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Speech of Mr. Benton,

OF MISSOURI.

IN SENATE.

Tuesday, February 23, 1836.

NATIONAL DEFENCE—FORTIFICATIONS.

On motion of Mr. BENTON, as chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, the Senate proceeded to the consideration of the bill making appropriations for the collection of materials, the purchase of sites, and the commencement of the construction of the new fortifications. The Bill having been read, Mr. B. rose and commenced his speech with saying, that when the bill was reported from the committee some weeks ago, the French question wore a lowering aspect, and a majority of the Senate seemed ready to vote the large appropriations which the crisis required. Since then, the fear of danger from that quarter had vanished, and he must now appeal to the enlightened forecast of the Senate for the same vote which a patriotic impulsion would then have given. I took occasion, said Mr. B., then to say, that my own support of the bill, and of the whole line of policy which it indicated, had no dependance upon the French question; that I was in favor of providing for the general defence, without regard to extrinsic circumstances; and that, so far as my own course was concerned, I should go on to clothe the country with the mantle of defence, and to put her in a condition to meet the contingency of war, although I might hold in my hand the bond of Fate for peace.

The President of the United States has sent us two messages on this subject; one while the French question wore a threatening aspect, recommending us to provide for the public defence; the other, since the happy termination of that question, announcing its auspicious conclusion, but still adhering to the recommendation in the first one, and reinforcing his own sentiments with the voice of Washington. This recommendation, thus supported, must coincide with the enlightened sense and patriotic feeling of the Senate. We must all feel the necessity of providing for the national defence now, in this most favorable conjuncture, when the possession of ample means and the enjoyment of full leisure, gives us full opportunity of doing so with the greatest economy and the greatest effect. The disappearance of danger will not affect our wise and systematic policy. We are not an assembly of frivolous Athenians, to inquire for the news before we vote, and then to give our votes, not according to the exigences of the public service, but according to the reported state of Philip's health.

In taking up this bill, continued Mr. B., which proposes appropriations for the commencement of a large number of new works, I thinkit proper in itself, and pertinent to the occasion, to make some general exposition of the state of our fortifications; to show the number proposed to complete the whole system, with the cost of the whole, and the number of men it will require to garrison them in peace and in war. This exposition I will endeavor to make with brevity, if not with perspicuity.

First as to the number of forts. Of those finished, we have 13; of those under construction, 14; proposed in the present bill, 19; and remaining to be proposed hereafter, 61; making in the whole 107.

Next as to the cost. For all built, or building, under the present system, we have expended $12,379,672, for all expected to be built, leaving out a few which data has not yet been collected to estimate the cost, and for furnishing those now under construction, the sum of twenty-eight millions of dollars is estimated to be necessary; making in the whole about forty millions of dollars. But to have a view of the whole cost of fortifications since the adoption of the federal constitution, we must add the sum of $7,607,000 for expenditures on this subject before the end of the late war; but which sum, for reasons hereafter to be shown, becomes almost a dead loss, few of the forts then built being of any service now.

Thirdly, as to the garrisons. The lowest number of troops, in time of peace, for all the forts now finished, all now under construction, and all proposed in the present bill, being 46 in number, is 1,820 men. The lowest number for all the remainder, leaving out a few, the plans of which are not yet formed; is 1,538, making a totality of 3,358 men; but this is to be understood of the lowest number necessary to keep the forts in order. To form proper garrisons in ordinary, as they are called, and with a view to keep up the discipline, police, and military spirit of the troops, the division of companies should be avoided, and the number of men in garrison should be almost double the number above stated; say 7,000 men for the 107 forts. In war the garisons for the whole number of forts would require to be about 62,000 men, of which the main part would consist of the volunteers and militia of the adjacient country.

Mr. B. presumed it might be agreeable to the Senate to understand the distribution of all these forts, among the different States and Territories, and of the money expended, or to be expended upon them. To give them this information he had caused two tables to be drawn up, which he would read, premising that the information which they contained was intended for the satisfaction of the Senate, and not to influence votes, as the distribution of the forts and the consequent expenditure of money in their construction, was governed by the wants of the country, its accessible and vulnerable points,—and not upon any rule founded upon population or territory. Mr. B. then read two detailed tables, the totals of which are as follows:

STATES.	NUMBER OF FORTS.		TOTAL COST.
Maine,	7	-	$1,365,000
New Hampshire,	1	-	500,000
Massachusetts,	16	-	2,769,000
Rhode Island,	6	-	2,469,000
Connecticut,	5	-	460,000
New York,	10	-	6,407,000
Pennsylvania and Delaware,	4	-	*1,007,136
Mary and,	10	-	†3,008,687
Virginia,	3	-	3,869,025
North Carolina,	3	-	952,869
South Carolina,	9	-	1,424,420
Georgia,	10	-	1,832,367
Louisiana,	7	-	1,756,858
Alabama,	3	-	1,630,000
Florida, Ter.,	12	-	5,014,000

☞ This table does not include 14 smaller forts, the cost of which is not estimated.

Mr. B. wished to repeat, and to be distinctly understood, as exhibiting these tables for the information and satisfaction of the Senate, not for the purpose of showing that more or less was expended in one quarter than in another. It was a subject on which equality of expenditures would be absurd; besides it was a subject on which tables could not speak explicitly; often the fort counted in one State belonged just as much, for all the purposes of protection and expenditure, to another State in which it was not counted.—This was the case with all forts situated upon bays or rivers which divide States, and was strongly exemplified in Connecticut and New York, in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and in Maryland and Virginia

After the general view of the whole number of forts, Mr. B. presented a general view of the particular bill before the Senate. It was a bill to provide for the collection of materials, the purchase of sites, & the commencement of construction of new forts. The number proposed was 19; their ultimate cost was estimated at $5,170,448; and the amount to begin within the present bill was $1,783,800. Besides these 19 forts, the bill proposed $660,000 for steam batteries to be stationed in aid of the forts, in the different ports and harbors of the United States. This was the general view of the bill; the particular view of it in showing the distribution of the forts, their separate ultimate cost, and present appropriation for each one, he would also show; and for that purpose, read the following table:

	No of forts.	Ultimate cost.	Present appropriation.
Maine,	3	$504,000	$304,000
N. Hamp.,	1	300,000	150,000
Massachusetts	4	1,098,413	300,000
Connecticut,	1	132,231	100,000
New York,	1	435,989	200,000
Del. & Penn.	2	900,000	250,000
Maryland,	3	1,010,206	350,000
N. Carolina,	1	12,000	12,000
Georgia,	1	300,000	50,000
Florida,	1	100,000	50,000
Louisiana,	1	77,800	77,800
	19	5,170,448	1,783,800

Mr. B. said it might be objected by some whose position might not enable them to view the whole ground, that the bill was unequal in its operations and that 15 out of 19 of the forts which he proposed would be north of the Potomac. This disproportion might strike the minds of some persons, and therefore, he would account for it at once, and show that it arose, first from the nature of the respective coasts of the northern and southern sections of the Union. North of the mouth of the Chesapeake bay, the coast was indented by deep bays, and opened by the wide estuaries of large rivers. One of these bays alone, the Chesapeake gave a double line of coast of a thousand miles in circuit, requiring defence. Further north, and especially in New England the coast was cut in by a continued succession of deep inlets. It was a serrated coast—it was a saw-edged coast—in which the incessant openings presented a continued succession of accessible and vulnerable points. Not so to the south of the Chesapeake. There the bays and indentations were scarce, the estuaries of the rivers comparatively shallow, the coast itself shoal, the accessible points few in number, far between, and the bars in the mouths of the harbors a total obstruction to the entrance of large vessels. He believed that Charlestown, South Carolina, presented the deepest water to be found on the Southern atlantic coast, and these vessels of war above the size of the largest sloops did not enter. Pensacola presented the deepest water on the gulf coast, and there, until the bar shall be cut, the entrance is only practicable to frigates of the second class. Thus from the nature of the two coasts, the largest proportion of the defences must go to the north. That of itself might be sufficient reason for the disproportion in the bill; but there was another reason for it, and that was that, of the forts built, or building, much the largest proportion was to the south. Thus of the 13 forts built 5 were in Louissiana, 1 in Alabama, 1 in Florida, 1 in South Carolina, and 1 in North Carolina.

Mr. B. would repeat, that he entered into this comparison, not that any effect on the votes of the Senate could be produced by it but to satisfy those who did not occupy positions, to take a view of the whole field and to show them that the disproportion in question was not founded on partiality, but in reason, that it resulted from the obligation of duty to give defence where defence was needed, and that this depended upon the nature of the coast and not upon any rule resulting from territorial extent of weight of population. With this general exposition of the bill, Mr. B. would not lay it down, reserving details upon each particular fort for the inquires which Senators might put to him, or for answers to the motions which might be made to amend, or to strike out. Postponing these details for the present, and believing that we had reached a point in the state of our public affairs, when the great policy of NATIONAL DEFENCE is to be *established or abandoned*, Mr. B. believed it to be both pertinent to the occasion, and profitable in its effect to pause for a moment; to look back upon the past, before we proceeded with the present, or the future, and to take a rapid historical view, from the foundation of the federal Government, of that branch of the national defence now under consideration.

The business of fortifying our coasts dates from the very commencement of this federal Government, and results from the constitutional obligation of the Government to provide for the "*common defence*," and from the surrender of their custom-house revenues, by the States, to the General Government, for several important national objects, of which one of the most important, the most prominent, and most essentially national, was that of providing for the common defence. For the accomplishment of these objects, the constitution invested the President with the right, or rather imposed upon him the duty, of recommending to Congress the adoption of the measures which he deemed necessary; to Congress itself it confided the sacred task of acting on all the measures, either of its own suggestion or of the President's recommendation; and of doing what was right and proper to be done. Such were the duties of the Executive, and of the legislative departments under the new Government, and in execution of them—I now limit myself to the point under consideration—in execution of them, we see the Father of his Country immediately coming forward, and pressing upon Congress the great duty of national defence, in a series of recommendations, repeated from year to year, until his paternal advice produced its effect.

The first of these recommendations was in the annual message of 1790, and this is an extract from it:

"Among the most interesting objects which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defence, will merit particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace."

The next was in the message of 1791, and was in these words:

"In connexion with this, (arming the militia,) the establishment of competent magazines and arsenals, and the fortification of such places as are peculiarly important and vulnerable, naturally present themselves for consideration. The safety of the United States, under divine protection, ought to rest on the basis of systematic and solid arrangement; exposed as little as possible to the hazard of fortuitous circumstances."

In the message of 1793, President Washington again averts to this primary duty of Congress, and presses the necessity of "*complete defence*," in a renewed recommendation couched in the most impressive terms, and enforced with earnest appeals to the lofty considerations connected with the duty of Congress, the interest of the Union, and the honor dignity, and independence of the country. The following is the passage in his message:

"I cannot recommend to your notice measures for the fulfilment of our duties to the rest of the world, without again pressing upon you the necessity of placing ourselves in a condition of *complete defence*, and of exacting from them the fulfilment of their duties towards us. The United States ought not to indulge a persuasion that, contrary to the order of human events, they will forever, keep at a distance those painful appeals to arms with which the history of every other nation abounds. There is a rank due to the United States, among nations which will be withheld, if not entirely lost, by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoide insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."

This, said Mr. B. is the recommendation of President Washington, adopted by President Jackson in his interesting message of Monday, the 22d instant; that message which presents the three great liberal Powers, Great Britain, France, and our America, under the harmonious aspects which they should forever wear! and in which the sacred duty of providing for the national defence is again pressed upon us under circumstances, at a time, and so reinforced, that it cannot fail to make a deep impression upon the country, as well as upon the Senate.

We will now turn, said Mr. B. to the legislative department of the Government, and see what effect these repeated recommendations of President Washington produced upon Congress. The last message was communicated in December, 1773; on the 28th of February following, Mr. Fitzsimmons, from the Military Committee of the House of Representatives, reported in favor of putting the whole maritime coast, from Maine to Georgia, in a state of defence, with a statement from the Secretary at War, General Knox, of the number and kind of works the different ports and harbors would require, and an estimate of the expense of construction, and of the garrisons necessary in peace and in war. The number of works recommended, exceeded an hundred; but, for want of means, they were small in size, and to be constructed of perishable materials, in the parts which required solid masonry; wood being substituted for stone. The largest number of cannon to be mounted for the defence of any city, was 82 at New York, and 72 at Charleston, S. C. Such were the recommendations, and an act of Congress in conformity with them was promptly passed. Mr. B. would read that act; for, with the single exception of the ports and harbors acquired by extension of territorial limits, or of points covered by extension of population, it embraces nearly every port and harbor which at this time demands our protection.

THE ACT.

"That the following ports and harbors be fortified under the direction of the President of the United States, and at such time or times as he shall judge necessary to wit: Portland, in the district of Maine: Portsmouth, in the State of New Hampshire; Gloucester, Salem, Marblehead, and Boston, in the State of Massachusetts; Newport, in the State of Rhode Island; New London, in the State of Connecticut; New York; Philadelphia; Wilmington, in the State of Delaware; Baltimore, in the State of Maryland; (Annapolis by supplementary act;) Norfolk and Alexandria, in the State of Virginia, Cape Fear river, and Ocracocke Inlet, in the State of North Carolina; Charleston and Georgetown, in the State of South Carolina; and Savannah and St. Mary's, in the State of Georgia."

Such was the act—such the first act for fortifying the ports and harbors of the United States. It is not only general in its provisions, and co-extensive with the whole maratime frontier, but vested President Washington with discretionary powers over the whole subject The execution of this act was the next point to which Mr. B. would call the attention of the Senate. It is already seen that it conferred plenary and discretionary powers on President Washington over the whole subject, and particularly over the time when the works should be commenced. With that great man, the *present* time was usually the *proper* time for doing what had to be done; and such was his conduct in the great trust now confided to him. The act putting into his hands the power of fortifying his country, passed on the 20th day March; on the 28th day of that same month the first instructions issued from the War Office to the engineers to repair to the respective stations and commence operations; and by the 11th of April the last of these instructions had issued. In other words, the first instructions issued within eight days after the passage of the act; and the whole within twenty-two days; Seven Engineers were employed, all French Officers: the whole coast from Maine to Georgia was parcelled among them, and the whole line of coast was under operation at once, and within a few weeks after the passing of the act. The Engineers employed were Rochecontarie, Vincent, L'Enfant, Rivaedi, Vermonnet, Martinon, and Perrault; and the instructions to them, as well as their reports to the Government, will still reward the research and curiosity of any citizen who will take the trouble to hunt them out and to read them. They may still be read with profit by the military man; and the friend of state rights may dwell upon them with pride and exultation for the respect and deference which they evince for State authorities. Mr. B. would read an extract from the instrutions, and another from some of the reports, as a specimen of the whole, and was certain that the Senate would hear them with pleasure as showing the State of the intercourse between the Federal and the State Governments in that early age of the Republic.

Mr. B. then read from the instructions to Rochebontaine, charged with fortiying the coast from Portland, in Maine, to New London, in Connecticut.

"In pursuance of the directions of the President of the United States, you are hereby appointed an engineer for the purpose of fortifying the ports and harbors hereinafter mentioned, to wit: New London, in the State of Connecticut; Newport, in the State of Rhode Island; Boston, Marblehead, Salem, Gloucester, and Portland, in the State of Massachusetts; and Portsmouth in the State of New Hampshire.

"You are therefore immediately to repair to the ports to be fortified in the said States respectively, and in case the Governors should be near any of the said ports, you are to wait upon them and exhibit these instructions. But if the Governors should be at any considerable distance from your route, you are respectfully to notify them of your appointment, enclose them a copy of these instructions, and inform them that you have repaired to the ports aforesaid, in order to make the necessary surveys and investigations relative to your mission, which you will submit to their consideration, and take their orders thereon.

"As soon as you shall receive their approbation of your plans, you are to construct the works, and to execute them with all possible vigor and despatch."

Having read this extract from the instructions, Mr. B. would next read an extract from the first report of the same engineer, and show the manner in which he executed them. He writes from Boston, and says:

"On the 25th of May, his Honor the Lieutenant Governor, elected since that time Governor of the State of Massachusetts, declared to the engineer that he did not find himself empowered to approve of the execution of the law of the United States respecting the fortification of the seaport towns in the State, without the advice of the Legislature, meeting a few days afterwards. His Excellency, however, gave orders, to the officers of the Executive of the State, to the State garrison of the Castle Island, and to the gentlemen the Selectmen of every seaport town directed to be fortified, to assist, every one in his capacity, the engineer in his reconnoitering and surveys. On the first of June, his Excellency was furnished with a general plan of defence for the harbor of Boston. On the 4th of June, a committee of the Legislature, appointed for the purpose, called on the engineer to be present at one of their conferences respecting the fortification of the harbor, and that of Castle Island particularly. On the 8th, the said committee visited Castle Island, with the engineer, that being the only port in the State that the Legislature could have any thing to do with as to fortifying. On the 11th, his Excellency permitted the engineer to visit the seaport towns of Salem, Marblehead, and Cape Ann, until the Legislature should come to a determination on the questions proposed in the address of the Governor respecting the fortification of the harbors of the State. On the 20th, his Excellency authorized the engineer to proceed to the State of New Hampshire, the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts having not yet come to any vote on the subject of fortifications. On the 29th of July, the engineer waited on his Excellency the Governor of Massachusetts, at Boston: the Legislature not having decided any thing respecting the fortifications of the State, his Excellency could not give any approbation to the erecting of any throughout the State, even at Portland, where the Selectmen and town meeting had irregularly acted in purchasing land for the United States without being authorized to do it by the Legislature. On the 16th of August, the Secretary of War authorized the engineer to erect fortifications, according to the law of the United States, at Salem, Marblehead, and Cape Ann. The inhabitants of Salem, in a legal town meeting, unanimously voted a cession to the United States of the ground which should be thought necessary for the defence of their harbor: immediately thereupon the works were begun."

Mr. B. had read these extracts for the purpose of showing the respect and deference which was shown by the Federal Government, in that early age of the republic, to the State authorities, when even a duty of constitutional obligation would not be exercised within a State without first endeavoring to obtain the approbation of its authorities, both for the thing to be done, and the manner of doing it. He had read them also for the purpose of showing the zeal of President Washington in carrying into effect the act of Congress, exemplified in the order to all the engineers "*to execute their work with all possible vigor and despatch.*" This, said Mr. B. was in the year 1794, when the Federal Government was almost without revenues, when it was encumbered with debts of which it could with difficulty discharge the annual interest, and when the means of the Treasury were so low that the engineers were directed to apply to the State authorities for voluntary contributions to eke out the scanty appropriations of Congress! an appeal which was nowhere met with such generosity of feeling as at Charleston, S. C. where the contributions were characterized by the wonted liberality of that State: 8000 day's work of labor; between £700, and £800, in money; 4000 feet of ranging timber, given gratuitously; and all the mechanical work done *gratis* by the mechanics of the city.

Mr. B. would remark, in closing his brief notice of the reports of the engineers of 1794, that they selected, in almost every instance, when not cramped by the smallness of appropriations, the same points for defending the ports and harbors which have been subsequently indicated by other engineers, and that, at most of the harbors, they recommended floating batteries and galleys to be combined with the fortification defence; a species of floating defence which the late engineers adopt in the idea and supersede in the form by recommending the adoption of the great improvement of the age, steam power.

At the meeting of Congress in November, 1794, President Washington caused to be communicated to that body the steps which he had taken, and the progress which had been made, in carrying into effect the act the 20th of March preceding, with an urgent recommendation to increase the fortifications and make them commensurate with the exigencies of the country. The Military Committee of the House of Representatives responded to this appeal, and as early as the 4th day of December ensuing, made a report by Mr. Fitzsimmons, their chairman, fully sustaining and carrying out the President's policy. Mr. B would read it, and would propose it as a model now to be followed, both for the brevity of its style and the efficiency of its recommendations.

THE REPORT.

"Mr. Fitzsimmons, from the committee to whom was referred that part of the message of the President which respects the fortifying the ports and harbors of the United States, made the following report:

"That by the report of the Secretary at War, it appears, that in pursuance of the act of the last session, the fortification of the different ports and harbors are in considerable forwardness, excepting only the port of Boston, and Wilmington in the State of Delaware, suspended for reasons assigned by the Secretary in his report.

"That contracts have been entered into for the ordnance necessary, and measures taken for progressing in the fortifications as soon as the season will permit.

"That from the necessity of enlarging the plan of defence in some instances, and the enhanced price of labor and materials since the first estimate was made, a sum not less than $225,500 will be necessary to complete the plan of defence contemplated, admitting the fortifications to be constructed of timber and earth; and if executed with stone, to a much larger sum.

"The committee, taking into view the circumstances connected with this subject, and having received the necessary information from the Secretary of War, submit the following resolution:

"*Resolved*, That the necessary works for fortifying the ports and harbors of the United States, ought to be continued, and constructed of the most durable materials, so as best to answer the purposes of defence and permanency.

"*Resolved*, That a sum not exceeding $500,000 (over and above the sums already appropriated) be appropriated for the purpose aforesaid; and that a sum not exceeding $100,000 perannum, be provided for the service aforesaid.

"*Resolved*. That the President of the United States be authorized to give preference, in point of time, to the completion of such of said fortifications as he may think adviseable."

Mr. B. would here drop details and economise his remarks. He had arrived at a point at which he would stop, and take a position. It was the commencement of the second term of Washington's Presidency, and the successful establishment of his great policy recommended in the messages of 1790, '91, '93, and '95, for clothing his country with the armor of defence,—fortifying all her ports and harbors,—and putting her in a condition to maintain among nations, the rank to which she was entitled. This policy was now completely established; and the historical view which he had attempted to sketch, no longer encumbered with documentary evidences and minute details, would proceed with ease and rapidity. The system of fortifying thus established under Washington's administration, went on with an accelerated pace under that of his successor, the first Mr. Adams, stimulated as it was by impending difficulties with France. But a frost, a killing frost fell upon that policy on the accession of Mr. Jefferson. The difficulties with France had vanished, and besides, he was not favorable to the policy in itself; and his first message was sufficiently indicative of his views to decide the fate of the fortifications. To do justice to him, an extract from that message will be read.

"The fortifications of our harbors, more or less advanced present considerations of great difficulty. While some of them are on a scale, sufficiently proportioned to the advantages of their position, to the efficacy of their protection, and the importance of the points within it, others are so extensive, will cost so much in their erection, so much in their maintenance, and require such a force to garrison them, as to make it questionable what is best now to be done. A statement of those commenced or projected of the expenses already incurred, and estimates of their future cost, as far as can be foreseen, shall be laid before you, that you may be enabled to judge whether any alteration is necessary in the laws respecting this subject."

Under this message, resumed Mr. B., the fortifications languished and declined. Appropriations became less and less; the old works decayed; garrisons were reduced, and new ones were not begun; but difficulties with England arose; some outrages were committed within our waters, and the States possessing seaport towns began to remonstrate, and to demand defences for their ports and harbors. The legislative resolves of the State of New York, as coming from a State friendly to the administration, as containing an argument within themselves, as being a sample of what came from other States, and as being strictly pertinent to the present debate, Mr. B. would read.

New York Legislature, March, 20, 1807.

"*Resolved*, As the sense of this Legislature, that every consideration of policy and duty requires that adequate measures should be adopted by the National Government for the protection of the port of New York.

"That the agricultural as well a commercial interests of the State, are deeply interested in this most desirable object.

"That in surrendering to the United States the revenue arising from imposts, this State anticipated, and has now a right to expect, that a competent portion of that revenue would be appropriated for its defence, and that the Congress of the United States are bound by their constitutional duties, as guardians of the common defence and general welfare, to satisfy this proper and reasonable expectation.

"*Resolved*, That an application be made to the President of the United States in behalf of this State, to fix upon a plan of durable and permanent defence for the port of New York, fully adequate to the importance of the object, and that he be also respectfully requested to appropriate, out of the moneys placed at his disposal, as large a sum as can be usefully expended for that purpose, until Congress shall have it in their power to make futher provision in the premises.

"*Resolved*, That the Legislature of this State fully approve of the conduct of our Senators and Representatives in Congress, in advocating and enforcing the claims of this State in this respect, and that they be requested to support and enforce such further measures as may be necessary for the permanent defence of this State, and to obtain, either by annual appropriation or by general provision, a sum competent to that important object."

Under this appeal from New York, continued Mr. B. backed by others from other States, and stimulated by the increasing aggression, contempt of the proclamation of inhibition, and multiplied violations of jurisdiction within our waters, by British ships of war, the administration of Mr. Jefferson found it necessary to do something, and the experment of gun-boats was resorted to. The gun-boats were tried. They had their day, and a brief day it was, for the end of Mr. Jefferson's administration saw the end of their glory. Mr. Madison came into office in March, 1809—convoked Congress for May of the same year, informed them that the gun-boats were put in a situation to require no further expenses, and that large appropriation for fortifications demanded their early consideration. This was the farewell to gun-boats and the revivial of the great system of defence, planned and established by Washington. The Congress of 1809, concurred with Mr. Madison, and at that very session the largest appropriation was made for fortifications which has ever been made in any year from the foundation of the Federal Government to this day. It was $1,419,000, being a quarter of a million more than was appropriated in the first year of the war, and within $300,000 of the sum contained in this bill; the amount of which seems to astonish some gentlemen so much. The Secretary at War, Dr. Eustis, made a report upon fortifications, in which may be found nearly every port and harbor now proposed to be fortified, from Passamaquoddy bay to the mouth of the Mississippi; and the appropriations continued to be large and annual, no less than $3,405,000, in the first four years of Mr. Madison's administration, which were years of peace, but menaced with war. The next four years, which covered the war, saw a further sum of $2,200,000 appropriated to this object. At the return of peace every body took warning from the past, and all the departments of Government entered cordially upon the business of repairing past errors by providing for the future, and covering the coast with permanent and durable works. Mr. Crawford, who was in Paris, sent us an engineer from the school of the great Napoleon; Congress took him into service; a board was formed to plan and direct the works, and appropriations of 8 or 900,000 dollars were annually made to carry them on. The messages of President Monroe, and the reports of the Secretary at War at that period, in favor of the system, are too well known to be repeated here The result of this spirit was the formation of the board alluded to; Bernard, Totten of the army, and Elliott, the navy; and their laborious examinations and various reports, especially of 1821, revised in 1826, by which the one hundred and seven forts, besides field works and floating batteries, were resolved upon for the defence of the maritime and gulf frontier. The system of Washington, thus revived at the end of the war, has been pursued ever since, with some relaxation in 1820, '21, '22, when the Treasury, from a surplus of sixteen millions, run out in about four years, had to overdraw in the Bank of the United States; and the Government, to avoid the disgrace of a public loan for current expenses, had to reduce the annual appropriation for the increase of the navy from one million of dollars to half a million, disbanded four thousand men out of its little army, diminished the fortification appropriations one half, and enforced a rigid economy and minute curtailment at all points. With the return of a prosperous Treasury, the usual appropriations for fortifications were resumed, and the sum of two millions and seven hundred and forty thousand dollars under the second Mr. Adams's administration, and of about five millions under President Jackson's, have been applied to that object, with the great consolation that all that has been applied since the war, amounting to twelve and a half millions of dollars is, saved, the works being constructed of durable and permanent materials, while the seven and a half millions previously laid out may be considered as lost, the works being done in perishable materials, for want of means in the time of Washington and Adams, and for want of time, and under the pressure of danger, in the time of Mr. Madison.

Here, Mr. B. said, there was room for precious and valuable retrospection. Seven and a half millions of dollars applied to fortifications, had been lost, partly by pernicious economy in using perishable material, but more by improvident neglect of time and means when we possessed both, and consequent waste and hurry when danger was pressing. There was a time, anterior to the late war, when the United States possessed both the means, and the

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*Estimates for Forts Mifflin and Delaware, not complete and not included.

†Estimate for Fort McHenry not complete, and not included.

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