The free spirit of the Americans, and still more their par­simonious habits in public matters, make them averse to the existence of a large standing army. In this, as in some other things, they carry their opposition to the practice of European states too far. There is no danger to liberty in a free state from a standing army which is collected from the great body of the people, deeply imbued from the highest to the lowest rank with the spirit of freedom, and in all respects a most unfit instrument of tyrants. In Great Britain, the old constitutional jealousy of a standing army has been long exploded ; and there is even less reason for jealousy on this subject in the democratical states of Ame­rica ; besides, that regular troops can be effectually opposed only by regular troops ; and, in the present condition of the world, the state which denudes itself of efficient defensive weapons may be said to court disaster and disgrace. To supply the want of a small number of regular troops by masses of raw militia six times as numerous, who leave their homes under great personal and pecuniary sacrifices, is not economy, but the reverse ; to say nothing of the certain defeat and disgrace to which such a force is subjected in its conflicts with a veteran enemy, and the humiliations which these produce to national feeling. After the close of the late war, the Congress, by act of 3d March 1815, fixed the strength of the regular army at 9980 men ; but it was after­wards reduced, and its actual strength, as reported to Con­gress in March 1822, was,

Engineers 23

Four regiments of artillery 1977

Seven regiments of infantry 3367

Ordnance men 53

5420

It has however been again increased, and the following is the general return, as stated by the adjutant-general, No­vember 1838.

General staff. 57

Medical department 83

Pay department 19

Purchasing department 3

Corps of engineers 43

Topographical engineers 36

Ordnance department 323

Two regiments of dragoons 1,498

Four regiments of artillery 3,020

Eight regiments of infantry 7,496

Total 12,539

The army is distributed at about fifty posts and places along the sea-coast and inland frontier. The pay of a colonel of infantry is seventy-five dollars (L.16. 10s.) per month, and six rations a day ; of a captain, forty dollars and three rations; of a first lieutenant, thirty dollars and three rations ; of a sergeant, eight dollars and one ration ; of a private, five dollars and one ration. The Americans have a well-conducted military academy at West Point, on the Hudson, where 230 cadets, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, are instructed in the branches of knowledge necessary to form engineers. The period of service is five years, and the expense for each pupil is about 500 dollars per annum. But the chief military force of the United States is the militia, consisting properly of all the males between eighteen and forty-five, but always less or more deficient. A return made to Congress in February 1839 makes the number amount to 1,350,805. When called out to the field they have the same allowances as the regular army, and their period of service is limited to six months.

The American militia are under the charge of the state go­vernments. They generally if not universally elect their own officers, and are said to be very indifferently dis­ciplined.@@\*

The naval branch of the service became extremely popu­lar, from the exploits which it performed during the last war ; and in 1816 Congress appropriated *a* million of dollars for eight years to increase the navy. The grant was after­wards reduced to 500,000 dollars, and continued till 1825, The following statement is given of the strength of the navy in August 1839.

Guns. Guns.

Ships of the line 3 74 Frigates 1 54

7 80 14 44

1 120 2 36

11 17

Sloops of war 20 Schooners 8

Brigs 4 Steam ships (small).... 2

The expense of the naval service in 1837 was 6,854,059 dollars ; and in the first three quarters of the year 1838 it was 4,325,563 dollars.

The navy is managed by a board of three commissioners and a secretary. A small tax of twenty cents per month is paid by all officers and seamen, both in the navy and mer­chant service, for the relief of sick and disabled mariners, part of whom arc lodged in hospitals.

The great distinction of the American government is, that the first magistrate is chosen by the people, solely on account of his fitness for the office. In an hereditary mo­narchy, the same office descends from father to son, without regard to fitness. He who is in the line of succession ob­tains the throne, though he may be a minor or an infant, or however otherwise unfit for its great duties. This distinc­tion of birth has been adopted in all the modern kingdoms of Europe, as the best security against rival claims, and the danger of a disputed succession. The illustrious historian of Romeobserves, that of “ all the various forms of government which have prevailed in the world, an hereditary monarchy seems to present the fairest scope for ridicule a nation being handed down like a drove of cattle to an infant son, and the “bravest warriors and wisest statesmen” approach­ing the royal cradle with bended knees and protestations of inviolable fidelity. Still, however, he adds, that though “ satire and declamation may paint these obvious topics in the most dazzling colours, our serious thoughts will respect a useful prejudice, which establishes a rule of succession in­dependent of the passions of mankind....In the cool shade of retirement,” he continues, “ we may easily devise imagi­nary forms of government, in which the sceptre shall be constantly bestowed on the most worthy, by the free and incorrupt suffrage of the whole community. Experience overturns these airy fabrics, and teaches us that, in a large society, the election of a monarch can never devolve to the wisest or to the most numerous part of the people."@@2 The truth of these eloquent observations, and their agreement with all previous experience, could not have been ques­tioned at the time the historian wrote. The ancient de­mocracies of Greece and Rome presented one continued scene of violence and disorder; they were bold but rude sketches of civil freedom, and they shine as meteors in the page of history; but the proper materials were wanting for the nice machinery of a popular government. The people were fierce and ignorant ; they would not submit to the curb of the law ; and those rude constitutions, loosely held to­gether, perished amid the popular conflicts to which they gave rise. During the elective monarchy of Rome which

@@@, Warden, iii. 402, the*.* Niles's Register, 16th and 30th March 1822 ; and American Papers.

@@@s Gibbon’s Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. vii.