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SPEECH

of the Honourable Joseph Hopkinson
of Philadelphia.

My participation in the counsels of the country, is of such recent date, that I may feel astonished at the occurrences which excite no more in me, than in those who have now under discussion the subject of the land tax. This Congress, sir, assembled after the conclusion of a war, which had called for vast expenditures, and accumulated a very heavy debt. At the commencement of the session a committee for the arrangement of the public business was appointed: and amongst the most prominent and most important, the committee of ways and means. It was the duty of this committee to examine into the state of the finances of the nation; to make accurate estimates of its resources; a judicious and impartial means; and fairly and impartially to apply the one to the necessities of the other.—The committee was appointed, in due time, and it proceeded on due consideration, and made their report upon these high matters to the house; and the debate we are now engaged in, arises out of that report. In the usual course of parliamentary affairs, it was doubtless to have been expected, that the opposition, if any, to the estimates and means thus furnished by the avowed friends of the administration, would have come from what, I find, is called "the opposition." But no such thing—we are on this side of the house, and the gentleman, in due time, prepared to take our share of the burden, and endure our portion of the suffering. As far as we can judge from the indications of our knowledge, the system then matured and delivered, would have generally at least, been adopted and carried into operation—when, behold, the storm of opposition rises, not with the opposition, but the declared friends and supporters of the administration, and of those measures which have called for these extraordinary burthen and supplies.—I should have expected that these gentlemen would have been willing to forget local interests, to surrender subordinate opinions, and united heartily in the great work of paying the national debt, and providing for future expenses. But I beg it may be distinctly remembered, that the first assault upon the reported system of finance, that assault which goes to its vitality, and opened a breach, which others, still declared friends of the administration, have widened, was made by the honourable gentleman from Kentucky, the speaker of the House. A motion was made by that gentleman, to reduce the land-tax from three to two millions—this motion failed. Not dissuaded by the defeat, he followed the attempt, by a blow infinitely more deadly to the whole scheme, by moving that the land tax should be an annual tax—while every other tax reported is perpetual, and the whole together declared to be a permanent system of taxation. In this the gentleman was successful, and the great part as three millions of the permanent system, has asurance of existence but for a single year. If this unfortunate, and I may say, ill-judged movement, shall throw the whole into confusion, and the government is thereby embarrassed, the public faith impeached, and the public establishments pinched, let me be remembered from whence these evils have flowed; let them be traced to their true source, the friends of the administration, and not the "opposition." When the honourable speaker had made this first step, it was natural to expect that some other gentleman, of the same side, should be ambitious to step before him, and accordingly we

find that his colleague proposes to abolish altogether this odious land-tax, and strike it out of the system; and of course to throw these three millions upon the shoulders of those who have been, or may be kind enough to take the rest of the burthen. Is this dealing fairly and equitably by all? But, sir, the cause of wonder does not stop here; the greater wonder is yet untold; no sooner does the honourable speaker suggest his essential, his vital change in this system of finance than the honourable chairman of the committee, by whom it was reported, surrenders it at discretion, without an effort to defend, or struggle to preserve it. Can it be expected that we in the opposition, however ill-disposed we may be to have confidence in a system thus solemnly reported as the matured work of knowledge and deliberation, and thus announced as the playing of a child. I know not the reasons which have determined the honourable chairman to this course. His intelligence and candour ought me to believe, he can give a satisfactory explanation of it; but until it is given, I must pause in my confidence. For myself, sir, I assure you most seriously, that I took my seat here with a fixed intent to give all the aid in my power to extricate the country from her difficulties, and provide for her future support; to place the resources of the nation fairly and liberally at the disposal of those whom the people have chosen to govern them, and to suffer no feelings of my own in relation to the conscientious discharge of my duty as an American legislator. But now must I hesitate in the course which would bring me to these results, when I find those who are appointed to lead the way, and are presumed to have all the information necessary for the purpose, halting and receding in their steps, and uncertain whether the path lies in this or in that direction; in fact suffering among themselves as to the measure to be pursued. While I would watch with double solicitude and care, the uses made of the public resources by an administration not possessing my confidence, I could, by no means feel justified in withholding those resources, and suffering the government itself to fall into dissolution. I will not let my house go to decay, because I do not like the tenant.

On the subject of the motives, the policy and the conduct of the war, the advantage and the glory of the peace; I had hoped to hear not a syllable within these walls, and certainly never intended myself to make them topics of discussion. I was willing to consider the war as an evil gone by, to be remembered no more as a source of irritation & reproach; and recurred to only for its lessons of wisdom and experience. I desired to look to the country in the actual situation in which we find her; to heal the deep wounds inflicted upon her; reanimate her powers and restore her strength. My attention has not therefore been for a moment turned to the numerous considerations that belong to the questions of the war and the peace.—But, sir, how has this moderation, for such I must call it, been received by the honourable speaker, who has this moment sat down. He has gone into an elaborate and animated justification, nay eulogium, of the causes of the war, and a magnificent display of the glory and advantages of the peace. And, sir, not satisfied with this, he has said the opposition, as he calls us, has not yet challenged either; and he challenges us to do so. Sir, I feel most fully the rashness of taking up this challenge on the instant, unarmed, unprepared, and without a moment's anticipation, that I should be drawn into the contest.—I will however venture upon it, taking the gentleman's own positions for my guide; and hoping to refute him on the very points & grounds he has chosen to place himself, in relation to the gains of the peace particularly. Let me, however, promise, that this peace had and has my hearty approbation, & most grateful I am to those who made it—God forbid that I should

reproach a measure which, I solemnly and conscientiously believe, snatched my country from the brink of the gulph of ruin. The federal government was at the last gasp of existence. But six months longer and it was no more. Yes, sir, trust me, that but for this providential peace, you and I would not be here listening to proud exclamations on the glory of the war; we should have heard nothing of a congress at this time, but as a thing that was; we should have had no profound plottings about a next president; no anxious longings for federal offices.—The general government would have dissolved into its original elements; its powers would have returned to the states, from which it was derived, and they doubtless would have been fully competent to their own defence against any enemy. Does not every body remember that all the great states, & the very small ones too, were preparing for this state of things, and organizing their own means for their own defence. When, therefore, I speak of our desperate condition, I speak only of the general government, and not of the country, of which I never despair, and never can. But, sir, as I believe that the struggle, prosperity and happiness of the country, essentially depend upon the maintenance of the federal government, can I not be grateful for an event which has preserved it. This source of approbation, however, is obviously independent of the terms of the peace treaty, in which I see none of the advantages so boasted of, and indeed, no excellence but the redemption from evil.

The honourable speaker and boldly and distinctly put the question, "What have we gained by the war?" and imposed upon him the task of exhibiting and proving these mighty gains. But to my astonishment, the whole of his argument was exerted to prove, not what we have gained, for no system of gain was produced, but what we have not lost; and in those cases in which he admits loss, to show how that loss was produced. In what manner any gain is to be made out of this, I cannot conjecture. To begin with the Fisheries.—The gentleman has told us that our right in them was held under the treaty of 1783; that in the late negotiations the British commissioners contended, that by our war we had forfeited all the rights held under former treaties, and among the rest the use of these fisheries. I do not understand from the gentleman that our commissioners assented to this doctrine, but rather that they made their objections to it. But still I cannot see how all this proves we have not lost the fisheries; and whether we lost them by the argument of the war, the only important fact remains unquestioned, that we have lost them. As our present enquiry, to which we are challenged, is into the gains of the war, it seems to be that the loss of the fisheries, however loss, cannot amount much to the account of our gains. Thus a physician may give a most learned and unanswerable detail of the reasons why and how his patient died; but I have never heard that the argument restored him to life, or satisfied any body that he was not dead. The honourable Speaker, however, has endeavoured to comfort us for this gain, by reminding us that the same argument which deprived us of the fisheries, took from the enemy the navigation of the river Mississippi, which he held under a former treaty. If this set off were even of a sufficient value to compensate for our loss, and one gentleman thinks it essentially more valuable, I still cannot see how it could aid the main point of this discussion, which is to display our gains by war, and to place the loss of the fisheries on the list. But unfortunately for this comfort, the gentleman has been candid enough to inform us that our commissioners actually offered to renew the Mississippi right to the British, if they would renew our right to the fisheries—the offer was rejected; and proves at least that our commissioners thought the fisheries worth the navigation of the river; and

that the British commissioners did not think that navigation worth the fisheries.

The next attempt made by the honourable gentleman in displaying our gains by the war was on the subject of the impressment of seamen; this great bone of contention. What is the argument to show that we have gained any thing here? The gentleman sets out with alluding to a letter, which has appeared in the papers, and excited much clamour with some people, written by a distinguished gentleman in the opposition, as the honourable speaker describes him. Now, says the speaker, the writer of this letter truly adopts and justifies the British doctrine on the subject of impressment; and if the gentlemen in the opposition hold the same opinions, surely it is not for them to complain that the treaty has done nothing in relation to it.—This is the argument. Now, in the first place I deny that it is fair to urge upon us, on this floor, the sentiments or opinions of a letter, by whomsoever it may have been written. I am not now called upon to express any opinion upon the principles held by the respectable writer of that letter; at present I protest against members on this floor being called upon to be judged by a document of that description. But that the honourable gentleman may have the full benefit of this circumstance, I will agree that the opposition maintain the doctrines of that letter. What inference can be drawn from this, to prove that the treaty in question has gained any thing on that subject? We have no right to complain—be it so—But is any thing gained by this? Is the American seaman more secure than he was before; or the American doctrine better established? If indeed the gentlemen who went to war for this principle, have changed their opinion of it; if they also agree with the writer of this letter on the subject, I admit their justification of a treaty, which if it does not surrender, at least leaves it as it was, is full and complete; for why should they ask a principle to be recognized in a treaty, which they are convinced is erroneous and ought to be abandoned. But if, on the other hand, these gentlemen adhere to their old opinions; if they still deny the right to search our vessels for British sailors and to take such as they find there; if in short they still hold the principles, the recognition of which was the declared cause and object of the war, then indeed I cannot see how a war or a treaty, which has gained nothing on this point, can be considered either successful or glorious. Certainly we can reckon nothing here in our account of gains. But we are told such a change took place in the affairs of Europe, as to stop practice of impressment; and this is all we need be concerned about. If it be so, we owe it consequently, not to the success of our war, or the skill of our treaty, but to a change in the affairs of Europe, over which we had no control, and for which we can honestly claim no credit. How then is it an item in the account of our gain by the war and the treaty? We should have had the same gain in the same way, and at the same time, if we had neither the war nor the treaty. But I must beg leave to correct the honourable gentleman in this part of his argument. A mere abstinence from the practice of impressment was not all the American government asked and contended for; but an explicit relinquishment of the principle under which it was defended. Let me refer to the official declarations of the cabinet, that the war would be in vain, without an express recognition of our principle; let me also refer to the speeches on the floor of congress, of the honourable speaker himself, in which in the strongest language, he maintains the same ground. Besides, if a cessation of the practice was all that was required, why did an arrangement, which would have prevented the abuse of the principle, and secured us from the dangers of the practice. At least, however, says the honourable speaker, we are in *status quo*, we stand as well on this subject as

we did before the war; we have given up nothing. To this however I cannot assent; and if I did, I do not see how it would prove a gain by the war. How is the fact? Do we stand as strong on this point, as we did before we took up arms for it? I think not; whatever may have been the strength of our claim before the war, it is weaker now. When a nation makes this last, this dread appeal in support of an asserted right, and then concludes the war by a voluntary treaty without obtaining the right, or any recognition of it, the right is weakened by the unsuccessful attempt, followed by a voluntary abandonment, if not of the right, at least of any acknowledgment of it—I may liken it to the case of an individual, who brings suit for a debt he alleges to be due to him, or a piece of land he claims as his own—If after the commencement of the trial he presents it; if not to issue, but suffers a nonsuit, and gives up his suit, what his cause, nobody will think as well of his rights as before. The man who abandons the prosecution of an asserted right will excite much distrust of his right itself, and even of his own confidence in it. We do not therefore stand in *status quo*, on the question of impressment.

The next subject of gain, introduced by the honourable gentleman, as resulting from the joint operations, of the war and the peace is, in relation to the islands in Passamaquoddy Bay. We have lost nothing here, says he, we have merely agreed that each party shall hold in that bay what he might be possessed of at the date of the treaty, and the right be afterwards settled by commissioners. Besides, says the Hon. Speaker, we (the American negotiators) had every reason to believe that the valour and patriotism of Massachusetts, would not only have rescued her soil from the possession of the enemy, but have also taken possession of the islands of —, and, in this case, we should have been the gainers by this arrangement; that as to the first branch of the argument we have lost nothing, because the right is not surrendered, and to be hereafter ascertained, it is not undetermined, that we may, at least, lost the possession, which is transferred to the enemy until the right shall be determined; and all the advantages to be derived, even in the arbitration, by the possession. Has not a large portion of the citizens of the U. States, in the mean time, been named over to a new master, and a new government? And more than all this, does any body believe, but for this war, G. Britain would ever have troubled herself, or us about those islands; or driven into question the boundaries, as they have been received by both parties for so many years? If not of fact, therefore, in sober truth we have, by this war, and this treaty, lost the right, if hereafter, it shall be decided against us, because but for the war, it would never have been submitted to any question or decision. As to the expectations that were entertained by our Commissioners, of the conquest to be made by Massachusetts I can see no just foundation for them.

The arms and resources of all the U. S. being placed at the disposal of the general government, whose duty it is to defend every state from invasion and conquest, the expectation would have been far more reasonable if it had been applied to the general government, and not to the government of the state, whose territory was occupied by the enemy. The expectation, however, apply it where you will, was disappointed; the possession of that portion of our country is lost; the right at least brought into unnecessary doubt and jeopardy, and, under these circumstances, I cannot reckon the result among the gains of the war.

But leaving these matters of fact calculations, the honourable gentleman has expatiated upon a wider field of gain by the war—the glory that has been acquired. I do not exactly understand how those gentlemen who declared and produced the war, make out their claim to all the glory that was acquired by

Land for Sale.
The subscribers offer private sale the land belonging to the heirs of Joseph Wilson in Calvert county, State of Maryland, lying on Plumpton creek, one of the most elevated situations on the Chesapeake, four hundred and fifty acres of first rate land, with good improvements, fifty acres of excellent meadow land, with a portion by fine apple orchard of different kinds of fruit. This farm is well adapted for corn, wheat and tobacco, it is well calculated for raising stock, will be sold on or before the first of March next.

Undoubted rights will be made the purchaser; as it is expected that all persons having a right to purchase will take a view of the land before purchase, they may know the terms of sale, by applying to the subscribers.

Martha Wilson,
Edward Wilson (of J. J. Wilson),
Joseph J. Wilson,
Thomas A. Wilson.
Jan. 25, 1816.

Land for Sale.
Will be offered at Public Sale, the premises, by the subscriber, Monday the 18th day of March next, a valuable Tract of Land, containing about 670 acres, 250 of which are wood of the most useful kinds, lying in Frederick county, Maryland, 2 1/2 miles from Frederick town, 2 1/2 from Liberty town, and 3 miles from Woodsbury. This land is situated on the head waters of Israel's Creek, uncommonly well watered from the failing springs of excellent water, has two considerable streams pass through it; the soil is good, and remarkably well suited to the use of plaster of Paris, and red clover; soil is of the blue slate kind, which has been found in the adjoining district where plaster of Paris and clover have been used, to improve and profitable crops. It is distant from the city of Baltimore 40 miles, bordering on the road leading from the city to Woodsbury, and adjoining to Benson's Copper Mine. On this tract there are great appearances of copper ore; and in addition to the many advantages it possesses, it is considered to be in a part of the country remarkable for good health. The improvements on this property consist of two farms, with tolerable wooden buildings, apple orchards and some meadow on each, and about 140 acres of cleared land between the two farms. The terms of sale will be one third of purchase money in hand, and the balance in three or four equal annual payments, on bond with approved security. Any person who may call to view the property will be shown the same by Capt. Philip Smith living on it.

Henry Maynard,
Annapolis, Jan 25, 1816.

The Editors of the Baltimore Telegraph, Federal Gazette, American and the Federal Republican, will please the above once a week till the day of sale, and forward their accounts to this office.

By His Excellency Charles Eildon of Hampton, Esq. Governor of Maryland.

A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS it has been represented to me by Arnold T. Windsor Esq. Sheriff of Montgomery county, that on the night of the 21st of Nov. last, Charles Farthing who had been found guilty by the verdict of a jury of Montgomery county of stealing a bright gelding the property of Benjamin Stewart, and a certain negro man named George, the property of Thomas Johnson, convicted of a rape on A. Keeth, broke the public goal of Annapolis, and made their escape. Whereas it is the duty of the executive in the execution of the laws, to bring all malefactors to justice, I have the fore thought proper to issue this proclamation, and do by and with the advice and consent of the council, offer a reward of two hundred dollars to any person or persons who shall apprehend and deliver to the sheriff of Montgomery county either of the said persons, and four hundred dollars for the said negro, given under my hand and the seal of the State of Maryland, at the city of Annapolis, this third day of January, eighteen hundred and sixteen.

C. RIDGELY, of Hampton, By his excellency's command,
NINIAN PINKNEY,
Clerk of the Council.

Negro George is between 20 and 25 years old, 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, tolerably black. Charles Farthing is about twenty five years of age, six feet high, handsome, strong and active. Ordered, That the foregoing proclamation be published eight times in the Maryland Gazette, Federal Gazette, Telegraph, Federal Republican, Herald at Fredericktown, and the Annapolis Monitor.

By order,
NINIAN PINKNEY,
Clerk of the Council.

FOR SALE.
A Negro Boy, aged about fifteen years, to serve until he is thirty years of age. For particulars apply to the office of the Gazette.

Feb. 22, 1816.