

Proceedings of Congress,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE
UNITED STATES.

MONDAY, JANUARY 6.

THE report of the committee, on the subject of the military establishment of the United States, which proposes an addition of a dollar per month to the present pay, was taken up in committee of the whole, Mr. Trumbull in the chair.

Mr. Irvine proposed to make the monthly pay five instead of four as proposed by the committee; it seemed to meet the unanimous sense of the members: But Mr. Clark thought this last augmentation too great. They might, at this way of proceeding, raise the pay, in time, to ten dollars a month.

Mr. Scott was of opinion, that there was too little proportion between the wages of ordinary labour, and that of military service. He could not have a workman, who was to sleep at peace in his bed, and to dine at a good table, for the pay that was given to a soldier for enduring the hardships of his dangerous profession. An augmentation of their pay would flatter the troops: It would put them in good humour; and therefore, he hoped that the five dollars would be carried through the house.

Mr. Smilie said, that the expence of living had been considerably raised in every part of the United States. The pay of the soldiers ought, in common justice, to be advanced in an equal degree with that of the other persons employed in the service of the state. Congress had lately received a petition of this sort, from some gentlemen employed in the public offices of Philadelphia. The officers of the army had been talking of a similar necessity of an advance in their pay. A new United States ought to pay well, that they might obtain good men. Many recruits had, upon late occasions, enlisted, and several of them in Philadelphia, who never should have been admitted into the military establishment of any nation whatever.

Mr. Wadsworth did not see any reason for the proposed additional dollar per month. If he had thought it wanted, he should have been very ready to mention it. He said, that in the States north of Pennsylvania, the wages of a common labourer were not, upon the whole, superior to those of a common soldier. It had been alleged, that by augmenting the pay of the troops, we should get better men. This was a doctrine which he, for one, did not understand. The present western army were as good troops as ever went into the field, and much better than the late continental army. Men, he said, of a sober character did not, and would not enlist. Recruits might have very good morals, and it was certain that many honest men did not love labor. Curiosity, levity, the heat of youth, and other every excusable motives, sent people to the army; but it never was, nor ever will be, the place where a thoughtful and industrious private man would be ambitious to exert his talents. For this reason, he was convinced, that to enlarge the pay would answer no good purpose. As to the militia, who were many of them, substantial people, it was in vain to imagine that they would fulfil the end of an army in the Indian war. They had been tried, and the experiment had failed. He again adverted to the impossibility of supplying the ranks with recruits above the most ordinary grades of life. He

never had seen an army, such as it was believed that the additional dollar would assemble; and he detested ever to see such an army. There was, however, an act of bounty, which might be of infinite service to the troops, and which he should that day take a more opportunity of moving for. He referred, he said, to a provision for the widows and children of men soldiers as should happen to loose their lives in the service.

Mr. Bond not said, that he should be very sorry to recommend the augmentation, if he thought that it would induce farmers to exchange their lands for military life. This the thought would indeed be a very alarming consequence, and did he apprehend it, he should undoubtedly oppose the intended increase. He had, he said no apprehensions of that kind. America would be in a very bad situation indeed if such a traffic as twelve dollars a year could bid a farmer or manufacturer to quit. He would look very strange at any of his neighbours, who should tell him that they had embraced such an offer. Instead of augmenting the pay, perhaps it was better to add something to the rations: those for example of salt and flour. He thought it safest to agree to the four dollars, because if they voted to five, the bill would run the farrest chance to be thrown out of the other House; and thus by granting at too much, the movers of the amendment would lose the bill altogether. Originally, troops had been raised for less than two dollars per month. The pay had since been augmented to three, and was now on the way of being raised to four. He wished to make its advances gradual. If we looked at the situation of other countries, and contemplated the state of their Finances, we should be convinced that America paid her troops as well in proportion to her ability, as any other people in the world paid theirs; and that her soldiers had no right to complain.

Mr. Montgomery spoke a few words in favour of an advance to five dollars.

Mr. Scott said, that Pennsylvania had, some time ago, raised a few companies of soldiers, frontier service, and given them two pounds ten shillings currency per month, which was equal to six dollars and two thirds. In consequence of this, the companies had been filled with some of the most respectable kind of people in the county. They were quite of a different class from the recruits raised for the western army. He wished to try the five dollars. This superior pay was reported to have nurtured the continental recruiting service. He thought very possible that such had been the case. If government give the proposed five dollars the continental army might perhaps, get all the levies which it wanted from these very companies.

Mr. Hunter would have voted for six dollars.

Mr. Bettie said, that he was for giving five dollars from a conviction that it was requisite to the service.

Mr. Smith was warmly for the additional augmentation. The recruits he said who had been raised in this city, were bad fellows, and not fit to be trusted. Better pay would bring forward better men.

Mr. S. said, that as to the rate of labour, garden were hired to work, in Maryland, for eighteen pounds a year, which is equal to four dollars per month, and out of that they find their own clothe. He thought it a very dangerous plan, to raise the wages of soldiers at this time, when e-

very article was above its natural or former price. The things referred to were, however, it would be impossible to raise their wages to that level. The people of these had, by their wars, increased the demand for the produce of our farms, and this raised the wages of labour. The members of Congress had six dollars per day, and it would be a very matter to see that which seemed to him might be quite improper. He thought that high pay would only serve to make the soldiers drunk. It would be much better to give them some substantial gratification at the end of life service.

Mr. Wadsworth a second time: he said that the army, in getting our dollars, got plenty, and he detested of seeing five dollars pass through the front, but were they to vote twenty, they would be able to enjoy that class of men, whom we expected five dollars would collect. A person, a quarter had mentioned, as a proof of the probability of enlisting the farmers, the instance of a party in one of the New-England States, who had formed themselves into a military body, and had gone backwards in quest of a settlement, but were cut to pieces by the Indians. He knew many, and he had likewise heard of others who had since gone from the last quarter, and on the 1st of March. He had enquired about their character, and had found, just as he expected, that they were very honest and of a simple, but somewhat of a rascally disposition, and not remarkably industrious. As to a notion of enlisting men, and attaching them to the country by 5 dollars a month, it would not do. The old continental army were very good soldiers, but certainly some of them did not fight for the sake of their country, since they deserted by scores. They were however, brought back, and fought very well. Their rearers by deserting, he did not pretend to know, but this he knew, that they were very idle, and very worthless fellows, who had got in their train from doing the dirty work. Mr. Wadsworth added, that it was quite a mistake to propose giving five dollars a month, for fear that we should not be able to get recruits. In a very short time our communications by sea would be cut off. We would then be prevented from sending any more to the back country. Accruals would then be had in the greatest abundance for four dollars per month, at which few numbers of people would then be thrown out of employment, and enlist for want of it.

The amendment to the bill of adding two dollars instead of one, was rejected.

Mr. Clark then moved as an amendment of the bill, that there should be an addition of four ounces of bread or flour and four ounces of meat to each ration.

Colonel Hartley was for augmenting the rations. He knew that they were too small. In cultivated countries, they might do, but not in the back woods where vegetables were not to be had.

Mr. Wadsworth was convinced that the rations were plenty, unless on a march; he spoke, he said, from abundant experience.

Mr. Giles had been frequently informed by officers in the army, that the rations were all defective. In the back woods, the soldiers had been often reduced to such distress, for want of vegetables, as to go in search of a gun to supply the place.

Mr. Fitzsimons said, that he had been in