

The National Intelligencer,

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WASHINGTON ADVERTISER.

VOL. I. WASHINGTON CITY, PRINTED BY SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH, NEW-JERSEY AVENUE, NEAR THE CAPITOL. No. XVII.

FIVE DOLLS. PER ANN.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8th, 1800.

PAID IN ADVANCE.

WASHINGTON CITY.

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, December 5, 1800.

Mr. MACON, from the Committee of Claims, made a report against the petition of Oliver Pollock, which was read, and ordered to lie on the table.

Mr. H. LEE moved that the House do go into a committee of the whole on the bill "directing the erection of a Mausoleum to GEORGE WASHINGTON."

On which motion the house divided, Ayes 35, Noes 31. Mr. MORRIS took the chair.

The Chairman after reading the bill through, proceeded to read it by paragraphs. The first section is as follows;

Sec. 1. "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That a Mausoleum of American granite and marble, in a pyramidal form, one hundred feet square at the base, and of a proportionate height, shall be erected in testimony of the love and gratitude of the citizens of the United States, to GEORGE WASHINGTON.

MR. ALLSTON, after some remarks which we were unable to hear from the remoteness of our position, moved an amendment to the first section, which was, in substance, that a Monument of marble be erected in the Capitol, at the City of Washington, commemorative of the great events of the military and political life of GEORGE WASHINGTON.

MR. H. LEE spoke for several minutes without our being able to hear in connection a single sentence. The amount of his remarks appeared to be, that during the last session the house, after long debate, had declared itself in favor of a Mausoleum, and that as no reasons had been assigned for a change of opinion, he hoped they would persevere in the deliberate result of their judgment.

MR. OTIS was ready to acknowledge himself unacquainted with many of the circumstances embraced by the subject. He, therefore, wished additional information to that which he had received. His present opinion was that a Mausoleum was preferable to a Monument. He acknowledged that in forming this opinion, he had felt great deference for the judgment of the committee which had recommended it. It was undoubtedly a subject but little understood. The formation of a proper decision depended upon a concurrence of several circumstances, upon a comparison of the expence with the value of the object to be accomplished. Besides this it had many peculiar features not comprehended by every gentleman. He thought these considerations sufficient to induce the house to decline voting for the amendment, whereby the plan of the committee, who had maturely considered the subject in all its relations, would be frustrated, unless stronger reasons were assigned than he had yet heard.

MR. NICHOLAS observed that the Bill directed the erection of a Mausoleum of certain dimensions, to ascertain the expence of which an estimate had been made. But that estimate was not satisfactory. It was made without information. The sum to be expended was not fixed. It might vastly exceed any sum now contemplated. The Mausoleum was to consist of a huge ugly mass of stones heaped upon one another, to raise which a heavy and useless expence would be incurred. And what was the object? It was to perpetuate the memory of George Washington. Was the memory of that great man to be perpetuated by a heap of large inanimate objects?

The best way in which his fame could be preserved, would be by bringing his ashes from the place where they now lay, by depositing them in the capitol at the will of the nation, in interring them in such a manner as had never heretofore been done, in placing over them a plain tablet, on which every man could write what his heart dictated. This, and this only, was the basis of his fame. It was not to be blazoned by figures or representations of any other sort. It consisted in the undecaying recollection of his virtues. It must live on the national feeling, & this called not for useless expence. Twenty thousand Dollars was as competent to its expression, as two hundred thousand. He hoped, therefore, the amendment would be adopted, and that the terms which related to military and political achievements would be omitted. He hoped a plain monument would be erected.

His preference of a monument to a mausoleum arose not from any indisposition to celebrate the memory of our American hero. He could say as much in his praise as any man. Neither a committee of Congress, nor the four Secretaries, on whom the bill devolved the superintendance, felt more zeal for the character of this great man than he did.

MR. NOTT did not rise to consume the time of the Committee by going at large into an examination of the subject; but to explain the reasons for the vote he meant to give. He had last session cooperated most cheerfully in all those measures which had been pursued to express the national sensibility at the loss of that great and immortal character. In the feelings of gratitude which his services excited, no man could outdo him. Among other measures he had been friendly to the erection of a mausoleum. But on more reflection he had changed his opinion. He did not believe that a huge mass of stones would add to the reputation of Washington, or be more expressive of national affection than a marble monument. This being the case, he preferred the latter, because it was the least expensive.

MR. GRISWOLD hoped the amendment would not prevail. It was the object of the bill to raise a monument which should last for ages, and which should be a perpetual memorial of the gratitude of America. Such would not be the case, if the proposition made by the gentleman from North Carolina should be adopted. The monument proposed by him might be broken and destroyed by a lawless mob or by a set of school boys. For his part, he would not consent to raise such a monument to the memory of a man who had deserved so well of his country.

The bill proposed the erection of a monument that would stand unimpaired for ages. It is true, that it will not perpetuate the fame of Washington; his fame required nothing which we could do to give it perpetuity; but it will perpetuate the gratitude of the country. It will be a structure that will command respect; it will be pointed to our children; they will enter it with reverence, as the spot in which the ashes of this great man are deposited.

It was undoubtedly a subject of sentiment; and subjects of such a kind must be guided by feeling. Various opinions, therefore, may naturally be expected. His opinion was that the national sentiment called for the erection of a structure correspondent in size to the character of the man to whom it was raised.

The general outlines of the bill might now be adopted; and if there existed a variance of opinion the subordinate members of it might be modified.

MR. H. LEE said, if it were the wish of gentlemen to avoid the adoption of measures commemorative of the talents of the great man we have lost, it would be candid in them to tell us so at once. For his part he saw little difference between the adoption of the amendment and the rejection of every plan proposed that was adequate to the occasion. Sir, said General Lee, there is not a rich man in Europe who loses his mistress that does not raise a trophy to her memory; and shall it be said that we, who have sustained the most irreparable loss in the death

of our chief, shall it be said that we refuse to pay him those honors which are lavished so liberally upon such inferior objects? If you do not mean to come forward on the occasion, say so—Then we shall understand the reasons of opposition to the ground taken by this house last session. As yet no reasons had been assigned for abandoning it—We then declared that we would act. We exhibited a spirit worthy of the immortal Washington, worthy of the dignified character of this house.

But should this honorable spirit, kindled by an enthusiasm in the virtues and talents of our departed benefactor, subside, and be chilled by the adoption of the proposed amendment, he would condole with the house; and would rather they would be silent for ever than disgrace themselves and their country by so subordinate an act.

It is true, Sir, that the celebrity and the glory of Washington hang not on our standards—History will transmit to posterity the lustre of his fame glittering with untarnished purity. It is not in our power either to increase or diminish it. But, Sir, we may imitate his virtues and his great example. We are deeply interested in holding them forth as illustrious models to our sons. Is there, then, I ask you, any other mode for perpetuating the memory of such transcendent virtues, so strong, so impressive, as that which we propose. The grandeur of the pile, we wish to raise, will impress a sublime awe on all who behold it. It will survive the present generation. It will receive the homage of our children's children; and they will learn that the truest way to gain honor amidst a free people is to be useful, to be virtuous.

This will not be the act of an individual. It will be the act of a Government expressing the will of a Great Nation—Seize then, I pray you, seize with rapture the occasion that is now presented, thankful to the Supreme disposer of events for giving you an opportunity of rearing some future Washington. This is a great object; from then upon all the little efforts made to defeat it.

It is certainly true that if you erect a Mausoleum, you must expend some public money. But are you not the guardians of the public treasure? Does not the selection of the best objects to which to appropriate it, devolve on you? And can there be a greater, a more patriotic purpose than this? Is it not your great duty to promote the public good; and can that be more completely promoted in any other way? The sum asked is seventy thousand dollars. Who can shew me in what other manner the same good can be effected by so small a sum?

But, it is said, that the bill vests a discretion in the Secretaries, and they may exceed the estimate. But, Sir, are the Secretaries unworthy of confidence? Do not we know that we may safely rely upon them? Besides, if thought expedient, the expenditure may be limited. Thus surely, without prodigality on the one hand, or parsimony on the other, you may do honor to yourselves and your country.

MR. MACON did not pretend to know much about that kind of things proposed by the bill; but he believed, from the little he did know, that such a thing had not been attempted for a thousand years. The expence, attending the proposed measure, had been treated lightly. For himself, he was not disposed to consider seventy thousand dollars a trifling sum. He thought it a great sum; and believed every man in the country thought as he did. In forming his idea of any particular sum he was not carried away by the visionary notions of speculation; he looked at the labour it required to produce it: and he well knew how hardly earned was the money from which this enormous sum must proceed.

He further believed that no man could tell how much the Mausoleum would cost. The seventy thousand dollars was probably only a beginning; and when the object was once begun, experience tells us that we must finish it at all events, let it cost what it might. The base was fixed at a hundred feet. Why not decide its other proportions? Did not the silence of the bill on this point shew the ignorance of gentlemen? All was doubt. What strength-

ened his opinion of the total want of information, was the exhibition last session of two estimates; one of which was predicated on a base of sixty feet, and required sixty-seven thousand dollars; the other was predicated on a base of one hundred feet, making the Structure nearly three times as large, and required only seventy thousand dollars. Could this be correct? Both estimates certainly could not be true. The probability was that neither could be depended upon.

For what purpose was this great mass to be raised? He saw no good purpose likely to be answered by it under the sun. Can stones shew gratitude? If the nation wished to shew its gratitude, let them do it by making a history of the life of Washington a school-book. Our children then will learn and imitate his virtues—This will be rendering the highest tribute to his fame, by making it the instrument of enlightening the mind and improving the heart.

While there are such rational modes of distinguishing the memory of Washington, can Congress so far forget the interest of the nation; can they so far forget their own duty, as to expend Millions in acts of useless and pernicious ostentation? Since the invention of types, monuments are good for nothing. The records of history will remain long after their decay or destruction.

We are told that the best mode of perpetuating the memory of Washington is to erect a Mausoleum. I have heard, said Mr. Macon, of Arifides, I have heard of Hamden; but I have never heard of monuments raised to their memories. Yet their virtues shine as bright now, as they did while they lived.—I have heard of a place called Westminster Abbey, full of the monuments of kings; yet, notwithstanding these grand memorials, I have heard very little of them after they left this world, and I question very much whether any man, let him have heard what he may, if he were to go there could tell one of them from the other.

But, it is said, that the monument, proposed by the amendment, may be thrown down and destroyed by mobs or school-boys. God forbid that this should ever be the case. I do not believe, said Mr. Macon, this to be possible. If it were made of glass, frail as it is, it would be safe; all would revere, all would respect it.

The house is told by one gentleman, who advocates the Mausoleum, that a rich man in Europe cannot lose his mistress without raising a monument to her memory. Was the gentleman serious when he made this remark? Would he place the memory of Washington on a footing with that of a rich man's mistress? Better, Sir, said Mr. Macon, far better would it be, more honorable to the Government, and more conformable to the wish of our deceased friend, to devote the seventy thousand dollars, designed for a Mausoleum, to the education of the poor. Then, indeed, we might flatter ourselves with having extended the Empire of his virtues, by making those understand and imitate them, who, uninstructed, could not comprehend them.

If he thought that by raising a magnificent monument to Washington, he could give duration to his fame, or carry his name into a single country which it had not yet reached, he would give the measure his support. But no such effect would be produced. It might indeed adorn this City; and that was the only plausible argument in favor of it.

Before gentlemen act in this business, let them look to Egypt; there they will behold precedents in profusion; men made gods, and statues and monuments and mausolea covering the whole face of the country; but where will they find the virtues or the talents of the men they meant to commemorate? Now is the time to make a stand against this monument mania. Washington is admired and beloved by all. No one can be charged with a desire to diminish his fame by opposing a useless expenditure of money.—The precedent we now establish will be suspicious to our future measures. If we