

"ECONOMY—MR. CALHOUN."

"Great savings in the War Department."

The power of the Secretary of War had arrived at its highest point about the close of the year 1819. He had produced a strong impression upon the Members of Congress, as well as upon the public, that to oppose his measures, was to oppose the administration of the President of the United States; and thus he availed himself, to a certain extent, of the weight of Mr. Monroe's character. He had also produced another strong impression, which still seems to prevail, that he had more influence than any other member of the cabinet, in procuring appointments to office; and, this, however groundless, has been of the greatest advantage to him. It has given him extensive influence, & added prodigiously to the fascination of his manners. It has brought to his party, all the office-hunters in the Union; and taken collectively, they are a very formidable body.

His measures thus far, although considered as wild and extravagant by some of the old-fashioned republicans, had met with no decided opposition by a majority of either house of Congress. But his estimates of the appropriations necessary for his department for the year 1820, startled those who had placed some reliance on his prudence and talents for business. Even those who had believed all the accounts of the "great savings in the War Department," now began to examine for themselves into his expenditures. The consequence of which was, that a majority of both houses of Congress concurred in the propriety of arresting the Secretary in his favorite, but useless and extravagant scheme, of sending an army to the Yellow Stone River, fifteen hundred miles up the Missouri. They determined to check the recruiting service which he was urging with as much ardour, as if a powerful enemy had invaded our shores, and was marching to Washington. And what was still more offensive, they adopted measures for reducing the army to six thousand men.

For these and similar offences, they have been stigmatized as Radicals, and denounced as enemies to the administration. The Secretary has made war upon them by every means in his power. A paper has been established at Washington, under his immediate patronage to write them down. He has pursued them into the remotest parts of the Union; and South Carolina is not the first nor the last state, in which his vindictive hand has been seen and felt.

At the commencement of the year 1817, the army in the aggregate, amounted to

Table with 2 columns: Year, Recruits. Rows for 1817, 1818, 1819.

In three years, 12,481
At the close of the year 1819 the army amounted to 8,688

Less than the aggregate at the commencement of 1817 by 3,793
This number added to the 12,481 amounts to 13,817 men lost to the army in three years. Of these probably about 3000 were discharged on the expiration of their terms of service; the remainder were lost by desertion and other casualties.

Mr. Calhoun required for the recruiting service of the year 1820 the sum of \$183,925
Viz—
For 5,000 recruits—
Bounties at 2 dolls. each 60,000
Premiums at 2 dolls. each 10,000
For quarters, fuel, banks, citizen surgeons for examining the recruits and attending to the sick, fees for magistrates for qualifying recruits until organized for joining Regiments or Corps, at 22 7/8 1/2 per man 113,925—183,925

These estimates appear from a letter, from the Adjutant and Inspector General to the Secretary of War, and by him communicated to the Senate of the United States on the 20th of March 1820.

The House of Representatives paid but little attention to the Secretary's estimates and instructions. They voted to appropriate for the whole recruiting service of that year, no more than \$55,125, not one third part of what the Secretary required. This appears from the first section of the bill making appropriations for the military service for 1820, & which passed into a law on the 14th of April of that year. So much of the section as respects this appropriation is in these words: "For bounties and premiums for fifteen hundred recruits, twenty-one thousand dollars. For fuel, straw, & all other expenses for recruits, until organized to join regiments and corps, thirty four thousand, one hundred and twenty five dollars."

On the 22nd of March, after this bill had passed the House of Representatives, and was depending before the Senate, the following letter from the Adjutant and Inspector General, was communicated to the Senate by the Secretary of War:—

Adjutant & Inspector General's Office, March 11th, 1820.

SIR—It appears by the papers, that the House of Representatives voted only 21,000 dollars for bounties and premiums, on account of the recruiting service of the year. This sum will only enlist 1500 men; less than the number actually lost by desertion during

the last year. In the three last years more than 12,000 men have been enlisted; and still the aggregate of the army at the close of the last year did not exceed 9,000 men.

It is true, only 300 men are entitled to a discharge by the expiration of their term; still if the desertions and other casualties, should be as great as in former years, the army will not exceed 8,000 men at the close of the year including the recruits which may be obtained with 21,000 Dollars voted for that purpose.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

D. PARKER, Adj't & Insp. Gen'l.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

This letter which the Secretary makes his own, by communicating it to the Senate, was evidently meant as a severe reprimand upon the House of Representatives, for neglecting their duty; and an admonition to the Senate to attend to theirs, and amend the bill, so as to correspond with the wishes and instructions of the War Department. It shews too, that the Secretary perfectly understood that the House of Representatives had determined to authorize the recruiting of 1500 men and no more for the year 1820.

The Senate on this point were as refractory as the House of Representatives, and notwithstanding the instructions and admonitions of the Secretary, and the utmost exertions of his friends, they passed the bill as it was sent to them. Congress had refused an appropriation for moving our troops from Council Bluffs to Yellow Stone, & were adopting measures for reducing our peace establishment. This was pressing very far upon the forbearance of the Secretary. But to limit the recruiting service at the warning he had given, particularly to the Senate, was an evidence of marked disrespect, calculated to call forth all the energies of his character. Were his magnificent schemes to be defeated, his brilliant prospects to be obscured from the paltry consideration of saving a few thousand, or hundred thousand Dollars?

He bethought himself of all the great things that had been said of him in the public papers: He recollected, although it had not been formally announced, that "South Carolina had given to the nation, the ablest man that ever filled the War Department." He considered that it would be thought disgraceful in the army that the greatest of all possible Secretaries, should yield to a parcel of Radicals in the two Houses of Congress. He reflected, that should this contumacy, particularly on the part of the Senate, be countenanced by the War Department, it would soon grow up into a spirit of mutiny, that it might be difficult to check.

Besides, some calculations alarmed the Secretary. If the army at the close of the year 1820, would amount to no more than 8,000 men, including the 1,500, to be recruited by the authority of Congress, when in 1817, 1818 and 1819, there had been recruited 12,481 men, in four years there would be a loss of sixteen thousand including those discharged on the expiration of their term of service. It followed from this, that should the recruiting service be checked, the army in two years more would be reduced to a regiment, which would afford no apology for keeping in pay, nearly 700 commissioned officers; and might induce Congress to reduce the number of officers, which the Father of the Army ought in no wise to permit. And should any considerable portion of the officers of the army be dismissed, it might endanger the election of the army candidate; a calamity at all hazards to be avoided. Under such circumstances the Secretary did not long hesitate. He determined to recruit 1,500 men by the authority of Congress, and 1,711 by the authority of the War Department. Accordingly 3,211 men were recruited for the service of the year 1820.

Whether Congress is to have any control over the recruiting service, or whether it is to depend upon the will of the Secretary of War, seems a question not yet settled. By the 8th section of the first article of the Constitution of the United States, Congress shall have power "to raise and support armies," under which they have presumed to regulate the recruiting service, both as to the amount of the appropriation, and as to the number of men necessary for that service.

In the case of 1820, they were more explicit than usual; they expressly designated the number of men to be recruited. The words of the act are "for bounties and premiums for fifteen hundred recruits." In the act of the 29th of April, 1816, the appropriation for the recruiting service is in these words: "For bounties and premiums, fifty-six thousand dollars." In the act of the 3d of March, 1817, "for bounties and premiums, thirty-two thousand dollars." In the act of the 19th February, 1818, "for bounties and premiums, forty-four thousand dollars." In the act of the 15th of February, 1819, "for bounties and premiums, sixty-two thousand five hundred dollars."—without designating in any of these cases the number to be recruited. The number, however, was easily ascertained by calculation.

The unusual form of appropriation in this particular for the year 1820, was evidently meant as a limitation to the discretion previously exercised by

the Secretary. And this precaution was by no means unnecessary, for in the year 1817, there were recruited 3939 men, and in the year 1818, 4238; although Congress meant to provide for the recruiting of no more than 2500 in the former year, and 3000 in the latter. The Secretary authorized this excess of recruiting over the appropriations, probably under some usage of the War Department, by which he ventures to exceed the appropriations for any particular year, & fill up the ranks of the army as established by law, provided he can find unexpended balances that may be transferred to that service. And, it is possible, that in the last case of 1820, he thought himself, under the same principle, justified in disregarding the will of Congress, expressed in direct terms.

By the peace establishment of 1815, the army was fixed at 10,000 men; but whether the ranks were to be kept full at all times or not, depended on the will of Congress as they believed, and not upon that of the Secretary of War. If he had the right to recruit 1711 men in 1820, beyond the number for which Congress had made the appropriation, he would have had an equal right to recruit that number, even if Congress had made no appropriation whatever, for the recruiting service of that year.

The safety of the country requires that Congress should have the power of controlling the recruiting service.—In this case it was peculiarly important, for they had determined to reduce the army, and did reduce it in the year following.

If the Secretary of War could thus recruit men at his pleasure, against the will of Congress, and they were bound to appropriate for the pay, subsistence, and clothing of such recruits; and if he could make contracts to the amount of millions of dollars, for fortifications and other objects connected with the defence of the country, and impose upon Congress the obligation, to make the appropriations necessary for carrying such contracts into effect, then indeed, the Representatives of the People, presented but a feeble barrier to the power of the War Department.

It is probable, however, that Congress will find means hereafter, to restrain the recruiting service within proper bounds; and they have already, by an act of the first May, 1820, provided that no contracts thereafter shall be made by the heads of any of the departments except under a law authorizing the same, or under an appropriation adequate to its fulfilment—and, excepting also, contracts made by the Quarter Master's Department, which may be made by the Secretaries of those Departments.

If the Secretary of War shall consider this very radical law as binding upon him, it will put an end to Rip Rap contracts.

As soon as it was discovered that more than 3000 men had been recruited for the year 1820, the House of Representatives, on motion of Mr. Tracy, called upon the Secretary for information upon this subject. In answer to which, on the 2d of January 1821, he communicated the following letters and statements:—

Department of War, 30th Dec. 1820.

SIR—In reply to the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 26th inst. requiring a statement from this Department, shewing the number of soldiers recruited for the Army, during the year 1820, indicating the fund from which the expenses of recruiting had been paid; and whether any unexpended balance of former appropriations had been used, and in what year said appropriations were made: I enclose reports of the Adjutant and Inspector General, and the Second Auditor of the Treasury, shewing the number of recruits and the expenses of the recruiting service.

It is deemed proper to observe, that although the number of recruits exceed 3000, the Army has not been so much increased since the last year. The difference between the enlistments and the increase, is accounted for by the discharges, desertions, and other casualties, during the year, amounting to half as many as have been enlisted.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

J. C. CALHOUN, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Adjutant & Inspector General's Office, 30th Dec. 1820.

SIR—In answer to that part of a Resolution of the House of Representatives, requiring the number of soldiers enlisted during this year, which you referred to me, I take the liberty to make the following extract, from my report to you of the second inst. viz: "Abstract of the recruiting returns for 1820, whole number enlisted during the year, 3,211." The number of recruits for this year is taken from the returns made to this office, of the first three quarters, and an estimate for the present quarter.

I have the honor to be, with perfect respect, your obdt. servt.

D. PARKER, Adj't & Insp. Gen. The SECRETARY OF WAR.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, 2d Auditor's Office, Dec. 23, 1820.

SIR—In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 26th inst. I have the honor to transmit to you, herewith, a statement of the funds out of which the expenses of recruiting for this year have been paid. I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant.

WM. LEE, Hon. J. C. CALHOUN, Secretary of War.

STATEMENT

Exhibiting the funds out of which the expenses of recruiting have been paid, during the year 1820, in obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives, dated 26th Dec. 1820.

BOUNTIES AND PREMIUMS.

Table with 2 columns: Description, Amount. Rows include Balance unexpended, Amount appropriated, Amount refunded, Amount brought to credit, Amount due by Rob't. Brent, etc.

EXPENSES OF RECRUITING.

Table with 2 columns: Description, Amount. Rows include Amount appropriated for the year 1820, Amount available by the Secretary of War.

EXPENDITURES.

Table with 2 columns: Description, Amount. Rows include Amount of warrants issued, Amount disbursed by sundry persons, Amount disbursed to 26th of Dec. on account of expenses of recruiting, etc.

Leaving a balance of appropriations on the 26th of Dec. 1820, of \$58,867 80

Under the following heads, viz—
Bounties & premiums 43,492 45
Expenses of recruiting 15,475 35

Treasury Department, 2d Auditor's Office, 28th Dec. 1820. WM. LEE.

NOTE.—When we say Robert Brent, late Paymaster General, refunded in 1820 \$35,364,56, it ought not to be understood that he refunded that sum in money; he refunded it in settlement of account only; that is to say, a balance being due to him, for disbursements on account of subsistence, and being a debtor under the head of bounties and premiums, to a large amount; his account of subsistence was closed, by carrying a part of the balance, due by him on bounties and premiums, say \$35,364,56 to his debit on that of subsistence, by which transaction, bounties and premiums received a credit on our books, while subsistence was debited."

This statement, which the Secretary communicated to the House of Representatives by way of throwing light upon a subject of enquiry, is a most rare and singular Document. The Radicals were about as wise after this elucidation as they were before it, as the Secretary, no doubt, intended they should be. But a paper of this character, thus communicated to Congress, deserves a little more attention than it has received. As to the balance of \$58,867 80 remaining on the 26th of December, 1820, nearly the whole of it would be expended when all the expenses of the recruiting service of that year should be paid. The bounties, premiums, and other expenses of recruiting 3,211 men, would amount, according to the estimate furnished by the War Department, to \$118,116 63. The amount available by the Secretary of War for this service, as by Mr. Lee's statement, was \$125,358 03,—leaving a surplus of no more than \$7,141 40.

The funds out of which bounties and premiums were paid for 1820, consist of six items. The first an unexpended balance in the hands of the Treasurer of \$3,197 92. This balance is not mentioned in the Secretary's estimate, in which he asks \$183,925 for recruiting 5000 men. Congress did not take it into consideration, or they would have appropriated a certain sum in addition to this balance, to recruit 1,500 men. The second is the sum of 21,000 dollars appropriated, and all that Congress intended should be expended, for bounties and premiums for the year 1820. As to the third, fourth, & fifth items, the Secretary could not suppose that any body should understand them. He might as well have informed Congress that 30,000 dollars and upwards had been refunded to the Treasurer, and received from certain persons, at

sundry times, and in diverse manners. As to the sixth item of \$35,364 56, refunded by Robert Brent, it must have surprised those who knew that Mr. Brent died in September, 1819, utterly insolvent, and a defaulter to the Government to a very large amount.

By a letter of the Comptroller of the Treasury of the 27th of November, 1820, it appears that a balance was due to United States, from Robert Brent, late Paymaster-General, on the books of the Third Auditor, of \$40,911 18. Besides which there were other and much larger sums due from him to the United States; for by a report of the Comptroller of the Treasury of the 27th December, 1822, it appears that he was a delinquent to the amount of \$115,598 33, accruing out of advances made to him from the 18th of May, 1816, to June, 1819, reported for suit on the 4th of May, 1820.

As the sixth item was involved in some obscurity, Mr. Lee adds an explanatory note, which Mr. Calhoun must have taken for a satisfactory elucidation of the subject, or he would not have made it a part of his Report. I have examined this explanatory note over and over, and never read any thing more ingeniously perplexed.—Who would suppose that the magic force of a few entries in the books of the Second Auditor, by which not a cent was obtained from Mr. Brent, and which was not to diminish the general balance against him to the amount of a cent, could authorize the Secretary of War, or any other person, to draw \$35,364 56 from any fund belonging to the United States?

Robert Brent had expended more money upon the article of subsistence than had been put into his hands for that particular purpose, which he took from monies put into his hands to pay bounties and premiums;—upon both items of account, however, there was a large balance due from him to the United States. It is easy to understand how his subsistence account was balanced by charging it with \$35,365 56 which he had taken from the monies in his hands to pay bounties and premiums, and that the balance on his account of bounties and premiums should be diminished by that amount. This might be a convenient mode of ascertaining the final balance due from him on both accounts, but could be of no other importance to him or to the United States, as they were to receive no money from him on either account, and surely were not expected to pay any. But whence came the money? Robert Brent refunded in "settlement of account only." This is not money: Yet the money was obtained from some quarter, for bounties and premiums cannot be paid in "settlement of account only."

If this sum of \$35,354 56, said to be refunded by Robert Brent, but which never was and never will be refunded, was drawn from the Treasurer of the United States, as agent for the War Department, or from the Treasury or any other fund belonging to the United States, after being charged to Robert Brent as if actually paid to him on account of his advances for subsistence, and credited to him as if actually refunded on account of an unexpended balance of money placed in his hands to pay bounties and premiums, and then applied to the recruiting service of the year 1820; if all this was done with Robert Brent, while he was in his grave and knew nothing of the matter, it proves, at least, that the Secretary is very expert at raising the wind.

In June, 1820, Robert Brent was indebted to the United States in the sum of \$115,598 38. He was dead, and his estate utterly insolvent; and this money never has been nor never will be refunded. An attempt to draw money from such a fund, thus sunk in the bottomless pit of the Paymaster's pocket, would formerly have been deemed as hopeless as the attempt of the philosopher of Lamputa to extract sun-beams from cucumbers: But this is an age of improvements, and every thing yields to the powers of genius.

It was discovered that Mr. Brent had disbursed \$35,364 56 for subsistence over and above what was charged to him on that account. It was thought that this sum might be paid to him on the part of the United States to balance and close this account of subsistence, provided he should immediately refund the same, on account of a very large balance due from him on account of bounties and premiums. But, as this payment and re-payment would have been but mere matter of form, it was discovered that it might be dispensed with, by a few entries on the books of the Second Auditor. Mr. Brent was, therefore, charged with this sum to close his subsistence account, and credited with an equal sum on account of bounties and premiums; by which transaction, says the Second Auditor, (he ought to have said manœuvre) "bounties and premiums received a credit on our books while subsistence was debited;" and the credit thus obtained was considered as a part of the available funds, which were applied to the recruiting service of 1820 under warrants drawn by the Secretary of War, as if the same had been appropriated by Congress for the recruiting service of that year.