

there were those, who would have stopped you, in the career of your measures, & held you back, as by the skirts of your garments, from the precipice, over which you are plunging, & drawing after you the Government of your Country.

It is time for Congress to examine & decide for itself. It has taken things on trust long enough. It has followed Executive recommendation, till there remains no hope of finding safety in that path. What is there, Sir, that makes it the duty of this people now to grant new confidence to the administration, & to surrender their most important rights to its discretion? On what merits of its own does it rest this extraordinary claim? When it calls thus loudly for the treasure & the lives of the people, what pledge does it offer, that it will not waste all in the same preposterous pursuits, which have hitherto engaged it? In the failure of all past promises, do we see any assurance of future performance? Are we to measure out our confidence in proportion to our disgraces, & now at last to grant away every thing, because all that we have heretofore granted has been wasted or misapplied? What is there in our condition, that bespeaks a wise or an able Government? What is the evidence, that the protection of the country is the object principally regarded?

Conscription is chosen as the most prom-

ising instrument, both of overcoming reluctance to the Service, & of subduing the difficulties which arise from the deficiencies of the Exchequer. The administration asserts the right to fill the ranks of the regular army by compulsion. It contends that it may now take one out of every twenty-five men, & any part or the whole of the rest, whenever its occasions require. Persons thus taken by force, & put into an army, may be compelled to serve there, during the war, or for life. They may be put on any service, at home or abroad, for defence or for invasion, according to the will & pleasure of Government. This power does not grow out of any invasion of the country, or even out of a state of war. It belongs to Government at all times, in peace as well as in war, & is to be exercised under all circumstances, according to its mere discretion. This, Sir, is the amount of the principle contended for by the Secretary of War.

Is this, Sir, consistent with the character of a free Government? Is this civil liberty? Is this the real character of our Constitution? No, Sir, indeed it is not. The Constitution is libelled, foully libelled. The people of this country have not established for themselves such a fabric of despotism. They have not purchased at a vast expense of their own treasure & their own blood a Magna Charta to be slaves. Where is it written in the Constitution, in what article