

were to be paid for within a year, he wrote to the President of Congress: "What do you wish to be thought here of the vicious circle with which you seek to confuse my claims? We will make no payment to M. Beaumarchais until we ascertain the amount of the accounts; we will not ascertain the amount of his accounts, so that we need not pay him. A people which has become powerful and independent may regard, it will be said, gratitude as a private virtue beneath its regard, but a state cannot dispense with being just and paying its debts." The appeal was of no avail. Beaumarchais, as is stated above, offered to accept any referee on the part of the United States, except Arthur Lee. It was Arthur Lee who was appointed to examine the accounts and the fears of Beaumarchais were justified. On the 15th January, 1779, Congress had acknowledged and passed a resolution of thanks, in which it lamented the disappointments he had met with, and that unfortunate circumstances had prevented the execution of its wishes, but that it would take the promptest measures to discharge its debt towards him. In 1781, the amount due was acknowledged to be 3,600,000 livres, equal to \$720,000, but Arthur Lee in 1789, reported that so far from the United States owing Beaumarchais, he was their debtor to the amount of 1,800,906 livres or \$360,000. In 1793, Alexander Hamilton, whose reputation as a financial authority is well known, again examined the accounts and reported that the United States owed Beaumarchais 2,280,000 livres or \$456,000, but neither then was he paid.

By this time the French revolution was in progress. At the age of sixty-one, old even for these years, he was proscribed, fled for refuge to Hamburg, believed himself completely ruined in France, saw for

his only daughter no help in the future but the American debt due him. To this he clung with the energy of despair. From his garret in Hamburg he deluged with appeals Congress, the ministers of the United States, finally the American people. In 1795 he wrote *Au peuple Américain entier*: "Americans! I have served you with untiring zeal; for this I have received in my life time only trouble and pain for my reward; I die your creditor. Let me, dying, bequeath to you my daughter, that you may bestow on her what you owe me. Adopt her as a child of the state. Let her be looked on by you as the child of a citizen. But should you refuse me redress for my heir, despairing, ruined, what would remain but that I pray heaven to grant me a moment's health to come to America? There, feeble in mind and body, in no condition to assert my rights, must I, with proofs in my hand, be borne to the doors of your National Assembly, and holding the cap of liberty, with which no man has more contributed than I to adorn your head, shall say to you: Americans! give alms to your friend, whose accumulated services have had only this reward, *Date obolum Belisario?*"

Four years later, on the 18th May, 1799, Beaumarchais was found dead in bed, his claims still unsettled. It was not till 1835, that a compromise was entered into with his heirs, who received instead of 4,441,171 livres, as settled by Silas Deane in 1781, the sum of 800,000 livres; that is, instead of \$888,234 they received \$160,000, much less than one fifth. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the story of Beaumarchais and his help to the Colonies in the supreme hour of their need, forms no conspicuous part of the history of the United States.

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