Proceedings of Congress.

REPRESENTATIVES

MONDAY, March 8.

HE bill for the remission and mitigation of fines, forfeitures and penalties, in certain cases, was read a third time, and passed.

The bill for promoting the progress of useful arts was read a third time, and ordered to lie on the table

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On motion, the consideration of the bill accepting he cession of a certain territory ceded to congress by the state of North-Carolina, sent from the senate, was postponed until Thursday next, and then to be taken up in a committee of the whole.

The resolve sent from the senate, directing the collectors in the several states not to grant clearances to any vessel without having such documents and manifests as are by law specified, was referred to Messieurs White, Contee and Tucker.

Mr. Livermore, from the committee respecting the alaries of the clerks of the commissioners of accounts, c. reported and brought in a bill for the purpose intended, which was read the first time.

A report from the secretary at war, on the petition f colonel John Ely, was read and laid on the table. A message was received from the president by Mr. Lear, transmitting the ratification of 11 of the 12 areles of amendments proposed by congress to the constitutionn of the United States, by the state of Delaware,

the consideration of the first article being postponed. The speaker presented the petition of Gissord Dally, door-keeper of the house, respecting services by him performed during the receis of congress, was read and referred to Messieurs Livermore, Sylvester and Lee.

Mr. White, from the committee who were instructed to bring in a bill for preventing the exportation of goods not legally inspected, brought in one for that purpose, which was read the first time.

Mr. Ames presented a petition of David Oliphant, late director for the hospitals of the southern department, which was read and laid on the table.

On motion of Mr. Hartley, the report of the committee to whom was referred the memorials respecting the abolition of flavery, was read a second time, and, after confiderable debate, Tuesday the 16th instant was

appointed for its discussion. Mr. Livermore, from the committee to whom was referred the petition of Gifford Dally, reported, That he be allowed two dollars per diem, for ninety-fix days

services, during the recess of congress. The house then went into a committee on the report of the secretary of the treasury, the resolve for assuming

the state debts being under consideration. Mr. White and Mr. Stone spoke strenuously against the adoption of the measure at the present time, and Mr. Gerry in favour thereof; but the usual hour of adjournment being arrived, on motion of Mr. Vining the committee rofe.

Mr. Clymer asked leave of absence for a few days, which was granted.

The house then adjourned until 11 o'clock to-mor-

TUESDAY, March 9.

The order of the day was called for on the report of the secretary of the treasury respecting the assumption of the state debts.

Mr. Benson in the chair.

Mr. Sherman spoke in favour of the assumption, and thought it would be agreeable to the people to have the public debt all under one common stock; it would be for the interest of the particular states as well as the public good. He therefore thought it would be best to agree to the proposition.

Mr. Bland said the assumption of the state debts was the only means to bind the gordian knot of juffice and equity in the United States, and if it was not immediately adopted, the evil which had been complained of, respecting speculators, would be multiplied ten fold. Some states would exert themselves; others would not; and in this fituation the speculators would know when to take the advantage.

The secretary of the treasury has reported ways and means for paying the state debts; and it cannot be difputed but that one of these two alternatives will eventually be adopted-either the states individually must levy taxes to pay their debts, or congress must do it, in order to keep up the peace and credit of the country.

Mr. Bland then faid he was highly pleased with the amendments proposed by his worthy colleague, which provided for a door to be kept open for the liquidation of the state debts. Had the 4th resolution been adopted without this amendment, the state fecurities might have fuffered a fall, fuch as would have reduced them to one shilling in the pound, or less perhaps; but with

their value. Congress, said Mr. Bland, must sooner ples. or later have taken up this business. He then concould not think of voting any other way than for the

Mr. Scott then rose and said that he was well aware that adopting the proposition would operate in favour of some states, to the certain prejudice of others, and it would be well if a day of retribution could be fixed, that might equalize the business; but he could not look forward to that day—he feared it would never arrive. He was well disposed to consent that the actual debts yet unpaid should be taken into the common mais, and a ratio struck, notwithstanding he had been against a funding system. Yet, under the impression that it was a great national effort, and that the state debts were invote for the proposition.

Mr. Lee faid, when he confidered the great respect which was due to the committee, and the character of the officer who had reported, he thought it his duty to ment, and will have to pay into the common stock. declare his reasons for the part he should take in the business before them. He acknowledged that the asfumption would be just if it could be effected on right principles; but the exertions of the individual states would be found unequal, and it would require two or three years to bring about a system of taxation. He dation can be made; and he therefore moved for a resolution to that effect.

If it will take two years, faid Mr. Lee, to collect the voice of unanimity and equity, why precipitate the business at present? Every gentleman who confiders well of this will agree, that more fatisfaction would be given to the public mind by more deliberate procedures and it would be more agreeable to the constitution.

Mr. Page was apprehensive that, unless a fair settlement could be had, instead of consolidating the interest of the states, this measure would tend to create more jealousies, and renovate the old disputes which had nearly subsided between the parties, in many states .-He was willing that Massachusetts should be paid for their extraordinary exertions and the Penobicot expedition, and South-Carolina for their's in building a frigate, &c. But he thought it would be better policy to leave the settlement of the state accounts to them-

Mr. Page used several other arguments, and thought that a more proper time might be found for going into this business; he therefore wished for a postponement.

Mr. Jackson said that most of the arguments which he had heard, in favour of the resolution, had already been answered. Let us examine, said he, the taxes proposed by the secretary of the treasury. The excise is a tax that has always been odious to the people of most of the states; the abolition of the ten per cent. allowance on turnage to domestic owners of vessels, and the ten per cent. additional duty on foreign bottoms, will affect the southern states most, the principal imports being articles for the uic of the husbandmen; so there appeared that, in this instance, it operates like direct taxation on agriculture, equal to a tax on houses or lands. Salt also was an article on which a tax would be thought

session, when some gentlemen who, perhaps, had now spoken differently, had then complained and reprobated affume the state debts, we will not want their excises. He denied the position which some members had argued for "that congress could collect taxes in the states better than the states themselves;" for congress cannot go beyond certain limits in taxation, even if a case of necessity required it, but the states themselves could go beyond those bounds; it was therefore more in their power to fund their own debts, than in the power of congreis.

Has there been a fingle answer offered by the gentlemen on the other fide of this question to the charge of injustice, which would be incurred by taxing the original creditors a second time. He thought there was no prospect of retribution, no justice in the proposition, not even with regard to its expediency: it will not prevent speculations, for speculations have already taken place; the state certificates are now in the hands of a third person-the debt will be enhanced, &c.

Mr. Jackson concluded by confessing, that if he could be convinced even of its utility, it should have his fanction; but as no arguments had been offered which were fufficient to make him change his opinion, he therefore would be against the proposition, and he only claimed the right of general justice.

Mr. Bland role to reply to some gentlemen whom, he faid, had appeared to fqueamish with regard to funding laws and taxation. When the conflitution was framing, it was well known that it would go to an abforgation of all the official revenues of the United States it was now too late to be squeamish on those subjects. He thought the military debts were the debts of the

the amendment they would probably stand nearer to union; for these reasons he adhered to his first princi-

Mr. Page thought the powers of congress should not cluded by professing that he spoke from the heart, and be so greatly extended, but in cases of urgent neces-

> Mr. Vining then role, and apologized for his long absence from the house, which, he said, had been unavoidable; but, although he had been absent, he had been employed in collecting the best information postible upon the subject.

When he viewed it as respecting a state, it appeared iniquitous, unjust and inequitable, but when taken in a larger extent, as respecting the United States, he confessed he was puzzled how to determine, and he scarcely knew where to apply for information: sacrifices were to be made upon the altar of accommodation, and the fate of America, perhaps, depended upon curred in the common cause of the union, he would the decision of this question. Some states have, perhaps, issued securities for their own particular advantage, which would be unjust to charge to the United States; whilst other states were in a contrary predica-

Here Mr. Vining expatiated upon the different lights in which the subject appeared to him, under various circumstances; but he inferred at length that confusion must ensue, if the debts were not assumed. Again, when he considered that direct taxation was to be the consequence, he was puzzled; yet this alternative had was willing to assume the debts now, if they were to not the dreadful appearances to his mind, which had be provided for by the United States as foon as a liqui- been depicted by fome gentlemen, for the great influx of money, which would follow the adoption of the measure, would render even direct taxation easy-it would not be felt in the degree which had been sup-

> The state of Delaware, he knew, would suffer by assumption; for they had funded their debt, and provided for the interest. Another circumstance he would mention from information, that fome states have made advances for their own particular advantage, without regard to the union. However, enough has been said by the gentlemen who have so ably debated this subject; it was therefore unnecessary for him to add any thing. He only wished to consider it in a large and general scale, and observed, that partial evil is oftentimes an universal good.

> He was forry some gentlemen had not brought forward a resolution providing, that the states who had paid off more than their proportion, and had the certificates now in their treasuries, would be allowed to discount them against the United States, &c.

> Mr. Vining concluded with an handsome figure, comparing his arguments to a vessel launched into the federal ocean. He wished that the business could have been postponed with propriety, but seeing that gentlemen were anxious to bring it to a decision after so long a discussion, he could therefore wish it were hastened. A few words more were added by Mr. Gerry, Mr.

> Page and Mr. Sedgwick, when This important question was at length put from the chair, on the 4th resolution, respecting the assumption

> of the state debts with Mr. Madison's amendment, and

For the affirmative, For the negative, The report of Joseph Nourse, register of the treasu-

ry of the United States, on the memorial of Robert Here Mr. Jackson referred to the debates of the last . Morris, late superintendent of finance, was read, setting forth, that he had made inquiry into the case and had found that the accounts of the faid Robert Morris the idea of taxing articles of this kind. If we do not had been regularly entered into the register office, and settled some time past.

A printed statement had been delivered, and proper investigation already made out, which render it unnecessary for congress to order any commissioners in the business, or create any new expence. The said accounts were closed the 1st of November, 1784. Every thing that come into the treasury was debited from the 20th February, 1781, to 1st November, 1784, and amounted to 8,177,431 72-90ths dollars; and all the payments made during the faid period were 8,155,405 dollars; which left a balance in the treasury on the 1st of November, 1784, of 21,826 dollars.

Congress of the United States.

At the second session, begun and held at the city of New-York, on Monday the fourth of January, one thousand seven hundred and ninety.

An ACT providing for the enumeration of the INHABITANTS of the UNITED STATES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the marshals of the several districts of the United States, shall be and they are hereby authorised and required to cause the number of the inhabitants with their respective districts to be taken, omitting, in such enumeration, Indians not taxed, and diffinguishing free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, from all others, distinguishing also the sexes and colours of free persons, and the free males of fixteen