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### CONGRESS.

House of Representatives, January 9.

#### DEBATE ON THE

#### Reduction of the Standing Army.

MR. HILL. Notwithstanding the invisible embarrassment which always oppresses me when I rise to address this House; notwithstanding my reluctance to present the debate on this question; which I have all along considered, ought to be promptly and immediately decided, I find myself impelled to offer a few observations on the subject—to make evident that my desire to press a speedy decision does not arise from the unworthy motive of forcing the minority into a measure without a full discussion of its merits; and that the sentiments which have actuated me, and will determine my vote on the present occasion, are such as forcibly impress me, with the propriety and necessity of such disposition of the resolution.

I consider the question of vast importance in various points of view. Whether it regards our respectability abroad—our interests and safety at home. The propositions appear to me to be fraught with mischief, calculated to involve the councils of our country in the contempt of other nations—to make them disreputable in the consideration of our own citizens. While, Sir, I thus freely declare my sentiments of the measure I would not be understood to intend that an improper motive is to be ascribed to the gentlemen who advocated the resolution. The human mind is so constructed that the same object of contemplation will appear differently to different persons, and even under various views will assume various appearances to the same mind—to this I am disposed to ascribe the want of unanimity now experienced.

To me, Sir, after bestowing the most unremitting and steady attention to the arguments of gentlemen on both sides, it appears unequivocally, that the measure if adopted, would produce the most fatal effects; that the very proposition cannot but create the most pernicious influence on our pending negotiation with France. Hence, Sir, to my wish to have the resolution speedily disposed of. I believe a majority of this House unquestionably disapprove it; and the only way to prevent the pernicious influence dreaded, is to let the disapprobation of the House accompany the account of the proposition. I would have the same breeze which wags across the ocean the paralyzing intelligence of the proposition, convey to our commissioners the restoring information of its decisive rejection.

But, Sir, it is said that this ill effect cannot be produced, because this army forms not a part of that system of defence occasioned by French aggressions. The contrary of this is so evident, that it would be an insult on the understanding of this House to attempt to prove it. If, however, a doubt exists, a reference to the law authorizing the enlistments, to the terms of enlistment, which form the contract between the government and the soldier will effectually conclude it. If then, Sir, this army is part of a system of defence adopted in consequence of French aggressions before we agree to disband it, it becomes necessary to know whether these aggressions have ceased; whether the injuries suffered have been repaired; and to examine the present state of affairs between the two countries. Will it be alleged that this is materially different from that existing when this army was organized? Will it be concluded that we are not in a state of actual war? Sir, it will not, because neither position is tenable—the facts are otherwise. Why then, Sir, I ask, are we to abandon this system? It is said, because it has not, it cannot have any possible effect on the French councils, while it induces a heavy expence on the American people. Sir, it had been clearly and conclusively proved that the system adopted has had a powerful influence on the French measure; the belligerent attitude assumed by this government, was a strong and indubitable evidence to the government of France, that we should prefer war, with all its calamities, to submission, and loss of our independence—that we would expend our last dollar in defence of our rights, but not bestow a single cent for tribute—the change of measures evidences the change of sentiment in the French councils, and this was consequent to the adoption of this system—a negotiation is invited by those, who, but a little while before, rejected with scorn and contempt, a like overture. If now in the very commencement of that negotiation, the first act of that legislature, is an abandonment, is the destruction of that system—what must be the fatal consequence? Sir, it cannot be any thing less than a prostration of our national honor, dignity and interests, at the feet of French mercy—and all we could have to expect would be what the magnanimity of the great nation might, in its tender commiseration, think proper to bestow on a people whose councils are too fluctuating and weak to assert

their rights, whose resources are unequal to their protection.

But, Sir, it is said that the negotiation may fail; nay, it would seem that gentlemen calculate it will fail; and therefore it is, say they, we bring the proposition forward now, aware that we now have to encounter less difficulties than if we wait the issue of the negotiation.

Surely Sir, nothing can operate with more force on the minds of every member of this House favorable to the measures of government, requiring such enactments, than this declaration, it must strike every mind on the propriety of making a firm stand against the present attempt.

It is further stated that the army cannot be of use, because invasion is impracticable, or if practicable still it cannot be useful, on account of the paucity of its numbers, and for other reasons—both these positions have been to ably assailed—the objections so convincingly refuted by two gentlemen from Virginia, that it would be but waste of time to enlarge on the subject. I will only observe, that possibilities more remote have been sustained in the French councils—and have proved practicable in their execution—calculations founded on the events of former wars, are not admissible as correct indications of what may occur in the present war. Never in modern times was a war, sustained as this has been, existed—perhaps the present are the only times which ever witnessed a single nation, unaided by allies—carrying war and havoc in every direction thro' various nations at the same time; with such a combination of powers to resist—and sustain itself victoriously as the French nation has done.

Are we to satisfy ourselves with the belief that the French will not invade us—and become unprepared to defend ourselves? While in actual war with that power? Is not this inviting invasion? but admit that invasion is not to be dreaded—is that the only means the French have of annoying us? of disturbing the peace, and introducing war into our country?

While we are considering whether our constitutional power to adopt measures to resist invasion, or is not expedient to be exercised. Let not, Sir, our country has a vulnerable side, other than that exposed to invasion—a point, Sir, that will not escape hostile notice, a point, Sir, which the Southern States have most to dread—and where, if war in our country is to happen it will probably commence.

As to the expence to be incurred by maintaining the army proposed to be discharged, it is admitted it cannot be much—too trifling, it is acknowledged, to be an object, if the nation to France succeeds—in that event it is every questionable whether there would be any saving at all by disbanding the army now, as most probably the pay which may be considered as proper to bestow on the discharge, would be fully equal to its support during the whole period of its enlistment.

Much has been said on the subject of economy; truly Sir, it is an important consideration, and ought always to be present in our councils. But, Sir, economy consists in a due application of the wealth and resources of the country; to promote measures calculated to produce the peace, safety and happiness of the citizens, to insure the prosperity and welfare of the Republic—This kind of economy is as distant from the paltry considerations of an impolitic parsimony as it is remote from the waste of an inconsiderate prodigality. I therefore consider what has been urged on that subject as of no moment in the present question; and much better calculated to rick the ears of an unreflecting populace, than convince the minds of a deliberative assembly. It has been alleged that the existence of this army occasions unpleasant sensations in the minds of the citizens at large, that the sound of the drum and the glitter of arms among their peaceful habitations distresses them. Sir, doubtless it excites their attention, and produces from them enquiries on the subject—but who told that this army is raised to be ready to protect the rights, and support the honor of their country, which has been and still is injured and insulted by a foreign power, they are satisfied. But what would be the operation of the measure proposed on the minds of these very citizens—they find the army disbanded—they enquire what reparations has our government received for the injuries, what satisfaction for the insults heaped on our country? None—why is the army then disbanded, and after the expence of organization for the defence of our country, we are now left without the proposed means of defence? Sir, can these questions be answered without involving our government in the dispute of its citizens? No, Sir, it must forcibly attach to it in every mind.

It has been urged that the wisdom and prudence of this House are involved in the present question. I sincerely coincide in this sentiment. I will go further. The dignity, Sir, of this House is involved in entertaining this question—it calls loudly to be extricated

as speedily as possible.—Scarcely, Sir, has a month elapsed since this House, without a division, announced to the American people, to the world at large, that it is the dictate of wisdom, of duty, to preserve in the system of defence adopted by the councils of our country. The sentiment is emphatically expressed in the address of this House to the President. And we are now without even the suggestion of a change of situation, called on to make an inroad on that system, to commence its destruction.

I hope Sir, the question will be taken, this day. I feel every disposition to accommodate gentlemen in their feelings and wishes—but I hold the interests of the country which I sincerely believe to be involved in the length of this debate, as too expensive a sacrifice—I apprehend every gentleman has made up his mind—without the probability of relinquishing the point on which it rests—if so, a further postponement can only be to afford an opportunity for a display of oratory. If gentlemen have made up their minds, and if it is important that a prompt decision should be had, it will be better to take the vote now and have the speeches afterwards—they doubtless will prove entertaining and instructive essays—and this course will be considered less exceptionable as it has been exemplified with no small success by an ancient orator of celebrity, I allude to Cicero, and his Oration in defence, but not heard until after the trial of his friend Milo—It is true it was of no manner of service to his friend—but it was nevertheless a very fine speech, and contributed not a little to increase the fame of his eloquence.

I hope, therefore, Sir, that this course may be taken rather than the decision should be longer delayed.

#### Federal Gazette.

BALTIMORE, February 8.

The publishers of General Washington's Will, have favoured us with the following extracts for publication, and authorize us to say they have engaged persons to carry round and dispose of this beneficial production on Monday next. It is comprised in a pamphlet of 32 pages.

Item, To the trustees (governors, or by whatsoever other name they may be designated) of the academy, in the town of Alexandria, I give and bequeath, in trust, four thousand dollars, or, in other words, twenty of the shares which I hold in the bank of Alexandria, towards the support of a free school, established at, and annexed to, the said academy, for the purpose of educating such orphan children, or the children of such other poor and indigent persons as are unable to accomplish it with their own means; and who, in the judgment of the trustees of the said seminary, are best entitled to the benefit of this donation.

Item, Whereas by a law of commonwealth of Virginia, enacted in the year 1785, the legislature thereof was pleased (as an evidence of its approbation of the services I had rendered the public during the revolution, and partly I believe, in consideration of my having suggested the vast advantages which the community would derive from the extension of its inland navigation under legislative patronage) to present me with one hundred shares of one hundred dollars each, in the incorporated company established for the purpose of extending the navigation of James River, from tide water to the mountains;—and also with fifty shares of one hundred pounds sterling each, in the corporation of another company likewise established for the similar purpose of opening the navigation of the River Potomac from tide water to Fort Cumberland; the acceptance of which, although the offer was highly honorable and grateful to my feelings, was refused as inconsistent with a principle which I had adopted, and had never departed from—Namely—not to receive pecuniary compensation for any services I could render my country in its arduous struggle with Great-Britain for its rights; and because I had evaded similar propositions from other States in the union. Adding to this refusal, however, an intimation that, if it should be the pleasure of the legislature to permit me to appropriate the said shares to public uses, I would receive them on those terms with due sensibility; and this it having consented to, in flattering terms, as will appear by a subsequent law and sundry resolutions, in the most ample and honorable manner. I proceed after this recital, for the more correct understanding of the case, to declare—That as it has always been a source of serious regret with me to see the youth of the United States sent to foreign countries for the purpose of education, often before their minds were formed, or they had imbibed any adequate ideas of the happiness of their own; contracting too frequently, not only habits of dissipation and extravagance, but principles unfriendly to republican government, and to the true and genuine liberties of mankind; which, thereafter are rarely overcome.—For these reasons, it has been my ardent wish to see a plan devised on a liberal scale which would have a tendency to spread