

4th CONGRESS.]

No. 90.

[2d SESSION.

DEBATES OF CONGRESS.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DECEMBER 13, 1796.

Mr. WILLIAM SMITH, from the committee to whom were referred the petitions of Thomas Lloyd and Thomas Carpenter, proposing to take down in shorthand, and publish, for the use of the House, the debates of the present session, reported the following resolution:

Resolved, That the clerk of this House cause the members to be furnished, during the present session, with copies of the debates of Congress printed in this city, [Philadelphia,] such as the members respectively shall choose, to be delivered at their lodgings: provided, they do not exceed the price at which subscribers, citizens of Philadelphia, are furnished with them.

4th CONGRESS.]

No. 91.

[2d SESSION.

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DECEMBER 21, 1796.

Mr. MADISON, from the committee to whom was committed the memorial of the commissioners appointed under the "Act establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the Government of the United States," and to whom also was referred that part of the President's speech relating to a national university, reported the following resolution:

That it is expedient, at present, that authority should be given, as prayed for by the said memorial, to proper persons to receive and hold in trust pecuniary donations, in aid of the appropriations already made, towards the establishment of a university within the District of Columbia.

To the honorable the Congress of the United States of America: The commissioners appointed under the act entitled "An act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the Government of the United States," respectfully represent:

That the institution of a national university within the United States has been the subject of much conversation; that all men seem to agree in the utility of the measure, but that no effectual means have hitherto been proposed to accomplish it; that recent transactions seem to call upon them, in a more particular manner than on their fellow-citizens at large, to promote this desirable object: they therefore take the liberty to state that, after the temporary and permanent seat of the Government of the United States was located by the President, agreeably to the act of Congress above mentioned, the proprietors of the lands adjacent to, and including the sites designated for the public buildings, ceded a large territory for the purpose of a federal city, and by their deeds of cession authorized the President of the United States for the time being to appropriate such portions thereof as he should judge necessary to public use. In virtue of this power the President has appropriated nineteen acres one rood and twenty-one perches, part of the land so ceded, for the site of a national university. That he has likewise declared to them his intention to grant, in perpetuity, fifty shares in the navigation of the Potomac river, as soon as the system assumes a shape which will enable him to do it with effect; and that they have no doubt, when that event shall take place, but many other liberal donations will be made, as well in Europe as in America; that the money actually paid on those fifty shares is five thousand pounds sterling; that the navigation is now nearly completed; and that all who are acquainted with the river Potomac and the adjacent country are sensible that the produce of those shares will be very great. They do not think it necessary to dilate on a subject, in respect to which there seems to be but one voice. The preservation of the morals and of the political principles of our youth; the saving of the expense of foreign education; the drawing to our shores the youth of other countries, particularly those attached to republican government; and the proportionate accession of wealth, the removal, or at least the diminution, of those local prejudices which at present exist in the several States, by the uniformity of education and the opportunity of a free interchange of sentiments and information among the youth from all the various parts of the Union, which would consequently take place, may, with certainty, be accounted among the benefits resulting from such an institution. We flatter ourselves it is only necessary to bring this subject within the view of the Federal Legislature. We think you will eagerly seize the occasion to extend to it your patronage, to give birth to an institution which may perpetuate and endear your names to the latest posterity.

How far it would be proper to go, at the present moment, we presume not to determine; but would beg leave to observe that, although the ultimate organization of the institution may be postponed to a future period, when the means of establishing and supporting it shall be more fully ascertained, yet much good will arise from a law authorizing proper persons to receive pecuniary donations and to hold estates, real and personal, which may be granted by deed, or devised by last will and testament, for the use of the intended establishment, with proper regulations for securing the due application of the moneys paid. Without some provisions of that kind (to the establishing of which we consider the Federal Legislature alone competent) the benevolent wishes of the virtuous and well-disposed will be rendered abortive.