, and other valuable articles of public property, deposited. No less a sum than twelve hundred thousand dollars, was appropriated, in 1798, for the purchase of cannon, small arms, ammunition, & military stores. A considerable proportion of these supplies, was expected to be drawn, and was actually drawn, from the market of Philadelphia and its vicinity. At least one central magazine, accessibly by water, was necessary for receiving such supplies, as were imported, and for effecting distributions to the navy and to garrison coast. Before these buildings were erected, the public property was deposited in private buildings, in various parts of the city of Philadelphia, and its vicinity, where they could not be conveniently inspected, and where they could not be guarded by the military, without hazard of disturbing the order of the city: a great accumulation of military supplies, in the midst of a populous city, was unsafe; the powers vested in the Executive Department, in a season of military preparations, were known to be of the highest importance, and the nature of the discretionary authority, actually intrusted by law, to the President of the United States, seemed necessary to imply the right to judge of the most suitable means of preserving the public property; a power which, when compared with others, was of no importance."

Concerning the expensiveness and unfinished state of the buildings, Mr. Wolcott proceeds:

"If it was intended that it should be understood, that more money has been expended than was necessary, considering the extent and solidity of the buildings, then it is certain a hasty opinion has been expressed, without acquiring due information. If the suggestion is, that the materials, decorations, or workmanship, were too costly, then it is answered that the buildings are brick structures, and an appeal is made to the public, on a comparison with buildings erected by the different states, or by the city of Philadelphia, or by incorporated companies, whether the design was unsuitable. It is true that the whole design has not been completed, but this idea is communicated by the expression that this pile of buildings, is set in an unfinished state. The public understand, that the expenditures hitherto made are useful; let the senses of the people of Philadelphia, and its vicinity, decide on the correctness of this impression."

With respect to the expenses being defrayed out of the appropriations heretofore made for the Quarter Master's department, he observes,

"I shall not attempt to reconcile this assertion with their first declaration, "that the appropriations for the army have been considered as constituting but one general fund," but to proceed to remark that the observation appears to imply an opinion that the fund appropriated for the Quarter Master Department could not lawfully be applied for erecting necessary magazines. With such men, as on reflection maintain this opinion, it will be in vain to reason, respecting the measures of the former administration, as the opinion will prove, that there remains no common source, from which arguments can be deduced. Unquestionably it has been considered as a primary duty of the Quarter Master Department, to provide all magazines, by purchase, lease, or otherwise, as should be deemed expedient:—this was the established principle, during the revolutionary war, and every subsequent regulation and instruction, with which I am acquainted, has proceeded on the same idea. It can-

not surely have been imagined, that specific appropriations for distinct items of expense, in the Quarter Master Department, were necessary; if not, the expense has been defrayed out of the proper funds, even upon the principles assumed by the Committee."

Mr. Wolcott adds,

"There is an allusion to the Loans, negotiated for the public, at an interest of eight per cent for ten years, which cannot be misunderstood—These are said by the Committee to have been obtained at a "high rate of interest." Mr. Gallatin has not thought it unsuitable, in an official report, to represent the interest as "exorbitant." I shall at all times be ready to explain the reasons of my conduct, when required; but to in direct imputations, from any quarter, it must be sufficient to observe, that this subject has been fully considered by a Committee, of equal authority with the Committee of Investigation, the members of which, with the concurrence of Mr. Nicholson, unanimously reported, that they saw "no reason to doubt that these Loans were negotiated upon the best terms which could be procured, and with a laudable view to the public interest."

The purchase of yards for the use of the navy of the United States;—the erection of the arsenals for the preservation of its military apparatus;—such are the objects which this patriotic committee have chosen to censure! That prudence which in times of peace and prosperity prepare means of defence against times of danger and adversity, and which has been selected by the eulogists of the statesmen of other countries as the choicest theme for panegyric, is in this the occasion of official reproach and legislative obloquy! Not those who would direct national wealth to its only proper object, national safety and prosperity, but those who flatter their vanity, or make mean appeals to their avarice, are the men, whom Americans, of late, delight to honor! Not those, who would protect from foreign invasion their cities and farms, their wives and their children; not those who would place public and private Happiness on its only rational foundation, security and capacity of self-protection, are the statesmen whom our citizens now reward and elevate; but those great patriots alone are the objects of their affections, who pretend to preserve peace in the pockets of individuals;—those who modulate their voices to every varying note of popular humor; those who give bread sops to the mouth of labour, and who set whiskey free for the throats of insurgents "I here are thy Gods, oh, Israel!" Bow down and worship these strange objects of adoration which ye have set up in your high places. Verily they are the work of your own hands. If ye can, rejoice in them and be glad. C.

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