

MR. CLAY'S SPEECH.

(concluded.)

Gentlemen have complained that we had lost the islands in the Bay of Passamaquoddy. Have they examined into that question, and do they know the grounds on which it stands? Prior to the war we occupied Moose Island, the British Grand Menan. Each party claimed both islands. America, because they are within the limits of the United States, as defined by the treaty of 1783; and Great Britain, because, as she alleges, they were in the execution contained in the second article of that treaty as to islands within the limits of the province of Nova Scotia. All the information which he had received concurred in representing Grand Menan as the most valuable island. Does the treaty, in stipulating an amicable and equitable mode of settling this controversy, yield one foot of the territory of the United States? If our title to Moose Island is drawn in question, that of Great Britain to Grand Menan is equally so. If we may lose the one, she may the other. The treaty, it was true, contained a provision that the party in possession, at the time of the ratification, may hold on until the question of right is decided. The committee would observe that this stipulation, as to possession, was not limited to the moment of the signature, but looked to the period of the ratification of the treaty. The American commissioners had thought they might safely rely on the valor of Massachusetts, or the arms of the United States, to drive the invader from our soils and had also hoped that we might obtain possession of Grand Menan. It is true they have been disappointed in the successful application of the force of that state and of that of the Union. But it is not true that we have parted with the right. It is fair to presume that Great Britain will with good faith, co-operate in carrying the stipulations into effect; and she has in fact already promptly proceeded to the appointment of commissioners under the treaty.

of such events. But he would ask does the recollection of Bunker's hill, of Saratoga, of Yorktown, afford them no pleasure? Every act of noble sacrifice to the country—every instance of patriotic devotion to her cause, has its beneficial influence. A nation's character is the sum of its splendid deeds. They constitute one common patrimony—the nation's inheritance. They awe foreign powers. They arouse and animate our own people. Do gentlemen derive no pleasure from the recent transactions in the Mediterranean? Can they regard, unmoved, the honorable issue of a war, in support of our national rights, declared, prosecuted and terminated by a treaty in which the enemy submitted to a carte blanche, in the short period of forty days? The days of chivalry are not gone. They have been revived in the person of Commodore Decatur, who, in releasing from infidel bondage christian captives—the subjects of a foreign power, and restoring them to their country and their friends, has placed himself beside the most renowned knights of former times. How true glory, said Mr. C. It is the sentiment which ought to cherish; and in spite of evils and sneers and attempts to put it down, it will finally conduct this nation to that height to which God and nature have destined it. Three wars, those who at present administer this government may say, and say with proud satisfaction, they have safely conducted us through. Two with powers which, though otherwise contemptible, have laid almost all Europe under tribute—a tribute from which we are exonerated. The third, with one of the most gigantic powers that the world ever saw. These struggles have not been without their sacrifices, nor without their lessons. They have created or rather increased the public debt. They have taught that to preserve the character we have established, preparation for war is necessary. The public debt exists. However contracted, the faith of the nation is pledged for its redemption. It can only be paid by providing an excess of revenue beyond expenditure, or by retrenchment. Did gentlemen contend that the results of the report were inaccurate—that the proceeds of the revenue would be greater, or the public expenses less than the estimate? On these subjects, he believed it would be presumption in him, when the defence of the report was in such able hands, (Mr. Lowndes) to attempt its vindication. Leaving the task to that gentleman, he would assume, for the present its accuracy. He would lay down a general rule, from which there ought never to be a departure, without absolute necessity, that the expenses of the year ought to be met by the revenue of the year. If in time of war it were impossible to observe this rule, we ought, in time of peace, to provide for as speedy a discharge of the debt contracted in the preceding war, as possible. This can only be done by an effective sinking fund based upon an excess of revenue beyond expenditure, and a protraction of the period of peace. If in England the sinking fund had not fulfilled what was promised, it was because of a failure to provide such a revenue, and because the intervals of peace in that country had been too few and too short. From the revolution to 1812, a period of 124 years, there had been 63 years of war, and only 61 of peace; and there had been contracted \$38,129,577 of debt, and discharged only 39,594,505. The national debt at the peace of Utrecht, amounted to 55,681,476*l.* and during the peace which followed, being 27 years, from 1714 to 1740, there was discharged only 7,231,503*l.* When the operations of our sinking fund are contrasted with those of Great Britain, they would be found to present the most gratifying results. Our public debt existing on the 1st of January, 1802, amounted to \$78,754,568.70 cents, and on the 1st of January, 1815, we had extinguished \$35,873,463.98 cents. Thus in 13 years, one half the period of peace that followed the treaty of Utrecht, we had discharged more public debt than Great Britain did during that period. In 26 years she did not pay much more than a seventh of her debt. In thirteen years we paid more than a third of ours. If, then, a public debt, contracted in a manner, he trusted, satisfactory to the country, imposed upon us a duty to provide for

its payment; if we were encouraged, by past experience, to persevere in the application of an effective sinking fund, he would again repeat, that the only alternatives were the adoption of a system of taxation producing the revenue estimated by the committee of ways and means, or by great retrenchment of the public expenses. In what respect can a reduction of the public expenses be effected? Gentlemen who assailed the report on this ground have, by the indefinite nature of the attack, great advantage on their side. Instead of contenting themselves with crying out retrenchment, retrenchment! a theme always plausible, an object always proper, when the public interest will admit of it, let them point the attention of the house to some specified subject. If they really think a reduction of the army and navy, or either of them, be proper, let them lay a resolution upon the table to that effect. They had generally, it was true, singled out, in discussing this report (and he had no objection to meet them in this way, though he thought the other the fairest course) the military establishment. Mr. C. said he was glad that the navy had fought itself into favor, and that no one appeared disposed to move its reduction or to oppose its gradual augmentation. But the "standing army" is the great object of gentlemen's apprehensions. And those who can bravely set at defiance hobgoblins, the creatures of their own fertile imaginations, are trembling for the liberties of the people, endangered by a standing army of 10,000 men. Those who can courageously vote against taxes are alarmed for the safety of the constitution and the country, at such a force scattered over our extensive territory. This could not have been expected, at least in the honorable gentleman (Mr. Ross) who, if he had been storming a fort, could not have displayed more cool, collected courage, than he did, when he declared that he would shew to Pennsylvania, that she had one faithful representative, bold and independent enough to vote against a tax! Mr. C. said he had happened, very incidentally, the other day, and in a manner which he had supposed could not attract particular attention, to state that the general condition of the world admonished us to shape our measures with a view to the possible conflicts into which we might be drawn; and he said he did not know when he should cease to witness the attacks made upon him in consequence of that general remark, when he should cease to hear the cry of "standing army," "national glory," &c. &c. From the tenor of gentlemen's observations, it would seem as if, for the first time, in the history of this government, it was now proposed that a certain regular force should constitute a portion of the public defence. But from the administration of Gen. Washington, down to this time, a regular force, a standing army (if gentlemen please) had existed, and the only question about it, at any time, had been what should be the amount. Gentlemen themselves, who most loudly decry this establishment, did not propose an entire disbandment of it: and the question, ever with them, is not whether a regular force be necessary, but whether a regular force of this or that amount be called for by the actual state of our affairs. The question is not, on any side of the house, as to the nature but the quantum of the force. Mr. C. said he maintained the position, that, if there was the most profound peace that ever existed; if we had no fears from any quarter whatever; if all the world was in a state of the most profound and absolute repose, a regular force of ten thousand men was not too great for the purposes of this government. We know too much, he said, of the vicissitudes of human affairs, and the uncertainty of all our calculations, not to know that even in the most profound tranquility, some tempest may suddenly arise, and bring us into a state requiring the exertion of military force, which cannot be created in a moment, but requires time for its collection, organization and discipline. When gentlemen talked of the force which was deemed sufficient some twenty years ago, what did they mean? That this force was not to be progressive? That the full grown man ought to wear the clothes and habits of his infancy?—That the establishments maintained by

this government, when its population amounted to four or five millions only, should be the standard by which our measures should be regulated in all subsequent states of the country? If gentlemen meant this, as it seemed to him they did, Mr. C. said he and they should not agree. He contended that establishments ought to be commensurate with the actual state of the country, should grow with its growth, and keep pace with its progress. Look at that map (said he, pointing to the large Map of the United States which hangs in the Hall of Representatives)—at the vast extent of that country which stretches from the Lake of the Woods, to the Bay of Fundi in the east. Look at the vast extent of our maritime coast; recollect we have Indians and powerful nations continuous on the whole frontier; and that we know not at what moment the savage enemy or Great Britain herself may seek to make war with us. Ought the force of the country to be graduated by the scale of our exposure, or are we to be influenced by the increase of our liability to war? Have we forgotten that the power of France, as a counterpoise to that of Great Britain is annihilated—gone; never to rise again, I believe, under the weak, unhappy and imbecile race who sway her destinies? Any individual must, I think, come to the same conclusion with myself, who takes these considerations into view, and reflects on our growth, the state of our defence, the situation of the nations of the world, and above all, of that nation with whom we are most likely to come into collision—for it is vain to conceal it; this country must have many a hard and desperate tug with Great Britain, let the two governments be administered how and by whom they may. That man must be blind to the indications of the future, who cannot see that we are destined to have war after war with Great Britain, until, if one of the two nations be not crushed, all grounds of collision shall have ceased between us. I repeat, said Mr. C. if the condition of France were that of perfect repose, instead of that of a volcano ready to burst out again with a desolating eruption; if with Spain our differences were settled; if the dreadful war raging in S. America were terminated; if the marines of all the powers in Europe were resuscitated as they stood prior to the revolution of France; if there was universal repose, and profound tranquility among all the nations of the earth, considering the actual growth of our country, in his judgment, the force of ten thousand men would not be too great for its exigencies. Do gentlemen ask if I rely on the regular force entirely for the defence of the country? I answer, it is for garrisoning and keeping in order our fortifications, for the preservation of the national arms, for something like a safe depository of military science and skill, to which we may recur in time of danger, that I desire to maintain an adequate regular force. I know, that in the hour of peril, our great reliance must be on the whole physical force of the country, & that no detachment of it can be exclusively depended on. History proves that no nation, not destitute of the military art, whose people were united in defence, ever was conquered. It is true, that in countries where standing armies have been entirely relied on, the armies have been subdued, and the subjugation of the nation has been the consequence of it; but no example is to be found of a united people being conquered, who possessed an adequate degree of military knowledge. Look at the German Republics struggling successfully against the overwhelming force of Persia; look more recently at Spain. I have great confidence in the militia, and I would go with my honorable colleague, (Mr. McKee) whose views I know are honest, hand in hand, in arming, disciplining and rendering effective the militia—I am for providing the nation with every possible means of resistance. I ask my honorable colleague, after I have gone thus far with him, to go a step farther with me, and let us retain the force we now have for the purposes I have already described. I ask gentlemen who propose to reduce the army, if they have examined in detail the number and extent of the posts and garrisons on our maritime and interior frontier? If they have not gone through this process of reasoning, how shall we arrive at the

result that we can reduce the army with safety? There is not one of our forts adequately garrisoned at this moment; and there is nearly one fourth of them that have not one solitary man. I said the other day, that I would rather vote for the augmentation than the reduction of the army. When returning to my country from its foreign service, and looking at this question, it appeared to me that the maximum was 20,000; the minimum 10,000 of the force we ought to retain. And I again say, that rather than reduce I would vote to increase the present force. A standing army, Mr. C. said, had been deemed necessary from the commencement of the government to the present time. The question was only as to the quantum of force; and not whether it should exist. No man who regards his political reputation would place himself before the people on a proposition for its absolute disbandment. He admitted a question as to quantum might be carried so far as to rise into a question of principle. If we were to propose to retain an army of thirty or forty or fifty thousand men, then truly the question would present itself, whether our rights were not in some danger from such a standing army, whether reliance was to be placed altogether on a standing army or on that natural safe defence which, according to the habits of the country & the principles of our government, is considered the bulwark of our liberties. But between five and ten thousand men, or any number under ten thousand, it could not be a question of principle; for, unless gentlemen are afraid of spectres, it was utterly impossible that any danger could be apprehended from ten thousand men, dispersed on a frontier of many thousand miles—here twenty or thirty, there a hundred, and the largest amount at Detroit not exceeding a thin regiment. And yet, brave gentlemen—gentlemen who are not alarmed at hobgoblins—who can intrepidly vote even against taxes, are alarmed by a force of this extent! What, he asked, was the amount of the army in the time of Mr. Jefferson, a time, the orthodoxy of which had been so ostentatiously proclaimed? It was true, when that gentleman came into power, it was his determination to retrench as far as practicable. Under the full influence of these notions, in 1802, the bold step of wholly disbanding the army, never was thought of. The military peace establishment was then fixed at about four thousand men. But, before Mr. Jefferson went out of power, what was done—that is, in April, 1808? In addition to the then existing peace establishment, eight regiments, amounting to between five and six thousand men, were authorized, making a total force precisely equal to the present peace establishment. It was true, that all this force had never been actually enlisted and embodied; that the recruiting service had been suspended; and that at the commencement of the war we had far from this number; and Mr. C. said, we have not now actually ten thousand men, being at least two thousand deficient of that number. Mr. C. adverted to what had been said on this and other occasions of Mr. Jefferson's not having seized the favorable moment for war which was afforded by the attack on the Chesapeake. He had always entertained the opinion, he said, that Mr. Jefferson on that occasion took the correct, manly and frank course, in saying to the British government—your officers have done this—it is an enormous aggression—do you approve the act, do you make it your cause or not? That government did not sanction the act? It disclaimed it, and promptly too—and, although they, for a long time withheld the due redress, it was ultimately tendered. If Mr. Jefferson had used his power to carry the country into a war at that period, it might have been supported by public opinion during the moment of fever, but it would soon abate and the people would begin to ask, why this war had been made without understanding whether the British government avowed the conduct of its officers, &c. If the threatening aspect of our relations with England had entered into the consideration which caused the increase of the army at that time, Mr. C. said, there were considerations equally strong at that time, with our augmented population, for retaining our present force. If, how-