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American Intelligence.

NEW-YORK, FEB. 18.

BY LAST EVENING'S NORTHERN MAIL.

From the *Plattsburgh Republican* of the 12th instant.

THE ARMY.—During the last week, immense quantities of military stores, &c. have arrived at this place from French Mills. It is understood that several regiments have marched for Sackett's Harbor, and that the main body of the army will be located at this place, after the public property shall have been removed from French Mills.

The report relative to the capture of a number of British troops, by our army at the west, is undoubtedly without foundation.

Capt. Mayhew came to this village on Sunday evening last, with a flag of truce. He tarried at a public house all night, and on Monday morning took his departure for Canada.

The "Virginia Regiment," respecting which such exaggerated statements have been published, consisted, when it joined the army last fall, of about 550—instead of 800; and now consists of about 400. The statement, therefore, of 600 having been swept away, by a destructive malady, &c. is nearly 150 from the truth.

James W. Wood, Esq. a citizen of Champlain, who was taken by the British in their excursion up the Lake last summer, arrived in town on Sunday last, from Quebec.

We are very credibly informed that the British have, at the Isle Aux Noix, a new vessel of war, to mount 20 guns, and a number of row galleys, nearly completed.

From the *Buffalo Gazette* of Feb. 8.

FORTUNATE ESCAPE.

It is with pleasure, we inform our readers of the escape of Mr. J. A. Baker, (son of Judge Baker) and Lt. Jesse Warner, (son of Deacon Warner, of Phelps, Ontario co.) from captivity in Canada. Barker it will be recollected was taken at Pierce's Tavern, Schlosser, and Warner was wounded and taken at Black Rock.

On Tuesday evening last, Parker and Warner were in the Hospital, 2 miles from Fort George; according to some previous arrangements, they left the hospital which was guarded, and proceeded 2 miles up the river, and formed a raft with rails, and succeeded at much imminent hazard, to cross the Niagara. The river being somewhat choked with ice, they were obliged in a measure, to take the current of the river, and landed only about a mile and a half above Fort Niagara; they then went on in safety to the American camp.

From Mr. Barker we learn, that the force assembled for the invasion of Black Rock and Buffalo was about 300, including Indians and militia; that from the best information he could gain, the British lost or killed 150, and out of between 80 and 100 wounded that were taken across the river, two thirds died of their wounds, that no public or private property of any amount was taken across the river by the British army, from any part of our frontier (save what was taken at Fort Niagara, and what things the savages carried on their backs)—the Canadian militia plundered considerably.

The British have removed the pickets of Fort George and are strengthening Fort Niagara—all their wood they obtain from the Canada side since Gen. John Swift captured their choppers.

Maj. Gen. Riall commands on the Niagara frontier. Has his head quarters on Queenston mountain. The 100th regt. are stationed at present from Chippewa to Fort Erie. Lt. Gen. Drummond has gone to Kingston, and is understood to be preparing a force to go against Sackett's Harbor; he only waits the arrival of two regiments of Highland Scots, which were on their march from Quebec, a fortnight since. A great effort will unquestionably be made to destroy our shipping at that place.

It is said that Gens. Proctor, De Rottenburg and Vincent, are ordered home to England.

It is rumored that the 100th regiment, with all the British Indians is to be sent against Malden.

The British give our militia credit for the spirited manner in which they commenced the action; and had stated unfavourably, that had they held out half an hour longer, they (the British) would have been defeated.

FROM THE WEST.

We have conversed with gentlemen from Detroit, who state, that every thing is yet safe at Fort Detroit, which post is well garrisoned and considered a strong place; that the sickness was very much abated.

Our vessels at Put in Bay are guarded by sailors and regulars.

Very respectable preparations are making at Erie for the protection of our Fleet. The militia are orderly and well-disposed.

Lake Erie continues open, except a few miles above Buffalo.

Congress of the United States.

MR. WEBSTER'S SPEECH.

Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U. S. on the 14th January, 1814, on a Bill making further provision for filling the ranks of the Regular Army, encouraging enlistments and authorising the enlistments for longer periods, of men whose terms of service are about to expire.

Mr. SPEAKER.—It was not my intention to offer myself to your notice on this question. I have changed my purpose only in consequence of the course which the debate took yesterday on an amendment, proposed by me, to one of the subordinate provisions of this bill. The observations to which that occasion gave rise, have induced me to prefer assigning my own reasons for my own vote, rather than to trust to the justice or charity of the times to assign reasons for me.

The design of this bill is to encourage, by means of a very extraordinary bounty, enlistments into the regular army. Laws already existing; and other bills now in progress before the house, provide for the organization of an army of 63,000 men. For the purpose of filling the ranks of that army, the bill before us proposes to give to each recruit a bounty of \$121, and 320 acres of land. It offers also a premium of \$8 to every person, in or out of the army, citizen or soldier, who shall procure an able bodied man to be enlisted.

Before, sir, I can determine for myself, whether so great a military force should be raised, and at so great an expence, I am bound to enquire into the object to which that force is to be applied. If the public exigency shall, in my judgment, demand it—if any object connected with the protection of the country, and the safety of its citizens, shall require it; and if I shall see reasonable ground to believe, that the force, when raised, will be applied to meet that exigency, and yield that protection, I shall not be restrained by any considerations of expence, from giving my support to the measure. I know that the country needs defence, and I am anxious that defence should be provided for it, to the fullest extent and in the promptest manner. But what is the object of this bill? To what service is this army destined when its ranks shall be filled? We are told, sir, that the frontier, is invaded, and that the troops are wanted to repel that invasion. It is too true that the frontier is invaded; that the war, with all its horrors, ordinary and extraordinary, is brought within our own territories; and that the inhabitants, near the country of the enemy, are compelled to fly, lighted by the fires of their own houses, or to stay and meet the foe, unprotected by any adequate aid of government.

But shew me, that by any vote of mine, or any effort of mine, I can contribute to the relief of such distress.—Shew me, that the purpose of government, in this measure, is to provide defence for the frontiers. I aver I see no evidence of any such intention. I have no assurance that this army will be applied to any such object. There are, as was said by my hon. friend from New York, (Mr. Grosvenor) strong reasons to infer the contrary, from the fact, that the forces hitherto raised have not been so applied, in any suitable or sufficient proportion. The defence of our own territory seems hitherto to have been regarded as an object of secondary importance, a duty of a lower order than invasion of the enemy. The army raised last year was competent to defend the frontier. To that purpose, government did not see fit to apply it. It was not competent, as the event proved, to invade with success the provinces of the enemy. To that purpose, however, it was applied. The substantial benefit which might have been obtained, and ought to be obtained, was sacrificed to a scheme of conquest, in my opinion a wild one, commenced without means, prosecuted without plan or concert, and ending in disgrace. Nor is it the inland frontier only that has been left defenceless. The sea-coast has been in many places wholly exposed.—Give me leave to state one instance.—The mouth of one of the largest rivers in the eastern section of the union is defended by a fort mounting 14 guns.—This fort, for a great part of the last season, was holden by one man and one boy only. I state the fact on the authority of an hon. gentleman of this house.—Other cases, almost equally flagrant, are known to have existed; in some of which, interests of a peculiar character and great magnitude have been at stake. With this knowledge of the past I must have evidence of some change in the purposes of administration, before I can vote for this bill, under an expectation that protection will thereby be afforded to either frontier of the union. Of such change there is no intimation. On the contrary, gentlemen tell us explicitly, that the acquisition of Canada is still deemed to be an essential object; and the vote of the house within the last half hour has put the matter beyond doubt. An hon. gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. Sheffey) has proposed an amendment to this bill, limiting the service of the troops to be raised by its provisions, to objects of defence. To the bill thus amended, he offered his support, and would have been cheerfully followed by his friends. The amendment was rejected. It is certain, therefore, that the real object of this proposition to increase the military force to any extraordinary degree, by extraordinary means, is to act over again the scenes of the two last campaigns. To that object I cannot lend my support. I am already satisfied with the exhibition.

Give me leave to say, sir, that the tone on

the subject of the conquest of Canada seems to be not a little changed. Before the war that conquest was represented to be quite an easy affair.—The valiant spirits who meditated it, were only fearful lest it should be too easy to be glorious. They had no apprehension, except that resistance would not be so powerful as to render the victory splendid. These confident expectations were, however, accompanied with a commendable spirit of moderation, the true mark of great minds, and it was gravely said, that we ought not to make too large a grasp for dominion, but stop in our march of conquest northward, somewhere about the line of perpetual congelation, and to leave to our enemies or others, the residue of the continent to the pole. How happens it, sir, that this country, so easy of acquisition, and over which, according to the prophecies, we were to have been, by this time legislating dividing, into states and territories, is not yet ours? Nay, sir, how happens it, that we are not even free of invasion ourselves; that gentlemen here call on us, by all the motives of patriotism, to assist in the defence of our own soil; and pour-tray before us the state of the frontier, by frequent and animated allusions to all those topics, which the modes of Indian warfare usually suggest?

This, Sir, is not what we were promised. This is not the entertainment to which we were invited. This is no fulfilment of those predictions, which it was deemed obstinacy itself not to believe. This is not that harvest of greatness and glory the seeds of which were supposed to be sown with the declaration of war.

When we ask, sir, for the causes of these disappointments, we are told that they are owing to the opposition which the war encounters in this house, and among the people. All the evils which afflict the country are imputed to opposition. This is the fashionable doctrine, both here and elsewhere. It is said to be owing to opposition that the war became necessary; and owing to opposition also, that it has been prosecuted with no better success. This, Sir, is no new strain. It has been sung a thousand times. It is the constant tune of every weak or wicked administration. What minister ever yet acknowledged, that the evils which fell on his country were the necessary consequences of his own incapacity, his own corruptions? What possessor of political power ever yet failed to charge the mischiefs resulting from his own measures, upon those who had uniformly opposed those measures? The people of the United States may well remember the administration of Lord North. He lost America to his country. Yet he could find pretences for throwing the odium upon his opponents. He could throw it upon those who had forwarned him of the consequences from the first, and who had opposed him, at every stage of his disastrous policy, with all the force of truth, and reason, and talent. It was not his own weakness, his own ambition, his own love of arbitrary power, which disaffected the colonies. It was not the Tea Act, the Stamp Act, or the Boston Port Bill that severed the Empire of Britain. Oh, no!—It was owing to no fault of administration. It was the work of opposition. It was the impertinent boldness of Chatham; the idle declamation of Fox; and the unseasonable sarcasm of Burke! These men, and men like them, would not join the minister in his American war. They would not give the name and character of wisdom to that which they believed to be the extreme of folly. They would not pronounce those measures just and honorable, which their principles led them to detest. They declared the minister's war to be wanton. They foresaw its end, and pointed it out plainly both to the ministers and to the country. He pronounced the opposition to be selfish and factious. He persisted in his course; and the result is in history.

This example of ministerial justice seems to have become a model for these times and this country. With slight shades of difference, owing to different degrees of talent and ability, the imitation is sufficiently exact. It requires little imagination to fancy one's self sometimes to be listening to a recitation of the captivating orations of the occupants of Lord North's Treasury Bench. We are told that our opposition has divided the government, and divided the country. Remember, Sir, the state of the government and of the country, when the war was declared. Did not differences of opinion then exist?—Do we not know that this house was divided?—Do we not know that the other house was still more divided?—Does not every man, to whom the public documents are accessible, know, that in the other house, one single vote, having been given otherwise than it was, would have rejected the act declaring war, and adopted a different course of measures? A parental, guardian government would have regarded that state of things. It would have weighed such considerations.—It would have enquired coolly and dispassionately into the state of public opinion, in the states of this confederacy.—It would have looked especially to those states, most concerned in the professed objects of the war, and whose interests were to be most deeply affected by it. Such a government, knowing that its strength consisted in the union of opinion among the people, would have taken no step of such importance, without that union: nor would it have mistaken mere party feeling for national sentiment.

That occasion, Sir, called for a large and liberal view of things. Not only the degree of union in the sentiments of the people; but the nature and structure of the government; the general habits and pursuits of the com-

munity; the probable consequences of the war; immediate and remote on our civil institutions; the effect of a vast military patronage; the variety of important local interests and objects;—these were considerations essentially belonging to the subject. It was not enough that government could make out its cause of war on the paper; and get the better of England in the argument. This was requisite, but not all that was requisite. The question of war or peace, in a country like this, is not to be compressed into the compass that would beat a small pin. Incapable in its nature of being decided upon technical rules it is unfit to be discussed in the manner which usually appertains to the forensic habit. It should be regarded as a great question, not only of right, but also of prudence and expediency. Reasons of a general nature—reasons of a moral nature—considerations which go back to the origin of our institutions, and other considerations which look forward to our hopeful progress in future times; all belong, in their just proportions and gradations, to a question, in the determination of which, the happiness of the present and of future generations may be so much concerned.

I have heard no satisfactory vindication of the war on grounds like those. They appear not to have suited the temper of that time. Utterly astonished at the declaration of war, I have been surprised at nothing since. Unless all history deceived me, I saw how it would be prosecuted, when I saw how it was begun. There is, in the nature of things, an unchangeable relation between rash counsels and feeble execution.

It was not, Sir, the minority that brought on the war. Look to your records, from the date of the Embargo, in 1807, to June 1812. Every thing that men could do, they did, to stay your course. When at last they could effect no more, they urged you to delay your measures. They entreated you to give yet a little time for deliberation, and to wait for favorable events. As if inspired for the purpose of arresting your progress, they laid before you the consequences of your measures, just as we have seen them since take place. They predicted to you their effects on public opinion. They told you, that instead of healing, they would inflame political dissensions. They pointed out to you also what would, and what must happen on the frontier. That which since hath happened there, is but their prediction, turned into history. Vain is the hope, then, of escaping just retribution, by imputing to the minority of the government, or to the opposition among the people, the disasters of these times. Vain is the attempt to impose thus on the common sense of mankind. The world has had too much experience of ministerial shifts and evasions. It has learned to judge of men by their actions, and of measures by their consequences.

If the purpose be, by casting these imputations upon those who are opposed to the policy of the government, to check their freedom of enquiry, discussion and debate, such purpose is also incapable of being executed. That opposition is constitutional and legal. It is also conscientious. It rests in settled and sober conviction, that such policy is destructive to the interests of the people, and dangerous to the being of the government. The experience of every day confirms these sentiments. Men who act from such motives are not to be discouraged by trifling obstacles, nor awed by any danger. They know the limit of constitutional opposition—up to that limit, at their own discretion, they will walk, and walk fearlessly. If they should find, in the history of their country, a precedent for going over, I trust they will not follow it. They are not of a school, in which insurrection is taught as a virtue. They will not seek promotion through the paths of sedition, nor qualify themselves to serve their country in any of the high departments of its government, by making rebellion the first element in their political science.

Important, as I deem it, to discuss, on all proper occasions, the policy of the measures at present pursued, it is still more important to maintain the right of such discussion, in its full and just extent. Sentiments lately sprung up, and now growing fashionable, make it necessary to be explicit on this point. The more I perceive a disposition to check the freedom of enquiry by extravagant and unconstitutional pretences, the firmer shall be the tone, in which I shall assert, and the freer the manner in which I shall exercise it. It is the unquestionable prerogative of this people to canvass public measures and the merits of public men. It is a "home-bred right," a fire-side privilege. It hath ever been enjoyed in every house, cottage and cabin in the nation. It is not to be drawn into controversy. It is as undoubted as the right of breathing the air, or walking on the earth. Belonging to private life as a right, it belongs to public life as a duty; and it is the last duty, which those whose representative I am, shall find me to abandon. Aiming at all times to be courteous and temperate in its use, except when the right itself shall be questioned, I shall then carry it to its extent. I shall then place myself on the extreme boundary of my right, and bid defiance to any arm, that would move me from my ground. This high constitutional privilege, I shall defend and exercise within this House, and without this House, and in all places; in time of war, in time of peace, and at all times. Living I shall assert, dying I shall assert it, and should I leave no other inheritance to my children, by the blessing of God I will still leave them the inheritance of free principles, and the example of a manly, independent and constitutional op-