

Andrew Jackson to 2nd Division Volunteers, March 7, 1812, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

DIVISION ORDERS.

Hermitage, March 7, 1812

VOLUNTEERS TO ARMS!

Citizens! Your goverment has at last yielded to the impulse of the nation. Your impatience is no longer restrained. The hour of national vengeance is now at hand. The eternal enemies of american prosperity are again to be taught to respect your rights, after having been compelled to feel, once more, the power of your arms. War is on the point of breaking out between the united States and the King of great Britain! and the martial hosts of america are summoned to the Tented Fields!¹

¹ The last sentence in this paragraph is perhaps not in Jackson's handwriting.

Citizens! An honourable confidence in your courage and your patriotism has been displayed by the general goverment. To raise a force for the protection of your rights she has not deemed it necessary to recur to the common mode of filling the ranks of an army. No drafts or compulsory levies are now to be made.

A simple invitation is given to the young men of the country to arm for their own and their countries rights. On this invitation 50,000 volunteers, full of martial ardor, indignant at their countries wrongs and burning with impatience to illustrate their names by some signal exploit, are expected to repair to the national standard.

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Could it be otherwise? Could the general government deem it necessary to force *us* to take the field? We, who for so many years have demanded a war with such clamorous importunity—who, in so many resolutions of town meetings and legislative assemblies, have offered our lives and fortunes for the defence of our country—who, so often and so publicly, have charged this verry government with a pusillanimous deference to foreign nations, because she had resolved to exhaust the arts of negociation before she made her last appeal to the power of arms. No under such circumstances it was impossible for the goverment to conceive that compulsion would be wanting to bring us into the field. And shall we now disappoint the expectations which we ourselves have excited? Shall we give the lie to the professions which we have so often and so publicly made? Shall we, who have clamoured for war, now skulk into a corner the moment war is about to be declared? Shall we, who for so many years have been tendering our lives and fortunes to the general goverment, now come out with evasions and pitifull excuses the moment tender is accepted?

But another and a nobler feeling should impell us to action. *Who are we? and for what are we going to fight?* are we the titled Slaves of George the third? the military conscripts of Napolon the great? or the frozen peasants of the Rusian Czar? No—we are the free born sons of america; the citizens of the only republick now existing in the world; and the only people on earth who possess rights, liberties, and property which the[y] dare call their own.

For what are we going to fight? To satisfy the revenge or ambition of a corrupt and infatuated ministry? to place another and another diadem on the head of an apostate republican general? to settle the ballance of power among an assasin tribe of Kings and emperors? “or to preserve to the prince of Blood, and the grand dignitaries of the empire” their overgrown wealth and exclusive privileges? No. Such splendid atchievements as these can form no part of the objects of an american war. But we are going to fight for the reestablishment of our national charector, misunderstood and vilified at home and abroad; for the protection of our maritime citizens, impressed on board British ships of war and

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compelled to fight the battles of our enemies against ourselves; to vindicate our right to a free trade, and open a market for the productions of our soil, now perishing on our hands because the *mistress of the ocean* has forbid us to carry them to any foreign nation; in fine, to seek some indemnity for past injuries, some security against future aggressions, by the conquest of all the British dominions upon the continent of north america.

Here then is the true and noble principle on which the energies of the nation should be brought into action: *a free people compelled to reclaim by the power of their arms the right which god has bestowed upon them, and which an infatuated King has said they shall not enjoy.*

In such a contest will the people shrink from the support of their government; or rather will the[y] shrink from the support of themselves? Will the[y] abandon their great unprescriptible rights, and tamely surrender that illustrious national charector which was purchased with so much blood in the war of the Revolution? No. Such infamy shall not fall upon us. The advocates of Kingly power shall not enjoy the triumph of seeing a free people desert themselves, and crouch before the slaves of a foreign tyrant. The patriotic tender of voluntary service of the invincible grays Capt. F. Stumps independant company and a correspondent display of patriotism by the voluntary tender of service from the counties of Davidson Sumner Smith and Rutherford, is a sure pledge that the free sons of the west will never *submit to such degradation.*

But the period of youth is the season for martial exploits; and accordingly it is upon the young men of america that the eye of the nation is now fixed. They in a peculiar degree are the proper subjects of a volunteer expedition. To say nothing of the generous courage which distinguishes that period of life, they, from their particular situation, can quit their homes at the shortest notice with the least inconvenience to themselves. Unencumbered with families and free from the embarrassment of domestic concerns they are ready at a moments warning to march to any extremity of the republick.

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Should the occupation of the canadas be resolved upon by the general goverment, how pleasing the prospect that would open to the young volunteer, while performing a military *promenade* into a distant country, a succession of new and interesting objects would perpetually fill and delight his imagination the effect of which would be heightened by the war like appearence, the martial music, and the grand evolutions of an army of fifty thousand men.

To view the stupendous works of nature, exemplified in the falls of Niagara and the cataract of Montmorenci; to tread the consecrated spot on which Wolf and Montgomery fell, would of themselves repay the young soldier for a march across the continent. But why should these inducements be held out to the young men of america? They need them not. Animated as they are by an ambition to rival the exploits of Rome, they will never prefer an inglorious sloth, a supine inactivity to the honorable toil of carrying the republican standard to the heights of abraham.

In consideration of all which and to carry into effect the object of the general goverment in demanding a voluntary force, to give to the valiant young men of the second military Division of the state of Tennessee an opportunity to evince their devoted affection to the service of the republick; the Major General of the said division has thereupon ordered

1 That the militia of the second military division of the state of Tennessee be forthwith mustered by the proper officers.

2 That the act of congress for raising a volunteer corps of 50,000 men be read at the head of each company.

3 That all persons willing to volunteer under the said act be immediately *enrolled* formed into companies, officered, and reported to the Major Genl.

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4 The Generals of Brigade, attached to the second division are charged with the prompt execution of these orders.