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[Whole No. 311.]

FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MANY of the enlightened and humane have for some time indulged a pleasing hope that the slave-trade, and perhaps slavery itself, will at length be abolished. What events of this kind time may produce, cannot be ascertained at present. But all, whose feelings and reason have not been perverted, must be shocked at the treatment which the unhappy Africans and their descendants still almost universally experience in the western world. Accustomed indeed continually, and perhaps from infancy, to treat their slaves with contempt and inhumanity, slave holders seem frequently insensible of the cruelty of their conduct. Ask most of the West-India gentlemen whether the Blacks are cruelly treated in the islands? "Not in general with any unnecessary severity," they will reply, and talk of their various privileges—privileges which are themselves the most unequivocal proofs that almost every thing is denied them which can render life agreeable, and every thing inflicted which a tyrant's caprice and passion may dictate. In the view of a West-Indian, neither nakedness, hunger, excessive labor, nor mangling stripes, are unnecessary severities to negroes. It is asserted that the Africans are, in the Islands, used "with kindness and humanity"—and at the same time acknowledged, that thousands are annually imported. How amiably mild must that treatment be which destroys the human species so much more rapidly than they propagate!—"Sparta teemed with slaves at the time of her highest fame as a valiant republic." Let it be added, that it was customary for this republic to send out her citizens at proper intervals to massacre coolly the stoutest of the Helotes, lest they should revolt. In the West-Indies, the slaves perish by millions, in a slower and more horrible way. But let us turn from this disagreeable prospect—let us next ask an inhabitant of any of the Southern States, whether slaves are there barbarously treated? "Not at all (says he) the invectives on that head are mere calumny and falsehood." Enquire more particularly as to their food, cloathing, habitations, discipline, &c. and you will find that their peck of Indian corn is regularly measured out to them; a pittance just sufficient to prevent their starving—that they have the privilege of exhibiting to gentlemen, and (surprising favor!) even to young ladies, a great proportion if not the whole of their glossy black bodies—that their hovels, when they are not entirely destitute of a shelter, are perhaps superior to hog styes—and finally, that salt is sometimes kindly applied to the furrows which the lash has made in their flesh.

The inhabitants of the middle and Northern States will severely censure the West-Indian and Southern slave-holders. The humane European, and unprejudiced American citizen, will in their turn justly account these very censurers, or rather some of them, guilty to a greater or less degree of the same barbarity. Who that has resided in any even of the last mentioned States, where there is a considerable number of slaves, has not seen many a poor black destitute of cloathing necessary to keep out the wintry blast, or even to cover their nakedness from the eye?—Who has not heard well attested relations concerning many a slave who has experienced continually the pangs of hunger, whom not sickness itself could excuse from an excessive and perhaps unhealthy task?—In whose ears have not, at one time or another, the cries of distress and anguish resounded—cries for mercy answering the unrestrained strokes of the lash, which leave their marks for life?—While such treatment of slaves proceeds from persons dead to every emotion but those of pride, avarice and passion, reformation from them is scarcely to be expected. We can but lament that the fate of men should be decided by such brutes. It is, however, a fact too well known to be denied, that slaves often experience such treatment from persons who profess continually to obey the mild and equitable precepts of Christianity—from persons who pride themselves in their sensibility of soul—from persons who look on freedom as an invaluable right—from men otherwise the most respectable, and women the most accomplished. But surely in this view, feeling, delicacy, softness of manners, humanity, love of liberty and religion, are all deserted for that which is despicable, cruel and vicious.

SOCRATES.

(CIRCULAR.)

Philadelphia, April 16, 1792.

SIR,  
IN conformity to an appointment and instructions from the Officers of the Massachusetts line of the late American army, I have attended at the seat of government from the 20th of March to the present period.

The object of my commission was to obtain a decision on a memorial which they had heretofore presented to Congress, on the subject of further compensation for themselves and the soldiers who served during the war. Although in the first instance similar applications were expected from those in the different States who were interested, yet that expectation was defeated by a delay of the communication contained in the circular address of the 28th of February, and an idea that an earlier adjournment of Congress would have taken place.

Finding myself thus situated, and considering that the officers and soldiers through the United States were equally interested in the question, I deemed it a mark of respect and attention due to them, not even to attempt a consideration of the subject until they had a fair opportunity of becoming active applicants in the measures we had adopted, and of affording us the aid of their advice and assistance.

As a proper investigation and decision of this question is of the highest importance, as it will afford relief to a large number of our companions of the war, whose distresses are only equalled by their patience; and as a union of sentiment and of measures will be most likely to produce the object of our reasonable wishes, I have it in particular command from the officers of Massachusetts, to request a co-operation of the officers of your line, at the opening of the next session of Congress.

They will attend at that time by their agent or agents, and a final decision will doubtless be obtained.

As my brother officers in Massachusetts have entrusted this business to my care, and as I have devoted some attention to the consideration of the subject, I flatter myself you will not deem it improper in me, in this communication, to make some general observations thereon.

The claim of the army on the public, in my opinion, is so fixed in the unalterable principles of justice, that they ought to feel the fullest confidence of success.

The people of America know, and the public records will ever perpetuate the services which have been rendered, and the manner in which they have been remunerated.—An attempt to prove that a demand of the most sacred nature still remains uncanceled, would be only to shew that a part is less than the whole; or that two, three, four or five, are not equal to twenty. The case in point indeed is stronger than any which can be adduced in its support; and the feelings of every honest heart will overcome every argument which sophistry can devise or ingenuity invent, in opposition to the claim.

Were I to attempt an investigation of the subject, it would appear from the most authentic documents that the public engagement to the army was a certain sum in specie.—That certain military services were to be rendered in consequence of this engagement.—That there has been a full acknowledgment on the part of the United States, that the services have been faithfully performed.—That the public neither discharged the demand in specie, or in other property equivalent in value to specie.—That the certificates, being unsupported by funds, had no other value than what was stamped on them by public opinion.—That this value was sanctioned by the uniform adjudications of the courts of law, through the United States, in causes relating to this kind of property.—That the same principle has been recognized by the legislatures of the different States, in a variety of instances.—That Congress themselves, under the confederation, were impressed with the same sentiments, particularly in the instance of the sale of the lands in the western territory, for a price greatly enhanced in consequence of payment being made in certificates.

From these facts it most conclusively follows, that the claim of the army is not chimerical, but founded in the clear and eternal principles of justice.

If these facts and the conclusion which follows from them, be true, what possible reason can be given why we should not, in a decent and manly manner, ask for our rights? The present government is not only endowed with the ability, but was formed for the express purpose of "establishing justice."—While the services of those men, who cheerfully endured every toil, hardship and danger, which are incident to a military life; who persevered in the service of their country until peace and happiness were restored, remain unrewarded, it can never be said that this purpose has been obtained. The pleasure which every honest American must feel from a reflection on the present prosperous situation of his country, must necessarily be checked by a consideration that those services are unrewarded which modestly need not blush to say, greatly contributed to the attainment of the public felicity which is now enjoyed. Nor is this all.—many of the men who performed those services are now (from the want of the just compensation which was promised to them) pining in indigence, languishing in jails, or compelled to seek a subsistence in the neighbourhood of savages, upon the frontiers of the United States; while nearly every thing they eat, drink or wear, in these distressing situations, is taxed to pay the difference between the former low and the present high value of their certificates to the present holders of them.

To shew that those characters who are entitled to the public consideration can easily be distinguished, that a further compensation can be made only by paying the debt which actually existed at the time when the funding system was adopted, that in doing it no new debt will be created, and the purchasers of aliened securities will not be affected, or any interference be made with any systems which have been adopted, I beg leave to present the following statement.

- The army may be divided into four classes—
1. Those whose terms of service expired the 1st of January, 1776.
  2. Those whose terms of service expired the 1st of January, 1777.
  3. Those who enlisted in the year 1777 for three years, or during the war. The term of service of those who enlisted for three years expired in the year 1780.
  4. Those who enlisted in the year 1780.

The first and second class have no well founded claims, because, there was no depreciation on the money at the time they were paid.—The fourth class, perhaps, have no claim in equity, because the large bounties they received, were a full equivalent for their services.—The third class, with the officers, remain only to be considered.—They depended wholly on the stipulations of Congress.—This class having served during the principal part of the war, received certificates in payment, the value of which has

been fully considered.—They returned home under the disadvantages of having the habits of their former occupations impaired by their military pursuits, their property and connections deranged and lost, and their families involved for a necessary support.—Thus circumstanced, necessity compelled them to dispose of their certificates for the current price in the market.

After the present government was established, provision was made for these certificates, wherever they were found.—By that provision the purchasers received an immense advantage.—The public however saved a part of the debt which was originally due—two per cent. for ten years on the principal of the whole debt, and half the interest which had accumulated.—This remnant now remains, and in paying it no more than the original debt will be discharged.

The rival pretensions to this remnant will be the original holders, who earned the whole by the sweat of their brow, and the present holders, who have already received seven or eight hundred per cent. on the money which they advanced.

In the name of justice, equity, and good conscience, which claim is to be preferred? Every man will answer, that of the soldier; unless his feelings are steered against every principle of honor, good faith, and gratitude.

This remnant therefore, so far as it extends to our own original claims, may be appropriated with great propriety to relieve the sufferings of the foregoing description of men. In addition to this, there can be no doubt but Congress will be disposed to make a liberal grant of land in the western territory, for the same purpose,—for it is not to be forgotten that those vast possessions, on which has been founded the pleasing expectation of sinking the whole of the public debt, are the fruits of those toils which the government is now called upon to compensate.—I have only, sir, to request you to take the earliest opportunity to make this communication known to the officers of your line, and I sincerely hope at the opening of the next session of Congress, they will think proper to make the application.—I am, with every sentiment of respect, in behalf of the officers of the Massachusetts line of the late army,

YOUR MOST OBEYANT SERVANT,  
WILLIAM HULL.



CONGRESS.

PHILADELPHIA.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
THURSDAY, MARCH 8.

Debate on the resolution reported by a select committee—That the Secretary of the Treasury be directed to report his opinion to the House, on the best mode of raising those additional supplies which the public service may require for the current year.

(Mr. Findley's speech concluded.)

MR. FINDLEY—It, as it is alleged, the Secretary of the Treasury framing revenue systems, is better calculated to support public credit and gives the business a greater facility in its passage through the House—I say if this is true, it proves the influence to be dangerous in a high degree—Certainly public credit and the means of supporting it, ought to depend only on the will of the legislature, and neither on the wisdom nor the caprice of a minister; indeed if it stands upon any other authority or influence, it is not fixed upon stable ground—for the legislature may, and will some time or other, act upon its own principles, and in this case the change of systems may be the more sensible. Gentlemen are wrong in arguing from the old government to the new—the old government was not vested with powers, nor possessed of resources for the support of public credit; therefore the not supporting it cannot be ascribed to the minister's not originating the systems.

The gentlemen say that it is proper the Secretary should be permitted to accompany his report with arguments, in order to explain the principles thereof, and state the facts with which it is connected.—I wholly object to a minister's dictating or propounding revenue systems, and still more to his supporting them with arguments; as it is carrying the influence of the executive administration to a still greater extent.—The President has a constitutional right to communicate information, to recommend such business as he may think expedient, and to exercise a limited negative after the bills have passed both Houses.—But if the President was to claim a right to originate a money-bill, it would be judged contrary to the principles of the government, and dangerous to liberty.—How much more dangerous, and I had almost said degrading, is it to transfer that power to a temporary minister, not chosen by the people nor responsible to them.

But one gentleman says that this is made the Secretary's duty, by the law which constitutes