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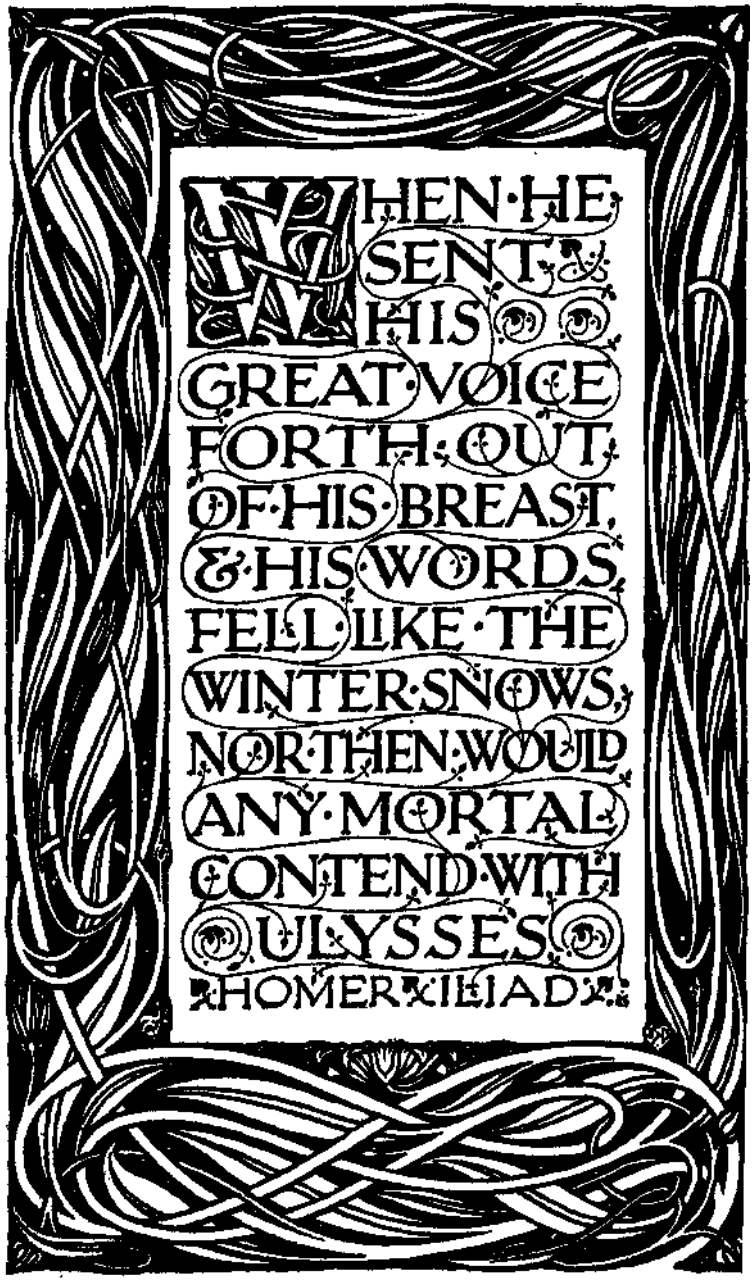
WHEN HE SENT HIS GREAT VOICE FORTH OUT OF HIS BREAST, & HIS WORDS FELL LIKE THE WINTER SNOWS, NOR THEN WOULD ANY MORTAL CONTEND WITH ULYSSES
HOMER ILIAD

ORATIONS on the FRENCH WAR, to the PEACE OF AMIENS by WILLIAM PITT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

"To Pitt's speeches," says a contemporary quoted by Lord Rosebery, " nothing seemed wanting, yet there was no redundancy. He seemed as by intuition to hit the precise point, where, having attained his object so far as eloquence could effect it, he sat down." This tribute to his art may be amplified by the dogmatic testimony of Macaulay, who called him, it may be remembered, "the spoiled child of the House of Commons," and pointed out that his real powers were all devoted to the task of convincing and persuading the House, while to the work of framing statutes, negotiating treaties, organizing fleets and armies, and so forth, he gave only the leavings of his time and the dregs of his fine intellect.

This is Macaulay's account of the younger Pitt: " At his first appearance in Parliament he showed himself superior to all his contemporaries in command of language. He could pour forth a long succession of round and stately periods, without premeditation, without ever pausing for a word, without ever repeating a word, in a voice of silver clearness, and with a pronunciation so articulate that not a letter was slurred over. He had less amplitude of mind and less richness of imagination than Burke, less ingenuity than Windham, less wit than Sheridan, less perfect mastery of dialectical fence, and less of that highest sort of eloquence which consists of reason and passion fused together, than Fox. Yet the almost unanimous judgment of those who were in the habit of listening to that remarkable race of men placed Pitt, as a speaker, above Burke, above Windham, above Sheridan, and not below Fox. His declamation was copious, polished, and splendid. In power of sarcasm he was probably not surpassed by any speaker, ancient or modern ; and of this formidable weapon he made merciless use. In two parts of the oratorical art which are of the highest value to a minister of state he was singularly expert. No man knew better how to be luminous or how to be obscure. When he wished to be understood, he never failed to make himself understood. He could with ease present to his audience, not perhaps an exact or profound,

The following is the brief list of his published works and speeches, with the more important lives and studies of his career :—

An unpublished tragedy, written when he was thirteen, some occasional verses, articles contributed to the *Anti-Jacobin* (i., ii., xii., xxv., xxxv.) form, together with his speeches, the bulk of Pitt's works. Speeches, 4 vols., Ed. W. S. Hathaway, 1806; Memoirs of the Life, and a Summary of the Speeches, by H. Cleland, **1807.** Life and Memoirs:—D. Gam, Memoirs of the Administration of William Pitt, 1797 ; H. Cleland, Memoirs of the Life, etc., 1807 ; Gifford (J. R. Green), A History of the Political Life of William Pitt, 1809; Bishop Tomline, 3 vols., **1821, 1822, 1903** (see also " Bishop Tomline's Estimate of Pitt" by Lord Rosebery, 1903); Brougham, "Sketches of Statesmen," first series, vol. ii , 1845; Macaulay, *EncycI Brit*,, 1859, published with his Miscellaneous Writings; edited with introduction and notes by J. Downie, etc., 1902; Lord Stanhope, 4 vols, ("the standard 'Life'")' 1862. Shorter Lives and Essays :—G. Cornewall Lewis, " Essays on the Administrations of Great Britain from 1783-1830," 1864 (from the *Edinburgh Review*); Goldwin Smith, " Three English Statesmen," 1867; Lewis Sergeant, " English Political Leaders " Series, 1882; Goldwin Smith, *Macmiian's Magazine.* August, 1890; Lord Rosebery, "Twelve English Statesmen," 1891 ; Lecky, *Macmillaris Magazine,* February, 1891 ; Lord Rosebery, " Pitt and Wilberforce " (includes " Sketch of Mr. Pitt by Wilberforce," and "Letters from Pitt to Wilberforce"), **1897.**

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PITTS
PARLIAMENTARY ORATIONS

ON PREPARATION FOR WAR

February I, 1793.[1]

SIR,—I shall now submit to the house some observations on the many important objects which arise out of the communication of his Majesty's message, and out of the present situation of this country. And in proceeding to the consideration of that message, the attention of the house should in the first instance, be strongly directed to that calamitous event,[2] to that dreadful outrage against every principle of religion, of justice, and of humanity, which has created one general sentiment of indignation and abhorrence in every part of this island, and most undoubtedly has produced the same effect in every civilized country.

At the same time I am aware, that I should better consult not only my own feelings, but those of the house, if considerations of duty would permit me to draw a veil over the whole of this transaction, because it is, in fact, in itself, in all those circumstances which led to it, in all that attended it, and in all which have followed, or which are likely to follow it hereafter, so full of every subject of grief and horror, that it is painful for the mind to dwell upon it. It is a subject which, for the honour of human nature, it would be better, if possible,

[1] The order of the day being moved for taking into consideration his Majesty's message of the 28th of January, it was read by the Speaker, as follows: "GEORGE R.—His Majesty has given directions for laying before the House of Commons, copies of several papers which have been received from M. Chauvelin, late minister plenipotentiary from the Most Christian King, by his Majesty's secretary of state for foreign affairs, and of the answers returned thereto; and likewise copy of an order made by his Majesty in council, and transmitted by his Majesty's commands to the said M. Chauvelin, in consequence of the accounts of the atrocious act recently perpetrated at Paris. In the present situation of affairs, his Majesty thinks it indispensably necessary to make a further augmentation of his forces by sea and land; and relies on the known affection and zeal of the House of Commons to enable his Majesty to take the most effectual measures, in the present important conjuncture, for maintaining the security and rights of his own dominions; for supporting his allies; and for opposing views of aggrandizement and ambition on the part of France, which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but are peculiarly so, when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society. "G. R."

* The murder of the King of France.

to dismiss from our memories, to expunge from the page of history, and to conceal it, both now and hereafter, from the observation of the world.

Excidat ille dies cevo, neu postera credant
Secula ; nos certe taceamus, et obruta multa
Nocte tegi nostra patiamur crimina gentis.

These, Sir, are the words of a great historian[1] of France in a former period, and were applied to an occasion which has always been considered as an eternal reproach to the French nation : And the atrocious acts lately perpetrated at Paris are, perhaps, the only instances that furnish any match to that dreadful and complicated scene of proscription and blood. But whatever may be our feelings on this subject, since, alas! it is not possible that the present age should not be contaminated with its guilt; since it is not possible that the knowledge of it should not be conveyed by the breath of tradition to posterity, there is a duty which we are called upon to perform —to enter our solemn protestation, that, on every principle by which men of justice and honour are actuated, it is the foulest and most atrocious deed which the history of the world has yet had occasion to attest.

There is another duty immediately relating to the interest of this and of every other country. Painful as it is to dwell upon this deed, since we cannot conceal what has happened, either from the view of the present age or of posterity, let us not deprive this nation of the benefit that may be derived from reflecting on some of the dreadful effects of those principles which are entertained and propagated with so much care and industry by a neighbouring country. We see in this one instance concentrated together, the effect of principles, which originally rest upon grounds that dissolve whatever has hitherto received the best sanctions of human legislation, which are contrary to every principle of law, human and divine. Presumptuously relying on their deceitful and destructive theories, they have rejected every benefit which the world has hitherto received from the effect either of reason, experience, or even of Revelation itself. The consequences of these principles have been illustrated by having been carried into effect in the single person of one, whom every human being commiserates. Their consequences equally tend to shake the security of commerce, to rob the

[1] De Thou, who applies these words to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and wishes that day could be blotted out of the history of France.

meanest individual in every country of whatever is most dear and valuable to him.

They strike directly against the authority of all regular government, and the inviolable personal situation of every lawful sovereign. I do feel it, therefore, not merely a tribute due to humanity, not merely an effusion of those feelings which I possess in common with every man in this country, but I hold it to be a proper subject of reflection to fix our minds on the effect of those principles which have been thus dreadfully attested, before we proceed to consider of the measures which it becomes this country to adopt, in order to avert their contagion, and to prevent their growth and progress in Europe.

However, notwithstanding that I feel strongly on this subject, I would, if possible, entreat of the house to consider even that calamitous event rather as a subject of reason and reflection, than of sentiment and feeling. Sentiment is often unavailing, but reason and reflection will lead to that knowledge which is necessary to the salvation of this and of all other countries. I am persuaded the house will not feel this as a circumstance which they are to take upon themselves, but that they will feel it in the manner in which I state it, as a proof of the calamities arising out of the most abominable and detestable principles; as a proof of the absence of all morals, of all justice, of all humanity, and of every principle which does honour to human nature; and, that it furnishes the strongest demonstration of the dreadful outrage which the crimes and follies of a neighbouring nation have suggested to them. I am persuaded the house will be sensible that these principles, and the effects of them, are narrowly to be watched, that there can be no leading consideration more nearly connected with the prospect of all countries, and most of all, that there can be no consideration more deserving the attention of this house, than to crush and destroy principles which are so dangerous and destructive of every blessing this country enjoys under its free and excellent constitution. We owe our present happiness and prosperity, which has never been equalled in the annals of mankind, to a mixture of monarchical government. We feel and know we are happy under that form of government. We consider it as our first duty to maintain and reverence the British constitution, which, for wise and just reasons of lasting and internal policy, attaches inviolability to the sacred person of the Sovereign, though, at the same time, by the responsibility it has annexed to government, by the check of a wise

system of laws, and by a mixture of aristocratic and democratical power in the frame of legislation, it has equally exempted itself from the danger arising from the exercise of absolute power on the one hand, and the still more dangerous contagion of popular licentiousness on the other. The equity of our laws, and the freedom of our political system, have been the envy of every surrounding nation. In this country no man, in consequence of his riches or rank, is so high as to be above the reach of the laws, and no individual is so poor or inconsiderable as not to be within their protection. It is the boast of the law of England, that it affords equal security and protection to the high and the low, to the rich and the poor.

Such is the envied situation of England, which may be compared, if I may be allowed the expression, to the situation of the temperate zone on the surface of the globe, formed by the bounty of Providence for habitation and enjoyment, being equally removed from the polar frosts on the one hand, and the scorching heat of the torrid zone on the other; where the vicissitude of the seasons, and the variety of the climate, contribute to the vigour and health of its inhabitants, and to the fertility of its soil; where pestilence and famine are unknown, as also earthquakes, hurricanes, &c. with all their dreadful consequences. Such is the situation, the fortunate situation of Britain: and what a splendid contrast does it form to the situation of that country which is exposed to all the tremendous consequences of that ungovernable, that intolerable and destroying spirit, which carries ruin and desolation where-ever it goes!

Sir, this infection can have no existence in this happy land, unless it is imported, unless it is studiously and industriously brought into this country. These principles are not the natural produce of Great Britain, and it ought to be our first duty, and principal concern, to take the most effectual measures in order to stop their growth and progress in this country, as well as in the other nations of Europe.

Under this impression, I wish to bring the house to the consideration of the situation in which we stand with respect to France, and with respect to the general state of the different powers of Europe. This subject was very much discussed on the first day of the present session, and I had the good fortune to concur with a very large majority of the house in the address that was presented to his Majesty, for his most gracious speech to both houses of parliament. Gentlemen then drew their

inferences from those notorious facts which every man's observation presented to him: and those circumstances were supposed to excite every sentiment of jealousy and precaution. They induced the house to arm his Majesty, and the executive government, with those powers which were indispensably necessary for effectually providing for the safety of the country. Many weeks have now elapsed since the beginning of the session, when the country appeared to be in a critical situation. Let us consider what are the circumstances now to attract our attention at the moment when the message of his Majesty calls on us for farther decision.

The papers which contain the communication between this country and France, consist of two different parts. The one comprehends the communication between this country and France, prior to the period which attracted those sentiments of jealousy I have stated :—This part also contains those comments which have taken place since, and those explanations which have been entered into by his Majesty's permission, with a view, if possible, that our jealousy might be removed in consequence of some step that might be taken. The other part consists, either of what were notorious facts at the meeting of parliament, or of those notorious facts which, though not officially communicated by his Majesty, were very generally known to the public.

The first part of these papers has never before been made public. The date of the first communication is May 12th, 1792. And the communication from that period till the 8th of July, contains the system on which his Majesty acted between France and the other European powers. From that period, down to the meeting of Parliament, his Majesty had most scrupulously observed the strictest neutrality with respect to France. He had taken no part whatever in the regulation of her internal government. He had given her no cause of complaint; and therefore the least return he might expect, was, that France would be cautious to avoid every measure that could furnish any just ground of complaint to his Majesty. He might also well expect that France would have felt a proper degree of respect for the rights of himself and his allies. His Majesty might most of all expect, that, in the troubled state of that country, they would not have chosen to attempt all interference with the internal government of this country, for the sole purpose of creating dissension among us, and of disturbing a scene of unexampled felicity. But fortunately for this country, they

did not succeed. The express assurances contained in the papers which have been printed and are now on the table, the very compact on the part of France does distinctly and precisely apply to every one of these points.

I have no doubt but gentlemen have applied the interval in perusing these papers with sufficient attention, to make it unnecessary for me to trouble them with more than the leading points. You will perceive, that the very first communication is from M. Chauvelin, May 12th, 1792, and contains this passage:

"Thus the King (of France) saw himself forced into a war, which was already declared against him; but, religiously faithful to the principles of the constitution, whatever may finally be the fate of arms in this war, France rejects all ideas of aggrandizement. She will preserve her limits, her liberty, her constitution, her unalienable right of reforming herself whenever she may think proper: she will never consent that, under any relation, foreign powers should attempt to dictate, or even dare to nourish a hope of dictating laws to her. But this very pride, so natural and so great, is a sure pledge to all the powers from whom she shall have received no provocation, not only of her constantly pacific dispositions, but also of the respect which the French well know how to show at all times for the laws, the customs, and all the forms of government of different nations.

"The King indeed wishes it to be known, that he would publicly and severely disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or favouring insurrections against the established order, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the interior policy of such states, under pretence of a proselytism, which, exercised in the dominions of friendly powers, would be a real violation of the law of nations."

This paper therefore contains a declaration, that whatever might be the fate of arms, France rejected all ideas of aggrandizement; she would preserve her rights, she would preserve her limits and her liberty. This declaration was made in the name of the king.

Gentlemen must remember, after the first revolution, and after the establishment of what they called the model of a government of liberty, the king wished it to be known, that he would publicly disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts,

in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or raising insurrections, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the internal government of such states, under pretence of proselytism, which would be a real violation of the law of nations. They have therefore passed, by anticipation, that sentence on their own conduct; and whether we shall pass a different sentence, is one of the objects of this day's consideration.

In the passage I have read, two distinct principles are laid down : the one, that whatever might be the fate of arms, France renounced all ideas of aggrandizement, and declared she would confine herself within her own territories ; the other, that to foment and raise insurrections in neutral states, under pretence of proselytism, was a violation of the law of nations. It is evident to all Europe, her conduct has been directly the reverse of those principles, both of which she has trampled under foot, in every instance where it was in her power. In the answer to that note of M. Chauvelin, his Majesty expresses his concern for the war that had arisen, for the situation of his Most Christian Majesty, and for the happiness of his dominions. He also gives him a positive assurance of his readiness to fulfil, in the most exact manner, the stipulations of the treaty of navigation and commerce; and concludes with these words :

" Faithful to all his engagements, his Majesty will pay the strictest attention to the preservation of the good understanding which so happily subsists between him and his Most Christian Majesty, expecting with confidence, that, animated with the same sentiments, his Most Christian Majesty will not fail to contribute to the same end, by causing, on his part, the rights of his Majesty and his allies to be respected, and by rigorously forbidding any step which might affect the friendship which his Majesty has ever desired to consolidate and perpetuate, for the happiness of the two empires."

We may also see what general assurances France thought fit to make to Great Britain, from a note from M. Chauvelin to Lord Grenville, dated June 8, 1792 ; where it is said,

" The King of the French is happy to renew to the King of Great Britain the formal assurance, that every thing which can interest the rights of his Britannic Majesty will continue to be the object of his most particular and most scrupulous attention.

" He hastens, at the same time, to declare to him, that the rights of all the allies of Great Britain, who shall not have

provoked France by hostile measures, shall by him be no less religiously respected.

" In making, or rather renewing this declaration, the King of the French enjoys the double satisfaction of expressing the wish of a people, in whose eyes every war, which is not rendered necessary by a due attention to its defence, is essentially unjust, and of joining particularly in the wishes of his Majesty, for the tranquillity of Europe, which would never be disturbed, if France and England would unite in order to preserve it."

Such then, Sir, is the situation in which his Majesty stands with respect to France. During the transactions of the last summer, when France was engaged in a war against the powers of Austria and Prussia, his Majesty departed in no shape from that neutrality. His Majesty did no one act from which it could be justly inferred, that he was friendly to that system. But what, let me ask the house, has been the conduct of France as to those express reiterated assurances, applied to the public concerns which I have now detailed?

These assurances went to three points: to a determination to abstain from views of aggrandizement; not to interfere with the government of neutral nations, which they admitted to be a violation of the law of nations; and to observe the rights of his Majesty and his allies. What has been the conduct of France on these three points, under the new system? She has, both by her words and actions, manifested a determination, if not checked by force, to act on principles of aggrandizement. She has completely disclaimed that maxim, " that whatever was the fate of their arms in war, France rejected all ideas of aggrandizement." She has made use of the first moment of success to publish a contradiction to that declaration. She has made use of the first instance of success in Savoy, without even attempting the ceremony of disguise, (after having professed a determination to confine herself within her ancient limits,) to annex it for ever as an eighty-fourth department to the present sovereignty of France. They have by their decree announced determination to carry on a similar operation in every country into which their arms can be carried, with a view, in substance, if not in name, to do the same thing in every country where they can with success.

Their decree of the 15th of December contains a fair illustration and confirmation of {heir principles and designs. They have by that decree expressly stated the plan on which they mean to act. Whenever they obtain a temporary success, whatever be

the situation of the country into which they come, whatever may have been its antecedent conduct, whatever may be its political connections, they have determined not to abandon the possession of it, till they have effected the utter and absolute subversion of its form of government, of every ancient, every established usage, however long they may have existed, and however much they may have been revered. They will not accept, under the name of liberty, any model of government, but that which is conformable to their own opinions and ideas; and all men must learn from the mouth of their cannon the propagation of their system in every part of the world. They have regularly and boldly avowed these instructions, which they sent to the commissioners who were to carry these orders into execution. They have stated to them what this house could not believe, they have stated to them a revolutionary principle and order, for the purpose of being applied in every country in which the French arms are crowned with success. They have stated, that they would organize every country by a disorganizing principle; and afterwards, they tell you all this is done by the will of the people. Where-ever our arms come, revolutions must take place, dictated by the will of the people. And then comes this plain question, what is this will of the people ? It is the power of the French. They have explained what that liberty is which they wish to give to every nation; and if they will not accept of it voluntarily, they compel them. They take every opportunity ,to destroy every institution that is most sacred and most valuable in every nation where their armies have made their appearance; and under the name of liberty, they have resolved to make every country in substance, if not in form, a province dependent on themselves, through the despotism of jacobin societies. This has given a more fatal blow to the liberties of mankind, than any they have suffered, even from the boldest attempts of the most aspiring monarch. We see, therefore, that France has trampled under foot all laws, human and divine. She has at last avowed the most insatiable ambition, and greatest contempt for the law of nations, which all independent states have hitherto professed most religiously to observe ; and unless she is stopped in her career, all Europe must soon learn their ideas of justice—law of nations—models of government—and principles of liberty from the mouth of the French cannon.

I gave the first instance of their success in Savoy, as a proof of their ambition and aggrandizement. I wish the house to

attend to the practical effect of their system, in the situation of the Netherlands. You will find, in some of the correspondence between France and this country, this declaration on the part of France:

" She has renounced, and again renounces every conquest, and her occupation of the Low Countries shall only continue during the war and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to ensure and consolidate their liberty; after which, they will be independent and happy. ' France will find her recompence in her felicity."

I ask whether this can mean any thing else, than that they hope to add the Netherlands, as an 84th or 85th department, to the French republic; whether it does not mean a subjugation of the Netherlands, to the absolute power of France, to a total and unequalled dependence on her? If any man entertains doubts upon the subject, let him look at the allegations of Dumourier, enforced by martial law. What was the conduct of this general, when he arrived at Brussels? Did he not assemble the inhabitants in the most public part of their city to elect the primary assemblies ? How agreeable must have been his arrival in the Netherlands, by his employing threats to procure a general illumination on his entrance into Brussels ! A hollow square of the French troops was drawn round the tree of liberty, to prevent the natives from pulling down the emblem of French freedom. This shews how well disposed the people were to receive the French system of liberty! This is the manner in which their principles are carried into effect in the different countries of Europe. I may here mention the conduct of the convention, on the occasion of an address from the people of Mons, in which they desire that the province of Hainault might be added as an 85th department of France. The convention referred the address to a committee, to report the form in which countries, wishing to unite with France, were to be admitted into the union. The convention could not decide upon it, and therefore they sent it to a committee to point out the manner in which they were to make their application for that purpose, so that the receiving of them was to be a fixed and standing principle, which in its consequences, if not timely prevented, must destroy the liberties and independence of England, as well as of all Europe.

1 would next proceed to their confirmed pledge, not to interfere in the government of other neutral countries. What they have done here is in countries which, under some pretence

or other, they have made their enemies. I need not remind the house of the decree of the 19th of November, which is a direct attack on every government in Europe, by encouraging the seditions of all nations to rise up against their lawful rulers, and by promising them their support and assistance. By this decree, they hold out an encouragement to insurrection and rebellion in every country in the world. They shew you they mean no exception, by ordering this decree to be printed in all languages. And therefore I might ask any man of common sense, whether any nation upon earth could be out of their contemplation at the time they passed it? And whether it was not meant to extend to England, whatever might be their pretences to the contrary? It is most manifest they mean, to carry their principles into every nation, without exception, subvert and destroy every government, and to plant on their ruins their sacred tree of liberty.

Some observations, to which they have affected to give the name of explanations, have been applied to this decree, and are these: "Now to come to the three points which can alone make an object of difficulty at the court of London, the executive council observe respecting the first, which is the decree of the 19th of November, that we have not been properly understood by the ministry of his Britannic Majesty, when, they accuse us of having given an explanation *which announces to the seditious of all nations, what are the cases in which they may previously count on the support and assistance of France.* Nothing could be more foreign than this reproach to the sentiments of the national convention, and to the explanation we have given of them; and we did not think it was possible we should be charged with the open design of favouring the *seditious,* at the very moment, when we declare that it would be *wronging the national convention, if they were charged with the project of protecting insurrections', and with the commotions that may break out in any corner of a state, of joining the ring-leaders, and of thus making the cause of a few private individuals that of the French nation,*

"We have said, and we desire to repeat it, that the decree of the 19th of November could not have any application, unless to the single case in which the GENERAL WILL of a nation clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call the French nation to its assistance and fraternity. Sedition can certainly never be construed into the GENERAL WILL. These two ideas mutually repel each other, since a sedition is not

and cannot be any other than the movement of a small number against the nation at large. And this movement would cease to be seditious, provided all the members of a society should at once rise, either to reform its government, or to change its form *in toto,* or for any other object.

"The Dutch were assuredly not seditious, when they formed the generous resolution of shaking off the yoke of Spain; and when the general will of that nation called for the assistance of France, it was not reputed a crime in Henry IV, or in Elizabeth of England, to have listened to them. The knowledge of the *general will* is the only basis of the transactions of nations with each other; and we can only treat with any government whatever on this principle, that such a government is deemed *the organ of the general will of the nation governed.*

"Thus when by this natural interpretation, the decree of the 19th of November is reduced to what it truly implies, it will be found, that it announces nothing more than an act of the general will, and that beyond any doubt so effectually founded in right, that it was scarcely worth the trouble to express it. On this account, the executive council thinks that the evidence of this right might, perhaps, have been dispensed with, by the national convention, and did not deserve to be made the object of a particular degree; but with the interpretation that precedes it, it cannot give uneasiness to any nation whatever."

To all this I shall only observe, that in the whole context of their language, on every occasion, they shew the clearest intention to propagate their principles all over the world. Their explanations contain only an avowal and repetition of the offence. They have proscribed royalty as a crime, and will not be satisfied but with its total destruction. The dreadful sentence which they have executed on their own unfortunate monarch, applies to every sovereign now existing. And lest you should not be satisfied that they mean to extend their system to this country, the conduct of the national convention has applied itself, by repeated acts, to yourselves by name, which makes any explanation on their part unsatisfactory and unavailing. There is no society in England, however contemptible in their numbers, however desperate in their principles, and questionable in their existence, who possessed treason and disloyalty, who were not cherished, justified, and applauded, and treated even with a degree of theatrical extravagance at the bar of the national convention. You have also

a list of the answers given to them at that bar. And, after all this, am I to ask you, whether England is one of the countries into which they wish to introduce a spirit of proselytism? which, exercised in the dominions of friendly powers, they themselves admit, would be a violation of the law of nations.

On the third point it is unnecessary for me to expatiate,—I mean on the violation of the rights of his Majesty, or of his allies.

To insist upon the opening of the river Scheldt, is an act of itself, in which the French nation had no right to interfere at all, unless she was the sovereign of the Low Countries, or boldly professed herself the general arbitress of Europe. This singular circumstance was an aggravation of their case, because they were bound by the faith of solemn and recent treaties to secure to the Dutch the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, and to have opposed the opening of that river, if any other power had attempted it. If France were the sovereign of the Low Countries, she would only succeed to the rights which were enjoyed by the house of Austria: and if she possessed the sovereignty, with all its advantage, she must also take it with all its incumbrances, of which the shutting up of the Scheldt was one. France can have no right to annul the stipulations relative to the Scheldt, unless she has also the right to set aside, equally, all the other treaties between all the powers of Europe, and all the other rights of England, or of her allies. England will never consent that France shall arrogate the power of annulling at her pleasure, and under the pretence of a natural right of which she makes herself the only judge, the political system of Europe, established by solemn treaties, and guaranteed by the consent of all the powers. Such a violation of rights as France has been guilty of, it would be difficult to find in the history of the world. The conduct of that nation is in the highest degree arbitrary, capricious, and founded upon no one principle of reason or justice. They declare this treaty was antiquated, and extorted by despotism, or procured by corruption. But what happened recently in the last year? This new and enlightened nation renewed her assurances of respecting all the rights of all his Majesty's allies, without any exception, without any reservation, so that the advancement of this claim is directly contrary to their recent professions. From the treaty of Munster, down to the year 1785, the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt has been one of the established rights of Holland. We are told it is to

be said, no formal requisition has been made by Holland for the support of this country. I beg gentlemen to consider, whether ships going up the Scheldt, after a protest of the States General, was not such an act as to have justified them in calling upon this country for a contingent of men. If this house means substantial good faith to its engagements, if it retains a just sense of the solemn faith of treaties, it must shew a determination to support them. Without entering too far upon this subject, let me call to their attention, for a moment, one circumstance,—I mean the sudden effect and progress of French ambition, and of French arms. If from that circumstance, Holland had just reason to be afraid to make a formal requisition; if she had seen just reason not to do what she might have been well justified in doing, that was no reason why we should not observe our treaty. Are we to stand by as indifferent spectators, and look at France trampling upon the ancient treaties of the allies of this country?. Are we to view with indifference the progress of French ambition, and of French arms, by which our allies are exposed to the greatest danger? This is surely no reason for England to be inactive and slothful. If Holland has not immediately called upon us for our support and assistance, she may have been influenced by motives of policy, and her forbearance ought not to be supposed to arise from her indifference about the river Scheldt. If Holland had not applied to England when Antwerp was taken, the French might have overrun her territory. And unless we wish to stand by, and to suffer state after state to be subverted under the power of France, we must now declare our firm resolution effectually to oppose those principles of ambition and aggrandizement, which have for their object the destruction of England, of Europe, and of the world.

The next thing is, whether we see any thing in these papers, which furnishes an answer to the past, or gives any security for the future? What does the explanation amount to on the subject of the treaty of our allies? It refers to the possibility of negociation at an indefinite period. She says, "she (France) has renounced, and again renounces every conquest, and her occupation of the Low Countries shall only continue during the war, and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to ensure and consolidate their liberty; after which, they will be independent and happy, and France will find her recompense in their felicity." What is this but an avowal of their former declarations?

On the subject of interference with neutral nations, there are one or two explanations of the decree of the 19th of November, which has been so often discussed. We are, indeed, told it is injurious to suppose the national convention could have intended to apply this decree to any country but where, by the public will, they have been called to give assistance and fraternity. This is in fact to advertise for treason and rebellion. Is there any man who could give credit to the reception which the English societies received in France? Though their numbers are too contemptible for the animadversion of the law, or the notice of our own executive government, they were considerable enough for the national convention. They tell you they are the clear, undisputed, constituted organ of the will of the people at large. What reliance can be placed on all their explanations, after the avowal of principles to the last degree dangerous to the liberty, the constitution, the independence, and the very existence of this country?

My time and my strength would fail me, if I were to attempt to go through all those various circumstances, which are connected with this subject. I shall take the liberty of reading a passage from a publication which came into my hands this morning, and I am extremely glad to have seen collected together, so many instances in which the conduct of France is detected. In a note from M. Chauvelin, dated December 27th, 1792, he complains'of the harsh construction which the British ministry had put on the conduct of France, and professes the strongest friendship for Great Britain. And yet, on the 31st of December, 1792,. that is in four days after, one of the members of the executive council, who had given these assurances to England, wrote this letter to the friends of liberty, and equality, in all *the* sea-ports in France:

"The government of England is arming, and the King of Spain, encouraged by this, is preparing to attack us. These two tyrannical powers, after persecuting the patriots in their own territories, think, no doubt, that they shall be able to influence the judgment to be pronounced on the tyrant Louis. They hope to frighten us. But no! a people who has made itself free; a people who has driven out of the bosom of France, and as far as the distant borders of the Rhine, the terrible army of the Prussians and Austrians; the people of France will not suffer laws to be dictated to them by a tyrant.

"The King and his parliament mean to make war against

us I will the English republicans suffer it? Already these free men shew their discontent, and the repugnance which they have to bear arms against their brothers, the French. Well! we will fly to their succour; we will make a descent on the island; we will lodge there fifty thousand caps of liberty; we will plant there the sacred tree, and we will stretch out our arms to our republican brethren; *the tyranny of their government will soon be destroyed.* Let every one of us be strongly impressed with this idea!—MONGE."

Such is the declaration of the sentiments of the minister of the marine; a declaration which separates not only the king, but the king and parliament of Great Britain from the people, who are called republicans. What faith can be put in assurances given on the part of France by M. Chauvelin, on the 27th of December, when, in four days after, we find the minister of the marine writing such a letter? It was to be hoped we might have seen reasons, perhaps, in consequence of friendly explanations, for not going to war. But such explanations as this communication contains, have been justly rejected. I shall not detain the house longer on this subject.

I shall state now what appears to be the state of the negociation. I take the conduct of France to be inconsistent with the peace and liberty of Europe. They have not given us satisfaction with respect to the question in issue. It is true, what they call explanations have taken place; but their principles, and the whole manner of their conduct, are such, that no faith can be put in their declarations. Their conduct gives the lie to their public professions; and, instead of giving satisfaction on the distinct articles, on which you have a right to claim a clear and precise explanation, and shewing any desire to abandon those views of conq'uest and aggrandizement, to return within their ancient limits, and to set barriers to the progress of their destructive arms, and to their principles, still more destructive; instead of doing so, they have given,—explanations I cannot call them, but an avowal of those very things you complain of. And in the last paper from M. Chauvelin, which may therefore be considered as the *ultimatum*, are these words:

" After so frank a declaration, which manifests such a sincere desire of peace, his Britannic Majesty's ministers ought not to have any doubts with regard to the intentions of France. If her explanations appear insufficient, and if we are still obliged to hear a haughty language; if hostile preparations are continued

in the English ports, after having exhausted every means to preserve peace, we will prepare for war with the sense of the justice of our cause, and of our efforts to avoid this extremity. We will fight the English, whom we esteem, with regret,—but we will fight them without fear."

This is an ultimatum to which you cannot accede. They have neither withdrawn their armies from the neighbouring nations, nor shewn the least disposition to withdraw them. If France is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must shew herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandizement, and to confine herself within her own territory, without insulting other governments, without disturbing their tranquillity, without violating their rights. And unless she consent to these terms, whatever may be our wishes for peace, the final issue must be war. As to the time, as to the moment when war is to commence, if there is yet any possibility of satisfactory explanation, and security for the future, it is not to the last moment precluded. But I should disguise my sentiments to the house, if I stated, that I thought it in any degree probable. This country has always been desirous of peace. We desire it still, but such as may be real and solid, and consistent with the interests and dignity of Britain, and with the general security of Europe. War, whenever it comes, will be preferable to peace without honour, without security, and which is incompatible either* with the external safety, or the internal happiness of this country.

I have endeavoured to comprehend as much as possible, though I am sensible I have left a great deal untouched. If any topic should afterwards arise, I trust I shall meet with the indulgence of the house in stating it. I shall now move, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message, and the communication of the papers, which, by his Majesty's command, have been laid before us.

" To offer his Majesty our heartfelt condolence on the atrocious act lately perpetrated at Paris, which must be viewed by every nation in Europe as an outrage on religion, justice, and humanity, and as a striking and dreadful example of the effects of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society.

" To represent to his Majesty, that it is impossible for us not to be sensible of the views of aggrandizement and ambition

which, in violation of repeated and solemn professions, have been openly manifested on the part of France, and which are connected with the propagation of principles incompatible with the existence of all just and regular government; that under the present circumstances, we consider a vigorous and effectual opposition to those views, as essential to the security of every thing that is most dear and valuable to us as a nation, and to the future tranquillity and safety of all other countries.

"That impressed with these sentiments, we shall, with the utmost zeal and alacrity, afford his Majesty the most effectual assistance, to enable his Majesty to make a farther augmentation of his forces by sea and land, and to act as circumstances may require in the present important conjuncture, for maintaining the security and honour of his crown, for supporting the just rights of his allies, and for preserving to his people the undisturbed enjoyment of the blessings, which, under the Divine Providence, they receive from the British constitution I"

DECLARATION OF WAR BY FRANCE

February 12, 1793.[1]

IN proposing, Pitt observed, to the house an address in answer to his Majesty's message, he did not conceive that there could be any necessity, in the present instance, at least in one view of the subject, for troubling them much at large. Whatever difference of opinion might formerly have existed with respect to subjects,

[1] The order of the day was moved for taking into consideration the following message from his Majesty: "'GEORGE R.—His Majesty thinks proper to acquaint the House of Common*, that the assembly now exercising the powers of government in France, have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his Majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations, and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against his Majesty and the United Provinces. Under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, his Majesty has taken the necessary steps to maintain the honour of his crown, and to vindicate the rights of his people; and his Majesty relies with confidence on the firm and effectual support of the House of Commons, and on the zealous exertions of a brave and loyal people, in prosecuting a just and necessary war, and in endeavouring, under the blessing of Providence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the farther progress of a system which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, ana is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity and justice.

"In a cause of such general concern, his Majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with his Majesty by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe. "G. R."

on which, however, the great majority both of that house and the nation had coincided in sentiment, whatever doubts might be entertained as to the interest, which this country had in the recept transactions on the continent, whatever question might be made of the satisfaction to which this country was intitled, or whatever question might be made of the mode of conduct which had been pursued by government, which lately had not been carried so far as to produce even a division; yet when the situation in which we now stood was considered, when those circumstances which had occurred to produce an alteration in the state of affairs since the last address, were taken into the account, he could not doubt but that there would be one unanimous sentiment and voice expressed on the present occasion. The question now was, not what degree of danger or insult we should find it necessary to repel, from a regard to our safety, or from a sense of honour; it was, not whether we should adopt in our measures a system of promptitude and vigour, or of tameness and procrastination; whether we should sacrifice every other consideration to the continuance of an uncertain and insecure peace—When war was declared, and the event no longer in our option, it remained only to be considered, whether we should prepare to meet it with a firm determination, and support his Majesty's government with zeal and courage against every attack. War now was not only declared, but carried on at our very doors; a war which aimed at an object no less destructive than the total ruin of the freedom and independence of this country. In this situation of affairs, he would not do so much injustice to the members of that house, whatever differences of opinion might formerly have existed, as to suppose there could be any but one decision, one fixed resolution, in this so urgent necessity, in this imminent and common danger, by the ardour and firmness of their support, to testify their loyalty to their sovereign, their attachment to the constitution, and their sense of those inestimable blessings which they had so long enjoyed under its influence. Confident, however, as he was, that such would be their unanimous decision, that such would be their determined and unalterable resolution, he should not consider it as altogether useless to take a view of the situation of the country at the time of his Majesty's last message, of the circumstances which had preceded and accompanied it, and of the situation in which we now stood, in consequence of what had occurred during that interval.

When his Majesty, by his message, informed them, that in

the present situation of affairs he conceived it indispensably necessary to make a farther augmentation of his forces, they had cheerfully concurred in that object, and returned in answer, what then was the feeling of the house, the expression of their affection and zeal, and their readiness to support his Majesty in those purposes, for which he had stated an augmentation of force to be necessary. They saw the justice of the alarm which was then entertained, and the propriety of affording that support which was required. He should shortly state the grounds upon which they had then given their concurrence. They considered that whatever temptations might have existed to this country from ancient enmity and rivalship, paltry motives indeed I or whatever opportunity might have been afforded by the tumultuous and distracted state of France, or whatever sentiments might be excited by the transactions which had taken place in that nation, his Majesty had uniformly abstained from all interference in its internal government, and had maintained, with respect to it, on every occasion, the strictest and most inviolable neutrality.

Such being his conduct towards France, he had a right to expect on their part a suitable return ; more especially, as this return had been expressly conditioned for by a compact, into which they entered, and by which they engaged to respect the rights of his Majesty and his allies, not to interfere in the government of any neutral country, and not to pursue any system of aggrandizement, or make any addition to their dominions, but to confine themselves, at the conclusion of the war, within their own territories. These conditions they had all grossly violated, and had adopted a system of ambitious and destructive policy, fatal to the peace and security of every government, and which in its consequences had shaken Europe itself to its foundation. Their decree of the 19th of November, which had been so much talked of, offering fraternity and affiance to all people who wish to recover their liberty, was a decree not levelled against particular nations, but against every country where there was any form of government established; a decree not hostile to individuals, but to the human race; which was calculated every where to sow the seeds of rebellion and civil contention, and to spread war from one end of Europe to the other, from one end of the globe to the other. While they were bound to this country by the engagements which he had mentioned, they had shewed no intention to exempt it from the consequences of this decree. Nay, a directly contrary opinion

might be formed, and it might be supposed that this country was more particularly aimed at by this very decree, if we were to judge from the exultation with which they had received from different societies in England every address expressive of sedition and disloyalty, and from the eager desire which they had testified to encourage and cherish the growth of such sentiments. Not only had they shewed no inclination to fulfil their engagements, but had even put it out of their own power, by taking the first opportunity to make additions to their territory in contradiction to their own express stipulations. By express resolutions for the destruction of the existing government of all invaded countries, by the means of jacobin societies, by orders given to their generals, by the whole system adopted in this respect by the national assembly, and by the actual connection of the whole country of Savoy, they had marked their determination to add to the dominions of France, and to provide means, through the medium of every new conquest, to carry their principles over Europe. Their conduct was such, as in every instance had militated against the dearest and most valuable interests of this country.

The next consideration was, that under all the provocations which had been sustained from France, provocations which, in ordinary times, and in different circumstances, could not have failed to have been regarded as acts of hostility, and which formerly, not even a delay of twenty-four hours would have been wanting to have treated as such, by commencing an immediate war of retaliation, his Majesty's ministers had prudently and temperately advised all the means to be previously employed of obtaining reasonable satisfaction, before recourse should be had to extremities. Means had been taken to inform their agents, even though not accredited, of the grounds of jealousy and coitiplaint on the part of this country, and an opportunity had been afforded through them of bringing forward any circumstances of explanation, or offering any terms of satisfaction. Whether the facts and explanations which these agents had brought forward were such as contained any proper satisfaction for the past, or could afford any reasonable assurance with respect to the future, every member might judge from the inspection of the papers. He had already given it as his opinion, that if there was no other alternative than either to make war or depart from our principles, rather than recede from our principles a war was preferable to a peace; because a peace, purchased upon such terms, must be uncertain, pre-

carious, and liable to be continually interrupted by the repetition of fresh injuries and insults. War was preferable to such a peace, because it was a shorter and a surer way to that end which the house had undoubtedly in view as its ultimate object —a secure and lasting peace. What sort of peace must that be in which there was no security? Peace he regarded as desirable only so far as it was secure. If, said Mr. Pitt, you entertain a sense of the many blessings which you enjoy, if you value the continuance and safety of that commerce which is a source of so much opulence, if you wish to preserve and render permanent that high state of prosperity by which this country has for some years past been so eminently distinguished, you hazard all these advantages more, and are more likely to forfeit them, by submitting to a precarious and disgraceful peace, than, by a timely and vigorous interposition of your arms.—By tameness and delay you suffer that evil which might now be' checked, to gain ground, and which, when it becomes indispensable to oppose, may perhaps be found irresistible.

It had on former debates been alleged, that by going to war we expose our commerce. Is there, he would ask, any man so blind and irrational, who does not know that the inevitable consequence of every war must be much interruption and injury to commerce? But, because our commerce was exposed to suffer, was that a reason why we should never go to war? Was there no combination of circumstances, was there no situation in the affairs of Europe, such as to render it expedient to hazard for a time a part of our commercial interests? Was there no evil greater, and which a war might be necessary to avoid, than the partial inconvenience to which our commerce was subjected, during the continuance of hostile operations? But he begged pardon of the house for the digression into which he had been led—while he talked as if they were debating about the expediency of a war, war was actually declared: we were at this moment engaged in a war.

He now came to state what had occurred since his Majesty's last message; and to notice those grounds which had served as a pretext for the declaration of war. When his Majesty had dismissed M. Chauvelin, what were then the hopes of peace? He was by no means sanguine in such hopes, and he had stated to the house that he then saw but little probability that a war could be avoided. Such then was his sentiment, because the explanations and conduct of the French agent were such as afforded him but little room to expect any terms which this

country could, either consistently with honour or a regard to its safety, accept. Still, however, the last moment had been kept open to receive any satisfactory explanation which might be offered. But what, it might be asked, was to be the mode of receiving such explanation? When his Majesty had dismissed M. Chauvelin, as, by the melancholy catastrophe of the French monarch, the only character in which he had ever been acknowledged at the British court had entirely ceased, eight days had been allowed him for his departure, and if during that period he had sent any more satisfactory explanation, still it would have been received. Had any disposition been testified to comply with the requisitions of Lord Grenville, still an opportunity was afforded of intimating this disposition. Thus had our government pursued to the last a conciliatory system, and left every opening for accommodation, had the French been disposed to embrace it. M. Chauvelin, however, instantly quitted the country, without making any proposition. Another agent had succeeded, (M. Maret) who, on his arrival in this country, had notified himself as the charge-d'affaires on the part of the French republic, but had never, during his residence in the kingdom, afforded the smallest communication.

What was the next event which had succeeded ? An embargo was laid on all the vessels and persons of his Majesty's subjects who were then in France. This embargo was to be considered as not only a symptom, but as an act of hostility. It certainly had taken place without any notice being given, contrary to treaty, and against all the laws of nations. Here perhaps it might be said, that on account of their stopping certain ships loaded with corn for France, the government of Great Britain might be under the same charge; to this point he should come presently. He believed if government were chargeable with any thing, it might rather be, that they were even too slow in asserting the honour and vindicating the rights of this country. If he thought that his Majesty's ministers wanted any justification, it would be for their forbearance, and not for their promptitude, since to the last moment they had testified a disposition to receive terms of accommodation, and left open the means of explanation. Notwithstanding this violent and outrageous act, such was the disposition to peace in his Majesty's ministers, that the channels of communication, even after this period, were not shut: a most singular circumstance happened, which was the arrival of intelligence from his Majesty's minister at the Hague on the very day when the

embargo became known here, that he had received an intimation from General Dumourier, that the general wished an interview, in order to see if it were yet possible to adjust the differences between the two countries, and to promote a general pacification. Instead of treating the embargo as an act of hostility, and forbearing from any communication, even after this aggression, his Majesty's ministers, on the same day on which the embargo was made known to them, gave instructions to the ambassador at the Hague, to enter into a communication with General Dumourier; and they did this with great satisfaction, on several accounts: first, because it might be done without committing the king's dignity; for the general of an army might, even in the very midst of war, without any recognition of his authority, open any negociation of peace. But this sort of communication was desirable also, because, if successful, it would be attended with the most immediate effects, as its tendency was immediately to stop the progress of war, in the most practical, and perhaps, in the only practical way. No time was therefore lost in authorizing the king's minister at the Hague to proceed in the pursuit of so desirable an object, if it could be done in a safe and honourable mode, but not otherwise. But before the answer of government could reach the ambassador, or any means be adopted for carrying the object proposed into execution, war was declared, on the part of the French, against this country. If then we were to debate at all, we were to debate whether or not we were to repel those principles, which not only were inimical to this, and to every other government, but which had been followed up in acts of hostility to this country. We were to debate whether or not we were to resist an aggression which had already been commenced. He would however refer the house, not to observations of reasoning, but to the grounds which had been assigned by the assembly themselves in their declaration of war. But first, he must again revert for a moment to the embargo. He then stated, that a detention of ships, if no ground of hostility had been given, was, in the first place, contrary to the law of nations. In the second place, there was an actual treaty between the two countries, providing for this very circumstance: and this treaty (if not set aside by our breach of it, which he should come to presently) expressly said, that, " in case of a rupture, time shall be given for the removal of persons and effects."

He should now proceed to the declaration itself. It began

with declaring, "That the King of England has not ceased, especially since the revolution of the 10th of August 1792, to give proofs of his being evil-disposed towards the French nation, and of his attachment to the coalition of crowned heads." Notwithstanding the assertion that his Majesty had not ceased to shew his evil dispositions towards the French nation, they had not attempted to shew any acts of hostility previous to the 10th of August; nor in support of the charge of his attachment to the coalition of crowned heads, had they been able to allege any fact, except his supposed accession to the treaty between the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia. This treaty had already, this evening, been the subject of conversation: it had then been mentioned, which he should now repeat, that the fact, thus alleged, was false, and entirely destitute of foundation; and that no accession to any such treaty had ever taken place on the part of his Majesty. And not only had he entered into no such treaty, but no step had been taken, and no engagement formed on the part of our government, to interfere in the internal affairs of France, or attempt to dictate to them any form of constitution. He declared that the whole of the interference of Great Britain had been (in consequence of French aggressions) with the general view of seeing whether it was possible, either by our own exertions, or in concert with any other powers, to repress this French system of aggrandizement and aggression, with the view of seeing whether we could not re-establish the blessings of peace, whether we could not, either separately, or jointly with other powers, provide for the security of our own country, and the general security of Europe.

The next charge brought by the national assembly was, "That at the period aforesaid, he ordered his ambassador at Paris to withdraw, because he would not acknowledge the provisional executive council, created by the legislative assembly." It was hardly necessary for him to discuss a subject with which all were already so well acquainted. After the horrors of the 10th of August, which were paralleled but not eclipsed by those of the 2d of September, and the suspension of the French monarch, to whom alone the ambassador had been sent, it certainly became proper to recall him. He could not remain to treat with any government to whom he was not accredited; and the propriety of his being recalled would appear still more evident, when it was considered that it was probable that the banditti who had seized upon the

government would not long retain their power; and, in fact, in) the course of a month, they had been obliged to yield to the interest of a different party, but of a description similar to their own. It was also to be remarked, that this circumstance of recalling the ambassador had never till now been complained of as an act of hostility. When a government was overturned, it became a fair question how long an interval should intervene till that government should be acknowledged? and especially if that change of government was accompanied with all the circumstances of tumult and distraction, it certainly became a matter of extreme hardship that a war should be the consequence to the nation which should refuse to acknowledge it in the first instance. The force of this reasoning became increased in the particular application, when it was considered, that France had not yet established any constitution of its own; that all hitherto, was merely provisional and temporary; and that, however the present republican system might be confirmed by force, or change of opinion, a little before, the voice of the nation, as far as its wish could be collected, had expressed itself in favour of a monarchy.

They proceeded to state, as farther grounds of their declaration of war, "That the cabinet of St. James's has ceased, since the same period (the 10th of August), to correspond with the French ambassador at London, on pretext of the suspension of the heretofore king of the French. That, since the opening of the national convention, it has refused to resume the usual correspondence between the two states, and to acknowledge the powers of this convention. That it has refused to acknowledge the ambassador of the French republic, although provided with letters of credit in its name." M. Chauvelin had been received at this court as ambassador of the king, and in no other capacity or character. From the period of the suspension of the king, he, for some months, ceased to hold any communication with the government here, or to act in any capacity; nor was it till the month of December that he had received his letter of credence to act here as the ambassador of the French republic. With respect to the charge of not having acknowledged the convention, he confessed it to be true. When these letters of credence had been tendered, they were* refused; but it was to be considered whether it would have been proper to have recognized them, after the repeated instances of offence, for which no compensation had been made, and of which, indeed, every fresh act presented not only a repetition, but an aggrava-

tion. Indeed, it would have been impossible at that period, without shewing a deviation from principle, and a tameness of disposition, to have recognized their authority, or accepted of the person who presented himself in the character of their ambassador. At that very moment, it was to be recollected, they were embarked in the unjust and inhuman process which had terminated in the murder of the king—an event which had everywhere excited sentiments of the utmost horror and indignation ! Would it have been becoming in our government first to have acknowledged them at such a moment, when the power they had assumed was thus cruelly and unjustly exercised against that very authority which they usurped ? But, whatever might be the feelings of abhorrence and indignation, which their conduct on this occasion could not fail to excite, he should by no means hold out these feelings as a ground for hostility, nor should he ever wish to propose a war of vengeance. The catastrophe of the French monarch, they ought all to feel deeply; and consistently with that impression, be led more firmly to resist those principles from which an event of so black and atrocious a nature had proceeded; principles which, if not opposed, might be expected in their progress to lead to the commission of similar crimes; but, notwithstanding government had been obliged to decline all communication which tended to acknowledge the authority of the convention, still, as he had said before, they had left open the means of accommodation; nor could that line of conduct which they had pursued, be stated as affording any ground of hostility.

He should now consider, collectively, some of the subsequent grounds which they had stated in their declaration, which were expressed in the following articles:

"That the court of St. James's has attempted to impede the different purchases of corn, arms, and other commodities ordered in England, either by French citizens or the agents of the republic.

" That it has caused to be stopped, several boats and ships loaded with grain for France, contrary to the treaty of 1786, while exportation to other foreign countries was free.

"That in order still more effectually to obstruct the commercial operations of the republic in England, it obtained an act of parliament prohibiting the circulation of assignats.

, "That in violation of the fourth article of the treaty of 1786, it obtained another act, in the month of January last, which subjects all French citizens, residing in, or coming

into England, to forms the most inquisitorial, vexatious, and dangerous.

"That at the same time, and contrary to the Ist article of **the** peace of 1783, it granted protection and pecuniary aid not only to the emigrants, but even to the chiefs of the rebels, who have already fought against France; that it has maintained with them a daily correspondence, evidently directed against the French revolution: that it has also received the chiefs of **the** rebels of the. French West-India colonies."

All these had been stated as provocations ; but what sort of provocations ? What, he would ask, was a provocation ?—That we had indeed, taken measures, which, if considered by themselves, and not as connected with the situation of affairs in which they were adopted, might perhaps be considered in the light of provocations, he would allow; but if these measures were justified by the necessity of circumstances—if they were called for by a regard to our own safety and interests—they could only be viewed as temperate and moderate precautions. And in this light, these grounds, assigned in the declaration, could only be regarded as frivolous and unfounded pretences. With respect to the charge of having stopped supplies of grain and other commodities, intended for France, what could be more ridiculous than such a pretext ? When there was reason to apprehend that France intended an attack upon the allies of this country, and against the country itself, upon which, at the same time, it depended for the stores and ammunitions necessary for carrying on hostilities, was it natural to suppose that they should furnish, from their own bosom, supplies to be turned against themselves and their allies? Could they be such children in understanding, could they be such traitors in principle, as to furnish to their enemies the means of hostility and the instruments of offence? What was the situation of France with respect to this country? Had they not given sufficient cause for jealousy of their hostile intentions? By their decree of the 19th of November, they had declared war against all governments. They had possessed themselves of Flanders, and were there endeavouring to establish, by force, what they styled a system of freedom, while they actually menaced Holland with an invasion. Another ground which they **had** stated in their declaration as an act of hostility on the part of our government was, that they had not suffered assignats to be circulated in this country. Truly, they had reason to be offended that we would not receive what was worth nothing;

and that, by exercising an act which came completely within our own sovereignty with respect to the circulation of any foreign paper currency, we thus avoided a gigantic system of swindling! If such, indeed, were the pretences which they brought forward as grounds for a declaration of war, it was matter of wonder that, instead of a sheet of paper, they did not occupy a volume, and proved that their ingenuity had been exhausted before their modesty had been at all affected. Of much the same nature was that other pretext, with respect to the passing of the alien bill; a bill absolutely necessary for the safety of the country, as it shielded us from the artifice of the seditious, perhaps the dagger of the assassin. This bill they had held out as an infringement of the treaty of commerce It could be no infringement of their treaty, as in the treaty itself it was expressly declared, that nothing was to be considered as an infringement, unless, first, proper explanations had taken place. Secondly, it was not to be expected that any treaty could supersede the propriety of adopting new measures in a new situation of affairs. Such was the case, when an inundation of foreigners had poured into this country under circumstances entirely different from those which were provided for by the bill. But who were those who complained of the severity of the regulations adopted by the alien bill in this country? The very persons who, during the late transactions in their own country, had adopted restrictions of police ten times more severe, but of which our government, however much its subjects might be affected, had never made the smallest complaint.

The next ground, assigned in the declaration, was the armament which had taken place in this country.

"That in the same spirit, without any provocation, and when all the maritime powers are at peace with England, the cabinet of St. James's has ordered a considerable naval armament, and an augmentation of the land forces.

"That this armament was ordered at a moment when the English minister was bitterly persecuting those who supported the principles of the French revolution in England, and was employing all possible means, both in parliament and out of it, to cover the French republic with ignominy, and to draw upon it the execration of the English nation, and of all Europe''

And, under what circumstances had the armament complained of taken place? At the period when the French, by their conduct with regard to the treaty of the Scheldt, shewed

their intention to disregard the obligation of all treaties, when they had begun to propagate principles of universal war, and to discover views of unbounded conquest. Was it to be wondered that, at such a time, we should think it necessary to take measures of precaution, and to oppose, with determination, the progress of principles, not only of so mischievous a tendency, but which, in their immediate consequences, threatened to be so fatal to ourselves and our allies? Indeed they now seemed rather to despair of these principles being so generally adopted, and attended with such striking and immediate success as they had at first fondly imagined. How little progress these principles had made in this country they might be sufficiently convinced by that spirit, which had displayed itself, of attachment to the constitution, and those expressions of a firm determination to support it, which had appeared from every quarter. If, indeed, they mean to attack us, because we do not like French principles, then would this indeed be that sort of war which had so often been alleged and deprecated on the other side of the house—a war against opinions. If they mean to attack us because we love our constitution, then indeed it would be a war of extirpation; for not till the spirit of Englishmen was exterminated, would their attachment to the constitution be destroyed, and their generous efforts be slackened in its defence.

The next articles of complaint on the part of the French were :

"That the object of this armament, intended against France, was not even disguised in the English parliament.

" That although the provisional executive council of France has employed every measure for preserving peace and fraternity with the English nation, and has replied to calumnies and violation of treaties only by remonstrances, founded on the principles of justice, and expressed with the dignity of free men; the English minister has persevered in his system of malevolence and hostility, continued the armaments, and sent a squadron to the Scheldt to disturb the operations of the French in Belgium.

" That, on the news of the execution of Louis, he carried his outrages to the French republic to such a length, as to order the ambassador of France to quit the British territory within eight days.

" That the King of England has manifested his attachment to the cause of that traitor, and his design of supporting it

by different hostile resolutions adopted in his council, both by nominating generals of his land army, and by applying to parliament for a considerable addition of land and sea forces, and putting ships of war in commission,"

They clearly shewed their enmity to that constitution, by taking every opportunity to separate the King of England from the nation, and by addressing the people as distinct from the government. Upon the point of their fraternity he did not wish to say much: he had no desire for their affection. To the people they offered fraternity, while they would rob them of that constitution by which they are protected, and deprive them of the numerous blessings which they enjoy under its influence. In this case, their fraternal embraces resembled those of certain animals who embrace only to destroy.

Another ground which they had assigned was the grief which had been expressed in the British court at the fate of their unhappy monarch. Of all the reason she ever heard for making war against another country, that of the French upon this occasion was the most extraordinary: they said they would make war on us, first, because we loved our own constitution; secondly, because we detested their proceedings; and lastly, because we presumed to grieve at the death of their murdered king. Thus would they even destroy those principles of justice, and those sentiments of compassion, which led us to reprobate their crimes, and to be afflicted at their cruelties. Thus would they deprive us of that last resource of humanity —to mourn over the misfortunes and sufferings of the victims of their injustice. If such was the case, it might be asked, in the emphatic words of the Roman writer, *Quis gemitus Populo Romano liber ertt?* They would not only endeavour to destroy our political existence, and to deprive us of the privileges which we enjoyed under our excellent constitution, but they would eradicate our feelings as men; they would make crimes of those sympathies which were excited by the distresses of our common nature; they would repress our sighs and restrain our tears. Thus, except the specific fact, which was alleged as a ground of their declaration of war, namely, the accession of his Majesty to the treaty between Austria and Prussia, which had turned out to be entirely false and unfounded, or the augmentation of our armament, a measure of precaution indispensably requisite for the safety of the country, and the protection of its allies, all the others were merely unjust, unfounded, absurd, and frivolous pretexts—pretexts which never could have been brought to

justify a measure of which they were not previously strongly desirous, and which shewed that, instead of waiting for provocation, they only sought a pretence of aggression. The death of Louis, though it only affected the individual, was aimed against all sovereignty, and shewed their determination to carry into execution that intention, which they had so often professed, of exterminating all monarchy. As a .consequence of that monstrous system of inconsistency which they pursued, even while they professed their desire to maintain a good understanding with this country, the minister of the marine had written a letter to the sea-port towns, ordering them to fit out privateers : for what purpose but the projected view of making depredations on our commerce ? While they affected to complain of our armament, they had passed a decree to fit out fifty sail of the line—an armament which, however, it was to be observed, existed only in the decree.

He feared that, by this long detail, he had wearied the patience of the house, and occupied more of their time than he at first intended. The pretexts, which he had been led to examine, alleged as grounds for the declaration of war, were of a nature that required no refutation. They were such as every man could see through; and in many of his remarks he doubted not he had been anticipated by that contempt with which the house would naturally regard the weak reasoning, but wicked policy, of these pretexts.

He now came to his conclusion.—We, said Mr. Pitt, have, in every instance, observed the strictest neutrality with respect to the French: we have pushed, to its utmost extent, the system of temperance and moderation: we have held out the means of accommodation: we have waited till the last moment for satisfactory explanation. These means of accommodation have been slighted and abused, and all along there has appeared no disposition to give any satisfactory explanation. They have now, at last, come to an actual aggression, by seizing our vessels in our very ports, without any provocation given on our part; without any preparations having been adopted but those of necessary precaution, they have declared, and are now waging war. Such is the conduct which they have pursued; such is the situation in which we stand. It now remains to be seen whether, under Providence, the efforts of a free, brave, loyal, and happy people, aided by their allies, will not be successful in checking the progress of a system, the principles of which, if not opposed, threaten the most fatal consequences to the tranquillity

of this country, the security of its allies, the good order of every European government, and the happiness of the whole of the human race!

Mr. Pitt then pr6ceeded to move the following address in answer to his Majesty's message:

"That an humble address be presented to'his Majesty, to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most grades message, informing us, that the assembly, now exercising the powers of government in France, have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his Majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against his Majesty and the United Provinces: to assure his Majesty that, under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, we most gratefully acknowledge his Majesty's care and vigilance in taking the necessary steps for maintaining the honour of his crown, and vindicating the rights of his people: that his Majesty may rely on the firm and effectual support of the representatives of a brave and loyaI people, in the prosecution of a just and necessary war, and in endeavouring, under the blessing of Providence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the farther progress of a system which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, and is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity, and justice.

" That, in a cause of such general concern, it must afford us great satisfaction to learn that his Majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with his Majesty by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe.

" That we are persuaded, that whatever his .Majesty's faithful subjects must consider as most dear and sacred, the stability of our happy constitution, the security and honour of his Majesty's crown, and the preservation of our laws, our liberty, and our religion, are all involved in the issue of the present contest; and that our zeal and exertions shall be proportioned to the importance of the conjuncture, and to the magnitude and value of the objects for which we have to contend."

FOX'S FOURTEEN RESOLUTIONS

May 30, 1794.[1]

I DO not feel it necessary, on the present occasion, or in the present stage of the debate, to trouble the house for any length of time, for the same reason that I had, in the first instance, conceived that it would be unnecessary for me to trouble them at all. The substance of the question, and of the arguments brought in support of it, is, as was stated by the right honourable mover of the resolutions, certainly old. The' honourable gentleman,[2] however, who spoke last, has contrived to introduce a considerable deal of novelty into the latter part of his speech. I will not say that the matter which he thus introduced, was not connected with the question; had it not been connected with the question, you, Sir, would undoubtedly have called him to order. I could easily, however, account for the principle on which you were restrained, from doing so, when I recollect that on a former occasion you stated, that any argument, however bad or absurd, does not therefore become disorderly. It is possible that an argument may have some connection, though it be not such as can evidently be received in the first instance, and certainly it will be allowed, with respect to the honourable gentleman, that he is possessed of such ingenuity as to bring together every argument, however incongruous, that may suit his purpose, and give it an appearance of connection with the question. What then was the amount of his arguments? That you ought to discontinue the war, because it afforded the means of fabricating plots in this country. The honourable gentleman thought proper, without the smallest regard either to probability or decency, to assert, that plots had been fabricated, and that these plots had no

1 Mr. Fox, pursuant to the notice he had given, this day submitted to the house a series of resolutions, (fourteen in number) reviewing the past proceedings of the war, and setting forth the measures that ought instantly to be adopted for promoting, on equitable and moderate conditions, a pacification with France.

Mr. Sheridan, in supporting these resolutions, took occasion to comment, in very severe terms, upon the conduct of Administration. He charged them with being the authors of a system of alarm calculated to deceive and insnare the people, and maintained that the traitorous designs, which had been pointed at in* the Report of the. Secret Committee, were fabulous plots and forged conspiracies, originating solely in the foul imagination of his Majesty's Ministers.

a Mr. Sheridan.

foundation except in the foul imagination of ministers. The abuse of that honourable gentleman has been too often repeated to have any degree of novelty with me, or to be entitled to any degree of importance, either with myself, or any other of my honourable friends, who may occasionally happen to be its objects. But I must own, that there is some degree of novelty indeed in this mode of attack against a report originating from twenty-one members, to whose character for honour and integrity 'I will not do any injury by comparing it with the quarter from* which the attack was made—

[Being here called to order by Mr. Courtenay, for an improper and uncalled-for attack upon the character of his honourable friend (Mr. Sheridan), the Speaker interfered, and allowed that the expressions were disorderly, however they might have arisen from the mode of attack which had been irregularly adopted by the honourable gentleman (Mr. Sheridan) in the first instance.

Mr. Sheridan rising to speak, Mr. Pitt proceeded :—]

Except the honourable gentleman rises for a motion of order, I certainly, as having been already before the house, am entitled to be heard. [Here Mr. Sheridan sat down.] I beg leave to say, that I must always bow with deference to any interruption from you, Sir, whose regard to the dignity and impartiality in conducting the business of this house is upon every occasion so evident, and whenever interrupted for any expression that may appear disorderly, and may have escaped me in the heat of debate, I most readily make my apology, where alone it is due, to you and to the house. Still, however, I must be permitted to add, that the language of the honourable gentleman whose observations I was called upon to answer, was neither within the rules of parliamentary debate, nor of parliamentary decency.

I was proceeding, when interrupted, to state, that the honourable gentleman had argued, that the discontinuance of the war would put an end to those proceedings of a committee of this house, which he has chosen to brand With such coarse and indiscriminate censure. The question is not merely, whether his mode of attack is fair and candid with respect to the individuals composing that committee; but how far it is proper to be adopted, when their report has already been received by this house, and been made the foundation of" a measure now sanctioned by the three branches of the legis_lature—the susp amble of that measure states the existence of that plot, as

recognized from the investigation of a committee, and the inspection of voluminous papers, which the honourable gentleman has chosen to brand as the fabrication of ministers. But why has he introduced this subject, apparently so little connected with the question? In order, as it appears, to give an account of a transaction, of which, I declare, till this night, I knew nothing:1 as little as I am acquainted with the dissemination of those inflammatory papers, of which so much has been said by the honourable gentleman. I have, indeed, for these few days past, been engaged with the examination of papers, but papers very different from those alluded to by the honourable gentleman. These papers, voluminous in their size, form the records of those societies, whose proceedings have attracted the notice of government. They contain materials of a nature very interesting indeed, and with which this house will speedily be acquainted. When these materials shall be brought forward, it will then appear, whether there is any real ground for alarm, or for supposing the existence of that plot which has been stated: I shall only desire the house to compare what shall appear upon the face of the report of their committee with what has been asserted by the honourable gentleman, as having been made use of by a respectable member of this house.[2] I am surprised that it could ever have appeared in any other light than as an expression of levity. The honourable gentleman, however, thinks otherwise. From the serious view in which he has taken it up, it appears that a conspiracy cannot be going abroad, but he immediately takes guilt to himself. If his jealousy be indeed so wakeful, and his fears so easily excited, in all probability the bet which he has mentioned with respect to himself may be a fair speculation.

In one point of view I must indeed thank the honourable gentleman for having introduced the topic of the state of the country, and the existence of plots, however irrelevant it might seem to the subject of debate. However irrelevant it might

1 Mr. Sheridan, in the course of his speech, had complained of certain liberties, which he conceived had been taken with his character as a member of that house.—" Suppose," continued Mr. Sheridan, " a great magistrate of the city, robed in the ensigns of his office, not lightly over a glass of wine, or after a good dinner, but solemnly and gravely in the court with his brother aldermen, should declare that a member of parliament, by name Mr. Sheridan, would be tent to the Tower within two months, provided the *Habeas Corpus* act were suspended, and should back his assertion with a bet, and so considerable a bet as one hundred and twenty guineas to six,—would you think this a light or trivial matter? And would not gentlemen suppose that such a magistrate, from his known connection with administration, had some authority for saying so beyond his own ideas as a private man ? It would not be orderly to name the honourable magistrate; but if he be in the house, he probably may be known by a gold chain which he wears."

2 The Lord Mayor

seem as introduced by him, it is certainly highly in our favour. For if, from the result of the report of your committee, it shall appear that there is ground to suppose that there has existed a system in this country, (and indeed no country in Europe has been exempted from its effects) to introduce French principles for French purposes, and by French means; if the same system may be traced all over the continent, and there shall be found to be the most striking coincidence both in the object aimed at, and the means by which it has been prosecuted; if the whole shall be clearly imputable to the present government of France, and be calculated everywhere to produce the same effects, which we have witnessed in that country, it must then be admitted, that nothing less than the subversion of that jacobin government, which has been contended for by my honourable friend,[1] can be adequate to the purposes of the war. The present, indeed, is not a contest for distant, or contingent objects; it is not a contest for acquisition of territory; it is not a contest for power and glory; as little is it carried on merely for any commercial advantage, or any particular form of government; but it is a contest for the security, the tranquillity, and thetvery existence of Great Britain, connected with that of every established government, and every country in Europe. This is the view of the nature of the war, upon which this house has acted in its former decisions. It is a view confirmed by the experience of every day, and of every hour; it is a view which the events of the present moment have tended still more strongly to impress upon the minds of gentlemen of this house, this moment, which has been chosen of all others in order to induce us to abandon our principles, and reverse our decisions.

I do not think it necessary to comment at length upon the string of resolutions brought forward by the right honourable gentleman.[2] They are evidently introduced for the express purpose of recording upon the journals of this house the opinions of that right honourable gentleman with respect to the nature, the object, and the probable events of the war—opinions which he has brought forward both in the course of the present, and of the former 'session. The substance of all his resolutions may be reduced to two, to each of which, now that I am upon my legs, I shall feel it necessary to say a very few words. The right honourable gentleman, in a speech more distinguished by its length and ability, than by any additional

1 Mr. Jenkinson. 2 Mr. Fox.

matter, or novelty of argument, divided the whole subject into three or four periods, in order to prove, that the subversion of the jacobin government was inconsistent with the former prpfessions of this government, and in its own nature impolitic and impracticable. In order to prove his assertion, the right honourable gentleman began with adverting to the professions of neutrality, held out on the part of this country previous to the declarations, and to the negociations set on foot, in order to secure the continuance of peace. To this part of his argument, .the answer of my honourable friend, was so full and satisfactory, as to require on my part no addition.' I have only to state, along with him, that it is not every provocation which justifies a war. The French revolution might not, in the first instance, appear to be so great an evil, as it has since evinced itself to be. It might not be discovered to have such pernicious effects as have since unfolded themselves to our view. The extent to which it carries the principle of propagating its doctrines by fire and sword is now, however, no longer a matter of doubt. The principle is rendered still more dangerous by the means which it possesses for carrying it into effect. Can we then be supposed to be pledged to the same line of conduct in the present moment, which in the first instance we might have deemed it prudent to adopt?—In proportion as the extent of the evil discloses itself, does not there arise a necessity for increased means of resistance? The right honourable gentleman stated that even subsequent to the memorable period of the 10th of August, we continued our professions of neutrality, though we thought proper to break off all intercourse with the French nation on account of their conduct to the sovereign. Of the principles upon which that intercourse was broken off, the house have'already expressed their decided approbation; and can they then, with regard either to the dignity of their character, or the consistency of their principles, renew, in a time of war, that intercourse which they thought proper on such solid grounds to break off in time of peace, and at a time too when, I contend, that the attempt' to renew- such intercourse would be as impotent as it would be disgraceful? *

. The right honourable gentleman stated, that the objects first held out for the war on the part of this country, were the breach of treaty by the French with respect to the Scheldt, and the views of aggrandizement which they disclosed in seizing upon the territory of the neighbouring powers. So far I admit he

has stated justly; but when he says, that all idea 'of interference with the government of France was entirely disclaimed, he states what is not the fact.—Such an interference, I grant, was not precisely stated; it was, however, referred to even in the first instance. And in proof of this assertion, I refer to the following passage in his Majesty's message, brought down to this house so early as the 28th of January 1793.

" In the present situation of affairs, his Majesty thinks it indispensably necessary to make a farther augmentation of his forces by sea and land, for maintaining the security and rights of his own dominions, for supporting his allies, and for opposing views of aggrandizement and ambition on the part of France, which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe; but are particularly so, when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society."

Such was the language even then adopted by his Majesty, and re-echoed in the answer of this house to that message. A few days after, came the declaration of war on the part of the Frenfch. What were the sentiments I expressly declared in the course of the last session, I refer to the recollection of every member present. A few days previous to the close of last session, the right honourable gentleman came forward with a motion precisely similar in nature and effect to the resolutions which he has this day proposed to the house. I then stated, that while the existing system continued in France, we could have but little hope of obtaining a peace upon solid and permanent grounds; that, could a peace be obtained, I certainly should not consider the continuance of the system, as itself, an objection. At the same time I expressly assured the house that the prospect of affairs was such as not to afford the smallest ground of rational expectation of our ever being able to obtain such a peace as we could either acdfept, or, for any length of time, hope to enjoy, while France remained under the influence of jacobin councils, and that the prospect of bringing the war to & conclusion, as well as the security for any engagements which we might form with France, must ultimately depend upon the destruction of those principles, which were hostile to every regular government, and subversive of all good faith. I asserted further, that if &n opportunity should occur, in which we might interfere with advantage in the internal government of France, we certainly should avail ourselves of eviry

such opportunity, as an operation of the war. Had I, a? the right honourable gentleman has contended, disclaimed all such interference in the present war, I should have done what never has been done in any former war. And I have only to remind the right honourable gentleman, of what, upon a former occasion, was his opinion with respect to an interference/ which government found necessary to make in the affairs of Holland. When we attempted to defend that measure upon the principles of justice, he contended that'we proved too much, and that, in order to justify it, it was only necessary to shew that it was for the interest of Great Britain. Upon what principle then can he now possibly urge that an interference, admitted in every former war, should become unjustifiable in the present, that commenced on the part of France, with an interference against ourselves ?

Having supposed then, that all idea of interference was disclaimed, the right honourable gentleman proceeded to bring forward a charge of inconsistency, from the declaration of Lord Hood, at Toulon, and that afterwards published by his Majesty, addressed to the people of France. These declarations, I, affirm, are perfectly consistent. That of Lord Hood only promises protection to the people of Toulon, so far as he could grant it, without specifying any particular form of government —they chose to pledge themselves to the constitution of 1789. The declaration of his Majesty offers protection to all the people of France who shall approve of an hereditary monarchy. What then do the resolutions, prepared by the right honourable gentleman, call upon you to <\o ?—to counteract all your former sentiments—to abandon those principles to which you have pledged yourselves—to rescind the measures which you have solemnly adopted—and, after having displayed the extent of your resources, and put into the hands of his Majesty means for carrying on the war, to tell him that he shall not avail himself of those means, and abandon every resource, except that of making peace with France. It is to require you, at the end of the session, to make a recantation of all that you have done in every former part of it—to contradict all your former professions, and to renounce opinions formed upon the most serious deliberation, and confirmed by repeated acts. It is worthy of remark, that the gentlemen on the other side, who are so fond of accusing others of inconsistency, take to themselves the credit of supporting the war to a certain period. Iteyond that period, they have stated they found it impossible

to give it any farther support, though I must observe, looking to their general conduct, if the periods at which they gave it support, and at which they thought necessary to withdraw it, were to be transposed, the difference would be very inconsiderable. What Was the period, down to which they take the credit of having given support to the war?—the passing of the French Corps bill. Then it was, it seems, that they first discovered that the present was a war for the purpose of an internal interference in the government of France. But it is of little consequence to this house, what are the opinions of individuals, or what the pretences which they may hold out. It is their business to consider what has been their general line of conduct, and what course they are bound to adopt on the pfresent occasion, from a regard to the dignity of their character, and the consistency of their measures. In this point of view, they will consider whether they have this night heard anything to induce them to deviate from these, principles, which they adopted on the most mature deliberation. The right honourable gentleman, in order to throw discredit on the object of the war, has had recourse to a confusion of argument. He chuses to confound the subversion of the present jacobin government with the conquest of France, and states that we have in view nothing less than the entire subjugation of that country. He forgets that the objects are entirely different: we have no desire to conquer France; we wish only to free it from a system of tyranny equally oppressive to itself and dangerous to its neighbours; which can, in the first instance, only exist by the misery of its subjects, arid menaces in its progress the destruction of every regular government. But he states, as an argument against our success, that the force of that government is in the present moment stronger than ever, while he adds, however, by way of parenthesis, no matter whether by terror or by whatever means. He seems to think that the means by which that power is Supported, have nothing to do with the question. I contend that they form the whole ; since on those means the permanence and stability ,of the government must depend. If it is a power acquired by the influence of terror, and supported by a system of coercion, it is neither likely to be solid nor lasting.

Another object which the right honourable gentleman has urged, is, that even if you should succeed in subverting the present government of France, such a measure would be in itself impolitic, and could afford you no prospect of rational

advantage. What, says he, would you destroy a government before you have made up your minds what to substitute in its stead? do you consider the consequence of again setting the minds of men adrift, and how can you be sure that the result will be better than what you at present witness? This is exactly an illustration of the mode of argument adopted by the right honourable gentleman, who, consulting neither the policy nor expediency of the particular question, is always addicted to push his general principles to the extreme. You ought not, says he, to subvert the present form of government, because if the French are to be left to chuse for themselves, you do not know by what other form it may be succeeded, whether an absolute or a limited monarchy, or a dififerent species of republic. In opposition to this reasoning, we can safely decide from experience of its effects, that any form of government which succeeds the present, founded upon jacobin principles, though not the best, must be comparatively good. But as a reason why we ought not to seek the subversion of this jacobin government, or be apprehensive of danger from its existence, the right honourable gentleman has stated, that it has been found perfectly possible for opposite governments to exist together, without interfering with each other. I grant that this is perfectly possible with respect to any established government, however defective, acting upon certain rules, and from certain principles. But I cannot adrpit that it is the case with respect to a system such as the present established in France, a system such as never existed before in any country, and to which no analogy can be found in the history of mankind; a system admitting of no modification of its vices, excluding all principles, and bearing in itself the seeds of hostility to every regular government; a system not possessing the means of power for the protection of its subjects, but usurping them for their oppression. Such a system presents no remedy for its vices, or hope of sequrity to its neighbours, but in its entire subversion. On all these grounds, I trust that the policy, consistency, and necessity of a vigorous prosecution of the war, will still appear to remain unimpeached.

I have only a few words to say to that resolution of the right honourable gentleman, which suggests, that we ought to aim at peace by negociation. In desiring us to have recourse to negociation, he contends, that we have at least nothing to apprehend from the experiment, even if it should fail, and that to propose terms can surely be attended with no harm. The

answer of my honourable friend [1] to this part of his argument, was so full and satisfactory, as to render it unnecessary for me to add any thing farther. My honourable friend stated, in the clearest manner, the. little hope we could have of success in any negociation from the nature of the jacobin system, and the characters of the present French rulers, and the still less security which we should have ' for the performance of any engagement into which they might enter. But the question is not merely whether these persons, now at the head of affairs in France, would be disposed to treat with us, or whether we could have any security for any peace which we might make with them ? We are to recollect, that while that system, with which we now contend, continues in France, we can have no peace upon any terms short of absolute ruin and dishonour; and that, by an express law of the constitution, any Frenchman who should propose to treat with us, except upon the conditions of' abandoning our most sacred principles and our dearest rights, of surrendering our constitution, dethroning our virtuous monarch, and consenting to introduce into this country that horrible system of anarchy which they propose to our imitation, is declared a traitor. What then becomes of the argument of the right honourable gentleman, that even if 'we should enter into negociation, no harm could possibly be attendant upon our failure ? Have we not reason to suppose, that by those who avow such principles, the terms which we should propose would most certainly be rejected ? And what then would be the consequence ? By entering into negociation we should have dissolved that confederacy, on which alone we can depend for success against the common enemy. To the French we should have given confidence and vigour: and, baffled in our expectations of peace, should ourselves be again obliged to have recourse to war, when war was found to be our only alternative, and when we had deprived ourselves of the means for its vigorous prosecution.

The acquisition of the West-India islands, the right honourable gentleman affirmed, was but of little consequence, as to attaining the object of the war—the subversion of the jacobin government of Paris. I grant that it may appear of little consequence as to its immediate effects; but may it not be supposed to have a collateral influence ? Is it indeed of little consequence in the first year of the war to cut up their resources, and destrby the sinews of their commerce ? Is the injury to

[1] **Mr. Jenkinson.**

their revenue less fatal, though, from the monstrous and gigantic expedients of finance to which they have had recourse, it may not, in the first instance, be perceived? Is it of little consequence to us in the prosecution of a war for. which we do not ourselves possess sufficient military force, and in aid of which we must have recourse to our pecuniary resources, thus to procure the means of increasing' these resources, by extending our commerce, and opening new sources of industry? When the right honourable gentleman, then, represents the loss of these West-India islands as but little felt, or altogether contemned, by the French, what obviously is the inference? Is it not that the government which can suffer such a limb to be torn from the empire without shrinking, which can view with indifference and unconcern the sinews of its commerce destroyed, and the sources of permanent revenue annihilated, can have but little interest or feeling in common with its subjects? If, indeed, we can suppose that the French government could see the danger of their colonies without fear, and submit to their loss without regret, it would only be a proof that they had become callous from desperation. Yet after the right honourable gentleman has represented these islands as considered but of little consequence by the convention, how does he proceed to argue? He considers them in one respect important, as they may be employed by you as valuable *media* of negociation—that is, he proposes to you to give up acquisitions which are highly valuable to you, as a bribe to induce those who despise them, to abandon their favourite project.

But if the right honourable gentleman should not succeed in prevailing upon you to adopt any of his resolutions which go to offer terms of negociation, still he has one resolution of a different nature: he calls upon you, by an explicit declaration, to prescribe the precise form of government, which you mean to insist should be adopted in France. This strange proposition he clothes indeed in elegant language: in that case, says he, you certainly would have fewer friends, but then they would be more sincere. What is. the case? that at present there **are** a great many of different opinions with respect to the form of government which they would wish to see established, but who, equally disapproving of the present horrible system, are prepared to concur with you for its destruction. These, whom it ought to be your object to unite and concentrate, he calls upon you, by this resolution, to alienate and disperse; a 'resolution too, which goes beyond the line of your policy, inasmuch as

your object is the subversion of a system inqompatible with your interest and with the security of Europe; and that once effected, the government that shall be deemed most proper to succeed, will then naturally become the object of modification to the different parties. I am the more surprised that such a resolution should have come from the right honourable gentleman, as an honourable friend[1] of his has stated as a principle, and it is the only part of his speech in which I can agree with him, "That seldom has any nation laid down a peremptory declaration, from which it has not found it necessary at some time or other to recede." I am astonished, indeed, that the right honourable gentleman, who so much disapproves of all idea of internal interference in the government of another country, should himself, by this resolution, carry the principle so far—to a length greatly beyond the line of our policy, and that object, which by our interference we propose to ourselves. It is not, in fact, more inconsistent with our principles than with his own: you could not adopt it without reprobating those sentiments which have been so often maintained by the right honourable gentleman; nor could he himself vote for it without giving up all his former opinions on the subject. This last resolution, therefore, I cannot deem more admissible than the others : it is not less incongruous in point of policy, than the former were repugnant to all those principles with respect to the present contest so solemnly adopted, and so repeatedly sanctioned by this house.

THE PRUSSIAN SUBSIDY AND THE WAR

July 10, 1794.[2]

MR. PITT said, that, before he entered into the three great points which the honourable gentleman[3] had made the chief topics of discussion, he would apply himself to those inferior matters which had been urged as preliminary to them. The

[1] Mr. Sheridan.

2 Mr. Sheridan moved, "That there be laid before the house an account of monies issued to the King of Prussia, in pursuance of the treaty concluded between his Majesty and the King of Prussia, signed at the Hague the 19th of April 1794; together with an account of the troops which have been employed in concert with his Majesty's troops, in pursuance of that treaty."

* Mr. Sheridan.

honourable gentleman seemed to express some satisfaction that he had at last had an opportunity of saying a few parting words and of stating some observations; and at the same time insinuated something blameable In his Majesty's ministers, on account of their supposed inattention to the house, and to their public duty; as they were not found in the house, at its last meeting, discharging that part of their public duty. He begged only to remind the house, that it was very generally understood, that all public business was closed. It was undoubtedly true the house was not prorogued; it was only adjourned, cm account of some necessary arrangements made for better conducting the affairs of the executive government; and, in fact, for reasons' in themselves pretty obvious, and which had been pretty weII mixed up with the discussions they had just heard from the honourable gentleman. Unless, therefore, they themselves had felt, from the situation of affairs, that some new measure was necessary to be adopted, (Which they did not, as they thought, in their view of the subject, that it would rather tend to embarrass than to improve the country,) they could not very well conceive that any other person had anything to propose. They did not imagine, till they heard of the honourable gentleman's notice, that it was very likely that he wanted to discuss again any of those subjects to which he had just directed their attention. He thought this was enough to say for himself. As to some gentlemen who were absent, as their seats were vacant, and their situations, as servants of the crown, had not yet commenced, they had sufficient excuse at present. His honourable friend,[1] they all knew, was absent by reason of a severe domestic misfortune, which he was sure the honourable gentleman regretted equally with himself.

Having thus explained the reason of the absence of ministers on a former day, Mr. Pitt said, he should very shortly advert to the three distinct points to which the honourable gentleman had alluded; and he should do it the more concisely, because, with regard to two of them, he thought it would be obvious to every gentleman, in that house, that it was impossible for him, without the greatest indiscretion, and an entire forgetfulness of every part of his duty, to enter into any discussion.

With regard to one of these points, he had no difficulty in giving a very distinct answer.

The three points were; the object of the war, as directed against France; the conduct of the king of Prussia : and the

[1] **Mr. Dundas,**

negociation now pending between this country and the United States of America.

Respecting the two last, he should state the reasons why he should, pass them over in profound silence.

With regard to the first, the object of the present war, it was not necessary to say much : but what he had to say, he wished to state as distinctly as he could : and in order to do so, he must beg not to answer the question as the hohourable gentleman had put it. He begged not to answer it equivocally, not upon any vague grounds, not upon construction, not upon misrepresentation. He begged to answer the question, What the object of the war was ? not from what the honourable member had mistakenly represented it to be, but from what he himself had constantly represented it to have been.

A number of irrelative and desultory observations had been made by the honourable gentleman, who had made up his argument by quoting some parts from one gentleman's speech, and some from another; and also borrowing something from those who were not delivering their own opinion, but were criticizing the opinion of others, and putting their own construction upon it. Among other loose assertions, the honourable gentleman had said, the object of the war was the extermination of the government subsisting in France, without explaining whether he applied it personally to those who formed the government of France, or whether it extended to all those who were adherents to that government. Using it equivocally, and to countenance another construction, he said it was a war *usque ad internecionem ;*—a phrase which, as far as he recollected, had. never been used but by those who opposed the war. If the honourable gentleman meant the object of the war, as expressed by ministers, was the destruction of the jacobin government in France, he, for his part, would readily admit that it had been distinctly avowed; that it was still distinctly avowed, and could not be receded from ; and he would add, that whatever strength ministers might gain from the counsel, as well as from the known respectability and influence of their new associates, their resolutions on this head could acquire no additional force from that circumstance, nor would their determination to pursue that object be more distinctly and firmly adhered to. The object was neither to be heightened by new grounds of success, nor relinquished from any temporary failures, in the means of its attainment; and was one which he would never depart from, as absolutely necessary to the security and preservation of this

country and her allies. It was not a war of extermination, as the honourable gentleman had called it, nor was its object the Conquest of France, but the emancipation of that unhappy country; not the destruction of an enemy, but the overthrow of an usurpation hostile to this and every other government in Europe, and destructive, even to the last extremity of ruin, to France itself. It was impossible to forget that this was the object of the war, as distinctly avowed in his Majesty's speech, and recognized by the house in a variety of proceedings, taken after solemn debate and deliberate consideration: no man of common candour could, therefore, misrepresent it. Let the right honourable member suppose that all France was united in support of the present system, yet he would be forced to declare his detestation of it; nor could any argument lead him to believe, that a numerous and enlightened people willingly submitted to the most severe and sanguinary despotism that ever stained the page of history. It was impossible to put an end to this most furious tyranny, without destroying the present government of France.

The manner in which the honourable gentleman had mentioned this country and her allies by the appellation of *despots*, Mr. Pitt remarked, was a mode of speech so exactly copied from the French, that he was even surprised that the honourable gentleman used it, who, though sometimes their apologist, had often been obliged to reprobate their actions. Who were those that the honourable gentleman joined with the French in calling despots ?—The regular powers of Europe, Great Britain and her allies, united in one common cause, using the most vigorous endeavours to open to France the means to work its own safety, and for restoring order and prosperity to that distracted country. Let the honourable gentleman understand once more (said he) that that object is not varied, nor that resolution altered ; that there is not a man in his Majesty's councils who has not a firm and unalterable determination to employ every exertion, to use the best means and faculties of the country, in conjunction with his Majesty's allies, to effect that which can alone render peace valuable; I mean, to render it permanent and secure. Let him recollect his own declarations, and the discussion the last day we conversed on this subject. That very object had been avowed in his Majesty's declaration in the course of last summer, in his speech as it appeared in the close of last session, and in his Majesty's speech in the beginning of the present session, and it had been adopted by the house: and,

therefore, the answer the honourable gentleman received from me was, that the object is such as has been avowed. I cannot state it more distinctly than formerly. The object of the war has bpen precisely the same from the beginning.

If, after having been in that house parties to the solemn pledge given to their sovereign to support him in it, a few weeks bad success, the loss of some towns in Flanders, the possession of which had in all wars been the fluctuating and unstable consequence of every temporary advantage, and the short series of those vicissitudes inseparable from warfare, should so unnerve them, and so extinguish every spark of British spirit in their bosoms, as to induce them to abandon all their objects, he should consider himself, and those who honoured him with their support, as fairly chargeable with the most shameful weakness and timidity, and with the meanest dereliction of their duty. An essential point deserving the consideration of the house was, the very different situation in which we stood compared with that of the enemy, and, notwithstanding all their new triumphs, how much more we had gained from them than they had obtained from us.

Mr. Pitt dwelt upon this part of his subject with great earnestness, and asked, whether, considering the circumstances that he had alluded to, the house was to be brought to sacrifice their own best interests, their very existence, and the well-being, order, and good government of all Europe, to the phantoms that might be attempted to be raised by the interested, or the panics it might suit their purposes to create? Humble though his opinion of himself was, he thought better of his own fortitude, and certainly had a much better opinion of that of the house, than to give way, even for a moment, to such a conception; and he sincerely thanked the honourable gentleman for having given him that day an opportunity of declaring, that if the disappointments which the allied armies had experienced, and the difficulties they had encountered, in the prosecution of the just and honourable war in which they were embarked, had been greater in a tenfold degree than they appeared to be, even from the mist of exaggerated misrepresentations which the honourable gentleman had cast upon it, it could not, in his mind, make an atom of variation, as to the only methods that prudence required them to take for the protection of this realm, and the conservation of that general system of order and tranquillity, which had been long gradually

methodizing, and moulding the mind of man into a more exalted and happy state of social union.

With regard to the question the honourable gentleman had emphatically asked, "What promise had ministers fulfilled?" he said, he should answer it by another, What promise had they broken? For what promise, indeed, could they break, who had never made any in the way the honourable gentleman would insinuate? The only way it was possible for them to break their promise, was to follow the advice of the honourable gentleman, and relinquish the object of the war; to abandon every engagement with their allies; to forget every debt they owed to society, every trust reposed in them by their sovereign and parliament, and every thing they owed to honour, honesty, or their own reputation. Being on that part of the honourable gentleman's charge, he thought it necessary to remind the house, that he had never, from the beginning of the war, spoken of any expected event with certainty: it was impossible he could; the circumstances of all wars were so variable and sudden, that no prudent man would hazard himself by risking a decisive opinion beforehand. He had always spoken of the events of the war with extreme and obvious anxiety, accompanied, nevertheless, with all that hope which the State of Great Britain, the relative state of France, and the situation of Europe, well justified; and as he held no language then, either sanguine or over-weening, so he would now say, that the hope which he then entertained was not in the smallest degree diminished. He was yet of opinion, that the powers of Europe had within them strength sufficient to secure their own safety; and he had not so very mean an estimation of their intellects as to suppose, that they would not, to the utmost, exert that power for the protection of every thing that could be held most dear by every friend to civilized society.

On the other two points, Mr. Pitt said, he would not long detain the house.

With regard to the treaty with the king of Prussia, he had only to say,,that his Majesty's servants were responsible that nothing should be wanting on their part, for the true and faithful performance of the engagements they had advised his Majesty to enter into. Whether those troops engaged by the subsidiary treaty had been most properly employed in the places where they were actually employed, or whether they might have been employed in another place more beneficially for the common cause, were questions which he would venture

to assert there was not a man in that house, who wished well to the operations of the combined armies, and the success of the cause, who would wish to have answered in the midst of a campaign. On that subject, considering all the circumstances of the war, it would be highly improper to insist on a reply, as it could only provoke a discussion which must be mischievous to all the objects we had at stake: on that ground, therefore, he should give it his decided negative.

With respect to the other object, while negociation was pending with America, he held it to be equally unnecessary and improper to state any circumstance relative to it, at a moment when a person had arrived in this country, entrusted with powers on the part of America, in order to see whether, by friendly discussion, our differences with that country could be adjusted. The public discussion of that subject at the present moment was most likely to defeat the order and arrangement of the business to the future satisfaction of both countries, and at the same time consistently with the interest of his Majesty's subjects. He should, therefore, say nothing on that subject. He did not know whether the honourable gentleman would, or would not, wave the moving of it. If he did, he should undoubtedly think it his duty to give his negative to the motion, on the grounds he had already stated. As to the general grounds of persevering in the war, notwithstanding the assertions of the honourable gentleman, he did not suspect the sentiments of the house, or of the nation, were changed. If they were not, the question was, what they were to gain by adjourning instead of proroguing parliament? With regard to the campaign, ministers were to carry it on in the manner which might seem most advisable to them, and were responsible to parliament for their conduct in that respect. It did not, therefore, require the sitting of parliament to watch that conduct; neither was it necessary that it should be kept sitting on account of the Prussian subsidy, in order to observe whether the king of Prussia fulfilled the terms of the treaty; and it was least of all necessary that they should continue sitting on account of the affairs with America, since, under the present circumstances, any parliamentary interference on that subject would be highly injudicious and improper. On these several accounts he felt that an address to his Majesty, such as had been moved, would be highly inexpedient and unadvisable, and therefore he should give the motion a decided negative.

Mr. Pitt took notice of what the honourable gentleman had said about the unpopularity of his Majesty's ministers in America. The honourable gentleman had told them, that there was a jacobin party in America, acting on French principles, and promoting French interests. With that jacobin party he hoped the king's ministers were as unpopular, as the honourable member himself was with those who opposed jacobin principles in this country. That the persons professing these jacobin principles were part of the honourable gentleman's ordinary correspondents, he could not have supposed, unless the honourable gentleman himself had so stated it. The honourable gentleman, however, was not very nice in his choice of correspondents in the western hemisphere, as he had lately shewn. Whether the king's ministers were popular or not in America among the jacobins of that country, signified but little. With jacobins he always expected to be unpopular, both at home and abroad. It was enough for him to know, that the popularity of administration in this country would depend on their stopping the progress of jacobin principles, on opposing them wherever they occurred, and in whatever shape they might be found. To promote impressions unfavourable to the success of the war, and to retrieve, if possible, a small degree of that popularity which had been lost among the honourable member's jacobin friends in America, was pretty clearly the great cause of his motion.

The honourable gentleman had asserted, that the present administration had been vested with greater powers than had been given to any former ministers. What men or money, said the honourable gentleman, had the king's ministers asked, and not received? He made no scruple to admit the fact; the house had been most liberal, certainly, in their grants to his Majesty's ministers; that honourable gentleman, however, had constantly opposed them, as he did every other measure of government. He believed even the ordinary mood of recruiting the army had been made the object rather of severe criticism. In short, there was not one measure of government which had not been favoured with all the heat and eloquence of that honourable gentleman's vehement opposition.

After the first campaign, ministers had done what they thought the most likely to call forth the zeal and energy of the people, in the cause in which we had embarked, by proposing the raising of voluntary corps by public subscription. This had been opposed upon the ground, that it would be destructive

to the constitution; the house judged otherwise, and approved the plan: the constitution had survived, and was strengthened by it; the success with which it had been crowned did honour to the aeal, the loyalty, and the gallantry of the nation.

The next measure of importance adopted arose from the consideration that Great Britain, rich in pecuniary resources, should endeavour to draw forth foreign aid, and facilitate the exertions of other powers, according to the ancient system of the country in continental wars. We should, by means of a subsidy, endeavour to increase the efforts made by nations whose military strength exceeded their pecuniary ability. We did so in the case of the Prussian subsidy; but it was reprobated with the same warmth, with the same eloquence, with the same zeal, as the measure adopted to increase the internal defence of the country. After retaining, as far as we could, all the subjects of Great Britain, and those foreign troops, it was natural to think of calling forth, of disciplining, and of rendering regular and effectual, that part of the French nation who had taken refuge in England, and whom we might enable to bear arms, for the purpose of assisting in recovering all those rights that were most dear to them. The demands of ministers on that head, according to the honourable gentleman, had not been refused. They certainly had not, except by the honourable gentleman. Ministers had united all the exertions of Europe to those of the sound part of France, in order to effect the salvation of that country, and to destroy that tyranny which otherwise threatened to overwhelm all civilized society.

None of these measures however, nor yet the object of the war, had so much irritated the honourable gentleman, as a matter to which he had so pointedly alluded; a topic drawn, not from events on the continent, but from events nearer home, and which had obviously made a deep impression on the honourable gentleman's mind. The honourable gentleman asked, What there could be, but a great and pressing necessity, to produce the new arrangements in the present administration? That question he would answer with another, What greater necessity could there exist to faithful subjects of their sovereign, to faithful guardians of the constitution, and sincere lovers of their country, to unite their efforts to preserve the security of the crown, the authority of the parliament, the liberty, the tranquillity, and safety of the nation, than the necessity of the moment? What connection of persons were more likely to serve the king well, or to defend the constitution wisely and

faithfully, than those who had united on the ground of that necessity? What was their object? They were not contending whether this ,or that description of family were the most likely to compose an administration that would meet the public opinion and forward the king's service; they were not contending with regard to constitutional points, whether this or that legislative measure, whether this or that representation of the people, was or was not to be adopted; they were not then debating what was the best form of government for India; nor discussing what were the merits of'a peace made twelve years ago; but they were considering, during the existence of an alarming, disastrous, and unprovoked war, what was the best mode of defending the liberty, the property, and security of every Englishman, by preserving the constitution from the dangers and destruction with which it was threatened. And as they tendered their allegiance, as they tendered their safety, as they cherished the memory of their ancestors who had defended that constitution, or as they looked to the interests of their posterity, they were bound to lay aside every, distinction, to remove every obstacle, and to unite the talents, the characters, integrity, and honour, of all honest men who were able to serve their country, upon which depended the present and future safety not only of Great Britain, but of Europe. On these principles they were united; on these principles they would act; and if their exertions should unfortunately fail, and not be crowned with success, they would at least have the consolation of being conscious that every effort had been made that human wisdom could suggest, and that nothing had been wanting on their part towards the attainment of an object, to which there was no one among them that would not have devoted all his faculties, and, if necessary, his life. These were the feelings and sentiments, Mr. Pitt said, which he entertained on this subject; and he was extremely obliged to the honourable member for the opportunity he had given him of stating his sentiments explicitly.

ON WILBERFORCE'S PEACE AMENDMENT

December 30, 1794.[1]

I SHOULD not have so much endeavoured, Sir, to have engaged your attention at the present moment, had not a sudden indisposition seized me, which I was apprehensive might, at a later hour, have incapacitated me from entering fully into the discussion of a question, upon which I must be supposed to feel most anxious to deliver my sentiments.

I am aware, that there are some gentlemen with whom the original opinions, which they have expressed on the war, prevent me from entertaining any hopes of concurrence. But there are other gentlemen, who, having supported the war at its commencement, have been led, by the disastrous events of the campaign, to change their former sentiments, and to withdraw their former support. It is with these gentlemen that I shall consider myself more immediately at issue. And, Sir, I must first make some remarks on the arguments which they have drawn from the words of the address. To this address they say that they cannot give their assent, because it pledges them *never* to make peace with the *republican* government of France. I do not consider that it does so pledge them. It says only, that with a government, such as the present government of France, we cannot treat on terms that can be deemed secure. And, Sir, where does there exist this imperious necessity to sue for peace? Are we sunk down and depressed to such an absence of hope, and to such a want of resources? If we were indeed so calamitously situated—if we were indeed so devoid of hope, and so deprived of resources—if the continuance of the war produced so intolerable a pressure, then, perhaps, we might consent to a change of system. I am ready to confess, that I can conceive an imaginary case of a peace being made with the government of France, even in its republican form; but I will fairly say also, that I have no idea of any peace being secure, unless France return to the monarchical

1 Debate on the address in answer to the King's speech on opening the session. An amendment to the address had been moved by Wilberforce, "advising his Majesty **to order a negociation for peace** on such **terms as should be deemed** just **and** reasonable."

system. That there may, however, be intermediate changes that may give the probability of a peace with that country, even should it continue a republic, I am ready to allow, though I certainly think that the monarchical form of constitution is best for all the countries of Europe, and most calculated to ensure to each of them general and individual happiness. Considering myself, therefore, as I said before, principally at issue with those who now, for the first time, dissent from the prosecution of the war, I am content to deliver my sentiments before I hear the arguments of some gentlemen, who will probably enter into a more full discussion than the subject has yet received.

Sir, the reasons that have induced gentlemen to dissent from the prosecution of the war, seem to have possessed a considerable influence on the manner in which they speak of the justice and necessity of the war at its commencement; and their language is now fainter and feebler than I had reason to expect. Contending, as these gentlemen and I did, with the new and monstrous systems of cruelty, anarchy, and impiety; against those, whose principles trampled upon civilized society, religion, and law—contending, I say, with such a system, I could not have entertained the slightest expectation, that from them would have proceeded such an amendment

It has pleased inscrutable Providence that this power of France should triumph over every thing that has been opposed to it! but let us not therefore fall without making any efforts to resist it;—let us not sink without measuring its strength. If any thing could make me agree to retire from the contest, it would be the consciousness of not being able to continue it. I would at least have no cause to reproach myself on the retrospect. I would not yield till I could exclaim,

——Potuit qua plurima virtus
Esse, fuit: toto certatum est corpore regni.

If, Sir, I have expressed myself with more emotion than is consistent with the propriety of debate, the particular situation in which I stand, opposing and contesting the opinions of those, with whom I have been, on all occasions, in almost all points fortunate enough to agree, will, I trust, excuse the warmth of my feelings.

The arguments used by my honourable friend, in support of his amendment,may be divided into two classes : The impolicy of continuing the war, and the insecurity of peace. One of the

arguments which he uses in support of the impolicy of continuing the war, is grounded on the recent changes that have taken place in France. My right honourable friend's speech was a .sufficient answer to that argument. The change that has taken place in France is only the change of an attachment to a name, and not to a substance. Those who have succeeded to the government since the fall of Robespierre, have succeeded to the same sort of government. They adopt the same revolutionary system; and, though they have made a more moderate use of their power than Robespierre, yet they differ from him only about as much as Robespierre did from Brissot, who incited the war against this country. The present government, therefore, deserves no more the name of moderation, than that established by Brissot and his followers, who committed the unprovoked aggression against Great Britain. The system of the present governors has its root in the same unqualified rights of man, the same principles of liberty and equality—principles, by which they flatter the people with the possession of the theoretical rights of man, all of which they vitiate and violate in practice. The mild principles of our government are a standing reproach to theirs, which are as intolerant as the rankest popish bigotry. Their pride and ambition lead them not so much to conquer, as to carry desolation and destruction into all the governments of Europe. Have we any right, therefore, to suppose that victory and triumph can produce so great a change in their detestable principles, or that success is such a corrective of all those vicious qualities that pervade their principles and their practice ?

Do the gentlemen who now desert the war, expect that a peace can be obtained, of such a nature, as has been so well described by my honourable friend?[1] Do they hope for a free and useful commerce ? Do they expect that the armies on both sides will be disbanded, and the fleets be called home? Do they mean to put an end to the traitorous correspondence act ? I believe not. I can easily suppose that those gentlemen who, have, in an early part of the evening, so decidedly given their opinion with respect to the late trials, and who have supposed all the persons in this country to be so pure, as not even to be infected by contact with jacobin principles, would foresee no danger from a French alliance, and would look forward with satisfaction to the consequences of such a measure.

[1] **Mr. Canning.**

But such is not the case with my honourable friends, who even, in such an event, talked of the necessity of additional precautions, in order to guard the dignity of the crown, and preserve the tranquillity of the country. What then would be the rational prospect of advantage to this country from a peace with an enraged enemy, in which there could exist no confidence on either side, but which must necessarily give rise to a state of jealousy, suspicion, and constant armament? How long would this state of trouble or repose last? How will you come to the contest when it is renewed? If you disband your armies, if you diminish your force, you will then put an end to that machine which, under the two first years of a war, can barely be said to have been raised to a point high enough to try the strength of the country. Disband your force, and see if the same means and the same period can raise it again to the same point. You will then be opposed in another war with a diminished military power to an enemy, who may have found it as difficult to disband his armies, as you would find it difficult to collect fresh forces. They will again be prepared to start with the same gigantic resources, deriving fresh confidence from the disposition which you had shewn to peace, and new vigour from the interval which .had been afforded to hostilities. But will that be all? What assistance can you expect, from the continental powers, if you dissolve the confederacy? And can you expect to assemble such a confederacy again? Suppose the enemy made an attack upon Holland, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and the states of Italy, or all or each of these; on what grounds, I would ask, could you rouse the spirit, or raise the vigour of this country again, when, from a sense of your inferiority, you have before given up the contest at a period when the confederacy was at its height? On the event of this night's debate, may depend what shall be your future situation with respect to your allies. If you do not now proclaim your weakness, if you do not renounce your prospects, you have still great hopes from the alliance of Europe. Prussia, .Austria, Spain, and the states of Italy, are yet in such a situation that their assistance may be looked to in carrying on the contest.

The honourable gentlemen who supported the amendment, disclaimed the language of fear; they said they knew what Great Britain could do, if once it was roused. What then is to be inferred from all their former professions? Is this a business, in which, after all, we were not serious? Is this cause, which has been admitted to involve not only the most important

interests of Great Britain, but the safety of Europe and the order of society, not considered to be of such a nature as requires all the energies of the country? What then is the greater necessity to which they looked? what the occasion on which they deemed that they could more worthily employ their efforts? If we should dissolve the powerful confederacy with which we are now united, could we hope again to bring it back at our summons? and shall we not, in the case of a fresh rupture, be exposed alone to the fury of France,, without the smallest prospect of assistance from any other quarter? Besides, I think I shall shew you that you are desired to relinquish the conflict, at a time when all the national and artificial resources of your enemy are verging to a rapid dissolution.

I must now take notice of a speculation which has been indulged—that if you withdraw, France will return to some more moderate system of government. I ask whether we ought to put ourselves in such a situation of hazard, which, if decided against us, would involve us in much greater calamities than we have yet experienced, and would reduce us to a situation in which we should be without means and without resources?

When it is said, therefore, that a peace will have the effect to overthrow the government of France, the proposition is by no means clear; the probability is much greater, that the persons now at the head of the government, will, in order to continue their own power, (and in France, it is to be recollected, that the continuance of their power is connected with that of their lives, so that, in addition to the incentives of ambition, they have the all-powerful motive of self-preservation,) be induced to continue the same system of measures that now prevails. Obliged as they would be to recall a numerous army from the frontiers, will the troops of whom it was composed, after having tasted the sweets of plunder and the licence of the field, be contented to return to the peaceful occupations of industry? Will they not, in order to amuse their daring spirit, and divert from themselves the effects of their turbulence, be compelled to find them some employment? And what is the employment to which they will most naturally direct their first attention? They will employ them to crush all the remains of courage, loyalty, and piety, that are yet to be found in France, and extinguish all that gallant and unhappy party, from whose co-operation we may promise ourselves, at any future period, to derive advantage. What else can be expected from those

Moderates, who, though assuming that appellation, have, in succeeding to the party of Robespierre, only established themselves on a new throne of terror? Thus the peace which is in the present instance proposed, as the means of safety, will ultimately only operate to ensure the work of destruction.

This being my feeling, my objection to asking for peace is, that peace, under the present circumstances, is *not desirable*, unless you can shew that the pressure is greater than, as I shall prove to you from a comparative view of the situation and resources of the two countries, it is.

But this is but a small part of my objection to the measure. My next objection is, that my honourable friend has not told us what sort of peace we are to have : unless, therefore, they state this, I say, that they would reduce us to a gratuitous loss of honour, and an unnecessary despair. On the kind of peace we might obtain, I will ask my honourable friend, whether he will say that we ought to leave the Austrian Netherlands in the possession of the French ?—He will not say so.

I have heard it stated in passing, that the ground of war has been done away by the Dutch negociation for peace. However paradoxical it may appear, I assert that the safety of Holland, even if she do make peace, depends on our being at war; for if both countries were at peace, then France would be left without restraint. Who that looks to the proceedings of the convention, does not see that it is their policy, on every occasion, to keep up their arrogant and menacing system, and to hold a high tone of superiority with respect to all other nations ? By these means they have contrived to cherish that spirit of enthusiasm among the people, which has enabled them to make such extraordinary exertions, and on which they depend for the continuance of their power. But who, I would ask, will say that France will make peace on terms, I will not make use of the word moderation, but of concession, when you make peace from a confession of her superiority ? And this naturally leads me to an assertion made use of by me during the last session (an assertion not accurately alluded to by an honourable baronet[1]), relative to the decree of the national convention of the 13th of April, which states, that the preliminary of peace must be a recognition of the unity and indivisibility of the republic, on the terms of equality;—a decree which has neither been repealed nor modified, and which, if you make peace during

1 Sir Richard Hill.

its existence, would sign the dissolution of your parliaments and of your present system of civil society.

Again, I say, that if this were only an ordinary war, and if after two years you had gained the West-India islands as an indemnification, and had been convinced of the strength of your own resources, and that the means of the enemy were decaying, would you consent to make concessions in order to obtain peace? You received the West-India colonies into your protection; will you then give them back to a system, under which they can have no protection? I say we cannot do this without being convinced that the further continuance of the war could only produce misfortune, misery, and ruin. Will you add something more terrific to the colonies than all the horrors of that miserable trade which has peopled those miserable colonies?

Before too you made such a surrender, there is another question to be considered: no less than whether you would afford to the French an unresisted opportunity of working upon the unfortunate system that now prevails in that country, and introducing their government of anarchy, the horrors of which are even more dreadful than those of slavery. To those who have in common deplored the miseries of the unfortunate negroes, it must appear astonishing, that any proposition likely to be attended with such consequences, could ever enter into the mind of my honourable friend.[1] Besides, it is impossible to ascertain what a wide-spread circle of calamity the adoption of this proposition may produce. If once the principles of jacobinism should obtain a footing in the French West-India islands, could we hope that our own would be safe from the contagion? If it has been found scarcely possible to shut out the infection of these principles from the well-tempered, and variously blended orders of society which subsist in this country, where a principle of subordination runs through all the ranks of society, and all are united by a reciprocity of connection and interest, what may be expected to be their effects operating upon the deplorable system pervading that quarter? It would be giving up your own colonies speedily to be devoted to all the horrors of anarchy and devastation.

Such would be the *status quo.* That the *status quo* would probably not be accepted, I have before argued. Will the country, therefore, consign itself, if not to the language, at least to the posture, of supplication?

1 Mr. Wilbcrforce.

With respect to our situation, 1 nave not heard it so fully stated as it is my intention to do. Of the last campaign I shall not be suspected of a wish to conceal the disasters, to deny the defeats, or to disallow the bad effects of the wounds inflicted on the two great military powers of Europe. But can I forget what the energies and perseverance of Britons have effected in former wars? or that constancy from a point of honour in greater difficulties has at length produced the object at which it aimed ?

Will any man say, that the bare event of military disasters, and territories taken, is a fair way of weighing the resources of the belligerent powers ? No, not in any wars, and least of all in this, as far as it relates to this country. All wars depend now on the finances of the nations engaged in them. This observation particularly applies to the present war. The balance of territorial acquisitions and pecuniary resources is in our favour; and I am not afraid to assert, that, putting together what has been lost in territory and what has been spent in money, yet with a view to resources, what has been lost by France is more in point of permanent value and present means than the losses of all the allies composed together.

What, let me ask, are the resources of France ? They exist by means as extraordinary as the events they have brought about—their pecuniary expenses are beyond any thing ever known—and, supported by requisition of person, life, and property, they depend entirely upon terror—every thing that weakens that system, weakens their means, and as the adoption of moderation saps it on one side, so the perseverance in attack cannot but pull it down on the other—take every part of it, one by one, view their expenditure, and then see, whether terror is not the instrument by which they have raised their extraordinary supplies, and obtained all their unexampled successes.

Let us enter into a view of the actual expenditure of France. This.expenditure, since the revolution, has amounted to the enormous sum of four hundred and eighty millions, spent since the commencement of the war. Three hundred and twenty millions have been the price of the efforts that have enabled them to wrest from the allies those territories, which are now in their possession. What your expenses have been during the same period, I need not state. I ask now, whether it is likely that France will see you exhausted first ? I think not. But it may be said, that what the French have spent, proves what they

can spend. To this I reply, have they been enabled to bear this expenditure, by the increase of their revenue, or by any of the ordinary means of France? No; but by the creation of an unlimited paper credit. I desire gentlemen to look at all the debates of the national convention, and they will find that all the deputies agree in this point—that they cannot increase the emission of the paper-money without ruin, and that the miseries arising from this system, aggravate all the calamities of the country. Many persons at first imagined that assignats must have stopped early in 1793. The fact undoubtedly was, that, previously to that period, it was thought the emission was greater than France could bear, and that no further creation could take place without producing a depreciation on the value of assignats, and an immoderate increase in the price of provisions. * The whole circulating medium of France at the highest, was 90,000,000 sterling. In August 1793, assignats existed to the amount of 140 millions; commerce was then declining; agriculture was discouraged; population checked; a forced loan of 40 millions was adopted on the idea, that to the amount of 130 millions they could not maintain assignats in circulation; as early as May or June, assignats had lost nearly half their value. A louis in specie soon afterwards produced 144 livres; then it was that the system of terror commenced, and that a system of credit was begun, which had its foundation in fear.

It may be asked, could any man have imagined that such a plan would have been resorted to? That it was resorted to—that it succeeded, has been proved. Let us look to the principles of it. There was a law which compelled every man to take at par, that which was worth only one sixth of the sum for which it was taken: a law for the *maximum* of the price of all commodities: a law by which no person was permitted to renounce his occupation, under the penalty of twenty years imprisonment. But you will tell me, that this proves how unlimited the powers and resources of the French are. My reply is, that such a system could neither be undertaken nor succeed but by means which could not last. I will not detain you by detail, but merely mention the other means of terror: the constant activity of the guillotine; the ferocious despotism of the deputies on missions. In addition to all the other engines of torture, Cambon, the mouth of the convention in matters of finance, tells us, that, in every district, there were revolutionary committees to watch the execution of the decrees of

the convention, and to enable the convention to seize the spoil of the people; the pay of these committees amounted annually to 26 millions sterling. I say this standing army of revolutionary committees is a mean adequate to produce so mighty an end.

Let us add now a new creation of assignats of 130 millions, which increased the total to 260 millions. Will any man say, that though the system of terror is done away, the effects can remain? When the system of terror was at an end, the *maximum* ceased to be observed: assignats were then converted into money, and hence the discount became enormous. The fall of Robespierre took place in July; three months afterwards, the discount was 3/4ths per cent, or 75 on the 100. I have even the authority of Tallien for saying that the French cannot maintain their assignats, without contracting their expenses and diminishing their forces. And it should be recollected this has been their only resource. Is it then too much to say, their resources are nearly at an end? It is this unlimited power which the French convention have assumed to purchase or to seize all property, as suited their purpose, that accounts for the stupendous scale of operations which they have been enabled to pursue. This circumstance completely solves the phenomenon, which otherwise would appear so inexplicable, and is adequate to all those miraculous effects which have attended the progress of the French revolution, and which seemed to baffle all reasoning, as much as they have exceeded all human expectation. In all these circumstances we have sufficient inducements to carry on the war, if not with a certainty of faith, yet at least with the confidence of expectation;—a war, the immediate termination of which must be attended with certain evil, and the prosecution of which, under the present circumstances, is at least not without great probable hope.

If we look to the situation of France, they are now attempting to have recourse to a milder and more moderate system,—a system which will only deprive them of those prodigious energies, which they have hitherto exerted with such astonishing effect; but they no longer indeed possess the same means, and cannot therefore be expected to display the same exertions. Will it be possible for them all at once to restore the farmer to the occupations of agriculture, and the merchant to the pursuits of commerce, and to replace, in an instant, the devastations of war and plunder, by the arts of peace, and the exertions of industry? It will require years of tranquillity to restore

them to the enjoyment of those ordinary resources, which they possessed previous to the commencement of the present destructive war—resources which they can no longer employ. For even could it be supposed that Robespierre were raised from the dead, they would no longer be qualified to display the same energies which, under his administration, were called forth by the influence of a system of terror; the means by which these exertions have been supplied, are now exhausted. Where can they possibly resort for fresh supplies? Can it be supposed, that when the forced loan failed at the time it was attempted, it can again be tried and succeed in a time much more unfavourable to it, when the system of terror is almost dissolved?

The question then is—have we, under the present circumstances, the prospect of being able to bring as great a force into the field, as will require from the French the same degree of exertion which has been necessary in the former campaigns? Even let it be supposed that Holland should fall, and that circumstances should be such that ,we can no longer look for assistance from the court of Berlin, yet I see no reason to believe that, in the next campaign, we cannot increase the British forces on the continent to an amount that shall nearly supply the deficiency of Prussian troops, and act with more effect. Other powers look with attention and anxiety on this night's debate. If you afford to those powers the means of making large exertions, you will oblige France to make efforts to which she is now unequal. If you act with spirit, I see no reason why the powers of Italy and Spain may not make a diversion, and thereby accomplish the important purpose I have before stated —a purpose, in the accomplishment of which, the happiness, almost the existence of Europe, entirely rests.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR, AND FOX'S CRITICISM

January 21, 1795.[1]

THE committee would not be surprised (said Pitt), if he solicited their attention for a few minutes. The right honourable gentleman,[2] who had just sat down, had, in every part of his speech, most completely misrepresented him, and, in many instances, in a manner so gross and palpable, that it must have been obvious to every gentleman in the house. In order to detect these various misrepresentations, it would be necessary to follow the right honourable gentleman almost through the whole of his speech; and when they were once taken away, all the charges so triumphantly advanced would sink to the ground. In the first place, the right honourable gentleman charged him with having called for the confidence of the house, as a preparatory step to their granting the supplies that had been moved for. Not one word that could be tortured into such a meaning, had dropped from him during the debate. It was the exigencies of the state that called for these extraordinary supplies; it was upon the estimates laid upon the table that the house were to found their vote, and not upon any unusual confidence in ministers. Whether or no the house acted wisely in placing, not a blind and unlimited, but a just and constitutional confidence in ministers, would be manifested by the event.

But what was the confidence which he had expressed, and which he had called upon the house to feel? It was a confidence that, in a contest so momentous as the present, all the innate spirit and vigour of this country would burst forth into action. It was a confidence in the firmness, the zeal, and

[1] The house having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, Mr. Hobart in the chair, the estimates of the army were laid before them.

On the first resolution being put, "That a number of land forces, amounting to 119,380 men, including 3,882 invalids, be employed for the service of the year 1795," Mr. Hussey moved as an amendment to the motion, "That the chairman do leave the chair and report progress."

After Mr. Fox had spoken, and in terms of great severity reprobated the measures ot Administration, in the conduct of the war, Mr. Pitt, who had previously expressed his disapprobation of the proposed amendment, again rose.

2 Mr. Fox.

ardour of the people, in the skill, in the courage, in the perseverance of our armies and of our fleets. It was a confidence in the industry, in the manufactures, in the commerce, in the increasing resources of this country—resources, not diminished by war, but which seemed to increase in proportion to our necessities. It was a confidence founded upon the credit of this country, unimpaired by war, superior to temporary attacks, and fully able to sustain a loan as large as the necessities of the state had called for. It was upon these general grounds combined that he had expressed his confidence, and surely they were sufficient to inspire it. If to place reliance upon such grounds as these was folly,—if to proclaim that reliance was arrogance, of both he was guilty. He* trusted that all the attempts of the right honourable gentleman to deceive the house in that respect would be vain. He stated under a general proposition under the title of confidence, what was applicable in a qualified sense to particular considerations, and had nothing to do with any confidence which any minister might think fit to ask, or any parliament should think wise to grant; it was not an attempt which any person feeling manfully on the subject would be induced to make, and was unworthy of the right honourable gentleman who made it; it could be consistent only with a disposition to damp the ardour and to fetter the exertions of the people of this country. This was the more extraordinary, as that gentleman had already pledged himself to a declaration in that house, that the greatest exertions are necessary at this time on the part of his country. But when he had exposed all the right honourable gentleman's misrepresentations, he would leave it to the house to determine to whom the charge of arrogance was most applicable.

The right honourable gentleman had next charged him with levity, in speaking of the events of the war: whether he had talked lightly of them or not, he submitted to the recollection of the house; and to the same tribunal he would leave it to decide whether, in treating of the misfortunes of the war, the right honourable gentleman, speaking in a tone of exultation, coupled with an affected lamentation, had or had not displayed a degree of triumph which the detail of our misfortunes was but ill calculated to inspire. But in what manner had he treated them with levity? Had he attempted to conceal or to deny any part of our ill success? On the contrary, he had, in the most explicit terms, acknowledged our want of success in various particulars. But what followed from those temporary

calamities? That we should give up the contest in despair; that we should humble ourselves before the enemy of mankind? No; it should induce the people to redouble their energy, and to call forth all their force in defence of their country. He was ready to admit that the situation of the country at present was such as created in his mind a reasonable degree of alarm, but it was an alarm rather at possible than at probable events. It was an alarm such as every man must feel when engaged in a doubtful contest; but it was a feeling very different indeed from dismay or despair, with which neither the exaggerated successes of the enemy, nor the pressure of temporary misfortune, could inspire him.

The right honourable gentleman had then proceeded to charge him with having said, that it was a fashion to call this war disastrous. It was true he had used that expression. It was a fashion with a set of people in this country, to represent every event which happened, as a misfortune to us. But the right honourable gentleman had gone farther, and, besides terming the war unfortunate, he had called it disgraceful. And gentlemen on the other side charged ministers with the whole of the disgrace, and with being the authors of all the calamity that had hitherto attended it, and then desired them to put as much blame as they were able on the generals who commanded the troops.

This, as far as it was a matter of advice, he did not thank the honourable gentleman for, and was what he would not follow. That we had in many instances failed, he had already admitted; but that in any one instance we had incurred disgrace, he positively denied. Whatever might be the event of this war, whether favourable to England or not, the skill and bravery of her forces by sea and land would shine in the page of history; they had even added to their former character. In fact, our army never stood higher in point of military glory, for skill, valour, and perseverance, and, until lately, they had been successful in every instance. He wished to ask, whether this war had been so uniformly unfortunate as it was the fashion to represent it? Look to the naval war, does that afford matter of despair? Look to the war out of Europe, has that been uniformly unfortunate?—In both we have the most solid ground of exultation. Look at the pecuniary resources, at the credit, at the commerce of the country, and the balance is infinitely in our favour.—These were the reasons why he had complained of that fashion of dwelling with a kind of malignant satisfaction upon the

calamities of the country, and applying the coarse epithet "disgraceful" to the war. It was not his intention to enter in detail into all the operations of our forces last campaign, as that was not exactly the proper time for such investigation. It was true, that when the house was considering the army estimates, it was not irregular to animadvert upon the operations of the army. Indeed, there were few points brought under the consideration of the house, in which gentlemen might not, if they thought proper, find an opportunity of throwing out invectives against ministers. But if he were even to go the length of admitting that every assertion of the right honourable gentleman was founded in fact, and that all his inferences were justly and correctly drawn from those facts, still, as far as related to the question then before the house, his arguments had no kind of application to it. If the right honourable gentleman was really serious in thinking that the ministers were so stupid, so utterly incapable of conducting the affairs of this nation, as he had represented—if it was true, that every failure which we have experienced during the war, was attributable to ministers—if all this was true, what followed? To refuse the necessary supplies, and that we were to have no army !!—for that was the question before the house. If the house should be convinced that ministers had acted improvidently and negligently, did it therefore follow that all our exertions should stop, and that we should throw ourselves upon the mercy of our enemy?

He believed, however, that the object of the right honourable gentleman was extremely different:—but perhaps he felt a degree of delicacy in stating it. He would relieve his delicacy, and state it for him. His purpose, in endeavouring thus to overwhelm ministers with charges, was to displace them—this was his grand object; but the right honourable gentleman need not have felt so much delicacy upon this subject. If he could prove, to the satisfaction of the house, that those who were now in his Majesty's councils are utterly incapable of directing the affairs of this country, let him do it. Let him propose an address to the throne, praying his Majesty to dismiss his present servants, as being wholly unfit for their situation. His Majesty, upon such an address, would certainly comply with its request. But even then the purpose of the honourable gentleman would not be answered, for he could not succeed to office unless he was able to convince that house—unless he was able to satisfy the people of England, that the more powerful, and consequently

the more dangerous the enemy became, the less we should prepare to resist them;—that the more their resources increased, the more we should decrease ours;—that the moment when the enemy was flushed with the insolence of conquest, was precisely the moment in which we should sue for peace : unless the right honourable gentleman could satisfy the house and the country of all these facts, he would derive no benefit by driving the present administration from their places, for he would not succeed them. If, on the other hand, he could do so, then his attack on ministers ought to come in a shape different from what it had at present; and if such an attack was to come at all, it might as well come from that right honourable gentleman as any other member of parliament.

But what were the points of proof of the deficiency in the administration? And what were the charges which had been brought against ministers by the right honourable gentleman, and by the honourable officer [1] who preceded him ? The first subject of charge was relative to the expedition undertaken by Sir Charles Grey, and Sir John Jervis, to the West Indies. It was said, that the forces allotted to that expedition were not adequate to the difficulty of the undertaking ; and it was also stated, that 10,000 men were promised, but that part of the troops destined for that service had been stolen from the officer who commanded that expedition. This mode of reasoning was as curious as it was new. It was founded upon a supposition, that whenever a body of troops were put under the command of an officer for any particular purpose, they became as it were the property of that officer ; and if the exigency of affairs should induce the executive government to employ a part of those troops in another service, then the troops so taken are to be considered as stolen from the officer under whom they were originally placed ! It was certainly true, that a part of the troops originally intended for the West Indies had been withdrawn, for the purpose of an expedition, which, from the posture of affairs at that time, was likely soon to take place, and which, if it could have been carried into effect, would, in all probability, have been attended with very beneficial consequences :—he meant the expedition that was then in agitation against the coast of France. That expedition did not take place, from circumstances which ministers could neither foresee nor prevent—Men could not command events ; they could

[1] General Tarleton.

only judge from probabilities, and act according to the dictates of their reason.

But when ministers were accused for sending a force to the West Indies utterly inadequate to the object, gentlemen should recollect what was the result of that expedition. It succeeded in every part. The force employed had consequently been decided to have been adequate to the service, as every thing had been done which had at any time been in contemplation of government. He did not wish to detract from the merit of the officers who commanded upon that occasion ; he was convinced that it was to their superior skill and indefatigable perseverance that the conquests were in a great degree to be attributed ; they had done signal services to their country, and had acquired the utmost honour for themselves. All he asked of the candour of gentlemen was, that when an expedition had been so completely successful, they would not accuse ministers of having sent an insufficient force, when it was undeniable that the force sent had achieved its object. With respect to the other charge, of not having taken any measures to send out succours to those islands—here again, he contended, ministers were not entitled to blame ; every possible exertion had been made to send out supplies to the West Indies ; they had in some instances been retarded, but from causes which could not be prevented.

The right honourable gentleman then adverted to the campaign in Flanders, and endeavoured, with much ingenuity, to place administration in a dilemma; but there was more ingenuity than justice in the argument, there not having been any mismanagement in the administration, nor in the officers or troops. The losses which we had met with arose from a chain of concurring causes and unavoidable accidents, each depending upon its own nice and particular nature, but which were neither to be avoided nor foreseen, many of them such as could not reasonably be conjectured before they happened, the highest degree of probability being, that the events would have happened the other way ; and to impute them to administration was just as wise as to impute to them the present severe frost. The honourable gentleman first of all supposes that all our allies have, in every instance, acted up to their engagements and to our expectations : he supposes that in every one of the operations upon the continent there was the most perfect unanimity ; that every one of the generals conducted themselves in a way to set military criticism at defiance. Then,

says the right honourable gentleman, triumphantly, if with such exertions as these you have tailed, how can you hope to be more successful in future? The right honourable gentleman immediately turns short round, and describes the picture in the other extreme. He supposes a total want of co-operation among the allies—he supposes that all the plans on the continent have been undertaken without judgment, and conducted without energy ; and then he asks what reason we have to expect that our exertions will be more ably or more effectually conducted in future ? If either of the positions of the honourable gentleman was justified by the fact, there might be some difficulty in denying his inferences—But it seemed never to occur to him that there was a medium between the two extremes, which came to the real truth of the case. There certainly was much to lament, something to censure, but nothing to deprive us of hope. That some of our allies had not in every particular answered our expectations, he was ready to admit now—he had never denied it :—perhaps some of our allies, the most nearly connected with us in point of interest, were the most liable to this observation. But the hour when that unhappy people were exposed to every calamity to which the success of a furious enemy could make them liable, was not the proper time for complaint. His object was not to accuse the fallen, but to shew that the charges advanced against the government were without foundation.

It was not sufficient, in order to attach guilt upon ministers, to shew that the allies were unfortunate in Flanders, or that Holland had fallen a sacrifice to the enemy ; it must be proved that it was owing to the want of attention, to the breach of faith, or to the supineness of the English government. In what one of these particulars could any charge be made ? Did not England adhere scrupulously to her treaties ? Did she not act vigourously in the common cause ? Did she not encourage the allies by her example, as well as by exhortation ? Throughout the whole war, the faith and honour of England had been kept inviolate.

He had been accused of speaking with levity upon the subject of the war. He felt for the misfortunes of his country, as a man and as an Englishman, but he could take no shame to himself, for misfortunes which he had done every thing in his power to prevent, nor pretend to feel contrition where there was no real cause for repentance.

The next ground of charge chosen by the right honourable

gentleman, was rather of a singular nature : he stated it as a matter of accusation against his Majesty's ministers, that the English army had not been withdrawn from the continent sooner. But surely the right honourable gentleman could not be serious in this part of his charge ; or, did he mean that as a specimen of the manner in which he would treat an ally ? Would it have been consistent with that good faith, which it is the boast of England always to have kept, to have abandoned our allies on the approach of danger ? Would the right honourable gentleman have advised us to have withdrawn our forces, while the frontier was defensible ? " But (says the right honourable gentleman), when you found the Dutch were negociating for a peace, you might have secured the retreat of your army." Sir, said Mr. Pitt, if we wished them to obtain an honourable peace, should we have taken the proper steps to obtain it for them by withdrawing our army, and leaving them to the *tender mercies* of the French ? It was to her ill-judged confidence in the faith of France, that Holland might in some degree attribute her destruction : On that faith it was that the people of England were recommended by the honourable gentleman and his friends to place implicit reliance. Were these the principles upon which the honourable gentleman would come into administration ? Would he lay it down that we should withdraw our support from our allies the moment our assistance became critically necessary? Would he negociate a peace with France for this country, as he seems to think it to have been negociated for Holland, by throwing ourselves entirely on the mercy of the enemy, and commencing the negociation, by depriving ourselves of the means of resistance ? Was there any alternative as to the conduct this country was to have adopted, with regard to Holland, provided it was understood as a fixed principle, that the faith of England ought never to be violated ? Or would the honourable gentleman undertake to point out the precise moment at which the danger of our ally became so imminent that we should be justified in considering our contracts as dissolved ? It could not be supposed that he was indifferent as to the fate of the gallant army on the continent ; their conduct was above all the feeble praise he could give it ; their exertions in the defence of Holland had exceeded even the most illustrious examples ; and he felt infinite satisfaction in the hope they were now in a place of safety and of comparative rest. In the general anxiety of the honourable gentleman to censure ministers, every public

calamity is attributed to them ; even the severity of the season is brought forward as a crime against them. But he would venture to assert, without the fear of being contradicted by any military man, that, had not the hand of God rendered the season so uncommonly severe, the force employed by England to defend Holland would have been found adequate to the purpose.

Mr. Pitt concluded with saying, he had avoided entering at large into any of the various topics upon which he had touched in the course of his reply, because the time would come when they might be more properly investigated ; he had been led to take this general view of the question, to shew the total want of foundation in the charge brought against administration.

ON THE DIPLOMATIC STATUS OF FRANCE

January 26, 1795.[1]

MR. PITT expressed himself extremely desirous of taking the earliest opportunity to deliver his sentiments on the present important question. Before, however, he stated the grounds of his objection to the resolution moved by the honourable gentleman, and before he proposed the amendment, which he meant to submit to the house, he was anxious that they might be fully in possession, both of the repeated declarations of his Majesty, and the sentiments that had been expressed by parliament on former occasions. For this purpose, he desired the clerk to read a passage from his Majesty's speech on the 21st of January 1794, and the answer of the house; and likewise part of the declaration of the 29th of October 1793, and the declaration of the 20th of November 1793, at Toulon. [They were accordingly read.]

He would take the liberty, in the course of what he had to offer to the house, to contend, that there was nothing at present in the situation of the country, or of Europe, which ought to induce the house to depart from the sentiments recorded in those declarations ; from the sentiments expressed from the throne, and from those sentiments which had received the approbation of parliament. He would contend that the

[1] **The motion by Mr. Grey was as follows : " That it is the opinion of this house, that the existence of the present government of France ought not to be considered as precluding, at this time, a negociation for peace."**

motion that had been made was directly inconsistent with those principles, and he would farther contend, that, whatever there was in the present situation of the country, it called on the house, instead of acceding to the honourable gentleman's motion, to shew to our enemies and to the world, that we did not shrink from those sober and rational principles which we had uniformly maintained. With that view, he thought it right in the outset to mention the precise nature and terms of the amendment he meant to propose, which was as follows :

"That under the present circumstances, this house feels itself called upon to declare its determination firmly and steadily to support his Majesty in the vigourous prosecution of the present just and necessary war, as affording, at this time, the only reasonable expectation of permanent security and peace to this country : And that, for the attainment of these objects, this house relies with equal confidence on his Majesty's intention to employ vigourously the force and resources of the country, in support of its essential interests ; and on the desire uniformly manifested by his Majesty, to effect a pacification on just and honourable grounds with any government in France, under whatever form, which shall appear capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other countries."

He begged to refer the house to the authentic declarations of parliament and of the crown on this subject, from which it clearly appeared, that his Majesty from the throne had avowed sentiments which they themselves had also stated in speeches in that house, and which he believed, to a greater or less extent, had been adopted by every man in that house and in the country, namely, that it would be a desirable issue of the present state of things, to see the re-establishment of some government in the form of a monarchy in France. His Majesty had declared his desire to co-operate with those who were willing to effect that re-establishment. That nothing was more justifiable, and, under the present circumstances, would be more political, than to direct the efforts of this country to avail itself of any opening in that country, if any there was, to facilitate the re-establishment of some monarchical government, was plain, obvious, and explicit : On the other hand, it was equally clear, that his Majesty's sentiments and the languge of parliament were not to be tried by doubtful constructions or plausible misrepresentations, but by the most solemn written documents.

In fact, the restoration of monarchy, upon the old principles, had never been stated by his Majesty, by government, or by parliament, as a *sine qua non,* as preparatory to peace. Not only so, but it had never been stated that any one specific and particular form of government was deemed on our part necessary, before we could negociate for peace. It had been stated, that his Majesty had no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of France ; and as long as that country had abstained from interfering with the government of other nations, till a direct and absolute aggression had been made on this country, and till hostilities had been actually commenced, his Majesty adhered strictly to that declaration, and abstained from any such interference : When that interference took place, which was agreeable to every experience and practice of the world, and justifiable on every plain principle of the law of nations, his Majesty still restrained himself to that degree of interference which was necessary for his own security and that of Europe. When his Majesty felt himself under the necessity of looking at the government of France, he looked at it certainly not without a wish which must naturally arise in every generous heart, that it might be adapted for the prosperity and happiness of those who were to live under it. But with a view to negociation and to peace, his Majesty did not look at it with that view, or for that purpose. He could only look at it for English views and for English purposes, to see whether it held out the solid grounds of treating, with any degree of reasonable security, for the performance of engagements that usually subsisted, and was to be found in the existing system of the different powers of Europe, without being liable to that new and unexampled order of things, that state of anarchy and confusion, which had for years existed in France. That having been the true measure and extent of the declarations made by his Majesty and by parliament, he conceived that no man in that house, on looking back to them, would wish he had not made those declarations ; that no man would feel they were not made on just principles, or that they did not arise from a fair view of the circumstances and necessity of the case. He had endeavoured to state his amendment almost in the very form of his Majesty's declarations. The honourable gentlemen on the other side of the house were of opinion, that in no case the form of government in another country ought to be considered as having any influence on the security of a treaty, but that we ought only to look to the terms and conditions of the treaty, without regarding the power, the

authority, the character, the nature and circumstances of the government that made it, or the state of that government. To that doctrine, however, he could never assent. He must contend, that every nation at war with another, ought not to treat for peace with a government that could not give security. He was not ready, therefore, to treat with the present government of France ; nor with any government, under any circumstances, or at any time, but such as should appear capable of maintaining the accustomed forms of peace and amity with other nations.

That the situation of France, since the commencement of the present war, had been such, that there did not exist in that country a government capable of maintaining with other nations the accustomed relations he had stated ;—that it was in a situation in which no security that could be given to a peace, made it preferable to the continuing of a difficult and hazardous war, was a proposition which he was perfectly prepared to maintain. It was a proposition that had been maintained again and again in that house, and by some of the gentlemen who now seemed to think that treaty ought to be attempted. He conceived, as it appeared on the face of the argument of that day, that the honourable mover and others could not expect any considerable part of the house to agree with them, either in their principles or their conclusions. They set out with observing, that the war was not a war originating in aggression on the part of France, and that we had not that proof of the hostile intentions of France towards this country, which would demonstrate that the war was just and necessary in its origin. It had, as he had just observed that day, been denied that the war commenced by aggression on the part of France; but that in fact it had originated with this country. To such an assertion neither he, nor those who had acted with him, could accede, without sacrificing every principle upon which they had hitherto called for and received the zealous and uniform support of the country. But that was not all. The honourable mover, and those who supported him, must contend, that throughout the whole of the French revolution, from the very commencement of it, during the reign of the two tyrants Brissot and Robespierre, as well as under the present system of moderatism, there was no one period in what was falsely termed the republican government, even in the most bloody part of the reign of Robespierre when there was no one pause of anarchy and confusion, even when that government

was supported by terror, and declared to be supported by enthusiasm, at the moment when the system of terror was working its own destruction—there was no one period in which the government of France did not possess sufficient stability or authority founded on a permanent basis, in which it did not possess a sufficient community of interest with the people, a sufficient interest in the hearts of the people, a sufficient guard for its own engagements, sufficient power, sufficient moderation of sentiment, to afford this country a rational prospect of security.

From the beginning of the war to that moment, supposing the terms of peace could be settled, we were not, according to the honourable mover, and those who agreed with him, to consider our security as affected by the internal situation of France. The house had not said so: The house had' said direclly the reverse; and he hoped the house would say the same thing again. Every man in the house and in the country must be satisfied that, in the termination of every war, there were two objects, reparation and security; but the great object was security. Reparation was only an auxiliary, only a subordinate object. Would any man tell him that a nation like France, put into a situation perfectly new, into a situation directly the reverse of all the existing governments on earth, destroying the foundations and the bonds of all political society, breaking down the distinction of all ranks, and subverting the security of property; a government pretending to put a whole nation into a situation of pretended equality, not the equality of laws, but an actual equality, an equality contrary to the physical inequality of men—would any man tell him, that we ought to make peace with a government constructed upon such principles, which had attempted, by every means in its power, to molest its neighbours, to impoverish and distress itself; to propagate its pernicious principles, to make converts, and to hold out the means of seducing other nations; and that had followed that up by open and direct acts of aggression, by a positive violation of treaties, and lastly, by an open declaration of war? This country scrupulously and religiously observed a neutrality, while it could hope or have a reasonable prospect, that the mischiefs of the French revolution would be confined within their own territories. We remained passive spectators of the conduct of France, until the very moment that we against our will were forced into the contest. And would any man say that it was rational, under any circum-

stances, to attempt to negociate a peace without taking into consideration the idea of security, the attainment of which, as already observed, was the great and primary object of every war? The whole question was narrowed to a single and a plain point; war being at all times one of the greatest of human evils, and never to be tolerated on any other grounds than that the evils of war were less painful upon the whole than the dangers attending an insecure and dishonourable peace. The whole question from time to time since the commencement of hostilities, resolved itself into a comparison of these two evils. They must not impiously imagine they could explore the secrets of Providence, and define the precise point to which the fortune of war might compel them; that would be to arrogate more than belongs to human wisdom, and, like other presumptions, must terminate in error and disappointment. They must proceed on general principles, which he could fairly describe. For the application arising from the circumstances, he must refer to the wisdom of parliament. The general principle he had stated was, that they ought not to regard the particular form of the government, but to look to the whole, to all the circumstances, whether it was or was not a government that could give them a reasonable degree of security.

The immediate question between the honourable mover and him was, whether the present circumstances of the internal state and government of France did or did not afford a prospect of sufficient security for a peace, so as to make it wise on the part of this country to negociate it? That was a question of infinite importance. It was, whether the government of France was such, at that moment, as to hold out that degree of reasonable security from any treaty of peace which might be concluded, as to make it, under all the present circumstances, preferable to the vigourous prosecution of the war? What did they naturally look to in the state of any country, but to the manner in which they performed their engagements! They looked to their stability—to their apparent authority—and to the reliance they could place in their pacific dispositions. He would not dwell on these circumstances. Let them recollect what had been generated under that system, and those principles that were now prevalent in France. They had seen them producing and exhibiting hitherto, not a government, but a succession and series of revolutions, for that was the proper situation in which France had stood since the commencement

of the present war. The terror of this revolution had been suspended a little more than six months. They had seen the reign and fall of Brissot; they had seen the reign and fall of Robespierre; and they now saw the prevalence of a system that was called moderatism. They had to recollect that gentlemen on the other side of the house held out to them the same sort of arguments for entering into a treaty with France, almost on the extinction of these two tyrants. Arguments were then produced of the stability of the government; and they now saw what was the ground of security, and how much they ought to depend on such arguments. But he did not wish to rest the question solely on the ground of so many successive changes, but, whether the manner in which they had cried up the sovereignty of the people, whether the manner in which the pride and passions of the populace had been erected into the criterion and rule of government, afforded any rational ground of security to any peace that could possibly be made. If that was not so, what were the particular grounds of permanence now existing in France, that ought to give us dependence on its stability more than formerly, in the time of Brissot and Robespierre? The mere question of moderatism would not be sufficient for that purpose. Though there was some relaxation of the severity and terror of former times, that would not be sufficient. It was a moderation which arose only from comparison. The system of revolutionary tribunals was not varied. That great leading article on which the happiness of the people so materially depended was not essentially varied, whatever it might be in mode or degree. He said he would not tire the house on that subject, but examine what were the leading points to which they ought to turn their attention. Some of them had been enumerated by a noble friend of his,[1] at the beginning of last session, with a force of language and of argument, which had made too strong an impression upon the minds of those who heard him, to be readily forgotten. He had then most clearly shewed the influence of public opinion, as unfavourable to the permanence of the government, and paving the way for its destruction. He said, he mentioned this for the purpose of shewing, that when the power of Robespierre was at its height, it was understood by the other side of the house as a powerful argument of the great stability of the government. That tyrant possessed the greatest degree of power and terror that ever existed; whereas the present rulers

[1] **Lord Mornington.**

of France being disarmed of that force, had only the chance of being supported by the opinion of the people. Look at the manner in which the revenue was at present collected in France. Did the present government recommend itself by the greater moderation of the means it used? Within a little more than a year and a half, the confiscations that took place in that devoted country, and which were the resources of the present government, exceeded THREE HUNDRED MILLIONS STERLING 1 That was the amount of the confiscations from May 1793, to the month of May last. And these confiscations were founded on what?—Upon that which would be looked upon by a British house of commons, and by this country in general, with horror. That immense sum did not arise from seizing the fortunes of exiled nobles and emigrants, but from confiscations made long after. They had seized as forfeitures the property of all persons who remained in the country, but who were possessed of landed estates, and had shewn the smallest dislike to the revolution. Having exiled the whole nobility and great landed proprietors in the course of a year and a half, they had, after that, collected that great sum. Whether the charge of guilt, upon which that confiscation had been grounded, had been falsely or truly applied, it equally made for his argument. In one view, it furnished the strongest proof of oppression in consequence of the system of terror; and if it was considered in another view, it was an incontestable proof of the division of the sentiments of the people of France, which contradicted the observations of the honourable mover, who talked in such strong terms of that united people, although three hundred millions sterling were wrested from those persons who did not admire the principles of the revolution. Taken in the other view, it might be considered as the fruits of the bloody massacres that took place under the dominion of Robespierre. It would appear then, what weight was due to the assertion, that all the French were united in one cause, when the great resources by which they had been able to carry on the war, had been derived almost entirely from the fund of confiscation and proscription, and had been the fruits and harvest of the bloody massacres which had marked the different periods of their revolution, and consisted of that system, on their professed detestation of which they built their power, and by the destruction of which alone, they attempted to support it, and acquire the confidence, affection, and good-will of the country. If these had hitherto formed its principal resources, in renouncing the system of

Robespierre, the present government had crippled their power of action, and deprived themselves of the means of exertion.

Mr. Pitt next called the attention of the house to the state of the agriculture and commerce of France. He said he wished to describe the present state of the agriculture and commerce of that country, not from any reports which the honourable mover might suppose had come to his hands from those who were friendly to him: his reporters were certainly not persons immediately dependent on him, or those who had any goodwill towards him. They were the members of the national convention of France, who made reports to that assembly from the several committees. According to those reports, their agriculture was *extinguished;* their commerce *annihilated.* That was the situation in which France stood. They had declared they were willing to re-animate commerce: but the present actual situation of the country was such as he had described. See whether, in fact, they had afforded any relief to commerce, and to the agriculture of the country, and whether they had any just title to the love and affection of the bulk of the people.

He next adverted to the state of justice in the country. All sanguinary cruelties had been committed through the medium of revolutionary tribunals: and though they were less cruel under the present government, they were only so by comparison with the former system, properly denominated the system of terror.

He desired the house to look at the state of religion in France, and asked them if they would willingly treat with a nation of atheists. He did not wish to consider them in that point of view. God forbid, that we should look on the body of the people of France as atheists, whatever might be the case with some individuals! It was not possible that a whole nation, in so short a time, should have renounced the religion of their fathers, forgotten all the principles in which they had been educated, extinguished the feelings of nature, and subdued the workings of conscience. To the larger proportion of the mass, there could not be a heavier burden than to be deprived of the exercise of that religion, and to be deprived of it in a country that called itself a land of liberty, and which set out on the principles of toleration, in a country which supposed itself to enjoy more than human liberty ; and yet, under the present *moderate* government, he believed a proposition had been made, to solemnize the Christian religion; when the convention passed to the order of the day, proposing forthwith to

establish a plan of decadal pagan festivals, and accompanied by a declaration, that all the priests should be detained in prison till that new religion was established. Although the present convention of France profess to have renounced the crimes and cruelties of their predecessors, yet, since they had been in a state of pure innocence, had there been more apparent unanimity among those in whom the present government subsisted? On the contrary, there never had been stronger instances of opposition, distraction, and confusion. They were continually recriminating on each other the guilt of those very cruelties he had been stating. Did he say then that the present system of government in France must necessarily fall? He said no such thing. Did he then say that the present rulers of France might not extricate themselves in some degree from that abuse, and follow a more just and prudent line; and that they might not gradually draw a veil over former severities, by which, if they could not gain the good opinion and confidence of others, they might at least obtain their acquiescence? They certainly might. Had that time arrived? Undoubtedly it had not. But if such a change should take place, and such an order of things should arrive, through whatever road, and by whatever means, if they gave to their government that stability and that authority which might afford grounds, not of certainty, but of moral probability (by which human affairs must be conducted) that we might treat for peace with security, then would be the proper time to negotiate; but we ought in prudence to wait the return of such circumstances as would afford us a probability of treating with success. So much on that part of the subject.

Supposing, however, that he did not look to the chance of a change, the next thing was, what assurance had we of the pacific disposition of the present national convention of France toward this country? We had reasons founded on probability, to infer that they entertained a spirit of hostility to all regular governments, and most of all to the government of Great Britain. If they had any reason to believe that the convention of France were disposed to peace, must he not infer that they were disposed to it, because they thought it would most probably tend to their advantage, and to our ruin? Till there was satisfactory evidence that their spirit of hostility to other nations was destroyed, he saw probable ground, in the very nature of their system, that they must persevere in that hostility, till they ceased to act upon it. They looked upon their own

government as the only lawful government in the world, and regarded the governments of all other nations as usurpation, Such was the ground on which they had undertaken the war. Did France make any professions of peace, or did she shew any dispositions for peace, but as she felt herself wearied of the war, and as she found herself involved in difficulties? The national convention had said plainly they desired a partial peace, because so extensive a war they found themselves unequal to prosecute. They had professed they desired peace with some of the powers, in order to ruin more securely those against whom they wished still to carry on the war; and he might add, afterwards to ruin those with whom now they professed to be willing to treat for peace. They would make a distinction in making peace. Their moderation was reserved for Holland, their vindictive principles for Great Britain. Could such dispositions either give security to peace, or render it of long continuance ?

It had been stated, that the decree of the 19th of November had been repealed, and that therefore the French no longer aspired at interfering with the internal government of other countries. In April 1793, they had enacted something on the subject of peace. They enacted that the penalty of death should be inflicted on any person who should propose peace with any country, unless that country acknowledged the French republic, one and indivisible, founded on the principles of liberty and equality. They were not merely satisfied with a partial acknowledgment *de facto ;* they required an acknowledgment *de jure.* He wished to know, if these principles were once recognized as the legitimate foundation of government, whether they would not be universal in their application? Could these principles be excluded from other nations ? And if they could not, would they not amount to a confession of the usurpation and injustice of every other government? If they were to treat for peace with France, they knew one of the things that must be preparatory to it, and that was, that they would acknowledge what they had hitherto denied. They must acknowledge those principles which condemned the usurpation of all the other governments, and denied the very power they were exercising. Such was the preliminary that must precede a proposal to treat; and what next would happen if peace was obtained?—leaving out all consideration of the terms of it, which might be expected to be high in proportion to their acquisition of territory. Did they look at the situation

in which they would lay open this country to all the emissaries of France? In proportion to the success of France, those principles had grown more bold in this, and in every other country. They had increased in activity and means of resistance. Were they to give up those safeguards which had been lately thrown round the constitution; and were they to follow the advice of the other side of the house by having recourse to the universal loyalty of the people of England? Did gentlemen think that we ran no risk of serious internal dangers by reviving and rekindling the embers of that faction in this country, which the other side of the house had supposed were now totally extinguished? Peace obtained under such circumstances, could not be stated with confidence as to its permanence, and therefore, if it were to be obtained, we must remain in a state of vigilant jealousy and never-ceasing suspicion. In that state, what sort of peace could we enjoy?—Could such a state possibly be preferable to war?—Would they not then give up those advantages they enjoyed? Were the country to disarm, few, he supposed, would be inclined to approve of that alternative; on the other hand, they could not remain armed without giving up, in a certain degree, that pitch of force, to which they had brought the exertions of the country, and retaining an establishment burthensome to peace, and ineffectual to war. It was impossible for any human being, in the present circumstances, to suppose a state of settled peace; it must be a state of watching each other, of inquietude, of distrust, merely a short truce, a state of partial inactivity and interrupted repose. In such a peace there could be no security; it was exposed to so much hazard, doubt, and danger, that no man could possibly look to it, except the exhausted state of our resources was such as to exclude the possibility of further exertion. The question was not the option between peace and war, but the option of war under considerable difficulties, with great means and resources, or peace without security.

He said he should be ashamed to go over the means of our resources; but as that object had been touched on by the honourable gentleman who had introduced the question, he must say a few words on the relative situation of the two countries. The foundation of the argument *of* the honourable mover was, that the resources of France were of so extraordinary a nature, that they were such as the other nations of Europe could not bear, but France, having borne them for so many

years, could do that which other nations could not do—and that they were therefore bound to suppose that the resources of France were superior to those of this country, which had expended so many millions without having had any effect on the revenue, commerce, and manufactures of the country, without means that were equal to the pressure sustained in other wars where this country had carried them on successfully. The honourable gentleman, who swept off millions from the expenditure of France, had added them with as rude a hand to the account of this country; he had said, if we were to make peace at that moment, the expense would be seventy millions sterling, and the extra expenses would be calculated moderately at fifty millions sterling. How much the honourable gentleman allowed for winding up expenses he knew not, but they were certainly large. Without taking in the expenses of the present year of 220,000 men, including the regular army and militia, and the vote of 100,000 seamen, to the best of his recollection,—taking the expenses of the year 1793 and of 1794 up to the end of last December, the sum was about twenty-five millions sterling, and there was a capital to be created, of somewhat more than thirty millions. This point was not very closely connected with the question, but he had corrected the statement of the honourable gentleman, who wished to shew we were no longer able to carry on the war, though he could not prove the least defalcation in the revenue of the country, or a diminution of the public credit. To what was that sum to be opposed on the part of France? To 260 millions sterling, which that country had expended during the last two years. Would any man say that France could afford to spend 260 millions sterling, of which the inhabitants had been plundered, better than Great Britain? That immense sum had been collected in France by force and terror, and had been attended by effects admitted by themselves to produce the desolation of the interior of the country, the extinction of agriculture, the ruin of their resources, the subversion of all the means of profitable industry, and the annihilation of every branch of commerce, besides the collateral circumstance of the system of assignats which he had mentioned on a former day. He said, on a former day he had made the expenses of the French republic amount to 480 millions sterling, which the honourable gentleman who had made the motion said was exaggerated by 120 millions. But the honourable gentleman had begun his calculations two years later than he, which was

the reason of that difference. The assignats, which were formerly near par, were now about 85 per cent, below it. That the house might not mistake him, they were not worth 85/. per cent, but only 15/. per cent. And therefore he repeated his former assertion, that there was a rapid and a progressive decay in the internal resources of France. It had been stated, that he had year after year represented the resources of France to be in a rapid state of decline. The first year of the war cost France 160 millions, which produced a rapid and progressive decay in the state of their finances; and was there any thing ridiculous in supposing those resources to be still in a progressive state of decay, after they had expended, during the last campaign, another 160 millions sterling ? .

The honourable gentleman[1] who seconded the motion, in the longest simile he had ever heard, observed, that the resources of America were declining for three years together. But would any man say that the features of that war bore any resemblance to those of the present, which marked the calamities of France ? It had been observed, that the French were making great exertions, and that therefore it was unjust to say their resources were at all decayed. But the question was, whether those great exertions ought not to be considered as a proof of the decay of the resources of the country? Would any man tell him that the internal state of the country would not be affected by a continued and extraordinary supply of the nerves and sinews of war ? The honourable gentleman who made the motion, had stated that the French had extended their conquests from Gibraltar to the Baltic. But no brilliant success, no acquisition of territory, was sufficient to compensate this internal decay of resources. The wide difference, in point of resources, was as important to the fate of empires and the lot of kingdoms, as new conquest; and the balance there was as much in our favour, as the acquisition of territory was against other countries and in favour of France.

There were many other points on which he wished to touch, but would not discuss them at length. One or two observations he could not help stating. It had been asked, what force had we to oppose to that of France ? He answered, an increased force on the part of this country. The convention had said that their forces must be contracted: their efforts must therefore be exhausted. Besides the exertions by sea

1 Mr. W. Smith.

and land which had been made by this country, it would probably depend on the resolution and firmness of that house, whether the emperor might not be enabled to bring such a military force into the field, as would render an extent of exertion necessary on the part of France, of which they had declared themselves incapable. It was said, do you expect to conquer France? do you expect a counter-revolution? When do you intend to march to Paris? If such was at one time our success in France, that the convention were put in imminent fear of the combined armies penetrating to Paris, it was not very extraordinary that his honourable friend[1] at London should allow himself to entertain a degree of hope of the possibility of that event. By a mode of arguing, not unusual with gentlemen on the other side, whose practice it frequently was, first to state positions in order that they afterwards might combat them, ministers had been charged with looking to the conquest of France. They had never held out any such object; they had only professed their hope of making such an impression upon the interior of that country as might lead to a secure and stable peace; and of being able, by the assistance of those well-disposed persons who were enemies to the present system, to establish a government honourable to them and safe to ourselves. If a change had taken place in the government of France, which rendered it more expedient for us to treat in the present than at a former period, he would ask, if nothing had been gained? We were now in a situation less remote from that in which we might be able to treat with security. It had been urged, that we ought to have let France alone. What was the consequence of neutrality but to produce aggression? But now that war had been two years carried on, the detestable system of their government had subsided into a state of less flagrant atrocity. It had been said that all France, to a man, was united for a republic. What was meant by the phrase of a republic? Was it merely a name at the top of a sheet of paper? Was their desire of a republic to be gathered from their submission to the tyranny of Robespierre? Was their unanimity to be inferred from the numerous proscriptions and massacres of federalists and royalists?

Mr. Pitt proceeded to recapitulate the general grounds on which he had opposed the original resolution, and the motives from which he had been induced to bring forward the amendment, which he had read, and should conclude with moving.

1 Mr. Jenkinson.

Peace I Peace was not obstructed by any form of government; out by a consideration of the internal circumstances of France. He remarked that there had been great misconstructions and misconceptions with respect to what he had stated on former occasions to be his sentiments, as to the re-establishment of monarchy, which he by no means wished to be considered as a *sine qua non* to the attainment of peace, and therefore he had not contented himself with barely negativing the resolution, but had been induced in the amendment to substitute that language which, in his mind, it became parliament to hold, as best adapted to the subject.

There was one other consideration to which he should advert, namely, the remark that the attempt to treat, though not likely to be successful, would yet be attended with advantage, both in France and this country. In France it would shew that we were disposed to treat. If it were wise to treat, this certainly would be an advantage; but such a conduct, instead of forwarding peace, would only be productive of danger, it would lead to a proposition of terms from France, elated by its recent acquisitions, which it would be impossible for this country to accept. And he trusted that his honourable friend,[1] who had, he conceived, gone too far in his propositions with respect to peace on a former occasion, would be convinced, upon his own principles, that as the difficulty increased, any proposition to treat in the present moment would have the effect to encourage the enemy, and to bury the remains of opposition in France. In this country it would have the effect to sink the spirit of the people, and to tell them that it was right to look for peace, though it was impossible to look for security; it would be to insinuate a doubt of their zeal, energy, and courage, and to add to the depression already produced by a succession of misfortunes and a series of misrepresentations. The honourable gentleman had said, that if his proposition to treat should not in the event be successful, he would then support the war. Upon what ground could he support a war, which he had in the first instance conceived and declared to be neither necessary nor just? But till the period should arrive at which it would be possible to treat, with a rational prospect of security, and a degree of, at least, probable advantage, he, and those who thought with him, must continue to support a war, of the justice and necessity of which they were firmly persuaded, and which they could not,

1 Mr. Wilbcrforce.

in the present moment, abandon without a sacrifice **of their** opinion, their consistency, and their honour.

ON WILBERFORCE'S MOTION IN FAVOUR OF A GENERAL PACIFICATION

May 27, 1795.[1]

I SHALL certainly endeavour, Sir, to confine what I have to say to the real point under consideration, and must stand excused if I do not follow the right honourable gentleman[2] who spoke last, in many of the points to which he adverted. I impute no blame to my honourable friend who has made this motion, though I lament and deplore that he has done so. He has acted, no doubt, from the fullest conviction that he was discharging his duty to his constituents and to the public at large. A great deal has been said this night about Holland being lost, without taking into consideration all the circumstances that belong to the case. It is not my business at present, but at any other time I should not be unwilling to discuss, whether it was not of immense advantage to Europe in general, that Holland was not added to France without a struggle, and which, but for the interference of this country, would have taken place two years ago. This union, after a long struggle, unfortunate I admit in the issue, has been formed chiefly from that country indulging unfounded hopes of peace, in a treaty of alliance, which has ended in their having been invaded and conquered; in their having submitted, being promised protection, and having been defrauded of four millions of money. Perhaps it may be better for them in the end, but it is certainly better for the state of the world, however unfortunate it may be for the inhabitants of that country, at the present moment, that they were united to France after a severe and unsuccessful struggle, and when Holland is no great acquisition to France, instead of being added to her, as a great accession, when she was in the zenith of her power. It has been argued this night, that this country

[1] The motion by Wilberforce ran:—"That it is the opinion of this house, that the present circumstances of France ought not to preclude the government of this country from entertaining proposals fora general pacification ; and that it is for the interest of Great Britain to make peace with France, provided it can be effected on fair terms, and in an honourable manner."

[2] Mr. Fox.

entered upon the present just and necessary war with a great and powerful confederacy in Europe; and I admit that this confederacy is narrowed and diminished. But I would ask, whether, in discussing the question of peace and war, we have not furnished them with grounds to argue upon, which it is impossible they could have had without the existence of that confederacy? To look for negociation at the present moment is premature, though I look to it at no remote period. I have no objection, were it connected with this business, to follow my honourable friend, and the right honourable gentleman, to the West Indies, to examine the efforts that have been made by this country, and compare them with those made in any former period; from which we should clearly see, whether greater exertions had ever been made, and whether the distresses in that quarter had not been aggravated by a great mortality, and other accidental causes.

But I come to the question immediately before us. I beg leave to consider what that question is, and I must say, that my honourable friend, in making his motion, suffered himself to be deceived in the manner of stating it; and this pervaded the whole of his argument. His statement was neither more nor less than this: Is a peace on fair and honourable terms preferable to the continuance of the war? We should not have been debating here so long, if this were the question; about this there can be no difference of opinion. But the question is, whether a peace on fair and honourable terms, which is the end of all war, is more likely to be attained by negociation at the present moment, than by a continuance of the war? Are you more likely to arrive at a better and more secure peace with a reasonable prospect of permanency on fair and honourable terms, by a continuance of the war with energy and vigour, till a more favourable opening presents itself, by taking some step or other to encourage and invite negociation? That is the question which puts away at once all the declamations on the advantages of peace, which nobody in this country will deny;—where the rapid effects of peace have healed wounds, infinitely greater than any we have experienced since the commencement of the present war, in repairing losses far more affecting the prosperity of the country than any we have sustained, and which were so vigourously experienced in the interval of a few years, as to make us almost forget the calamities of former wars.

Sir, that being the state of the question, I mean to submit

to the house, that at the present moment, perseverance in the contest is more wise and prudent, and more likely in the end to effect a safe, lasting, and honourable peace, than any attempt at negociation. My honourable friend does not chuse to state that this country ought to take the first steps to peace, and he claims great merit for his moderation in not going so far, but only that ministers ought to receive overtures. I beg leave to submit, whether this be not only taking the first step, but doing it in the most exceptionable manner. To say it is not an overture on our part, if we have received no intimation whatever from the government of France to treat, to say we shall be glad to treat, is what no man living will contend. Where the overture comes from the legislature of the country, it is attended with a degree of publicity which the right honourable gentleman admits is one of the merits of our constitution. But surely this mode of making overtures of peace is not the most convenient, inasmuch as it makes known the whole terms of peace to the enemy. It leaves no will to ministers to take advantage of any favourable circumstances that may occur. For that reason it is that the legislature does not usually interfere in such transactions, as the true state of the transactions is only fully understood by a few, and therefore it has been wisely committed to the executive government. Why has this country, which is so jealous of its rights and liberties, entrusted such prerogatives to the crown? Why is the making of peace and war, and other prerogatives which form the happiness of this constitution, entrusted to the king? Because it has been found, that the power of parliament was sufficient to prevent the royal prerogatives from being carried beyond its proper limits. I say the question is then, whether you will step forward, and assume this power of the crown at a crisis of peculiar delicacy?

The right honourable gentleman who spoke last, was of opinion that the French convention, from the publicity of its proceedings, bore a nearer resemblance to the British constitution, than the constitution of any other country. In this comparison, I trust, it was not meant to be carried any farther, as if the interests of this country were to be discussed in one popular assembly. I hope the right honourable gentleman is not so much in love with France. I think the right honourable gentleman took up that idea rather hastily. I am by no means certain, nor is it worth while here to examine, whether a despotic government, or an anarchical republic, like that of

France, most nearly resembles the constitution of Great Britain, which is removed at an equal distance from both extremes.

The publicity of the proceedings of the French convention has been the source of outrage, horror, and disgust, to every feeling heart. That publicity has been a faithful recorder, and an accurate witness of the enormity of their proceedings. The question is, whether we are to take the first step towards negociation, or to go on, trusting to the executive government to take the opportunity of the first favourable moment for negociation, and in the mean time strengthening the hands of that government, to persevere with vigour in the contest in which we are engaged. We have been told, that although this question has been several times brought forward, it has never been directly disposed of; it has never been directly negatived. I contend that it has in effect been directly negatived. For when the motion was made some time ago, an amendment was made to the motion, stating, that we were resolved to persevere in the contest, trusting that his Majesty would seize the first favourable opportunity that presented for treating with security. I beg to know, whether that which was done with deliberation, was not negativing the motion. Subsequent to that, this question was discussed again and again, and this house on those occasions came to a resolution, that it did not conceive, under the present circumstances of the countries, negociation was a measure expedient to be adopted.

But another question here arises. Have the circumstances and situation of the country materially altered since the last motion on this subject, or since my honourable friend first found himself an advocate for negociation? Has the posture of affairs varied since that time, so as to make negociation more eligible at the present moment than it was at any former period? I heard my honourable friend state one fact on this business, which no evidence can contradict. I heard him with pleasure state, that the situation of France was now so weakened and exhausted, as to make peace with that government, though not secure, yet, in consequence of that weakness, attended with a considerable degree of security. That something more of this security exists at the present moment, I not only admit, but contend that the prospect is improving every day, and that this becomes more and more ascertained; as I shall state before I sit down. But is this a reason why we should negotiate at this moment? I think not. From facts that are notorious, from things known to the world, there is now a

general feeling that there is, comparatively speaking, a sense of security in the country, when compared with the alarming uneasiness which some time ago prevailed. The enemy have not been able to avail themselves of their success and acquisitions, nor have they acquired solid and substantial strength. The natural anxiety of the people of this country has led them to remark the progress of the decay, decline, and ruin of the enemy, as being more rapid than they could have foreseen. When this business was formerly discussed, it was used as a very considerable argument against negociation, that from our situation then, we could not hope to treat with France on terms of equality : that our affairs since the commencement of the war were in so unfavourable a state, that we could not reasonably hope to obtain terms of equality, or any thing fair and honourable. Is not this argument very considerably strengthened at this moment, when you compare the state of this country and France? Exhausted and wearied with the addition of your own weakness, will you give up the contest in despair? We should then, like Holland, have to consider what indemnity France would expect of us. I state this as a practical objection, and wholly independent of any question on the security of negociation. Those who argue for peace, consider our situation as rendered more fit for negociation in this way:—that we have lost our allies, by which we are reduced to such a state of weakness, that we must listen to peace; and now that our allies have deserted us, it is unnecessary to obtain their consent. We formerly refused to treat with France, because we were satisfied she was unable to maintain that peace and amity that ought to prevail among neutral nations. Gentlemen have chosen to forget all the arguments used with regard to acknowledging the republic of France. We refused to treat with M. Chauvelin after the unfortunate murder of Louis X V I. We refused to acknowledge a government that had been reeking with the blood of their sovereign. Was not that an objection not to acknowledge them at that period? The murder of the king preceded but a very few days the declaration of war against this country.

The next argument is, whether you would dishonour yourself by acknowledging a republic that might endanger your own independence, and which made a public profession of principles which went to destroy the independence of every nation of Europe? I say, I will not acknowledge such a republic. The question here is but simply whether you will acknowledge so

as to treat with it? It is not, nor has it been, since the commencement of the war, the interest of England, not from any one circumstance, but from taking all circumstances together, to institute a negociation with the ruling powers now existing in France.

As to the declaration of the emperor to the diet, if it is authentic, that he should be happy to enter into a negociation for peace, I beg leave to say, this declaration must be supposed to bind the emperor in no other capacity than as head of the empire; and I am sure they cannot, and will not state that that precludes him, as duke of Austria, or king of Bohemia, from performing any agreement he may chuse to enter into, on his own separate account, in those capacities. As the head of the empire, he might, from the present situation of that country, think it wise and expedient to go beyond the line he may chalk out to himself as a sovereign prince and king, as king of Bohemia and archduke of Austria. There may be circumstances to induce him, as the head of the empire, to wish to open a negociation with France, rather than run the risk of a separate negociation, through the medium of the king of Prussia, contrary to the constitution of the Germanic body. One of the next points relied upon, and imputed as blame to ministers, was the circumstance of the war in La Vendee and with the Chouans being at an end. I do not see how that circumstance can attach any blame to government. It has been stated, that the inhabitants of La Vendee have submitted to the French republic. Whoever has conversed with gentlemen coming from France, has been made acquainted with the situation of the inhabitants of La Vendee and the Chouans, as well as from the Paris newspapers. They will do well to consider, whether the French government can have any degree of confidence, that they can reap the least advantage from that union. The advantages of the peace in that quarter have been entirely in favour of La Vendee and Britanny, and not of the republic; the inhabitants have gained by the treaty, and lost nothing. The republic has no right to any accession of strength from this district of the kingdom. Were they subject to requisitions? or did they furnish recruits for the army? or did they increase the treasure of the country? By the articles of their submission to the laws of the republic, if they are reported truly, they are in fact an independent government, from which what are called patriots are excluded. The state of La Vendee was directly the reverse of that of Holland; and if that country

was not an accession of strength to the republic, is it not a confession of the weakness of the government, that they found themselves under the necessity, notwithstanding all their splendid success, to enter into such a treaty as a sovereign would never have entered into but from necessity?

There is another circumstance which has been relied upon, and which I must not pass over in silence. Among other events of the day, we see that Holland and France have entered into an alliance; and that Holland is to furnish France with twelve ships of the line, and eighteen frigates. The present state of Holland makes that circumstance more favourable for this country than we had reason to expect it would have been when Holland was over-run by the French.

The question is, whether the state of France is not so weak; whether the distractions and disturbances of the country, and the discontents of the people, are not so great, as are likely to leaa to some change or new order of things, more favourable than any that has hitherto appeared?

First, as to the weakness of Fiance. We have been told by the right honourable gentleman, that there was no appearance in France of the relaxation of its efforts; that the reign of terror ended with the month of July last; and subsequent to that period they have been as successful as ever. But surely it is not very wonderful if the operations of that great and extraordinary machine had wound up the whole of that extensive empire, by all the men who were put in a state of requisition, and by all the meretricious treasure that was amassed; if so many causes operating so long, the effects were not to cease as immediately as the causes. The effects in their operation survive the causes; but have the French acquired fresh vigour? Whoever has taken any pains to look at the number and efforts of their armies, and state of the provisions and magazines, and attends to the manner in which requisitions have been carried on; whoever reads the accounts the members of the convention give of themselves; whoever reads their speeches ;—must have discovered how evidently the vigour and exertion of that country have been diminishing.

In the next place, look at the state of their assignats, which for a long time has been the subject of a great deal of anxious attention to the convention. They have been employed almost in a perpetual contest about two things,—to make a constitution, and to raise their credit, by preventing an unlimited number of assignats entering into circulation. They therefore passed a

decree to withdraw a certain number of them to raise their credit. The nominal value of assignats was only 25/. per cent. At present they are somewhat less than 5/. per cent. Their expenditure is incredible; last month it amounted to twenty-seven millions sterling, which is more than is wanted by Great Britain in the course of a year. This expense amounts to three hundred and twenty-four millions sterling per annum, which exceeds the whole national debt of Great Britain. The commerce of that country is totally extinguished, and a portion of bankruptcy mixes itself with every transaction.

The next article is the price of provisions, respecting which I have received a great deal of authentic information within these few days, indeed I may say within these few hours; and the price of provisions is so very high, and scarcity prevails to such a degree, as must stop all great and extensive operations.

In the next place, I doubt very much whether the provisions for the French army and navy will in future be so regularly supplied as they formerly have been. I have accounts of provisions being re-landed from on board some of the ships at Brest; and the city of Paris has been supplied by pittances from the army on the Rhine. Expressions of discontent are not confined to individuals, but are general, and such as come home to the door of every individual in France. What will be the effect of this complicated pressure, how long it may be continued, or what order of things may ultimately rise out of it, I shall not pretend to say. But I think it may produce, and probably at no great distance of time, some new order of things, more friendly to a general pacification, and to a regular intercourse with the other established powers of Europe. Such is the genuine prospect for all the countries of Europe, for an order of things more satisfactory than we have seen at any former period. It is owing to your perseverance in forcing them, and to which they are unequal, that they would willingly accept peace. But because you have such a prospect at this moment, you are by no means certain that a safe and honourable peace could be obtained. That is, at this moment, premature; a continuance of your perseverance some time longer, will in all probability produce that happy effect.

Compare the situation and resources of this country, feeling for the burthens of the country, which must be felt by the poor and industrious to a certain extent, and deploring their necessity, as they must obstruct the increasing wealth of the country. Look also at the manufactures and trade and revenue, and

compare it with the expense of the war. Compare the annual expenditure of twenty or twenty-five millions sterling, to the enormous sum of twenty-seven millions sterling per month, or three hundred and twenty-four millions per annum, the sum yearly expended by France. After you have made these comparisons, tell me whether you will lay aside your exertions, under the peculiar circumstances in which you are now placed. You have laid on taxes unprecedented in their amount, but at the same time having the satisfaction to know that they are borne by the inhabitants of this country without any material severe pressure. You are provided therefore with the most ample and liberal supplies for the present campaign. But is that the case with France? No. Every month, every week, is an additional strain of the new machine, and they are not provided with any of that enormous expense which I have mentioned, but must raise it all by forced means, by requisitions, by robbery, and plunder. I have trespassed too long on the patience of the house. I conclude by observing again, that I have to hope for a more favourable order of things, and I have no reason to be satisfied with any attempt at negociation at this moment: but by a vigourous prosecution of the war for a short time longer, we have every reasonable prospect that we shall be able to procure for ourselves a solid, permanent, and honourable peace.

PITT *versus* FOX

October 29, 1795.[1]

PITT began by observing that no question had ever occurred in the history of this country, which involved in it more circumstances peculiarly connected with its interest, honour, and safety, than the question which had been proposed to their determination that night by his noble friend, together

[1] His Majesty this day opened the session with a most gracious speech from the throne. After the address (in the usual form) had been moved by the Earl of Dalkeith, and seconded by the Honourable Mr. Stewart, Mr. Fox, in a speech of considerable length, inveighing severely against the assertions of ministry, as fallacious and delusive, moved an amendment to the address, "setting forth the disastrous result of the measures hitherto pursued, and imploring his Majesty to take immediate steps for bringing about a peace with France, whatever might be the piesent or future form of her internal government; looking for indemnity, where alone indemnity could be found, in the restoration of industry, plenty and tranquillity at home."

with the amendment that had been made to it by the right honourable gentleman opposite to him. That amendment contained a proposition so extraordinary in itself, that he could not believe the right honourable gentleman was serious in making it. It was neither more nor less than this. After observing the supposed state of universal degradation and disappointment, to which we had been reduced in consequence of the war, we were advised at this moment to sue on our part for peace, without being informed how the negociation was to be conducted, or what indemnity this country was to receive. That amendment, therefore, only held out the mockery of returning to a state of security and peace. Such was the nature and state of the question which the right honourable gentleman had brought before them ; a proposition which, according to the sacred rules of parliament, any gentleman might bring forward *without personal responsibility*, and upon which therefore he could retort upon the right honourable gentleman no threat of impeachment; but if he were a minister, and were to bring forward such a proposition, he would deserve impeachment more than any man who ever disgraced the country.

Mr. Pitt begged first to take a view of the general proposition, and leading points of contest in the address, leaving out of the question some extraneous topics. He wished to confine his attention to the address that had been moved by his noble friend, and to contrast it with the amendment. The first leading point in the king's speech, and the proposition which had been laid before that house for their concurrence was this: "That notwithstanding the many events unfavourable to the common cause, the prospect resulting from the general situation of affairs has in many important respects been materially improved in the course of the present war." The first proposition therefore to be proved was, that on considering the relative state of the belligerent powers since the commencement of the present war, notwithstanding our reverses and disappointments, the prospect arising out of the general situation of affairs had been materially improved. In the first place, before he entered into any detail upon the subject, he begged leave to ask, what was the period comprised in this proposition? It included the space between the opening of the last session of parliament, and the moment at which he was then speaking. He wished to ask every candid man, with what feelings and with what expectations they entered that house at the com-

mencement of the last session? He then desired them to ask themselves, what were their own impressions, and what was their belief of the general impressions of the country, with regard to general security, at the present moment, compared with what they were last year. He hoped the gentlemen on the other side of the house were not wholly forgetful what a melancholy picture they had formerly drawn of the situation of this country; how deplorable, how dreadful, how unprecedented our calamitous situation was at the commencement of the last session. They now seemed desirous to forget those exaggerated statements of last year, and to apply them to the present. He hoped, when a fair comparison was made between these two periods, no candid man would suppose that he meant to insult the people of England, when he used the word *satisfaction.* He again declared, that on a general review of the state of this country ten months ago, and at the moment when he was speaking, he felt no small degree of satisfaction.

But, he said, he must go somewhat farther, and must state plain, distinct, and solid grounds of satisfaction. He wished to observe, that there were essential objects, of which they might be deprived, and from the importance of which they had been led into the war. His grounds of satisfaction were these: allowing for all the victories the enemy had gained in different quarters, allowing for every advantage they had obtained; allowing also for all the calamities whatever which might have befallen this country or our allies, he begged of the house to look at the present principles of the war, to examine it in all its parts, and they would easily observe the grounds of his satisfaction, and the state of our improvement. They could not fail to perceive the enemy's reduced means of prosecuting the war. The enemy was now in a situation to give us fair prospects of their being, perhaps, soon more capable of giving reasonable security of engagements of peace. They were now in a situation in which they felt a greater necessity for peace, and in which it was apparent they had a much stronger disposition for it. If he was right in that proposition, which he should endeavour to prove, was it to insult the country to express the satisfaction which he felt from these circumstances which he had just stated? Many observations which he meant to make in the illustration of the subject, had been most ably anticipated by his noble friend who moved the address, and by his right honourable friend who seconded it.

The first question that presented itself, was, whether or not

the means of the enemy were reduced for carrying on the war. He had no doubt but he should make out that proposition to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind. At an early period of the right honourable gentleman's speech, he seemed for a considerable time to imagine that the only ground of satisfaction which he (Mr. Pitt) had to state, was, that the enemy was less capable of carrying on the war on account of the want of subsistence. The right honourable gentleman had also made a number of observations respecting the high price of grain at home. This was a subject to which, before he sat down, he should beg leave to call the attention of the house. He did not mean to rest solely on that ground of satisfaction which had been stated by the right honourable gentleman. It had been said by him, "That the old story of the depreciation of assignats was an argument of no weight; that, considering the state to which they were at present reduced, it was precisely the same as if they had been ten times lower; that they were equal to nothing; and that as the enemy had relaxed none of their military operations on that account, it was the clearest proof they could go on without them." At the commencement of the last session, the assignats had been truly stated by the right honourable gentleman to be only about one fourth of their nominal value. When this old story came now to be repeated, it was this:—At the commencement of the last session of parliament, the value of assignats was from 20 to 25 per cent. At the present moment they were only *one and a half per cent.*, viz. for one hundred assignats of nominal value, only one and a half were received; consequently, they were now only about one sixteenth of the value they were last year. There was therefore some variety in this old story. There was a difference in the account. There was also an uniformity in this account, for every time he spoke of them there was a successive depression. The system of terror produced miraculous effects on this subject. For the space of a twelvemonth it kept assignats up at a par. When that system was destroyed, they returned to that state of depression in which it found them. They were at present only one sixteenth part of the value they were at, ten months ago. If any gentleman should ask him what the consequences of this great depreciation were, they were these;—Suppose any individual in France, ten months ago, had received any number of assignats as the price of his labour, or in payment of a debt, and that he had laid up those assignats as the means of his future subsistence, he

would find at this moment that they were only one sixteenth part of the value of what they were at the commencement of the last session. This was the state of the private fortune of every individual in France. The prodigality of their system forced into circulation between six and seven milliars, which was equal to 280 millions sterling, and which was-three or four times more than the amount of all the money in France in its richest state, and which its commerce wanted for its circulating *medium.* At that time these assignats produced the highest degree of difficulty and embarrassment; and notwithstanding all the advantages the French had gained during the course of the present year, notwithstanding all the deductions that had been made, assignats were equal to only one sixteenth part of their former value. This was confessed by every man who had written in France;—it was confessed by every man who had spoken in France;—it was admitted by every man who thought in Europe. At present they had assignats in circulation to the incredible amount of 720 millions sterling. The number of assignats was still increasing; so that the repeated increase of new issues was to be added to that immense sum. The enemy had therefore to face another campaign under these circumstances. Supposing the other powers of Europe were desirous to put them to the hard necessity of trying the experiment, he firmly believed in his conscience, that the prodigal resources of their system could not be supported, unless by the restoration of the system of terror. Was he to consider all these circumstances as nothing? Most certainly not

But there were some favourable circumstances in the situation of the enemy, and he had no desire to conceal them. He had no difficulty to state the equivocal conduct of the king of Prussia. The French could also disband the two armies which they had withdrawn from two different quarters of Spain, except in so far as those armies had been employed by different diversions. On account of the peace they had concluded with the king of Prussia, they might be enabled to a certain degree to contend with a much smaller army, than when they had to oppose the whole of the confederacy. Yet it must be observed, that for every pound sterling that was formerly paid to each man in such an army, they must give sixteen pounds sterling at the commencement of the present year. The depreciation of assignats was constantly increasing, and not only increasing, but increasing in a compound ratio of an increasing proportion.

The only question was, whether, as these assignats would very soon, in all probability, be totally inefficient, there were any other visible means of maintaining their operations. It would certainly be very rash in any man to hazard a decided opinion on this point. Without pretending to give such an opinion on a subject so large and complicated, and where it was extremely difficult to judge with precision on the general result of all circumstances, he had no difficulty in stating, that he saw the greatest perplexities arising from this depression of assignats, pervading every individual in the state, and bringing nothing, as the French themselves had said, but misery and paper into every corner of the country.

That circumstance had been so pressing upon every man in the country, that if they had had the means of substituting any other less dangerous and less wasteful expedient, what greater necessity could there be for the application of such a remedy? Every financier in every department of the government had declared, that the safety of their republic depended on the regular payment of the army. He said he took this account of the subject from the records of France. He had taken it from the accounts of some of the most remarkable ministers who had appeared during the different periods of the revolution: some of them had been removed from the situation; and from the present situation of France, it was probable some of them might be restored. He observed that these ministers, at a time when assignats were far short of what they were at present, when the depression was only one half of their nominal value, declared, that unless an instant remedy was applied, the most serious consequences were to be apprehended; and, that it was absolutely necessary to raise the credit of these assignats by taking a number of them out of circulation, and giving security for the value of those that remained. He was ashamed, he said, of wearying the house on a subject that was so clear and obvious; but he hoped he should be excused when it was recollected that it was extremely interesting and important These resources might last a little longer or a shorter time before they produced their final effect; but they had in them the seeds of decay, and the inevitable cause of a violent dissolution. As it might be asked, what they had been able to propose as a remedy, he wished that every gentleman in that house had had an opportunity of perusing a plan which had been published, three months ago, by a person of no inconsiderable abilities, M. Montesquieu. According to him there were

thirteen milliars of assignats in circulation, which were five milliars less than the convention had since acknowledged. That made a difference of no less than two hundred millions sterling. That gentleman proposed two things; first, to take out of circulation an immense part of those assignats, and to give a solid and adequate pledge to the public, in order to secure those that remained in circulation being at par. That circumstance would enable them to carry on the war with vigour. He said it would carry him too far to enter into a detail of this plan; but every man must be satisfied of the desperate state of that country, when they heard the nature of the remedy. They proposed taking out of circulation 1500 millions of livres, by appropriating for money which had not yet been received of those who had purchased of the public the estates of the emigrants, and other lands which had been confiscated. In other words, those assignats were to be discharged by bad debts. The pledge given to them was, that on an average they were to receive in land one fifth part of their value, and if the rents should not be paid them, they were to receive interest for their paper. But it was observable, that that paper was not transferable from hand to hand, as was the case with the stocks in this country.

Such then was the state of France, where such a remedy had been proposed, and that remedy to this hour had never been applied. In the last days of the convention another plan was proposed. A few days ago, Vernier proposed as a remedy, that the plates should be destroyed, and it was decreed that no more should be issued, provided other means could be found to carry on the war. To supply the place of assignats, metallic pieces were to be introduced into circulation; but it was not explained whether these were to pass for more than their intrinsic value, which if they did, they were only metallic assignats, instead of assignats made of paper. If those metallic pieces were to pass at their value, no mention was made how they were to be procured. They had given no information how precious metals to that immense extent were to be obtained. It was unnecessary for him to state how a nation destitute of specie, and of the precious metals, could procure them. A nation destitute of gold and silver CQuld only procure those precious metals in exchange for the exportation of those productions it had raised from its own soil, after leaving at home sufficient for its necessary consumption ; and after procuring all the other articles of consumption, which its own soil did not produce.

The eternal law of things proved that this was the only mode of procuring the precious metals. Their commerce was ruined. What was lost by the destruction of the commerce of their colonies, of the Levant, and the loss of their internal manufactures, particularly those of Lyons, had been estimated at many millions sterling.

The causes of their necessary importation were also to be taken into the account. He was ready to admit their successes on the Rhine. At first view, it appeared impossible they could have faced the Austrian army which was so formidable in that quarter. He admitted, and admitted with feelings of regret, their having been enabled to make so calamitous a use of the advantages they had obtained. The expedition to Quiberon-bay, and the hard fate of the unfortunate emigrants who were fighting for him whom they conceived to be their lawful monarch, was to be considered by us as a calamity, independent of its effects. Every man's personal feelings were interested in that event: every man in that house, and in the country, who was possessed of the principles of loyalty and honour, must feel regret. He said he would admit the enemy had been only kept on the defensive on the side of Italy; but he must desire the house to look at the enemy during the course of the present campaign, and they would clearly see, that, notwithstanding the diminished number of their opponents, and though their successes were great and many, the internal situation of France was most wretched and deplorable. They had not made their attempt to cross the Rhine till almost the close of the campaign. It was not easy to find any other cause for that but that they had relaxed in their energy. It was difficult to conceive how their vast machinery could be directed, or how the power of the state could be supported without assignats. If they were taken out of circulation, they could not command the labour of their own subjects either for civil or military operations. Although this circumstance had not as yet produced its effect, it was evidently approaching towards it. The instruments of government in France were so numerous, that in any other country they would form a nation. There was another thing worthy of remark, that to many persons employed by the state, they had been obliged to allot a number of articles of necessity in kind. What would be the next point, when they were obliged to hold out imperfect means of subsistence to a successful and victorious army? They had been compelled to add one-sevfenth in money to the daily pay of their soldiers, who

received by that means ten times equal the amount of their pay in assignats. He directed the attention of the house to consider the effect of that measure. No sooner had it been adopted in the French armies, than it was attended with this consequence, that a soldier found himself a richer man than his officer. He hoped he had not wasted the time of the house by stating these observations, which seemed fully to confirm all the reasonings and speculations he had formed on the subject. Taking therefore into the account all the victories obtained by France, and also their external glory of foreign acquisitions; when he considered the state of their internal resources, and their inability to carry on the war for another campaign, he had no doubt but the situation of things was materially improved.

Mr. Pitt said he must be very short on those articles which still remained. If the enemy had entertained the idea that they were under a greater necessity, from the situation of their affairs, to procure peace, they would naturally have a stronger disposition to obtain it. He contended, that all these circumstances evidently arose out of the present situation of France; which led him to observe, that the prospect of the present situation of affairs in France might afford more reasonable means of effecting peace with security. Such were the present dispositions, the present principles professed, and acted upon in France, as they appeared from recent transactions, compared with any other period since the revolution. He desired the house to consider the manner in which the next constitution of France had been ushered into the world. There were certainly many circumstances in the present situation of France, favourable for a disposition to treat for peace, though it might still be made a question, whether there were enough to make it advisable or practicable for us to treat. We ought to recollect, continued Mr. Pitt, that this new constitution was ushered in with an invective against all former periods of the revolution, with a philosophical investigation of the causes which had produced such a succession of evil, strongly reprobating the idea of building up constitutions from the ground, solemnly recanting those errors into which they had been led, from the prevalence of chimerical notions, and asking pardon of God and man for the crimes they had committed, under the impulse of blind enthusiasm. They now announced their intention to be no longer led astray by theory, but to resort to practicable principles and the lessons of experience, renouncing forever the

wild scheme of forming abstract systems, not only for France, but for the whole of Europe. This surely was something. But are they yet in a state with respect to which we have such means of satisfactory information, that we ought in the present moment to come to any declaration? You need only to be reminded, that the day before yesterday, unless it was postponed, was fixed as the day on which their new constitution was to be put in activity, on which the power of the convention was to expire, and a new set of men to come into the legislature. In a few days we shall know what constitution has been adopted, and what men are in power. You will judge, then, whether at such a period it becomes us as statesmen to announce our own weakness and inability to continue the contest, and to declare our readiness immediately to negociate, without so much as knowing who are to receive the declaration. So absurd, so preposterous a supposition I could never have believed to have been made, if it had not been actually brought forward. The right honourable gentleman says, that until ministers come to such a declaration he will not believe them to be sincere in their wishes for peace. For my own part I will submit to any imputation, however harsh; to any opinion, however severe, rather than consent, by such a measure, to betray the interests and sacrifice the honour and dignity of the country. [Mr. Pitt here charged Mr. Fox with not having accurately quoted the words of his Majesty's speech at the opening of last session; and denied that there was any equivocation or evasion in the speech which had been just read.]

Ministers have been guilty of no act of reservation; they have been consistent in the whole of their conduct and declarations. Was it possible for them to foresee the events which have taken place since last session? I have no hesitation to declare, under what circumstances I would think it advisable for this country to treat with France, Whether the new constitution may have been put in activity, or may have been postponed, we are yet ignorant; but should that constitution, in the form in which it has been decreed, have been examined, and put in activity with such acquiescence of the nation, as to enable their representatives to speak on behalf of the people of France, I then have no difficulty in saying, from that time all objections to the form of that government, and to the principles of that government—all objections to them as obstacles to negociation will be at an end. I will also state, with the same frankness, that should that be the termination, whether it will then lead to

the issue of competent security, and a reasonable satisfaction to this country, must depend on the terms. If, under those circumstances, by any precipitate and premature desire for peace, from any disposition to under-rate our real strength, or any want of fortitude to bear what I admit to be real difficulties; if we should overlook the ten thousand times more complicated distress of the enemy, and, by stooping to the humiliation which I now deprecate, put an end to the advantages they give us, for obtaining peace on just and suitable terms, that would in my opinion be the most fatal event that could possibly happen. If, I say, you submit to any such humiliation, you must look to a much less satisfactory issue of the contest than I firmly expect, or than we might have obtained at different periods, or before other powers were wanting to themselves in shrinking from the common cause. I shall ever lament if, uniting in a combination against a conspiracy hostile to civilized Europe, if, arming in the cause of exiled orders, of degraded religion, of insulted humanity, we shall thus tamely abandon the contest. If we are true to ourselves, much may yet be accomplished. It will, at least, be said, that if any power stood in the breach, saved the rest of Europe, and gave time to those principles, which threatened universal ruin, to spend their fury, it was a country enjoying a mild and free government, supported during the contest on the basis of public credit and individual industry. We shall see France reduced to a wreck, while that credit and industry steer this country to the port of tranquillity and safety. The right honourable gentleman says, that we have forfeited our pledge, when we last year declared our readiness to treat with a government in France capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity. He adduces the conduct which they have observed in their neutrality to America, Denmark, and Sweden, as instances that they are capable of maintaining those relations. That argument, I must remark, would have equally well applied in any year of the war, and was expressly answered last year, when the declaration was made. I ask, whether they did not observe their neutrality in America, by endeavouring to excite a conspiracy in its bosom, in order to overturn the government? And, whether they were not guilty of other instances of a notorious breach of faith to Denmark and Sweden, though these powers did not think prudent to resent it? The case of the king of Prussia was fully argued last session.

It is not surprising, that in their exhausted situation, they should have been disposed to avail themselves of the opportunity which peace with that monarch afforded them to contract the scale of their operations, and that, with respect to him, they should have practised a forbearance so essential to their interests. Another circumstance has been exultingly brought forward, that of the elector of Hanover having signed a treaty with France. Let us suppose the elector of Hanover to have nothing to do with the king of England, and then consider whether the government of a country, destitute of population and resources, sufficient to enable them to resist an overwhelming and impetuous enemy close upon their frontiers, and menacing their immediate existence, were not, from every motive, bound to prefer even an insecure peace to a more pressing danger. But is this example to apply to a country in circumstances entirely different, not only not threatened by any pressing danger, but possessing resources to make a stand against the utmost power of the enemy, perhaps, even to weary out their efforts, and exhaust their means of hostility? But it would seem as if the intention were to confound the sacred and august personage who fills the throne of this country with the elector of Hanover. If such really be the intention, let me observe, that the rules and forms of this house require that no notice shall be taken of that illustrious personage except through his ministers, and the same thing ought to prevail with respect to foreign princes; because the elector of Hanover went to war on grounds, in which this country had no concern, would that be deemed any reason why we ought to imitate the example? All such reasoning must be partial and fallacious; and were it to be brought forward on another occasion, the gentlemen on the other side would be the first to remonstrate against it. I again repeat, that we ought not to choose the moments of the expiring government of France, in order to make such a declaration as is now proposed. If the new constitution be accepted, there can be then no objection to treat, if the terms shall be such as are consistent with the honour and interests of this country. It is urged by the right honourable gentleman, that the French, last year, shewed a disposition for peace. That they did shew a disposition for peace with other countries, is certain, but it was only to prosecute their views of enmity against England with more vigour and effect. Their means were diminished, but their fury had not subsided. This year they discover a very different

temper; every word and every groan they utter, breathes only peace, and a general peace. They are sensible that peace alone can restore to them the wreck and remnant of their power.

The right honourable gentleman has told the house, he does not wish to deal in encomiums on constitutions of which he has had no experience. That right honourable gentleman, however, on a former occasion was not quite so cautious, when he broke out upon " that glorious fabric of human wisdom," which consisted of little more, as the French themselves have admitted, than subversion. I now hope the right honourable gentleman has borrowed something of their doubt and hesitation. They have learned important lessons from the misfortunes they have suffered; and I trust the right honourable gentleman will be satisfied with having seen them in France, without wishing to have them tried near home.

The only way to judge of a government is to judge of it fully and fairly in all its bearings: how far the nature of that government may affect the internal circumstances of that country, must be left to the decision of experience; but it can at one glance be perceived, whether a government avows the doctrine of hostility to all others, or whether it is of the nature of a military democracy—the most restless in itself, and the most dangerous to its neighbours; its character in these respects, may be judged of from the materials of which it is composed, and the temper with which it is embraced. If it is resorted to by a people tired with a repetition of sufferings, and strongly impressed with the necessity of peace, even though it is destined to undergo a long succession of changes, it will afford more security for negociation, because it is accompanied with a greater sense of weakness, and a more ardent wish of repose.

The right honourable gentleman went into a declamation on the subject of wars against opinions ; he compared them to the system adopted by inquisitions. It he meant wars against opinions, resting in the conscience of the individual, and producing no effects on society, he might have spared himself the labour, such wars have not for many years found any advocate in this house; but what will he say, if the opinions against which we contend are those of the Inquisition—those of men seeking to establish what they deem the only lawful government by fire and sword?—Will he not admit that we have armed justly, to resist the proceedings of such an inqui-

sition, and that, by exhausting their force, and subduing the malignity of their opinions, we have rendered to society an essential service? There are many other points to which I ought to advert, were the hour not so late, or my strength less exhausted. I contend, that we have already gone as far in explaining the terms on which we are ready to negociate, as it is possible for us to go, consistent with sound policy or national honour.

There is another question, of which the practical decision may be difficult, but too interesting to be omitted, the high price of grain. I agree with the right honourable gentleman, that there is no point more difficult to be rendered a subject of legislative regulation, and, at the same time, none which ought to be more speedily investigated. It has been said, that ministers made light of this calamity, when it was last year presented to their notice. One circumstance it was impossible for them to foresee, that in consequence of the season, the harvest would be delayed a month later than might have been expected. The right honourable gentleman speaks of this as a severe charge against ministers. Does he suppose that we could have remedied the evil, by prematurely withdrawing from the war? When gentlemen talk of the quantity of grain consumed by military operations, I wish they would first ascertain what quantity really was consumed; what number of troops, who would otherwise have been fed at home, were maintained by foreign grain; and what were the supplies derived from the vessels that were detained—these are points on which they ought to be well satisfied, if they have any regard for the tranquillity of the country, and for that good understanding, which ought to prevail between the rich and the poor; and if they are not actuated by the sentiments akin to those which have been so clamorously avowed without doors, and which ought never to be heard within these walls. I suppose one honourable gentleman[1] forgot he was in this house, when alluding to the effect which had been mentioned by an honourable friend of mine, as likely to result in France, from the distress of the country, he said, that our prospect was, indeed, improved, if the distress of this country would tend to produce a better government. I leave him in possession of that moderate, wise, and humane sentiment. I am confident that it is the first wish, as it is the most indispensable duty of his Majesty's ministers, to use every means in their

1 Mr. Sheridan.

power for reducing the high price of grain, and for rendering the situation of the poor more comfortable. Under this impression I shall conclude with recommending to the house to take the subject under their serious and immediate consideration, in order to get an accurate knowledge of the state of the country, and see if any measures can possibly be adopted to relieve the heavy pressure under which his Majesty's subjects at present labour, and to prevent the renewal of similar embarrassments in future.

ON A QUESTION OF CONCILIATION

February 15, 1796.[1]

MUCH as the honourable gentleman[2] has introduced into his speech, connected with the origin and conduct of the war, from which I must decidedly dissent; much as I differ with him on many of the topics he has urged, and on many of the principles he has laid down, as grounds for his motion; and firmly as I am persuaded that no measure could be more hostile to the true interests of this country, than the line of conduct which he has proposed to be adopted; there is still one view of the subject on which I believe it impossible there can be any difference of opinion. If the state of the country, and the sentiments of a great majority of this house are such, as I have reason to suppose, there cannot, indeed, be any wide or essential difference as to the general result. But if, after the explanation which I may be able to give with respect to the state of this country, and the position of the enemy, the honourable gentleman shall still choose to persevere in his motion, there are one or two consequences, which might otherwise be drawn from any declaration of mine on the present occasion, against which it may be necessary for me to guard. I must, therefore, guard against any imputations which may hereafter be brought forward, either as to the insincerity of any declaration which I may express in favour of peace, or as to the inefficiency of the measures taken to

[1] On a motion by Mr. Grey, for an address to his Majesty, "that he would be graciously pleased to take such steps as to his royal wisdom should appear most proper, for communicating directly to the Executive Directory of the French Republic, his Majesty's readiness to meet any disposition to negociationon the part of that government, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect."

2 Mr Grey.

facilitate its progress. However I may be disposed to favour that object, which the motion seems principally to have in view, I can by no means concede the grounds on which it has been followed up;—I mean that from a view of our situation, and of the events of the war, we should discover such shameful humiliation, such hopeless despondency, as to abandon every thing for which we have formerly contended, and be disposed to prostrate ourselves at the feet of the enemy. If the necessity of our condition, if the sense of having been baffled, should operate so strongly as to induce us to make overtures of peace upon any terms; if every consideration of policy, and every feeling of decent and honourable pride must be sacrificed to the extreme pressure of our affairs, we must then indeed be bound to receive the law of the conqueror. This situation of affairs the honourable gentleman has not indeed developed, but has pretty plainly insinuated it as a ground for his motion. I trust, however, that the state of this country is far different, and that no temporary reverse in the fortune of war, no internal pressure in our domestic situation, has yet produced this mortifying humiliation, this dreadful alternative.

But the honourable gentleman, as an impeachment of the sincerity of ministers with respect to peace, has alluded to an argument, which was formerly supported from this side of the house—that we could not make peace without humbling ourselves to the enemy, and without discovering that we were baffled in our attempts, and exhausted in our resources. From this he no doubt meant to insinuate that ministers were at no time sincere in their wishes for peace, and were disposed to throw every obstacle in its way. He does not think proper to mention, that this argument was made use of at a time when the opponents of the war, availing themselves of a series of misfortunes and disappointments which had befallen the confederacy, took the opportunity to press their motion for an immediate peace. We then contended, that the evil was not so great as to exclude hope, or to damp enterprize, that no circumstances had taken place under which a firm and manly resistance became impracticable, and that we might still look with confidence to the effect of a vigorous and persevering prosecution of the war. In proportion as this truth has become manifest to the enemy themselves, do we feel ourselves inclined to adopt a more conciliating tone. In proportion as the situation of things is inverted, the objection, which we formerly made, is superseded. That situation which the honourable gentleman

chose only to suppose as theoretical, I contend to be practical; that our successes have been such as to obviate any obstacle to negociation on the score of national honour; and so far I undoubtedly am of opinion, that the diflSculty is infinitely diminished.

In stating, however, generally, my own sentiments, and those of his Majesty's ministers, I must protest against the practice of being called upon from day to day, from week to week, from time to time, to declare what are precisely our views on the posture of affairs, or what are the steps, which we may think it necessary in consequence to adopt. The progress of the measures, which such a situation of affairs as the present may render necessary, can only be left safely to the conduct of the executive government. If the house are of opinion that the business cannot be safely left in the hands of ministers, the proper step would be to address his Majesty to remove them from their situation; and not to endeavour to interrupt the affairs of government by calling on the house of commons to interfere with the functions of executive authority. The honourable gentleman himself seemed to be aware of this, as he admitted the principle to be correct; he said, he did not contend against the constitutional degree of confidence which an executive government ought to have from the legislative power, while its conduct was unexceptionable.

The honourable gentleman says, that he does not confide in ministers: on that ground he has been led to give an uniform opposition to their measures during the war; and on the same ground he now expresses his distrust of the sincerity of their wishes respecting peace. Unquestionably the honourable gentleman, who places no confidence in ministers, is entitled to oppose their measures and to question their sincerity ; but he is bound to conform to established rules, and not to effect any change in a constitutional question. I mean, whenever this house, adopting a motion like the present, instead of addressing his Majesty to remove his ministers, apply in order to take the business into their own hands, they deprive the country of every chance for a successful negociation. On a question so critical, I am afraid lest I should overstep the line of my duty, by entering too much into detail. It is a subject on which it is impossible to descant so minutely as the honourable gentleman seems to expect, without breaking in upon that principle which has guided every discreet minister in treating subjects of this nature. If I felt that generally, as

applicable to subjects of this kind, how much more must I feel it on this particular occasion, considering, as I must, the peculiar situation of the country at this moment?—Let gentlemen look at the situation of affairs on the continent; let them look at the situation of our enemy; what has been their plan and practice? what has been the case in this respect since the honourable gentleman reminded the house of the matter? What, I would ask, has been the effect of the separation of the general confederacy against France, and the weakening of the power of that confederacy?—power, that long ere this, might have achieved much advantage, had they kept in union. Recollect what has happened upon the appearance of that separation, and then conjecture what might have been the effect, had the confederacy remained entire. The destruction of the enemy, perhaps, or at least the diminution of its strength to such an extent, as to have brought forward an honourable repose and lasting tranquillity to Europe. Let me ask the house, whether or not, every man did not believe it was the policy and the aim of France to use all endeavours to separate the confederacy against her? Let me ask, whether she did not seem to triumph even in the hope of being able to effect it? Let me ask whether any thing remained of the hope of France but this separation, to enable her to dictate to Europe? Let me ask, whether any thing could, therefore, be so desirable to France as the detaching of that confederacy, which, for the honour and safety of Europe, was formed against her? And then let me ask, whether there ever was, or could be, a cause in which it would be more the duty of every good man to prevent any jealousy, or the rising of any suspicion, or the creating of any disunion, among those, who, if they remain entire, may yet give honourable and lasting peace to Europe? If the directory have yet any hope of dictating terms to Europe, it is, no doubt, on the same policy which they have hitherto found so beneficial, that they ground their expectations of future success. If there is any thing by which they can expect to attain this situation of proud eminence, this object of their favourite ambition, it is by being able to instil jealousy, to sow the seeds of division, and engender sources of animosity among those of the confederacy, who yet remain united to oppose their power. On preserving entire the remains of that confederacy, depends the only hope of impressing on them a conviction of the necessity of yielding to reasonable terms, and of bringing the war to a desirable conclusion. And perhaps

in this point of view, an attention to the preservation of that confederacy becomes a duty, not only for ministers, but for all those persons who are anxious for the public welfare, and interested in the national character; for all those who are desirous of an honourable peace, and adverse to any peace purchased with dishonour : and if such be the case, it is important for them to consider whether the measures which they may wish to persuade government to adopt, be such as may oblige the country to give up the chance of a successful peace altogether, or to take it on terms inconsistent with the honour of the nation. If we receive propositions of peace on the terms of the honourable gentleman, the considerations "speedy and honourable," then become separated. We must in that case choose the alternative; if we adopt the motion, a peace " speedy and honourable " we cannot have. But an honourable peace we may have, if we persevere in the same firm and vigorous line of conduct which we have hitherto pursued. This I know, not from any immediate communication with the enemy, not from any communication of their disposition for peace, but from the statement which they have themselves furnished of their defective and almost exhausted means for carrying on the war. On this ground I oppose the motion. If I were not sincerely, and anxiously desirous of peace, I should be forfeiting my duty to the country, and violating the trust which I hold from my public situation ; but I can never consent to the proposition of peace, unless the terms should be consistent with our present honour, suitable to our present condition, and compatible with our future security.

Having said this with the general view I have of the subject of peace, if the question be thought a necessary one, I will say a few words as to the message from his Majesty to parliament about two months ago, because it was said, that no step had been taken since for a negociation ; I hope the house will recollect what I said upon that occasion. I said then, that the house should not compel, by its vote, the executive government to enter into a negociation, bound down and fettered with any acknowledgment of our own weakness : precisely the same thing do I desire of the house upon the present occasion. Those who differ from me in general, and who have thought the war altogether unnecessary, I did not then, nor do I now, expect to convince; but the house at large thought as I do. To the house at large, therefore, I will now say, that the question, as the honourable gentleman has himself stated it, is a

very narrow one—"Whether, because after having received the message from his Majesty no communication has taken place of any subsequent measures, the house, by adopting a motion of this sort, ought to compel the executive government, bound hand and foot, to commence a negociation?" If the honourable gentleman entertains such distrust of the sincerity of ministers, as to suppose them disposed to take no measures to carry into effect their own declarations, I shall certainly not argue with him on that point. But in order to be consistent, the argument of the honourable gentleman must infer, either that overtures have been made on the part of the enemy, or that some favourable opportunity has occurred to this country for the purpose of commencing negociation, which have been rejected subsequent to the period of the message.

If a negociation should be entered into, it is evident, that in order to give it its full effect, we should be careful not only to keep up the strict letter of our engagements with our allies, but to maintain with them full concert and harmony. I therefore, take upon me to assert, that since his Majesty's message has been delivered to this house, ministers have taken every measure consistent with the general interests of the country, and with the attention and regard due to her allies, to enable his Majesty to take any opportunity, either to meet overtures for negociation, or to make such overtures as might be found most expedient. That no etiquette with respect to who should make the first overture—no difficulty in finding a mode of making it, appeared to government to be an obstacle to negociation, if in other respects there appeared to be a probability of leading to just and honourable terms; the great point being what prospect there was of obtaining such terms. Measures have been taken to ascertain these points, and are now in train; and if the enemy are sincere, they must speedily lead to a negociation. Whether that negociation will lead to peace I cannot say, because that depends upon whether the exhausted state of the enemy will incline them to set on foot that negociation with a view to a peace, very different as to the terms of it from any which their public declarations have for a long time past seemed to indicate: if this is not the case, I must say a speedy peace is impossible. I wish ardently for peace—but not for any but an honourable peace. The country has a right to expect it from its own strength and resources, and from a knowledge of the relative situation of France.

I admit that the honourable gentleman in his speech separated

negociation from the terms. But in other passages he talked of negociation as leading to an immediate peace. I do not hold out a prospect of immediate peace, nor do I state any period that I can ascertain for it; I only say it will not be the fault of his Majesty's servants if the period is remote. The enemy must be however ready to make it on terms which we have a right to think just and honourable; it rests not on us only, but also on the enemy, whether this may lead to any negociation at all, or whether negociation will lead to peace. It all depends on this, whether the disposition of the enemy shall be more moderate than any we have lately seen of their professions. Sorry I am to see such a seeming disposition on the part of the enemy, as may render them, in case of success, desirous of preventing any effect to pacific dispositions, which they may now profess, or even of retracting them. Whether this may lead to a moderation in practice which I have not seen yet, I know no more of, as I have said already, than what any other gentleman has an opportunity of knowing. What has been made public I hope is not authentic; however, by what has been circulated in this country, and through the continent with industry, and what they are said to hold out as the boon of peace to the English nation, it does not appear as if they were very desirous of meeting us on honourable terms; for I have heard that they are ready to give peace, because the government of England asks it. Thus then we are to have peace if we shall sue for it; that is, if we shall abandon that for which our ancestors have fought so bravely. If we shall abandon our allies; if we shall abandon the safety of all Europe, and sacrifice to France every thing that is dear to us, and offer to them homage, and grant them an unconditional and uncompensated restitution of all that has been their's, and all that has been in the possession of those whom they have forced to be their allies—then, in return for this, they will offer to the people of England their fraternization.

I have thus stated the degree to which we have been ready to go. I hope I shall not be told some weeks hence I have been insincere. We have not been ready to grasp at a treaty such as you have heard from me. There is but one situation in which a minister of this country should convey such terms to the enemies of it: that is, when the abjectness of the country and its willingness to sue for peace is proclaimed by parliament, so as to deprive us of vigour and energy, and make us unwilling to strive for the maintenance of ourselves. If this motion be

adopted, what overtures we shall receive, or what we shall not, I will not pretend to determine; but while we shew any confidence in our resources, I do not fear that a negociation of measures that are in train may prove effectual: at what period, for reasons I have already stated, it is impossible for me to imagine. I am not apprehensive that parliament will not leave this to take the course which the practice of our ancestors lays down to us, and which reason dictates. I say, if we and our allies are not false to each other and ourselves, we shall have an opportunity of restoring to Europe peace, on safe, just, and honourable grounds, and nothing but a premature motion like the present, can deprive us of that blessing; and therefore, as a lover of my country, and of justice, I oppose this motion.

ON AN AMENDMENT OF SHERIDAN'S

December 9, 1795.[1]

HE said, he prefaced the address which he had the honour of proposing with very few words, because he conceived there could have been no difference of opinion upon the subject. He formed this opinion, both from adverting to the nature of his Majesty's gracious communication, from the situation of the contending parties, and from the existing circumstances of the war. What was most calculated to confirm that opinion was the conduct of the honourable gentleman himself[2] who had just sat down, and who the preceding day, when he had introduced the present subject, after mature consideration, said he

1 The order of the day being read for taking into consideration his Majesty's message, which had been delivered the preceding day, acquainting the House that the crisis, which was depending at the commencement of the session, had led to such an order of things in France, as would induce his Majesty to meet any disposition to negociation on the part of the enemy with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, and to conclude a treaty of general peace, whenever it could be effected on just and suitable terms for himself and his allies,'

Mr. Pitt in a short introductory speech moved an address, " thanking his Majesty for his gracious communication and expressing the satisfaction of the House at the sentiments contained therein ; at the same time assuring him of their cordial support in enabling his Majesty to continue the contest with the utmost energy and vigour, till the period should arrive for concluding a peace on just and honourable terms."

The address was opposed by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Grey, the former of whom moved an amendment, " signifying the concern of the House, that any form of government in France should induce his Majesty to be averse to peace; and requesting that, setting aside all considerations of that nature, he would direct that an immediate negociatktt might be entered on for the above salutary object."

2 Mr. Grey.

would not press the motion of which he had given notice. He declared he was at a loss to understand what was at this time the honourable gentleman's object; it would seem that, had he followed his own inclination, there would and ought to have been no amendment, and yet he votes for that proposed. At the same time, too, he seems inclined to put the same construction on the meaning of the message and address that was intended to be conveyed by the amendment. It was really singular to observe the mood in which the question had been taken up ; to attend to the arguments which had generally been used by gentlemen on the other side, and the conduct which they practically pursued.

The address went to pledge the house to co-operate with his Majesty on such measures as might tend to the obtainment of peace on honourable terms, and stated that tha house was satisfied, that if a disposition to that effect was manifested on the part of the enemy, his Majesty was inclined to meet it, by which the house would entertain a hope that peace might be concluded on honourable terms, and that, whether we should succeed in the object by his Majesty's readiness to meet that disposition to negociate, must depend altogether upon the terms. What said the amendment moved by the honourable gentleman? It went a great deal further. It went to require his Majesty's ministers immediately to enter on that negociation, whether they should see that disposition manifested or not; or rather, whether they should see that disposition affirmed or negatived by the enemy in the course of their conduct. Such was the nature of the amendment which had been supported by honourable gentlemen, who upon various occasions, with so much zeal, eloquence, and address, urged every topic to prove that ministers were responsible to the public for not having opened a negociation long ago, and that they should not wait until they saw the disposition to negociate in the enemy ; and now that ministers were coming forward, with a declared readiness on the part of his Majesty to meet that disposition, they charged them with having abandoned their former arguments upon this subject, to throw obstacles in the way of negociation. This was the way in which they proved to the house, and to the public, their earnestness for a negociation for peace. The theme of their eloquence formerly was, that peace was at all events desirable, so desirable that they cared not by whom it was obtained. The theme of their eloquence at present was, that ministers had abandoned all their former arguments, and

the whole of their consistency, by professing a readiness to meet the desire of the enemy, if any such desire should appear, to negociate for peace upon just and honourable terms. The purity of such opposition was not a subject for him to discuss. Gentlemen seemed to triumph under the idea that they had discovered inconsistency in the conduct of his Majesty's ministers; and they seemed to triumph as if this inconsistency had been proved: they seemed indeed to triumph at the idea that they could impress upon the house topics which might restrain the object of negociation. They seemed to rejoice that they had found means to impede that peace which, on so many occasions, in the animation of their eloquence, and the candour of their nature, they declared to be the object which was nearest to their hearts. They seemed to triumph that, although the enemy might manifest a disposition to negociate for a peace, yet by the present minister a peace could not be concluded. Whether such a triumph was founded upon public virtue and patriotic principle, or was a triumph of a less dignified nature, he should leave to others to determine, or, if they pleased, he would leave it to these gentlemen to determine for themselves.

What were the circumstances which had been strenuously insisted upon by the supporters of the amendment, and particularly by the honourable gentleman who spoke last, in favour of that amendment? He declared he had not heard one word to that effect by way of argument; as little had he heard against the address which he had the honour to move. He meant he had not heard any thing from these gentlemen against their agreeing to the address; for the drift of their arguments went against himself and the majority of the house, with whom he agreed in the whole course of the war, agreeing to the address. They endeavoured to prove that this address was perfectly consistent with their arguments upon all former occasions, when the subject of the war was debated, but perfectly inconsistent with the conduct of the majority of the house. This argument, thus singular in its nature, was founded upon neither more nor less than a total forgetfulness of every leading fact and every leading argument that had been brought forward since the commencement of this war, up to the moment in which he was speaking. These gentlemen applied all their objections, not to the conduct of the enemy, but to the conduct of the executive government of this country. They, in the first place, bring forward an observation which has again and again been con-

futed, that the war originated in the aggression of this country. They, in the second place, wish to fix ministers with having stated it to be an absolute *sine qua non* to establish a certain form of government in France, and that too in the ancient form, that everlasting warfare was declared against every other system, and that unless that object was obtained, it was to be a *bellum internecinunu* Thirdly, that between the state of the present government of France and those that preceded it since the revolution, there was no practical distinction so as to give us any security for peace until the ancient form be established. Fourthly, that the present form of government in France, in establishing a council of ancients, &c., was a trifling formal distinction. And lastly, that we had met, in the whole course of the war, nothing but defeats, disasters, and disgraces, with the exception of a few victories at sea. On each of these heads it would be necessary, before he sat down, to make some remarks.

Upon the first point, he would not tread over the ground that had been already so fully occupied, nor imagine that it was in the power of any honourable gentleman present to reason over the majority of the house to the persuasion, that the war was not, in the most emphatical sense of the word, defensive on the part of this country, and, at the same time, the most important, in a general point of view, that ever was undertaken, involving the interests and well-being of Europe, nay, of all mankind. When that war was once commenced, it certainly became a most material question, when they could again look for peace? The answer could not but be, not until we have repelled unjust aggression, and procured reasonable hopes of future security. On the first day of the present session he had stated to the house some reason for being satisfied with our efforts. He stated that he considered our efforts as an example to future times, as well as a satisfaction to our own feelings; as a source of comfort to every lover of justice, of good order, and of every thing that was respectable in society, that the efforts of a great and a free people had done so much to stem the torrent with which all the civilized world was threatened to be overwhelmed. He stated further, that he should have been happy if the war had ended in a total dissolution of that system which had been adopted by our enemies. He stated also, that even dangerous as these principles were, the war might be terminated even under the present form of the government of France; and he observed that the evils with which civil society

had been threatened by the principle on which this war had been carried on by our enemies, had been in a great degree defeated. When he was asked, why we expended so much of our blood and treasure in the prosecution of this war? he would answer, it was because our enemies gave us no alternative but to hazard them. When he was asked, what we had gained by the war? he would answer, all that we must have lost without it. What did the supporters of the amendment desire the house to do? They asked parliament to take away all discretion from the executive power, and give a bond to the enemy that all further efforts should be discontinued against them. These gentlemen were not content that the necessary inference of the principles of the enemy should follow in their course, but they must take away the very means of making the negotiation an advantageous one to the country, as if the mischief of these principles could not otherwise be sufficiently certain; and yet these gentlemen, at the opening of the session, declaimed violently on the necessity of entering into a negociation. They might bring forward, day after day, their different motions upon that subject, one after another, to record their principles that the war was unjust, asking always in their turn, what we had got by the war. This, he believed, the house would think was not a very candid or just mode of proceeding.

He would next call upon the house to mark the candour of the second part, to which he had adverted, of the argument of these gentlemen. He had said that the aggression of the enemy on us was violent, and unlike all former, even unjust wars, in which allies had been attacked or territories seized, or in which any of the usual causes of just war had appeared; but that the war on the part of the enemy was intimately connected with principles which professed an intention to subvert all the established governments upon earth, which the efforts of the professors of these principles could reach. He said this principle would allow no rest to any established government upon earth while it had any force to resist with. He said so, and he felt it to be the cause of the present war, and that we had no resource but that of repelling with vigour the attack that was made upon us. He said also there were many in that unhappy country anxious for the destruction of that principle, and willing to co-operate with us for that destruction. He said it was the just exercise of the right of war to interfere in the internal concerns of an enemy, to endeavour to overthrow that government for the purpose of bringing the war to a con

clusion. No man ever attempted to refute this principle upon the authority of the law of nations, or upon the principles of justice. He said he wished for peace on honourable grounds, and as favourable to us as possible. This was all the interference that he ever intended with respect to the government of France. Instead of taking this on a fair ground, it was maintained by gentlemen on the other side that he wished at all events to overthrow the whole government of France, and to substitute the old in its place, and even that day was quoted the phrase of *bellum internecinum* as applicable to the present war, a phrase which he believed was never pronounced by any gentleman on that side of the house but to repel a misrepresentation from the other side. He would say positively for himself, he never used it for any other purpose, and he believed it was never so used by any other. When he stated that the government of France was bad in principle, he then said that even under that government there were circumstances that might compel us to treat for peace. He did not deny that he had admitted, nay contended, that monarchy was desirable for that country, and for the general interest of mankind; but the idea that he had at any time made the restoration of monarchy a *sine qua non*, was so entirely beyond all he had ever uttered upon the subject, that he should not argue it.

He was come to another point which had been a good deal insisted upon; viz. that if the executive government should make peace, they were chargeable with a dereliction of their principle. How stood that point? He said on former occasions, that we could not make peace until there was a reasonable expectation of security for its continuance, and that, if such a security could be reasonably expected, then the question must depend upon the terms. No, the question was, did the enemy stand in such a situation as to make that expectation of security reasonable, and will they shew a disposition to negociate? It was on these points our conduct should be regulated.

In considering that part of the subject, the next question was, is there not a substantial difference between the former order of things in France, and the present order? Upon this subject gentlemen had argued as if the former mode of government was as good for our security in negociating as the present. That question, like every other, must depend upon all the circumstances which might attend it. Gentlemen on the other side had argued, if the terms were right, the former government was such as we might have treated with safely. He had

said, he did not think so, and of the former government he would say the same still. But when he said, we should treat now because the present government might be safe, these gentlenien turned round upon him, and contended, "This is not the time in which we shall be safe in treating according to the minister's own principles. He is inconsistent with himself, he abandons his own ground." These gentlemen, in their anxiety for his consistency, lost sight of the interest of their country, which was committed to their charge. Whether there was a great difference between the situation of France at the present or at former times, when he had denied the policy of attempting to negociate, was a question into the detail of which he should not at present enter; he would refer to what he had said on that point on the first day of the present session. He had said then that from the change which had taken place in the form of their government, from the change which had taken place with regard to its mode of calling forth its supplies, and, above all, with regard to the change which had visibly taken place in the disposition and temper of the people of that country, there was a reasonable hope that a peace might be concluded with them at this time; and this hope had not existed at any former period of the war. There were points in this argument which he knew gentlemen on the other side would be disposed to contest; but be the degree what it might, there certainly was a difference in the situation of France at this moment from any other period since the commencement of the war. Gentlemen should not mistake him—he was not going to pronounce a panegyric on the present form of the government of that country. He only said it was different from its former state.

The gentlemen on the other side had talked of an attack on the principles of that country by some, and the defence of them by others that night. Was it a mere slip of inadvertency, or did they mean it should be understood that he was to invert the proposition, and say that he attacked the principles of the French, and that these honourable gentlemen were the defenders of them? He would leave that to the cooler reflection of these honourable gentlemen. Whether they defended the constitution of the French he knew not; he was not the defender of it, except on a comparison with the former one. There were others in this country who certainly were the defenders of the French; those who professed to be the friends of the French principles, who adopted and avowed them; who had attempted

to introduce into this country jacobin names and tenets; who had endeavoured to reduce them into practice; who had tried to subvert the constitution of England; who had treated with contempt the present form of government of France, because it bore too near a resemblance to some part of the constitution of England ; who had expressed their abhorrence of it, because it was supposed to have some likeness of something that was English. This of itself proved to him the advantage the new constitution had over any thing which preceded it, because it had become the object of anger to these people, instead of being the theme of praise. But did any man mean seriously to assert, that no difference had taken place? When the rights of man were fully acted upon, there was but one representative body, containing in itself all powers legislative, executive and judicial, the only lawful center from which every thing was to proceed. The new constitution was a complete disclaimer of that wild and delusive theory. It was founded on experience as far as it went. They had admitted the falsehood of the doctrine of perfect equality. They had admitted (for he was not afraid of the word) of artificial distinctions, which fastened and kept together the mass of society. They had endeavoured to repair the breaches of their former system, a system of pure democracy ; a system which united in it all the horrors of other systems, without the advantage of either. Instead of having one popular assembly, where the sudden and uncontrolled gusts of passion subdued the reason; instead of that condition in which the wisest man was under the control, and subject to the correction, fury, and frenzy, of a mob; instead of being subject to the violence and fury of a lawless rabble, they had arrived at one point that would be useful to them, they had laid hold of one of the elements which contribute to form a social state for man,—a mixed form of government. They had separated the legislative from the executive part. They had formed two houses of legislature, and had so far imitated what contributed so much to the excellency of our constitution. Were these points to be got rid of by quaintly calling the two houses of legislature *old and young gentlemen*, as he had heard them called? The thing in plain English was this ; they had now two houses of legislature instead of one popular assembly. They had now an executive government, separate from the legislative. These points constituted a difference between their present form of government and that of a pure democracy. Whether their present government was a machine

that would last for a great length of time, he would not pretend to decide; he was not presumptuous enough even to guess. He only said they were so far wise when they preferred experience to theory. Nothing that the most ingenious artist had designed at once, could in his mind be equal in utility, application, and excellence, to that frame of government arising from the adoption of gradual improvements naturally suggested from time to time in the course of events, and which was the result of the experience of mankind in the course of ages.

But after all, he would ask, if he had rested all his security on the form of government lately adopted in France? Gentlemen had said, that he had insisted that the former government of that country was not capable of maintaining the usual relations of peace and amity with other powers, and that now he evaded that question. How had he conducted himself upon that point? Had he ever denied, that even then the government of France was totally incapable of being treated with? No such thing; he had thought that to compel the government of this country to treat with France was, under all the circumstances, inexpedient on our part, and because the propositions brought forward by gentlemen on the other side were mere dry and abstract questions, leading to no particular good effect. We were not to conclude in the abstract, and without considering the situation of the enemy, without seeing what were their means and what their dispositions. But he had been asked, what he thought of the views of the French with regard to their future operations? He must answer, he could not say; but he would say this, that France would consult its own happiness by not endeavouring further to disturb the tranquillity of Europe, and by agreeing to just and equitable terms at this time; and he maintained that the state of their finances was in such a situation as not to enable them to proceed much longer in the contest without utter ruin to themselves. This subject indeed had already been amply discussed. As an additional argument, he desired only to call their attention to what had passed within these few weeks; he appealed to the dying confession of the old government, and to the infant acts of the new. If such were their exhausted state, it could hardly be supposed that they would soon again be inclined to revive the contest. These circumstances, which he had just mentioned, were almost all new; and, as he had endeavoured to prove, very different from any that had hitherto occurred. Some might imagine that there was sufficient security before

that period: they could not then deny that there was more at this time.

Another part of the speech of the honourable gentleman who spoke last was extremely material to be attended to. He had been pleased to say, that the war had been to us a scene of disasters and defeats, except in the instances of sea engagements. That was the account which that honourable gentleman had pleased to give of the effect of our exertions. He said we had met with nothing but disasters, with only the exception of a few instances, and then he brought out a cold parenthesis with respect to our sea engagements. What! Could an Englishman speak lightly of our superiority on an element peculiarly the object of attention? of a superiority which formed the darling pride and honour of the country 1 That such an observation should come from that honourable gentleman was extraordinary indeed. But was it true ? Was there ever a war in which this country could boast of so many successful candidates for fame and glory ? Was there ever a war in which the British character had been rendered more exalted, or in which those of our land as well as our sea service had achieved more military fame, from the highest in command to the lowest attendant? Had the honourable gentleman forgotten what the British had done in Holland and in Germany, and was the laurel not their due as much as if their efforts, in conjunction with others, had been successful ? Was nothing to be said in praise of disappointed valour? Had the son forgotten the service of his father? Had that honourable gentleman forgotten what was accomplished by Sir Charles Grey in the West Indies, or did he feel no pride or gratitude to that illustrious officer for his conduct upon that service? Nor did he agree with that honourable gentleman in considering the present war in other respects so disastrous to this country, even supposing it to end as it now was. Let him look at the three different points that we had gained in the present contest; Martinique, Cape Nichola Mole, and the Cape of Good Hope; and then let him ask himself, whether they were not the most important that could fall into our hands? These points would shew whether the war was so very disastrous to us as the honourable gentleman had stated, and this would lead the house to reflect whether, as we had means in our hands, we had not reason to expect, if true to ourselves, to bring the war to a successful and honourable termination.

As to the discretion which gentlemen seemed so unwilling to give executive government upon this occasion, he must desire that the house would not interfere with it in the course of the negociation, if they chose to attach to government any responsibility for what they were about to do. But if the amendment and the advice of its promoters were adopted, the discretion of government would be entirely taken away, and the responsibility would be doubled. All that was to be done must be done with a view to the relative situation of the enemy. The honourable gentleman said that ministers would have a loop-hole, and that they would creep out of it, and, after promising to negociate, carry on the war. He would say then, that if his Majesty had reason to believe there was a disposition in the enemy to negociate, his Majesty would meet that desire, and endeavour to render it effectual. This address neither precluded his Majesty from entering into a negociation immediately, nor did it bind him to make it in any form. He would say again, this must be left to the discretion of the executive government. It was said that they allowed only the present order of things to be such as they might treat with, and that they might suppose no other equally competent; consequently if another change were to take place, they should be just where they were. That, however, was not altogether the case. The permanency of the present government of France does not now, as formerly, so much connect itself with the permanency of a treaty of peace. Formerly the succession of parties was so rapid and so violent, that this country making peace with one, would have been sufficient reason for the other party to set it aside; but considering the situation to which France was reduced, no man could pretend to say it would be policy in any other set of men who might come into power, to reject a treaty of peace concluded with the present rulers. If it were asked, what he would do were the same miserable state to recur, which gave rise to the present contest, he should answer, that were he in possession of the means, he would again earnestly conjure the house and the country to repel the unjust attack, as they had done before.

Mr. Pitt concluded with observing, that neither the form of government of France, nor the circumstances which subsisted formerly, were any longer the cause of preventing a negociation between France and this, country, and that the whole question of peace must depend on the terms. For this reason he should vote for the address which he had proposed to the

house as a proper measure in the present conjuncture of affairs, and of course against the amendment, as a measure intended to defeat the object of the address.

ON THE NEGOCIATIONS FOR PEACE

May 10, 1796.

IT is far from being my intention, Sir, unnecessarily to detain the attention of the house, by expatiating at any great length on the various topics introduced into the very long and elaborate speech which you have now heard pronounced.[1] The right honourable gentleman who delivered it, thought proper to lay considerable stress on the authority of a celebrated orator of antiquity,[2] who established it as a maxim, that, from a retrospect of past errors, we should rectify our conduct for the future; and that if they were errors of incapacity only that had occasioned our misfortunes, and not an absence of zeal, strength, and resources to maintain our cause, and secure our defence, instead of such a disappointment being a cause of despair, it should, on the contrary, invigorate our exertions, and reanimate our hopes. That such a retrospect may, in most cases, be wise and salutary, is a proposition which will hardly be denied. It is evident that our appeal to experience is the best guard to future conduct, and that it may be necessary to probe the nature of the misfortune, in order to apply a suitable remedy. But in a question so momentous and interesting to the country, as undoubtedly the present question must be, if it can be deemed expedient to run out into a long retrospective view of past calamities, surely it must be far more so to point out the mode by which their fatal effects may be averted, and by proving the origin of the evils complained of, to judge of the nature and efficacy of the remedies to be applied. Whatever, therefore, our present situation may be, it certainly cannot be wise to fix our attention solely on what is past, but rather to look to what still can, and remains to be done. This is more naturally the subject that should be proposed to the discussion of a deliberate assembly. Whatever may have been the origin of the contest in which we are engaged, when all the circumstances attending it are duly considered, it has had the effect of uniting all candid and im-

1 By Fox. 2 Demosthenes.

partial men, in acknowledging the undisputed justice of our cause, and the unjust and wanton aggression on the part of the enemy. Such having been, and still, I presume to say, being the more general opinion, prudence then must tell us to dismiss all retrospective views of the subject and to direct the whole of our attention to what our actual situation requires we should do. The right honourable gentleman must have consumed much time in preparing the retrospect he has just taken of our past disasters; and he has consumed much of his time in detailing it to the house; but instead of lavishing away what was so precious on evils which, according to him, admit of no remedy or change, would it not be more becoming him, as a friend to his country, and an enlightened member of this house, to attend to what new circumstances may produce, and to trace out the line of conduct which in the present state of things it would be prudent to pursue?

In the close of his speech the right honourable gentleman alluded to his former professions respecting the prosecution of the war. According to these professions, he, and every gentleman who thought with him, declared, that should the enemy reject overtures of peace, or appear reluctant to enter into negociation, when proposed, then he, and every man in the country would unite in advising the adoption of the most vigorous measures; and that not only such conduct on the part of the enemy would unite every Englishman in the cause, but that while it united England, it must divide France, who would be indignant against whatever government or governors should dare to reject, what was the sincere wish of the majority of its inhabitants. Instead, therefore, of expatiating on the exhausted state of the financial resources of the country, and running into an historical detail of all our past calamities, a subject which almost engrossed the right honourable gentleman's speech, I must beg leave to remind him of those his former professions, and invite him to make good the pledge he has so often given to this house, and to the country, and not to enflame the arrogance and unjust pretensions of the enemy, by an exaggerated statement of our past misfortunes, or of our present inability to retrieve them by a spirited and vigorous prosecution of the war. His feelings as an Englishman, and his duty as a member of parliament, must assuredly induce the right honourable gentleman to exert his abilities in suggesting the most effectual means of insuring our success in the contest, especially since he heard the late arrogant and ambitious pro-

fessions of the enemy. All retrospective views I therefore for the present must regard as useless, and think it far more wise and urgent to provide for the success of future exertions; not that I decline entering into the retrospect to which I am challenged, which I am ready to do with the indulgence of the house, but because I feel it of more serious importance to call your attention, not to the retrospect alone, but rather to the actual state of things, which the right honourable gentleman has entirely omitted.

And, first, let me observe, that, while I endeavour to follow the right honourable gentleman through his very long detail of facts and events, I shall follow him as they* bear on a particular conclusion which he wishes to draw from them, but which the country does not call for, and which it will not admit. What is the conclusion to which he wishes to lead us? Does it not go to record a confession and retractation of our past errors? an avowal that, instead of a just and necessary war, to which we were compelled by an unprovoked aggression, we are embarked in a contest in which we wantonly and unjustly engaged, while our defence is evidently such as our dearest interests call for, and which a regard to justice, and to every moral principle, legitimates and sanctifies? Can, then, this house adopt a motion, which directly contradicts its recorded opinions, and which tends to force on it new councils; or, in other words, to oblige it to rescind all the resolutions it has come to since the commencement of the war? The right honourable gentleman has, in rich and glowing colouring, depicted our exhausted resources; the want of vigour in our measures, and the inattention of ministers to seize on the more favourable opportunities for making peace. He also assumes, that the sole cause of the war, was the restoration of monarchy in France; and that this cause afterwards shifted into various other complexions. All these charges, however, as well as the unjustness of the war, he establishes only by presumption. The right honourable gentleman then goes back to 1792, when he says the first opportunity was offered of our procuring peace to Europe, but of which ministers did not avail themselves. He also refers to a speech made by me on the opening of the budget of that year, which he describes as having been uttered in a tone of great satisfaction, triumph, and exultation. It is true, indeed, that I felt much satisfaction in exhibiting to the country the high degree of prosperity to which it had then reached;—not less satisfaction, I am sure, than the honourable gentleman seems to feel in

giving the melancholy picture that his motion has now drawn of its present reduced situation; and I felt the more vivid satisfaction in viewing that prosperity, as it enabled us to prepare for, and enter into, a contest of a nature altogether unprecedented. Now, however, when that prosperity is over, the honourable gentleman dwells on it rather rapturously, though it seemed little to affect him at the time it was enjoyed. But, not only are ministers accused of having neglected the opportunities of making peace, but when they have attempted overtures of that nature, they are charged with insincerity, or with holding forth something in the shape and make of these overtures that must create suspicions of their sincerity in the enemy, or provoke their disgust. What can countenance such an accusation, I am sadly at a loss to discover: for at the periods alluded to, every motive of public duty, every consideration of personal ease, must have induced me to exert the best of my endeavours to promote a peace, by which alone I could be enabled to effect the favourite objects I had in view, of redeeming the public debt and the 4 per cents., as alluded to by the honourable gentleman. No stronger proofs could be given of the sincerity of government to promote and ensure peace, than was then given by his Majesty's ministers; and if they were disappointed, the fault is not with them, but their conduct must be understood and justified by the imperious necessity, which in 1793 compelled them to resist an unprovoked aggression. As to the accusations urged against us of not offering our mediation, or even refusing it when solicited, they are equally of little weight. Are ministers to be blamed, for what it would be hazardous in them to attempt, and would it not be hazardous to propose a mediation where both parties were not ready to agree? To have erected ourselves into arbiters, could only expose us to difficulties and disputes, if we were determined, as we ought to be, to enforce that mediation on the parties who refused to admit it. And what is the great use which the honourable gentleman seems to be so eager to derive from that peace, if so procured? Is it fit that we should go to war in order to prevent the partition of Poland? In general policy, I am ready to confess, that this partition is unjust; but it does not go, as is said, to overturn the balance of power in Europe, for which the right honourable gentleman, as it suits his argument, expresses greater or less solicitude; for that country being nearly divided equally between three great powers, it can little contribute to the undue aggrandize*

ment of either. But how strange did it seem in that right honourable gentleman, who inveighed so strongly against the partition of Poland, to censure ministers for their endeavours to prevent the partition of Turkey, when it was the establishment of the principle, that this country could not interfere to prevent the partition of Turkey, precluded the possibility of any interference with respect to Poland!

As to the latter transactions that have occurred between this country and France, they are too recent in the memory of .the house, to require that I should call their attention to them. The resolutions to which we have come on this subject, are too sacred and too solemn, the opinion too settled and too deeply formed, to' be lightly reversed. We cannot, surely, forget the first cause of complaint, allowed to be well founded, and the famous decree of the 19th of November, which was an insult and an outrage on all civilized nations. Seditious men, delegated from this country, with treason in their mouths, and rebellion in their hearts, were received, welcomed, and caressed by the legislature of France. That government, without waiting until it had even established itself, declared hostilities against all the old established systems: without having scarcely an existence in itself, it had the presumption to promise to interpose to the destruction of all the existing governments in the world. All governments alike fell under its vengeance; the old forms were contemned and reprobated; those which had stood the test of experience, whether monarchy, aristocracy, or mixed democracy, were ail to be destroyed. They declared that they would join the rebellious subjects of any state to overturn their government. And what was the explanation received from M. Chauvelin on these subjects of complaint? Did it amount to any more than that the French would not intermeddle with the form of government in other countries, unless it appeared that the majority of the people required it to be changed? As to their declaration against aggrandizement, without stopping to argue a point that is so extremely clear, I will only refer the house to their whole conduct towards Belgium. They declared that they would never interfere in the government of Belgium, after it had consolidated its liberties;—a strange way of declining interference when a form of constitution was forced upon it, bearing the name, but not the stamp of liberty, and compelling the Belgians to consolidate and preserve it. With respect to another cause of war, viz. the opening of the Scheldt, their explanations regard-

ing that circumstance, and their intentions upon Holland, were equally unsatisfactory; their ultimatum was, that they would give no further satisfaction; and their refusing a fair explanation made them the aggressors in reality, if not in form. Still, however, the channel of negociation was not cut off by this country: as long as the king of France retained a shadow of power, M. Chauvelin continued to be received in an official capacity; and even after the cruel catastrophe of that unfortunate monarch, his Majesty's minister at the Hague did not refuse to communicate with General Dumourier, when he expressed a wish to hold a conference with him relative to some proposals of peace. When all these opportunities had been offered and neglected, they declared war, and left us no choice, in form or in substance, but reduced us to the necessity of repelling an unjust aggression. In every point of view, they therefore were evidently the aggressors, even according to the right honourable gentleman's own principles, and we certainly took every precaution, that it was either fit, or possible to do, to avoid it.

I cannot help wishing to recall the attention of the house to the general conclusion of what I have stated, for upon that rests all I have to say on the first part of the right honourable gentleman's propositions. If the house had been hurried by passion into the war, if it had been hurried by the false opinion of others, or by any unjust pretensions of its own, would it go to the enemy to atone for its misconduct, and accede to such conditions as the enemy might offer? Could it happen that a war not ordinarily just and necessary, when applied to every moral principle, should in form be so untrue, that, after three years' standing, it should be found all illusion? If the house cannot acknowledge these things, much less can I believe, admitting all the depreciated statements of our resources to be true, and founded to such an extent as to make us submit almost to any humiliation, that last of all we should submit to the pride and ambition of an enemy, whose hypocrisy, injustice, tyranny, and oppression we have so repeatedly witnessed, reprobated, and deplored: and yet that was what the right honourable gentleman proposed. He proposed that we should bow down before the enemy, with the cord about our necks, when we have not felt the self-reproach of doing wrong; to reijounce and abjure our recorded professions, and receive a sentence of condemnation, as severe as undeserved. This I contend would be to renounce the character of Britons. Even

if, by the adverse fortune of war, we should be driven to sue for peace, I hope we shall never be mean enough to acknowledge ourselves guilty of a falsehood and injustice, in order to obtain it.

The right honourable gentleman's next accusation against ministers is, that they have been guilty of a radical error, in not acknowledging the French republic. It is said this has been the bar to all treaty : this has prevented every overture in subsequent situations. I admit that it has so happened, that we have never acknowledged the republic, and I admit also, that no application nor overture for peace, on the part of this country, has been made till lately. I admit, that after the siege of Valenciennes, I did say it was not then advisable to make conditions, and I admit also, that when we struggled under disadvantages, I was equally averse; whence the right honourable gentleman infers, "that if you will not treat for peace when you are successful, nor treat for it when you are unfortunate, there must be some secret cause, which induces us to believe you are not disposed to treat at all." Is it reasonable, I ask, when a just hope is entertained of increasing our advantages, to risk the opportunity which those advantages would secure of making better terms; or, is it reasonable when we experience great and deplorable misfortunes, to entertain a just apprehension of obtaining a permanent and honourable peace, on fair and permanent conditions ? These are the principles on which I have acted, and they are raised upon the fair grounds of human action. If success enough were gained to force the enemy to relinquish a part of their possessions, and we might not yet hope to be wholly relieved from similar dangers, except by a repetition of similar efforts and similar success, was it inconsistent for a lover of his country to push those efforts further upon the reasonable expectation of securing a more permanent and honourable peace ? And, on the other hand, when we experienced the sad reverse of fortune, when the spirit of our allies was broken, our troops discomfited, our territories wrested from us, and all our hopes disconcerted and overthrown, did it argue a want of reason or a want of prudence not to yield to the temporary pressure? The same situations to a well-tempered mind would always dictate the same mode of conduct. In carrying on the war, we have met with misfortunes, God knows, severe and bitter! Exclusive of positive acquisitions however, have we gained nothing by the change which has taken place in France ? If we had made peace, as the right honourable gentleman says

we ought to have done, in 1793, we should have made it before France had lost her trade; before she had exhausted her capital; before her foreign possessions were captured, and her navy destroyed. This is my answer to every part of the right honourable gentleman's speech relative to making peace at those early periods.

But a discussion is once more introduced as to the object of the war. Ministers have repeatedly and distinctly stated the object, but it is a custom on the other side of the house, to take unguarded and warm expressions of individuals in favour of the war, for declarations of ministers. Thus, many things which fell from that great man (Mr. Burke) have since been stated as the solemn declaration of government; though it is known that, to a certain extent, there is a difference between ministers and that gentleman upon this subject. But then it is to be taken as clear, that ministers are not only anxious for the restoration of monarchy in France, but the old monarchy with all its abuses. That ministers wished to treat with a government in which jacobin principles should not prevail; that they wished for a government from which they could hope for security, and that they thought a monarchy the most likely form of government to afford to them these advantages, is most undoubtedly true; but that ministers ever had an idea of continuing the war for the purpose of re-establishing the old government of France, with all its abuses, I solemnly deny. If, for the reasons I have before stated, it would not have been prudent to have made a peace in the early stage of our contest, surely it would not have been advisable when the enemy were inflated with success. The fate of the campaign of 1794 turned against us upon as narrow a point as I believe ever occurred. We were unfortunate, but the blame did not rest here: that campaign led to the conquest of Holland, and to the consternation which immediately extended itself among the people of Germany and England. What, however, was the conduct of ministers at that period? If they had given way to the alarm, they would have been censurable indeed: instead of doing so, they immediately sent out expeditions to capture the Dutch settlements, which we may now either restore to the stadtholder, if he should be restored, or else we may retain them ourselves. If, instead of that line of conduct, his Majesty's ministers had then acknowledged the French republic, does the right honourable gentleman, does the house, suppose that the terms we should then have obtained would have been better than those we can now

expect? Then, it was asked, why did not administration negociate for peace before the confederacy was weakened by the defection of Spain and Prussia, because, of course, better terms might have been obtained when the allies were all united, than could be expected after they became divided? It undoubtedly would have been a most advantageous thing, if we could have prevailed upon the kings of Spain and Prussia to have continued the war until the enemy were brought to terms, but that not having been the case, we at least had the advantage of the assistance of those powers, while they remained in the confederacy. Before any blame can attach upon ministers upon this ground, it will be necessary to shew, that, prior to the defection of Prussia and Spain, terms were proposed to us, which we rejected. Whether these two powers have gained much from the peace they have made, is not a question very difficult to be answered. Whether Spain was really in that state that she could not have maintained another campaign, without running the risk of utter destruction, is a point upon which I do not choose to give an opinion; but with respect to Prussia, she certainly enjoys the inactivity of peace, but she has all the preparation and expense of war.

The right honourable gentleman again adverts to the form of government, which, he says it was the intention of ministers to establish in France, and alludes particularly to the affair at Toulon; and from that subject the honourable gentleman makes a rapid transition to the case of M. de la Fayette. With respect to what might be the treatment of that unfortunate gentleman, the cabinet of Great Britain had no share in it, nor did ministers think themselves warranted in interfering with true allies upon the subject. With regard to Mr. Lameth, the right honourable gentleman certainly did ministers justice, when he said they could feel no antipathy to that person; and they certainly did feel great reluctance in ordering him to quit the kingdom : but as to the motive which induced them to take that step, they did not conceive it to be a proper subject of discussion. The act of parliament had vested discretion in the executive government, and they must be left to the exercise of it

The right honourable gentleman has also alluded to the situation of the emigrants, and asserted, that if government were of opinion that there was no prospect of making an attack with success upon France, it was the height of cruelty to have employed them. This however was not the case, there were at different times well grounded expectations of success against

that country, and surely, it cannot be considered as cruelty to have furnished the emigrants with the means of attempting to regain their properties and their honours.

The right honourable gentleman had also thought proper, in his speech, to dwell at considerable length on the state of the enemy's finances. He is willing to admit that their finances are, as he says I have stated them to be, in the very gulph of bankruptcy, in their last agonies. But then the right honourable gentleman proceeds to ask me, whether, notwithstanding this financial bankruptcy, they have not prosecuted their military operations with increased vigour and success? Whether, notwithstanding these their last agonies, they may not make such dreadful struggles as may bring their adversaries to the grave? I will not now detain the house by contrasting the finances of this country with those of the enemy; I will not now dwell on the impossibility of a nation carrying on a vigorous war, in which it is annually expending one third of its capital; but I will tell the right honourable gentleman that the derangement of the French armies at the latter end of the last campaign, the exhausted state of their magazines and stores, and their ultimate retreat before the allied troops, furnish a convincing proof that the rapid decline of their finances begins to affect in the greatest degree their military operations. How far their recent successes, on the side of Italy, deserve credit to the extent stated by the right honourable gentleman, I shall not take upon me to say: I have had no intelligence on the subject, and therefore shall offer no opinion to the house.

The next topic which I have to consider, is the argument drawn from the question of our sincerity in the message delivered to the French minister at Basle, on the 8th of March; and a great variety of observations have been suggested and urged upon that point. One inference drawn by the right honourable gentleman, arises from the circumstance of this message having been communicated four months after his Majesty's speech, and three months after the declaration made to parliament, that his Majesty was ready to meet and give effect to any disposition manifested on the part of the enemy for the conclusion of a general peace. In the first place it must be remembered, that neither the speech from the throne, nor the declaration expressed any intention in the British government, to be the first in making proposals for opening a negociation. The fair construction went no farther than to invite the enemy to make the first advances, if they were so

disposed, and to shew that no obstacle would be opposed on our part to the capacity of the government they had chosen to negociate terms with this country. Gentlemen, therefore, have no right to feel in any degree disappointed at the delay of the communication, since, in being the first to make any overtures of peace, his Majesty's ministers went beyond any pledge they had given, or any expectation that ought to be entertained.

It has further been objected, that those proposals must be insincere, because it did not appear that on this occasion we had acted in concert with our allies. A sufficient answer to this may be given by the peculiar circumstances of affairs, the lateness of the season, and those communications being cut off, by which we and our allies were before enabled to maintain a ready intercourse. Had this ceremony been complied with, the delay, which it would have occasioned, must unavoidably have been greater than that of which gentlemen think themselves warranted to complain. They are, however, as much mistaken in their facts, as they are in their inferences, for this step was not taken without previous communication with our allies, and we acted in concert with them, though they were not formally made parties to the proposal; a ceremony which in my opinion would be wholly superfluous.

Another proof, it should seem, of our insincerity is, that, in the message alluded to, we did not recognize the republic. It is truly generous in the right honourable gentleman, generous towards them at least, to find out an objection for the French which they themselves did not discover. We had the answer of the directory to our note, and they took not the least notice of the republic not having been recognized. If that had been a necessary and indispensable form, without which they considered themselves insulted, their natural conduct would have been to give no answer at all. On this point of recognition, however, the right honourable gentleman is always extremely tender, and has it very much at heart. He holds up the example of America to us, as if it was an instance that had any application to the present question. The right honourable gentleman also boldly contends, that if we had paid the French government this mark of respect and confidence, it would have induced them in return to propose more moderate terms. I am, however, very far from expecting any such effect; for, in fact, the government of France never seemed to think of it I do not consider the omission as an act of hostility, and they must be aware, that the proposal to treat in itself implied a

recognition, without which it was impossible that a treaty should be concluded.

To shew the consistency of the arguments on this subject, I shall take the liberty of recalling the attention of the house to those antecedent periods, when the gentleman on the opposite side of the house, in defending the French government, held up to our imitation the wise and temperate conduct of the court of Denmark, which maintained a beneficial neutrality with France, and with which the latter shewed itself capable of maintaining the necessary relations of amity and peace. It is indeed true that France has in a great measure respected the neutrality of Denmark, and observed with it the relations of peace, at least, if not of amity. What, however, destroys the right honourable gentleman's argument at once is, that this wise, peaceable, neutral, and amicable court of Denmark had not recognized the French republic till the present yean So that, in fact, Denmark did not consider the French government as one that it ought to acknowledge, till the form which it assumed rendered it in some degree equally admissible in the eyes of the other powers of Europe.

Another argument of insincerity is, that we did not propose terms to the enemy, while we called upon them for theirs. This I conceive to be that which we had no right to do; the application did not come from the enemy, it was made on our part, and it would have been ridiculous to propose any particular terms to them, till we were previously informed whether they were willing to treat at all. It has also been alleged, that we must have been insincere, because when we employed the minister at Basle to make this application, we did not at the same time give him the power to negociate. It was extraordinary indeed that an observation of this kind should be urged by any person who professed the slightest acquaintance with diplomatic proceedings. I would ask the right honourable gentleman whether it was ever known that the person, employed to sound the disposition of a belligerent party, was also considered as the proper minister for discussing all the relative interests, and concluding a treaty? The house must remember on former occasions, when the right honourable gentleman was so warm in the recommendation of a peace with France, whatever might be its government, that, apprehensive of an adherence to that etiquette, which might prevent us from being the first to make overtures, he advised us to make recourse to expedients, and sound the disposition of the enemy, through the

medium of neutral powers. As soon as France adopted a form of government, from which an expectation of stability was to be drawn, his Majesty's ministers readily waved all etiquette, and wpuld not let such forms stand in the way of the permanent object of the peace and tranquillity of Europe, and they made direct proposals to the enemy. Had they, however, adopted the expedient proposed to them, and employed a neutral power to make their communications, was it to be expected that we should appoint that neutral power our minister plenipotentiary to manage our interests, as well as those of our allies? The gentleman through whom the communications were made as Basle, is one perfectly qualified from his talents, his zeal, and his integrity, to conduct any negociation; but whatever may be his character, it would be the height of imprudence, or rather folly, to entrust the management of a negociation of such uncommon moment to the discretion of an individual, and at such a distance.

The motives which induced his Majesty's ministers not to employ the same minister who had made the advances, as the negociator of a peace, are not confined to what I have hitherto stated; it was also necessary in order to shew our allies that we did not go beyond the line of that arrangement which was concerted with them, and that, true to our engagements, we had no separate object, and would not proceed a step without their concurrence. We wished to avoid any thing which could excite the slightest suspicion, that we were disposed to a separate negociation, which was what France would wish, and what was her uniform aim during the present contest This was a policy which in some instances was too successful with some of our allies, and which enabled her to enforce on them successively more harsh and unequal conditions. It was with a view to the same open dealing, that it was thought proper to publish to the different courts of Europe the message arid the answer, that the world might judge of the moderation of the allies and the arrogance of the enemy.

There was one ground of sincerity which I believe the right honourable gentleman did not state; but which the directory rested upon principally, in their answer. This was the proposal for holding a general congress. How this could support the charge of insincerity, I am at a loss to conceive. The British government pointed out the mode of pacification. This the enemy thought proper to decline and to reproach, but did not attempt to substitute any other mode by which the object was

likely to be obtained. So far from projecting} any thing which cpuld even justly be an object of suspicion, ministers had preferred that of a congress, which was the only mode in which wars were concluded in all cases wherein allies were concerned, ever since the peace of Munster, the two last treaties only excepted. This charge of insincerity was represented by the right honourable gentleman as the probable cause of the exorbitant terms demanded by the enemy :—" They are high in their demands,"says the right honourable gentleman, "because they know you are not in earnest; whereas, were they confident in your sincerity, they would be moderate and candid." In my humble apprehension, the extravagance of their terms leads to an opposite conclusion, and proves that the plea of insincerity is with them only a pretence. If they really thought his Majesty's ministers insincere, their policy would have been to make just and moderate demands, which, if rejected, would exhibit openly and in the face of the world, that want of candour, and that appetite for war, which the right honourable gentleman joins in so unjustly attributing to us. But having, in fact, no disposition for peace, and led away by false and aspiring notions of aggrandizement, the government of France offered us such terms as they knew could not possibly be complied with. Did they know the spirit, temper, and character of this country, when they presumed to make such arrogant proposals ? These proposals I will leave to the silent sense impressed by them in the breast of every Englishman. I am, thank God! addressing myself to Britons, who are acquainted with the presumption of the enemy, and who, conscious of their resources, impelled by their native spirit, and valuing the national character, will prefer the chances and alternatives of war to such unjust, unequal, and humiliating conditions.

The plea of the French directory, that their constitution did not permit them to accept of any terms, which should diminish the extent of country annexed by conquest to the territories of the republic, the right honourable gentleman himself very fairly condemns; because, if persevered in, it must be an eternal obstacle to the conclusion of any peace. That the interests of foreign nations should yield to those laws, which another country should think proper to prescribe to itself, is a fallacy, a monster in politics, that never before was heard of. Whether their military successes are likely to enable them to preserve a constitution so framed, I will not now inquire, but of this I am

certain, that the fortune of war must be tried before the nations of Europe will submit to such pretences.

On a fair examination, however, will it appear, that the right honourable gentleman is right in observing, that this allegation could be no more than a pretext? If so, is it not singular that the right honourable gentleman, who seems so shocked at this pretext of the law of the French constitution, should direct none of his censure against the legislators, or government of that nation, but vent all his indignation on the British ministers, for .deferring their proposals for peace, till the enemy had formed such a constitution as rendered peace impracticable? I will not now recount all those arguments which, on former occasions, I have so frequently submitted to the house, nor the motives which induced me to decline all proposals for peace, till some form of government was established, which had a chance of being stable and permanent. Surely, however, it is too great a task imposed upon me to be able to foresee, amongst the innumerable and varying constitutional projects of the French, the precise system on which they would fix at last. Much less could I foresee that they would have adopted a constitution which even the right honourable gentleman himself would be induced to condemn. But, having so condemned it, he should in justice have transferred his censures to those by whom it was framed; instead of which, all the thunder of the right honourable gentleman's eloquence is spent at home upon the innocent, while the guilty at a distance are not disturbed even by the report.

However the spirit of this country may be roused, and its indignation excited, by the exorbitant conditions proposed to it by the enemy, yet even these extravagant pretensions should not induce us to act under the influence of passion. I could easily have anticipated that unanimity of sentiment, with which such degrading proposals have been rejected by every man in this country, but our resentment, or our scorn, must not for a moment suffer us to lose sight of our moderation and our temper. We have long been in the habit of waiting for the return of reason in our deluded enemy, and whenever they shall descend from those aspiring and inadmissible projects which they seem to have formed, and are proceeding to act upon, we shall still be ready to treat with them upon fair and honourable terms. We are particularly interested in urging them to the acceptance of such a constitution as may be best suited to their character and situation, but we must take care

that their constitution shaII not operate injuriously to ourselves. We do not shut the door against negociation whenever it can be fairly entered upon, but the enemy, so far from meeting us, say plainly they carinot listen to any terms, but such as in honour we cannot accept. The terms of peace which the right honourable gentleman pointed at, and which, after all, he considers as very disadvantageous, are, that the French may retain their conquests in Europe, and that we should keep our acquisitions in the colonies. What however is the proposal of the directory? No less than this: that every thing should be restored to them, and they in return are to give up nothing. It is also urged by the honourable gentleman, that we were to blame in so abruptly breaking off the negociation, and communicating the result to the world, together with the observations made upon it. To this I will answer, that the terms proposed by the enemy cut short all further treaty; and as to the communication of the result, it will have, at least, the important consequence *of* dividing the opinions of France, and uniting those of England.

BRITISH RESOURCES AND THE WAR

October 6, 1796.[1]

ALTHOUGH I feel myself impelled, Sir, from more than one consideration to come forward on the present occasion, I shall not be under the necessity of troubling the house much at length. It is certainly to me matter of great satisfaction, that at so critical a conjuncture, indeed the most critical and the most important that has occurred during the present century, that on the only great and substantial question, on which the address proposes to express any opinion, there should be no difference of sentiment in this house, and that even the right honourable gentleman[2] should have expressed his cordial concurrence. There are indeed many topics on which he touched in the course of his speech, in which I now differ with him as much as ever I differed at any former period; but, with respect to the great and substantial object of the address, the propriety of the conduct employed to bring about a solid and durable

1 Debate on the address of thanks to his Majesty for his speech on opening the session.
2 Mr. Fox.

peace, such a peace as may be consistent with the permanent security and the just pretensions of the country, there does not subsist even the slightest shade of difference. That object is found to command the most full and most unequivocal support. Such a circumstance I must indeed consider as matter of just pride and of honest satisfaction. It exhibits the most decided and undeniable proof that the steps which his Majesty has taken towards negociation, that the clear and explicit declaration that he has made, are in themselves so unexceptionable, and so well calculated for the end in view, that they must command assent from any man who retains the smallest care for the interest and honour of his country. Impressed with this feeling of satisfaction, I can have but little inclination to detain the house on points of slighter difference. I look with still higher satisfaction to the concurrence now expressed in the object of the address, as the pledge of general unanimity, and the omen of great exertions, if, unfortunately, that object should not be obtained.

The honourable gentleman justly states, that what hitherto has been done, only amounts to an overture for peace. It is impossible to state what may be the result. We cannot pronounce what will be the disposition of the enemy, or what circumstances may occur to influence the fate of negociation. We ought to look fairly to our situation. It holds out to us a chance of peace, if the enemy are disposed to accede to it on just and reasonable terms; but, on the other hand, if they are still actuated by ambitious projects, we shall gain another object by the course we have pursued ; we shall unmask them in the eyes of Europe; we shall expose the injustice of their policy and their insatiable thirst of aggrandizement: and, if no other advantage be gained, we at least shall be able to put to the proof the sincerity of that pledge which this day has been given, that if the enemy are not disposed to accede to peace on just and reasonable terms, the war will be supported by the unanimous voice and the collected force of the nation. I trust and hope that it may not be necessary to have recourse to such a test of sincerity; but, while we indulge with satisfaction in the hope of a more favourable issue, we must at the same time look to the other alternative; we must be prepared with all the force of the country to support the prosecution of the contest, if its continuance should be found necessary. If the unanimity of this day be accompanied with such views, if it is not an unanimity founded merely upon the pleasing sound of peace, the captivating charm of renewed tranquillity, and the prospect of the

termination of those scenes of horror and calamity with which war is always attended (such an unanimity would indeed be fatal to the country), but if it is an unanimity the result of rational and manly reflection, founded upon a careful consideration of the situation of the country, and prepared to meet every conjuncture, it cannot then be too highly prized. We must not put out of view those means of exertion which we still possess; we must fairly compare the situation of this country with that of the enemy, and the amount of our own acquisitions with the losses of our allies ; we must estimate the extent of the sacrifices which, under all these circumstances, it may be fitting for us to make, in order to effect the restoration of peace. It is with a view to these principles, that unanimity becomes so peculiarly desirable in the present moment. The clear and unequivocal explanation which his Majesty has given of his conduct, with respect to peace, has commanded a general concurrence. If it be that sentiment which, on the one hand, is prepared to support the just pretensions and reasonable hopes of the country, and on the other to resist the unjustifiable demands and arrogant claims of the enemy, I shall then consider the unanimity of this day as the happiest aera in the history of the country. On this head I shall say no more, and agreeing thus far with the right honourable gentleman, I would wish to say as little as possible on the other points on which he touched in the course of his speech, and with respect to which we widely differ. They have been too often and too warmly discussed to be now forgotten by gentlemen who sat in the former parliament; and in the concluding part of his speech the right honourable gentleman gave us an assurance that we should hear of them again.

The right honourable gentleman has intimated as his opinion, that we much change the whole system of our interior policy, which he considers as inconsistent with the constitution of the country. I am happy, however, to find that he is so far satisfied with the constitution, as to ascribe to its protection that internal order and undisturbed tranquillity which he admitted that the country had for some time past enjoyed. He at the same time reprobated in the severest terms laws which were passed during the last parliament, and which he represented as pregnant with the most michievous consequences, and declared that he could not subscribe to any construction of that part of his Majesty's speech which included those among the laws, the energy and wisdom of which had contributed to secure the tranquillity

of the country. Having made this declaration, it would be unfair and uncandid on my part not to be equally explicit. I desire no gentleman to vote for the address upon any such qualification with respect to those laws. I am firmly of opinion, that, exclusive of their influence, the peace of the country could not have been so successfully maintained, nor can I suffer the smallest reproach to fall upon the character of the last parliament, who displayed their wisdom and their energy in providing a remedy so suitable to the alarming nature of the crisis. If there is any ambiguity in the address, with respect to those laws, it is because they are so consistent with the spirit of the constitution which they were framed to protect, and so blended with the system of our jurisprudence, so congenial to the practice of former times, and so conformable even to the letter of former acts, that it was impossible to make any discrimination. It is to be recollected, that they were passed in a moment of alarm and turbulence; they had been found most admirably calculated to meet the emergency of the time. The address does not apportion with minute exactness what degree of tranquillity we have derived from the operation of those laws, when blended with the constitution, and what we might have enjoyed from the influence of laws previously subsisting; how much we were indebted for protection to the ancient strength of the edifice, or to those buttresses that were raised to support it in the moment of hurricane.

There were some other points on which the right honourable gentleman touched. He seemed to consider, from the language of the address, that endeavours have only been made of late to procure peace. He ought to recollect that his Majesty's speech particularly refers to what has taken place since he last communicated with his parliament. If ever the day shall come when an examination shall be instituted into the steps which have been adopted to secure the re-establishment of the general tranquillity, I am confident that no endeavours for that purpose will be found to have been wanting on the part of his Majesty's ministers. But gentlemen must be sensible, that what may be admitted as an endeavour to restore peace depends upon a variety of circumstances, and is likely to be differently appreciated by individuals of opposite sentiments. It depends on the relative state of parties, on the number of allies with whom we may be engaged to act, on the degree of attention we pay to their interests, and on the concert we wish to preserve with them. Taking all these necessary considerations into view, I again

pledge myself that it will be found in the result of inquiry, that ministers have neglected no opportunity which could have been improved for the purpose of accelerating peace. But the right honourable gentleman has told us, that we are at last come to the period which he had all along pointed out; that we have now consented to adopt that course which he has uniformly recommended since the commencement of the contest—to send a person to Paris, and to try the effect of negociation. He takes to himself all the merit of that policy which we have tardily adopted, and so confident did he feel himself in this ground of self-exultation, that he declined all illustration of his victory, and merely made it the subject of one triumphant observation. His assertion was, " you are now taking those measures which, if you had listened to my counsels, you might have adopted four years ago." But does it follow that the measure was right then, because it is right now ? May not a period of four years produce many events to justify a material change of policy, and to render measures wise and expedient, which at a certain time would neither have been prudent nor seasonable ? Because you do not choose to make peace the day after an unprovoked aggression, may you not be justified in holding out pacific overtures after a lapse of four years ? The argument of the right honourable gentleman amounts to this, that either you must make peace the day after the aggression, or not make it at all.

With respect to the relative situation of this country and Spain, it would not be consistent with my duty to go into any detail on that subject at the present moment.

As to the question of our resources, the right honourable gentleman admits them to be extensive and flourishing. They furnish, indeed, in a moment like the present, a subject of peculiar congratulation and well-grounded confidence. If the revenue, after a four years' war, which might have been expected to have injured it so materially in so many branches, and after all the additional burthens which have been imposed, still keeps up to the rate at which it was stated last year, that circumstance is surely no slight source of satisfaction. With respect to the state of commerce, I am enabled to speak in a very different strain. Notwithstanding all the embarrassments which it has had to encounter, it has attained and still continues to enjoy a pitch of unexampled prosperity. Those embarrassments have proceeded from various causes;—the expense of the war abroad, and the high price of articles of consumption at home; the situation of part of the continent,

where the markets have been shut against us; and even the growth of our capital re-acting upon the commerce which occasioned it, so that what was an unequivocal symptom of prdsperity, was itself a cause of temporary distress. Of the continuance of this prosperity, we have now the best assurance. The state of our exports during the last six months has been equal to what they were in the most flourishing year of peace, 1792 ; and our foreign trade has even exceeded the produce of that year, which was the most productive of any in the history of this country. Under these circumstances, whatever temporary embarrassments may have arisen from the quantity of specie sent out of the country, from the want of a sufficient circulating medium, from the state of foreign markets, and from the increase of our capital; and however these difficulties may for a time have obstructed the ordinary operations of finance, the commercial character of the country has lost neither its vigour nor importance. If such has been the state of things, at a period when the country has had to contend for every thing dear to it; if, notwithstanding all the obstacles which have clogged the machinery, the spring has retained so much force and energy, we may presume, that, if by the obstinacy and ambition of the enemy we should be called to still greater exertions, our resources as yet remain untouched, and that we shall be able to bring them into action with a degree of concert and effect worthy of the character of the British nation, and of the cause in which they will be employed. These resources have in them nothing hollow or delusive. They are the result of an accumulated capital, of gradually increasing commerce, of high and established credit. They are the fruits of fair exertion, of laudable ingenuity, of successful industry; they have been produced under a system of order and of justice, while we, under many disadvantages, have been contending agkinst a country which exhibits in every respect the reverse of the picture;—a proof that the regular operation of those principles must triumph over the unnatural and exhausting efforts of violence and extortion. By these resources we are now qualified to take such steps as may tend to conduct us to a solid and a durable peace; or, if we do not succeed in that object, to prosecute the contest with firmness and confidence.

The right honourable gentleman suggested one remark, that the speech contained no recognition of the government of France. He wasted a good deal of ingenuity in attempting to prove that it ought to have contained an express acknow-

ledgment of the French government. It ought to have occurred to him that a passport having been sent for and granted, some communication must have taken place on that occasion, and as the executive directory had been satisfied with the form of communication, and the mode in which they had been addressed, it could not be necessary for him to start a difficulty where they had found none. I can assure him, on the part of British ministers, that no question of etiquette, no difficulty of form originating from them, shall be permitted to stand in the way of negociation, or to obstruct the attainment of the great object of peace.

As to the other points, the right honourable gentleman has suggested what lessons we ought to derive from the experience of adversity. These lessons may be greatly varied according to the situation of parties and the different points of view in which the subject is considered. But, when the right honourable gentleman tells us that the situation of this country is that of adversity, I can by no means agree to the proposition. How far it deserves to be ranked under that description, let those pronounce who are best acquainted with the state of our resources. It cannot surely be termed a state of adversity from any losses of our trade, the diminution of our capital, or from the reduction of any of our foreign possessions. We have not been greatly impoverished by the events of the war in the East and West Indies. We cannot be much weakened in our national strength, even upon the statement of the right honourable gentleman, by having our navy, in consequence of repeated triumphs over every hostile squadron, raised to a greater degree of glory and of fame than it had ever before attained. Where then, are we to look for the symptoms of this adversity? Are we to look for them in the losses and disasters of our allies? But, does the right honourable gentleman appeal to these as a criterion of adversity, when in the same breath I hear him hold out as a source of complaint, that you are not, under your present circumstances, sure of a triumphant peace? And why can you not command such a peace?—because you will not separate your own greatness, and your own commerce, from the interest and from the fate of your allies; because you refuse to purchase peace for yourselves on any other terms than those which will secure the tranquillity of Europe, and consider the situation of Great Britain as chained to that of the continent, by the bonds of a liberal and comprehensive policy. If what has been lost on the continent is a subject of

regret, it is at least a topic on which we have no reason to reproach ourselves. If even the prospect in that quarter continued as gloomy as it was some time since, and if the extremity had not roused the armies of the emperor to those gallant and spirited exertions which have been crowned with such brilliant and unprecedented success, no share of blame could attach to us. While the violence of France has been over-running so great a part of Europe, and every where carrying desolation in its progress, your naval exertions have enabled you to counterbalance their successes, by acquisitions in different parts of the globe, and to pave the way for the restoration of peace to your allies, on terms which their own strength might have been unable to procure. If you look indeed to the geographical situation of the seat of war, the emperor has not regained by his recent victories all that he had formerly lost. But do you count for nothing the destruction and ruin of those armies, by whom all the previous successes of the enemy had been achieved? Do you count for nothing the glorious and immortal testimony that has been exhibited to mankind, that disciplined valour must finally triumph over those principles that the war was undertaken to oppose, and which owed all their extraordinary and unaccountable successes to the violence in which they originated, and the excesses with which they were accompanied? A memorable warning has also been afforded with respect to the true consequences which have resulted to those foreign powers, who, in opposition to their true interests, have courted the alliance of that enemy, and expected to find security in disgraceful tranquillity. Recent events have served also to exculpate the characters of those who were calumniated as desirous to embrace their principles, and receive their laws, and in Germany they have left behind them nothing but the memory of their wrongs, and a feeling of eternal resentment. Are such effects to be considered as of small importance, or to be put in competition with the reduction of a fortress, or the possession of a district ?

Of the virtues to be acquired in the school of adversity, the right honourable* gentleman only mentioned those of moderation and forbearance. Moderation I should consider as that virtue which is best adapted to the dawn of prosperity; there are other virtues of no less importance which are to be acquired under a reverse of fortune, and which are equally becoming in those who are called to suffer:—there are the virtues of adversity endured and adversity resisted; of adversity encountered and

adversity surmounted. The recent example of Germany has furnished an illustrious instance of fortitude and perseverance, and their fortitude and perseverance have had their merited reward. These are lessons which I trust this country has not to learn. England has never shewn itself deficient in firmness and magnanimity; it is unrivalled in resource; it has always been foremost in the career of honourable exertion, and it has only to maintain its accustomed vigour and perseverance, to effect the restoration of general tranquillity upon terms consistent with the dignity of its own character, and the security and interest of Europe.

ON THE INVASION OF ENGLAND

October 18, 1796.[1]

AFTER the unanimous vote which the house gave upon the first day of the session, and their general occurrence in that part of the address which respects a foreign invasion, it would be doing injustice to the feelings which were then expressed, were I to make any apology for calling their attention to the subject on the present occasion. I shall not detain them therefore a single moment in shewing the propriety of laying before them at so early a period the measures which I mean this day to propose. It is equally our duty and our interest by every means in our power, and by every exertion of which we are capable, if possible, in the language of the address, to preclude the attempt, and at the same time to take such measures of defence as shall cause the invasion, if it should be attempted, to issue in the confusion and ruin of the enemy. I shall not at present go much at large into the detail of preparations, but merely suggest a general outline of defence, which, if it should be approved of by the committee, may be particularly discussed when the bills are afterwards brought in upon

[1] **The house having resolved itself into a committee to consider of that part of his Majesty's speech, which respected invasion, the paragraph was read as follows—**

"You will feel this peculiarly necessary at a moment when the enemy has openly manifested the intention of attempting a descent on these kingdoms. It cannot be doubted what would be the issue of such an enterprize ; but it befits your wisdom to neglect no precautions that may either preclude the attempt, or secure the speediest means of turning it to the confusion and ruin of the enemy."

the resolutions. The general considerations are few and obvious. The natural defence of this kingdom, in case of invasion, is certainly its naval force. This presents a formidable barrier, in whatever point the enemy may direct their attack. In this department, however, little now remains to' be done, our fleet at this moment being more respectable and more formidable than ever it was at any other period in the history of the country. But strong and powerful even as it at present is, it is capable of considerable increase, could an additional supply of seamen, or even landsmen, who in a very short time might be trained to an adequate knowledge of the naval service,, be procured. For this purpose I would suggest a levy upon the different parishes throughout the kingdom—an expedient precisely similar to that which was practised with so much success nearly two years ago. This levy, however, I would not confine as a mode of supply for the sea service. It is certainly of the highest importance both for the internal defence of the country and the security of our foreign possessions, that all the old regiments should be complete. But every one must be sensible, that from the numbers in those regiments who have fallen a sacrifice to sickness and the fortune of war, a more expeditious method must be adopted for their completion, than the ordinary mode of recruiting supplies, in order that the country may be able to avail itself of this arm of strength. I would propose, therefore, in the first place, a levy of fifteen thousand men from the different parishes for the sea service, and for recruiting the regiments of the line. The committee, however, must be sensible when a plan of invasion is in agitation—a scheme, which almost at another time would not have beqri conceived, and an attempt, which, by any other enemy than that with whom we have now to contend, might have been justly deemed impracticable—that a more enlarged and a more expensive plan of prevention and of defence is necessary.

In digesting this plan there are two considerations of which we ought not to lose sight. The first is the means (which must not be altogether new) of calling together a land force, sufficiently strong to frustrate the attempt, keeping our naval force entirely out of view; and secondly, to adopt such measures in raising this force as shall not materially interfere with the industry, the agriculture and the commerce of the country. It will be for the house to decide upon the degree to which the former consideration ought to be permitted to interfere with the latter. A primary object will be to raise, and gradually to

train, such a force as may in a short time be fit for service. Of all the modes of attaining this object, there is none so expeditious, so effectual, and attended with so little expense, as that of raising a supplemental levy of militia, to be grafted upon the present establishment.. I should propose that this supplement shall consist of sixty thousand men, not to be immediately called out, but to be enrolled, officered and gradually trained, so as to be fit for service at a time of danger. The best mode of training them without withdrawing too many at one time from their regular pursuits, will be to embody one-sixth part in regular succession, each to be trained for twenty days, in the course of which they may become tolerable proficients in the military exercise. With respect to the mode of conducting the levy, the returns that have been lately made from the different counties shew the present levies to be extremely disproportioned, and that the clause in the act which provides against this abuse has never been executed. . Accordingly we find that in some counties the proportion is one out of seven, and in others one out of three. It will be expedient therefore to regulate the future levy, not by the proportions now existing, but by a general estimate of the inhabitants who are able to bear arms.

The next consideration which merits attention, is the manner in which the troops are to be furnished, which I think ought to be generally from all parts of the kingdom, and that an obligation be imposed upon those who are balloted, either to serve in person, or to provide a substitute; and the better to preserve the general proportion, that this substitute be provided either from the parish in which the person balloted resides, or from a parish immediately adjoining. It will be proper also to remove' the present exemption from those who have more than one child, on the express condition that they shall not be called upon to serve out of the parish in which they live. The mode of training only one-sixth part of the whole, twenty days in succession, as it will only withdraw ten thousand at a time from their usual occupations, consequently will not much infringe upon the general order of the community. Of course they must be provided with some sort of uniform, but it will be of the coarsest kind, and such as may be purchased at a small expense. A sufficient number of arms will also be in readiness for supplying each man in the moment of danger.

Another measure which I would suggest to the committee, is to provide a considerable force of irregular cavalry. The regular cavalry on the present establishment is certainly by no

means inconsiderable, and the yeomanry cavalry, which from their numbers are sufficiently respectable, we have found to be highly useful in securing the quiet and maintaining the internal tranquillity of the country. But with a view to repelling an invasion, the more that this species of force is extended, the greater advantage is likely to accrue from it, as an invading enemy, who must be destitute of horses, can have no means to meet it upon equal terms. Besides, it is a species of force which may be provided in a mode that will be attended with almost no expense to the public, and with little hardship to individuals. In order to calculate the extent to which these irregular cavalry may be raised, it is necessary to estimate the number of horses which are kept for pleasure throughout the kingdom, and by raising the levy in this proportion we shall have the satisfaction to think that it will fall upon those only who have a considerable stake to defend. By the produce of the tax, which is as good a criterion as any, of the number of horses kept for pleasure, we find that in Scotland, England and Wales, they amount to about two hundred thousand, one hundred and twenty thousand of which belong to persons who keep only one horse of the kind, the rest to persons, some of whom keep ten, and various other proportions. It certainly would not be a very severe regulation when compared with the object meant to be accomplished, to require one-tenth of these horses for the public service. I would therefore propose that every person who keeps ten horses, shall be obliged to furnish one horse and a horseman to serve in a corps of cavalry;—that every person who keeps more than ten horses, and a number falling short of twenty, after furnishing a horse and horseman, for the first ten, shall subscribe a proportionate sum for the rest, which shall be applied to defray the general expense;—that those who keep twenty shall furnish two, three of thirty, &c, and that those who keep fewer than ten shall form themselves into a class, when it shall be decided by ballot, who at the common expense shall furnish the horse and the horseman. These troops thus raised will be provided with uniform and accoutrements, formed into corps, and put under proper officers. And surely when the means are compared with the object to be attained and the expense to which individuals will be subjected, with the security of the property which they possess, no one will complain that that end or that security is purchased at too dear a price.

There is still another resource which, though it **may** not

appear so serious as those which have been already mentioned, ought not to be neglected. Upon the supposition of an invasion, it would certainly be of no small importance to form bodies of men, who, from their dexterity in using fire-arms, might be highly useful in harassing the operations of the enemy. The employment of such men for the purpose of defending the country, and harassing the enemy in case of an invasion, must be attended with the most serious and important consequences. Gentlemen will naturally guess that I am now alluding to that description of men called gamekeepers, and to others of the same class. I do most certainly allude to them, for there are many whose personal services would be of the utmost advantage. But I also, and more particularly, allude to those instances where gentlemen are gamekeepers for their own amusement, where they are gamekeepers merely for the satisfaction of being so, not gamekeepers of necessity but of choice; in such cases there can be no hardship in obliging those gentlemen, if we cannot have their personal services, at least to find a substitute, who may be as well calculated to defend the country as themselves. I do therefore propose, that those persons who shall have taken out licences to shoot game, or deputations for gamekeepers, shall, within a certain period, be at liberty to return the same if they think proper; but if after that period they shall continue their licences or deputations for gamekeepers, then they shall be obliged to find substitutes. I observe gentlemen smiling at the idea of raising a force by such means, but that smile will be converted into surprise, when they hear that the number of persons who have taken out those licences, are no fewer than 7,000. Such a plan cannot be considered as a means of internal defence likely to be approved of by every person in the country.

I have stated to the committee the general outline of the bill. I shall defer saying much more on the subject; it will be more satisfactory to speak particularly when the resolution is reported to the house, than to enter into any further detail at this moment. The number of cavalry which I propose to raise in the manner I have mentioned will be 20,000 ; but with respect to whether there must not be some other additional mode adopted, it is impossible to say exactly, from not being able to ascertain with certainty how many persons it may be necessary to exempt, on account of their being in orders, or for other reasons. Thus have I pointed out the means by which I propose to raise 15,000 men, to be divided between the sea

and the land service, to raise the supplemental **levy** of **60,000** for the militia, of which one-sixth part is to be forthwith called out to exercise ; to raise 20,000 men by means of persons taking out the licences to shoot game and keep gamekeepers, or on such other persons as may hereafter be deemed necessary. If the propositions I have mentioned should be approved, I should wish the resolutions to be printed, and if immediately, to introduce the bill, to carry it on to a committee, and to fill up the blanks, and then to allow an interval of a week for its 'discussion. I mention this in order that more time should not be taken up than is absolutely necessary for the due examination of the principles of the bill; since, gentlemen, you cannot but recollect, when you are once satisfied, and have determined upon the propriety of any particular measure, every day, every hour of delay, is attended with additional danger.

I shall now move that the chairman be directed to report to the house, "That it is the opinion of the committee, that a bill should be brought in for raising a certain number of men in the several counties of England, and the several counties, burghs, and stewartries of Scotland, for the service of his Majesty."

A discussion of some length succeeded, in which Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Dundas, and Mr. Fox severally delivered their sentiments upon the proposed measure.

Mr. Pitt spoke in reply :

After what has already been said by my right honourable friend,[1] I entertain some doubts whether I ought to detain the committee one moment from the unanimous vote which I believe will be given upon the present occasion. I am sure, at least, that it will not be necessary to consume much of your time by replying at length to the short observations of the honourable gentleman,[2] or to the more detailed remarks in which he has been followed by the right honourable gentleman,[3] upon the same side, as I cannot but regard the declaration with which they prefaced and concluded their animadversions, that they did not mean to oppose the resolutions which I had the honour to propose, as a sufficient answer to the arguments by which it was accompanied. If the right honourable gentleman feels that the declarations of ministers upon the subject which constitutes the foundation of the present deliberations, are not sufficient to justify the measures which are to be

1 Mr. Dundas. 2 Mr. Sheridan. 3 Mr. Fox.

grounded upon it; if he considers their assurances or their representations entitled to no confidence; if he is persuaded that there exists no danger of invasion, against which it is intended to provide ; if he is convinced that the objects of the preparations that are to be made, are destined to carry on other warlike operations than the plan avows, or are employed as pretexts to cover designs of ambition or of encroachment at home; if he believes that they are intended to prosecute that object of the war which he thinks proper to describe as unjust and diabolical, I would ask, how he can reconcile these principles with the conduct he is to pursue; or, as a public man, upon what public ground he can rest that assent which he has bestowed upon the measures which have been suggested? But while the right honourable gentleman indulged in these animadversions, he knew well that the precautions were demanded by the country as measures of self-defence, from which he could not withhold his concurrence. He demonstrated by his actions, that he was in reality sensible that the present was not like other wars, undertaken to maintain a point of national honour, or to defend a disputed interest;—to support an ally that was attacked, or to guard remote or doubtful dangers ; but that it was the first war in which a great and free people, in the prosecution of their commerce and the enjoyment of their prosperity, were called upon for a time to defend the sources from which they flowed, and, in compliance with the good faith which was due to their allies, and urged by a sense of common danger, found themselves compelled to oppose unprovoked aggression, and resist principles hostile to the government and constitution of these kingdoms and to every regular government in Europe. Why did not the right honourable gentleman follow up his principles, by opposing likewise the measures which were proposed to meet this danger, but because he believed that the situation of affairs is such as to require these precautions ; and because he must know that a false security could alone present the smallest chance of success in the attempt which has been threatened; because also he knew that such was the character of the enemy with whom we had to contend, that they were not so liable to be deterred by the desperate nature of the enterprise, or by a consideration of the number of persons whom its ruin might devote to destruction? Such, I am convinced, were the feelings of the right honourable gentleman upon this occasion, and such are the considerations by which his conduct is explained, although, perhaps, he found it neces-

sary to colour his assent, and to disguise his conviction, by the invectives he introduced against the last parliament, and against the conduct of administration. Though, however, he reprobated the system and the measures of administration, though he accused the justice and vilified the character of the former parliament, he could not trust the natural conclusion of his own premises. He did not ask if any of the new members, who had so lately come up impregnated with the sense of their electors, or if the old members, who were witnesses of the proceedings, and whose recollection of the last parliament was so recent, would agree with him in the character which he had ascribed to it. Nor did he venture to make any appeal to ascertain who were those who would concur with him in asserting the principles he had professed. While I reflect upon these circumstances, I feel confident that it will not be incumbent upon me to answer at much length the arguments of the honourable gentlemen on the other side of the house, especially when the objections of the one are answered by the observations adduced by the other.

While the right honourable gentleman[1] professed to agree with every sentiment of his honourable friend,[2] they materially overthrew each other's reasonings, and every sentence uttered by the right honourable gentleman was confuted by that which preceded it. The internal order of battle seems to have been completely deranged, and the arguments of the honourable gentlemen themselves meet in hostile encounter. The honourable gentleman[2] wished to impose upon ministers a responsibility for the measures which were founded upon the assertion in his Majesty's speech, because, continued he, this matter rests only upon the information of the speech from the throne, which I must consider as the speech of ministers; and in order to supply the defect of this responsibility which attaches to ministers by the most solemn and formal declaration, the honourable gentleman insists upon receiving satisfaction, and imposing responsibility by a communication less formal and less authentic ! The right honourable gentleman,[1] however, proceeded as if ministers were pleading on their responsibility, and then concluded by maintaining that there is no responsibility at all.

The right honourable gentleman is likewise offended with the general argument of the necessity of precaution, which was employed by my right honourable friend ;3 but his honourable

1 Mr. Fox. 2 Mr. Sheridan. 3 Mr. Dundas.

friend [1] beside him admits, that only general information was to be expected; so that to this argument the right honourable gentleman must lift up his hand and express his disapprobation, as he professes that he cannot act upon general information. But why, says he, did not the danger, which you now apprehend, long before this induce you to demand the adoption of those measures of precaution which you now think it necessary to employ? No such plans, continued he, were pursued upon any former period. The right honourable gentleman too went out of his way to find comparisons to depreciate the characters of ministers, and asserted, that to such measures as the present much better ministers, in former wars, never had found it necessary to resort. He does not, however, mention who these much better ministers are; and if the right honourable gentleman recollects the language he employed during the seven last years of the American war, there was a time when he bestowed upon the conduct of that administration epithets as offensive, as *unjust* and *diabolical.* Why, exclaims the honourable gentleman, did you not call for these measures upon former occasions? Are we then gravely deliberating upon a great and important subject, and are we to be told that in certain given circumstances no precautions are to be taken because at a former period such measures were not required? May not the means which were judged adequate in a particular situation be found insufficient when circumstances alter, or when danger is increased? The honourable gentlemen, though in other points their arguments were at variance, go on together contending that my right honourable friend had said, on a former occasion, that the force which this country possessed, was sufficient to repel the attacks of all Europe. Certainly I do not believe that my right honourable friend ever asserted, that in any possible case the volunteer corps would be sufficient for the defence of the country. If my right honourable friend had asserted that the spirit by which these volunteer associations were dictated, put in action as circumstances required, and accommodated to the pressure of danger, would be able to resist the efforts of the whole house of Bourbon, or of the republic of France, aided by any particular branch of the house of Bourbon, or of any other combination of powers—such an opinion I believe to be just, and at least, perfectly consonant to the well-known firmness and zeal of my right honourable friend. But may not the relative situation of the enemy present

1 Mr. Sheridan.

them with more specific means of carrying their purpose into execution, than they possessed at a former period, when it was necessary to guard against the dangers which then threatened them from various quarters ?

The right honourable gentleman says, you relied on the firmness and attachment of the people two years ago; and is it less now that you have recourse to extraordinary precautions? The attachment and loyalty of the people of this country, I trust, has experienced no diminution. It lives, and is cherished by that constitution which, notwithstanding the assertions of the right honourable gentleman, still remains entire. Under the protection and support which it derives from the acts passed'by the last parliament, the constitution inspires the steady affection of the people, and is still felt to be worth defending with every drop of our blood. The voice of the country proclaims that it continues to deserve and to receive their support. Fortified by laws in perfect unison with its principles and with its practice, and fitted to the emergencies by which they were occasioned, it still possesses that just esteem and admiration of the people which will induce them faithfully to defend it against the designs of domestic foes, and the attempts of their foreign enemies. The right honourable gentleman discovers the extent of the adversity into which he represents the country to be fallen in some of the measures now proposed for its defence, and which he reprobates by the name of *requisitions ;*—a species of levy, however, which so long as it was practised in France, he did not consider as deserving of any particular disapprobation. I will not at this moment inquire, whether requisitions in France were a right and proper measure; but let not the right honourable gentleman at once maintain that the attachment of the people renders these measures of defence superfluous, and in the next moment represent these precautions as proofs of the intolerable pitch of adversity to which the nation is reduced. The situation in which we are fljaced does not imply a suspicion of our power, though it justifies our precautions. That prosperity is deceitful and dangerous, if it lead to a false security; that the danger, though groundlessly apprehended, or falsely exaggerated, without exertion upon our part, can alone be of doubtful issue or perilous consequence, is the real opinion which the contemplation of the state of the country is fitted to inspire.

The right honourable gentleman, when he expressed his dislike of the mode of pressing men for the public service, did

not specifically apply his objection to the plan of augmenting the militia and raising the new supplies of cavalry; he admits that these may, in some measure, come under the description of personal force. The mode proposed of increasing the militia is not new in its principle. They are to be balloted in the same manner as the established militia of the country. The 60,000 men which it was proposed to add, were to be formed precisely as the 90,000 of which the ordinary number consists. The present addition does not exceed the amount for which, on former occasions, it was thought necessary to provide. In 1756, a bill was passed for doubling the number. The right honourable gentleman, however, in pressing his argument, runs before his recollection. The 15,000 men for the land and sea service are to be raised according to the provisions of the act passed two years ago upon this subject. Does the right honourable gentleman then consider this to be pressing ? No ; it is meant to raise volunteers by contribution among the inhabitants of each parish, and, if they failed to produce the number at which they were rated, they were to pay a certain sum over the sum at which a person to serve could be procured. If the right honourable gentleman reprobates this mode as pressing, what was the language he held upon another occasion, and when a different mode was pursued? In 1794, when voluntary offers of service were introduced for the defence of the country, this mode was reprobated as repugnant to the constitution; and now when men are called upon to contribute their property and their personal service to the defence of their country, it is discovered to be unjust, and stigmatized as requisition ! The two honourable gentlemen admit the necessity of precaution, and they reprobate every measure which is proposed; and while they agree that it is necessary to provide for the defence of the state, they are dissatisfied with the means by which security is to be obtained. Notwithstanding the unanimity with which the resolution will be voted, I cannot augur well for the future co-operation which the measures may obtain, when I consider the sentiments which the honourable gentlemen entertain, and the observations with which their present concurrence is accompanied.

The resolution was afterwards put and agreed to.

ON THE WAR BUDGET

December 7, 1796.

T H E subject which I have now to lay before you is so extensive in its details, and of importance so evident and so striking, that.I shall best gratify my own feelings, as well as best discharge my duty, by abstaining from all observations, which, though collateral to the subject of the day, would serve only to extend the consideration, and by proceeding, as expeditiously as possible, to state distinctly and shortly the resources which we may confidently rely on for the service of the year, and the amount of the expenses which we may have to incur.

Before I proceed to that most important part of the task of this day, to open to the committee a view of the general resources of the country, by which we may be able to provide for the necessary service of the year, and to shew them, that however great the demand may be, we are fully equal to the emergency, and prepared to meet it, it is my duty to state the amount of the supply, as it has been already voted, and that may be yet necessary to vote, for the service.

The committee will recollect that the vote for the ordinary of the Navy was for 120,000 seamen and marines.	£6,240,000	
To which add the amount of extraordinaries.	1,420,000	
Making together the sum of . . .	7,660,000	
But, that I may not leave any part of the service, much less this most valuable and favourite service, short; and that our exertions may be carried to the utmost possible length, I will take for the Navy the farther sum of.	2,500,000	
Making altogether the service of the Navy for the year 1797, amount to——————;		£ 10,160,000
The amount of the sums already voted for the Army is	£6,613,000	

The account of the extraordinaries is not yet complete; but, as far as they can be made up with accuracy according to the account now presented, they appear to be of excess above the sum allowed last year .	£4,300,000	
Total of the Army		£10,913,000
The amount of the ordnance		1,623,000
The miscellaneous services, including the sums given for the provision of the emigrant priests, and under all the usual heads		378,000
Deficiency of land and malt		350,000
Sum for the diminution of the national debt		200,000
Surplus of grants in the year 1796, which ought to have come in aid of the service, amounting to 420,000/. will enable me to take the deficiency of the taxes at so much less ; I shall take the deficiency of taxes at		1,023,000
A vote of credit which I jntend to move for, and which I shall afterwards explain, for		3,000,000
Making the total of the supply for the year 1797		27,647,000
The first article of Ways and Means, is of course the land and malt		2,750,000
The growing produce of the consolidated fund I shall take at a very small sum, the reasons of which I shall state afterwards		1,075,000
Surplus of grants of the year 1796, and not applied in the year 1796		420,000
Profit on the lottery, after defraying the small sum which remains upon it, due to the loyalists, amounting to 80 or 100,000/., I shall take at		200,000
The loan, the circumstances of which I shall afterwards explain		18,000,000
Exchequer bills, which I propose to issue in a new manner, and which I shall afterwards explain and prove to be both practicable and expedient		5,500,000
Total of Ways and Means		£27,945,000

So that there is an excess of ways and means over the amount

of the supply of 298,000/. I have stated the extent of what will be necessary for the supply of the year; but in order to anticipate, as far as human foresight can provide for, an expense so large, in circumstances so difficult, I shall endeavour to bring every thing distinctly before the committee. In the first place, I shall shortly state the terms of the loan, without comprehending all the singular combinations which have entered into this transaction, so creditable and glorious to the country. The new annual interest to be paid for the loan, as it stands at present, is subject to a great reduction, if the funds should rise on the event of a safe and permanent peace,—an event to which we have a right to look, and which this great display of national zeal and spirit is calculated to accelerate; yet I wish to view it as a permanent interest, and to consider it without the prospect of reduction. In that way the committee will see that the loan was made at the interest of only 5/. *12s. 6d.* per cent.; and I should not think myself justifiable if I were to provide a less sum than for the whole as a permanent annuity. It is also my intention to add the usual sum of one per cent, to the sinking fund, as if the loan was not to be paid off. In this view, taking the interest at £5 12*s. 6d.* and adding one per cent, on account of the sinking fund, the total interest on 18,000,000/. at 6/. 15s. per cent., would be 1,215,000/. I have proposed that we shall look to an issue of exchequer bills to the amount of 5,500,000/. as a fair and practicable means for the service of the year, and I do this because I am convinced that so many may be circulated both with economy and advantage. Other species of floating debt have been found to be extremely inconvenient and injurious, from the enormity of the discount to which they fell on account of the length of period they had to run. But exchequer bills were not subject to the same objection, though I should not think it wise to issue them even for the period of a twelvemonth. I think that it is an available means for the public until the instalments of the loan shall be made, to issue exchequer bills at short periods, say, at three months, which bearing an interest of a fraction above 5 per cent., would be certain of never falling to a discount, because they would be receivable in payment of the instalments of the loan. The interest is as near as possible to 5 per cent, to accommodate it in the usual way to a certain sum per diem. I am confident that no inconvenience will be suffered from keeping afloat this amount of exchequer bills, but that, on the contrary, it will be attended with advantage

and accommodation to the public. If, at the end of the year, it should be found advisable to take them out of circulation, there will be no difficulty in the task. I propose to provide interest at five per cent, on the amount of these exchequer bills, which will be 275,000/.

It is my wish to look to every object for which we have to provide in the course of the year; with this view we must look to the amount of interest to be provided for the navy debt beyond the amount of the former votes.

The total excess of the Navy Debt beyond estimate of 1796, is	£8,250,000
Of this sum there was provided for	4,000,000
There remained therefore to be provided, interest for	£4,250,000

I shall by-and-by state to the committee the grounds of the computation that I made, and of the reasons why it has so far exceeded the estimate that I made, and I trust that I shall do it to their satisfaction. It ought to teach us to look forward to the probable addition that may be required for the service of the present year, and to provide largely against unforeseen circumstances. In this view, having already taken 2,500,000/. in the estimate of supply, I am confident that I shall cover every possible demand under the head of navy debt, if I provide interest for 3,000,000/. more.

There is only one other article to be added to the above, and which at the same time ought not to be taken into the estimate of the expense of the year. The committee will recollect that one of the taxes of the last session was, in its passage through parliament, found to be so complicated, that it was expedient to give it up, viz. the tax on collateral succession. It was taken for the sum of 140,000/. and not having, as it was my intention to do, provided another tax in its room, it is now my duty to make up for that deficiency ; but of course this is not a sum to be taken as any part of the expense of the current year.

The total of the annuity to be raised by new burdens on the people for these distinct heads therefore is	£2,222,000
But from this amount I have to deduct the sum which the East-India Company have engaged	

to pay, namely, interest on 2,000,000/. of the above loan for four years; I have to deduct therefore	£112000
Making the sum to be raised by annual taxes .	£2,110,000

I should not think that I had attained my object by the engagement of the India company to advance this for four years, though undoubtedly it is a very handsome sum, if afterwards it was to be left afloat, and might come to be provided for at that period. But I have recent information that it is to be recommended to the court of directors, and by them to the general court, that the company shall undertake to pay this sum annually during the remainder of their existing charter. They certainly cannot undertake more liberally, and it is a handsome and becoming return on their part for the protection which they received from the country in the moment of their pressure, that they thus come forward to contribute so liberally to the public service.

My next duty is to enumerate the particulars of the taxes by which it is proposed to defray the heavy burden which it becomes necessary to impose, in order to meet the exigency of our situation. This is a painful, but at the same time indispensable part of my duty ; and I trust that we shall not shrink from performing this duty in its full extent, from any inconvenience which it may present, to our constituents, far less to ourselves; that we shall not fail to give a pledge to Europe that we have both spirit and resources to look our situation in the face, and to provide for every emergency which may arise in the present contest. While I talk thus, it is not because I feel the hardship on others to be small; on myself most assuredly I feel it to be great. Every additional burden which it is necessary to impose upon the country, is undoubtedly a new subject of regret. But at the same time it is with peculiar satisfaction I reflect, that the period at which I am now speaking is pregnant with a thousand circumstances, which at once proclaim the inexhaustible resources, and the unconquered spirit of the British nation. At such a period I may confidently come forward without disguising the burthens which the exigency of the crisis requires, and at the same time without affecting to treat them as light.—Light indeed they cannot be considered, except they be so represented in comparison with the immense importance of the objects of the

contest, and in comparison with those unnatural and violent means which have been employed by the enemy, and have almost exhausted their resources. I should not do my duty if I did not propose such objects of taxation as may appear sufficient to meet the scale of expenditure for which it becomes necessary to provide. At the same time I am well aware that these objects will admit of much discussion, and that they cannot be fully considered or fairly examined, in the first instance. Their particular consideration must necessarily be the subject of future debate. I have therefore to deprecate all hasty objections, and to solicit from the candour of gentlemen, that they will, at least, forbear to cavil at any object of taxation which I may propose, unless they are confident that they are acquainted with and can propose a better substitute. Where taxes are to be raised to so considerable an amount, as in the present instance, it is impossible to provide adequate means, which will not be liable to much objection. But though it will be impossible to avoid particular objections, it seems upon the whole to be the most fair and unexceptionable principle of taxation, that the more generally the burdens are diffused, the more likely will they be to be equal. If we have seen the revenue of this country, even under circumstances the most unfavourable, so rapidly accumulated and drawn from such various channels, we may surely look with confidence to the capability of the country to bear those further burdens which will be required in the present moment. It has surely shewn a degree of energy, even more than sufficient to encounter all the difficulties of the crisis. If, after all the distresses of the last war, the burthens of which were at the time so severely felt, and which seemed almost to have exhausted the resources of the country, the revival of the revenue in the first years of peace was so rapid; if within a few years it has attained a state so flourishing; and if we, from the unfortunate experience of some years of war, have been enabled to ascertain that it has now arrived at that degree of solidity and permanency, so as to leave the old sources of the national income untouched, and even shew itself equal to produce new, certainly we may look forward with confidence to prosperity beyond all estimate on the restoration of the blessings of peace. In the meantime the most equal principle of taxation will be to render the objects as diffuse as possible, and with this view I propose to select a few of the different branches of the existing revenue which seem best calculated for the purpose,

in order to provide the additional taxes necessary for the service of the year.

The first branch of the revenue which I mean to propose to your attention is undoubtedly one of the most important, and which has appeared to me particularly eligible as a source of supply on the present occasion—I allude to that branch of revenue which has arisen from the excise. The taxes drawn from this quarter have in every instance been so successful as to give us confidence with respect to any new experiment which we may be induced to make. The first object which I mean to suggest is one which at different times has occupied the attention of the house, and occasioned considerable discussion —I mean the article of tea. Notwithstanding the additional duty lately imposed on this article, the sales of last year at the India house have considerably exceeded those of any former year, both in respect of quantity, and of quality and value. It is evident that the consumption is greatly increased, and is now universally prevalent. This circumstance pointed out the propriety of a small additional tax. From the extensive consumption of the article, this tax must be immensely diffused, and therefore can only be felt in a trifling degree by any individual. Small, however, as that proportion might be, it is still my intention that this tax shall in no degree be allowed to bear hard on the lower classes of the community. I mean, therefore, to exempt from the operation of this tax the whole of that coarser sort of tea, which I understand to be the common beverage of the poorer classes, and which at the India sales does not exceed two shillings per pound. It may be urged that any additional tax on tea will have the effect to encourage smuggling. At the same time it may be remarked that the coarse species of tea, which is expressly exempted from the operation of the tax, is the most easily smuggled, the least liable to be damaged, and also the most likely to be an object of consumption among the lower classes, who inhabit the coast. This additional tax I propose to rate at 10 per cent, on the value of the article, and if we attend to the circumstances of the additional importation and the great increase of the sales, we may reasonably expect that the return will be amply productive. I am aware that at former periods it has been found expedient to adopt measures of an entirely different tendency, which at the time undoubtedly were highly beneficial. But, though we owe the benefit of the suppression of illicit trade to the low price to which tea was reduced by former

proceedings of the legislature, it by no means follows that it is still necessary to continue the same policy. There is not the same danger to be apprehended from the attempts of smugglers after their capital has been withdrawn, their habits broken, and such regulations adopted, as must operate as an effectual bar to their future practices. If the return of peace tend to diminish the risk of smugglers, at the same time it will so reduce the charges of the India company as will enable them to lower their prices. Taking the additional duty on tea at the rate of 10 per cent, on the average of the sales of three years, it would amount to 240,000/.

An additional duty on sales by auction of two-pence half-penny in the pound on sales of estates, and three-pence on all sales of furniture, goods and merchandize, will produce 40,000/.

An additional duty of *is.* per 1000 on all bricks made in Great Britain, I estimate at 36,000/.

There is another article, which I have to submit to the committee, which suggests nearly the same considerations as the additional duty on tea. One considerable duty has already been gained on this article, and the consumption is so pernicious, that with respect to this article no man could wish that there should be any limits to the duty, so far as are consistent with the means of safely collecting it. So long as the consumption continues to a considerable extent, an addition to the duty must be considered as highly eligible in every view of policy and morals. I propose to raise the duty on spirits in the same proportion as before, viz. one penny on every gallon of wash, amounting to five-pence on every gallon of British spirits. The duty on foreign spirits will be advanced in the same proportion. The total amount on British and foreign spirits I estimate at the sum of 210,000/.

Another circumstance I have to mention, must be satisfactory, so far as it presents a new and eligible mode of supply, and yet must occasion no small degree of astonishment in the committee :—the circumstance to which I allude respects the state of the distilleries in Scotland. The mode of collecting the duty on spirits in that quarter has been by a duty on the contents of the still. The sum raised in this way, in the first instance, was so inconsiderable as not to deserve to be mentioned. By the last regulation it amounted to a sum of eighteen pounds, and had altogether produced a sum of one hundred thousand pounds. On calculating the amount of the quantity

of spirits distilled in that country, still the duty was found very inadequate to that which subsisted on the same quantity in England. The disproportion is so very great, as ought not to be suffered to continue. I have had representations from the most respectable people in Scotland, suggesting, that either with a view to the morals of the people, or on fair grounds of policy, the present was a most eligible object of revenue. While a duty of eighteen pounds has been charged on the contents of a still through the rest of Scotland, only a sum of two pounds ten shillings has been charged on the same contents in the Highlands. The propriety of this exemption has been urged from various local considerations—the nature of the soil, the grain produced, &c. It may be proper to discuss, whether this exemption should be allowed to continue in its full extent? and whether the reasons which have formerly been urged, ought to be allowed the same weight in the present moment? The smallest sum which I propose to lay on the stills through the rest of Scotland, is triple the present duty of eighteen pounds on the licence. Notwithstanding this increase, the duty will not be equal to the proportion of duties in England. The sum arising from this increased duty on the stills I estimate at 300,0001. Even if the effect should be to lessen the consumption of spirits, still the revenue will not suffer in any material degree. This diminution must occasion greater consumption of malt liquor, and in this way will equally contribute to promote the interests of the revenue, while it will have a much more beneficial tendency with respect to the health and morals of the people.

The next tax I mention with regret, because it will fall in some degree on the lower classes of the people, though it is one which, on the whole, seems to be a proper object of taxation. I mean an additional tax of *2s. 6d.* on every hundredweight of sugar. This I calculate will amount to a sum of 280,0001.

On brimstone, bar iron, oil of olives, staves, I propose to lay an addition of ten per cent., amounting to 430,0001.; and on all other customs, wines, coals, and prize goods excepted, a new duty of five per cent, amounting to 110,0001.

The whole of these duties from the customs will amount to 466,0001.

A noble lord formerly imposed a duty on houses; taking the number of windows and the rent as the criterion of the sum to be paid. This last seemed to be a tolerably fair criterion of the different proportions which ought to be contributed by each

individual, as it might in general be supposed that the rent and size of the house were regulated by the means of subsistence of the occupier. This, however, was in many cases a fallacious conclusion. In some instances in the country the extent of a house was found to be a disadvantage. The possession of an old large mansion-house, where it was accompanied with a small fortune, so far from subjecting the proprietor to additional taxes, ought rather to operate as an exemption. The value of houses of the same size was to be estimated not so much according to their extent, as according to the circumstances with which they were connected, such as the number of servants kept, and the amount of other assessed taxes charged on the occupier. The most equitable mode, therefore, seemed to be to levy a tax in proportion to the other assessed taxes, as these might be supposed to bear a more certain proportion to the fortunes of the individuals. The number of servants, for instance, kept in a house, will in general correspond with the style of living and fortunes of the inhabitants. The sum arising from a tax levied in this way, I calculate will amount to 150,0001. and this, with an addition to the assessed taxes, I take at **290,000/.**

The conveyance of articles, which, from the present advanced state of society, is put on so much better a footing, seems to be at present a fair object of taxation. It is, undoubtedly, but just that those articles should be made to contribute to the public service in return for that convenience and protection which they derive from the public. Letters in a particular manner come under this description. The increased facility with which they are transmitted to a distance, and the great convenience afforded to correspondence in consequence of recent improvements, may fairly allow that something should be added to the present rate of postage. The present rate of charging letters is first for one, two, or three stages; it then goes on to eighty miles, and from that to one hundred and fifty. This mode of charging by stages is very unequal, as one stage consists of more miles than another. I am therefore of opinion that it will be a more equitable mode to charge by miles than by stages; I also propose to adopt a new regulation with respect to gradations, and with respect to the bye and cross roads. These regulations, with an additional penny to be paid on each letter, will, according to the best calculation, amount to about 250,000/.

An additional duty on stage coaches will produce 60,000/.

The conveyance of parcels by stage coaches and **other** vehicles is also a fair object of taxation. I propose to subject them to a small stamp duty on booking them, which will afford additional security to the conveyance, and I estimate will produce 60,000/.

The only other tax which I have to propose is on a species of conveyance, which has also been much indebted to recent improvements—the conveyance by inland navigation. This accommodation to the trade and industry of the country, has owed much to the protection and patronage of the legislature. To it the proprietors have been indebted for the permission to employ their capital in a way so beneficial to themselves and the public. It is therefore but fair that while the extent of their improvements discovers their increasing opulence, the legislature should apply to this source of prosperity for assistance to the exigencies of the state. It is proposed to make a small addition to the tolls already charged on that navigation amounting to about one eighth. If an addition had been made to the tax on insurance against fire and water, and had been found fully to answer, surely those individuals who derived so much accommodation as well as a considerable saving from this new mode of conveyance, might, in return for the benefit they experienced, be called upon to contribute a small proportion to the exigencies of the state. As this eighth would be charged only on the existing tolls, all the exemptions which were now allowed, would still be permitted to hold good. The following is a recapitulation of the taxes.

EXCISE.

10 per cent, on teas	£240,000
10 per cent, on coffee, &c.	30,000
Auctions	40,000
Bricks	36,000
Spirits	**210,000**
Licences on Scots distillery	300,000
Total of excise duties	^856,000

CUSTOMS.

Sugar	£280,000
Pepper	10,000
10 per cent, on brimstone, iron, olive oil and staves	43,000

5 per cent, on all other customs, prize goods, coals and wine excepted .	; £ i 10,000	
Other articles on import, such as starch, bricks, &c.	23,000	
Total of customs		£466,000
Assessed taxes, and new house tax.		296,000
Regulation of stamps.		30,000
Postage and regulation of post-office.		250,000
Stage coaches.		60,000
Stamp on parcels.		60,000
Canal navigation.		120,000
Total amount of new taxes.		2,138,000
Amount of the annuity to be raised.		2,110,000
Excess of taxes		£28,000

Such are the suurces from which I propose to draw the necessary sums to provide for the interest of the enormous expense of the year. I am not insensible that in several of these taxes I may have made an erroneous calculation, and have extended the estimate of the produce beyond what it may ultimately turn out to be; in this, however, I trust the committee will believe I have been guided by the strictest regard to truth, and have taken the best criterion that was in my power, experience, for my guide. In those taxes which I could subject to that test, I have confidence in the accuracy of my statement; in those which are untried I have at least been moderate in my calculation. I am happy to say, that in looking at the resources of the country, we have a right to have confidence in the full production of these duties. They are diffused over so many articles, that they will operate with equality, and yet will not bear hard on the classes of the poor. If we look at the production of the permanent taxes, we shall have no reason to believe that the war has materially injured the sources of our prosperity.

The permanent revenue for the year, ending 10th October, 1796, amounted to.	£14,012,003
And notwithstanding the operation of the new duties and the influence of a state of war, the average produce of those duties for the last three years, was.	£13,855,000

On the side of supply, I have taken but the sum of 3,000,000/. to meet the further extraordinaries for the year 1797, though the extraordinaries for the last year amounted to a much larger sum. There are two grounds for my not thinking it necessary to make a larger provision; there were many articles of charge in 1796, which will not recur in 1797. And secondly, there were several sums advanced which are likely to be repaid, and upon which we have a right to calculate. For instance, in the advances of 1796, made by commissioners upon oath to the merchants of Grenada, there is the sum of 900,000/. which we have a right to believe was advanced upon good security, and which will, no doubt, be speedily available to the public

Another expense of a particular nature has been incurred in the interval of parliament. I allude to assistance which has been granted to the emperor, in order to enable him to carry on his military operations. That the expense of the country has been swelled by exertions which have been so gallantly supported, and have terminated so beneficially to the common cause, I think no man will regret. I am persuaded no man will be of opinion that we ought to have withheld from a brave and faithful ally the assistance necessary to preserve his independence, and to restore him to glory. That assistance ministers thought proper to grant, not ignorant of the responsibility which they thereby incurred, not forgetting their own duty, nor fearful of the event. They reflected that in the critical situation of the country it might have been matter of extreme delicacy to have brought forward a public discussion on the propriety of advancing a sum to a foreign court; they were aware of the alarm which might have been excited by any proposition to send a quantity of specie out of the country. It is well known that a generally received opinion of the mischief which may be attendant on a measure is often productive of the reality. The consequence of discussion might have been to have suggested the grant of a sum too small for the wants of our ally, or too large for the means of the country. On that account ministers declined taking the opinion of parliament. They did not so far yield to their desire of aiding the emperor, as to step beyond the bounds of prudence, nor did they so tamely shrink from their own responsibility, as to withhold that assistance which they deemed to be essentially important for the common cause. A sum of about twelve hundred thousand pounds has, I believe, been allotted to his imperial majesty. A future

opportunity will be afforded for the discussion of this particular topic, which it was not otherwise necessary for me to mention in the present instance, than.because I was anxious that no circumstance connected with the national expenditure should be kept back on this occasion. I am convinced, that, to have withheld the assistance which has been granted, would have been to have sacrificed the best hope of this country for bringing the present contest to a fortunate issue. It is my intention, if this conduct is found to merit your approbation, humbly and earnestly to claim and solicit your confidence in continuing the same system. I cannot, for the reasons I have already mentioned, propose to you any specific sum to be granted to his imperial majesty: but, if you think proper to repose in ministers the same confidence in granting such occasional aid as they may see to be necessary, it shall, on their part, be exercised with the same caution. I have therefore proposed a sum of three millions, chiefly with a view of enabling ministers to make advances to our allies if we shall be compelled to persevere in the war. At the same time, we are not to consider such sums as lost to the country. We have seen too many of those qualities, the inherent companions of good faith and honour, displayed in the recent exertions of his imperial majesty, to entertain any suspicions with respect to his conduct. And we may confidently hope for the happiest result in the present contest from his courage and perseverance, fed by our resources and supported by our constancy. On this ground I proposed the vote of three millions. I shall add nothing farther on the subject of army extraordinaries.

On the subject of navy debt, it was my desire and expectation that a full and perfect account should have been laid upon the table, so as to have given to the committee a distinct idea of the whole amount for the year. I find, however, that the account has not been presented entire. I am able to state roundly whac it is expected to amount to, from the progress that has been already made, and as it is laid before the house:

The net amount of the navy debt up to the 30th November appears to be	;£i5,i7ijOoo
To which add, as the probable sum to the 31st December, 1796	.1,000,000
Add to this, the sum of navy debt first funded	4,414,000

And the amount of the navy debt on the 31st December, 1796, will be in all. . . .	20,585,000
On the 31st December, 1795, it amounted to .	12,362,000
So that the debt incurred in 1796 is	8,223,000
I foresaw and provided for.	4,000,000
It has therefore exceeded my estimate, by . .	£4,223,000

and it is my duty to explain how this excess has happened ; not that I mean to shelter myself from the imputation of error, so difficult to avoid in a calculation so extremely large; but to shew, as far as it is in my power, that it arose from circumstances which I could neither foresee nor prevent. The explanation will perhaps serve to convince the committee that we may look with perfect reliance to a diminution of these expenses for the current year.

In the first place, the expense of transports exceeded the sum which I had imagined, and which on the most mature calculations, made by persons of the greatest experience, I presented to parliament, by no less a sum than 1,300,000/. This arose from a variety of circumstances which no human foresight could anticipate, and which, though the most to be regretted, are the easiest to be excused. By the unfortunate vicissitudes of weather, by the delays and disasters which unfortunately happened to our expeditions; by the quantity of transports that were necessary to be taken up in consequence of these things, and by the new regulations of this board not being brought into perfect activity.

Another head of expense which has occurred, and which it was impossible to foresee, was the sum incurred for foreign transports, in order to bring into our own ports stores and provisions, which might otherwise have fallen into the hands of the enemy; for the high demurrage which we have been obliged to pay, and to which our courts of admiralty, however reluctantly, have found it just and equitable to submit. By these causes the expense of foreign transports, demurrage, &c. has amounted to 900,000/.

Another head of unforeseen expense was the unprecedented discount to which the navy bills fell, and which operated so injuriously upon commerce and on public circulation. On this head of discount there has been paid no less than the sum of

600,000/. Thus, therefore, the committee will see that in three articles only, which it was impossible to anticipate, there has been expended near 3,000,000/.; and when they take into their farther consideration the circumstances of our having a new maritime enemy to encounter, and also a threatened invasion to repel, for which measures of precaution have been taken, it will not be thought that the sum of 4,200,000/. above my calculation is a very remarkable error. The practical use that we must draw, however, from the fact certainly is, not to avoid all estimates, but to make our estimates with as much correctness as possible, at the same time claiming a large, though discreet, indulgence for unforeseen circumstances; and in the statement of the supply I think I have made ample provision for the naval exertions of the year, even if the obstinacy of the enemy should oblige us to continue those exertions through the whole of the year. The committee will recollect that there has teen already voted—

Under the head of navy, ...	£7,660,000
To which I added the farther sum of	2,500,000
Making together the sum of.	10,160,000
And to this I now add, for which I have also made provision, the probable sum of.	3,000,000
Total of navy for the year 1797.	£13,160,000

which the committee will see, if they deduct the sums that have been paid under the head of transports, foreign freights for the bringing home of flour, &c, together with demurrage, and the amount of the discounts on the navy bills, (all articles which are not likely to recur) is fully equal to the expenditure of the last year, which, with all these unforeseen accidents, was **15,212,000/.**

In stating these estimates I have endeavoured to bring forward to the view of the committee all the information which they can possibly desire on the subject. I have stated in its utmost extent the scale of expenditure which it may be necessary to incur, if we shall still be called to persevere in a contest connected with our honour, our happiness, our independence, and safety. I trust that I have said enough on this topic, and that if the alternative should be presented, the British nation would need no incentive to support such a contest with vigour

and perseverance, rather than submit to protracted misery, evaded mischief, and certain disgrace. Such, undoubtedly, will be their conduct, if they wish to maintain the character which they inherit from their ancestors, or to transmit the privileges they enjoy undiminished to their posterity. In this period of the war (God grant that it may be short!) it is still matter of much congratulation, under all we have suffered, under all the accumulated difficulties arising from a contest as unexampled in its exertions, as transcendently important in its objects, and notwithstanding the violent and unnatural means employed by the enemy, that, by opposing to them the constant fruits of regular industry, protected by a system of civil order, we have been able to meet the exigency of the crisis, and to provide ample resources for every branch of the public service. If, after four years of war, not only the permanent revenue is not affected, but even the new taxes are found to be fully productive; if the state of internal industry and domestic improvement exhibit a picture of prosperity, which would amaze incredulity, if it did not address itself to observation, we have surely great and solid ground of satisfaction. I have formerly had occasion to describe the highly flourishing situation of our commerce, which, even under circumstances the most unfavourable, has increased with astonishing and unexampled rapidity. It is with infinite pleasure I am enabled to state that the receipts of the last quarter fully confirm the symptoms of our growing prosperity; and if those of the other quarters increase in the same proportion, the whole exports for the year will amount to thirty millions. This flourishing state of our affairs ought not to lessen our moderation, or abate our desire for peace. But that peace is not worthy of the name which is not calculated to afford internal and external security, to preserve to us the blessings of our constitution, to protect the operations of our industry, and to maintain the dignity of the British character among foreign nations. It is the restoration of such a peace which alone is truly desirable, and in seeking which, we ought to be careful not to mistake the phantom for the reality.

I beg pardon for not being able to with-hold the expression of my feelings on this subject. They are feelings which want not to be enforced by words. They are the feelings of the British nation spoken by substantial acts, evinced by the most unequivocal displays of zeal, the most liberal exertions in aid of the public cause, and supported by powerful and ample resources. It is my most fervent wish that the spirit of Britain

may be an example to other countries, that her resources may ever keep pace with her zeal, and her perseverance be crowned with the most distinguished success. I now move, Sir, " that towards raising the supply granted to his Majesty, the sum of 18,ooo;ooo/. be raised by annuities."

The several resolutions were afterwards put and carried, and the report of the committee was ordered to be received on the following day.

ON THE GERMAN SUBSIDY

December 14, 1796.[1]

WHEN I consider, Sir, the nature of the motion which is this day brought forward by the right honourable gentleman against his Majesty's ministers, and the serious charge which it involves, I must regard myself as particularly implicated in that charge, as possessing a particular share of responsibility in the conduct of that measure which is censured as a violation of the constitution, and a breach of the privileges of this house. I have, however, in the discussion of this question everything to expect from the candour and justice of the house. An imputation of a most serious kind has been advanced against his Majesty's ministers; but it is necessary that all which may be offered on both sides should be fairly heard, before any decision can take place. It is requisite that gentlemen should be in full possession of every important fact that can be adduced, before they hasten to a conclusion which necessarily involves in it matter of such weight and magnitude. The house should clearly know the general principles on which it is to decide : it should know the grounds on which the theory of this part of the constitution is erected: it should also know, what the particular instances are in point of practice that militate in a certain degree against the general principles. I say, Sir, when these considerations

1 Mr. Fox, after an introductory speech, condemning, as unconstitutional, the conduct of ministers in having granted money to the Emperor of Germany and the Prince of Conde, without the consent of Parliament, moved the following resolution : " That his Majesty's ministers, having authorised and directed, at different times, without the consent, and during the sitting of Parliament, the issue of various sums of money for the service of his Imperial Majesty, and also for the service of the army under the Prince of Conde, have acted contrary to their duty, and to the trust reposed in them, and have thereby violated the constitutional privileges of this house."

are once known, it will then be incumbent on the house to decide. But I trust it will not be denied, that until these points are completely and satisfactorily ascertained, the house ought, with every view to propriety, to suspend its determination. It is no small object of satisfaction to me, that the full review of former precedents with respect to the present motion, forms a chief ground of it. In such an application of facts, I have considerable reason to be pleased, and I trust I shall clearly demonstrate, before I sit down, that former precedents concur in justifying the measure which is at this moment so severely condemned.

I am, however, not a little surprised to hear the language made use of by an honourable magistrate,[1] who has declared that he has received instructions from his constituents to join in a vote of censure against his Majesty's ministers, for having supplied the emperor with money without the authority of parliament. There is, perhaps, not any question on which a member ought to allow the decided dictates of his own conscience and judgment to be superseded by the instructions of his constituents ; but if there is any case in which a member ought to be particularly anxious to preserve his right of private judgment, it is in the present instance, with respect to a criminal charge : for I think it must be admitted, that it was impossible for the honourable gentleman's constituents to decide in a just and candid manner, on the propriety of giving a vote on a motion, with the particulars of which they must have been unacquainted, and more peculiarly as they must have been totally ignorant of the defence which his Majesty's ministers meant to set up. I have, Sir, to caution the house against those constitutional doctrines which have been maintained in former debates, and particularly on Thursday night last. But without entering into a minute refutation of them, or stating those which I conceive to be strictly just, I cannot help observing, that much is saved for my purpose by the concessions which the right honourable gentleman himself[2] has made. I certainly do not wish to goad the right honourable gentleman into the former opinions he has at different times maintained : I am better content to take his present statements : I am better content with what I have heard from him to-day, and with those general principles which have fallen from him in support of his motion. For as, on a former occasion, when the present subject was first started, the interval of one

[1] Alderman Combe. 2 Mr. Fox.

night made him see the measure more inflammatory than it really is; it now appears that a pause of a few days have diminished his ideas of the inflammatory tendency which, in his own opinion, it possessed. The right honourable gentleman has taken great pains to lay down the great constitutional principles with regard to pecuniary grants, and the use of these grants. I did understand *on* a former night, that the honourable gentleman told us one thing, to which he said there was no exception, namely, that no expense could be incurred without the consent of parliament. I did not altogether subscribe to that doctrine, and I will state, as nearly as possible, the very words of the argument I then used in answer. 1 argued, that the practice of extraordinaries had been adopted at different periods of the history of the country, at periods the most approved in the history of the country, at least at periods which the honourable gentleman must naturally think the most approved—when he was himself in the administration. Extraordinaries, to a large amount, were used during the sitting of parliament, and parliament afterwards justified the act by a vote. The honourable gentleman did then admit, that he never could be supposed to have said that extraordinaries could not be used without the consent of parliament, previously obtained; but when ministers have now adopted the same measure, the propriety of which the honourable gentleman said, he could not be supposed to deny, yet such is his alarm, that he cannot feel himself justified in pausing a moment on the necessity of the actual condemnation of ministers.

However, Sir, it is enough for my purpose to admit, that, according to the fundamental principles of the constitution, all grants must proceed from the commons; that they are afterwards subject to their control, is a principle undeniable : but although the commons are possessed of the power of controlling the application of the supplies raised by them, yet it is a circumstance proved to demonstration, by practice and general observation, that it would be impossible to carry on any wars, that it would be impossible for government to proceed with due regard for the public safety, or with advantage for the public service, if extraordinaries were not raised by parliament. In point of practice, it is evident they have been raised. Those great writers, who have written on the subject subsequent to the revolution, prove that extraordinaries have always been used from that period. I desire to refer to the practice of the whole of the succession of administrations, from

the days of King William down to the present time, when the principles of the constitution are become infinitely more definite, and when, owing to ambition on the part of France, public expenses and the transactions of finance have attained a greater magnitude; and I ask, whether from that period down to the present, the practice of extraordinaries has not been recognized, and admitted? I do not mean of extraordinaries only, but of extraordinary services during the sitting of parliament. I do not state this, as if there was only one or two solitary precedents, but as the uniform practice of all the wars in which this country has been engaged; and that, during such wars, the extraordinaries have been precisely of the description I have stated. Sir, our constitution is one which rests on great and leading principles, but still no one would wish that the constitution should experience any injury by pushing those principles to a rigid and extreme excess. If we are to look into the record books of the constitution, we shall find certain principles laid down, which seem to contradict many acts of parliament, which are held as strictly legal. If we examine the law of parliament, we shall find, that it is derived principally from the general tenor of the whole of the principles of the constitution, illustrated by the particular urgency and necessity of circumstances. If this is the true way which men ought to study the constitution, by applying the principles of it to the exigency of circumstances, let me repeat what I stated on a former nighr, with respect to the impossibility of the measure being wrong, which was done in conformity to the best and most approved principles, as adapted to peculiar events; and let me also ask, how a measure can deserve to be loaded with obloquy and reproach, which in truth is no more than has been the practice of every administration, at those periods when we have been most proud of the constitution? I might remark, that the honourable gentleman, in the course of his speech, has admitted such to have been the practice, because he has himself acted upon it; yet I must admit that the honourable gentleman, when he stated that such was the practice, observed, that because extraordinaries were consonant to practice, it was no reason they should be extended so far, if it could possibly be avoided. The honourable .gentleman, if I understand him right, by that very mode of argument, of the extension of the extraordinaries being attended with so much the more mischief, does, in fact, admit the exception to the principle which he charges me with having violated, and, in short, destroys in effect the very prin-

ciple he before admitted. He told us that every extraordinary service involved the breach of the pledge to satisfy former estimates, by removing the means of paying them to some other service. If his doctrines mean to infer that extraordinaries ought not to be unnecessarily extended, I cannot but perfectly coincide with him : but if his argument has for its object that of rendering all extraordinaries invidious, I hope, in such case, I may be allowed to guard the house against the effects of attending too much to topics opposed to the very same principles which he has before admitted. That extraordinaries are liable to the future observation and control of parliament, is true; but parliament has at all times felt, that it is necessary, for the public safety, that ministers should have the power of using extraordinaries, without appealing to parliament, provided that power, and the means by which those extraordinaries are incurred, are subject to future discussion.

But it is not the question of extraordinaries only that arises. Parliament, finding the impossibility *of* reducing every thing to estimated expenses, has introduced the practice of giving votes of credit, with the power, generally, to apply them as exigencies might require. As far as it has been possible to provide against extraordinaries, which always hitherto has been impracticable, every endeavour has been exerted ; but it is a circumstance in which parliament have certainly acted with great wisdom, that it has not thought proper at any time to interfere with respect to the amount of the sums which ministers might think necessary for supplying the extraordinaries, but merely to make ministers responsible for the application of the sums, and the necessity of the extraordinaries, to the payment of which they are directed. Before I say any more, I will only observe, that it is not likely I should be one to dispute the propriety of the measure of providing for the extraordinaries by the extent of the vote of credit, if such a thing could be adopted ; I have often heard it made a matter of reproach to me, that I endeavoured to estimate every expense and provide for it beforehand. The votes of credit were always smaller in former wars than in the present. In the present war, I have added to the vote of credit other provisions for the purpose of providing for the extraordinaries beforehand; I may therefore be considered as having done all in my power towards endeavouring to take the previous authority of parliament. What then do I say, that there is no difference between a vote of credit and extraordinaries ? As to the vote of credit, I conceive it to be a privilege

granted to his Majesty's ministers to employ a given sum to any such purpose as the exigency of affairs shall require. There is no circumstance, however unforeseen, there is no purpose, be it what it may, no possible event, to which ministers may not think it requisite that a vote of credit is applicable; no expenses upon sudden emergencies, which do not come within the spirit of a vote of credit, subject however to that principle which I shall state. [Here Mr. Grey took notes of what fell from the Chancellor of the'Exchequer.] I observe an honourable gentleman taking notes of what I have just mentioned, and by his manner he seems to express disapprobation. I only hope he will not interrupt me, till he has done me the honour to attend to the whole of what I say, when I have no doubt but I shall be able to convince him I am right. Have I said that, because a vote of credit is applicable to every public service, there is no question of responsibility? Have I said there is no principle of respect, of attention, of deference to parliament? I trust I have neither denied, nor at any one moment of my life have failed to shew by my conduct, that such responsibility does exist. I know that for every exercise of that discretion, regularly given by the act, founded upon the vote of credit, ministers are subject to the same responsibility as for the exercise of every other discretion, which permanently belongs to them as ministers of the crown, and which they are bound to use for the safety, the welfare, and the dignity of the country; a discretion the more important, as it relates to the disposition of the public money: and I trust parliament will not lose sight, that it is their duty to weigh those unforeseen difficulties on which alone government can use the powers with which it is entrusted.

But, Sir, I do not mean to stop here; I do not mean to say that government ought not to be questioned as to the propriety of the measures it may think proper to recur to. I have admitted its liability to be censured. I will admit, that if, at that time of using a vote of credit, ministers foresee any expenditure which appears likely to be of consequence, either with respect to its amount, or the importance or peculiarity of the subject, if it admits of a precise estimate, and if the subject is of such a nature that it can be divulged without injury or inconvenience to the public—should readily admit that that minister would fail in his duty to parliament, that he would not act according to the sound principles of what I believe to be the constitution of the country, if he were not to state the nature of the emergency, and endeavour to estimate the expense; but if

from the nature of the exigency, it should be impolitic to divulge it, in that case, I conceive the minister justified, who conceals it from parliament till a future season. By these principles, as to the general question, I am satisfied that my merits or dements should be tried; If I have, in the opinion of the house, departed from the principles of the constitution, then I have committed an error in judgment: If through an error in judgment I have departed from the principles of the constitution, I admit that I ought to receive the censure of the house, notwithstanding that error proceeded from my having felt it my irresistible duty, in common with the rest of his Majesty's ministers, to act upon principles which I conceived the best calculated to ensure the prosperity and advantage of the country. Let me not be supposed to admit, what the honourable gentleman seems to assume as an instance of candour, namely, that he reserved the question, whether any degree of importance, which might attach to the subject, could possibly be considered an argument for concealing it, or that its importance could make any difference with regard to the estimate of its expense. Of the principle itself, it is not material to say more; but with respect to what the honourable gentleman has stated, I will make this observation. He has said that extraordinaries are admitted on account of indispensable necessity, and that those extraordinaries are such a mischief, that he almost doubts whether they should be suffered at all. I will admit that expense, be it what it will, is indubitably objectionable, and that if the expense arises to a considerable sum, the objection is still stronger; but the greater the expense, the higher is the advance on the responsibility of ministers, and the greater is the inducement for this house to vote to discharge those expenses. The only case has occurred which was in contemplation. If it should appear to the house, that, in consequence of an unforeseen change of circumstances, the necessity of expenditure was increased ; if it should appear that the only opportunity had arrived, in which there was no alternative but that of relinquishing the cause in which the country was engaged, or of advancing the responsibility of ministers; if, I say, this should appear, is it a mark of candour in the honourable gentleman to desire that the urgency only should be put out of the question ?

Why then, Sir, as to the utility of the advance to the emperor, whether it could have been made in a more proper form; whether, by a previous application to parliament, it

would not have been attended with a greater degree of inconvenience ; whether the advance was not made at a time the most critical that could possibly have occurred—these are questions which I shall shortly proceed to discuss. But, assuming for the present, that there was a difficulty about the mode of doing it, what mode, under similar circumstances, would have been more eligible ? In this way it has been tried, and has succeeded: by previously applying to parliament, it is doubtful whether it would have succeeded or not. I entreat gentlemen to recollect the situation of the emperor on the continent; the situation of this country, with respect to the prosecution of the war, or of its termination by a safe and honourable peace: I request them to look back to July or August last; a period when we saw with regret and apprehension the triumphant arms of the French Republic at the gates of Munich, and the territorial possessions of the belligerent powers in danger of being wrested from them. When they look back to this period, let them at the same time contemplate the slow, firm, measured and magnanimous retreat of the gallant Austrian army, and the consequences which followed from a retreat only calculated to ensure the success of their future operations. Will they then ask themselves, dry as the question may be, when so animated a subject is presented to the mind, how far the assurance of the aid which this country was disposed to grant, may have invigorated the spirit of a country making its utmost efforts to resist an invading foe, how far it may have given confidence to their resources, and enabled them to prosecute that line of operations which has been attended with such distinguished success ? With these considerations in his view, is there any man who can regard as a matter of consequence, whether the expense of 900,000/. or 1,200,000/. has been incurred to the country? Is there any man who can question the propriety of the sum allotted for the object, and would be willing, for the sake of so paltry a saving, to give up our share in promoting a service, which has terminated so honourably for the character of our allies, and so beneficially for the general interests of Europe ? Who would not rejoice that he was admitted into partnership so illustrious, and accompanied with such brilliant success ?

———————*Me credite Lesbon,*
Me Tenedon, Chrysenque, & Cyllan Apollinis urbes,
Et Scyron cepisse. Med concussa putate
Procabuisse solo Lyrnessia mania dextra.

We have besides to consider, that whatever in this instance has been given, has only been lent to a power whom we have no reason to distrust. Even if a sum had been given to a much larger amount, it would surely have been amply repaid by the success which has attended the exertions of our allies, and the important advantages which have been gained to the common cause. In the course of discussion on this subject, frequent mention has been made of the opinion of the public. The public are not so dead or so insensible as either to be ignorant of the advantages which have been obtained, or ungrateful towards those to whose gallant exertions they are indebted on the present occasion. There is not a man, even the meanest individual in the country, who will not feel himself more than repaid for the small quota which he will be required to bring forward in aid of the public service, by the important benefits which have been secured to the general interests of Europe. There is not, I will venture to say, an Englishman who does not feel the most ardent sympathy with the magnanimity, the resources, the spirit, and perseverance which have been displayed by Austria in her recent exertions, and who does not rejoice that the contributions of England have been brought forward in aid of operations which have been equally marked by their gallantry and success. I will not think so ill of the good sense of my countrymen, as to suppose that they can regret any trifling expense, which has been the means of obtaining such signal advantages. The question alone is, whether there is any doubt of the exigence of the measure, whether there is any doubt of its necessity, and whether the service would have been performed by a previous statement to parliament.

Here, Sir, let me state to this house, or rather repeat what I have shortly stated on a former night. The house will recollect, that from the principles on which I conceive a government should act, it never could have been in my contemplation, or that of his Majesty's ministers, under the vote of credit, to propose advancing the whole of the sum which turned out to be necessary for the emperor. That it was not my intention, is proved by this circumstance, that at the very period of proposing the vote of credit, a reserve was expressly made for a loan to be specifically brought forward, and submitted to parliament, to a much larger amount than the vote of credit. What inference do I wish to draw from this? First of all, that it is a pretty clear and evident proof, that it in

reality appeared, by the Austrians being so much in want, that his Majesty's ministers had an impression of the necessity of assisting the emperor. Could they have any motive to hold out a loan, if there was no such thing in agitation? What view could any government have in stating the necessity of an Austrian loan, if they did not see the occasion for one? When we asked for the vote of credit, it was plain we were not asking for a vote of credit for services unforeseen, but that we intended to apply it as it has been applied. Gentlemen will recollect, that on the first loan of eighteen millions, it was stated as uncertain the precise time it would be called for; that the precise time depended on the result of an intercourse between his Majesty and the emperor, without which it was impossible to settle the extent of it. But it is true, I felt that, in consequence of the extraordinary extent of the drain of money, some time would be necessary before the influx of trade would be such as to render a measure of that kind practicable in its execution, or safe in its impression; for of all subjects, that which relates to credit, or the stagnation of money, the delicacy of which every man knows, is that in which it is necessary to be particularly circumspect. Now, how does this stand? I was sanguine that a much shorter interval would have diminished the scarcity. Afterwards, at a much later period, I found that it would be impossible to bring forward the loan. Under this impression, I did think it advisable to take the step I have taken, a short time previous to the end of last parliament. How far that can be fairly imputed to me as a crime, is a question I shall have occasion to discuss. However, this is the first principle of my defence, that when the campaign was advancing, so that the emperor could not wait for any proof of the reality of his hopes of an increase of pecuniary supply, in conformity to what had been done before, and according to principles recognized by parliament, I thought it expedient, for the success of his arms, to send the means of repelling the enemy.

The principal question is, whether this measure has deprived you of any thing you possessed? whether any disadvantage has been the consequence of it, so as to make our situation more embarrassed now than it would have been some months ago, by a loan taking place? I believe the situation of mercantile men, and the pecuniary state of the country, is more favourable now than they were at the periods when the several remittances to the emperor were issued. This I state not merely on the sug-

gestions of any particular member of this house, not merely in consequence of any discovered public opinion; but I state it on evident grounds of reason. Nor can I for a moment suppose that the members of this house, that the public will long suspend the delegation of their assent to a measure founded equally in the justice and expediency of the motives which gave it birth. But however this may be, I have on this occasion the satisfaction of knowing that I am not stating my own sentiments only, but also those of the persons who were the contractors for the last loan. The contractors for that loan themselves felt then, and have since communicated to me, the inconveniencies that had resulted to commerce in general from the immense, but necessary drains in the money market. They had felt that any specific proposition to guarantee a fresh loan to the emperor would have sensibly affected the money market: would have depreciated the funds, and depressed the public credit. Had I upon that occasion adopted the mode of a public loan; had I come to parliament, when parliament first sat to deliberate on public measures; had I, while the necessities of the empire and the dearest interests of Europe depended in some measure, the one for relief, the other for preservation, on the remittance of certain portions of that sum of 1,200,000/.;—had I in that eventful crisis done any thing that might, in its ultimate consequences, increase the difficulties of that ally, endanger and risk the liberties of Europe, what, let me ask, would have been the language of the honourable gentleman, who has this night censured my conduct, and made it the subject of a specific motion? I repeat it: The persons best acquainted with the money market were, at the periods I have mentioned, deeply impressed with a sense of its growing embarrassment, and seriously felt the inconveniencies necessarily concomitant to a state of warfare. They felt those inconveniencies, but they more than felt the justice of the contest which had operated as the cause of them. In their opinion, the pecuniary situation of the country was such as would have rendered the public avowal of any loan to the emperor extremely impolitic, and by an ill-timed discussion of its propriety, have produced those evils I have in part detailed. To them I submitted whether a public loan would be prudent in such circumstances, but they were unanimous in their preference of the adopted mode. A proof this, that I could have no intention to violate the constitution. That I had not hastily, and immaturely adopted the alternative; that I made those

preliminary arrangements; that my enquiries on the subject were as general and earnest as I have this night avowed, is well known, not only to the individuals with whom I consulted, but also to my colleagues in the ministry. I appeal, without fear of being contradicted, I appeal to those in my confidence, whether such were or such were not my sentiments, whether such was or was not my conduct on that occasion? At this time the situation of the empire was also so peculiar, that his Majesty's servants could not but have a strong and influencing sense of the impropriety of affording publickly the aid that situation so much required. The arms of the French republic were victorious in almost every quarter, the empire threatened with destruction, and Europe with ruin. This was, I own, the reverse of our once favourable hopes: from the exertions of that ally our expectations had been different; but could any temporary reverse of circumstances justify a measure that must' have entailed on that ally a permanent mischief? Surely we, "who had considered ourselves entitled to share in the good fortune of the arms of Austria, would not justly have separated our interests in her adversity. Surely that ally, of whose good faith and candour, of whose steady attachment to the principles of the alliance we had so many and such splendid proofs; that ally, who had almost singly resisted the destructive progress of an impetuous and enthusiastic enemy; yes, the house of Austria eminently merited our confidence and our esteem. But these were not enough. The empire was in actual danger; her treasury exhausted; and many of her princes forced to abandon her defence. It was in this conjuncture that his Majesty's servants, faithful at least to their sense of the danger, afforded to Germany that assistance which I am proud to say had been in a great measure the means of saving not only that particular empire, but a vast portion of Europe. Actuated by these considerations, thus hurried by existing necessities, to adopt a particular measure, I natter myself few who hear me will in the end fail to discover, that the act itself, even supposing it to be unconstitutional, could not be the result of a deliberate intention to violate acts of parliament.

The right honourable gentleman has supposed that the measure was now brought forward under cover of the glory of the Austrian successes; but I have to remind that honourable gentleman, and the house, that the resolution of his Majesty's ministers, to assist the emperor, was taken not under the flattering phantom of delusive glory, not because the house of

Austria was resuming, under the auspices of one of its illustrious members, its former spirit, and had regained its ardour; not because the French had been forced to abandon some places, and retreat from others in the German dominions; but their resolution was taken when ministers felt that they had an opportunity of giving to the emperor, Europe and the country, the best pledge of their sincerity, of their attention to their interests, of their individual integrity, and collective force. The resolution was not taken without serious contemplation of the risk. It was not undertaken without maturely considering every relation, in which it could possibly connect itself with the constitution. It was not undertaken in defiance of law, nor made a solitary exception to all former usage. It was not undertaken to cripple our finances, nor had it either prospectively, or retrospectively, any one thing in common with a deliberate insult to the house. But it was undertaken in a way, and upon an emergency, which warranted the measure. Even the measure was warranted by the former opinions of my adversaries; but especially by the then and present opinion of monied men. I shall perhaps be asked, what is the difference between a loan in the manner that loan was transacted, and a loan granted in the old and popular way? What the difference between a direct and a\owed disbursement of the public money, and an indirect and concealed disbursement? The former I shall, perhaps, be told, must have decreased the pecuniary resources of the country equally with the latter; and have lessened, though in a secret manner, the general means of commercial security. But to this I cannot concede, because the reverse has been the fact. The fact has been, that by remitting money to the emperor in that season of difficulty, of doubt and danger, his Majesty's ministers have rendered less doubtful the prospects of a safe and honourable peace. Had ministers on that occasion, after being convinced themselves of the necessity and justice of such assistance, and during the recess of parliament, delayed the adoption of the conduct they have pursued, instead of affording to the emperor, the enemy, and Europe, a proof of superior wisdom, and superior resources, it would be a proof of the want of both, by giving the money publicly. By discussing the subject in parliament at the earliest period, if such a discussion could be entered into, not only public credit would have been injured, but you would have told the enemy that your difficulties obliged you to stint the acknowledged wants of your allies. To those who thought

worse of our resources than I did, to the public mind in general, such a measure in such a crisis would, I know, have been a cause not of rejoicing, but of sorrow; not a source of pleasure, but of pain. Every man who wished well to his country, every man sincerely attached to the principles of the constitution, instead of approving of that assistance being afforded originally as a loan, would have said, No, do not commit yourself to your ally, so as to make your necessities a test of his. If, instead of endeavouring to poise and remove the difficulty as I have done, this house had so passed a public loan, such must have been the consequence. I am certain that had parliament been acquainted with the danger of our ally, and had even determined to give the necessary assistance, the publicity of the measure would have defeated the object. So that whether we had or had not been reduced to the alternative of refusing assistance altogether, the event must have produced collateral mischiefs. I may therefore, I think, ask, Ought you to yield to the pressure of temporary difficulty, and abandon your ally at a moment when such a step may be decisive of his fate? Ought you, on the other hand, completely to pledge yourselves to grant a pecuniary assistance which, in the first instance, may be attended with considerable inconvenience, and the influence of which, on the future course of events, you are unable to ascertain? Pledges of aid, and of instant aid, his Majesty's servants had certainly seen good reason to give to the emperor. These pledges had been given long before the meeting of parliament, and might justly be considered as very eminently conducive to every measure and every success which has been since adopted and experienced. It is, I know, one among the grounds on which the right honourable gentleman has brought his accusation, that a part of the money was sent previously to the meeting of parliament, and another ground, that money has been sent since its meeting. I own, the advance to the emperor consists of sums sent since the meeting of the present parliament; but I do contend, that the pledges of these sums were the means by which the house of Austria endured adversity, and retrieved its prosperity. Had the emperor, in July and August last, had no assurance of your assistance, I will not say we should have been at this moment a ruined people, but I will say, that the pecuniary security of England, and the territorial security of Austria, had been diminished, if not utterly destroyed.

On a former night, an honourable friend of mine used as an

argument, the effect which he thought a public discusssion of the measure would have to depreciate the credit of the country; and I own I have not yet heard any thing that could induce me to think differently on that subject. The effect of a knowledge of the pecuniary distresses of the emperor, joined to the difficulty which a prompt supply would have produced, could not fail to bear with peculiarly embarrassing weight on the course of exchange. Whereas the transmission of the sum of 1,200,000/. in different sums, and at different periods, tended greatly to relieve the emperor, and preserve the credit of this country from that depression, which the same sum granted at once, and in the form of a public loan, would have occasioned. I need not therefore enumerate the particular dates of those bills. Our assurance to Austria was not confined to the meeting of parliament, not subjected to the delays of several months of recess, but it was given with reference to every situation of difficulty or danger in which the arms of the emperor might be placed by their resistance to the arms of France. When the Austrian troops were retreating from their severe and glorious combat with the French republicans, they surely merited every assistance this country could afford them; but when, in the career of a brilliant series of the most splendid victories, those gallant men were urged by their emulation of the intrepidity of their invincible officers to acts of unparalleled prowess, his Majesty's servants found themselves called upon, most particularly called upon, to aid and promote their views, to soften their calamities, and to afford them means of securing their important conquests. On the conviction of the propriety of these sentiments, and of such conduct, it was, that the King's ministers had acted. Of the number of those who had been guided by these sentiments, I, Sir, certainly was one, not the least active to provide, nor, I trust, the least vigilant to manage prudently that pecuniary stimulus which, during the recess, and at other periods, was given to the arms of the empire. Our conduct, therefore, Sir, does not respect the months of October, of November, nor December in particular, but it had a clear and unerring relation to every crisis and circumstance, to every moment of danger. In truth, the acts themselves were acts performed distinctly in compliance with solemn engagements; they were acts in execution of pledges which had been previously given. Acting during the recess from the conviction that these pledges were given by the letter and the spirit of the existing treaties, acting after the parliament was met under the

sanction of these treaties, with no intention then, and surely none now, of setting up their own judgments as the standard of, or superior to, the judgment of the house of commons, ministers, I think, may be permitted to avail themselves of the exceptions of all similar treaties in favour of similar conduct As to the transaction itself, no separation could fairly be made of the necessity which gave existence to the measure, and the motives which influenced its adoption. Even supposing the judgment of parliament could have been taken, the state of Germany was such, as could not have left gentlemen one moment to their doubts whether or no it was proper to assist the emperor. What ministers have done in pursuance of their pledge, was, however, done in a great measure before parliament could have been assembled to consider its expediency. Of the nature and effect of the services performed by the emperor, gentlemen may very readily judge. They have them recorded in the annals of very recent periods, annals the most brilliant, perhaps, in the history of the world. Thus, whether we judge of the services of Austria in whole, or only in part, I think gentlemen must concede to me that the services of the last three months have been at least such as merit our particular approbation. On this part of the subject I have, therefore, at present, scarcely any thing more to remark. I have, in the best manner I am able, stated to the house the circumstance of that situation which rendered it impossible for Austria to continue her warlike operations without assistance from this country. I have likewise endeavoured to render my own conceptions of the act of sending money to an ally without the previous consent of parliament In addition to these, I have submitted to the house those principles, in the practical exertion of which I pursued that line of conduct now so much the subject of the animadversions of the right honourable gentleman.

With this species of defence, I might in some measure rest satisfied : but I should still be wanting in duty to myself, did I not, before I sat down this night, desire the house to keep in memory the principles I have thus stated, as being those on which I acted ; if I did not desire the house to compare these principles with my conduct. As to the question of extraordinaries, I have heard the idea suggested, and something like an argument attempted to be deduced from it, that if its spirit be adhered to, no part of a vote of credit can be employed to pay foreign troops. I have heard too, that of such an application

of the public money so voted, our annals scarcely afford any, and if any, not apposite precedents. Sir, I think I can instance a number of precedents of this kind; I can instance to this house, and for the information of the right honourable gentleman, that votes of credit were appropriated by our ancestors to the payment of foreign troops. In times before the revolution, but of those times gentlemen seem unwilling to say much, in the reign immediately before the revolution, this very thing had been done by the crown; but, Sir, in periods subsequent to the revolution, in periods not the least favoured in our annals, although certainly not altogether free from the stains of calumny, but especially of party violence, in the reign of King William, during the year 1701, accompanied by circumstances of a singularly important and curious nature, the parliament voted an extra sum for the payment of foreign forces. This sum was voted not regularly as a vote of credit, but it succeeded the granting of a vote of credit, and was a measure which, although it occasioned some trifling opposition, was carried unanimously. Such was the conduct of our ancestors at the revolution. In the reign of Queen Ann, a reign reprehended undoubtedly by some, a reign which had unhappily encouraged, if not occasioned and fomented those differences which rendered the Tories so implacable against the Whigs; in that reign, thus chequered by the persecutions, sanguinary persecutions, first of the Whigs, but latterly, and I will confess with not less cruelty, begun and continued by the Tories: in this reign, and in the years 1704 and 1705, both subsidies and grants had been employed in paying foreign forces. This too was done without the authority of parliament. In 1706, a transaction more directly characteristic of this, for which the ministers of the present day are censured, was publicly avowed, and as publicly discussed; yet it seems the right honourable gentleman had overlooked it. This at least seems to be the case; or, if known, he certainly ought to have abandoned his assertion. There is to be met with in the annals of the parliament of that day, an account of three different sums, each considered, by the opposition of that day, as violations of the constitution—a remittance to the Duke of Savoy, to the Emperor, and to Spain. A sum too had been paid in the same manner to the Landgrave of Hesse, for a corps of his troops then in the pay of England. All these sums were not voted regularly after the specific propositions, submitted for that purpose to the house, but were remitted to those sovereigns without the

previous consent of parliament. Not even estimates of the services, for which the sums had been paid, were laid before the house till six weeks after its meeting. The sum sent to the emperor was peculiarly distinguished—it had been transmitted, not at the close, not during the recess of that session in which it was first announced to parliament, but before the end of the preceding session. These proceedings did certainly attract notice. The house of commons and the public had been addressed on the unconstitutionality of the measure; then as now there had been employed every effort which ingenuity could suggest; every vehicle of public communication rendered a vehicle of asperity and censure on the conduct of ministers. It became the subject of a solemn discussion—a discussion, apparently not less vehement, than it was laboured and profuse. But how, Sir, did the ministers of that day retire from the combat? Did they retire overwhelmed with the virulence and abuse, the censure of the discerning and temperate members of that parliament? Or were those their actions distinguished by the approbation of the commons of Great Britain? Sir, the minister of that day had the satisfaction to see the attack of his adversaries repelled, and their expressions of censure changed to approbation. That minister, Sir, heard his conduct applauded, and the journals of this house were made to bear record that the sense of its members was, that the sums advanced to the emperor on that occasion had been productive not only of the preservation of the empire, but had also supported and maintained the interests of Europe. In the year 1718, in the beginning of the reign of George the First, an instance of the application of the public money occurred, which, though not so analogous as the last, I think it right to mention. A message had been received from his Majesty, soliciting the aid of the commons to make such an augmentation of the actual forces of the country as might be deemed necessary to place it in a respectable state of defence; and that because there had been an appearance of an invasion.—At this time his Majesty takes Dutch troops into his pay, and the money voted to raise and maintain native troops is disbursed for the use of a foreign corps. It is true this body of Dutch troops were landed in England, and their services confined to it; but not even these affected much the application of the fact as a precedent. However, Sir, in the year 1734, a period nearer our own times, a general vote of credit was granted. That vote of credit was applied on such occasions, and for such purposes as

might at any time, during its existence, arise out of the exigencies of the time. On the 18th of February of the subsequent year, a vote of credit was also granted, and a treaty concluded with Denmark. And, Sir, if I have not totally misconceived the passage of our parliamentary history where these facts are stated, this last, as well as the vote of credit immediately preceding it, was applied to purposes in their nature not unlike those to which necessity impelled the ministers of the present day to apply the vote of 1796. I might also refer gentlemen to another.instance of an advance to foreign troops. An advance to the Duke of Arenberg, commander of the Austrian forces, in the year 1742, was noticed in debate, and censured in the administration of Mr. Pelham—a name this as dear to the friends of constitutional liberty as perhaps any that could be mentioned : but the enquiry was avoided by moving the previous question. It happened, however, that, not long after, the same question was made the subject of a specific discussion. It appeared that the advance had been made under the authority of an assurance expressed by Lord Carteret, and not in consequence of any previous consent of parliament; but it appeared also that the progress of the Austrian troops was considerably accelerated by the influence of that aid, and their subsequent successes owing chiefly to it. The vote of censure, therefore, which had been founded on the act of Lord Carteret, was amended, and the advance declared necessary to the salvation of the empire. But, Sir, let us compare the crisis of 1796 with that of 1787, when the expenses incurred by our endeavours to protect Holland were recognized under the head of secret services. This, too, was an unanimous recognition of the act which, had it been the offspring of 1796, the right honourable gentleman, influenced by his new opinions, would, I have no doubt, have marked with his disapprobation; but so stood the fact then.

The right honourable gentleman avoids no opportunity to express his disrespect for the memory of the last parliament. But surely he ought to recollect, that, although he has often told us that the last parliament completely undermined the constitution, there yet remain principles for which the right honourable gentleman thinks it his duty to contend, under the sanction of which, he is yet permitted to accuse his Majesty's ministers as criminals for doing that which necessity provoked, and which precedents warrant. Undoubtedly, Sir, I think that whether the people of England will hereafter approve of the

conduct of opposition as constitutional conduct, they will admit that it is a vigilant opposition. On the present occasion, however, much of that vigilance seems to me to have been exerted in vain. They have not, with all their industry, fallen even in the way of one precedent, that might have induced some little relaxation of their inordinate zeal. They have not discovered that the act they have marked with every species of obloquy, of which language is capable, is an act that has been again and again approved of. It is even within the admitted principle of successive parliaments. But the members who sat in the last parliament have not forgot that, when a loan of four millions and a half was proposed to be granted to the emperor, the intention of granting that loan was known as early as February 1795. A message had been received from his Majesty, stating that a negociation was pending with the emperor to maintain 200,000 men. The loan to be granted when the negociation succeeded, and when it failed, to be mentioned. Soon after the answer to this message was communicated to the throne, a motion was made for an account of 250,000/. advanced to the emperor in May 1795; and again a similar motion was made for an account of 300,000/. also advanced to the emperor in the month of May following. With respect to these sums, it was agreed by the house before the loan was debated, that they might be afterwards made good out of the loan. This, Sir, I have stated to shew that the members who sat in the last parliament cannot be altogether ignorant of the principles of the constitution. After the negociation was concluded, the loan was debated; the house was divided, but no objection was made to these advances. On the subject of the Prince of Conde's army being supplied with money by this country, I can only say, that whatever sums that army has as yet received have been paid, on account of services rendered, as forming a part of the Austrian forces. The circumstance of a part of the 1,200,000/. stated as being sent to the emperor, being afterwards received in this country in part payment of the interest due on the second Austrian loan, is also easily accounted for, these payments, on account of being in their nature the same, as if the emperor, instead of being so accommodating to himself as to pay the money, by his agent, on the spot, had ordered it to be sent to Vienna, and transmitted by the same post to this court

I may now, Sir, I think be permitted to ask on what principle **of** justice a criminal charge can be brought against me **for**

merely having followed the uniform tenour of precedent, and the established line of practice? By what interpretation of a candid and liberal mind can I be judged guilty of an attempt, wantonly to violate the constitution? I appeal to the right honourable gentleman himself, who is not the last to contend for the delicacy which ought to be used in imputing criminal motives to any individual, and to urge in the strongest terms the attention which ought to be shewn to the candid and impartial administration of justice. In what country do we live? and by what principles are we to be tried? By the maxims of natural justice and constitutional law, or by what new code of some revolutionary tribunal? Not longer than a year and a half since, the same principle was adopted, and suffered to pass without any animadversion; and now, at a crisis of ten-fold importance, and where the measure has not out-run the exercise of a sound discretion, it is made the foundation of a criminal charge. We are accused with a direct and wanton attack upon the constitution. It is not supposed that we have been actuated by any but the blackest and most malignant motives. We are not allowed the credit of having felt any zeal for the interest of our country, nor of those advantages which the measure has produced to the common cause.

I have now weighed the whole merits of the transaction before the house, and with them I am well content to leave the decision. While we claim a fair construction on the principles and intentions which have guided our conduct, if it shall appear that it has in the smallest instance deviated from any constitutional principle, we must submit to the consequence, whatever be the censure or the punishment. It is our duty, according to the best of our judgment, to consult for the interest of the country; it is your sacred and peculiar trust to preserve inviolate the principles of the constitution. I throw myself upon your justice, prepared in every case to submit to your decision; but with considerable confidence, that I shall experience your approbation. If I should be disappointed, I will not say that the disappointment will not be heavy, and the mortification severe; at any rate however it will to me be matter of consolation, that I have not, from any apprehension of personal consequences, neglected to pursue that line of conduct which I conceive to be essential to the interests of the country and of Europe. But while I bow with the most perfect submission to the determination of the house, I cannot but remark on the

extraordinary language which has been used on this question. Ministers have been broadly accused with a wanton and a malignant desire to violate the constitution : it has been stated that no other motive could possibly have actuated their conduct. If a charge of such malignant intention had been brought against men, who have affirmed the present war to be neither just nor necessary, and who on that ground cannot be supposed friendly to its success ; who have extolled, nay, even exulted in the prodigies of French valour; who have gloried in the successes of the foes of civil liberty, the hostile disturbers of the peace of Europe, men who blasphemously denied the existence of the Deity, and who had rejected and trampled on every law, moral and divine; who have exclaimed against the injustice of bringing to trial persons who had associated to overawe the legislature; those who gravely and vehemently asserted, that it was a question of prudence, rather than a question of morality, whether an act of the legislature should be resisted ; those who were anxious to expose and aggravate every defect of the constitution; to reprobate every measure adopted for its preservation, and to obstruct every proceeding of the executive government to ensure the success of the contest in which we are engaged in common with our allies; I say, if such a charge of deliberate and deep-rooted malignity were brought against persons of this description, I should conceive that even then the rules of candid and charitable interpretation would induce us to hesitate in admitting its reality; much more when it is brought against individuals, whose conduct, I trust, has exhibited the reverse of the picture I have now drawn. I appeal to the justice of the house, I rely on their candour ; but, to gentlemen who can suppose ministers capable of those motives which have been imputed to them on this occasion, it must be evident that I can desire to make no such **appeal.**

ON THE FAILURE OF THE PEACE NEGOCIATIONS

December 30, 1796.[1]

I AM perfectly aware, Sir, in rising upon the present occasion, that the motion which I shall have the honour to propose to the house, in consequence of his Majesty's most gracious message and founded upon the papers with which it was accompanied, involves many great and important considerations. Whatever difference of opinion may be entertained upon some of the topics which they contain, I am sure there will exist only one sentiment with regard to the event which they announce. We must all concur in that deep and poignant regret which is naturally excited by the information that the negociation, in which his Majesty was engaged, is abruptly broken off; a negociation by which we fondly wished, and perhaps might have sanguinely hoped, that upon terms of peace, which it would have been wise and prudent, and honourable in this country to have embraced, we should at length have been enabled to have retired from a contest undertaken in compliance with the faith of treaties and for the defence of our allies; undertaken to repel the daring, unprincipled, and unprovoked aggression of the enemy; undertaken for the maintenance of our own independence and the support of our own rights; undertaken for the preservation of our constitution and laws, and in obedience to those principles of policy by which the conduct of England has so long and so gloriously been directed; undertaken from a union of all these causes and a combination of all these motives, to a degree for which the annals of the world present no parallel. From the documents of which the house are now in possession, and from the proceedings of which they are now enabled to judge, I trust it will appear, that if it was thought necessary to embark in the contest upon such urgent grounds and such

[1] **Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's message, respecting the failure of the negociation for peace that had been carrying on with the French Government.**

powerful considerations, his Majesty's ministers have evinced a perseverance equally sincere in their endeavours to restore peace to Europe upon fair, just, and honourable grounds, in spite of the discouragements under which they laboured, and the difficulties with which they had to encounter. To whatever cause, however, the failure of the negociation is to be ascribed, it must be matter of regret to all, and to none more than to myself. Whatever subject of personal anxiety I may have had, in addition to the common feelings of humanity and for the general happiness of mankind, my sentiments are only those of disappointment But I have the satisfaction of knowing that this feeling of disappointment is unaccompanied with any reflection, unmingled with regret, unembittered with despondency, as it must be evident to the world, that the event which we deplore can be attributed only to the pride, the ambition, the obstinacy, and the arrogant pretensions of the enemy. I feel this consolation annexed to the task which we have now to perform, that we can come forward, not unaware of the difficulty, yet not dismayed by the prospect, prepared to review the situation in which we are placed, to ask what are the causes from which the failure of the negociation proceeded, what opinion it authorises us to form, what conduct it requires us to pursue, what duty it imposes upon us to discharge, and what efforts we are called upon to exert in our own defence, and what support and assistance policy demands that we should grant to our allies for the vigorous and effectual prosecution of a contest in which we are compelled to persevere.

As to the next point which I shall have to consider, I cannot expect equal unanimity; not, however, that it is much more complicated, although undoubtedly not so self-evident. I allude to the failure of the negociation, in point of terms, and which renders a continuance of the war necessary; but have we not the consolation that the aggression has uniformly been on the side of the enemy, and that nothing has been wanting on the part of this country to restore peace, on the grounds on which peace alone would be desirable? When we wish for peace, we wish for a secure and permanent peace, and the secure and permanent possession of those blessings with which peace is accompanied.

If, in that necessity to which we are now subjected, of pursuing with vigour the war in which we are engaged, we can look for consolation, amid the sacrifices with which it will

be attended, to the original aggression of the enemy by which it was occasioned, to the consideration, that no endeavour has been omitted which can evince our earnest and sincere desire of peace, and that this sentiment still predominates to put an end to the contest upon those principles which alone can render that event desirable, which can secure a peace, safe, honourable, and permanent; which can restore those blessings which it is calculated to produce, and those advantages for which it is worthy to be desired;—if we have adhered to these considerations, we have done every thing which it was in our power to perform. We may lament the failure of his Majesty's exertions upon this occasion, but at least we have not to regret that they have been wholly without advantage. They must prove to which party the prolongation of the war is to be imputed; they will tend at once to unite England and to divide France; they will animate our endeavours with new energy and new confidence, while they must have the effect to enfeeble and to embarrass the operations of the enemy. The question is not merely how far his Majesty's ministers and those to whose province it is committed to judge of the terms upon which peace ought to be concluded, and what offers are to be proposed, (a duty always attended with difficulty, but in the present circumstances peculiarly embarrassed and unusually critical) acted properly in the conditions upon which they were willing to treat: but after the propositions which were made had been rejected; when, instead of yours, terms utterly inadmissible and glaringly extravagant were substituted; when, to a peremptory rejection was added the refusal of all farther discussion; when the negociation was abruptly broken off, and his Majesty's ambassador was sent away; when all this is accompanied with a proceeding still more insulting than the original dismissal, when a condition is reserved, which is not even the semblance, but which stands undisguised as the most glaring mockery of negociation, it remains for the house to judge whether any thing has been wanting upon the part of ministers, whether any thing more is required to display the sentiments and the views of the enemy. It remains to be seen whether there are any gentlemen in this house, who, as friends to peace, as friends to their country, who, consistent with the principles of statesmen, or the feelings of patriots, can discover any alternative in the ultimate line of conduct to be pursued. From the manner in which what I have now said has been received, I hope it will not be incumbent upon me to dwell

more particularly upon this topic, before I advert to others which come previously to be considered.

The two leading points which arise from the views connected with the subject in discussion, are, the sentiment which it is proper to express upon the steps to be taken by his Majesty for the purpose of obtaining peace, and then, combining the offers made with the rejection of the enemy, and the circumstances with which it was accompanied, what sentiment parliament and the nation ought to entertain, with regard to the conduct necessary to be adopted for our own security, for maintaining the cause of our allies, and protecting the independence of Europe. After the communications which have already been made of the former steps taken by this country, and on the part of the emperor, for the purpose of bringing the contest to a termination, it would be unnecessary to dwell upon the particulars of these transactions. I would beg leave, however, to remind the house, that, in March 1796, offers were made to the French government, by his Majesty's envoy at Basle, Mr. wickham, to treat for a general peace, in a manner which of all others had been most usual in a complicated war, a mode sanctioned by custom and justified by experience, which had been commonly found successful in attaining the objects for which it was intended; yet this proposal met with a refusal, and was affected to be received as a mark of insincerity. We find the enemy advancing a principle, to which I shall afterwards more particularly advert; so manifestly unjust, and so undeniably absurd, that whatever difference of opinion subsisted upon other points, there was no man living had the temerity to support it. The question upon the former discussions to which this transaction gave rise, was, whether the principle to which I allude was fairly imputed. In the answer to Mr. Wickham's note, when we found the government of France advancing a law of her own internal constitution, to cancel the obligation of treaties, and to annul the public law of Europe, the only doubt was, whether it was fair and candid, upon such a foundation, to ascribe to the directory the reality of such a pretension. The principle itself I am sure can never be successfully defended upon any law of nations or any argument of reason. The emperor too, in spite of the refusal with which the application of this country had been received; in spite of the discouragement which a new attempt presented; did, at the opening of the campaign, renew the offers for negociating a general peace upon the principles upon which the proposition of this country had been founded.

In the course of this eventful year, so chequered with remarkable vicissitudes, before the successes of the enemy, which unfortunately so rapidly followed the breaking of the armistice, and before the glorious tide of victory by which the latter period of the campaign had been distinguished, many instances occurred for the application of their principle. The proposition of the emperor, however, was received nearly in the same manner with our own; and even the answer which it produced was conceived in the same tone, and conveyed the same unfounded imputation, excepting that there were some topics with regard to points of etiquette and differences about form, which, upon the application of this country, had not been observed till they were renewed upon the perusal of reports of certain proceedings in this house, whether faithfully detailed or not I will not enquire. The answer which the emperor received was, that he might send a plenipotentiary to Paris to treat for a peace, consistent with the laws and constitution of the republick. Notwithstanding the discouragement which the repeated experience of former disappointments was calculated to produce, his Majesty, retaining that desire of putting a period to hostilities by which he was uniformly animated, felt some hope from the distress to which France was reduced, and from the embarrassments under which she laboured, that a renewed proposal would be welcomed with a more friendly reception. To shew that the inveterate disposition which the enemy had manifested did not discourage his Majesty from giving another chance of success to his ardent wishes, without having witnessed any indication upon their part of sentiments more pacific or more conciliatory, without their having discovered any retraction of the principles which had been advanced in reply to his first proposal, his Majesty determined to try the experiment of a new attempt of negociation, to the circumstances of which I shall again recur.

Upon many occasions during the present contest it had been discussed, whether it was politic for this country to appeal to negociation in whatever circumstances the enemy were placed. Gentlemen on the other side were accustomed to press the argument, that in no situation could negociation be humiliating. If a sincere desire of peace, it was said, does exist, there are modes of ascertaining the dispositions of the enemy, of making your wishes known, and making advances to the attainment of the object, without involving any question of etiquette or provoking any discussion of forms.—Of all the

modes then recommended, that of application through the medium of a neutral minister was the most approved. After the reception which the successive proposals of this country, and of the emperor, received at Basle, the mode of application by a neutral power, by that very power which had been again and again cited as an instance of the good faith of the French government, and their respect for independent states, was at length adopted, and the Danish minister was pitched upon for this purpose. In this proceeding it was not the object to announce on what terms this country was willing to conclude a peace, not to avoid any objections of etiquette, not to evade any discussion of preliminary formalities, but merely to ascertain the point, whether the directory would grant passports to a confidential person whom his Majesty was willing to send to Paris. The application was accordingly made by the Danish resident, and, after an interval of some days' delay, this step was allowed to pass in silence; to a written application no answer was returned, and at last a verbal notification was given, that the directory could not listen to any indirect application through the medium of neutral powers, and that a plenipotentiary might proceed to the frontiers, and there wait for the necessary passports.

I would now ask the house to judge, if it had really been the wish of his Majesty's ministers to avail themselves of the plausible grounds for proceeding no farther, which were then presented, which could so easily be justified by a reference to the conduct of the French government, and by the dispositions by which experience had proved them to be guided, would they have been very eager again to try the issue of new attempts? But even to this they submitted, and by a flag of truce sent to the governor of Calais, directly demanded the necessary passports.—The directory, now feeling the eagerness with which this country pursued the desire of terminating the contest by negociation, and, foreseeing the odium with which the refusal would be attended, were compelled, I repeat, were compelled, to grant the passports, and thus to afford to his Majesty the opportunity of presenting the outline of the terms upon which peace might be restored. Under circumstances like these, with the experience of an uniform tenor of conduct which testified the very reverse of any disposition to a cordial co-operation for the re-establishment of peace, there was little hope that the French government would keep pace with the offers proposed by this country, and **it** was foreseen **that it**

would rest with his Majesty, after stimulating their reluctant progress through every part of the discussion, to encounter the farther difficulty of proposing specific terms. In this embarrassing situation the first thing to be done was to endeavour to establish what is at once conformable to reason, sanctioned by usage, and agreeable to universal practice since negociation was first reduced to a system ; I mean some basis upon which the negociation was to be founded. How usual such a practice had been, it would be unnecessary to argue; how reasonable, it would be impossible to dispute; as it must be evident that such a mode of proceeding must conduce to abridge the delay with which a discussion of this kind is apt to be attended, to afford a clue to that labyrinth of complicated interests that are to be considered, and to supply some rule of stating mutual propositions. It would be equally unnecessary, as this mode was to be adopted in a negociation where we, for ourselves directly, had so little to ask, and for our allies so much, and where the interests of Europe demanded such important claims; where we had to treat with a country which had advanced principles that destroyed all former establishments; that cancelled all received laws and existing treaties; that overthrew all experience of past proceeding. This basis then was to be a basis of compensation, not of ambition or aggrandizement, but that compensation which was due for the conquests achieved by the valour and perseverance of our forces from the acquisitions gained by the enemy; a basis than this I am confident more equitable, or more just, better calculated to secure the interests of our allies, to maintain the independence of Europe, or more honourable to this country, never was proposed. But whether this basis be reasonable or not, is not now so much the enquiry, as another proof of the views of the enemy is disclosed, and a fresh instance of the inveterate disposition of the French government is displayed. Before any explicit answer to the basis proposed was returned; when it was understood that it was to be rejected, Lord Malmesbury is required, within twenty-four hours, to present his *ultimatum.* It appears, however, from the able manner in which Lord Malmesbury conducted himself upon this demand, that this demand was not insisted upon, and to his explanation, they replied only by an evasive answer, which announced their refusal of the basis proposed, and intimated the extravagant pretensions they were desirous to substitute. I will now put to the recollection of the house the public

discussions, to which the subject of the basis of negociation presented to the French government gave rise. I will not say that the public was unanimous, nor will I pretend to decide in what proportions it was divided. None, however, doubted that this basis would not be agreed to. In the public discussion to which the plan was subjected (by this I do not mean parliamentary discussions) and in the writings which it produced, particularly in the metropolis, the argument maintained was, that the principle was unreasonable, and ought not to have been offered. The directory, however, thought proper to accept what it was argued in this country ought to have been refused, and the principle of compensation was admitted.

Having, I trust, shewn therefore, from the extorted confession which arises out of every statement, that the basis of compensation was accepted, there follow the particular terms, as far as they were the subject of negociation. It is a point well understood that the final terms to be considered as binding upon the parties, never form a part of the original proposition. What, however, is the case here? When the first advances were made by this country, they were met by no corresponding offers by the directory, every difficulty that was started and removed, prepared only new cavils; the demands made by us were accompanied by no disclosure of the terms to which they would accede. After a reluctant admission of the basis, they insisted upon a specific statement of the objects of compensation. Under circumstances similar to those upon which the negociation was begun, the difficulties with which it is attended must be obvious, and the common practice has been, as far as possible, to divide them, to render the statement of terms mutual, to give reciprocally, and at the same time, the explanations, the concessions, and the demands upon which each party is disposed to insist. The propriety of this is obvious. Without such a mode of proceeding it is impossible to know what value the one sets upon a particular concession, or a particular acquisition, and upon what conditions this is to be abandoned, and how the other is to be compensated. This difficulty obtains in all negociations, more particularly where doubts are entertained of the sincerity of the party with whom you have to deal, but most of all when no advance, no reciprocal offer is made. How difficult then must it have been under all the circumstances of this case to produce specific terms with any probability of success or advantage. Yet the

same motives which had induced his Majesty on former occasions to surmount the obstacles presented by the enemy, induced him here likewise to remove every pretence of cavil. Plans were given in, signed by Lord Malmesbury, stating likewise terms for the allies of this country. In the outline, two things are to be kept separate and distinct,—the compensations demanded for our allies, and those which were intended to protect the balance of Europe.

I need not argue again that a basis of compensation is reasonable;—that I am entitled to assume as admitted: but to what enormous extent it was retracted, I am now to state. During that period of adverse fortune which has since by the valour and glory of the gallant Imperial army so remarkably been retrieved, considerable possessions belonging to Austria and other states were added to the acquisitions of the enemy. On the other hand, the success of our brave troops, retarded indeed in particular quarters by some untoward circumstances, though not obstructed, had added to our distant possessions, and extended, by colonial acquisitions, the sources of our commerce, our wealth, and our prosperity, to a degree unparalleled even in the annals of this country. Feeling the pressure, which the war, no doubt, gave to our commerce, but feeling too that it neither affected the sources of our commerce, nor would ultimately retard the full tide of our prosperity, I was convinced that the temporary embarrassments which occurred, were less the effect of a real distress, than of an accidental derangement arising from our increasing capital and extended commerce. In looking round, you discovered no symptom of radical decay, no proof of consuming strength; and, although I have been accused of advancing a paradox, while I maintained this proposition, I am convinced that the embarrassment stated as an evidence of decline, was a proof of the reality and the magnitude of our resources. I do not state these circumstances, to give any one an idea that I do not ardently wish for peace, but to shew that we are not yet arrived at so deplorable a state of wretchedness and abasement, as to be compelled to make any insecure and dishonourable compromise. What, on the other hand, was the 'situation of the enemy? They at first indeed were enabled to employ gigantic means of support, which from their extravagant nature, were temporary, not permanent. They find also the additional expedient of disseminating new, unheard of, destructive principles; these they poured forth from the

interior of France, into all the quarters of Europe, where no rampart could be raised to oppose the dangerous, the fatal inundation. Although madness and fanaticism carried them thus far for a time, yet no rational man will deny that those persons formed a fair and reasonable conclusion, who thought that such resources could not be attended with either duration or stability. I need hardly recur to the subject of French finance, though it has a very considerable effect indeed upon the question. I have on this subject been accused of bringing forward groundless surmises, of using fanciful reasoning, of stating elaborate theories without authority. I have even been complimented on my dexterity at this sort of argument, for the kind purpose of afterwards converting it into ridicule; but I shall not now stop to confirm what in this respect I have formerly asserted: I may surely, however, suppose that the admissions of the executive directory are true, particularly when officially conveyed in the form of a message to one of their councils. Are we told by themselves, that the only pay of their troops are the horrors of nakedness and famine; that their state contractors, their judges, and all other public functionaries, receive no part of their salaries; that the roads are impassable, that the public hospitals and general interests of charity are totally neglected, that nothing, in short, remains in a state of organization but murder and assassination?—Is this a true picture drawn by themselves, and can this be the time for Europe to prostrate itself at the foot of France,—suppliantly to bow the knee, and ignominiously to receive its law?

If these considerations would not have justified this country in refusing to treat unless upon the principle of restoring to the emperor the territories of which he has been stripped, at least it is sufficient reason to entitle us to refuse to the French republic in the moment of debilitated power and exhausted resource, what we should have disdained to grant to France in the proudest days of her prosperous and flourishing monarchy. It was reason enough why we should not desert our allies, nor abandon our engagements, and why we should not agree to yield up to France for the pretence of preventing future wars, what for two centuries our ancestors thought it wise to contend to prevent the French from obtaining possession of; and why, after the recorded weakness of the republic, we ought not to resign without a struggle, what the power and the riches of France in other times could never extort. What then were we

to attain by the conquests we had achieved? For ourselves, we had nothing to ask; we demanded the return of no ancient possessions; we sued not for liberty to maintain our independence, to reject the fraternal embrace, and prevent the organization of treason. These do not rest upon the permission of the enemy; they depend upon the valour, the intrepidity and the patriotism of the people of this country. We desired, Sir, only to preserve our good faith inviolate, and were ready to sacrifice all our own advantages, to obtain what we could not honourably give away without the consent of the emperor. Could we possibly ask less at the outset of a negociation? I touch, no doubt, upon a delicate subject, but I ask, could we even have demanded the consent of the emperor to ask less? Whatever might have been the disposition of the emperor to peace, would he have been content to agree to inferior terms, when the campaign was not yet closed,—when the enemy were yet struck with the effects of the brilliant and glorious success with which the Imperial arms have lately been attended on the side of the Rhine, when the exertions in Italy might have been expected to communicate to the affairs of Austria in that quarter, the same tide of victory by which the frontiers of Germany were distinguished? Could we have asked less, consistently with the good faith we owe to that ally, to whose exertions and to whose victories we have been so much indebted; that ally to whom we are so closely bound by congenial 'feelings, with whom we participate in the glory of adversity retrieved, and of prosperity restored? In doing this, I am confident the house will agree in thinking that we do not do too much.

By the terms proposed, all the territory between the Rhine and the Moselle was to be ceded by France, subject to future modification. When the French conquests in Italy were stated as objects of restitution, it was not from that to be inferred that Savoy and Nice were included, for in no geographical view could they be considered as component parts of that country. All the propositions underwent discussion between the plenipotentiary of his Majesty and the French minister; only the British minister informed the minister of France, that as to the Netherlands, his Majesty could, on no account, retract any part of his propositions, but that every thing else should be subject to modification. These offers, Sir, I maintain to have been extremely liberal in their principle, and more so, when we consider the application of it. We carried the principle of

compensation to the fullest extent, when we offered to give up all that we had taken, reserving one subject only for consideration, which depended on a treaty, and which I shall presently mention; and we asked no more than what, by the strictest ties of justice and honour, we were bound to demand. Let me appeal to every one present if this conduct was not fair, just, and reasonable; if it did not bespeak sincere intentions and an anxious wish on the part of his Majesty to procure peace, consistently with good faith and security to himself and his allies, and if it was not entitled to a candid reception from the enemy ! As to the value of the French possessions which we offered to give up, it must be confessed that the same evils with which France has been afflicted have been extended to the colonial possessions; they have undoubtedly been much depreciated, much impoverished; but after all, they are of infinite importance to the commerce and marine of France. The valuable post of St. Domingo; the military and commercial advantages of Martinique; the peculiarly favourable military situation of St. Lucia; the importance of Tobago to this country; when we combine these, and place them in an united point of view, we have some reason to doubt whether there was not some degree of boldness on the part of his Majesty's ministers to make such overtures; we have some reason to suspect the wisdom of the measure, rather than to cavil at the insufficiency of the offer.

I come now more particularly to mention what relates to the Spanish part of St. Domingo, in the late negociation. By a former treaty with Spain, made at the peace of Utrecht, in the year 1713, Spain engages not to alienate any of her possessions in America and the West Indies, without the consent of Great Britain. Have we not then a right to take advantage of this circumstance, on the present occasion, and to hold out our consent to this alienation, as a part of the compensation offered on the part of this country ? In what consists the right of the French to the Spanish parts of St. Domingo ? Is it the right of possession ? No ! they never yet have been in possession. Is it then merely the right of title ? No ! for their title is derived from the alienation of the Spaniards, who had no right to transfer it without the consent of this country. But it may be said that this treaty is old and obsolete. On the contrary, having been kept sacred up to the year 1796, it has gained strength by a long prescription; besides it has been recognized and confirmed at the end of every war since that time, and par-

ticularly so in the definitive treaty of 1783. It may be objected, however, and has indeed been urged on this occasion, that England herself has violated this treaty in the transaction of Pensacola and Florida; but this argument depends upon an obvious fallacy. The agreement with respect to the Spanish dominions in America and the West Indies was made between this country and Spain. Now, although the two parties to the agreement may, by consent at pleasure, modify their respective interests, it does not follow that either party can, without the consent and to the disadvantage of the other, introduce the interests of third parties. Upon every view of this subject, then, I ask if we have not a fair and reasonable right to avail ourselves of the advantages arising to us from the treaty of Utrecht.

Sir, I think, that from the great extent of the subject, it will be unnecessary for me to trouble the house with any farther observation on that part of it; but I must request the attention of the house to the nature of the terms proposed with respect to the meditated peace between this country and her allies; and first with respect to Holland, a country which, although now hostile to us, I cannot help considering as having, at the commencement of the present war, been concerned in alliance with us in carrying it on, and connected in our interest by every tie of internal policy—a country which is now only opposed to us in consequence of the restraint imposed by the overbearing arms of France. However, Sir, notwithstanding Holland was our ally, and an ally whose protection against the common enemy was one of the causes of our entering into the war; yet, as circumstances have occurred, which have compelled Holland to become the enemy of this country, I must, of necessity, treat her as such; I must consider her in the relation, in which she stands with respect to France, though at the same time I cannot bring myself to forget she was formerly an ally, whose friendship was attended with reciprocal advantages to herself and to this country. I am satisfied, if it were possible to replace Holland in the situation in which she formerly stood, and restore her legitimate government, not nominally, but permanently and effectually, that such a restoration would undoubtedly redound to the advantage of this country. But as it is perhaps a question of too remote contingency to consider the advantage which we should acquire by the restoration of Holland to her former system, such an event, either nominally or really, being extremely unlikely under the present aspect

of things, I shall therefore refrain from arguing the point Now, Sir, as to the conduct pursued on the part of this country, with regard to her connections with other powers, and supposing for the present that Holland may for a time remain subject to France, I may be allowed to assert that the terms proposed by this country, on behalf of her allies, were such as could only be dictated by a principle of moderation, of disinterestedness, and earnest desire for peace. This country having nothing to ask for herself, was induced to surrender a considerable part, nay, almost the whole of her acquisitions, for the purpose of inducing the French to give up to our allies that territory she has wrested from them.

The continental possessions which France had acquired from Holland, might perhaps be subject of discussion in what manner they were best to be arranged at once for the interest of Holland and of the allies. But these and the conquests made by this country must be considered, in the view of restitution, as merely an addition to the French power. We ought to consider that those possessions, with regard to which no relation was to be admitted, were to be retained, in order that they might not become acquisitions to the French government. In refusing to yield them up, we only refuse to put into the hands of the enemy the means of carrying into effect the deep laid schemes of ambition they have long cherished, and the plan they have conceived of undermining our Indian empire, and destroying our Indian commerce, by ceding out of our own hands, what may be deemed the bulwark of the wealth of this country, and the security of the Indian empire. These, indeed, were refused to be given up to our enemies; but everything else which the valour and the arms of this country had acquired, which was valuable, was proposed to be made matter of negociation. This, Sir, was the nature of the propositions made at the very first moment when the negociation was commenced ; and I again submit to the final decision of the house, whether a proposition, including the restoration of every thing valuable which we had acquired, except that which we could not forego without manifest detriment to the most important interests of the country, was not founded in liberality and sincerity. Sir, I must beg leave to observe, that on this part of the subject I have been the more anxious to be explicit, because it is that part on which I lay the more particular stress, as tending to prove to the house, that every thing was done at the commencement, every thing distinctly stated, on which this country was willing

to enter upon a negociation. I am the more desirous of impressing the house with this part of my argument, because I feel it material in order to enable them to form a determinate precise idea of the character and prominent features of the negociation itself. In return to the statements of compensation proposed by this country, the French government presented no *projet* of their own, they afforded no room for discussion, because they were actuated by motives very distant from conciliation.

This much I have thought it necessary to state, in vindication of the character of myself and colleagues, that the house may be enabled to see that we never lost sight of the idea of a peace advantageous for our allies, safe for Europe, and honourable to this country. With regard to any specific terms of peace, which it might be proper to adopt or refuse, I do not think it would be wise for the house to pronounce. This may still be considered as a dormant negociation, capable of being renewed; and it would be impolitic to give a pledge to any specific terms to which it might be impossible to adhere, and which can never be incurred without rashness. No man can be pledged to any particular terms, because in these he must be guided by a view of collateral circumstances, and a comparative statement of resources. All that I wish parliament to pronounce is, that they will add their testimony to the sincerity with which his Majesty has endeavoured to restore peace to Europe, and their approbation of the steps which were employed for its attainment. But even after their rejection of every proposition that was advanced, after all the difficulties they started, after all the cavils they employed, after all the discouragements which they presented, when, at last, the French government had been compelled to open the discussion, the first thing that happens, after requiring a note containing specific proposals, is a captious demand to have it signed by Lord Malmesbury. This demand was complied with to deprive them of every pretence for breaking off the negociation, and immediately they call for an *ultimatum* in twenty-four hours. The impossibility of complying with such a demand is obvious. Was it possible to reconcile discordances, to smooth opposition, or pronounce good understanding in this manner? Does it come within the scope of the negociation? Is an *ultimatum*, which means that demand which is to come the nearest to the views of all parties, and to state the lowest terms which could be offered, thus to be made out at random, without knowing what the enemy would con-

cede on their part, or what they would accept on ours? A proposal, drawn up in such a manner, without explanation, without information, could have no good effect. It is a demand contrary to all reason and to all principle. With such a demand, therefore, it was impossible to comply; and in consequence of this, Lord Malmesbury received orders to quit Paris in forty-eight hours, and the territories of the republic as soon as possible.

Perhaps, however, I shall be told, that the negociation is not broken off, and that the French government have pointed out a new basis upon which they are still willing to proceed. There are two things upon this subject not unworthy of consideration. The time at which they propose this new basis, and what sort of basis it is that they propose. After having approved and acted upon the basis proposed by his Majesty's government; after having acknowledged, and, to all appearance, cordially acquiesced in it, as the ground of negociation; after having demanded an *ultimatum* at the very commencement of this negociation, and before any discussion had taken place, to be delivered in to the directory, in the space of twenty-four hours; and after dismissing the ambassador of the king with every mark of ignominy and insult, they propose a new basis, by which the negociation is to be carried on by means of couriers. And what is the reason they assign for this new basis? Because Lord Malmesbury acted in a manner purely passive, and because he could assent to nothing without dispatching couriers to obtain the sanction of his court. Here one cannot help remarking the studied perverseness of the temper of the French government. When a courier was dispatched to Paris, at the instance of the minister of a neutral power, in order to get a passport from the French government, it was denied. A courier could not even obtain a passport, though the application was made to the executive directory through the medium of the Danish minister. The request of the Danish minister was not enough; nothing could satisfy them but a British minister. Well, a British minister was sent. At the commencement of the negociation he had occasion frequently to send dispatches to his court, because it is very well known that there are a great number of difficulties which attend the opening of every negociation, and because Lord Malmesbury had been sent to Paris before the preliminaries, which are usually settled by means of couriers, were arranged. While these preliminaries were in a course of

settling, Lord Malmesbury's presence was barely endured, and the frequent dispatches of his couriers were subjects of animadversion; but no sooner were these preliminaries settled, and the British minister delivered in a *projet*, when there was less necessity for dispatching couriers, when the period for discussion was arrived, when the personal presence of an ambassador was particularly necessary, and when the King's ministers announced to the French government that he was prepared to enter into discussion upon the official memorials containing his *projet*, than he was ordered to quit Paris, and leave the negotiation to be carried on by means of couriers. Such is the precise form, and it was impossible to devise a better, in which a studied insult, refined and matured by the French directory, was offered to his Britannic Majesty.

I now come to state the broad plain ground on which the question rests, as far as the terms, upon which we are invited to treat on this new basis, are concerned. After having started a variety of captious objections at the opening of the negociation, after the preliminaries were with much difficulty adjusted, after an *ultimatum* was demanded, almost before discussion had commenced, after the king's minister was ordered, in the most insulting manner, to leave the territories of France, after a retraction by the executive directory of the original basis of negociation, and the substitution of a new one in its place, they demand not as an *ultimatum*, but as a preliminary, to be permitted to retain all those territories of which the chance of war has given them a temporary possession, and respecting which they have thought proper, contrary to every principle of equity and the received laws of nations, to pass a constitutional law, declaring, as they interpret it, that they shall not be alienated from the republic. Now whether this be the principle of their constitution or not, upon which I shall afterwards have occasion to make some observations, it was at least naturally to be supposed that the principle had been virtually set aside when the former basis of negociation was recognized by the French directory; for it must have been a strange admission of the principle of reciprocal compensations indeed, if they were obliged by the rules of their constitution to retain all those conquests which we were most bound in duty and in honour to insist upon their giving up, (not by any mystery of a new constitution, which is little known, and even among those who know it of doubtful interpretation, but by public and known engagements) and if they were under the

same constitutional necessity, which they certainly are, of demanding the restitution of those colonies formerly in their possession, but which they have lost in the course of the war. Notwithstanding, however, their disavowal of this principle in the admission of the former basis of the negociation, it is now alleged as a ground for the pretension, that they are entitled, as a matter of right, to demand from this country, not as an *ultimatum,* but as a preliminary to the discussion of any articles of treaty, that we shall make no proposals inconsistent with the laws and constitution of France. I know of no law of nations which can in the remotest degree countenance such a perverse and monstrous claim. The annexation of territory to any state by the government of that state during the continuance of the war in which they have been acquired, can never confer a claim which supersedes the treaties of their powers, and the known and public obligations of the different nations of Europe. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that the separate act of a separate government can operate to the dissolution of the ties subsisting between other governments, and to the abrogation of treaties previously concluded : and yet this is the pretension to which the French government lay claim, and the acknowledgment of which they hold out not as an *ultimatum,* but as a preliminary of negociation to the king of Great Britain and his allies. In my opinion, there is no principle of the law of nations clearer than this, that, when in the course of war any nation acquires new possessions, such nation has only temporary right to them, and they do not become property till the end of the war. This principle is incontrovertible, and founded upon the nature of things. For, supposing possessions thus acquired to be immediately annexed to the territory of the state by which the conquest was made, and that the conqueror was to insist upon retaining them, because he had passed a law that they should not be alienated, might not the neighbouring powers, or even the hostile power, ask—Who gave you a right to pass this law? What have we to do with the regulations of your municipal law ? Or, what authority have you as a separate state, by any annexation of territory to your dominions, to cancel existing treaties, and to destroy the equilibrium established among nations ? Were this pretension to be tolerated, it would be a source of eternal hostility, and a perpetual bar to negociation between the contending parties; because the pretensions of **the** one would be totally irreconcileable with those **of** the **other.**

This pretension in the instance of France has been as inconsistent in its operations as it was unfounded in its origin. The possessions which they have lost in the West Indies in the course of the war, they made independent republics; and what is still more singular, Tobago, which they have lost in the war, and which is retained by British arms, is a part of indivisible France. I should not be surprised to hear that Ireland, in consequence of the rumour which has been circulated of their intention to attempt an invasion upon that country, is constitutionally annexed to the territories of the republic, or even that the city of Westminster is a part of indivisible France. There is a distinction, no doubt, between the Netherlands and the West-India islands, but it whimsically happens that this principle of law, that this constitutional pretension is least applicable to those possessions upon which it is held out as operating by the French Government, and that the Austrian Netherlands, even by the letter of their own constitution, ought to be exempted from its operation. I own I am little qualified to read a lecture upon the French constitution, and perhaps I shall be accused, in my interpretation of it, of pretending to understand it better than they do themselves. Here I must remind my accusers, however, that even M. Delacroix, that great master of the law of nations, allows that on this point the constitution is not perfectly clear, and gives that particular interpretation of it upon the authority of the best publicists. I again repeat it—that, in discussing the terms of a treaty with France, I am not obliged to know either her constitution or her laws, because it was unreasonable for her to advance a pretension upon a foundation inconsistent with the received law of nations and the established nature of things. But it will demonstrate their insincerity and the shallowness of the subterfuges to which they have been obliged to have recourse, if I can shew that no such law is in existence, and that their constitution leaves the government entirely at liberty to dispose of the possessions which they have acquired in war, in any way they may think proper. I have looked through this voluminous code [holding a copy of the constitution in his hand], and I think it may be considered as an instance that a constitution upon paper, digesting and regulating the conduct of municipal jurisprudence as well as of foreign relations, does not lead to the best application of the true principles of political economy. In the copy of their constitution all I find upon the subject is a declaration that France is one and

indivisible, which is followed by a long list of departments. And here I would recommend it to gentlemen to read the report upon which this decree was founded, in which they will find that it was passed for the avowed purpose of obtaining for France an indisputable ascendant in Europe, and of suppressing the trade and commerce of rival nations. Overlooking, however, the principle of the decree, if it was found inapplicable to the possessions of the French in the East and West Indies, which they had previous to the war, it was certainly much more inapplicable to the Austrian Netherlands, of which they have got possession in the course of the war; and therefore the government, in holding out the principle as operating upon the latter, and not to the former, apply it to that part of their territory to which it is least applicable.

If we look at the provisions under the next title, *respecting relations with foreign powers*, the argument against the existence of any such principle in their constitution is confirmed: for we find the executive government is there vested with the full power of treating, but all their treaties must be ratified by the legislative bodies, with the singular exception of secret articles, which it is in the power of the directory to put in execution without being ratified, a proof that they are authorized by the constitution to alienate territories belonging to the republic. Allowing, however, that it is a principle of their constitution, is it an evil without a remedy? No. M. Delacroix confesses that it may be remedied, but not without the inconvenience of calling the primary assemblies. And are we then, after all the exertions that we have made in order to effect the object of general pacification, and after being baffled in all our efforts by the stubborn pride and persevering obstinacy of the French government, after our propositions have been slighted, and our ambassador insulted, are we now to consent to sacrifice our engagements, and to violate our treaties, because, forsooth, it would be attended with some inconvenience for them to call their primary assemblies, in order to cancel a law which is incompatible with the principle of fair negociation? Shall we forget our own honour, our own dignity, and our own duty, so far, as to acquiesce in a principle as a preliminary to negociation, intolerable in its tendency, unfounded in fact, inconsistent with the nature of things, and inadmissible by the law of nations?

But this is not all the sacrifice they demand. This is not all the degradation to which they would have us submit. You

must also engage, and as a preliminary too, to make no propositions which are contrary to the laws of the constitution, and the *treaties* which bind the republic. Here they introduce a new and extraordinary clause, imposing a restriction still more absurd and unreasonable than the other. The republic of France may have made secret treaties which we know nothing about, and yet that government expects that we are not to permit our propositions to interfere with these treaties, In the former instance we had a text upon which to comment, but here we are in the state of those diviners who were left to guess at the dreams which they were called upon to interpret. How is it possible for this country to know what secret articles there may be in the treaty between France and Holland? How can we know what the Dutch may have ceded to France, or whether France may not have an oath in heaven never to give up the territories ceded to her by Holland? Who can know but her treaty with Spain contains some secret article guaranteeing to the latter the restitution of Gibraltar, or some important possession now belonging to his Majesty? And how can I know whether the performance of all these engagements may not be included under the pretension which the French government now holds out? How is it possible for me to sound where no line can fathom? And even after you have acceded to these preliminaries, in what situation do you stand? After accepting of terms of which you are entirely ignorant, and giving up all that it is of importance for you to keep, you at last arrive at a discussion of the government which France may chuse to give to Italy, and of the fate which she may be pleased to assign to Germany. In fact, the question is not, how much you will give for peace, but how much disgrace you will suffer at the outset, how much degradation you will submit to as a preliminary? In these circumstances, then, are we to persevere in the war with a spirit and energy worthy of the British name and of the British character; or are we, by sending couriers to Paris, to prostrate ourselves at the feet of a stubborn and supercilious government, to do what they require, and to submit to whatever they may impose? I hope there is not a hand in his Majesty's councils that would sign the proposals, that there is not a heart in this house that would sanction the measure, and that there is not an individual in the British dominions who would act as the courier.

Mr. Pitt concluded with moving,

"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to

assure his Majesty, that that house also felt the utmost concern that his Majesty's earnest endeavours to effect the restoration of peace had been unhappily frustrated, and that the negociation, in which he had been happily engaged, had been abruptly broken off by the peremptory refusal of the French government to treat, except upon a basis evidently inadmissible, and by their having in consequence required his Majesty's plenipotentiary to quit Paris within forty-eight hours.

" To thank his Majesty for having directed the several memorials and papers which had been exchanged in the course of the late discussion, and the account transmitted to his Majesty of its final result, to be laid before the house.

" That they were perfectly satisfied, from the perusal of these papers, that his Majesty's conduct had been guided by a sincere desire to effect the restoration of peace, on principles suited to the relative situation of the belligerent powers, and essential for the permanent interests of his Majesty's kingdoms, and the general security of Europe : whilst his enemies had advanced pretensions at once inconsistent with those objects, unsupported even on the grounds on which they were professed to rest, and repugnant both to the system established by repeated treaties; and to the principles and practice which had hitherto regulated the intercourse of independent nations.

" To assure his Majesty, that, under the protection of Providence, he might place the fullest reliance on the wisdom and firmness of his parliament, on the tried valour of his forces by sea and land, and on the zeal, public spirit, and resources of his kingdoms, for vigorous and effectual support in the prosecution of a contest, which it did not depend on his Majesty to terminate, and which involved in it the security and permanent interests of this country and of Europe."

THE MUTINY AT THE NORE

June 2, 1797.[1]

IMPORTANT as the present occasion is, I feel that it will not be necessary for me to detain the house with a long detail upon the subject of the gracious communication from the throne, which has now been read to us. By that communication we learn that all the benefit of his Majesty's gracious favour, which restored satisfaction to part of his Majesty's forces, was attended with every mark of duty and gratitude by that part, and was extended to the whole of his Majesty's fleet; but that, nevertheless, there are now at the Nore deluded persons who have persisted in disobedience, and proceeded to open acts of mutiny and disorder, although all the same benefits have been allowed to them ; the same liberal allowance which was agreed upon by parliament, and his Majesty's most gracious pardon, have been offered to them in the same generous manner as it was to those who have returned to their duty. We have the mortification now to learn that mutiny is carried on to the most dangerous and criminal excess, to such a length, that the persons concerned in it have gone into open and undisguised hostility against his Majesty's forces acting under orders and

[1] **Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's message relative to the Mutiny in the Fleet—**

"GEORGE R.

" It is with the deepest concern his Majesty acquaints the House of Commons, that the conduct of the crews of some of his ships now at the Nore, in persisting in the most violent and treasonable acts of mutiny and disobedience, notwithstanding the full extension to them of all the benefits which had been accepted with gratitude by the rest of his Majesty's fleet, and notwithstanding the repeated offers of his Majesty's gracious pardon, on their returning to their duty, have compelled his Majesty to call on all his faithful subjects to give their utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings. His Majesty has directed a copy of the proclamation which he has issued for this purpose, to be laid before the House; and he cannot doubt that his parliament will adopt, with readiness and decision, every measure which can tend, at this important conjuncture, to provide for the public security. And his Majesty particularly recommends it to the consideration of Parliament, to make more effectual provision for the prevention and punishment of all traiterous attempts to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's naval service ; or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces, by sea or land, from their duty and allegiance to him; and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and safety of the British Empire,

G. R."

commands from regular authority. Much as we must deplore such events, much as we must feel them as an aggravation of the public difficulties with which we have to contend, yet I am sure we all feel it to be the duty of the house of commons to shew to its constituents, and to the world at large, that there is no difficulty which they will not meet with firmness and resolute decision; that we will take measures to extricate the country from its difficulties in a manner that is worthy of the representatives of a great, a brave, a powerful, and a free people. I am persuaded that, under our present circumstances, we can have no hesitation in laying at the foot of the throne an address of assurance, that we will afford his Majesty every effectual support in our power; that we will counteract, as far as we can, so fatal an example as has, by the most consummate wickedness, been set to his Majesty's naval force ; that we will shew that we feel a just indignation against a conduct so unworthy of, so inconsistent with, the manly and generous character of British seamen; that we feel resentment at so ungrateful a return to the generosity of a liberal parliament, and the mildness and benignity of an illustrious throne. I trust that we shall recollect what our duty is in such a conjuncture. I trust too, that as these late proceedings are utterly repugnant to the real spirit of the British sailor, contrary to the conduct which has established the glory of the British navy, and the renown of the British nation, it will appear that it was not in the hearts of British seamen that such mutinous principles originated. I trust that we shall shew also, that if there are among us those who are enemies to the fundamental interests of this country, to its glory, to its safety, and to its existence as a nation, whose malignity is directed to the honour and even existence of our navy, who carry on their diabolical artifice by misrepresentation of facts, to pervert the dispositions and change the principles of the seamen, by instilling into their minds false alarms and apprehensions, and prevail upon them to do acts contrary to their instinct, and that too when they are called upon to contend with an enemy,—I trust, I say, that if there be among us such foes, they may be detected and dealt with as they deserve. Our indignation should be more active against the seducers than the seduced and misguided.

Whether, according to the existing law against the open attempts that we have seen made upon another branch of his Majesty's service to shake its loyalty, but which, to the honour

of that body, remains unmoved, and I trust is immoveable, we possess power enough to punish, as they deserve, such wicked offenders, may be a matter perhaps of doubt. I shall, however, instantly proceed to that part of the recommendation in his Majesty's message, and to state my ideas upon the law against persons who shall excite his Majesty's forces to mutiny or disobedience. It is not necessary for me to enter now into particulars upon that subject; but I feel it my duty to declare, that if the address which I shall propose shall meet, as I hope and confidently trust it will, the unanimous sense of the house, I shall immediately move for leave to bring in a bill for the better prevention of the crime I have already stated. There is, I am persuaded, in this house, but one sense of the great guilt of this offence, of the notoriety of its practice, and of the danger of its consequences; in short, there exists every ground upon which penal law can be applied to any offence, viz. the mischief of the act itself, and the frequency of its commission. The remedy which I mean to propose for the consideration of parliament, will, I trust, be sufficiently efficacious to attain its object, without o'erstepping the moral guilt and real malignity of the crime. While, however, we all feel it to be our duty to enter on the consideration of such legislative provision, while parliament is not wanting in its duty at such a crisis of public affairs, I trust also that we shall not be disappointed in our expectation of the spirit of the public collectively or individually; that they will not be wanting in their exertions in such a crisis; that they will be animated, collectively and individually, with a spirit that will give energy and effect to their exertions; that every man who boasts, and is worthy of the name of an Englishman, will stand forth in the metropolis, and in every part of the kingdom, to maintain the authority of the laws, and enforce obedience to them, to oppose and counteract the machinations of the disaffected, and to preserve a due principle of submission to legal authority. I trust that all the inhabitants of the kingdom will unite in one common defence against internal enemies, to maintain the general security of the kingdom, by providing for the local security of each particular district; that we shall all remember, that by so doing we shall give the fullest scope to his Majesty's forces against foreign enemies, and also the fullest scope to the known valour and unshaken fidelity of the military force of the kingdom against those who shall endeavour to disturb its internal tranquillity.

Such are the principles which I feel, and upon which I shall act for myself, and such are the principles, and will be the conduct, I hope, of every man in this house and out of it; such are the sentiments that are implanted in us all; such the feelings that are inherent in the breast of every Englishman. I should insult the house by shewing that I distrusted its character, and the character of the country, if I said more, and I should have neglected my duty if I had said less. I now move, Sir,

"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message.

"To express to his Majesty the concern and indignation which we must feel in common with his Majesty, at the heinous and criminal conduct of the crews of some of his Majesty's ships, notwithstanding the offer so repeatedly made to them of his Majesty's most gracious pardon, and the proofs of the paternal regard of his Majesty, and of the liberality of parliament, which they have received in common with the rest of his Majesty's fleet.

"To assure his Majesty, that we are ready and determined to afford to his Majesty our utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings, and to adopt every measure which can tend, at this conjuncture, to provide for the public security: with this view we shall proceed, without delay, in pursuance of the recommendation of his Majesty, to consider of such further provision as it may be necessary to make, for the more effectual prevention and punishment of all traiterous attempts to excite mutiny in any part of his Majesty's forces, or to withdraw them from their duty and allegiance, and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire:

"That we have the fullest reliance, that all his Majesty's faithful subjects, from sentiments of loyalty and attachment to his Majesty, and a just anxiety for their dearest interests, will be eager to manifest, at so important a crisis, a full determination to contribute, on every occasion, their utmost exertions for the support of legal authority, the maintenance of peace and order, and the general protection and defence of his Majesty's kingdoms."

A general sentiment of unanimity appearing through the House,

Mr. Pitt, in his reply, declared,

That in expressing his anxiety for unanimity in voting the proposed address, he was influenced indeed by the most important considerations. He wished for such an unanimity as would lay a just foundation for future prosperity, for one on which he placed the most favourable augury, the unanimity of the nation at large—an unanimity not in support of administration, but in support of the constitution itself, and of all those laws by which it was guarded. The country was called upon to be unanimous in a contest which embraced every thing that was most valuable to its dearest interests. Whatever difference of opinion might prevail in the minds of gentlemen on former points, there could not exist a shadow of doubt with respect to the present question. It was now indispensably necessary for them to unite in one common cause; it was incumbent on them to consolidate their efforts, to reconcile their different views, to concentrate their individual exertions, and to give energy and vigour to the laws, without which it was impossible there could be any solid happiness. It was not merely by declarations that they were bound to proceed, but by a spirit and promptitude of action, and a firm resolution and readiness to support the execution of the laws by military subordination and legal obedience. It became their duty to give a resistless efficacy to that conduct through every corner of the metropolis, and through every part of the kingdom. By such measures they could alone disappoint the dark and malignant efforts of the enemy ; and he was proud to say that to so glorious an unanimity there was nothing that he would not cheerfully sacrifice. He therefore hoped that nothing would in fact be found in the latter part of the address, that could in the slightest degree tend to destroy the unanimity of the house in agreeing to it.

When he came to consider the nature and the terms of it, he was completely at a loss to find one word that could appear objectionable. The house could not be supposed to pledge themselves particularly to agree to the bill which was about to be brought in. They merely pledged themselves to this ; that, in pursuance of his Majesty's recommendation to parliament to make more effectual provision, for the purpose of strengthening the present laws which related to military obedience and discipline, they would consider of the propriety of those measures which might be deemed necessary for that specific object. The house, therefore, in voting for the address, went no farther than

to declare, that they would act in compliance with his Majesty's recommendation, but did not preclude themselves from taking into their mature consideration the nature of the bill, nor did they, by such a vote, debar themselves from withholding their assent to any matter that might appear objectionable in it. But though he was so particularly anxious to secure unanimity in passing the address, he did not, with a view of obtaining that desirable measure, wish to conceal or protract the delivery of his sentiments on any part of it. His conviction of the propriety of the bill was formed on the ground of the greatest necessity, and strongly impressed with the idea that it was absolutely requisite to give dispatch to the operation of it, he should move, the moment the address was carried, for leave to present the bill, and if it was then agreed to, he should also propose the second reading of it to take place the next day. He also thought it necessary to premise, that the further discussion of the bill would be carried on as speedily as possible.

An honourable gentleman,[1] who had spoken against the latter part of the address, declared, that he reserved to himself the liberty of opposing the bill. A declaration of that nature was by no means necessary, because no gentleman could be supposed to pledge himself to measures which he had in all instances the freedom of discussing and disagreeing with. He would not undertake to convince the scruples of the honourable gentleman on every point which was contained in the latter part of the address, but he entertained an opinion that he was competent to do so on some points which appeared peculiarly satisfactory to himself. The provisions of the bill did not go beyond the necessity of the case, and this statement he would undertake in the most direct and positive manner to support; but if the honourable gentleman meant, that it was requisite to prove the existence of particular acts on board each of his Majesty's ships which were then in a state of mutiny, he should freely declare that he would undertake no such thing. He took the ground of proceeding with the bill to be derived from a plain and fair opinion, on which the public mind and parliament might be fully satisfied as in many other cases of equal notoriety. That the speeches of this or that emissary of faction and general anarchy had produced mutiny in particular ships, he would not pretend to say; but the public opinion with respect to the disorganized state of these ships, and the causes

1 Mr. Hobhouse.

which had first produced the disobedience, and continued to uphold it, was founded on grounds unhappily too notorious in all instances, too much felt in some cases, and too strongly proved, but fortunately defeated in others. On these grounds he should therefore propose the bill. He thought it necessary, in consequence of what had fallen from some gentlemen, to submit these candid statements which decided his conviction on the propriety of the measure, and he begged pardon of the house for having troubled them a second time, but he felt from the great importance of the subject, from the pressing exigence of the case, and from the present crisis of public affairs, that it was the duty of every man zealously to unite in a measure, which, by securing the obedience and discipline of his Majesty's forces, preserved the country from the efforts of its domestic and foreign enemies.

[The question on the address was put and agreed to *nemine contradiccnte.*

Mr. Pitt then rose again,—]

To move, he said, for leave to bring in a bill for the better prevention and punishment of all traiterous attempts to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service ; or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces by sea or land from their duty and allegiance to him, and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire. He had already stated, he observed, that if any person required substantial evidence of any individual malpractices to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service, he was not at present in the possession of the power to produce it; but he trusted it would be enough for the satisfaction of the house to authorize the introduction of the bill, to state the necessity on general grounds. It would be enough, he conceived, to obtain their sanction, and their approbation of the measures he was about to recommend, if the frequency, the malignity, and the universality of seditious practices were so notorious, and in the daily habit of coming to the knowledge of every person both in and out of that house, that no reasonable man could dissent from his Majesty's declaration of the necessity to provide for security in future. It might be more immediately his duty to state, as a convincing proof of the existence of one active, uniform, and wide extended plan of sedition to seduce his Majesty's forces from their duty and allegiance, that the discontents did not originate with any single individual, that

they were not confined to one corner of the kingdom, nor contracted in one circle of complaint, but that they had manifested themselves in different detached parts, were working at the same time, and in different places on the same principles, and branched out into so many fresh ramifications of complaint, that no person could foresee where they would end. Many and various had been the attempts to excite this disaffection, by false, insidious, and calumniating means, sometimes provoking rebellion by emissaries at secret hours, sometimes by misrepresentations, and other artful means, and at others by dispersing hand bills wherever opportunity presented itself or any expectation of success in their pursuits could be indulged, to detach the soldiers also from their duty ; so that the engines of sedition had been no less busily and unremittingly persevering on shore, where to the honour of the soldiery he had the happiness to say, they had failed in their effects, than in the navy where they had unfortunately prevailed. Here then, he had an opportunity of observing, that gentlemen needed only to connect the discontents on board the fleet with the other species of sedition upon shore, to pronounce them to be the operations of one fatal and too-well digested system; for that they were not the spontaneous combinations of the seamen, that they were not the effects of accident, nor the effusion of one solitary and unconnected discontent, was demonstrated by the conformity of transactions at Newcastle, at Nottingham, at Maidstone, at Canterbury, at Salisbury, and many other places, where the same species of hand bills had been scattered and diffused, accompanied by rumours echoed and re-echoed of the most false and scandalous nature, and where, in some unhappy instances, a few deluded or ill-minded people had set the same melancholy example. A more studied system could not offer itself to the thought of any man ; a more practicable plan of treason to provoke a general rebellion could never be attempted to be put in execution.

From such specimens therefore it was evident the sedition was extensive enough to prove it to be systematic, and dangerous enough to make precaution requisite. Could any person doubt the existence of some treacherous conspiracy ? Could any person wish to have a proof of its existence when its existence had already been attested by numerous instances of loyalty and fidelity in the soldiery, who with honest and honourable indignation, had not only been wise and resolute enough to repel it, but had also voluntarily stepped forward in

the most liberal and manly manner to discover the offenders? With this notoriety of a disgraceful system to corrupt one service, where it had so nobly been defeated, how could any man doubt of its insinuation and its influence in another?—A quarter too where such opinions and such measures were the least congenial to the natural dispositions of the persons who professed them. The whole affair was of that colour and description which proved it to be not of a native growth, and left no hesitation in the mind of any thinking man to determine whence it was imported; but on the contrary, it was so uniform and particular in its species, and so like every sample of what they had witnessed in another country, that there was no doubt the propagators of it there had executed a previous determination to transplant it into every soil that would receive it. Could any man for a moment doubt, he again demanded, that the same engines had been at work in this country to produce disorder and rebellion, which had been elsewhere so fatally effectual? Could anv man doubt it with the knowledge of the frustrated endeavours in the army, and the suspicion of the same endeavours in the navy? That knowledge and that suspicion was, in his opinion, all the proof the legislature could require. But if that were deemed sufficient proof, and upon that evidence it was thought not only prudent but absolutely necessary to confine its operations, and, if possible, inflict a penalty on the offenders, no man could doubt but its operations would have been confined within some bounds of restriction long ago, if the penal laws were competent to recognize such machinations and punish the delinquents. The boldness, the malignancy, the frequency of the offences, all tended to confute that proposition.

But he would put it to the decision of every man who heard him, Were the laws, now in being, sufficient to deter men from the prosecution of their evil purposes? That they had not deterred them was plain from the mutinous proceedings still existing; and as they did not deter them from pushing those proceedings further, it was a reasonable ground for the presumption that the laws in force were not sufficient. Look at the statute laws, find out their origin and examine their extent. Had the statute law ever endeavoured to search out every possible offence, and provide for its prevention and its punishment? Certainly not. The statute laws of this country were not the result of an original deliberative systematic code, but the natural effects of the commission of crimes, arising from their

frequency and heinousness, and proportioning the penalties accordingly. They grew up from the offences which they afterwards controlled, and their character and complexion distinguished them to be the produce of different periods. What then would be the principle of any one's argument who should contend, that, because no particular law nor any particular penalty had been yet provided by the legislature, none should be provided? His argument would in such a case apply just as much, if he were to contend that no law or punishment should be in force against parricide, because, by referring to the statute books, he might find, that there was a time when no such law or penalty existed. He rested the introduction of this bill, therefore, upon the general footing of common law; and as the offence exceeded the provision for subduing the ordinary species of treason, and was in its nature of a particular and extraordinary description, he should act upon a principle of the common law, in which a proof of the expediency to alter or extend a particular law was given by this circumstance. Formerly, to entice any of his Majesty's forces to desert from his service was only a misdemeanour; but soon after the accession of the family of Hanover to the throne of these dominions, that law was revised and altered, and any person found guilty of that offence, incurred an additional penalty. Would any man pretend to say then, that a person found guilty of enticing any of his Majesty's forces to desert, should incur a heavy penalty, and that they who enticed his forces, not to desert, but to employ their arms in breach of their allegiance should go unpunished? Indisputably not!—And for that reason he had undertaken to provide such a remedy as to him appeared most likely to prevail. He regretted that the offences were so secret and so complex in their nature, that it was impossible at present to define them, and under those circumstances he was sorry to add, he could not propose any measure so definite as he wished. In point of moral guilt, the persons who had been so artful and so active in their operations, to seduce the forces from their allegiance, and excite them to rebellion at so dangerous a crisis of the public safety as the present, were the worst traitors to society, and certainly deserved the highest and most exemplary punishment; but on the other hand, as the precise nature and extent could not be determined, he thought the medium would be the best and most serviceable way to proceed against them.

Having said thus much, both by way of proof of the necessity

of some restriction, and his opinion of what that restriction ought to be, he should now come to the description of the remedy he intended to propose. What he had to propose then was, to treat any traiterous attempt to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service, or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces by sea or land from their duty and allegiance, as an aggravated species of misdemeanour, leaving to the discretion of the court the power of inflicting not only the penalties of fine and imprisonment, as in other cases of misdemeanour, but, as circumstances might require, the penalties of banishment and transportation also. This was a short statement of the measures he meant to propose, and wishing to be cautious how he contributed to extend the criminal laws of this country, he was willing to press his restriction of the offences he had described, in this shape in preference to any other. The penalties for such offences could not, in his opinion, press too much, consistently with the future security and happiness; and in the mode he had suggested to the consideration of the house, he hoped and trusted they would not be found to press too little. He therefore moved for leave to bring in the bill.

ON THE FRENCH NEGOCIATIONS

November 10, 1797.[1]

AFTER Sir John Sinclair and Lord Temple had spoken, the former of whom moved an amendment to the address, Mr. Pitt rose.

Sir,—Having come to this house with the firm persuasion, that there never existed an occasion, when the unanimous concurrence of the house might be more justly expected than on a proposal, to agree in the sentiments contained in the address which has been read, I must confess myself considerably disappointed in some degree, even by the speech of my noble relation, (much as I rejoice in the testimony which he has given of his talents and abilities,) and still more by the

[1] **The order of the day being read for the House to take into consideration the papers, which had been laid before them by his Majesty's direction, relative to the late negociation at Lisle, and the address of the House of Lords being also read, Mr. Duruias moved " that the house do concur with their Lordships in that address."**

speech of the honourable baronet, and by the amendment which he has moved. I cannot agree with the noble lord in the extent to which he has stated his sentiments, that we ought to rejoice that peace was not made; much less, Sir, can I feel desirous to accept, on the part of myself or my colleagues, either from my noble kinsman, or any other person, the approbation which he was pleased to express, of the manner in which we have concluded the negociation. *We* have not concluded the negociation—the negociation has been concluded by others; we have not been suffered to continue it; our claim to merit, if we have any, our claim to the approbation of our country is, that we persisted in every attempt to conduct that negociation to a pacific termination, as long as our enemies left us, not the prospect but the chance or possibility of doing so, consistent with our honour, our dignity, and our safety. We lament and deplore the disappointment of the sincere wishes which we felt, and of the earnest endeavours which we employed; yet we are far from suffering those sentiments to induce us to adopt the unmanly line of conduct that has been recommended by the honourable baronet; this is not the moment to dwell only on our disappointment, to suppress our indignation, or to let our courage, our constancy, and our determination, be buried in the expressions of unmanly fear, or unavailing regret. Between these two extremes, it is, that I trust our conduct is directed; and in calling upon the house to join in sentiments between those extremes, I do trust, that if we cannot have the unanimous opinion, we shall have the general and ready concurrence both of the house and of the country.

Sir, before I trouble the house, which I am not desirous of doing at length, with a few points which I wish to recapitulate, let me first call to your minds the general nature of the amendment which the honourable baronet has, under these circumstances, thought fit to propose, and the general nature of the observations by which he introduced it. He began with deploring the calamities of war, on the general topic, that all war is calamitous. Do I object to this sentiment? No: but is it our business at a moment when we feel that the continuance of that war is owing to the animosity, the implacable animosity of our enemy, to the inveterate and insatiable ambition of the present frantic government of France, not of the people of France, as the honourable baronet unjustly stated it—is it our business at that moment to content ourselves with

merely lamenting in common-place terms the calamities of war, and forgetting that it is part of the duty which, as representatives of the people, we owe to our government and our country, to state that the continuance of those evils upon ourselves, and upon France too, is the fruit only of the conduct of the enemy; that it is to be imputed to them, and not to us?

Sir, the papers which were ordered to be laid on the table have been in every gentleman's hand, and on the materials which they furnish we must be prepared to decide. Can there be a doubt, that all the evils of war, whatever may be their consequences, are to be imputed solely to his Majesty's enemies? Is there any man here prepared to deny, that the delay in every stage of the negociation, and its final rupture, are proved to be owirig to the evasive conduct, the unwarrantable pretensions, the inordinate ambition, and the implacable animosity of the enemy? I will shortly state what are the points, though it is hardly necessary that I should state them, for they speak loudlv for themselves, on which I would rest that proposition; but if there is any man who doubts it, is it the honourable baronet? Is it he who makes this amendment, leaving out every thing that is honourable to the character of his own country, and seeming to court some new complaisance on the part of the French directcry?—the honourable baronet, who, as soon as he has stated the nature of his amendment, makes the first part of his speech a charge against his Majesty's ministers, for even having commenced the negociation in the manner, and under the circumstances in which they did commence it—who makes his next charge, their having persevered in it, when violations of form and practice were insisted upon in the earliest stage of it? Does he discover that the French government, whom we have accused with insincerity, have been sincere from the beginning to the end of the negociation? Or, after having praised his Majesty's ministers for commencing and persevering in it, is the honourable baronet so afraid of being misconstrued into an idea of animosity against the people of France, that he must disguise the truth, must do injustice to the character and cause of his own country, and leave unexplained the cause of the continuance of this great contest? Let us be prepared to probe that question to the bottom, to form our opinion upon it, and to render our conduct comformable to that opinion. This, I conceive, to be a manly conduct, and, especially at such a moment, to be the indispensable duty of the house. But let not the honourable baronet imagine

there is any ground for his apprehension, that by adopting the language of the address, which ascribes the continuance of the war to the ambition of the enemy, we shall declare a system of endless animosity between the nations of Great Britain and France. I say directly the contrary. He who scruples to declare, that in the present moment the government of France are acting as much in contradiction to the known wishes of the French nation, as to the just pretensions and anxious wishes of the people of Great Britain—he who scruples to declare them the authors of this calamity, deprives us of the consolatory hope which we are inclined to cherish, of some future change of circumstances more favourable to our wishes.

It is a melancholy spectacle, indeed, to see in any country, and on the ruin of any pretence of liberty however nominal, shallow, or delusive, a system of tyranny erected, the most galling, the most horrible, the most undisguised in all its parts and attributes that has stained the page of history, or disgraced the annals of the world; but it would be much more unfortunate, if when we see that the same cause carries desolation through France, which extends disquiet and fermentation through Europe, it would be worse, indeed, if we attributed to the nation of France that, which is to be attributed only to the unwarranted and usurped authority which involves them in misery, and would, if unresisted, involve Europe with them in one common ruin and destruction. Do we state this to be animosity on the part of the people of France? Do we state it in order to raise up an implacable spirit of animosity against that country? Where is one word to that effect in the declaration to which the honourable gentleman has alluded? He complains much of this declaration, because it tends to perpetuate animosity between two nations which one day or other must be at peace—God grant that day may be soon! But what does that declaration express upon the subject? Does it express, that because the present existing government of France has acted as it has acted, we forego the wish or renounce the hope that some new situation may lead to happier consequences? On the contrary, his Majesty's language is distinctly this: "While this determination continues to prevail on the part of his enemies, his Majesty's earnest wishes and endeavours to restore peace to his subjects must be fruitless; but his sentiments remain unaltered; he looks with anxious expectation to the moment when the government of France may shew a temper and spirit in any degree correspond-

ing with his own." I wish to know whether words can be found in the English language which more expressly state the contrary sentiment to that which the honourable baronet imputes; they not only disclaim animosity against the people of France in consequence of the conduct of its rulers, but do not go the length of declaring, that after all this provocation, even with the present rulers, all treaty is impracticable. Whether it is probable, that acting on the principles upon which they have acquired their power, and while that power continues, they will listen to any system of moderation or justice at home or abroad, it is not now necessary to discuss; but for one, I desire to express my cordial concurrence in the sentiment, so pointedly expressed in that passage of the declaration, in which his Majesty, notwithstanding all the provocation he has received, and even after the recent successes, which, by the blessing of Providence, have attended his arms, declares his readiness to adhere to the same moderate terms and principles which he proposed at the time of our greatest difficulties, and to conclude peace on that ground, if it can be obtained, now with this very government.

I am sensible, that while I am endeavouring to vindicate his Majesty's servants against the charges of the honourable baronet, which are sufficiently, however, refuted by the early part of his own speech, I am incurring, in some degree, the censure of the noble lord to whom I before alluded. According to his principles and opinions, and of some few others in this country, it is matter of charge against us that we even harbour in our minds at this moment, a wish to conclude peace upon the terms which we think admissible with the present rulers of France. I am not one of those who can or will join in that sentiment I have no difficulty in repeating what I stated before, that in their present spirit, after what they have said, and still more, after what they have done, I can entertain little hope of so desirable an event. I have no hesitation in avowing, for it would be idleness and hypocrisy to conceal it, that for the sake of mankind in general, and to gratify those sentiments which can never be eradicated from the human heart, I should see with pleasure and satisfaction the termination of a government whose conduct, and whose origin is such as we have seen that of the government of France: but that is not the object—that ought not to be the principle of the war, whatever wish I may entertain in my own heart; and whatever opinion I may think it fair or manly to

avow, I have no difficulty in stating, that violent and odious as is the character of that government, I verily believe, in the present state of Europe, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, if, by the blessing of Providence, our perseverance, and our resources, should enable us to make peace with France upon terms in which we taint not our character, in which we do not abandon the sources of our wealth, the means of our strength, the defence of what we already possess; if we maintain our equal pretensions, and assert that rank which we are entitled to hold among nations—the moment peace can be obtained on such terms, be the form of government in France what it may, peace is desirable, peace is then anxiously to be sought. But unless it is attained on such terms, there is no extremity of war, there is no extremity of honourable contest, that is not preferable to the name and pretence of peace, which must be in reality a disgraceful capitulation, a base, an abject surrender of every thing that constitutes the pride, the safety, and happiness of England.

These, Sir, are the sentiments of my mind on this leading point, and with these sentiments I shape my conduct between the contending opinions of the noble lord and of the honourable baronet. But there is one observation of the honourable baronet on which I must now more particularly remark. He has discovered that we state the directory of France to have been all along insincere, and yet take merit for having commenced a negociation, which we ought never to have commenced without being persuaded of their sincerity. This supposed contradiction requires but a few words to explain it I believe that those who constitute the *present* government of France never were sincere for a moment in the negociation: from all the information I have obtained, and from every conjecture I could form, I for one never was so duped as to believe them sincere ; but I did believe, and I thought I knew, that there was a general prevailing wish for peace, and a predominant sense of its necessity growing and confirming itself in France, and founded on the most obvious and most pressing motives. I did see a spirit of reviving moderation gradually gaining ground, and opening a way to the happiest alterations in the general system of that country: I did believe that the violence of that portion of the executive government, which, by the late strange revolution of France, unhappily for France itself and for the world, has gained the ascendency, would have been restrained within some bounds; that ambition

must give way to reason; that even phrenzy itself must be controlled and governed by necessity. These were the hopes and expectations I entertained. I did, notwithstanding, feel, that even from the outset, and in every step of that negociation, those who happily had not yet the full power to cut it short in the beginning, who dared not trust the public eye with the whole of their designs, who could not avow all their principles, unfortunately, nevertheless, did retain from the beginning power enough to control those who had a better disposition; to mix in every part of the negociation, which they could not then abruptly break off, whatever could impede, embarrass, and perplex, in order to throw upon us, if possible, the odium of its failure.

Sir, the system of France is explained by the very objections that are made against our conduct. The violent party could not, as I have stated, at once break off the treaty on their part, but they wished to drive England to the rupture; they had not strength enough to reject all negociation, but they had strength enough to mix in every step those degradations and insults, those inconsistent and unwarranted pretensions in points even of subordinate importance, which reduced ministers to that opinion which I have described; but which they decided in a way that has exposed them to the censure of the honourable baronet. They chose rather to incur the blame of sacrificing punctilios (at some times essential) rather than afford the enemy an opportunity of evading this plain question—Is there any ground, and, if any, what, upon which you are ready to conclude peace? To that point it was our duty to drive them; we have driven them to that point; they would tell us no terms, however exorbitant and unwarrantable, upon which they would be ready to make peace. What would have been the honourable baronet's expedient to avoid this embarrassment? It would have been, as he has this day informed us, an address which he had thought of moving in the last session, and which, indeed, I should have been less surprised had he moved, than if the house had concurred in it; he would have moved that no *projet* should be given in till the enemy were prepared to present a *contre projet.* If it was a great misfortune that that address was not moved, I am afraid some of the guilt belongs to me, because the honourable baronet did suggest such an idea, and I did with great sincerity and frankness tell him, that if he was really a friend to peace, there was no motion he could make so little calculated to promote that object; and I did

prevail upon the honourable baronet to give up the intention. If I am right in the supposition I have stated; if I am right in thinking that our great object was to press France to this point, and to put the question—if you have any terms to offer, what are they?—was there any one way by which we could make it so difficult for them to retain any pretence of a desire of peace, as to speak out ourselves, and call upon them either for agreement, or for modification, or for some other plan in their turn? By not adopting the honourable baronet's plan, we have put the question beyond dispute, whether peace was attainable at last, and whether our advances would or would not be met on the part of France; and I shall, to the latest hour of my life, rejoice that we were fortunate enough to place this question in the light which defies the powers of misrepresentation, in which no man can attempt to perplex it, and in which it presents itself this day for the decision of the house and of the nation, and calls upon every individual who has at stake the public happiness and his own, to determine for himself, whether this is or is not a crisis which requires his best exertions in the defence of his country.

To shew which, I shall now proceed, notwithstanding the reproach which has been thrown on our line of conduct, to shew the system even of obstinate forbearance, with which we endeavoured to overcome preliminary difficulties, the determined resolution on our part to overlook all minor obstacles, and to come to the real essence of discussion upon the terms of peace. To shew this, it is not necessary to do more than to call to the recollection of the house the leading parts of the declaration of his Majesty. I mean to leave that part of the subject also without the possibility of doubt, or difference of opinion. It is certainly true, that, even previous to any of the circumstances that related to the preliminary forms of the negociation, the prior conduct of France had offered to any government that was not sincerely and most anxiously bent upon peace, sufficient ground for the continuance of hostilities; it is true that, in the former negociation at Paris, Lord Malmesbury was finally sent away, not upon a question of terms of peace, not upon a question of the cession of European or colonial possessions, but upon the haughty demand of a previous preliminary, which should give up every thing on the part of the allies, and which should leave them afterwards every thing to ask, or rather to require. It is true it closed in nearly the same insulting manner as the second mission; it is true,

too, that, subsequent to that period, in the preliminaries concluded between the emperor and France, it was agreed to invite the allies of each party to a congress, which, however, was never carried into execution. It was under these circumstances that his Majesty, in the earnest desire of availing himself of that spirit of moderation which had begun to shew itself in France, determined to renew those proposals which had been before slighted and rejected; but when this step was taken, what was the conduct of those who have gained the ascendency in France? On the first application to know on what ground they were disposed to negociate, wantonly, as will be shewn by the sequel, and for no purpose but to prevent even the opening of the conferences, they insisted upon a mode of negociation very contrary to general usage and convenience, contrary to the mode in which they had terminated war with any of the belligerent powers, and directly contrary to any mode which they themselves afterwards persisted in following in this very negociation with us. They began by saying, they would receive no proposals for preliminaries, but that conferences should be held for the purpose of concluding at once a definitive treaty.

His Majesty's answer was, that it was his desire to adopt that mode only which was most likely to accelerate the object in view, and the powers of his plenipotentiary would apply to either object, either preliminary or definitive. They appeared content with his answer : but what was the next step? In the simple form of granting a passport for the minister, at the moment they were saying they preferred a definitive peace, because it was the most expeditious; in that very passport, which in all former times has only described the character of the minister, without entering into any thing relating to the terms or mode of negociating, they insert a condition relative to his powers, and that inconsistent with what his Majesty had explained to be the nature of the powers he had intended to give, and with which they had apparently been satisfied; they made it a passport not for a minister coming to conclude peace generally, but applicable only to a definitive and separate peace.

This proceeding was in itself liable to the most obvious objection; but it is more important, as an instance to shew how, in the simplest part of the transaction, the untractable spirit of France discovered itself; it throws light upon the subsequent part of the transaction, and shews the inconsistencies and contradictions of their successive pretensions. As to the

condition then made in the passport for the first time, that the negociation should be for a separate peace, his Majesty declared that he had no choice between a definitive and a preliminary treaty, but as to a separate peace, his honour and good faith, with regard to his ally the queen of Portugal, would not permit it: he therefore stated his unalterable determination to agree to no treaty in which Portugal should not be included, expressing at the same time, his readiness that France should treat on the part of Holland and Spain.

On this occasion, the good faith of this country prevailed; the system of violence and despotism was not then ripe, and therefore his Majesty's demand to treat for Portugal was acquiesced in by the directory. They, at the same time, undertook to treat on their part for their allies, Holland and Spain, as well as for themselves, though in the subsequent course of the negociation they pretended to be without sufficient power to treat for either.

I must here entreat the attention of the house to the next circumstance which occurred. When the firmness of his Majesty, his anxious and sincere desire to terminate the horrors of war, and his uniform moderation, overcame the violence, and defeated the designs of the members of the executive government of France, they had recourse to another expedient—the most absurd, as well as the most unjustifiable: they adverted to the rupture of the former negociation, as if that rupture was to be imputed to his Majesty; and this insinuation was accompanied with a personal reflection upon the minister who was sent by his Majesty to treat on the part of this country. His Majesty, looking anxiously as he did to the conclusion of peace, disdained to reply otherwise, than by observing, that this was not a fit topic to be agitated at the moment of renewing a negociation, and that the circumstances of the transaction wore well enough known to Europe and to the world. And the result of this negociation has confirmed what the former had sufficiently proved, that his Majesty could not have selected, in the ample field of talents which his dominions furnish, any person better qualified to do justice to his sincere and benevolent desire, to promote the restoration of peace, and his firm and unalterable determination to maintain the dignity and honour of his kingdoms.

In spite of these obstacles, and others more minute, the British plenipotentiary at length arrived at Lisle; the full powers were transmitted to the respective governments, and

were found unexceptionable, though the supposed defect of these full powers is, three months after, alleged as a cause for the rupture of the negociation; and what is more remarkable, it did so happen, that the French full powers were, on the face of them, much more limited than ours, for they only enabled the commissioners of the directory to act according to the instructions they were to receive from time to time. On this point it is not necessary now to dwell, but I desire the house to treasure it in their memory, when we come to the question of pretence for the rupture of the negotiation.

Then, Sir, I come to the point in which we have incurred the censure of the honourable baronet, for delivering in on our part a *projet* To his opinion, I do not subscribe, for the reasons that I stated before. But can there be a stronger proof of his Majesty's sincerity, than his waving so many points important in themselves rather than suffer the negociation to be broken off? What was our situation? We were to treat with a government, that had in the outset expressed, that they would treat only definitely; and from every part of their conduct which preceded the meeting of our plenipotentiary, and their commissioners, we might have expected that they would have been prepared to answer our *projet* almost in twenty-four hours after it was delivered. We stood with respect to France in this predicament—we had nothing to ask of them, the question only was, how much we were to give of that which the valour of his Majesty's arms had acquired from them, and from their allies. In this situation, surely, we might have expected, that, before we offered the price of peace, they would at least have condescended to say what were the sacrifices which they expected us to make. But, Sir, in this situation, what species of *projet* was it that was presented by his Majesty's minister? A *projet* the most distinct, the most particular, the most conciliatory and moderate, that ever constituted the first words spoken by any negociator; and yet of this *projet* what have we heard in the language of the French government? What have we seen dispersed through all Europe by that press in France which knows no sentiments but what French policy dictates? What have we seen dispersed by that English press which knows no other use of English liberty, but servilely to retail and transcribe French opinions? We have been told, that it was a *projet* that refused to embrace the terms of negociation. Gentlemen have read the papers—how does that fact stand? In the original *projet* we agreed to give up the conquests we

had made from France and her allies, with certain exceptions. For those exceptions a blank was left, in order to ascertain whether France was desirous that the exceptions should be divided between her and her allies, or whether she continued to insist upon a complete compensation, and left England to look for compensation only to her allies. France, zealous as she pretends to be for her allies, had no difficulty in authorizing her ministers to declare, that she must retain every thing for herself. This blank was then filled up, and it was then distinctly stated, how little, out of what we had, we demanded to keep; in one sense, it remains a blank still, we did not attempt to preclude France from any other mode of filling it up; but while we stated the utmost extent of our own views, we left open to full explanation whatever points the government of France could desire. We called upon them, and repeatedly solicited them, to state something as to the nature of the terms which they proposed, if they objected to ours. It was thus left open to modification, alteration, or concession: but this is not the place, this is not the time, in which I am to discuss, whether those terms, in all given circumstances, or in the circumstances of that moment, were or were not the ultimate terms upon which peace ought to be accepted or rejected; if it were once brought to the point when an ultimatum could be judged of, I will not argue whether some great concession might not have been made with the certainty of peace, or whether the terms proposed constituted an offer of peace upon more favourable grounds for the enemy than his Majesty's ministers could justify. I argue not the one question or the other; it would be inconsistent with the public interest and our duty, that we should here state or discuss it; all that I have to discuss, is, whether the terms, upon the face of them, appear honourable, open, frank, distinct, sincere, and a pledge of moderation; and I leave it to the good sense of the house, whether there can exist a difference of opinion upon this point.

Sir, what was it we offered to renounce to France? In one word, all that we had taken from them. What did this consist of?—the valuable, and almost, under all circumstances, the impregnable island of Martinique, various other West-India possessions, St. Lucia, Tobago, the French part of St. Domingo, the settlements of Pondicherry and Chandernagore, all the French factories and means of trade in the East Indies, and the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon; and for what were these renunciations to be made? For peace, and for peace

only. And to whom? To a nation which had obtained from his Majesty's dominions in Europe nothing in the course of the war, which had never met our fleets but to add to the catalogue of our victories, and to swell the melancholy lists of their own captures and defeats.—To a power which had never separately met the arms of this country by land, but to carry the glory and prowess of the British name to a higher pitch, and to a country whose commerce is unheard of, whose navy is annihilated, whose distress, confessed by themselves, (however it may be attempted to be dissembled by their panegyrists in this or any other country,) is acknowledged by the sighs and groans of the people of France, and proved by the expostulations and remonstrances occasioned by the violent measures of its executive government.—Such was the situation in which we stood—such the situation of the enemy when we offered to make these important concessions, as the price of peace. What was the situation of the allies of France? From Spain, who, from the moment she had deserted our cause and enlisted on the part of the enemy, only added to the number of our conquests, and to her own indelible disgrace, we made claim of one island, the island of Trinidad, a claim not resting on the mere naked title of possession, to counterbalance the general European aggrandizement of France, but as the price of something that we had to give by making good the title to the Spanish part of Saint Domingo, which Spain had ceded without right, and which cession could not be made without our guarantee. To Holland, having in our hands the whole means of their commerce, the whole source of their wealth, we offered to return almost all that was valuable and lucrative to them, in the mere consideration of commerce; we desired in return to keep what to them, in a pecuniary view, would be only a burthen, in a political view worse than useless, because they had not the means to keep it; what, had we granted it, would have been a sacrifice, not to them, but to France; what would in future have enabled her to carry on her plan of subjugation against the Eastern possessions of Holland itself, as well as against those of Great Britain. All that we asked, was, not indemnification for what we had suffered, but the means of preserving our own possessions, and the strength of our naval empire; we did this at a time when our enemy was feeling the pressure of war—and who looks at the question of peace without some regard to the relative situation of the country with which you are contending? Look then at their trade; look at their means; look at

the posture of their affairs; look at what we hold, and at the means we have of defending ourselves, and our enemy of resisting us, and tell me, whether this offer was or was not a proof of sincerity, and a pledge of moderation. Sir, I should be ashamed of arguing it, I confess; I am apprehensive we may have gone too far in the first proposals we made; rather than shew any backwardness in the negociation ; but it is unnecessary to argue this point.

Our proposal was received and allowed by the French plenipotentiaries, and transmitted for the consideration of the Directory; months had elapsed in sending couriers weekly and daily from Paris to Lisle, and from Lisle to Paris; they taught us to expect, from time to time, a consideration of this subject, and an explicit answer to our *projet.* But the first attempt of the Directory to negociate, after having received our *projet,* is worthy of remark; they required that we, whom they had summoned to a definitive treaty, should stop and discuss preliminary points, which were to be settled without knowing whether, when we had agreed to them all, we had advanced one inch ; we were to discuss, whether his Majesty would renounce the title of King of France, a harmless feather, at most, in the crown of England; we were to discuss, whether we would restore those ships taken at Toulon, the acquisition of valour, and which we were entitled upon every ground to hold; we were to discuss, whether we would renounce the mortgage which we might possess on the Netherlands, and which engaged much of the honourable baronet's attention: but it does so happen, that what the honourable baronet considered as so important, was of no importance at all. For a mortgage on the Netherlands, we have none, and consequently we have none to renounce; therefore, upon that condition, which they had no right to ask, and we had no means of granting, we told them the true state of the case, and that it was not worth talking about.

The next point which occurred, is of a nature which is difficult to dwell upon without indignation; we were waiting the fulfilment of a promise which had been made repeatedly, of delivering to our ambassador a *contre-projet,* when they who had desired us to come for the purpose of concluding a definitive treaty, propose that we should subscribe as a *sine qud non* preliminary, that we were ready, in the first instance, to consent to give up all that we had taken, and then to hear what they had farther to ask. Is it possible to suppose that such a thing

could be listened to by any country that was not prepared to prostrate itself at the feet of France, and in that abject posture to adore its conquerer, to solicit new insults, to submit to demands still more degrading and ignominious, and to cancel at once the honour of the British name? His Majesty had no hesitation in refusing to comply with such insolent and unwarrantable demands: Here again the house will see, that the spirit of the violent part of the French government which had the insolence to advance this proposition, had not acquired power and strength in that state of the negociation to adhere to it; his Majesty's explanations and remonstrances for a time prevailed, and an interval ensued, in which we had a hope, that we were advancing to a pacification. His Majesty's refusal of this demand was received by the French plenipotentiaries with assurances of a pacific disposition, was transmitted to their government, and was seconded by a continued and repeated repetition of promises, that a *contre-projet* should be presented, pretending that they were under the necessity of sending to their allies an account of what passed; and that they were endeavouring to prevail on them to accede to proposals for putting an end to the calamities of war—to terminate the calamities of that war into which those allies were forced, in which they were retained by France alone, and in which they purchased nothing but sacrifices to France, and misery to themselves. We were told, indeed, in a conference that followed, that they had obtained an answer, but that not being sufficiently satisfactory, it was sent back to be considered. This continued, during the whole period, until that dreadful catastrophe of the 4th of September: even after that event, the same pretence was held out; they peremptorily promised the *contre-projet* in four days; the same pacific professions were renewed, and our minister was assured, that the change of circumstances in France should not be a bar to the pacification. Such was the uniform language of the plenipotentiaries in the name of the government—how it is proved by their actions I have already stated to the house. After this series of professions, what was the first step taken to go on with the negociation in this spirit of conciliation? Sir, the first step was to renew, as his Majesty's declaration has well stated, in a shape still more offensive, the former inadmissible and rejected demand; the rejection of which had been acquiesced in by themselves two months before, and during all which time, we had been impatiently waiting for the performance of their

promises. That demand was the same that I have already stated in substance, that Lord Malmesbury should explain to them, not only his powers, but also his instructions; and they asked not for the formal extent of his power, which would give solidity to what he might conclude in the king's name, but they asked an irrevocable pledge, that he would consent to give up all that we had taken from them and from their allies, without knowing how much more they had afterwards to ask. It is true they endeavoured to convince Lord Malmesbury, that although an avowal of his instructions was demanded, it would never be required that he should act upon it, for there was a great difference between knowing the extent of the powers of a minister, and insisting upon their exercise. And here I would ask the honourable baronet, whether he thinks, if, in the first instance, we had given up all to the French plenipotentiaries, they would have given it all back again to us? Suppose I was ambassador from the French Directory, and the honourable baronet was ambassador from Great Britain, and I were to say to him, "Will you give up all you have gained? it would only be a handsome thing in you, as an Englishman, and no ungenerous use shall be made of it;" would the honourable baronet expect me, as a French ambassador, to say, "I am instructed, from the good nature of the Directory, to say, you have acted handsomely, and I now return you what you have so generously given?" Should we not be called children and drivellers, if we could act in this manner? and indeed the French government could be nothing but children and drivellers, if they could suppose that we should have acceded to such a proposal.—But they are bound, it seems, by sacred treaties; they are bound by immutable laws; they are sworn when they make peace, to return every thing to their allies; and who shall require of France for the safety of Europe, to depart from its own pretensions to honour and independence?

If any person can really suppose that this country could have agreed to such a proposition, or that such a negociation was likely to lead to a good end, all I can say is, that with such a man I will not argue. I leave others to imagine what was likely to have been the end of a negociation, in which it was to have been settled as a preliminary, that you were to give up all that you have gained; and when, on the side of your enemy, not a word was said of what he had to propose afterwards. They demand of your ambassador to shew to them not only his powers, but also his instructions, before they explain a word of

theirs; and they tell you too, that you are never to expect to hear what their powers are, until you shall be ready to concede every thing which the Directory may think fit to require. This is certainly the substance of what they propose; and they tell you also, that they are to carry on the negociation from the instructions which their plenipotentiaries are to receive from time to time from them. You are to have no power to instruct your ambassador; you are to shew to the enemy at once all you have in view, and they will only tell you from time to time, as to them shall seem meet, what demands they shall make.

It was thus it was attempted, on the part of the French, to commence the negociation. In July, this demand was made to Lord Malmesbury. He stated, that his powers were ample. In answer to this, they went no farther than to say, that if he had no such power as what they required, he should send to England to obtain it. To which he replied, that he had not, nor should he have it if he sent. In this they acquiesce, and attempt to amuse us for two months. At the end of that time, the plenipotentiaries say to Lord Malmesbury, not what they said before, send to England for power to accede to proposals which you have already rejected ; but go to England yourself for such powers, in order to obtain peace.

Such was the winding up of the negociation ; such was the way in which the prospect of peace has been disappointed by the conduct of France; and I must look upon the dismissal of Lord Malmesbury as the last stage of the negociation, because the undisguised insult by which it was pretended to be kept up for ten days after Lord Malmesbury was sent away, was really below comment. You (France) send him to ask for those powers which you were told he had not, and in the refusal of which, you acquiesced: you have asked, as a preliminary, that which is monstrous and exorbitant; that preliminary you were told would not be complied with, and yet the performance of that preliminary you made the *sinequa non* condition of his return ! Such was the last step by which the French government has shewn that it had feeling enough left to think it necessary to search for some pretext to colour its proceedings; but they are such proceedings that no pretext or artifice can cover them, as will appear more particularly from the papers officially communicated to the house.

But here the subject does not rest: if we look to the whole complexion of this transaction, the duplicity, the arrogance, and violence which has appeared in the course of the negociation,

if we take from thence our opinion of its general result, we shall be justified in our conclusion, not that the people of France, not that the whole government of France, but that that part of the government which had too much influence, and has now the whole ascendency, never was sincere; was determined to accept of no terms but such as would make it neither durable nor safe, such as could only be accepted by this country by a surrender of all its interests, and by a sacrifice of every pretension to the character of a great, a powerful, or an independent nation.

This, Sir, is inference no longer, you have their own open avowal; you have it stated in the subsequent declaration of France itself, that it is not against your commerce, that it is not against your wealth, it is not against your possessions in the east, or colonies in the west, it is not against even the source of your maritime greatness, it is not against any of the appendages of your empire, but against the veiy essence of your liberty, against the foundation of your independence, against the citadel of your happiness, against your constitution itself, that their hostilities are directed. They have themselves announced and proclaimed the proposition, that what they mean to bring with their invading army is the genius of *their* liberty : I desire no other word to express the subversion of the British constitution,—and the substitution of the most malignant and fatal contrast,—and the annihilation of British liberty, and the obliteration of every thing that has rendered you a great, a flourishing, and a happy people.

This is what is at issue; for this are we to declare ourselves in a manner that deprecates the rage which our enemy will not dissemble, and which will be little moved by our entreaty. Under such circumstances are we ashamed or afraid to declare, in a firm and manly tone, our resolution to defend ourselves, or to speak the language of truth with the energy that belongs to Englishmen united in such a cause ? Sir, I do not scruple for one to say, if I knew nothing by which I could state to myself a probability of the contest terminating in our favour, I would maintain, that the contest with its worst chances is preferable to an acquiescence in such demands.

If I could look at this as a dry question of prudence, if I could calculate it upon the mere grounds of interest, I would say, if we love that degree of national power which is necessary for the independence of the country, and its safety; if we regard domestic tranquillity, if we look at individual enjoyment,

from the highest to the meanest among us, there is not a man, whose stake is so great in the country, that he ought to hesitate a moment in sacrificing any portion of it to oppose the violence of the enemy; nor is there, I trust, a man in this happy and free nation, whose stake is so small, that would not be ready to sacrifice his life in the same cause. If we look at it with a view to safety, this would be our conduct; but if we look at it upon the principle of true honour, of the character which we have to support, of the example which we have to set to the other nations of Europe, if we view rightly the lot in which Providence has placed us, and the contrast between ourselves and all the other countries in Europe, gratitude to that Providence should inspire us to make every effort in such a cause. There may be danger, but on the one side there is danger accompanied with honour; on the other side, there is danger with indelible shame and disgrace; upon such an alternative, Englishmen will not hesitate. I wish to disguise no part of my sentiments upon -he grounds on which I put the issue of the contest. I ask, whether up to the principles I have stated, we are prepared to act? Having done so, my opinion is not altered, my hopes however are animated from the reflection that the means of our safety are in our own hands; for there never was a period when we had more to encourage us; in spite of heavy burdens, the radical strength of the nation never shewed itself more conspicuous; its revenue never exhibited greater proofs of the wealth of the country; the same objects, which constitute the blessings we have to fight for, furnish us with the means of continuing them. But it is not upon that point I rest it; there is one great resource, which I trust will never abandon us, and which has shone forth in the English character, by which we have preserved our existence and fame, as a nation, which I trust we shall be determined never to abandon under any extremity, but shall join hand and heart in the solemn pledge that is proposed to us, and declare to his Majesty, that we know great exertions are wanting, that we are prepared to make them, and at all events determined to stand or fall by the laws, liberties, and religion of our country.[1]

[1] **The amendment was afterwards withdrawn, and the** original address passed ne***mine contradiccnte.***

THE PRESS-GANG AND MR. TIERNEY

May 25, 1798.[1]

MR. PITT replied, that if every measure adopted against the designs of France, was to be considered as hostile to the liberty of this country, then indeed his idea of liberty differed very widely from that which seemed to be entertained by the honourable gentleman. The house would recollect, however that honourable gentleman might say to the contrary, that he had given notice of the present motion, though he had not judged it prudent then to explain the mode in which it was to be put into execution. Neither could it be fairly supposed, that the present measure was to be brought forward as the usual one for augmenting the navy. A bill of the nature of the latter was introduced about ten days ago; and at that time he stated to the house, that if they acceded to the proposed augmentation of the navy, they must adopt some vigorous measure to make that augmentation effectual, as nothing but a law of a vigorous nature could succeed in making the intended number of seamen complete. When the honourable gentleman complained of the manner in which the bill was to be hurried through the house, and hinted that it was too

[1] Mr. Pitt, conformably to the notice he had previously given, and after stating that the object of his motion was precisely the same with that, for which a similar bill had been brought in in the year 1779, namely, to suspend for a limited time the protections which various descriptions of persons enjoy, to prevent them from being impressed into the service of the navy, moved for leave to bring in a bill for the more effectual manning of his Majesty's navy; at the same time intimating, that, as the present alarming situation of the country made it necessary that this measure should be passed without any delay, he should wish that the bill might this day proceed through its different stages, with a suitable pause at each, if required, and that it should be sent to the Lords for their concurrence.

Mr. Tierney complained of the very extraordinary and precipitate manner in which the right honourable gentleman had called upon the house to adopt the measure proposed. He had heard no arguments, he said, that proved its propriety; he knew of no sudden emergency that urged its necessity; even if he had, some time ought to have been allowed him to weigh the force of such arguments, and examine the nature of such an emergency, before he proceeded to give three or four votes on a measure of which no notice of **any** sort had been given ; and of which no idea had ever entered his mind. If the right honourable gentleman persisted in hurrying the bill through the house in the manner proposed, he must give it his decided negative, however reluctantly he opposed any measure that was said to be necessary to the safety of the country. For, from what he had lately seen, he must view all the measures of ministers as hostile to the liberty of the subject; **and** the present measure he regarded with peculiar jealousy, as it went directly to rob **them** of **the** few remaining privileges they were still permitted to enjoy.

frequently resorted to, he saw the suspension of the *habeas corpus* act was lurking in his mind. The honourable gentleman would have a long notice given of the present motion, and would retard its progress through the house. He acknowledges that, were it not passed in a day, those whom it might concern might elude its effect, thus assigning himself the reason for its immediate adoption. But if the measure be necessary, and that a notice of it would enable its effect to be eluded, how can the honourable gentleman's opposition to it be accounted for, but from a desire to obstruct the defence of the country.[1]

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Mr. Pitt said, that he feared the house must wait a long time, if they waited for his explanation on the present subject. The sense of what he advanced was, that there was no distinction between the two cases in question. That if notice was to be given of the measure under consideration, that notice would only serve to elude its execution, and therefore no man could be justified in opposing the necessary expedition that made the measure effectual} or if he did, he must surely appear to obstruct the measures employed for the defence of the country. He knew very well that it was unparliamentary to state the motives that actuated the opinions of gentlemen, but it was impossible to go into arguments in favour of a question without sometimes hinting at the motives that induced an opposition to it. He submitted to the judgment of the house the propriety and necessity of the arguments he had urged, and he would not depart from any thing he had there advanced, by either retracting or explaining them.[2]

1 Mr. Tierney here called the right honourable gentleman to order. This language, Sir, said he, is surely not parliamentary, and upon you only can I call for protection.

Ihe Speaker observed, that whatever had a tendency to throw suspicion on the sentiments of a member, if conveyed in language that clearly marked that intention, such language was, without doubt, irregular and unparliamentary; but if it argued no such intention, there was no room for censuring it as disorderly : if, therefore, it was the opinion of the house, that such was the fair import of the language used by the right honourable gentleman, they would judge of it accordingly; but they would first wait to hear the right honourable gentleman's explanation.

2 The bill afterwards went through all its stages, and was ordered to be carried to the Lords; from whom a message was returned in a few minutes, that their Lordships had agreed to the bill.

In consequence of what passed between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Tierney on this occasion, a meeting took place on the 27th, at three o'clock in the afternoon, on Putney Heath. Mr. Pitt was accompanied by Mr. Ryder, and Mr. Tierney by Sir George Walpole.

After some ineffectual attempts, on the part of the seconds, to prevent further proceedings, the parties took their ground at the distance of twelve paces. A case of pistols was fired at the same moment without effect; a second case was also fired in the same way, Mr. Pitt firing his pistol in the air. the seconds then jointly interfeied, and insisted that the matter should go no farther, it being their decided opinion that sufficient satisfaction had been given, and that the business was ended with perfect honour to both parties.

ON THE WAR BUDGET

December 3, I798.[1]

BEFORE I proceed to submit to the committee the very important matters which form the subject of this day's consideration, I conceive it necessary to take a diligent review of the general amount of the total services of the present year, and of the ways and means applicable to those services. Without adopting this method, I do not think it would be possible to inform your judgment with any degree of accuracy, respecting the propriety of the measure I have to propose, for raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, or be able to enforce those arguments I shall adduce in support of that measure. It is a matter of extreme satisfaction to me, that it will appear to the committee, from the estimate I shall now produce, compared with former estimates, that although our expenses are beyond what they ever were, yet that our means of supplying them are so ample and extensive, that the country is placed in a proud and eminent situation, beyond what it has enjoyed at any former period.

I shall begin by stating what has been voted as the amount of the supply under the head of the services for the navy, with the exception of what is necessary for transport services. All these accounts have this day been laid before us; and it appears that the total sum for the ordinaries and extraordinaries of the navy and transport services amounts to 13,642,000/., being the same sum, within a very small amount, as was granted in the course of last session, and which I have the satisfaction of assuring the committee is likely to prove sufficient for the whole expenses of the navy, without leaving any necessity for augmentation. The next head of expense is the army, in which the estimates amount to 8,840,000/. Gentlemen will recollect the extraordinaries in

1 Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, to consider of a supply to be granted to his Majesty.

1 he House having resolved itself into the said committee, Mr. Pitt further moved, that the act of the 38th of his present Majesty, chap. 16, for granting an aid or contribution to his Majesty, might be read, and that it might be an instruction to the committee to consider of the said **act;** which being agreed to, he then addressed **the** committee.

the course of last session, to be incurred in 1798, were stated at 3,200,000/. There was also voted a sum of 1,000,000/. as a vote of credit, applicable as extraordinaries to unforeseen expenses. This vote of credit will cover all the extraordinary expenses to the end of the year, so that, as in the article of the navy, there will be no past arrears to be discharged. But with respect to the vote of credit for this year, one million will be wanted to discharge that amount issued in exchequer bills. Under the article, then, of army expenditure, there remain the extraordinary services of the year 1799, which I may put at two millions. Thus the total amount, under the head of army, will be 8,840,000/. including the one million for the discharge of exchequer bills issued, and two millions for the extraordinary services of 1799. Under the head of ordnance services, including the expenses which have not been provided for, there has been voted the sum of 1,570,000/. The next article is that of the miscellaneous services. The plantation estimates have already been voted, but there are other minuter parts of those services which have not yet undergone a discussion in this house. The amount will be rather less than it was last session. I state it 600,000/. To this is to be added the usual sum voted towards the redemption of the national debt, above the annual million, which is 200,000/. There are other sums, which are generally voted under the head of deficiency of grants. Among these is a sum due for interest on treasury and exchequer bills paid off, amounting to 565,000/.; the discount on prompt payments upon the loan, amounting to 210,000/. ; the interest on exchequer bills circulated within the year, and charged upon the succeeding year, 300,000/.; in addition to this, there is the deficiency of the land and malt in the act passed two years ago, amounting to 300,000/. These sums swell the total of the supply to 29,272,000/. This total, Sir, does not differ in any material degree from the amount of the supply of last session.

Towards raising this supply, it will naturally occur to the mind of every gentleman in the committee, that the same resources will be applicable as are always applicable at all periods, whether of peace or of war. The land and malt have always been taken at 2,750,000/.: there remains the lottery, which will not produce less than 200,000/., and the growing produce of the consolidated fund. I have stated these articles first, for reasons which will be obvious to the committee. These are the ordinary resources. The growing produce of the consolidated fund would amount for one year to 2,100,000/., but in

the course of the present year that produce will, be affected by some heavy burdens ;—by the remains of charges in arrears; by the interest, if it is still to remain a burden upon us, on the imperial loan; and by the growing interest on such parts of loans raised on the credit of levying any tax, for which no interest has been provided. On the other hand, the growing produce will be swelled by the advances to the planters of Grenada, amounting to 800,000/. I take, therefore, the probable growing produce of the consolidated fund at 1,500,000/. In addition to this, and independently of the voluntary contributions, a tax was laid in the last session of parliament upon the exports and imports, founded upon the peculiar situation of our trade, as it then stood. That tax, Sir, has not only yielded to the full amount of what I estimated it at, but has even exceeded it; and I have the satisfaction of finding, that now, when that trade is brought to the test of a duty upon the declarations of the parties themselves, allowing them indulgences, and granting them a deduction of ten per cent.—I have, I repeat, Sir, the satisfaction of stating, that the total amount of our exports and imports exceeds, in a large degree, the largest sum that any man ever yet ventured to state upon the subject. That duty I estimated to produce the sum of 1,200,000/. I have the best reason for believing that the actual produce of it will be much beyond that sum. In addition to this duty upon exports and imports, and which, as far as can be done without diminishing our resources, which must be contemplated with the greatest exultation, because they prove the extent of our commerce, in addition to that duty, now that the whole trade of the West Indies is centred in this country, a reduction may be made with advantage to the nation in the large sums paid upon drawbacks, and bounties upon exports. Into this subject, however, it is not my intention to enter at the present moment. I mention it, because it will make an increase to the tax upon exports and imports, which I have every reason to believe will amount, with that increase, to 1,700,000/. I have thus enumerated the principal articles:

The land and malt	;£2,75o,ooo
Lottery	200,000
The growing produce of the consolidated fund	1,500,000
The tax upon imports and exports	1,700,000
Total	;£6,150,000

The remainder of the sum is that which must be raised either by a tax within the year, in the same manner as the assessed tax bill of last year, or by a loan. It will be to be considered, how the committee will divide that remaining sum between them. The sum to be provided for is upwards of twenty-three millions. Gentlemen will recollect, that, in the debates upon the subject of the assessed taxes last session, two fundamental principles were established as the rule by which we should be guided in providing for the supplies for the service of the year. These were, first, to reduce the total amount to be at present raised by a loan; and next, as far as it was not reducible, to reduce it to such a limit, that no more loan should be raised than a temporary tax should defray within a limited time. In the first place, the tax acceded to by the house last session was for the purpose of providing for the supplies of the year; and in the next place, for the purpose of extinguishing the loan raised in that year. From the modifications, however, which that measure underwent after its being first proposed, the produce of it was diminished to a considerable extent. Other means indeed were adopted to remedy the deficiency which was thus occasioned.—The voluntary and cheerful efforts which, so honourably to individuals, and to the country, came in aid of the deficit of the assessed taxes, and the superior produce of the exports and imports beyond the estimate, brought the amount of the sums raised to that at which they had been calculated. The different articles were estimated at seven millions and a half, and this sum is fully covered by the actual receipt under the distinct heads. It gives me, indeed, the most heartfelt satisfaction to state, that notwithstanding the difficulties which the measure encountered from the shameful evasion, or rather the scandalous frauds by which its effects were counteracted, the total amount which was expected has yet been realized. The meanness which shrunk from fair and equal contribution has been compensated to the public by the voluntary exertions of patriotism. The produce of the assessed taxes, under all the modifications, and all the evasions, is four millions. I had taken it at four and a half after the modifications were adopted. This deficiency is supplied by the excess on the head of voluntary contributions. In proportion as the one has fallen short of the estimate, the other has gone beyond it in favour of the country. If I did not calculate the evasion, the fraud, and the meanness which have struggled to defeat the operation of the assessed taxes, and I mention it with

shame that in a moment like the present, in a contest so awfully interesting to every individual and to the nation, there have been men base enough to avail themselves of the general modifications which were intended to relieve those who might have been called upon to contribute beyond their means, to avoid that fair assessment which corresponded with their circumstances, I am happy to find that the honour of the nation has been vindicated by the noble and generous aid of voluntary contribution, and that the sum which I had stated is greatly exceeded. Not only in this country but in every part of the British dependencies the patriotic spirit has displayed itself, and wherever they were placed, the subjects of England have shewn themselves worthy of the relations by which they are connected with their country. Instead of 1,500,000/. the voluntary contributions already exceed two millions; and the sum of seven millions and a half, for which credit was taken, has been effective to the public service.

Satisfactory as it must be to review the circumstances to which we owe these advantages, and the benefits which the mode of raising the supplies to a considerable extent adopted last session has produced, it is unnecessary for me to state, that, however the principle may deserve our approbation, it is still much to be desired that its effects should be more extensive, and its application more efficient. It is in vain to disguise that, by the causes to which I have alluded, the full advantage of the principle has not been obtained. The wishes and the interest of individuals, I am sure, must unite in demanding a more comprehensive, a more equal, and a more vigorous application of a principle, the rare advantages of which we have been able to ascertain, if we have not yet been so fortunate as to enjoy. Last session those who acknowledged the importance of the principle of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, confined their objections to the proportion fixed upon the scale of the assessed taxes, as unequal in its application, and liable to great evasion in practice. Though not insensible of the weight of the objection, I then felt it my duty, convinced as I was of the immense advantages of the system, to adopt some visible criterion by which to estimate and to regulate the extent of contribution, if it was not possible to devise means of embracing fully every class of property, and every source of contribution. I felt it materially important, to follow some durable, some apparent and sensible criterion, by which to apportion the burden. At the same time I felt, that

although the assessed taxes furnished the most comprehensive, and most general, and the most efficient scale of contribution, there necessarily must be much income, much wealth, great means, which were not included in its application. It now appears that not by any error in the calculation of our resources, not by any exaggeration of our wealth, but by the general facility of modification, by the anxiety to render the measure as little oppressive as possible, a defalcation has arisen which ought not to have taken place. Yet under the disadvantage and imperfections of an unequal and inadequate scale of application, the effects of the measure have tended to confirm our estimates of its benefits, and to encourage us to persevere in its principle. Every circumstance in our situation, every event in the retrospect of our affairs, every thing which strikes our view as we look around us, demonstrates the advantages of the system of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, and ought to induce us to enforce it more effectually to prevent those frauds, which an imperfect criterion and a loose facility of modification have introduced; to repress those evasions so disgraceful to the country, so injurious to those who honourably discharge their equal contribution, and, above all, so detrimental to the great object of national advantage which it is intended to promote. In these sentiments, our leading principle should be to guard against all evasion, to endeavour by a fair and strict application, to realize that full tenth, which it was the original purpose of the measure of the assessed taxes to obtain, and to extend this as far as possible in every direction, till it may be necessary clearly to mark the modification, or to renounce, in certain instances, the application of it altogether. If then, the committee assent to this principle, they must feel the necessity of following it up, by a more comprehensive scale and by more efficient provisions. They will perceive the necessity of obtaining a more specific statement of income, than the loose scale of modification, which, under the former measure, permitted such fraud and evasion. If such a provision be requisite to correct the abuses of collection, to obviate the artifices of dishonesty, to extend the utility of the whole system, it will be found that many of the regulations of the old measure will be adapted to a more comprehensive and efficient application of the principle. If regulations can be devised to prevent an undue abatement, and to proportion the burden to the real ability, means must be

employed to reach those resources which, *prima facie,* it is impossible under the present system of the assessed taxes to touch. While inaccuracy, fraud, inequality be grievances, which it is desirable to remedy, it will be an additional satisfaction, that when compelled to adopt means to prevent the defects of which we complain, we shall be enabled likewise to improve and to extend the benefits we have obtained. The experience which we have had upon the subject, proves that we must correct and remedy, in order to secure the advantages which the measure is calculated to afford. It is in our power to make them our own. I think I can shew that whatever benefit the principle upon which we have begun to act, is fitted to bestow, may by a liberal, fair and efficient application, be carried to an extent far greater than has yet been obtained, an extent equal to every object of great and magnanimous effort, to every purpose of national safety and glory, to every advantage of permanent credit and of increased prosperity.

Impressed then with the importance of the subject, convinced that we ought, as far as possible, to prevent all evasion and fraud, it remains for us to consider, by what means these defects may be redressed, by what means a more equal scale of contribution can be applied, and a more extensive effect obtained. For this purpose it is my intention to propose, that the presumption founded upon the assessed taxes shall be laid aside, and that a general tax shall be imposed upon all the leading branches of income. No scale of income indeed which can be devised will be perfectly free from the objection of inequality, or entirely cut off the possibility of evasion. All that can be attempted is, to approach as near as circumstances will permit to a fair and equal contribution. I trust that the opinion of the country will concur with the disposition of parliament to give that energy to our exertions, to give that stability to our resources, which our present situation and our future prosperity demand. I trust that all who value the national honour, and the national safety, will co-operate in the desirable purpose of obtaining, by an efficient and comprehensive tax upon real ability, every advantage which flourishing and invigorated resources can confer upon national efforts. The details of a measure which attempts an end so great and important, must necessarily require serious and mature deliberation. At present all that I can pretend to do is, to lay before the committee an outline of a plan which endeavours to combine every thing

at which such a measure ought to aim. This outline I shall now proceed to develope to the committee as clearly and distinctly as I am able.

It will occur to every one to enquire what species of commissioners shall be vested with the power of fixing the rate of assessment under a measure which must leave considerable discretionary power. In such commissioners several qualifications are in a particular manner desirable. They ought to be persons of a respectable situation in life ; as far as possible removed from any suspicion of partiality, or any kind of undue influence; men of integrity and independence. From the experience which we have had of the benefits derived from the voluntary exertions of such a body of commissioners, we may be able to ascertain in what classes to look for men qualified for the important functions which the office would impose. Still, however, I should consider it necessary to vary somewhat from the mode pursued in forming the commissioners of the land-tax. After much consideration, then, it occurs to me that, out of the commissioners appointed under the act for assessing the land-tax, a certain proportion should be taken with given qualifications. I should think that no man should be admitted to act as commissioner for the purposes to be afterwards specified, who does not possess 300/. per annum. To these, other persons of similar qualifications should be added, and the list so framed to be referred to the grand jury, or those who have served on the two last grand juries to form the commissioners. In case the party is dissatisfied with the decision of these commissioners, another body of commissioners shall be formed, to whom an appeal may be carried. In commercial towns some special provisions will be necessary, adapted to the nature of circumstances.

The next point for consideration, then, is the mode of contribution which shall be adopted. On this head it is my intention to propose, that no income under 60/. a year shall be called upon to contribute, and that the scale of modification up to 200/. a year, as in the assessed taxes, shall be introduced with restriction. The quota which will then be called for ought to amount to a full tenth of the contributor's income. The mode proposed of obtaining this contribution differs from that pursued in the assessed taxes, as instead of trebling their amount, the statement of income is to proceed from the party himself. In doing this it is not proposed that income shall be distinctly laid open, but it shall only be declared that the

assessment is beyond the proportion of a tenth of the income of the person on whom it is imposed. In this way I hope, that the disclosure at which many may revolt will be avoided, and at the same time every man will be under the necessity of contributing his fair and equal proportion. How then, it will be asked, is evasion and fraud to be checked? Knowing the difficulty of guessing what a man's real ability is, I do not think that the charge of fixing what is to be the rate, ought to be left to the commissioners. It would, I am persuaded, be most acceptable to the general feeling, to make it the duty of a particular officer, as surveyor, to lay before the commissioners such grounds of doubt, as may occur to him on the fairness of the rate at which a party may have assessed himself. These doubts, and the reasons on which they are founded, are then to be transmitted by the surveyor to the commissioners, in order that they may call for farther explanation from the person concerned. When in the case of the assessed taxes we have had so much experience of the evasions which have taken place; when we see the consequences which have resulted from a vague rule of exemption, and an indefinite principle of deduction; when we see that, by the different modes by which exemptions were regulated, persons, who probably would have shrunk from a direct fraud, have been able by different pretences to disguise to themselves the fair and adequate proportion which they ought to have contributed, it becomes more than ever necessary to render every case of exemption precise, and to guard every title to deduction from the danger of being abused. At the same time, under every disadvantage of the unrestricted application of deduction, and the easy commission of fraud, we have yet ample proof of our national wealth and general honesty. To prevent the country from suffering by dishonesty, to prevent the willing contributor from being taxed to the utmost proportion of his means, while his wealthy neighbour owes his exemption to meanness, it is necessary to guard with greater strictness against every chance of evasion. When doubts are entertained that a false statement has been given, it shall be competent for the commissioners to call for a specification of income. It will be necessary to simplify and to state with precision the different proportions of income arising from land, from trade, annuity, or profession, which shall entitle to deduction. The commissioners are then to say whether they are satisfied with the statement which has been given. The officer or surveyor is to be allowed to examine and to report whether

there appears reason to believe that the assessment is adequate. When the day of examination arrives, the commissioners shall hear what the surveyor and the party have to allege in support of the objection and the assessment, and examine other individuals. The schedule, which shall be drawn up in such a manner as accurately to define every case of exemption or deduction, shall be presented by the party, with his claim clearly specified. To the truth of the schedule he shall make oath. The party, however, shall not be compelled to answer; his books shall not be called for, nor his confidential clerks or agents examined. If, however, he declines to submit to the investigation of his books, and the examination of his clerks, and other means of ascertaining the truth, it shall be competent for the commissioners to fix the assessment, and their decision shall be final, unless he appeals to the higher commissioners. No disclosure is compulsory; but if the party is unwilling to disclose, he must acquiesce in the decision of the commissioners, who shall not be authorized to relieve without a full disclosure.

This, I am perfectly ready to admit, gives to the commissioners considerable power. But I think, Sir, I have stated enough to shew to the committee, that, unless some such powers be afforded under this act, the real and substantial effect of the measure will be entirely defeated. I think, too, I have proved, that commissioners, selected in the manner I have described, are as likely to be as free from all undue influence, and to act with as much integrity and honour, as any other set of men whatever. If, however, a better mode should be suggested, so far from opposing it, I shall consider it as a melioration and improvement of my plan. With respect to the information which may be communicated to the commissioners, I should propose that they shall be strictly sworn not to disclose such information, nor to avail themselves of it for any other purpose separate from the execution of the act. If any statement, however, should be made upon oath, which the commissioners shall think to be false, and which they may wish to bring to a trial, it must be obvious to the committee that then there ought to be afforded the means of carrying on a prosecution for perjury. But on no other ground should there be any disclosure of facts by the commissioners, or any of the other officers appointed to carry the act into execution.

Having said thus much, Sir, having laid down these general principles and outlines, I cannot feel, that if commissioners of

the description I have alluded to can be found, bound to execute their duty fairly and impartially, and sworn to secresy —say, if such men can be selected, I cannot feel, however strong the objections may be against the disclosure of circumstances, that any statement made to such commissioners is liable to the general objection against public disclosures of the incomes and circumstances of individuals in a commercial country; at least, Sir, I am sure there is every disposition in the plan to guard against it. There is little danger, I conceive, that such commissioners will act partially, or will conduct themselves vexatiously; and, in my opinion, there does not remain any fair ground for jealousy in individuals, that a disclosure to such men will give to persons in the same line of life any advantages over them.

Perhaps, however, Sir, there is one class of men to whom it may be for the committee to determine whether the measure shall extend, and whether they ought not to remain exceptions to the act. Among the descriptions of persons to whom it may remain for the committee to consider whether a disclosure would not be detrimental, is the class which includes the poorest persons engaged in mercantile concerns ; a class whose gains are most precarious, whose credit may be most doubtful, and most injured by a disclosure—I speak of the persons engaged in retail trades, to whom the assessed tax bill of last session gave great indulgences, considering that the relief of abatement was one of which they could not avail themselves, without greater inconvenience and injury to them, perhaps, than to persons of higher rank, and of a higher description of mercantile traders. I wish, therefore, the committee to consider whether it may not be as well to leave that class to pay on the mitigated rate of assessment to which they are liable under the assessed tax bill, as to subject them to the general rate of the present bill. It will also naturally enter into the consideration of the committee, what allowances or exemptions ought to be extended to other descriptions of persons. In the last act, certain allowances and abatements were granted to persons with large families. That principle it will certainly be proper to extend to this measure; and the only doubt which I entertain upon the subject is, whether it was carried far enough in the bill of last year. If this suggestion be admitted, it will naturally be a matter of doubt, whether the principle in the last bill, with respect to persons having no families, ought not to be extended. It will also very reasonably occur to the minds of

the committee, that it is of the utmost importance to the due execution of the act, that, as far as the general principles can be laid down for establishing a rate of landed property, or what may be the proper average of incomes which are subject to average, the rates in the last act should be subject to correction and improvement. By the operation of these powers, and by the influence of these rules, we may expect to arrive more nearly at that fair proportion which each man ought to contribute towards the exigencies, and for the service of the country.

The next consideration to which I wish to direct the attention of the committee, is one liable to more difficulty and doubt, upon which gentlemen will be aware that every thing must be conjectural, but in which we are still not without lights to guide us—I mean as to the probable amount of a tax of this kind. The committee must be convinced, that what I shall state will be with doubt and uncertainty. I shall, however, submit to the view of the house the information I have collected, the authorities with which I am fortified, and the grounds upon which I proceed. And fIrst, Sir, I shall proceed to state what is the first great object of income. I mean the property derived from land. Upon this point I have consulted the best opinions, and authors of the most acknowledged merit. Upon the subject of the rent of the land of this country, Sir William Petty is the earliest author whom I have consulted, but upon whom I shall not dwell much. At the time he wrote, the rent of land was stated at eight millions. In a subsequent period, in the beginning of this century, and in the reign of Queen Anne, two writers of credit, Davenant and King, represented the rent of land to be 14,000,000/. However they differed on other points, on this they both agreed. Posterior to that time it was a received opinion, that a land-tax of four shillings in the pound was equivalent to about two shillings of what would be collected on the real rents of the kingdom, which were stated to amount to twenty millions. Full twenty years ago this was said by a writer, who was also a member of this house, and who, in a work he wrote, expressly recommended the very principles which I have submitted to the committee this day. The same estimate was stated, and the same opinion was countenanced by the authority of the celebrated author of the Treatise on the Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith. He received it as a statement generally admitted, and sufficiently proved, that the rent

of the land in the kingdom was twenty millions yearly. In a work published as long ago as the year 1774, Mr. Arthur Young, who had made agricultural pursuits his study, has advanced the same opinion. I mention all these authorities, to shew what has been the amount of the rent of land at different periods. I state them also to shew how great has been the increase upon it within the last ten years; but if any of those authorities should still not be free from exaggeration, the committee will at least see that any estimate which I may make is not likely to be one which is much beyond probability. I have had also, Sir, the advantage of other inquiries made expressly by a body who have made the cultivation of the land their peculiar province—I mean the board of agriculture. I allude more particularly to one report published by a person who made this part of the subject his study, the report drawn up by Mr. Middleton. All these, checked with other examinations, state the whole amount of the cultivated land of the country to amount to little less than forty millions of acres. Any attempt to state what is the average value of these forty millions of acres, must be, the committee will see, in its nature extremely uncertain. As far as the inquiries I have made have enabled me to obtain any information, I find that many persons most conversant upon the subject believe the average value to be fifteen shillings per acre. I shall, however, take it at no more than twelve shillings and sixpence. In doing this, perhaps, I am rather under the mark, but I will put the average value at twenty-five millions a year. And gentlemen surely will see, that when I take the number of acres at forty millions, and the average value at only twelve shillings and sixpence per acre, the result is only an increase of five millions beyond what it was twenty years ago, and that therefore I cannot be considered as a very sanguine calculator. However, in this part of the subject, I desire the committee to bear in mind, that it will be proper to propose a reduction for all under 60/. a year, and that the same modifications be admitted into this act as in the assessed-tax bill—I mean the scale of income from 60/. to 200/. a year, and rising from a one hundred and twentieth part to a tenth. I mean on this account to assume a deduction of one-fifth, and to state the taxable property at only twenty millions.

I shall next proceed to state that part of income from land which belongs to the tenant. I propose to value every man accord-

ing to his rent, making only a deduction for repairs. What I shall suggest for the further consideration of the committee, is three-fourths of the rack rent which the tenant pays to the landlord. The value of the income from land which belongs to the tenant I take at nineteen millions ; the income to the landlord, as I have before said, at twenty-five millions. Instead of deducting only one-fifth, as I have suggested with respect to the landlord, I shall propose with respect to the tenant, to deduct two-thirds, leaving five millions as the taxable property of the tenants. The next income arising from land, is an income which is received neither by the landlord, nor by the tenant—I mean what is received from tithes. This is an income enjoyed, as the committee know, either by lay impropriators, or by the clergy. The statements of the amount of the tithes are different; but I estimate the value of them to be five millions. If gentlemen suppose the amount of the cultivated land in the country to be forty millions of acres, and the average value to be twenty-five millions, they will find, I believe, my valuation to be very moderate : it is also Mr. Arthur Young's statement. Upon this subject of tithes, I propose to allow a deduction of one-fifth, though, perhaps, I may be considered as stating the reduction too largely ; but gentlemen will consider the allowance to be made for poor livings.

Another species of property is that which arises from mines, and from shares in canals. There is also another property which I have not included in the rents of land, I mean the property arising from the sale of timber. I take ail these three, the mirfes, canals, and timber, at three millions.

Another species of rent is that received for houses. I propose to proceed upon the rate which was followed in the act of last session. The committee are aware, that to establish accurately the rent of houses has ever been found to be impracticable, particularly of houses of the higher description of rent, which have always been undervalued. Out of the number of 700,000 houses, 250,000 are calculated to pay to the assessed taxes; I shall therefore take the rent of houses at no more than six millions.

In the early statements to which I have alluded, the profits gained by the professors of the law alone are stated at one million and a half; I cannot suppose that they are at all diminished. Allowing, besides, for all the branches of the medical profession, I conceive that two millions is a very small sum as the amount of the incomes arising from the professions.

The next head of income relates to the profits of retail trade : but there are persons of a certain description, with respect to whom it will be necessary to make some allowance. The reduction I shall propose to take at one-eighth of the net sum of the profits of the trade of Great Britain, after which there will remain a sum of 5,000,000/. applicable to the general operation of the tax.

There will then remain another article of taxation, which is the income spent in this country by persons who derive it from other parts of the world; and unquestionably all who reside in this kingdom, and draw their means from sources out of it, cannot be dissatisfied at contributing to their own support and protection. Of this description, the only persons I shall think it necessary to estimate are those whose incomes arise from their having property in Ireland, and who reside in this country, and persons owning estates in the West Indies, or receiving the interest of mortgages on estates in that part of the world. With respect to those persons whose incomes arise from Ireland, I have no accurate data in order to estimate the amount; but I believe it is the generally received opinion, that the property of persons of this description amounted to at least 1,000,000/. a considerable time since, and now, from the increase of rents, it may reasonably be estimated far beyond that sum. With respect to the incomes of estates in the West Indies, the total amount cannot be estimated at less than 7,000,000/. sterling, and far the greater amount is produced from the property of persons residing in Great Britain, who either own estates or have mortgages upon them for which they receive interest. From that are to be deducted the amount of the exports carried out, and the charge of cultivating the estates in the West Indies; after which deduction, I estimate the produce of income in the West Indies at four millions, and 1 believe I run no danger of stating it too high. Thus it appears I may fairly estimate at five millions the whole produce of income arising beyond seas, and enjoyed by persons in this country.

The next description of property which will come under the consideration of the committee as a source for the proposed tax, is the income of persons not in trade. Under this head will be included annuities of all kinds, public and private mortgages, and income arising from money lent upon securities under various denominations. At the same time the committee however will go along with me in seeing that, in estimating the general rental of the land of England, I have taken it with

all its burdens, and consequently have included the mortgages. In the practical detail of the measure, it will come to be decided whether it shall fall on the land owner, or on the mortgagee. In respect, therefore, of this description of property, I do not now make any distinct estimate. Whatever is lent upon the security of land will naturally come forth in the process of this tax, and as we have no accurate means of judging of the amount of the mortgaged property in England, I avoid taking any particular sum under the distinct head. With respect to private annuities of another kind, it is also difficult to ascertain their amount. Not so with regard to public annuities; we have no difficulty of ascertaining the exact amount of the annuities paid by the public to individuals, and I shall have no hesitation in submitting to the committee, that when a general assessment upon income is to take place, no distinction ought to be made as to the sources from which that income may arise. There can be no fair objection taken by the stockholder upon the occasion; there can be no question of a breach of good faith, of national stipulation with the public creditor, by thus imposing upon him what every other subject of the realm is to incur. The public creditor enjoys his security under the most sacred obligations of the state, and the committee will do me the justice to recollect, that, whenever an idea has been started in debate, of imposing upon the stockholders, separately and distinctly, any sort of tax, I have been prepared to reprobate the attempt, as utterly inconsistent with good faith and public engagements. Parliament has always gone along with me in the feeling that no such tax ought to be levied upon them, and they have uniformly acted upon this feeling, on the principle, that, as the public creditors came forward and lent their money to the state in the moment of its necessity, while at the same time they bore, in common with every other description of his Majesty's subjects, the taxes on consumption, they were to be secured against any imposts, distinctly levelled at them as annuitants of the public; and the parliament has felt this more particularly from the recollection of the duty which they owe to persons who had embarked so much, and identified themselves so intimately with the state. Against any direct tax upon the stockholder, then, I am sure the committee, as well as myself, would set themselves in opposition; but the matter is materially reversed, when a tax is to be levied upon the income of every description of persons in the realm; when it is no longer in the power of the stockholder to say, I could avoid this tax by removing my

property from the funds to landed security, or to trade; every argument against including him in the assessment is withdrawn. The protection yielded to the stockholder, is the same as to the landholder, the merchant and the manufacturer. The duty, therefore, is the same, and every other description of persons in the country would have a right to complain, if, when they are called upon for a sacrifice of this extraordinary nature, so numerous a body of pers6ns were to be exempted from the assessment. I am confident, therefore, that every gentleman who hears me, will agree that the principle of the measure is not liable to any imputation of breach of faith. It cannot be called a resumption of the annuity that has been granted to the public creditors, nor in the most remote degree an infringement of the contract that was originally made with them. They are, in this instance, only to do that which every other body of men within the kingdom are to do; they are to make a sacrifice of a part of their income to the necessities of the state, and they are to do it upon the principle of giving security and permanence to all which they possess. I have detained the committee longer upon this head than I should otherwise have done, because I am aware that objections may be lightly and loosely thrown out to this part of the measure. I should say to the stockholder, as one of the public, if you expect from the state the protection which is common to us all, you ought also to make the sacrifice which we are called upon to make. It is not peculiar to you, it does not belong to the quality of your income, but it is made general, and required from all; you could not embark your capital in any other species of security in which it would not be subject to the same charge. I do not know what objection the stockholder could make to this appeal. I include, therefore, the public annuitants in the view of the proposed tax, and there is no difficulty in estimating the amount of this species of income. At the same time, it is to be taken into consideration, that all that part of the public annuities which have been redeemed by the nation, is to be exempted from the charge of the tax. Taking the amount of the redemption, therefore, at what it now appears to be, the rental of the public annuitants may be estimated at 15,ooo,ooo/. ; but here, as in all the other cases, both of the land and rental, and of other sources of property, there will, of course, be admitted the same exemptions to all annuitants who have less than 60/. a year, and the same modifications to all who possess from 60/. to 200/. a year. At the same time it is to be considered, that these exemptions and

modifications are only to apply to those individuals whose whole income amounts to less than 200/. a year. If persons possess incomes from various sources, they are to be calculated in the aggregate ; for the exemption or the modification will not apply, if the whole income should not be under the stipulated sum. I am sure, that I shall over-rate the amount of these exemptions and modifications, when I deduct one-fifth from the sum that I have stated the public annuities to be ; but I do not admit that deduction, and therefore state the total of the income from the public funds at 12,000,000/.

There now remain, Mr. Chairman, the other great sources of trade to the inhabitants of this country ;—the produce of trade, foreign and domestic: and this branch of income is, in its nature, more difficult of estimate than any other. We have, however, lights and aids by which we may come to a knowledge of a material part, at least, of this source of national wealth, I mean the produce of our foreign trade. By the recent acts which have been passed, the amounts of the imports and exports have been ascertained with such a degree of accuracy, as to enable us to form a tolerable judgment of the amount of the capital embarked in this branch of our trade, and, consequently, to form an estimate of the profits accruing from it. By the late act for the insurance of produce and manufactures exported, as well as by the recent act of which I have spoken, for the laying a duty on convoys, we have been able, more clearly than heretofore, to ascertain the amount and value of this trade, since we have not only the estimate and calculation that is made by the revenue, but the declarations of the persons engaged in the trade themselves, upon which the duty is paid : and by these guides we are able to ascertain that the capital employed in this way is certainly not less than 80,000,000/. sterling. Less it cannot be by the proof of the insurance act, which has now lasted two years, but it may be considerably more, because it is a well-known thing that merchants stand a part of the risk themselves, and do not insure to the full amount of the goods they export. But taking the amount at 80,000,000/. the calculation corresponds with the view of our foreign commerce, which has been recently made by our most accurate calculators ; and in all these estimates I wish rather to be under than over the mark. I state the amount of the capital, therefore, embarked in our foreign trade at 80,000,000/.; and assuming this as the capital, the next question is, what we ought to take as the profit to all the description of persons employed

in carrying on this branch of our trade? In estimating this, we must necessarily include in our view, not merely the merchant who exports, but all the orders and descriptions of persons from the manufacturer upwards, who are in any way connected with our export trade. Under this head come in the profits of brokerage, wharfage, and carriage, with all the other contributory trades connected with foreign commerce; and I am sure the committee will agree with me, that I make a moderate calculation, when I estimate the average of the profits upon the capital of 80,000,000/. at 15 per cent. I take, therefore, 12,000,000/. as the income of all the persons connected with the foreign trade of this kingdom.

There now remains that which more than any other branch of our income baffles the power of scrutiny, and affords even very limited grounds for conjecture; I mean the profits arising from domestic trade and manufacture. Here the many descriptions of persons whose skill and industry are the source of income in all the progress of our arts and manufactures, from the first preparation of the rude and raw material to its state of perfection, serve to make calculation almost impossible from their variety and extent. Even here, however, we have some means of forming an idea. Of the general capital of 80,000,000/. employed in the foreign trade, it has been pretty accurately determined, that about 30,000,000/. are destined and employed in the export of the leading manufactures of England. I am sure, then, that the committee will go along with me in saying, that the amount of the capital and sum employed in internal trade must be four times the amount of our export of British manufactures. When we look at the vast machine of trade in all its parts, let any gentleman ask himself whether, in the woollen manufactures, cotton, linen, hardware, pottery, and in all the other great and leading branches of manufacture, there can be a less sum employed than four times the amount of that which is appropriated by the merchant for the purposes of exportation? Viewing all the enormous capital invested in domestic manufacture, I cannot take it at less than 120,000,000/.; and upon this capital I estimate the gain at no more than 15 per cent, making a sum of 18,000,000/. per anrrum of income.

There is one other description of income which, though it embraces a vast variety of individuals, is reducible to none of the former heads, but comes naturally to be included in the article of domestic trade; I mean artisans, architects, brewers,

distillers, builders, brickmakers, masons, carpenters, and all that innumerable class of persons who, by skill in their professions, draw their incomes from the general prosperity of the country. The committee, from their general knowledge of the kingdom, will at once perceive how numerous and how varied this class of persons must be, and how utterly impossible it is to arrive at an accurate criterion of the general amount of their gains. I am sure, however, that they will agree with me that I understate it, when I take it at 10,000,000/. per annum. I thus estimate the whole amount of our internal manufactures and trade at 28,000,000/. a year.

I have thus rapidly gone through all the distinct branches of national rental, and of national profits, from which we have to derive the tax that I mean to propose to you, without presuming to think that I have been able to do it with that accuracy of detail which can only be derived from practice, or with that certainty upon which you ought to repose. I have, however, through the whole been anxious to understate the amount of the estimate as collected from the best sources of calculation, and to over-rate the exemptions and deductions that it would be necessary to make from each. The committee, who have gone along with me in my details, will see that I make the whole sum of annual rental and profits, after making the deductions which I think reasonable, 102,000,000/. sterling.

For the sake of greater clearness, I will recapitulate the heads in the same order that I have followed :

The land rental, then, after deducting one-fifth, I estimate at	£20,000,000
The tenant's rental of land, deducting two-thirds of rack rent, I take at	6,000,000
The amount of tythes, deducting one-fifth	4,000,000
The produce of mines, canal-navigation, &c. deducting one-fifth	3,000,000
The rental of houses, deducting one-fifth	5,000,000
The profits of professions	2,000,000
The rental of Scotland, taking it at one-eighth of that of England	5,000,000
The income of persons resident in Great Britain drawn from possessions beyond seas	5,000,000
The amount of annuities from the public funds, after deducting one-fifth for exemptions and modifications	12,000,000

The profits on the capital employed in our foreign commerce. . . . . ;£1	2,000,000
The profits on the capital employed in domestic trade, and the profits of skill and industry .	28,000,00c
In all	£102,000,000

Upon this sum a tax of 10 per. cent is likely to produce 10,000,000/. a year, and this is the sum which is likely to result from the measure, and at which I shall assume it. I flatter myself that I have been extremely careful not to overstate any part of the sources.

Now, supposing that ten millions is the sum thus collected, gentlemen will recollect that, in the last session of parliament, the assessed taxes were the only part of the public resources which were mortgaged for the sum of 8,000,000/. borrowed for the public service in 1797. I should think it my duty, therefore, that the sum now proposed to be raised in lieu of the assessed taxes, should, after its appropriation to the supplies of the present year, remain as a pledge for the discharge of that sum for which the assessed taxes were a security, and also for the discharge of the loan of the present year, beyond what will be paid out of the sinking fund. Taking the assessed taxes at four millions, they would have been mortgaged for two years after peace;—and thus the advantage of this measure is this, that no greater sums will be raised on any individuals than those which have been hitherto paid, at least by such as have rendered the measure of the legislature effectual; they will be relieved of a greater than a proportional share of their burthen, and the duration of the burden will not be half the time. This is a recommendation of the justice and expediency which must be felt by the people at large. But it does not stop here; it looks anxiously to the alleviation of the burdens of the country, by a great temporary exertion; it looks to the equality of the tax, and the general efficacy of the measure, conscious that on them depends our success in the great cause in which we are engaged. —That it is to furnish the means of providing for the debt created in two years, within the same period we formerly provided for the debt created in one. In the mode of applying the sum now to be raised, there are different ways. The sum which the assessed taxes were applied to discharge last year amounted to eight millions; it would be only to borrow a sum equal to the debt to supply the deficiency; but it occurs, how-

ever, to me, that a more simple and direct mode is, to apply this sum, in the first instance, to the supplies of the year, but at the same time to enact, that the tax shall continue till it has discharged the debt for which the assessed taxes were mortgaged, and then to make a farther charge for what may be borrowed beyond what the sinking fund will discharge.

Supposing this ten per cent, on income produces 10,000,000/. the period when I should propose it to take effect would be the 5th of April next. I should propose the repeal of the former assessed taxes at the same period; but, from the calculation I have made, four millions and a half will be raised from the first of February, 1798, to the first of February, 1799. It would, therefore, be more beneficial to the object I have in view to commence the operation of this new measure at an earlier period, because of the benefit of the increased rate of taxation ; but there will be the addition of what will come in under the assessed taxes, which will amount to 700,000/. Thus, there will be raised 10,700,000/. But this is not applicable to the whole of the subject; for gentlemen will recollect, that the interest of the 8,000,000/. was also charged on the assessed taxes. The interest will continue in the course of the present year, to which also is to be added the interest of whatever loan may be made this year. This will amount to about one million five hundred thousand pounds, which leaves the sum of nine millions two hundred thousand pounds, as applicable to the services of the present year. This aid would be all that is necessary to furnish the ways and means for the supplies, except as to the sum of twenty-four millions. Fourteen millions, therefore, is the sum necessary to be raised by loan, of which, however, four millions and a half is discharged by the operation of the sinking fund, consequently nine millions and a half is the whole sum to be added to the national debt. I wish, therefore, to lay this down as a principle, that nine millions and a half is the sum to be raised this year, for which I should propose to charge as a mortgage the income tax, after discharging the former mortgage. This gives a general view of the amount of the services of the year, and the ways and means to defray them. I have also stated, to the best of my power, the possible amount of every article proposed as the subject of taxation.

I trust that it will not be necessary for me to go into any detail of argument to convince the committee of the advantages of the beneficial mode adopted last session, of raising a con-

of more than ordinary precaution against the common disturbers of Europe, and the common enemy of man. Will the honourable gentleman continue in his state of doubt? Let him look to the conduct of that prince during what has passed of the present campaign. If in such conduct there be not unfolded some solicitude for the deliverance of Europe from the tyranny of France, I know not, Sir, in what we are to look for it. But the honourable gentleman seems to think no alliance can long be preserved against France. I do not deny that unfortunately some of the nations of Europe have shamefully crouched to that power, and receded from the common cause, at a moment when it was due to their own dignity, to what they owed to that civilized community of which they are still a part, to persevere in the struggle, to reanimate their legions with that spirit of just detestation and vengeance which such inhumanity and cruelty might so well provoke. I do not say that the powers of Europe have not acted improperly in many other instances; and Russia in her turn; for, during a period of infinite peril to this country, she saw our danger advance upon us, and four different treaties entered into of offensive alliance against us, without comment, and without a single expression of its disapprobation. This was the conduct of that power in former times. The conduct of his present Majesty raises quite other emotions, and excites altogether a different interest. His Majesty, since his accession, has unequivocally declared his attachment to Great Britain, and, abandoning those projects of ambition which formed the occupation of his predecessor, he chose rather to join in the cause of religion and order against France, than to pursue the plan marked out for him to humble and destroy a power, which he was taught to consider as his common enemy. He turned aside from all hostility against the Ottoman Porte, and united his force to the power of that prince, the more effectually to check the progress of the common enemy. Will, then, gentlemen continue to regard with suspicion the conduct of that prince? Has he not sufficiently shown his devotion to the cause in which we are engaged, by the kind, and number, and value of his sacrifices, ultimately to prevail in the struggle against a tyranny which, in changing our point of vision, we every where find accompanied in its desolating progress by degradation, misery, and nakedness, to the unhappy victims of its power—a tyranny which has magnified and strengthened its powers to do mischief, in the proportion that the legitimate and venerable fabrics of civilized

siderable part of the supplies within the year. The propriety of the measure has been recognized, and felt in a way the most gratifying to the feelings and to the pride of every Englishman. The principle has been proved to be the most wise and beneficial, though in the manner of carrying it into practice it has been so shamefully and grossly evaded. The experience which we have had, points out the propriety of correcting the errors of that plan, and of enforcing and extending the principle. If we have been able, from the benefits of that measure, so evaded and crippled, to do so much, it is obviously our duty to seek for the means of perfecting the plan upon which we are set out; and if we can find regulations and checks against the abuses that have been committed, it is surely wise and proper that they should be made to apply to a more general and extensive scheme than that which we have already tried. It no longer rests upon theory, or upon reasoning; it is recommended to us by the surest test of experience; and if, by the efficacy of this plan, we have been able to disappoint the hopes of the enemy;—to rise above all the attempts which they made to disturb our domestic tranquillity;—to remove the apprehensions of the despondent, and to shew them that all their fears of our being unable to continue the contest, were vain ;—to assert the high and proud distinction which we took in the maintenance of genuine government and social order;—if we have been able thereby to animate the public spirit of Europe, to revive its dismayed energy, and to give a turn to the political aspect of the world, favourable to the cause of humanity, shall we not persevere in a course which has been so fruitful of good? If we have proved that, at the end of the sixth year of war, unsubdued by all the exertions and sacrifices we have made, our commerce is flourishing beyond the example of any year even of peace; if our revenues are undiminished; if new means of vigour are daily presenting themselves to our grasp; if our efforts have been crowned with the most perfect success ; if the public sentiment be firm and united in the justice and necessity of the cause in which we are embarked; if every motive to exertion continues the same, and every effort we have made in the cause is a source only of exultation and pride to the heart; if, by the efficacy of those efforts, we have now the expectation of accomplishing the great object of all our sacrifices and all our labours; if despondency be dissipated at home, and confidence created abroad, shall we not persevere in a course so fairly calculated to bring us to a happy issue? Let us do justice

to ourselves. It is not merely owing to the dazzling events of the campaign that we are indebted for the proud station in which we now stand. Great and glorious as those achievements have been, which cannot fail to be a source of exultation to every British bosom, I shall not detract from the high renown of all those persons to whose skill, vigour, and determination, we are indebted for the achievements that have astonished and aroused Europe, when I say, that it is not altogether owing to them that we now feel ourselves in a situation so proud and consoling. The grand and important changes which have been effected in Europe, are not merely to be ascribed to the promptitude, vigilance, skill, and vigour, of our naval department, whose merits no man can feel, or can estimate, more highly than I do; nor to the heroism, zeal, patriotism, and devotion, of our transcendent commanders—and I speak particularly of that great commander [1] whose services fill every bosom with rapturous emotion, and who will never cease to derive from the gratitude of his countrymen the tribute of his worth—nor is it to the unparalleled perseverance, valour, and wonders performed by our gallant fleets, which have raised the British name to a distinction unknown even to her former annals, that we are to ascribe all the advantages of our present posture. No, we must also do justice to the wisdom, energy, and determination of the parliament who have furnished the means, and the power, by which all the rest was sustained and accomplished. Through them all the departments of his Majesty's government had the means of employing the force whose achievements have been so brilliant; through the wisdom of parliament the resources of the country have been called forth, and its spirit embodied in a manner unexampled in its history. By their firmness, magnanimity, and devotion to the cause, not merely of our own individual safety, but of the cause of mankind in general, we have been enabled to stand forth the saviours of the earth. No difficulties have stood in our way; no sacrifices have been thought too great for us to make; a common feeling of danger has produced a common spirit of exertion, and we have cheerfully come forward with a surrender of a part of our property as a salvage, not merely for recovering ourselves, but for the general recovery of mankind. We have presented a phenomenon in the character of nations.

It has often been thought, and has been the theme of historians, that as nations became mercantile, they lost in

[1] **Lord Nelson.**

martial spirit what they gained in commercial avidity; that it is of the essence of trade to be sordid, and that high notions of honour are incompatible with the prosecution of traffic. This hypothesis has been proved to be false; for in the memorable era of the past year Great Britain has exhibited the glorious example of a nation shewing the most universal spirit of military heroism, at a time when she had acquired the most flourishing degree of national commerce. In no time of the proudest antiquity could the people of Great Britain exhibit a more dignified character of martial spirit than they have during the last year, when they have also risen to the greatest point of commercial advantage; and, Mr. Chairman, they are not insensible of the benefits, as well as of the glory, they have acquired; they know and feel that the most manly course has also been the most prudent, and they are sensible that, by bravely resisting the torrent with which they were threatened, instead of striking balances on their fate, and looking to the averages of profit and loss, on standing out, or of yielding to the tempest, they have given to themselves not merely security, but lustre and fame. If they had, on the contrary, submitted to purchase a suspension of danger and a mere pause of war, they feel that they could only have purchased the means of future and more deplorable mischief, marked with the stamp of impoverishment and degradation; they feel therefore, that, in pursuing the path which duty and honour prescribed, they have also trod in the path of prudence and economy. They have secured to themselves permanent peace, and future repose, and have given an animating example to the world of the advantages of vigour, constancy, and union. If the world shall not be disposed to take the benefit of this example, Great Britain has at least the consolation to know, that she has given them the power. And if I were disposed, Sir, to pay regard to drier and colder maxims of policy, I should say, that every regard even to prudent economy would point out the course which we have taken, as the most advantageous for a people to pursue. It will be manifest to every gentleman on the slightest consideration of the subject, that, in the end, the measure of raising the supplies within the year is the cheapest and the most salutary course that a wise people can pursue; and when it is considered that there is a saving of at least one twelfth upon all that is raised, gentlemen will not suffer a superstitious fear, and jealousy of the danger of exposing the secrecy of income,

to combat with a measure that is so pregnant with benefits to the nation. If gentlemen will take into their consideration the probable duration of peace and war, calculated from the experience of past times, they will be convinced of the immeasurable importance of striving to raise the supplies within the year, rather than accumulating a permanent debt. The experience of the last hundred, fifty, or forty years, will shew how little confidence we can have in the duration of peace, and it ought to convince us, how important it is to establish a system, that will prepare us for every emergency, give stability to strength, and perpetual renovations to resource. I think, I could make it apparent to gentlemen, that in any war, of the duration of six years, the plan of funding all the expenses to be incurred in carrying it on, would leave at the end of it a greater burden permanently upon the nation than would be sustained, than they would have to incur for the six years only of its continuance, and one year beyond it, provided that the) made the sacrifice of a tenth of their income. In the old, unwise, and destructive way of raising the supplies by a permanent fund, without any provision for its' redemption, a war so carried on entails the burden upon the age and upon their posterity for ever. This has, to be sure, in a great measure, been done away and corrected, by the salutary and valuable system which has been adopted of the redemption fund. But that fund cannot accomplish the end in a shorter period than forty years, and during all that time the expenses of a war so funded must weigh down and press upon the people. If, on the contrary, it had at an early period of our history been resolved to adopt the present mode of raising the supplies within the year; if, for instance, after the peace of Aix la Chapelle, the scheme of redemption even had been adopted, and persevered in to this time, we should not now, for the seventh year of the war, have had more to raise from the pockets of the people than what we have now to pay of permanent taxes, together with about a fourth of what it would be necessary to lay on in addition for this year. Fortunately we have at last established the redemption fund: the benefits of it are already felt; they will every year be more and more acknowledged; and in addition to this it is only necessary, that instead of consulting a present advantage, and throwing the burden, as heretofore, upon posterity, we shall fairly meet it ourselves, and lay the foundation of a system that shall make us independent of all the future events of the world.

I am sure that, in deliberating upon the advantages of this system, gentlemen whose liberal and exalted views go beyond the mere present convenience of the moment, and are not limited to the period of the interest which they may themselves take in public affairs, or even to the period of their own existence, but look with a provident affection to the independence and happiness of a generation unborn, will feel and recognise the wisdom of a system that has for its principle the permanency of British grandeur. You will feel that it is not only to the splendour of your arms, to the achievements of your fleets, that you are indebted for the high distinction which you at present enjoy; but also to the wisdom of the councils you have adopted in taking advantage of the influence which your happy constitution confers beyond the example of any other people, and by which you have given a grand and edifying lesson to dismayed Europe, that safety, honour, and repose, must ever depend upon the energy with which danger is met and resisted. You have shewn the power of self-defence, which is permanent and unassailable: standing upon the principles you have assumed, the wild and extravagant hopes of the enemy will be thwarted; Europe will be aroused and animated to adopt a course so honourable; and surely with the means of persevering thus obvious, you will not think it prudent or necessary to shrink from the principles you have adopted, or take shelter in a peace which might be obtained by a more temporizing conduct, but which would neither be safe nor durable. But, Sir, I cannot encourage any sentiment so degrading; I feel in common with every gentleman who hears me, the proud situation in which we have been placed, and the importance it has given us in the scale of nations. The rank that we now hold, I trust, we shall continue to cherish, and that, pursuing the same glorious course, we shall all of us feel it to be a source of pride and consolation that we are the subjects of the king of Great Britain. I will not detain you longer, Sir, but will move for the first of my series of resolutions in carrying the plan of taxation into execution, which' I have endeavoured to detail.

ON THE DELIVERANCE OF EUROPE

June 7, 1799.[1]

I WISH, Sir, to offer such an explanation on some of the topics dwelt upon by the honourable gentleman[2] who just sat down, as will, I think, satisfy the committee and the honourable gentleman. The nature of the engagement to which the message would pledge the house is simply, that, ist, for the purpose of setting the Russian army in motion, we shall advance to that country 225,000/. part of which by instalments, to accompany the subsidy to be paid when the army is in actual service. And I believe no one, who has been the least attentive to the progress of affairs in the world, who can appreciate worth, and admire superior zeal and activity, will doubt the sincerity of the sovereign of Russia, or make a question of his integrity in any compact. The 2d head of distribution is 75,000/. per month, to be paid at the expiration of every succeeding month of service; and, lastly, a subsidy of 37,500/. to be paid after the war, on the conclusion of a peace by common consent. Now, I think it strange that the honourable gentleman should charge us with want of prudence, while it cannot be unknown to him that the principal subsidies are not to be paid until the service has been performed, and that in one remarkable instance the present subsidy differs from every other, in as much as a part of it is not to be paid until after the conclusion of a peace by common consent. I think gentlemen would act more consistently if they would openly give their opposition on the principle that they cannot support the war under any circumstances of the country and of Europe,

[1] The house having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, his Majesty's message, which had been referred to the committee the preceding day, acquainting the House with the engagements entered into between his Majesty and the Emperor of Russia, was read.

Mr. Pitt then rose, and in a short speech moved "that the sum of 825,000/. be granted to his Majesty, to enable his Majesty to fulfil his engagements with Russia in such a manner as may be best adapted to the exigencies *of* the case."

Mr. Tierney opposed the motion on the ground of its object being undefined. He called upon ministers to declare what was the *common cause* they talked of, and what was meant by the *deliverance of Europe ;* asserting, that he would not vote any sums for a purpose which he did not understand, and in aid of a power whose object he did not know, which might be appropriated to her own views exclusively, and to the injury instead of the welfare of England.

2 Mr. Tierney.

than in this equivocal and cold manner to embarrass our deliberations, and throw obstacles in the way of all vigorous co-operation. There is no reason, no ground to fear that that magnanimous prince will act with infidelity in a cause in which he is so sincerely engaged, and which he knows to be the cause of all good government, of religion and humanity, against a monstrous medley of tyranny, injustice, vanity, irreligion, ignorance, and folly. Of such an ally there can be no reason to be jealous; and least of all have the honourable gentlemen opposite me grounds of jealousy, considering the nature and circumstances of our engagements with that monarch. As to the sum itself, I think no man can find fault with it. In fact, it is comparatively small. We take into our pay 45,000 of the troops of Russia, and I believe, if any gentleman will look to all former subsidies, the result will be, that never was so large a body of men subsidized for so small a sum. This fact cannot be considered without feeling that this magnanimous and powerful prince has undertaken to supply at a very trifling expense a most essential force, and that for *the deliverance of Europe.* I still must use this phrase, notwithstanding the sneers of the honourable gentleman. Does it not promise the deliverance of Europe, when we find the armies of our allies rapidly advancing in a career of victory at once the most brilliant and auspicious that perhaps ever signalized the exertions of any combination? Will it be regarded with apathy, that that wise and vigorous and exalted prince has already, by his promptness and decision, given a turn to the affairs of the continent? Is the house to be called upon to refuse succours to our ally, who, by his prowess, and the bravery of his arms, has attracted so much of the attention and admiration of Europe?

The honourable gentleman says he wishes for peace, and that he approved more of what I said on this subject towards the close of my speech, than of the opening. Now what I said was, that if by powerfully seconding the efforts of our allies, we could only look for peace with any prospect of realizing our hopes, whatever would enable us to do so promptly and effectually would be true economy. I must, indeed, be much misunderstood, if generally it was not perceived that I meant, that whether the period which is to carry us to peace be shorter or longer, what we have to look to is not so much when we make peace, as whether we shall derive from it complete and solid security; and that whatever other nations may

do, whether they shall persevere in the contest, or untimely abandon it, we have to look to ourselves for the means of defence, we are to look to the means to secure our constitution, preserve our character, and maintain our independence, in the virtue and perseverance of the people. There is a high-spirited pride, an elevated loyalty, a generous warmth of heart, a nobleness of spirit, a hearty, manly gaiety, which distinguish our nation, in which we are to look for the best pledges of general safety, and of that security against an aggressing usurpation, which other nations in their weakness or in their folly have yet no where found. With respect to that which appears so much to embarrass certain gentlemen—the deliverance of Europe—I will not say particularly what it is. Whether it is to be its deliverance from that under which it suffers, or that from which it is in danger; whether from the infection of false principles, the corroding cares of a period of distraction and dismay, or that dissolution of all governments, and that death of religion and social order which are to signalize the triumph of the French republic, if unfortunately for mankind she should, in spite of all opposition, prevail in the contest;—from whichsoever of these Europe is to be delivered, it will not be difficult to prove, that what she suffers, and what is her danger, are the power and existence of the Freiich government. If any man says that the government is not a tyranny, he miserably mistakes the character of that body. It is an insupportable and odious tyranny, holding within its grasp the lives, the characters, and the fortunes of all who are forced to own its sway, and only holding these that it may at will measure out of each the portion, which from time to time it sacrifices to its avarice, its cruelty, and injustice. The French republic is dyked and fenced round with crime, and owes much of its present security to its being regarded with a horror which appals men in their approaches to its impious battlements.

The honourable gentleman says, that he does not know whether the Emperor of Russia understands what we mean by the deliverance of Europe. I do not think it proper here to dwell much at length on this curious doubt. But whatever may be the meaning which that august personage attaches to our phrase "the deliverance of Europe," at least he has shewn that he is no stranger to the condition of the world; that whatever be the specific object of the contest, he has learnt rightly to consider the character of the common enemy, and shews by his public proceedings **that** he is determined to take measures

of more than ordinary precaution against the common disturbers of Europe, and the common enemy of man. Will the honourable gentleman continue in his state of doubt? Let him look to the conduct of that prince during what has passed of the present campaign. If in such conduct there be not unfolded some solicitude for the deliverance of Europe from the tyranny of France, I know not, Sir, in what we are to look for it. But the honourable gentleman seems to think no alliance can long be preserved against France. I do not deny that unfortunately some of the nations of Europe have shamefully crouched to that power, and receded from the common cause, at a moment when it was due to their own dignity, to what they owed to that civilized community of which they are still a part, to persevere in the struggle, to reanimate their legions with that spirit of just detestation and vengeance which such inhumanity and cruelty might so well provoke. I do not say that the powers of Europe have not acted improperly in many other instances; and Russia in her turn; for, during a period of infinite peril to this country, she saw our danger advance upon us, and four different treaties entered into of offensive alliance against us, without comment, and without a single expression of its disapprobation. This was the conduct of that power in former times. The conduct of his present Majesty raises quite other emotions, and excites altogether a different interest. His Majesty, since his accession, has unequivocally declared his attachment to Great Britain, and, abandoning those projects of ambition which formed the occupation of his predecessor, he chose rather to join in the cause of religion and order against France, than to pursue the plan marked out for him to humble and destroy a power, which he was taught to consider as his common enemy. He turned aside from all hostility against the Ottoman Porte, and united his force to the power of that prince, the more effectually to check the progress of the common enemy. Will, then, gentlemen continue to regard with suspicion the conduct of that prince? Has he not sufficiently shown his devotion to the cause in which we are engaged, by the kind, and number, and value of his sacrifices, ultimately to prevail in the struggle against a tyranny which, in changing our point of vision, we every where find accompanied in its desolating progress by degradation, misery, and nakedness, to the unhappy victims of its power—a tyranny which has magnified and strengthened its powers to do mischief, in the proportion that the legitimate and venerable fabrics of civilized

and polished society have declined from the meridian of their glory, and lost the power of doing good—a tyranny which strides across the ill-fated domain of France, its foot armed with the scythe of oppression and indiscriminate proscription, that touches only to blight, and rests only to destroy; the reproach and the curse of the infatuated people who still continue to acknowledge it. When we consider that it is against this monster the Emperor of Russia has sent down his legions, shall we say that he is not entitled to our confidence?

But what is the constitutional state of the question? It is competent, undoubtedly, to any gentleman to make the character of an ally the subject of consideration; but in this case it is not to the Emperor of Russia we vote a subsidy, but to his Majesty. The question, therefore, is, whether his Majesty's government affix any undue object to the message, whether they draw any undue inference from the deliverance of Europe. The honourable gentleman has told us, that his deliverance of Europe is the driving of France within her ancient limits—that he is not indifferent to the restoration of the other states of Europe to independence, as connected with the independence of this country; but it is assumed by the honourable gentleman, that we are not content with wishing to drive France within her ancient limits, that, on the contrary, we seek to overthrow the government of France; and he would make us say, that we never will treat with it as a republic. Now I neither meant any thing like this, nor expressed myself so as to lead to such inferences. Whatever I may in the abstract think of the kind of government called a republic, whatever may be its fitness to the nation where it prevails, there may be times when it would not be dangerous to exist in its vicinity. But while the spirit of France remains what at present it is, its government despotic, vindictive, unjust, with a temper untamed, a character unchanged, if its power to do wrong at all remains, there does not exist any security for this country or Europe. In my view of security, every object of ambition and aggrandizement is abandoned. Our simple object is security, just security, with a little mixture of indemnification. These are the legitimate objects of war at all times; and when we have attained that end, we are in a condition to derive from peace its beneficent advantages; but until then, our duty and our interest require that we should persevere unappalled in the struggle to which we were provoked. We shall not be satisfied with a false security. War, with all its evils, is better than a

peace in which there is nothing to be seen but usurpation and injustice, dwelling with savage delight on the humble, prostrate condition of some timid suppliant people. It is not to be dissembled, that in the changes and chances to which the fortunes of individuals, as well as of states, are continually subject, we may have the misfortune, and great it would be, of seeing our allies decline the contest. I hope this will not happen. I hope it is not reserved for us to behold the mortifying spectacle of two mighty nations abandoning a contest, in which they have sacrificed so much, and made such brilliant progress.

In the application of this principle, I have no doubt but the honourable gentleman admits the security of the country to be the legitimate object of the contest; and I must think I am sufficiently intelligible on this topic. But wishing to be fully understood, I answer the honourable gentleman when he asks, " Does the right honourable gentleman mean to prosecute the war until the French republic is overthrown? Is it his determination not to treat with France while it continues a republic? " —I answer, I do not confine my views to the territorial limits of France; I contemplate the principles, character, and conduct of France ; I consider what these are; I see in them the issues of distraction, of infamy and ruin, to every state in her alliance; and therefore I say, that until the aspect of that mighty mass of iniquity and folly is entirely changed;—until the character of the government is totally reversed; until, by the common consent of the general voice of all men, I can with truth tell parliament, France is no longer terrible for her contempt of the rights of every other nation—she no longer avows schemes of universal empire—she has settled into a state whose government can maintain those relations in their integrity, in which alone civilized communities are to find their security, and from which they are to derive their distinction and their glory;—until in the situation of France we have exhibited to us those features of a wise, a just, and a liberal policy, I cannot treat with her. The time to come to the discussion of a peace can only be the time when you can look with confidence to an honourable issue; to such a peace as shall at once restore to Europe her settled and balanced constitution of general polity, and to every negociating power in particular, that weight in the scale of general empire which has ever been found the best guarantee and pledge of local independence and general security. Such are my sentiments. I

am not afraid to avow them. I commit them to the thinking part of mankind; and if they have not been poisoned by the stream of French sophistry, and prejudiced by her falsehood, I am sure they will approve of the determination I have avowed, for those grave and mature reasons on which I found it. I earnestly pray that ail the powers engaged in the contest may think as I do, and particularly the Emperor of Russia, which, indeed, I do not doubt; and therefore I do contend, that with that power it is fit that the house should enter into the engagement recommended in his Majesty's message.

Mr. Tierney, in reply, commented on the last speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and contended that the explanation he had given made it clear, that it was not merely against the power of France we were struggling, but against her system ;—not merely to repel her within her ancient limits, but to drive her back from her present to her ancient opinions ;—in fact, to prosecute the war until the existing government of France should be overthrown. Upon which grounds he should refuse voting any subsidy for foreign service.

Mr. Pitt rose once more :

Sir, 1 cannot agree to the interpretation the honourable gentleman has thought proper to give to parts of my speech. He has supposed that I said, we persevere in the war, and increase our activity, and extend our alliances, to impose a government on another country, and to restore monarchy to France. I never once uttered any such intention. What I said was, and the house must be in the recollection of it, that the France which now exists, affords no promise of security against aggression and injustice in peace, and is destitute of all justice and integrity in war. I observed also, and I think the honourable gentleman must agree with me when I repeat it, that the character and conduct of that government must enter into the calculation of security to other governments against wrong, and for the due and liberal observance of political engagements. The honourable gentleman says, that he has too much good sense, and that every man must have too much good sense, to suppose that territorial limits can, of themselves, be made to constitute the security of states. He does well to add his sanction to a doctrine that is as old as political society itself. In the civilized and regular community, states find their mutual security against wrong, not in territory only, they have the guarantee of fleets, of armies, of acknowledged integrity, and tried good faith ; it is to be judged of by the character, the talents, and the virtues of the men who guide the councils of states, who are the advisers of princes: but what is it in the

situation of the French republic, on which can be founded a confidence which is to be in itself some proof that she can afford security against wrong? She has territory, she has the remains of a navy, she has armies; but what is her character as a moral being? who is there to testify her integrity? The Swiss nation!—Who bears testimony to her good faith? The states she has plundered, under the delusive but captivating masks of deliverers from tyranny!—What is the character of her advisers? what the aspect of her councils? They are the authors of all that misery, the fountain-head of all those calamities, which, marching by the side of an unblushing tyranny, have saddened and obscured the fairest and the gayest portions of Europe, which have deformed the face of nature wherever their pestiferous genius has acquired an ascendency. In fine, we are to look for security from a government which is constantly making professions of different kinds of sentiments, and is constantly receding from every thing it professes;—a government that has professed, and in its general conduct still manifests, enmity to every institution and state in Europe, and particularly to this country, the best regulated in its government, the happiest in itself, of all the empires that form that great community.

Having said thus much on those matters, I shall now shortly notice a continued confusion in the honourable gentleman's ideas. On another occasion he could not understand what I meant by the deliverance of Europe; and in this second effort of his inquisitive mind he is not more happy. He tells us, he cannot see any thing in the present principles of France but mere abstract metaphysical dogmas. What are those principles which guided the arms of France in their unprincipled attack on the independence of Switzerland, which the honourable gentleman has reprobated? Was the degradation, without trial, of the members of the assemblies of France—were, in short, those excesses, and that wickedness, in the contemplation of which the honourable gentleman says he first learnt to regard France as an odious tyranny—will he class the principles which could lead to all these things with the mere metaphysical obstructions of heated, over-zealous theorists? He will still persist, at least he has given the promise of considerable resistance to all arguments to the contrary, in saying that we have an intention to wage war against opinion. It is not so. We are not in arms against the opinions of the closet, nor the speculations of the school. We are at war with armed opinions;

we are at war with those opinions which the sword of audacious, unprincipled, and impious innovation seeks to propagate amidst the ruins of empires, the demolition of the altars of all religion, the destruction of every venerable, and good, and liberal institution, under whatever form of polity they have been raised; and this, in spite of the dissenting reason of men, in contempt of that lawful authority which, in the settled order, superior talents and superior virtues attain, crying out to them not to enter on holy ground, nor to pollute the stream of eternal justice;—admonishing them of their danger, whilst, like the genius of evil, they mimic their voice, and, having succeeded in drawing upon them the ridicule of the vulgar, close their day of wickedness and savage triumph with the massacre and waste of whatever is amiable, learned, and pious, in the districts they have over-run. Whilst the principles avowed by France, and acted upon so wildly, held their legitimate place, confined to the circles of a few ingenious and learned men ;—whilst these men continued to occupy those heights which vulgar minds could not mount;—whilst thev contented themselves with abstract inquiries concerning the laws of matter or the progress of mind, it was pleasing to regard them with respect; for, while the simplicity of the man of genius is preserved untouched, if we will not pay homage to his eccentricity, there is, at least, much in it to be admired. Whilst these principles were confined in that way, and had not yet bounded over the common sense and reason of mankind, we saw nothing in them to alarm, nothing to terrify; but their appearance in arms changed their character. We will not leave the monster to prowl the world unopposed. He must cease to annoy the abode of peaceful men. If he retire into the cell, whether of solitude or repentance, thither we will not pursue him; but we cannot leave him on the throne of power.

I shall now give some farther instances of the confusion of the honourable gentleman's ideas. He says, that the French republic and liberty cannot exist together: therefore, as a friend to liberty, he cannot be a friend to France. Yet he tells us almost in the same breath, that he will not vote for any thing that does not tend to secure the liberties of that country, though, to give him the benefit of his own proposition, not to wish the overthrow of France is not to wish for the preservation of English liberty. Indeed, he says, he will vote nothing for the purpose of overthrowing that tyranny, or, as he very strangely adds, the rights and liberties of others—the rights

and liberties of France ! But how will the gentleman maintain his character for consistency, while he will not vote for any measure that seeks to overthrow the power of a government, in the contemplation of which he has discovered a gulph in his mind between the ideas of its existence and the existence of liberty ? It never, however, entered his mind to say that he made the overthrow of the French republic the *sine qua non.*

Here another example arises of that confusion of ideas into which, contrary to his usual custom, the honourable gentleman has fallen this evening :—he says he is one of those who think, that a republic in France is not contrary to the safety of other countries, and not incongruous to the state of France itself. How strange is this! whilst we have it from the honourable gentleman, that liberty and the French republic cannot exist together. I am ready to say, that if the republican regimen was characterized by the sobriety of reason, affording nourishment, strength, and health to the members of the community ; if the government was just and unambitious, as wisdom and sound policy dictate; if order reigned in her senates, morals in the private walk of life, and in their public places there were to be found the temples of their God, supported in dignity, and resorted to with pious awe and strengthening veneration by the people, there would be in France the reality of a well-regulated state, under whatever denomination, but *obruit male partum male retentum, male gestum imperium.* Whilst republican France continues what it is, then I make war against republican France; but if I should see any chance of the return of a government that did not threaten to endanger the existence of other governments, far be it from me to breathe hostility to it. I must first see this change of fortune to France and to Europe make its progress with rapid and certain steps, before I relax in the assertion of those rights, which, dearer to Britons than all the world, because by them better understood and more fully enjoyed, are the common property, the links of union of the regular governments of Europe. I must regard as an enemy, and treat as such, a government which is founded on those principles of universal anarchy, and frightful injustice, which, sometimes awkwardly dissembled, and sometimes insolently avowed, but always destructive, distinguish it from every other government of Europe.

ON THE PEACE NEGOCIATIONS

February 3, 1800.[1]

SIR, I am induced, at this period of the debate, to offer my sentiments to the house, both from an apprehension that, at a later hour, the attention of the house must necessarily be exhausted, and because the sentiment with which the honourable and learned gentleman[2] began his speech, and with which he has thought proper to conclude it, places the question precisely on that ground on which I am most desirous of discussing it. The learned gentleman seems to assume, as the foundation of his reasoning, and as the great argument for immediate treaty, that every effort to overturn the system of the French revolution must be unavailing; and that it would be not only imprudent, but almost impious, to struggle longer against that order of things, which, on I know not what principle of predestination, he appears to consider as immortal. Little as I am inclined to accede to this opinion, I am not sorry that the honourable gentleman has contemplated the subject in this serious view. I do, indeed, consider the French revolution as the severest trial which the visitation of Providence has ever yet inflicted upon the nations of the earth; but I cannot help reflecting, with satisfaction, that this country, even under such a trial, has not only been exempted from those calamities which have covered almost every other part of Europe, but appears to have been reserved as a refuge and asylum to those who fled from its persecution, as a barrier to oppose its progress, and, perhaps, ultimately as an instrument to deliver the world from the crimes and miseries which have attended it.

Under this impression, I trust, the house will forgive me, if I endeavour, as far as I am able, to take a large and comprehensive view of this important question. In doing so, I agree with my honourable friend, that it would, in any case, be impossible to separate the present discussion from the former

1 The order of the day being read for taking his Majesty's message into consideration, Mr. Dundas moved an address to the throne, approving of the answers that had been returned to the late communications from France, relative to a negociation for peace.

***2* Mr. Erskine.**

crimes and atrocities of the French revolution; because both the papers now on the table, and the whole of the learned gentleman's argument, force upon our consideration the origin of the war, and all the material facts which have occurred during its continuance. The learned gentleman has revived and retailed all those arguments from his own pamphlet, which had before passed through thirty-seven or thirty-eight editions in print; and now gives them to the house, embellished by the graces of his personal delivery. The First Consul has also thought fit to revive and retail the chief arguments used by all the opposition speakers, and all the opposition publishers, in this country during the last seven years. And (what is still more material) the question itself, which is now immediately at issue—the question, whether, under the present circumstances, there is such a prospect of security from any treaty with France as ought to induce us to negociate, cannot be properly decided upon, without retracing, both from our own experience, and from that of other nations, the nature, the causes and the magnitude of the danger against which we have to guard, in order to judge of the security which we ought to accept.

I say, then, that before any man can concur in opinion with that learned gentleman ; before any man can think that the substance of his Majesty's answer is any other than the safety of the country required; before any man can be of opinion, that to the overtures made by the enemy, at such a time, and under such circumstances, it would have been safe to have returned an answer concurring in the negooiation—he must come within one of the three following descriptions: He must either believe, that the French revolution neither does now exhibit, nor has at any time exhibited, such circumstances of danger, arising out of the very nature of the system and -the internal state and condition of France, as to leave to foreign powers no adequate ground of security in negociation; or, secondly, he must be of opinion, that the change which has recently taken place, has given that security, which, in the former stages of the revolution, was wanting; or, thirdly, he must be one who, believing that the danger existed, not undervaluing its extent, nor mistaking its nature, nevertheless thinks, from his view of the present pressure on the country, from his view of its situation and its prospects, compared with the situation and prospects of its enemies, that we are, with our eyes open, bound to accept of inadequate security for every thing

that is valuable and sacred, rather than endure the pressure, or incur the risk, which would result from a farther prolongation of the contest.

In discussing the last of these questions, we shall be led to consider, what inference is to be drawn from the circumstances and the result of our own negociations in former periods of the war;—whether, in the comparative state of this country and France, we now see the same reason for repeating our then unsuccessful experiments;—or whether we have not thence derived the lessons of experience, added to the deductions of reason, marking the inefficacy and danger of the very measures which are quoted to us as precedents for our adoption.

Unwilling, Sir, as I am, to go into much detail on ground which has been so often trodden before; yet, when I find the learned gentleman, after all the information which he must have received, if he has read any of the answers to his work, (however ignorant he might be when he wrote it) still giving the sanction of his authority to the supposition, that the order to M. Chauvelin to depart from this kingdom was the cause of the war between this country and France, I do feel it necessary to say a few words on that part of the subject.

Inaccuracy in dates seems to be a sort of fatality common to all who have written on that side of the question; for even the writer of the note to his Majesty is not more correct, in this respect, than if he had taken his information only from the pamphlet of the learned gentleman. The house will recollect the first professions of the French republic, which are enumerated, and enumerated truly, in that note—they are tests of every thing which would best recommend a government to the esteem and confidence of foreign powers, and the reverse of every thing which has been the system and practice of France now for near ten years. It is there stated, that their first principles were love of peace, aversion to conquest, and respect for the independence of other countries. In the same note, it seems, indeed, admitted, that they since have violated all those principles; but it is alleged that they have done so, only in consequence of the provocation of other powers. One of the first of those provocations is stated to have consisted in the various outrages offered to their ministers, of which the example is said to have been set by the king of Great Britain in his conduct to M. Chauvelin. In answer to this supposition, it is only necessary to remark, that before the example was given, before Austria and Prussia are supposed to have been thus

encouraged to combine in a plan for the partition of France; that plan, if it ever existed at all, had existed and been acted upon for above eight months: France and Prussia had been at war eight months before the dismissal of M. Chauvelin. So much for the accuracy of the statement.

[Mr. Erskine here observed that this was not the statement of his argument]

I have been hitherto commenting on the arguments contained in the notes: I come now to those of the learned gentleman. I understand him to say, that the dismissal of M. Chauvelin was the real cause, I do not say of the general war, but of the rupture between France and England; and the learned gentleman states, particularly, that this dismissal rendered all discussion of the points in dispute impossible. Now I desire to meet distinctly every part of this assertion: I maintain, on the contrary, that an opportunity was given for discussing every matter in dispute between France and Great Britain, as fully as if a regular and accredited French minister had been resident here;—that the causes of war which existed at the beginning, or arose during the course of this discussion, were such as would have justified, twenty times over, a declaration of war on the part of this country;—that all the explanations on the part of France, were evidently unsatisfactory and inadmissable ; and that M. Chauvelin had given in a peremptory ultimatum, declaring, that if these explanations were not received as sufficient, and if we did not immediately disarm, our refusal would be considered as a declaration of war.

After this followed that scene which no man can even now speak of without horror, or think of without indignation; that murder and regicide from which I was sorry to hear the learned gentleman date the beginning of the legal government of France.

Having thus given in their ultimatum, they added, as a further demand (while we were smarting under accumulated injuries, for which all satisfaction was denied) that we should instantly receive M. Chauvelin as their ambassador, with new credentials, representing them in the character which they had just derived from the murder of their sovereign. We replied, " he came here as the representative of a sovereign whom you have put to a cruel and illegal death; we have no satisfaction for the injuries we have received, no security from the danger with which we are threatened. Under these circumstances we will not receive your new credentials; the former credentials you have yourselves recalled by the sacrifice of your king."

What, from that moment, was the situation of M. Chauvelin? He was reduced to the situation of a private individual, and was required to quit the kingdom, under the provisions of the Alien Act, which, for the purpose of securing domestic tranquillity, had recently invested his Majesty with the power of removing out of this kingdom all foreigners suspected of revolutionary principles. Is it contended that he was, then, less liable to the provisions of that act than any other individual foreigner, whose conduct afforded to government just ground of objection or suspicion? Did his conduct and connexions here afford no such ground? or will it be pretended that the bare act of refusing to receive fresh credentials from an infant republic, not then acknowledged by any one power of Europe, and in the very act of heaping upon us injuries and insults, was of itself a cause of war? So far from it, that even the very nations of Europe, whose wisdom and moderation have been repeatedly extolled for maintaining neutrality, and preserving friendship, with the French republic, remained for years subsequent to this period, without receiving from it any accredited minister, or doing any one act to acknowledge its political existence. In answer to a representation from the belligerent powers, in December, 1793, Count Bernstorff, the minister of Denmark, officially declared that, "It was well known, that the national convention had appointed M. Grouville minister-plenipotentiary at Denmark, but that it was also well known, that he had neither been received nor acknowledged in that quality." And as late as February, 1796, when the same minister was at length, for the first time, received in his official capacity, Count Bernstorff, in a public note, assigned this reason for that change of conduct—"So long as no other than a revolutionary government existed in France, his Majesty could not acknowledge the minister of that government; but now that the French constitution is completely organized, and a regular government established in France, his Majesty's obligation ceases in that respect, and M. Grouville will therefore be acknowledged in the usual form." How far the court of Denmark was justified in the opinion, that a revolutionary government then no longer existed in France, it is not now necessary to inquire; but whatever may have been the fact, in that respect, the principle on which they acted is clear and intelligible and is a decisive instance in favour of the proposition which I have maintained.

Is it then necessary to examine what were the terms of that

ultimatum, with which we refused to comply? Acts of hostility had been openly threatened against our allies; an hostility founded upon the assumption of a right which would at once supersede the whole law of nations:—a demand was made by France upon Holland, to open the navigation of the Scheldt, on the ground of a general and national right, in violation of positive treaty; this claim we discussed, at the time, not so much on account of its immediate importance, (though it was important both in a maritime and commercial view) as on account of the general principle on which it was founded. On the same arbitrary notion they soon afterwards discovered that sacred law of nature, which made the Rhine and the Alps the legitimate boundaries of France, and assumed the power which they have affected to exercise through the whole of the revolution, of superseding, by a new code of their own, all the recognised principles of the law of nations. They were actually advancing towards the republic of Holland, by rapid strides, after the victory of Jemappe, and they had ordered their generals to pursue the Austrian troops into any neutral country: thereby explicitly avowing an intention of invading Holland. They had already shewn their moderation and self-denial, by incorporating Belgium with the French republic. These lovers of peace, who set out with a sworn aversion to conquest, and professions of respect for the independence of other nations; who pretend that they departed from this system, only in consequence of your aggression, themselves in time of peace while you were still confessedly neutral, without the pretence or shadow of provocation, wrested Savoy from the king of Sardinia, and had proceeded to incorporate it likewise with France. These were their aggressions at this period; and more than these. They had issued an universal declaration of war against all the thrones of Europe; and they had, by their conduct, applied it particularly and specifically to you: they had passed the decree of the 19th of November, 1792, proclaiming the promise of French succour to all nations who should manifest a wish to become free: they had, by all their language, as well as their example, shewn what they understood to be freedom: they had sealed their principles by the deposition of their sovereign: they had applied them to England, by inviting and encouraging the addresses of those seditious and traitorous societies, who, from the beginning, favoured their views, and who, encouraged by your forbearance, were even then publicly avowing French doctrines, and anticipating their

success in this country ; who were hailing the progress of those proceedings in France, which led to the murder of its king : they were even then looking to the day when they should behold a national convention in England, formed upon similar principles.

And what were the explanations they offered on these different grounds of offence ? As to Holland ; they contented themselves with telling us, that the Scheldt was too insignificant for us to trouble ourselves about, and therefore it was to be decided as they chose, in breach of a positive treaty, which they had themselves guaranteed, and which we, by our alliance, were bound to support. If, however, after the war was over, Belgium should have consolidated its liberty, (a term of which we now know the meaning, from the fate of every nation into which the arms of France have penetrated) then Belgium and Holland might, if they pleased, settle the question of the Scheldt, by separate negociation between themselves. With respect to aggrandizement, they assured us, that they would retain possession of Belgium by arms no longer than they should find it necessary for the purpose already stated of consolidating its liberty. And with respect to the decree of the 19th of November, applied as it was pointedly to you, by all the intercourse I have stated with all the seditious and traitorous part of this country, and particularly by the speeches of every leading man among them, they contented themselves with asserting, that the declaration conveyed no such meaning as was imputed to it, and that, so far from encouraging sedition, it could apply only to countries where a great majority of the people should have already declared itself in favour of a revolution ; a supposition which, as they asserted, necessarily implied a total absence of all sedition.

What would have been the effect of admitting this explanation ?—to suffer a nation, and an armed nation, to preach to the inhabitants of all the countries in the world, that themselves were slaves, and their rulers tyrants : to encourage and invite them to revolution, by a previous promise of French support, to whatever might call itself a majority, or to whatever France might declare to be so. This was their explanation: and this they told you, was their ultimatum.

But was this all? Even at that very moment, when they were endeavouring to induce you to admit these explanations, to be contented with the avowal, that France offered herself as a general guarantee for every successful revolution, and would

interfere only to sanction and confirm whatever the free and uninfluenced choice of the people might have decided, what were their orders to their generals on the same subject? In the midst of these amicable explanations with you, came forth a decree which I really believe must be effaced from the minds of gentlemen opposite to me, if they can prevail upon themselves for a moment to hint even a doubt upon the origin of this quarrel, not only as to this country, but as to all the nations of Europe with whom France has been subsequently engaged in hostility. I speak of the decree of the 15 th of December. This decree, more even than all the previous transactions, amounted to an universal declaration of war against all thrones, and against all civilized governments. It said, wherever the armies of France shall come (whether within countries then at war or at peace is not distinguished) in all those countries it shall be the first care of their generals to introduce the principles and the practice of the French revolution; to demolish all privileged orders, and every thing which obstructs the establishment of their new system.

If any doubt is entertained, whither the armies of France were intended to come, if it is contended that they referred only to those nations with whom they were then at war, or with whom, in the course of this contest, they might be driven into war; let it be remembered, that, at this very moment, they had actually given orders to their generals to pursue the Austrian army from the Netherlands into Holland, with whom they were at that time in peace. Or, even if the construction contended for is admitted, let us see what would have been its application; let us look at the list of their aggressions, which was read by my right honourable friend[1] near me. With whom have they been at war since the period of this declaration? With all the nations of Europe save two,[2] and if not with those two, it is only because, with every provocation that could justify defensive war, those countries have hitherto acquiesced in repeated violations of their rights, rather than recur to war for their vindication. Wherever their arms have been carried, it will be a matter of short subsequent inquiry to trace whether they have faithfully applied these principles. If in terms, this decree is a denunciation of war against all governments; if in practice it has been applied against every one with which France has come into contact; what is it but the deliberate code of the French revolution, from the birth of the republic, which

1 Mr. Dundas. 2 Sweden and Denmark.

has never once been departed from, which has been enforced with unremitted rigour against all the nations that have come into their power?

If there could otherwise be any doubt whether the application of this decree was intended to be universal, whether it applied to all nations, and to England particularly; there is one circumstance which alone would be decisive—that nearly at the same period it was proposed, in the national convention,[1] to declare expressly, that the decree of the nineteenth of November was confined to the nations with whom they were then at war; and that proposal was rejected by a great majority of that very convention from whom we were desired to receive these explanations as satisfactory.

Such, Sir, was the nature of the system. Let us examine a little farther, whether it was from the beginning intended to be acted upon, in the extent which I have stated. At the very moment when their threats appeared to many little else than the ravings of madmen, they were digesting and methodizing the means of execution, as accurately as if they had actually foreseen the extent to which they have since been able to realize their criminal projects; they sat down coolly to devise the most regular and effectual mode of making the application of this system the current business of the day, and incorporating it with the general orders of their army; for (will the house believe it) this confirmation of the decree of the nineteenth of November, was accompanied by an exposition and commentary addressed to the general of every army of France, containing a schedule as coolly conceived, and as methodically reduced, as any by which the most quiet business of a justice of peace, or the most regular routine of any department of state in this country could be conducted. Each commander was furnished with one general blank formula of a letter for all the nations of the world! The people of France to the people of * * * greeting: "We are come to expel your tyrants." Even this was not all; one of the articles of the decree of the fifteenth of December was expressly, "that those who should shew themselves so brutish and so enamoured of their chains as to refuse the restoration of their rights, to renounce liberty and equality, or to preserve, recall, or treat with their Prince or privileged orders, were not entitled to the distinction which France, in other cases, had justly established between government ana people; and that such a people ought to be treated according

[1] On a motion of M. Baraillon.

to the rigour of war, and of conquest." [1] Here is their love of peace ; here is their aversion to conquest; here is their respect for the independence of other nations !

It was then, after receiving such explanations as these, after receiving the ultimatum of France, and after M. Chauvelin's credentials had ceased, that he was required to depart. Even after that period, I am almost ashamed to record it, we did not on our part shut the door against other attempts to negociate; but this transaction was immediately followed by the declaration of war, proceeding not from England in vindication of its rights, but from France as the completion of the injuries and insults they had offered. And on a war thus originating, can it be doubted, by an English house of commons, whether the aggression was on the part of this country, or of France ? or whether the manifest aggression on the part of France was the result of any thing but the principles which characterize the French revolution?

What then are the resources and subterfuges by which those who agree with the learned gentleman are prevented from sinking under the force of this simple statement of facts ? None but what are found in the insinuation contained in the note from France, that this country had, previous to the transactions to which I have referred, encouraged and supported the combination of other powers directed against them.

Upon this part of the subject, the proofs which contradict such an insinuation are innumerable. In the first place, the evidence of dates; in the second place, the admission of all the different parties in France ; of the friends of Bissot charging on Robespierre the war with this country, and of the friends of Robespierre charging it on Brissot; but both acquitting England ; the testimonies of the French Government during the whole interval, since the declaration of Pilnitz, and the date assigned to the pretended treaty of Pavia; the first of which had not the slightest relation to any project of partition or dismemberment; the second of which I firmly believe to be an absolute fabrication and forgery; and in neither of which, even as they are represented, any reason has been assigned for believing that this country had any share. Even M. Talleyrand himself was sent by the constitutional king of the French, after the period when that concert, which is now charged, must have existed, if it existed at all, with a letter from the King of France,

[1] **Vide Decree of 15th December, 1792.**

expressly thanking his Majesty for the neutrality which he had uniformly observed. The same fact is confirmed by the concurring evidence of every person who knew any thing of the plans of the King of Sweden in 1791 ; the only sovereign who, I believe, at that time meditated any hostile measures against France, and whose utmost hopes were expressly stated to be, that England would not oppose his intended expedition ; by all those, also, who knew any thing of the conduct of the Emperor, or the King of Prussia; by the clear and decisive testimony of M. Chauvelin himself, in his dispatches from hence to the French government, since published by their authority; by every thing which has occurred since the war ; by the publications of Dumourier; by the publications of Brissot; by the facts that have since come to light in America, with respect to the mission of M. Ganet; which shew that hostility against this country was decided on the part of France long before the period when M. Chauvelin was sent from hence. Besides this, the reduction of our peace establishment in the year 1791, and continued to the subsequent year, is a fact from which the inference is indisputable: a fact which, I am afraid, shews, not only that we were not waiting for the occasion of war, but that, in our partiality for a pacific system, we had indulged ourselves in a fond and credulous security, which wisdom and discretion would not have dictated. In addition to every other proof, it is singular enough, that in a decree, on the eve of the declaration of war on the part of France, it is expressly stated, as for the first time, that England was then departing from that system of neutrality *which she had hitherto observed.*

But, Sir, I will not rest merely on these testimonies or arguments, however strong and decisive. I assert distinctly and positively, and I have the documents in my hand to prove it, that from the middle of the year 1791, upon the first rumour of any measure taken by the Emperor of Germany, and till late in the year 1792, we not only were no parties to any of the projects imputed to the Emperor, but, from the political circumstances in which we then stood with relation to that court, we wholly declined all communications with him on the subject of France. To Prussia, with whom we were in connexion, and still more decisively to Holland, with whom we were in close and intimate correspondence, we uniformly stated our unalterable resolution to maintain neutrality, and avoid interference in the internal affairs of France, as long as France should refrain from hostile measures against us and our allies. No minister

of England had any authority to treat with foreign states, even provisionally, for any warlike concert, till after the battle of Jemappe ; till a period subsequent to the repeated provocations which had been offered to us, and subsequent particularly to the decree of fraternity of the 19th of November ; even then, to what object was it that the concert which we wished to establish was to be directed ? If we had then rightly cast the true character of the French revolution, I cannot now deny that we should have been better justified in a very different conduct. But it is material to the present argument to declare what that conduct actually was, because it is of itself sufficient to confute all the pretexts by which the advocates of France have so long laboured to perplex the question of aggression.

At that period, Russia had at length conceived, as well as ourselves, a natural and just alarm for the balance of Europe, and applied to us to learn our sentiments on the subject. In our answer to this application, we imparted to Russia the principles upon which we then acted, and we communicated this answer to Prussia, with whom we were connected in defensive alliance. I will state shortly the leading parts of those principles. A dispatch was sent from Lord Grenville to his Majesty's minister in Russia, dated the 29th of December, 1792, stating a desire to have an explanation set on foot on the subject of the war with France. I will read the material parts of it.

"The two leading points on which such explanation will naturally turn, are the line of conduct to be followed previous to the commencement of hostilities, and with a view, if possible, to avert them; and the nature and amount of the forces which the powers engaged in this concert might be enabled to use, supposing such extremities unavoidable.

" With respect to the first, it appears on the whole, subject however to future consideration and discussion with the other powers, that the most advisable step to be taken would be, that sufficient explanation should be had with the powers at war with France, in order to enable those, not hitherto engaged in the war, to propose to that country terms of peace. That these terms should be, the withdrawing their arms within the limits of the French territory ; the abandoning their conquests; the rescinding any acts injurious to the sovereignty or rights of any other nations, and the giving in some public and unequivocal manner a pledge of their intention no longer to foment troubles, or to excite disturbances against other governments. In return

for these stipulations, the different powers of Europe, who should be parties to this measure, might engage to abandon all measures, or views of hostility against France, or interference in their internal affairs, and to maintain a correspondence and intercourse of amity with the existing powers in that country, with whom such a treaty may be concluded. If, on the result of this proposal so made by the powers acting in concert, these terms should not be accepted by France, or being accepted, should not be satisfactorily performed, the different powers might then engage themselves to each other to enter into active measures, for the purpose of obtaining the ends in view; and it may be to be considered, whether, in such case, they might not reasonably look to some indemnity for the expenses and hazards to which they would necessarily be exposed."

The dispatch then proceeded to the second point, that of the forces to be employed, on which it is unnecessary now to speak.

Now, Sir, I would really ask any person who has been, from the beginning, the most desirous of avoiding hostilities, whether it is possible to conceive any measure to be adopted in the situation in which we then stood, which could more evidently demonstrate our desire, after repeated provocations, to preserve peace, on any terms consistent with our safety ; or whether any sentiment could now be suggested which would have more plainly marked our moderation, forbearance, and sincerity ? In saying this, I am not challenging the applause and approbation of my country, because I must now confess that we were too slow in anticipating that danger of which we had, perhaps, even then sufficient experience, though far short, indeed, of that which we now possess, and that we might even then have seen, what facts have since but too incontestably proved, that nothing but vigorous and open hostility can afford complete and adequate security against revolutionary principles, while they retain a proportion of power sufficient to furnish the means of war.

I will enlarge no farther on the origin of the war. I have read and detailed to you a system which was in itself a declaration of war against all nations, which was so intended, and which has been so applied, which has been exemplified in the extreme peril and hazard of almost all who for a moment have trusted to treaty, and which has not at this hour overwhelmed Europe in one indiscriminate mass of ruin, only because we have not indulged, to a fatal extremity, that disposition, which we have however indulged too far; because we have not con-

sented to trust to profession and compromise, rather than to our own valour and exertion, for security against a system, from which we never shall be delivered, till either the principle is extinguished, or till its strength is exhausted.

I might, Sir, if I found it necessary, enter into much detail upon this part of the subject; but at present I only beg leave to express my readiness at any time to enter upon it, when either my own strength or the patience of the house will admit of it; but, I say, without distinction, against every nation in Europe, and against some out of Europe, the principle has been faithfully applied. You cannot look at the map of Europe, and lay your hand upon that country against which France has not either declared an open and aggressive war, or violated some positive treaty, or broken some recognized principle of the law of nations.

This subject may be divided into various periods. There were some acts of hostility committed previous to the war with this country, and very little indeed subsequent to that declaration, which abjured the love of conquest. The attack upon the Papal State, by the seizure of Avignon, in 1791, was accompanied by a series of the most atrocious crimes and outrages that ever disgraced a revolution. Avignon was separated from its lawful sovereign, with whom not even the pretence of quarrel existed, and forcibly incorporated in the tyranny of one and indivisible France. The same system led, in the same year, to an aggression against the whole German empire, by the seizure of Porentrui, part of the dominions of the bishop of Basle. Afterwards, in 1792, unpreceded by any declaration of war, or any cause of hostility, and in direct violation of the solemn pledge to abstain from conquest, an attack was made upon the king of Sardinia, by the seizure of Savoy, for the purpose of incorporating it, in like manner, with France. In the same year, they had proceeded to the declaration of war against Austria, against Prussia, and against the German empire, in which they have been justified only on a ground of rooted hostility, combination, and league of sovereigns, for the dismemberment of France. I say, that some of the documents, brought to support this pretence, are spurious and false; I say, that even in those that are not so, there is not one word to prove the charge principally relied upon, that of an intention to effect the dismemberment of France, or to impose upon it, by force, any particular constitution. I say, that as far as we have been able to trace what passed at Pilnitz, the declaration there

signed referred to the imprisonment of Louis X V I ; its immediate view was to effect his deliverance, if a concert sufficiently extensive could be formed with other sovereigns, for that purpose. It left the internal state of France to be decided by the king restored to his liberty, with the free consent of the states of his kingdom, and it did not contain one word relative to the dismemberment of France.

In the subsequent discussions, which took place in 1792, and which embraced at the same time, all the other points of jealousy which had arisen between the two countries, the declaration of Pilnitz was referred to, and explained on the part of Austria in a manner precisely conformable to what I have now stated ; and the amicable explanations which took place, both on this subject and on all the matters in dispute, will be found in the official correspondence between the two courts which has been made public ; and it will be found also, that, as long as the negociation continued to be conducted through M. Delessart, then minister for foreign affairs, there was a great prospect that those discussions would be amicably terminated; but it is notorious, and has since been clearly proved, on the authority of Brissot himself, that the violent party in France considered such an issue of the negociation as likely to be fatal to their projects, and thought, to use his own words, that " war was necessary to consolidate the revolution." For the express purpose of producing the war, they excited a popular tumult in Paris; they insisted upon and obtained the dismissal of M. Delessart. A new minister was appointed in his room, the tone of the negociation was immediately changed, and an ultimatum was sent to the emperor, similar to that which was afterwards sent to this country, affording him no satisfaction on his just grounds of complaint, and requiring him, under those circumstances, to disarm. The first events of the contest proved how much more France was prepared for war than Austria, and afford a strong confirmation of the proposition which I maintain ; that no offensive intention was entertained on the part of the latter power.

War was then declared against Austria; a war which I state to be a war of aggression on the part of France. The king of Prussia had declared, that he should consider war against the emperor or empire, as war against himself. He had declared, that, as a co-estate of the empire, he was determined to defend their rights ; that, as an ally of the emperor, he would support him to the utmost against any attack; and that, for the sake of

his own dominions, he felt himself called upon to resist the progress of French principles, and to maintain the balance of power in Europe. With this notice before them, France declared war upon the emperor, and the war with Prussia was the necessary consequence of this aggression, both against the emperor and the empire.

The war against the king of Sardinia follows next. The declaration of that war was the seizure of Savoy, by an invading army; and on what ground? On that which has been stated already. They had found out, by some light of nature, that the Rhine and the Alps were the natural limits of France. Upon that ground Savoy was seized; and Savoy was also incorporated with France.

Here finishes the history of the wars in which France was engaged, antecedent to the war with Great Britain, with Holland, and with Spain. With respect to Spain, we have seen nothing in any part of its conduct, which leads us to suspect, that either attachment to religion, or the ties of consanguinity, or regard to the ancient system of Europe, was likely to induce that court to connect itself in offensive war against France. The war was evidently and incontestably begun by France against Spain.

The case of Holland is so fresh in every man's recollection, and so connected with the immediate causes of the war with this country, that it cannot require one word of observation. What shall I say then on the case of Portugal? I cannot indeed say, that France ever declared war against that country; I can hardly say even that she ever made war, but she required them to make a treaty of peace, as if they had been at-war; she obliged them to purchase that treaty; she broke it as soon as it was purchased, and she had originally no other ground of complaint than this,—that Portugal had performed, though inadequately, the engagements of its ancient defensive alliance with this country, in the character of an auxiliary; a conduct which cannot of itself make any power a principal in a war.

I have now enumerated all the nations at war at that period, with the exception only of Naples. It can hardly be necessary to call to the recollection of the house, the characteristic feature of revolutionary principles which was shewn, even at this early period, in the personal insult offered to the king of Naples, by the commander of a French squadron, riding uncontrouled in the Mediterranean, and (while our fleets were yet unarmed) threatening destruction to all the coast of Italy.

It was not till a considerably later period that almost all the

other nations of Europe found themselves equally involved in actual hostility: but it is not a little material to the whole of my argument, compared with the statement of the learned gentleman, and with that contained in the French note, to examine at what period this hostility extended itself. It extended itself, in the course of 1796, to the states of Italy which had hitherto been exempted from it. In 1797 it had ended in the destruction of most of them; it had ended in the virtual deposition of the king of Sardinia, it had ended in the conversion of Genoa and Tuscany into democratic republics ; it had ended in the revolution of Venice, in the violation of treaties with the new Venetian republic ; and finally, in transferring that very republic, the creature and vassal of France, to the dominion of Austria.

I observe from the gestures of some honourable gentlemen, that they think we are precluded from the use of any argument founded on this last transaction. I already hear them saying, that it was as criminal in Austria to receive, as it was in France to give. I am far from defending or palliating the conduct of Austria upon this occasion: but because Austria, unable at last to contend with the arms of France, was forced to accept an unjust and insufficient indemnification from the conquests France had made from it, are we to be debarred from stating what, on the part of France, was not merely an unjust acquisition, but an act of the grossest and most aggravated perfidy and cruelty, and one of the most striking specimens of that system which has been uniformly and indiscriminately applied to all the countries which France has had within its grasp? This only can be said in vindication of France (and it is still more a vindication of Austria), that, practically speaking, if there is any part of this transaction for which Venice itself has reason to be grateful, it can only be for the permission to exchange the embraces of French fraternity for what is called the despotism of Vienna.

Let these facts, and these dates, be compared with what we have heard. The honourable gentleman has told us, and the author of the note from France has told us also, that all the French conquests were produced by the operations of the allies. It was when they were pressed on all sides, when their own territory was in danger, when their own independence was in question, when the confederacy appeared too strong; it was then they used the means with which their power and their courage furnished them; and, " attacked upon all sides, they

carried every where their defensive arms."[1] I do not wish to misrepresent the learned gentleman, but I understood him to speak of this sentiment with approbation: the sentiment itself is this, that if a nation is unjustly attacked in any one quarter by others, she cannot stop to consider by whom, but must find means of strength in other quarters, no matter where; and is justified in attacking, in her turn, those with whom she is at peace, and from whom she has received no species of provocation.

Sir, I hope I have already proved, in a great measure, that no such attack was made upon France; but, if it was made, I maintain, that the whole ground on which that argument is founded cannot be tolerated. In the name of the laws of nature and nations, in the name of every thing that is sacred and honourable, I demur to that plea, and I tell that honourable and learned gentleman that he would do well, to look.again into the law of nations, before he ventures to come to this house, to give the sanction of his authority to so dreadful and execrable a system.

[Mr. Erskine here said across the house, that he had never maintained such a proposition.]

I certainly understood this to be distinctly the tenor of the learned gentleman's argument; but as he tells me he did not use it, I take it for granted he did not intend to use it: I rejoice that he did not: but, at least, then I have a right to expect, that the learned gentleman should now transfer to the French note some of the indignation which he has hitherto lavished upon the declarations of this country. This principle, which the learned gentleman disclaims, the French note avows : and I contend, without the fear of contradiction, it is the principle upon which France has uniformly acted. But while the learned gentleman disclaims this proposition, he certainly will admit, that he has himself asserted, and maintained in the whole course of his argument, that the pressure of the war upon France, imposed upon her the necessity of those exertions which produced most of the enormities of the revolution, and most of the enormities practised against the other countries of Europe. The house will recollect, that, in the year 1796, when all these horrors in Italy were beginning, which are the strongest illustrations of the general character of the French revolution, we had begun that negociation to which the learned gentleman has referred. England then possessed numerous conquests;

1 Vide M. Talleyrand's note.

England, though not having at that time had the advantage of three of her most splendid victories, England, even then, appeared undisputed mistress of the sea; England, having then engrossed the whole wealth of the colonial world; England; having lost nothing of its original possessions; England then comes forward, proposing general peace, and offering—what? offering the surrender of all that it had acquired, in order to obtain—what? not the dismemberment, not the partition of ancient France, but the return of a part of those conquests, no one of which could be retained, but in direct contradiction, to that original and solemn pledge which is now referred to, as the proof of the just and moderate disposition of the French republic. Yet even this offer was not sufficient to procure peace, or to arrest the progress of France in her defensive operations against other unoffending countries. From the pages, however, of the learned gentleman's pamphlet (which, after all its editions, is now fresher in his memory than in that of any other person in this house, or in the country), he is furnished with an argument on the result of the negociation, on which he appears confidently to rely. He maintains, that the single point on which the negociation was broken off, was the question of the possession of the Austrian Netherlands; and that it is, therefore, on that ground only, that the war has, since that time, been continued. When this subject was before under discussion, I stated, and I shall state again (notwithstanding the learned gentleman's accusation of my having endeavoured to shift the question from its true point), that the question, then at issue, was not, whether the Netherlands should, in fact, be restored; though even on that question I am not, like the learned gentleman, unprepared to give any opinion; I am ready to say, that to leave that territory in the possession of France would be obviously dangerous to the interests of this country, and is inconsistent with the policy which it has uniformly pursued, at every period in which it has concerned itself in the general system of the continent; but it was not on the decision of this question of expediency and policy, that the issue of the negociation then turned; what was required of us by France was, not merely that we should acquiesce in her retaining the Netherlands, but that, as a preliminary to all treaty, and before entering upon the discussion of terms, we should recognise the principle, that whatever France, in time of war, had annexed to the republic, must remain inseparable for ever, and could not become the subject of negociation. I say, that, in refusing such

a preliminary, we were only resisting the claim of France, to arrogate to itself the power of controlling, by its own separate and municipal acts, the rights and interests of other countries, and moulding, at its discretion, a new and general code of the law of nations.

In reviewing the issue of this negociation, it is important to observe, that France, who began by abjuring a love of conquest, was desired to give up nothing of her own, not even to give up all that she had conquered; that it was offered to her to receive back all that had been conquered from her; and when she rejected the negociation for peace upon these grounds, are we then to be told of the unrelenting hostility of the combined powers, for which France was to revenge itself upon other countries, and which is to justify the subversion of every established government, and the destruction of property, religion, and domestic comfort, from one end of Italy to the other? Such was the effect of the war against Modena, against Genoa, against Tuscany, against Venice, against Rome, and against Naples ; all of which she engaged in, or prosecuted, subsequent to this very period.

After this, in the year 1797, Austria had made peace, England and its ally, Portugal, (from whom we could expect little active assistance, but whom we felt it our duty to defend), alone remained in the war. In that situation, under the pressure of necessity, which I shall not disguise, we made another attempt to negociate. In 1797, Prussia, Spain, Austria, and Naples having successively made peace, the princes of Italy having been destroyed, France having surrounded itself, in almost every part in which it is not surrounded by the sea, with revolutionary republics, England made another offer of a different nature. It was not now a demand that France should restore any thing. Austria having made a peace upon her own terms, England had nothing to require with regard to her allies; she asked no restitution of the dominions added to France in Europe. So far from retaining any thing French out of Europe, we freely offered them all, demanding only, as a poor compensation, to retain a part of what we had acquired by arms, from Holland, then identified with France, and that part, useless to Holland, and necessary for the security of our Indian possessions. This proposal also, Sir, was proudly refused, in a way which the learned gentleman himself has not attempted to justify, indeed of which he has spoken with detestation. I wish, since he has not finally abjured his duty in this house, that that detestation had been

stated earlier, that he had mixed his own voice with the general voice of his country, on the result of that negotiation.

Let us look at the conduct of France immediately subsequent to this period. She had spurned at the offers of Great Britain; she had reduced her continental enemies to the necessity of accepting a precarious peace; she had (in spite of those pledges repeatedly made and uniformly violated) surrounded herself by new conquests, on every part of her frontier but one; that one was Switzerland. The first effect of being relieved from the war with Austria, of being secured against all fears of continental invasion on the antient territory of France, was their unprovoked attack against this unoffending and devoted country. This was one of the scenes which satisfied even those who were the most incredulous, that France had thrown off the mask, *" if indeed she had ever worn it"* [1] It collected, in one view, many of the characteristic features of that revolutionary system which I have endeavoured to trace. The perfidy which alone rendered their arms successful, the pretext of which they availed themselves to produce division and prepare the entrance of Jacobinism in that country, the proposal of armistice, one of the known and regular engines of the revolution, which was, as usual, the immediate prelude to military execution, attended with cruelty and barbarity, of which there are few examples : all these are known to the world. The country they attacked was one which had long been the faithful ally of France, which, instead of giving cause of jealousy to any other power, had been, for ages, proverbial for the simplicity and innocence of its manners, and which had acquired and preserved the esteem of all the nations of Europe; which had almost, by the common consent of mankind, been exempted from the sound of war, and marked out as a land of Goschen, safe and untouched in the midst of surrounding calamities.

Look then at the fate of Switzerland, at the circumstances which led to its destruction, add this instance to the catalogue of aggression against all Europe, and then tell me, whether the system I have described has not been prosecuted with an unrelenting spirit, which cannot be subdued in adversity, which cannot be appeased in prosperity, which neither solemn professions, nor the general law of nations, nor the obligation of treaties (whether previous to the revolution or subsequent to it), could restrain from the subversion of every state into which, either by force or fraud, their arms could penetrate. Then

1 Vide Speeches at the Whig Club.

tell me, whether the disasters of Europe are to be charged upon the provocation of this country and its allies, or on the inherent principle of the French revolution, of which the natural result produced so much misery and carnage in France, and carried desolation and terror over so large a portion of the world.

Sir, much as I have now stated, I have not finished the catalogue. America almost as much as Switzerland, perhaps, contributed to that change, which has taken place in the minds of those who were originally partial to the principles of the French government. The hostility against America followed a long course of neutrality adhered to, under the strongest provocations, or rather of repeated compliances to France, with which we might well have been dissatisfied. It was on the face of it, unjust and wanton; and it was accompanied by those instance of sordid corruption which shocked and disgusted even the enthusiastic admirers of revolutionary purity, and threw a new light on the genius of revolutionary government.

After this, it remains only shortly to remind gentlemen of the aggression against Egypt, not omitting, however, to notice the capture of Malta, in the way to Egypt. Inconsiderable as that island may be thought, compared with the scenes we have witnessed, let it be remembered, that it is an island of which the government had long been recognised by every state of Europe, against which France pretended no cause of war, and whose independence was as dear to itself and as sacred as that of any country in Europe. It was in fact not unimportant from its local situation to the other powers of Europe, but in proportion as any man may diminish its importance, the instance will only serve the more to illustrate and confirm the proposition which I have maintained.—The all-searching eye of the French revolution looks to every part of Europe, and every quarter of the world, in which can be found an object either of acquisition or plunder. Nothing is too great for the temerity of its ambition, nothing too small or insignificant for the grasp of its rapacity. From hence Buonaparte and his army proceeded to Egypt. The attack was made, pretences were held out to the natives of that country in the name of the French king, whom they had murdered; they pretended to have the approbation of the grand seignior, whose territories they were violating; their project was carried on under the profession of a zeal for Mahometanism; it was carried on by

proclaiming that France had been reconciled to the Mussulman faith, had abjured that of Christianity, or, as he in his impious language termed it, of " *the sect of the Messiah"*

The only plea which they have since held out to colour this atrocious invasion of a neutral and friendly territory, is, that it was the road to attack the English power in India. It is most unquestionably true, that this was one and a principal cause of this unparalleled outrage; but another, and an equally substantial cause (as appears by their own statements), was the division and partition of the territories of what they thought a falling power. It is impossible to dismiss this subject without observing that this attack against Egypt was accompanied by an attack upon the British possessions in India, made on true revolutionary principles. In Europe, the propagation of the principles of France had uniformly prepared the way for the progress of its arms. To India, the lovers of peace had sent the messengers of jacobinism, for the purpose of inculcating war in those distant regions, on jacobin principles, and of forming jacobin clubs, which they actually succeeded in establishing, and which in most respects resembled the European model, but which were distinguished by this peculiarity, that they were required to swear in one breath, *hatred to tyranny, the love of liberty, and the destruction of all kings and sovereigns—except the good and faithful ally of the French republic.* CITIZEN TIPPOO.

What then was the nature of this system ? Was it any thing but what I have stated it to be ? an insatiable love of agrandizement, an implacable spirit of destruction directed against all the civil and religious institutions of every country. This is the first moving and acting spirit of the French revolution; this is the spirit which animated it at its birth, and this is the spirit which will not desert it till the moment of its dissolution, "which grew with its growth, which strengthened with its strength," but which has not abated under its misfortunes, nor declined in its decay; it has been invariably the same in every period, operating more or less, according as accident or circumstances might assist it; but it has been inherent in the revolution in all its stages, it has equally belonged to Brissot, to Robespierre, to Tallien, to Reubel, to Barras, and to every one of the leaders of the Directory, but to none more than to Buonaparte, in whom now all their powers are united. What are its characters ? Can it be accident that produced them ? No, it is only from the alliance of the most horrid principles

with the most horrid means, that such miseries could have been brought upon Europe. It is this paradox, which we must always keep in mind when we are discussing any question relative to the effects of the French revolution. Groaning under every degree of misery, the victim of its own crimes, and as I once before expressed it in this house, asking pardon of God and of man for the miseries which it has brought upon itself and others, France still retains (while it has neither left means of comfort, nor almost of subsistence to its own inhabitants), new and unexampled means of annoyance and destruction against all the other powers of Europe.

Its first fundamental principle was to bribe the poor against the rich, by proposing to transfer into new hands, on the delusive notion of equality, and in breach of every principle of justice, the whole property of the country; the practical application of this principle was to devote the whole of that property to indiscriminate plunder, and to make it the foundation of a revolutionary system of finance, productive in proportion to the misery and desolation which it created. It has been accompanied by an unwearied spirit of proselytism, diffusing itself over all the nations of the earth; a spirit which can apply itself to all circumstances and all situations, which can furnish a list of grievances, and hold out a promise of redress equally to all nations, which inspired the teachers of French liberty with the hope of alike recommending themselves to those who live under the feudal code of the German empire; to the various states of Italy, under all their different institutions; to the old republicans of Holland, and to the new republicans of America; to the catholic of Ireland, whom it was to deliver from protestant usurpation; to the protestant of Switzerland, whom it was to deliver from popish superstition; and to the mussulman of Egypt, whom it was to deliver from Christian persecution; to the remote Indian, blindly bigotted to his ancient institutions; and to the natives of Great Britain, enjoying the perfection of practical freedom, and justly attached to their constitution, from the joint result of habit, of reason, and of experience. The last and distinguishing feature is a perfidy, which nothing can bind, which no tie of treaty, no sense of the principles generally received among nations, no obligation, human or divine, can restrain. Thus qualified, thus armed for destruction, the genius of the French revolution marched forth, the terror and dismay of the world. Every nation has in its turn been the witness, many have been the

victims of its principles, and it is left for us to decide, whether we will compromise with such a danger, while we have yet resources to supply the sinews of war, while the heart and spirit of the country is yet unbroken, and while we have the means of calling forth and supporting a powerful co-operation in Europe.

Much more might be said on this part of the subject; but if what I have said already is a faithful, though only an imperfect sketch of those excesses and outrages, which even history itself will hereafter be unable fully to record, and a just representation of the principle and source from which they originated, will any man say that we ought to accept a precarious security against so tremendous a danger? Much more will he pretend, after the experience of all that has passed, in the different stages of the French revolution, that we ought to be deterred from probing this great question to the bottom, and from examining, without ceremony or disguise, whether the change which has recently taken place in France, is sufficient now to give security, not against a common danger, but against such a danger as that which I have described?

In examining this part of the subject, let it be remembered, that there is one other characteristic of the French revolution, as striking as its dreadful and destructive principles, I mean the instability of its government, which has been of itself sufficient to destroy all reliance, if any such reliance could, at any time, have been placed on the good faith of any of its rulers. Such has been the incredible rapidity with which the revolutions in France have succeeded each other, that I believe the names of those who have successively exercised absolute power, under the pretence of liberty, are to be numbered by the years of the revolution; and each of the new constitutions, which, under the same pretence, has, in its turn, been imposed by force on France, every one of which alike was founded upon principles which professed to be universal, and was intended to be established and perpetuated among all the nations of the earth—each of these will be found, upon an average, to have had about two years, as the period of its duration.

Under this revolutionary system, accompanied with this perpetual fluctuation and change, both in the form of the government and in the persons of the rulers, what is the security which has hitherto existed, and what new security is now offered? Before an answer is given to this question, let me

sum up the history of all the revolutionary governments of France, and of their characters in relation to other powers, in words more emphatical than any which I could use—the memorable words pronounced, on the eve of this last constitution, by the orator [1] who was selected to report to an assembly, surrounded by a file of grenadiers, the new form of liberty which it was destined to enjoy under the auspices of General Buonaparte. From this reporter, the mouth and organ of the new government, we learn this important lesson: "It is easy to conceive why peace was not concluded before the establishment of the constitutional government. The only government which then existed, described itself as revolutionary; it was, in fact, only the tyranny of a few men who were soon overthrown by others, and it consequently presented no stability of principles or of views, no security either with respect to men, or with respect to things.

"It should seem that that stability and that security ought to have existed from the establishment, and as the effect, of the constitutional system; and yet they did not exist more, perhaps even less, than they had done before. In truth, we did make some partial treaties, we signed a continental peace, and a general congress was held to confirm it; but these treaties, these diplomatic conferences, appear to have been the source of a new war, more inveterate and more bloody than before.

"Before the 18th Fructidor, (4th September) of the 5th year, the French government exhibited to foreign nations so uncertain an existence, that they refused to treat with it. After this great event the whole power was absorbed in the Directory; the legislative body can hardly be said to have existed; treaties of peace were broken, and war carried every where, without that body having any share in those measures. The same Directory, after having intimidated all Europe, and destroyed, at its pleasure, several governments, neither knowing how to make peace or war, or how even to establish itself, was overturned by a breath, on the 13th Prairial (18th June), to make room for other men, influenced, perhaps, by different views, or who might be governed by different principles.

"Judging, then, only from notorious facts, the French government must be considered as exhibiting nothing fixed, neither in respect to men or to things."

1 Vide Speech of Boulay de la Meurthe, in the Council of Five Hundred, at St. Cloud, 19th Brumaire (9th November), 1799.

Here, then, is the picture, down to the period of the last revolution, of the state of France, under all its successive governments!

Having taken a view of what it was, let us now examine what it is. In the first place, we see, as has been truly stated, a change in the description and form of the sovereign authority; a supreme power is placed at the head of this nominal republic, with a more open avowal of military despotism than at any former period; with a more open and undisguised abandonment of the names and pretences under which that despotism long attempted to conceal itself. The different institutions, republican in their form and appearance, which were before the instruments of that despotism, are now annihilated; they have given way to the absolute power of one man, concentrating in himself all the authority of the state, and differing from other monarchs only in this, that, as my honourable friend[1] truly stated it, he wields a sword instead of a sceptre. What then is the confidence we are to derive either from the frame of the government, or from the character and past conduct of the person who is now the absolute ruler of France?

Had we seen a man, of whom we had no previous knowledge, suddenly invested with the sovereign authority of the country; invested with the power of taxation, with the power of the sword, the power of war and peace, the unlimited power of commanding the resources, of disposing of the lives and fortunes of every man in France; if we had seen, at the same moment, all the inferior machinery of the revolution, which, under the variety of successive shocks, had kept the system in motion, still remaining entire, all that, by requisition and plunder, had given activity to the revolutionary system of finance, and had furnished the means of creating an army, by converting every man, who was of age to bear arms, into a soldier, not for the defence of his own country, but for the sake of carrying unprovoked war into surrounding countries; if we had seen all the subordinate instruments of jacobin power subsisting in their full force, and retaining (to use the French phrase) all their original organization; and had then observed this single change in the conduct of their affairs, that there was now one man, with no rival to thwart his measures, no colleague to divide his powers, no council to control his operations, no liberty of speaking or writing, no expression of public opinion to check or influence his conduct; under such circumstances,

[1] Mr. Canning.

should we be wrong to pause, or wait for the evidence of facts and experience, before we consented to trust our safety to the forbearance of a single man, in such a situation, and to relinquish those means of defence which have hitherto carried us safe through all the storms of the revolution? if we were to ask what are the principles and character of this stranger, to whom Fortune has suddenly committed the concerns of a great and powerful nation?

But is this the actual state of the present question? Are we talking of a stranger of whom we have heard nothing? No, Sir; we have heard of him; we, and Europe, and the world, have heard both of him and of the satellites by whom he is surrounded; and it is impossible to discuss fairly the propriety of any answer which could be returned to his overtures of negociation, without taking into consideration the inferences to be drawn from his personal character and conduct. I know it is the fashion with some gentlemen to represent any reference to topics of this nature as invidious and irritating; but the truth is, that they rise unavoidably out of the very nature of the question. Would it have been possible for ministers to discharge their duty, in offering their advice to their Sovereign, either for accepting or declining negociation, without taking into their account the reliance to be placed on the disposition and the principles of the person? on whose disposition and principles the security to be obtained by treaty must, in the present circumstances, principally depend? or would they act honestly or candidly towards parliament and towards the country, if, having been guided by these considerations, they forbore to state publicly and distinctly the real grounds which have influenced their decision; and if, from a false delicacy and groundless timidity, they purposely declined an examination of a point, the most essential towards enabling parliament to form a just determination on so important a subject?

What opinion, then, are we led to form of the pretensions of the Consul to those particular qualities which, in the official note, are represented as affording us, from his personal character, the surest pledge of peace? We are told this is his *second attempt* at general pacification. Let us see, for a moment, how this *second attempt* has been conducted. There is, indeed, as the learned gentleman has said, a word in the first declaration which refers to general peace, and which states this to be the second time in which the Consul has endeavoured to accomplish that object. We thought fit, for the reasons which

have been assigned, to decline altogether the proposal of treating, under the present circumstances; but we, at the same time, expressly stated, that, whenever the moment for treaty should arrive, we would in no case treat, but in conjunction with our allies. Our general refusal to negociate at the present moment did not prevent the Consul from renewing his overtures; but were they renewed for the purpose of general pacification? Though he had hinted at general peace in the terms of his first note; though we had shewn, by our answer, that we deemed negociation, even for general peace, at this moment, inadmissible; though we added, that, even at any future period, we would treat only in conjunction with our allies; what was the proposal contained in his last note?—To treat, not for *general peace*, but for a *separate peace* between Great Britain and France.

Such was the second attempt to effect *general pacification:* a proposal for a *separate* treaty with Great Britain. What had been the first?—The conclusion of a *separate* treaty with Austria: and, in addition to this faot, there are two anecdotes connected with the conclusion of this treaty, which are sufficient to illustrate the disposition of this pacificator of Europe. This very treaty of Campo Formio was ostentatiously professed to be concluded with the Emperor, for the purpose of enabling Buonaparte to take the command of the army of England, and to dictate a separate peace with this country on the banks of the Thames. But there is this additional circumstance, singular beyond all conception, considering that we are now referred to the treaty of Campo Formio as a proof of the personal disposition of the Consul to general peace; he sent his two confidential and chosen friends, *Berthier* and *Monge*, charged to communicate to the Directory this treaty of Campo Formio; to announce to them, that one enemy was humbled, that the war with Austria was terminated, and, therefore, that now was the moment to prosecute their operations against this country; they used, on this occasion, the memorable words, "*the Kingdom of Great Britain and the French republic cannot exist together*" This, I say, was the solemn declaration of the deputies and ambassadors of Buonaparte himself, offering to the Directory the first fruits of this first attempt at general pacification.

So much for his disposition towards general pacification: let us look next at the part he has taken in the different stages of the French revolution, and let us then judge whether we are

to look to him, as the security against revolutionary principles ; let us determine what reliance we can place on his engagements with other countries, when we see how he has observed his engagements to his own. When the constitution of the third year was established under Barras, that constitution was imposed by the arms of Buonaparte, then commanding the army of the Triumvirate in Paris. To that constitution he then swore fidelity. How often he has repeated the same oath I know not; but twice, at least, we know that he has not only repeated it himself, but tendered it to others, under circumstances too striking not to be stated.

Sir, the house cannot have forgotten the revolution of the fourth of September, which produced the dismissal of Lord Malmesbury from Lisle. How was that revolution procured? It was procured chiefly by the promise of Buonaparte (in the name of his army), decidedly to support the Directory in those measures which led to the infringement and violation of every thing that the authors of the constitution of 1795, or its adherents, could consider as fundamental, and which established a system of despotism inferior only to that now realized in his own person. Immediately before this event, in the midst of the desolation and bloodshed of Italy, he had received the sacred present of new banners from the Directory; he delivered them to his army with this exhortation : " Let us swear, fellow soldiers, by the manes of the patriots who have died by our side, eternal hatred to the enemies of the constitution of the third year :" That very constitution which he soon after enabled the Directory to violate, and which, at the head of his grenadiers, he has now finally destroyed. Sir, that oath was again renewed, in the midst of that very scene to which I have last referred; the oath of fidelity to the constitution of the third year was administered to all the members of the assembly then sitting (under the terror of the bayonet), as the solemn preparation for the business of the day; and the morning was ushered in with swearing attachment to the constitution, that the evening might close with its destruction.

If we carry our views out of France, and look at the dreadful catalogue of all the breaches of treaty, all the acts of perfidy at which I have only glanced, and which are precisely commensurate with the number of treaties which the republic have made (for I have sought in vain for any one which it has made and which it has not broken); if we trace the history of them all from the beginning of the revolution to the present time, or if

we select those which have been accompanied by the most atrocious cruelty, and marked the most strongly with the characteristic features of the revolution, the name of Buonaparte will be found allied to more of them than that of any other that can be handed down in the history of the crimes and miseries of the last ten years. His name will be recorded with the horrors committed in Italy, in the memorable campaign of 1796 and 1797, in the Milanese, in Genoa, in Modena, in Tuscany, in Rome, and in Venice.

His entrance into Lombardy was announced by a solemn proclamation, issued on the 27th of April, 1796, which terminated with these words : " Nations of Italy ! the French army is come to break your chains; the French are the friends of the people in every country; your religion, your property, your customs, shall be respected." This was followed by a second proclamation, dated from Milan, 20th of May, and signed " Buonaparte," in these terms: " Respect for property and personal security; respect for the religion of countries: these are the sentiments of the government of the French republic, and of the army of Italy. The French, victorious, consider the nations of Lombardy as their brothers." In testimony of this fraternity, and to fulfil the solemn pledge of respecting property, this very proclamation imposed on the Milanese a provisional contribution to the amount of twenty millions of livres, or near one million sterling; and successive exactions were afterwards levied on that single state to the amount, in the whole, of near six millions sterling. The regard to religion and to the customs of the country was manifested with the same scrupulous fidelity. The churches were given up to indiscriminate plunder. Every religious and charitable fund, every public treasure was confiscated. The country was made the scene of every species of disorder and rapine. The priests, the established form of worship, all the objects of religious reverence, were openly insulted by the French troops; at Pavia, particularly, the tomb of St. Augustine, which the inhabitants were accustomed to view with peculiar veneration, was mutilated and defaced. This last provocation having roused the resentment of the people, they flew to arms, surrounded the French garrison, and took them prisoners, but carefully abstained from offering any violence to a single soldier. In revenge for this conduct, Buonaparte, then on his march to the Mincio, suddenly returned, collected his troops, and carried the extremity of military execution over the country: he burnt the town of

Benasco, and massacred eight hundred of its inhabitants; he marched to Pavia, took it by storm, and delivered it over to general plunder, and published, at the same moment, a proclamation, of the 26th of May, ordering his troops to shoot all those who had not laid down their arms, and taken an oath of obedience, and to burn every village where the *tocsin* should be sounded, and to put its inhabitants to death.

The transactions with Modena were on a smaller scale, but in the same character. Buonaparte began by signing a treaty, by which the Duke of Modena was to pay twelve millions of livres, and neutrality was promised him in return; this was soon followed by the personal arrest of the duke, and by a fresh extortion of two hundred thousand sequins; after this he was permitted, on the payment of a further sum, to sign another treaty, called a *Convention de Suerete*, which of course was only the prelude to the repetition of similar exactions.

Nearly at the same period, in violation of the rights of neutrality, and of the treaty which had been concluded between the French republic and the Grand Duke of Tuscany in the preceding year, and in breach of a positive promise given only a few days before, the French army forcibly took possession of Leghorn, for the purpose of seizing the British property which was deposited there, and confiscating it as prize; and shortly after, when Buonaparte agreed to evacuate Leghorn in return for the evacuation of the island of Elbe, which was in the possession of the British troops, he insisted upon a separate article, by which, in addition to the plunder before obtained, by the infraction of the law of nations, it was stipulated, that the grand duke should pay to the French the expense, which they had incurred by this invasion of his territory.

In the proceedings towards Genoa we shall find not only a continuation of the same system of extortion and plunder (in violation of the solemn pledge contained in the proclamations already referred to), but a striking instance of the revolutionary means employed for the destruction of independent governments. A French minister was at that time resident at Genoa, which was acknowledged by France to be in a state of neutrality and friendship : in breach of this neutrality, Buonaparte began, in the year 1796, with the demand of a loan; he afterwards, from the month of September, required and enforced the payment of a monthly subsidy, to the amount which he thought proper to stipulate: these exactions were accompanied by

repeated assurances and protestations of friendship; they were followed, in May, 1797, by a conspiracy against the government, fomented by the emissaries of the French embassy, and conducted by the partisans of France, encouraged and afterwards protected by the French minister. The conspirators failed in their first attempt; overpowered by the courage and voluntary exertions of the inhabitants, their force was dispersed, and many of their number were arrested. Buonaparte instantly considered the defeat of the conspirators as an act of aggression against the French republic ; he dispatched an aide-de-camp with an order to the senate of this independent state; first, to release all the French who were detained ; secondly, to punish those who had arrested them; thirdly, to declare that they had had no share in the insurrection ; and fourthly, to disarm the people. Several French prisoners were immediately released, and a proclamation was preparing to disarm the inhabitants, when, by a second note, Buonaparte required the arrest of the three Inquisitors of state, and immediate alterations in the constitution ; he accompanied this with an order to the French minister to quit Genoa, if his commands were not immediately carried into execution ; at the same moment his troops entered the territory of the republic, and shortly after the councils, intimidated and overpowered, abdicated their functions. Three deputies were then sent to Buonaparte to receive from him a new constitution; on the 6th of June, after the conferences at Montebello, he signed a convention, or rather issued a decree, by which he fixed the new form of their government; he himself named provisionally all the members who were to compose it, and he required the payment of seven millions of livres, as the price of the subversion of their constitution, and their independence. These transactions require but one short comment ; it is to be found in the official account given of them at Paris, which is in these memorable words : " General Buonaparte has pursued the only line of conduct which could be allowed in the representative of a nation, which has supported the war only to procure the solemn acknowledgment of the right of nations, to change the form of their government. He contributed nothing towards the revolution of Genoa, but he seized the first moment to acknowledge the new government, as soon as he saw that it was the result of the wishes of the people."[1]

It is unnecessary to dwell on the wanton attacks against Rome, under the direction of Buonaparte himself, in the year

1 Redacteur Official, June 30, 1797.

1796, and in the beginning of 1797, which led first, to the treaty of Tolentino, concluded by Buonaparte, in which, by enormous sacrifices, the Pope was allowed to purchase the acknowledgment of his authority, as a sovereign prince; and secondly, to the violation of that very treaty, and to the subversion of the papal authority by Joseph Buonaparte, the brother and the agent of the general, and the minister of the French republic to the holy see: A transaction accompanied by outrages and insults towards the pious and venerable Pontiff (in spite of the sanctity of his age and the unsullied purity of his character), which even to a protestant, seemed hardly short of the guilt of sacrilege.

But of all the disgusting and tragical scenes which took place in Italy, in the course of the period I am describing, those which passed at Venice are perhaps the most striking, and the most characteristic: in May, 1796, the French army, under Buonaparte, in the full tide of its success against the Austrians, first approached the territories of this republic, which, from the commencement of the war, had observed a rigid neutrality. Their entrance on these territories was as usual accompanied by a solemn proclamation in the name of their general. "Buonaparte to the republic of Venice." "It is to deliver the finest country in Europe from the iron yoke of the proud house of Austria, that the French army has braved obstacles the most difficult to surmount. Victory in union with justice has crowned its efforts. The wreck of the enemy's army has retired behind the Mincio. The French army, in order to follow them, passes over the territory of the republic of Venice; but it will never forget, that antient friendship unites the two republics. Religion, government, customs, and property, shall be respected. That the people may be without apprehension, the most severe discipline shall be maintained. All that may be provided for the army shall be faithfully paid for in money. The general-in-chief engages the officers of the republic of Venice, the magistrates, and the priests, to make known these sentiments to the people, in order that confidence may cement that friendship which has so long united the two nations, faithful in the path of honour, as in that of victory. The French soldier is terrible only to the enemies of his liberty and his government. Buonaparte."

This proclamation was followed by exactions similar to those which were practised against Genoa, by the renewal of similar professions of friendship, and the use of similar means to excite

insurrection. At length, in the spring of 1797, occasion was taken from disturbances thus excited, to forge, in the name of the Venetian government, a proclamation,[1] hostile to France; and this proceeding was made the ground for military execution against the country, and for effecting by force the subversion of its antient government and the establishment of the democratic forms of the French revolution. This revolution was sealed by a treaty, signed in May, 1797, between Buonaparte and commissioners appointed on the part of the new and revolutionary government of Venice. By the second and third secret articles of this treaty, Venice agreed to give as a ransom, to secure itself against all farther exactions or demands, the sum of three millions of livres in money, the value of three millions more in articles of naval supply, and three ships of the line; and it received in return the assurances of the friendship and support of the French republic. Immediately after the signature of this treaty, the arsenal, the library, and the palace of St. Marc, were ransacked and plundered, and heavy additional contributions were imposed upon its inhabitants: and, in not more than four months afterwards, this very republic of Venice, united by alliance to France, the creature of Buonaparte himself, from whom it had received the present of French liberty, was by the same Buonaparte transferred under the treaty of Campo Formio, to "that iron yoke of the proud House of Austria," to deliver it from which he had represented in his first proclamation to be the great object of all his operations.

Sir, all this is followed by the memorable expedition into Egypt, which I mention, not merely because it forms a principal article in the catalogue of those acts of violence and perfidy in which Buonaparte has been engaged; not merely because it was an enterprise peculiarly his own, of which he was himself the planner, the executor, and the betrayer; but chiefly because, when from thence he retires to a different scene to take possession of a new throne, from which he is to speak upon an equality with the kings and governors of Europe, he leaves behind him, at the moment of his departure, a specimen, which cannot be mistaken, of his principles of negociation. The intercepted correspondence, which has been alluded to in this debate, seems to afford the strongest ground to believe, that his offers to the Turkish government to evacuate Egypt

[1] Vide Account of this transaction in the Proclamation of the Senate of Venice, April 12, 1798.

were made solely with a view "*to gain time;*" that the ratification of any treaty on this subject was to be delayed with the view of finally eluding its performance, if any change of circumstances favourable to the French should occur in the interval. But whatever gentlemen may think of the intention with which these offers were made, there will at least be no question with respect to the credit due to those professions by which he endeavoured to prove, in Egypt, his pacific dispositions. He expressly enjoins his successor, strongly and steadily to insist in ail his intercourse with the Turks, that he came to Egypt with no hostile design, and that he never meant to keep possession of the country; while, on the opposite page of the same instructions, he states in the most unequivocal manner his regret at the discomfiture of his favourite project of colonizing Egypt, and of maintaining it as a territorial acquisition. Now, Sir, if in any note addressed to the Grand Vizier, or the Sultan, Buonaparte had claimed credit for the sincerity of his professions, that he forcibly invaded Egypt with no view hostile to Turkey, and solely for the purpose of molesting the British interests; is there any one argument now used to induce us to believe his present professions to us, which might not have been equally urged on that occasion to the Turkish government? Would not those professions have been equally supported by solemn asseverations, by the same reference which is now made to personal character, with this single difference, that they would then have been accompanied with one instance less of that perfidy, which we have had occasion to trace in this very transaction?

It is unnecessary to say more with respect to the credit due to his professions, or the reliance to be placed on his general character: but it will, perhaps, be argued, that, whatever may be his character, or whatever has been his past conduct, he has now an interest in making and observing peace. That he has an interest in making peace is at best but a doubtful proposition, and that he has an interest in preserving it is still more uncertain. That it is his interest to negociate, I do not indeed deny; it is his interest above all to engage this country in separate negociation, in order to loosen and dissolve the whole system of the confederacy on the Continent, to palsy, at once, the arms of Russia or of Austria, or of any other country that might look to you for support; and then either to break off his separate treaty, or if he should have concluded it, to apply the

1 Vide "Intercepted Letters from Egypt."

lesson which is taught in his school of policy in Egypt; and to revive, at his pleasure, those claims of indemnification which *may have been reserved to some happier period}*

This is precisely the interest which he has in negociation; but on what grounds are we to be convinced that he has an interest in concluding and observing a solid and permanent pacification? Under all the circumstances of his personal character, and his newly acquired power, what other security has he for retaining that power, but the sword? His hold upon France is the sword, and he has no other. Is he connected with the soil, or with the habits, the affections, or the prejudices of the country? He is a stranger, a foreigner, and an usurper; he unites in his own person every thing that a pure Republican must detest; every thing that an enraged jacobin has abjured; every thing that a sincere and faithful Royalist must feel as an insult. If he is opposed at any time in his career, what is his appeal? *He appeals to his fortune;* in other words to his army and his sword. Placing, then, his whole reliance upon military support, can he afford to let his military renown pass away, to let his laurels wither, to let the memory of his achievements sink in obscurity? Is it certain that, with his army confined within France, and restrained from inroads upon her neighbours, he can maintain, at his devotion, a force sufficiently numerous to support his power? Having no object but the possession of absolute dominion, no passion but military glory, is it certain, that he can feel such an interest in permanent peace, as would justify us in laying down our arms, reducing our expense, and relinquishing our means of security, on the faith of his engagements? Do we believe, that after the conclusion of peace, he would not still sigh over the lost trophies of Egypt, wrested from him by the celebrated victory of Aboukir, and the brilliant exertions of that heroic band of British seamen, whose influence and example rendered the Turkish troops invincible at Acre? Can he forget, that the effect of these exploits enabled Austria and Russia, in one campaign, to recover from France all which she had acquired by his victories, to dissolve the charm, which, for a time, fascinated Europe, and to shew that their generals, contending in a just cause, could efface, even by their success and their military glory, the most dazzling triumphs of his victories and desolating ambition?

Can we believe, with these impressions on his mind, that if,

[1] **Vide " Intercepted Letters from Egypt."**

after a year, eighteen months, or two years, of peace had elapsed, he should be tempted by the appearance of a fresh insurrection in Ireland, encouraged by renewed and unrestrained communication with France, and fomented by the fresh infusion of jacobin principles ; if we were at such a moment without a fleet to watch the ports of France, or to guard the coasts of Ireland, without a disposable army, or an embodied militia, capable of supplying a speedy and adequate reinforcement, and that he had suddenly the means of transporting thither a body of twenty or thirty thousand French troops: can we believe, that at such a moment his ambition and vindictive spirit would be restrained by the recollection of engagements, or the obligation of treaty? Or, if in some new crisis of difficulty and danger to the Ottoman empire, with no British navy in the Mediterranean, no confederacy formed, no force collected to support it, an opportunity should present itself for resuming the abandoned expedition to Egypt, for renewing the avowed and favourite project of conquering and colonizing that rich and fertile country, and of opening the way to wound some of the vital interests of England, and to plunder the treasures of the east, in order to fill the bankrupt coffers of France, would it be the interest of Buonaparte, under such circumstances, or his principles, his moderation, his love of peace, his aversion to conquest, and his regard for the independence of other nations—would it be all, or any of these that would secure us against an attempt, which would leave us only the option of submitting, without a struggle, to certain loss and disgrace, or of renewing the contest which we had prematurely terminated, and renewing it without allies, without preparation, with diminished means, and with increased difficulty and hazard?

Hitherto I have spoken only of the reliance which we can place on the professions, the character, and the conduct of the present First Consul; but it remains to consider the stability of his power. The revolution has been marked throughout by a rapid succession of new depositaries of public authority, each supplanting his predecessor; what grounds have we as yet to believe that this new usurpation, more odious and more undisguised than all that preceded it, will be more durable? Is it that we rely on the particular provisions contained in the code of the pretended constitution, which was proclaimed as accepted by the French people, as soon as the garrison of Paris declared their determination to exterminate all its enemies, and before

any of its articles could even be known to half the country, whose consent was required for its establishment?

I will not pretend to inquire deeply into the nature and effects of a constitution, which can hardly be regarded but as a farce and a mockery. If, however, it could be supposed that its provisions were to have any effect, it seems equally adapted to two purposes; that of giving to its founder for a time an absolute and uncontrolled authority, and that of laying the certain foundation of future disunion and discord, which, if they once prevail, must render the exercise of all the authority under the constitution impossible, and leave no appeal but to the sword.

Is then military despotism that which we are accustomed to consider as a stable form of government? In all ages of the world, it has been attended with the least stability to the persons who exercised it, and with the most rapid succession of changes and revolutions. The advocates of the French revolution boasted in its outset, that by their new system they had furnished a security for ever, not to France only but to all countries in the world, against military despotism; that the force of standing armies was vain and delusive, that no artificial power could resist public opinion; and that it was upon the foundation of public opinion alone that any government could stand. I believe, that in this instance, as in every other, the progress of the French revolution has belied its professions; but so far from its being a proof of the prevalence of public opinion against military force, it is instead of the proof, the strongest exception from that doctrine, which appears in the history of the world. Through all the stages of the revolution military force has governed; public opinion has scarcely been heard. But still I consider this as only an exception from a general truth; I still believe, that, in every civilized country (not enslaved by a jacobin faction) public opinion is the only sure support of any government: I believe this with the more satisfaction, from a conviction, that if this contest is happily terminated, the established governments of Europe will stand upon that rock firmer than ever; and whatever may be the defects of any particular constitution, those who live under it will prefer its continuance to the experiment of changes which may plunge them into the unfathomable abyss of revolution, or extricate them from it, only to expose them to the terrors of military despotism. And to apply this to France, I see no reason to believe, that the present usurpation will be more permanent than any other military despotism, which has been

established by the same means, and with the same defiance of public opinion.

What, then, is the inference I draw from all that I have now stated? Is it, that we will in no case treat with Buonaparte? I say no such thing. But I say, as has been said in the answer returned to the French note, that we ought to wait for *experience, and the evidence of facts,* before we are convinced that such a treaty is admissible. The circumstances I have stated would well justify us if we should be slow in being convinced; but on a question of peace and war, every thing depends upon degree, and upon comparison. If, on the one hand, there should be an appearance that the policy of France is at length guided by different maxims from those which have hitherto prevailed; if we should hereafter see signs of stability in the government, which are not now to be traced; if the progress of the allied army should not call forth such a spirit in France, as to make it probable that the act of the country itself will destroy the system now prevailing; if the danger, the difficulty, the risk of continuing the contest, should increase, while the hope of complete ultimate success should be diminished; all these, in their due place, are considerations, which, with myself and (I can answer for it) with every one of my colleagues, will have their just weight. But at present these considerations all operate one way; at present there is nothing from which we can presage a favourable disposition to change in the French councils: There is the greatest reason to rely on powerful co-operation from our allies; there are the strongest marks of a disposition in the interior of France to active resistance against this new tyranny; and there is every ground to believe, on reviewing our situation, and that of the enemy, that if we are ultimately disappointed of that complete success which we are at present entitled to hope, the continuance of the contest, instead of making our situation comparatively worse, will have made it comparatively better.

If, then, I am asked how long are we to persevere in the war, I can only say, that no period can be accurately assigned beforehand. Considering the importance of obtaining complete security for the objects for which we contend, we ought not to be discouraged too soon: but on the other hand, considering the importance of not impairing and exhausting the radical strength of the country, there are limits beyond which we ought not to persist, and which we can determine only by estimating and comparing fairly, from time to time, the degree

of security to be obtained by treaty, and the risk and disadvantage of continuing the contest.

But, Sir, there are some gentlemen in the house, who seem to consider it already certain, that the ultimate success to which I am looking is unattainable: they suppose us contending only for the restoration of the French monarchy, which they believe to be impracticable, and deny to be desirable for this country. We have been asked in the course of this debate, do you think you can impose monarchy upon France, against the will of the nation? I never thought it, I never hoped it, I never wished it: I have thought, I have hoped, I have wished, that the time might come when the effect of the arms of the allies might so far overpower the military force which keeps France in bondage, as to give vent and scope to the thoughts and actions of its inhabitants. We have, indeed, already seen abundant proof of what is the disposition of a large part of the country; we have seen almost through the whole of the revolution the western provinces of France deluged with the blood of its inhabitants, obstinately contending for their antient laws and religion. We have recently seen, in the revival of that war, a fresh instance of the zeal which still animates those countiies, in the same cause. These efforts (I state it distinctly, and there are those near me who can bear witness to the truth of the assertion) were not produced by any instigation from hence; they were the effects of a rooted sentiment prevailing through all those provinces, forced into action by the *Law of the Hostages* and the other tyrannical measures of the Directory, at the moment when we were endeavouring to discourage so hazardous an enterprise. If, under such circumstances, we find them giving proofs of their unalterable perseverance in their principles ; if there is every reason to believe that the same disposition prevails in many other extensive provinces of France; if every party appears at length equally wearied and disappointed with all the successive changes which the revolution has produced; if the question is no longer between monarchy, and even the pretence and name of liberty, but between the antient line of hereditary princes on the one hand, and a military tyrant, a foreign usurper, on the other; if the armies of that usurper are likely to find sufficient occupation on the frontiers, and to be forced at length to leave the interior of the country at liberty to manifest its real feeling and disposition; what reason have we to anticipate,

that the restoration of monarchy, under such circumstances, is impracticable?

The learned gentleman has, indeed, told us, that almost every man now possessed of property in France must necessarily be interested in resisting such a change, and that therefore it never can be effected. If that single consideration were conclusive against the possibility of a change, for the same reason the revolution itself, by which the whole property of the country was taken from its antient possessors, could never have taken place. But though I deny it to be an insuperable obstacle, I admit it to be a point of considerable delicacy and difficulty. It is not, indeed, for us to discuss minutely what arrangement might be formed on this point to conciliate and unite opposite interests; but whoever considers the precarious tenure and depreciated value of lands held under the revolutionary title, and the low price for which they have generally been obtained, will think it, perhaps, not impossible that an ample compensation might be made to the bulk of the present possessors, both for the purchase-money they have paid, and for the actual value of what they now enjoy; and that the antient proprietors might be reinstated in the possession of their former rights, with only such a temporary sacrifice as reasonable men would willingly make to obtain so essential an object.

The honourable and learned gentleman, however, has supported his reasoning on this part of the subject, by an argument which he undoubtedly considers as unanswerable—a reference to what would be his own conduct in similar circumstances; and he tells us, that every landed proprietor in France must support the present order of things in that country from the same motive that he and every proprietor of three per cent, stock would join in the defence of the constitution of Great Britain. I must do the learned gentleman the justice to believe, that the habits of his profession must supply him with better and nobler motives, for defending a constitution which he has had so much occasion to study and examine, than any which he can derive from the value of his proportion (however large) of three per cents., even supposing them to continue to increase in price as rapidly as they have done, during the last three years, in which the security and prosperity of the country has been established by following a system directly opposite to the counsels of the learned gentleman and his friends.

The learned gentleman's illustration, however, though it fails with respect to himself, is happily and aptly applied to the state of France ; and let us see what inference it furnishes with respect to the probable attachment of monied men to the continuance of the revolutionary system, as well as with respect to the general state of public credit in that country. I do not, indeed, know that there exists precisely any fund of three per cents, in France, to furnish a test for the patriotism and public spirit of the lovers of French liberty. But there is another fund which may equally answer our purpose—the capital of three per cent, stock which formerly existed in France has undergone a whimsical operation, similar to many other expedients of finance which we have seen in the course of the revolution—this was performed by a decree, which, as they termed it, *republicanised* their debt; that is, in other words, struck off, at once, two-thirds of the capital, and left the proprietors to take their chance for the payment of interest on the remainder. This remnant was afterwards converted into the present five per cent, stock. I had the curiosity very lately to inquire what price it bore in the market, and I was told that the price had somewhat risen from confidence in the new government, and was actually as high as *seventeen.* I really at first supposed that my informer meant seventeen years' purchase for every pound of interest, and I began to be almost jealous of revolutionary credit; but I soon found that he literally meant seventeen pounds for every hundred pounds capital stock of five per cent., that is, a little more than three and a half years' purchase. So much for the value of revolutionary property, and for the attachment with which it must inspire its possessors towards the system of government to which that value is to be ascribed !

On the question, Sir, how far the restoration of the French monarchy, if practicable, is desirable, I shall not think it necessary to say much. Can it be supposed to be indifferent to us or to the world, whether the throne of France is to be filled by a prince of the house of Bourbon, or by him whose principles and conduct I have endeavoured to develope ? Is it nothing, with a view to influence and example, whether the fortune of this last adventurer in the lottery of Revolutions shall appear to be permanent ? Is it nothing, whether a system shall be sanctioned which confirms by one of its fundamental articles, that general transfer of property from its antient and lawful possessors, which holds out one of the most terrible examples

of national injustice, and which has furnished the great source of revolutionary finance and revolutionary strength against all the powers of Europe?

In the exhausted and impoverished state of France, it seems for a time impossible that any system but that of robbery and confiscation, any thing but the continued torture, which can be applied only by the engines of the revolution, can extort from its ruined inhabitants more than the means of supporting, in peace, the yearly expenditure of its government. Suppose, then, the heir of the house of Bourbon reinstated on the throne, he will have sufficient occupation in endeavouring, if possible, to heal the wounds, and gradually to repair the losses of ten years of civil convulsion; to reanimate the drooping commerce, to rekindle the industry, to replace the capital, and to revive the manufactures of the country. Under such circumstances, there must probably be a considerable interval before such a monarch, whatever may be his views, can possess the power which can make him formidable to Europe; but while the system of the revolution continues, the case is quite different. It is true, indeed, that even the gigantic and unnatural means by which that revolution has been supported, are so far impaired; the influence of its principles, and the terror of its arms, so far weakened; and its power of action so much contracted and circumscribed, that against the embodied force of Europe, prosecuting a vigorous war, we may justly hope that the remnant and wreck of this system cannot long oppose an effectual resistance. But, supposing the confederacy of Europe prematurely dissolved; supposing our armies disbanded, our fleets laid up in our harbours, our exertions relaxed, and our means of precaution and defence relinquished; do we believe that the revolutionary power, with this rest and breathing-time given it to recover from the pressure under which it is now sinking, possessing still the means of calling suddenly and violently into action whatever is the remaining physical force of France, under the guidance of military despotism; do we believe that this power, the terror of which is now beginning to vanish, will not again prove formidable to Europe? Can we forget, that in the ten years in which that power has subsisted, it has brought more misery on surrounding nations, and produced more acts of aggression, cruelty, perfidy, and enormous ambition, than can be traced in the history of France for the centuries which have elapsed since the foundation of its monarchy, including all the wars which, in the course of that

period, have been waged by any of those sovereigns, whose projects of aggrandizement, and violations of treaty, afford a constant theme of general reproach against the ancient government of France? And with these considerations before us, can we hesitate whether we have the best prospect of permanent peace, the best security for the independence and safety of Europe, from the restoration of the lawful government, or from the continuance of revolutionary power in the hands of Buonaparte?

In compromise and treaty with such a power, placed in such hands as now exercise it, and retaining the same means of annoyance which it now possesses, I see little hope of permanent security. I see no possibility at this moment of concluding such a peace as would justify that liberal intercourse which is the essence of real amity; no chance of terminating the expenses or the anxieties of war, or of restoring to us any of the advantages of established tranquillity; and as a sincere lover of peace, I cannot be content with its nominal attainment; I must be desirous of pursuing that system which promises to attain, in the end, the permanent enjoyment of its solid and substantial blessings for this country, and for Europe. As a sincere lover of peace, I will not sacrifice it by grasping at the shadow, when the reality is not substantially within my reach—

Cur igitur pacem nolo? Quia infida est, quia periculosa, quia esse non potest.

If, Sir, in all that I have now offered to the house, I have succeeded in establishing the proposition, that the system of the French revolution has been such as to afford to foreign powers no adequate ground for security in negociation, and that the change which has recently taken place has not yet afforded that security; if I have laid before you a just statement of the nature and extent of the danger with which we have been threatened; it would remain only shortly to consider, whether there is any thing in the circumstances of the present moment to induce us to accept a security confessedly inadequate against a danger of such a description.

It will be necessary here to say a few words on the subject on which gentlemen have been so fond of dwelling; I mean our former negociations, and particularly that at Lisle in 1797. I am desirous of stating frankly and openly the true motives which induced me to concur in then recommending negociation; and I will leave it to the house, and to the country,

to judge whether our conduct at that time was inconsistent with the principles by which we are guided at present. That revolutionary policy which I have endeavoured to describe, that gigantic system of prodigality and bloodshed by which the efforts of France were supported, and which counts for nothing the lives and the property of a nation, had at that period driven us to exertions which had, in a great measure, exhausted the ordinary means of defraying our immense expenditure, and had led many of those who were the most convinced of the original justice and necessity of the war, and of the danger of jacobin principles, to doubt the possibility of persisting in it, till complete and adequate security could be obtained. There seemed, too, much reason to believe, that without some new measure to check the rapid accumulation of debt, we could no longer trust to the stability of that funding system, by which the nation had been enabled to support the expense of all the different wars in which we have engaged in the course of the present century. In order to continue our exertions with vigour, it became necessary that a new and solid system of finance should be established, such as could not be rendered effectual but by the general and decided concurrence of public opinion. Such a concurrence in the strong and vigorous measures necessary for the purpose could not then be expected, but from satisfying the country, by the strongest and most decided proofs, that peace on terms in any degree admissible was unattainable.

Under this impression we thought it our duty to attempt negociation, not from the sanguine hope, even at that time, that its result could afford us complete security, but from the persuasion, that the danger arising from peace under such circumstances was less than that of continuing the war with precarious and inadequate means. The result of those negociations proved, that the enemy would be satisfied with nothing less than the sacrifice of the honour and independence of the country. From this conviction, a spirit and enthusiasm was excited in the nation, which produced the efforts to which we are indebted for the subsequent change in our situation. Having witnessed that happy change, having observed the increasing prosperity and security of the country from that period, seeing how much more satisfactory our prospects now are, than any which we could then have derived from the successful result of negociation, I have not scrupled to declare, that I consider the rupture of the negociation, on the part of

the enemy, as a fortunate circumstance for the country. But because these are my sentiments at this time, after reviewing what has since passed, does it follow that we were, at that time, insincere in endeavouring to obtain peace? The learned gentleman, indeed, assumes that we were; and he even makes a concession, of which I desire not to claim the benefit; he is willing to admit, that on our principles, and our view of the subject, insincerity would have been justifiable. I know, Sir, no plea that would justify those who are entrusted with the conduct of public affairs, in holding out to parliament and to the nation one object while they were, in fact, pursuing another. I did, in fact, believe, at the moment, the conclusion of peace (if it could have been obtained) to be preferable to the continuance of the war under its increasing risks and difficulties. I therefore wished for peace; I sincerely laboured for peace. Our endeavours were frustrated by the act of the enemy. If then, the circumstances are since changed, if what passed at that period has afforded a proof that the object we aimed at was unattainable, and if all that has passed since has proved, that, if peace had been then made, it could not have been durable, are we bound to repeat the same experiment, when every reason against it is strengthened by subsequent experience, and when the inducements, which led to it at that time, have ceased to exist?

When we consider the resources and the spirit of the country, can any man doubt that if adequate security is not now to be obtained by treaty, we have the means of prosecuting the contest without material difficulty or danger, and with a reasonable prospect of completely attaining our object? I will not dwell on the improved state of public credit, on the continually increasing amount (in spite of extraordinary temporary burthens) of our permanent revenue, on the yearly accession of wealth to a degree unprecedented even in the most flourishing times of peace, which we are deriving, in the midst of war, from our extended and flourishing commerce; on the progressive improvement and growth of our manufactures; on the proofs which we see on all sides of the uninterrupted accumulation of productive capital; and on the active exertion of every branch of national industry, which can tend to support and augment the population, the riches, and the power of the country.

As little need I recall the attention of the house to the additional means of action which we have derived from the great

augmentation of our disposable military force, the continued triumphs of our powerful and victorious navy, and the events, which, in the course of the last two years, have raised the military ardour and military glory of the country to a height unexampled in any period of our history.

In addition to these grounds of reliance on our own strength and exertions, we have seen the consummate skill and valour of the arms of our allies proved by that series of unexampled success which distinguished the last campaign, and we have every reason to expect a co-operation on the continent, even to a greater extent, in the course of the present year. If we compare this view of our own situation with every thing we can observe of the state and condition of our enemy; if we can trace him labouring under equal difficulty in finding men to recruit his army, or money to pay it; if we know that in the course of the last year the most rigorous efforts of military conscription were scarcely sufficient to replace to the French armies, at the end of the campaign, the numbers which they had lost in the course of it; if we have seen that the force of the enemy, then in possession of advantages which it has since lost, was unable to contend with the efforts of the combined armies; if we know that, even while supported by the plunder of all the countries which they had over-run, the French armies were reduced, by the confession of their commanders, to the extremity of distress, and destitute not only of the principal articles of military supply, but almost of the necessaries of life; if we see them now driven back within their own frontiers, and confined within a country whose own resources have long since been proclaimed by their successive governments to be unequal either to paying or maintaining them; if we observe, that since the last revolution, no one substantial or effectual measure has been adopted to remedy the intolerable disorder of their finances, and to supply the deficiency of their credit and resources; if we see through large and populous districts of France, either open war levied against the present usurpation, or evident marks of disunion and distraction, which the first occasion may call forth into a flame : if, 1 say, Sir, this comparison be just, I feel myself authorized to conclude from it, not that we are entitled to consider ourselves certain of ultimate success, not that we are to suppose ourselves exempted from the unforeseen vicissitudes of war; but that, considering the value of the object for which we are contending, the means for supporting the contest, and the probable course of human

events, we should be inexcusable, if at this moment we were to relinquish the struggle on any grounds short of entire and complete security against the greatest danger which has ever yet threatened the world; that from perseverance in our efforts under such circumstances, we have the fairest reason to expect the full attainment of that object; but that at all events, even if we are disappointed in our more sanguine hopes, we are more likely to gain than to lose by the continuation of the contest; that every month to which it is continued, even if it should not in its effects lead to the final destruction of the jacobin system, must tend so far to weaken and exhaust it, as to give us at least a greater comparative security in any other termination of the war; that on all these grounds, this is not the moment at which it is consistent with our interest or our duty to listen to any proposals of negociation with the present Ruler of France; but that we are not therefore pledged to any unalterable determination as to our future conduct; that in this we must be regulated by the course of events; and that it will be the duty of his Majesty's ministers from time to time to adapt their measures to any variation of circumstances, to consider how far the effects of the military operations of the allies, or of the internal disposition of France, correspond with our present expectations ; and, on a view of the whole, to compare the difficulties or risks which may arise in the prosecution of the contest, with the prospect of ultimate success, or of the degree of advantage which may be derived from its farther continuance, and to be governed by the result of all these considerations, in the opinion and advice which they may offer to their sovereign.

ON SECURITY AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY

[PITT'S 'BUTS' AND 'IFS.']

February 17, 1800.[1]

THE motion which I shall submit to the committee this day, is founded upon a principle which has been often, and has recently been recognized in this house, that we are to proceed in a vigorous prosecution of the war; a measure which we in common feel to be necessary for the safety, honour, and happiness of this country. Those who were of opinion that his Majesty's government acted wisely in declining negociation at this period with the enemy, will not be backward in consenting to continue, or, if necessary, to augment the force that may be deemed proper to be used in the common cause, such as was employed last year, or may be employed this, and which affords the best prospect of success on the frontier of France. This gives, even to France, an opportunity of relieving itself from a galling yoke and obtaining a happy repose, and to its neighbours a hope of permanent tranquillity. It affords a prospect of delivering the remainder of the continent (for much of it was delivered during the last campaign) from the horror of a system which once threatened even more than all Europe with total destruction. These are among the great objects which we must endeavour to accomplish. Above all, we have to crush and disable the system of jacobinism, or if we even fail in completely destroying that monster, we should at least persevere till we

1 Pitt having moved the order of the day, for referring his Majesty's message to a committee of the whole house, to consider of a supply to be granted to his Majesty, the house resolved itself into a committee accordingly.

The King's message ran :—

"His Majesty is at present employed in concerting such engagements with the Emperor of Germany, the Elector of Bavaria, and other powers of the empire, as may strengthen the efforts of his Imperial Majesty, and materially conduce to the advantage of the common cause in the course of the ensuing campaign ; and his Majesty will give directions that these engagements, as soon as they shall have been completed and ratified, shall be laid before the house. But, in order to ensure the benefit of this co-operation at an early period, his Majesty is desirous of authorizing his minister to make (provisionally), such advances as may be necessary, in the first instance, for this purpose ; and his Majesty recommends it to **the** house to enable him to make such provision accordingly. G. R."

have weakened the instruments and engines by which it propagates its principles; for it is generally agreed, that there can be no safety for Europe as long as jacobinism remains strong and triumphant. Those, therefore, I say, who were of opinion that his Majesty's ministers acted wisely in declining to negociate with the enemy at this moment, will not be unwilling to assent to the motion with which I shall have the honour of concluding. But I should hope that even those who recommended negociation, and who, I believe, recommended it without much confidence of ultimate success if it were attempted, will acquiesce in the measure that I am now going to propose. The majority of this house, and the great majority of the people of this country, will, I am confident, agree, that if the war is to be carried on at all, it should be carried on upon that scale which is most likely to bring it to an honourable, if possible a speedy, but, at all events, to a secure conclusion.

After what I have seen of the brilliant achievements last year, it is not for me to say how much is to be expected from the exertions of the Imperial arms; this is not for me to argue—it rests upon a much better foundation than any argument can be. I am aware, that there is fresh in the minds of those who are most anxious for the honour of the common cause, a supposition that there may not be the same co-operation of both the Imperial courts, or that the same force will not be employed against France in the present year, or the ensuing campaign, as there was the last campaign. I take this opportunity of stating, that there is reason to believe the Emperor of Russia will not employ his arms to the same extent, if to any extent, against France, in conjunction with Austria. I stated this on a former night. I stated also, that there was no reason to believe that his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Russia, will withdraw from the most cordial co-operation with this country, or cease to shew his resolution not to acquiesce with France, whilst it pursues a system, such as it does now, that endangers the tranquillity of Europe and all its establishments. But if there were any grounds of apprehension that his Imperial Majesty would withdraw all co-operation, I should then take the liberty of urging that as an additional reason for the measure which his Majesty has taken, and which was communicated to us by his gracious message, part of which the committee has just heard read; and the committee will learn with satisfaction, that the force from the power of Germany will be greater in the ensuing campaign than it was in the last, great and brilliant as

its victories were: I should therefore expect the concurrence of this committee to any measure which may be likely to further so very desirable an object. If the general object, therefore, be likely to meet the concurrence of the house, as by recent discussion the house has already declared and pledged itself it should, I might now proceed to my motion; but there are some other points upon which it is perhaps expected that I should touch briefly. At this period of the year, and from circumstances which I need not enumerate, we cannot have the treaties ready to be laid before parliament, therefore the house cannot judge ultimately on the scheme, part only of which is now laid before it; but I say there is already enough before us to make it incumbent on parliament, at this crisis, to enable his Majesty to make advances such as may prevent the enemy from having any advantage by postponing the efforts of the allies beyond an early period, or of preventing the campaign from being opened with that vigour which the friends of the common cause against the common enemy could wish: the great object of the present measure is to give spirit to the campaign at its commencement, and afterwards due strength for its continuance on the part of the allies.

These are the two principles on which his Majesty's message is founded; and the motion with which I shall have the honour of concluding, is to give his Majesty's intention effect. I am not aware of any objections that are likely to be made to this measure. If I should hear any, I shall endeavour to give them an answer. There is only one point more to which I beg leave to allude, and which was hinted at on a former day: I have stated, that from the circumstances of the continent, the negociations between us and our allies are not fully concluded; it is therefore impossible for me to name the whole force to be employed, or the total amount of the pecuniary assistance which this country is to afford to his Imperial Majesty. I have already said, it is proposed in the mean time that 500,000/. should be advanced by way of commencement. At the same time, I am aware that gentlemen would naturally expect I should state some general heads of what we have in view by the measure now about to be submitted to the committee. The object of it is to secure the co-operation of such a force as his Majesty's ministers have reason to believe is likely to be superior to any force the French can bring to the frontier. The total amount of the advance upon this subject will probably be two millions and a half; for the whole force to be employed

against France is considerably larger than it was last year. The sum which is now proposed to be voted is only 500,000/. I shall therefore move, " That it is the opinion of this committee, that a sum not exceeding 500,000/. be granted to his Majesty, to enable his Majesty to make such advances as may be necessary for the purpose of insuring, at an early period, a vigorous co-operation of the Emperor of Germany, the Elector of Bavaria and other powers, in the ensuing campaign against the common enemy."

Mr. Tierney in strong terms objected to the motion, challenging ministers to define, if it were possible, the real aim and object of the war. It is not, concluded he, the destruction of jacobin principles ; it may be the restoration of the House of Bourbon ; but I would wish the right honourable gentleman in one sentence to state, if he can, without his *ifs* and *buts*, and special pleading ambiguity, what this object is. I am persuaded he cannot ; and that he calls us to prosecute a war, and to lavish our treasure and blood in its support, when no one plain satisfactory reason can be given for its continuance.

Mr. Pitt: The observation with which the honourable gentleman concluded his speech, appears to me one of the strangest I ever heard advanced, and first challenges my attention. He defies me to state, in one sentence, what is the object of the war. I know not whether I can do it in one sentence; but in one word, I can tell him that it is SECURITY : security against a danger, the greatest that ever threatened the world. It is security against a danger which never existed in any past period of society. It is security against a danger which in degree and extent was never equalled; against a danger which threatened all the nations of the earth; against a danger which has been resisted by all the nations of Europe, and resisted by none with so much success as by this nation, because by none has it been resisted so uniformly, and with so much energy. This country alone, of all the nations of Europe, presented barriers the best fitted to resist its progress. We alone recognized the necessity of open war, as well with the principles, as the practice of the French revolution. We saw that it was to be resisted no less by arms abroad, than by precaution at home; that we were to look for protection no less to the courage of our forces, than to the wisdom of our councils; no less to military effort, than to legislative enactment. At the moment when those, who now admit the dangers of jacobinism while they contend that it is extinct, used to palliate its atrocity, and extenuate its mischief, this

house wisely saw that it was necessary to erect a double safeguard against a danger that wrought no less by undisguised hostility than by secret machination. But how long is it since the honourable gentleman and his friends have discovered that the dangers of jacobinism have ceased to exist? How long is it since they have found that the cause of the French revolution is not the cause of liberty? How or where did the honourable gentleman discover that the jacobinism of Robespierre, of Barrere, the jacobinism of the Triumvirate, the jacobinism of the Five Directors, which he acknowledged to be real, has all vanished and disappeared, because it has all been centered and condensed into one man who was reared and nursed in its bosom, whose celebrity was gained under its auspices, who was at once the child and the champion of all its atrocities and horrors? Our security in negociation is to be this Buonaparte, who is now the sole organ of all that was formerly dangerous and pestiferous in the revolution. Jacobinism is allowed formerly to have existed, because the power was divided. Now it is single, and it no longer lives. This discovery is new, and I know not how it has been made.

But the honourable gentleman asks, What is our intention? He asks, Whether the war is to be carried on till jacobinism is finally extinguished? If he means that war is to be carried on till jacobinism has either lost its sting or is abridged in its power to do evil, I say that this is the object of our exertions. I do not say that we must wage war until the principle of jacobinism is extinguished in the mind of every individual; were that the object of the contest, I am afraid it would not terminate but with the present generation. I am afraid that a mind once tainted with that infection never recovers its healthful state. I am afraid that no purification is sufficient to eradicate the poison of that foul distemper. Even those, we see, who so loudly tell us now that the danger of jacobinism is past, are endeavouring to disarm us of the means of carrying on the war we now wage against its remnant, by those arts which they employed to bend us down before its meridian splendour. They tell us again, that, by resisting that pestilent mischief, we are promoting distress, that we are despising humanity. They tell us that we have spent two hundred millions for a phrase—for the words "just and necessary." I hope, Sir, that the people of this country will not be governed by words. No, Sir, the people of England will not be so misled. We have spent two hundred millions; but what has been the object—

what have been the fruits of this expenditure? If this country has spent two hundred millions, they have been spent to preserve the sources of its prosperity, its happiness, its glory, its freedom. Yes, Sir, we have spent that sum; and I trust we are ready, as I am sure we are able, to spend two hundred millions more for purposes so great and important. I trust this country is ready to exert its efforts to avail ourselves of the assistance of our allies to obtain real security, and to attain solid peace.

It is true that in this contest different opinions may exist as to the means by which the danger is to be resisted; the Emperor of Russia may approve of one course; the Emperor of Germany may adopt another. But is it not strange that the honourable gentleman should be so particularly displeased that we should be desirous of the co-operation of the Emperor of Germany, who has not gone so far in his declarations on the subject of the war as the Emperor of Russia? Is it a ground of objection with the honourable gentleman, that we should avail ourselves of the assistance of those who do not declare themselves in favour of that object which he professes himself particularly to disapprove? If, as I do not believe, the Emperor of Germany did not see any danger in French principles; if, as I do not believe, the Emperor of Germany considers it as no desirable object to overthrow that government by which they are embodied and organized, yet are we to refuse the co-operation of that power which may so essentially contribute to promote that security which we have in view? Without changing our own objects, may we not avail ourselves of the aid of other powers, though the motives of the co operation may not be those which dictate our own exertions? Admitting that the Emperor of Germany has no other view but to regain possession of the Netherlands, to drive the enemy back to the Rhine, to recover the fortresses which it was for a moment forced to abandon, are these objects which we have no interest to promote? are these designs which have no relation to British policy—no connexion with British safety? Whatever be the professions of Austria, she must dread the hostility of French principles, she must distrust the security of republican peace. Why, then, should we be unwilling to employ the co-operation of Austrian arms for objects in which we ourselves are so nearly concerned? It is our duty, it is our highest interest to encourage the exertions, and

to promote the views of Austria, with which our own security is so materially concerned.

The honourable gentleman took another ground of argument, to which I shall now follow him. He said, that the war could not be just, because it was carried on for the restoration of the House of Bourbon; and, secondly, that it could not be necessary, because we had refused to negociate for peace when an opportunity for negociation was offered us. As to the first proposition, that it cannot be just, because it is carried on for the restoration of the House of Bourbon, he has assumed the foundation of the argument, and has left no ground for controverting it, or for explanation, because he says that any attempt at explanation upon this subject is the mere ambiguous unintelligible language of *ifs* and *buts*, and of special pleading. Now, Sir, I never had much liking to special pleading; and if ever I had any, it is by this time almost entirely gone. He has besides so abridged me of the use of particles, that though I am not particularly attached to the sound of an *if ox* a *but* I would be much obliged to the honourable gentleman if he would give me some others to supply their places. Is this, however, a light matter, that it should be treated in so light a manner? The restoration of the French- monarchy, I will still tell the honourable gentleman, I consider as a most desirable object, because I think that it would afford the strongest and best security to this country and to Europe. *But* this object may not be attainable; and *if* it be not attainable, we must be satisfied with the best security which we can find independent of it. Peace is most desirable to this country; *but* negociation may be attended with greater evils than could be counterbalanced by any benefits which would result from it. And *if* this be found to be the case; *if it* afford no prospect of security; *if* it threaten all the evils which we have been struggling to avert; *if* the prosecution of the war afford the prospect of attaining complete security; and *if* it may be prosecuted with increasing commerce, with increasing means, and with increasing prosperity, except what may result from the visitations of the seasons ; then I say, that it is prudent in us not to negociate at the present moment. These are my *buts* and my *jfs.* This is my plea, and on no other do I wish to be tried, by God and my country.

The honourable gentleman says, that we reduce our own means in the same proportion that we exhaust those of the

enemy. Is this, indeed, the conclusion which we must draw from a survey of the respective situations of France and England, since the negociation at Paris, and particularly those at Lisle? Does the honourable gentleman really think, that the means of this country have been exhausted in the same proportion with those of the enemy? Does he think that the expense of a new campaign will produce that effect? On these grounds of comparison the question is to be decided, and not upon those topics which are adduced to create a prejudice against the war, and those insidious representations employed to render it unpopular. It is, indeed, to become the allies of jacobinism; to connect, as some aifect to do, the present scarcity with the subject of the war. It is, indeed, to resort to its most destructive weapons, thus to appeal to the feelings of the multitude, and call upon them to decide on such a ground upon a question, of which, in their coolest state, they are, perhaps, unqualified to judge. When we see such arts employed, I think it pretty strong proof that jacobinism is not extinct. If indeed we find that it is still alive even in the minds of spectators, what influence must it not possess with those who are involved in its scenes, and who rule by its influence?

It is said, however, that I endeavour to prevent the freedom of deliberation, by saying, that parliament, by its former vote, is pledged to this particular measure. Most certainly I have no such intention; on the contrary, I stated only, that those who think the war should be continued, must approve of every means by which it can be carried on with vigour and success. The question then is, whether the measure is calculated for that end? if it is, it would be to suppose parliament guided by no consistent view, if it did not meet with its approbation. That the honourable gentleman and his friends should oppose the measure, I should be disposed to ascribe, not so much to their disapproving it, as to their opposition to the war itself. I took it for granted, indeed, that even some of those who opposed the war itself, might acquiesce in this measure, because I trust their sentiment is sincere; they cannot prevent the war —they must be desirous to see it carried on with vigour and success. If they had no other object but to palsy our efforts, to disarm our force in the prosecution of a contest, which their votes cannot prevent; their objects would be criminal, their language would be mischievous. I hope, however, that the feelings, which, in candour, I supposed gentlemen on the other side to possess, will not be belied by their conduct.

The honourable gentleman says, that though his friends are few, they have represented the opinions of the country on a former occasion, and that they now represent it in their expressed desire of peace. If he meant this in the full sense of his expressions, it is another proof that jacobinism is not yet overthrown; for it is one of its most favourite principles, that the few who compose the sect represent the opinion of the many. I recollect an expression of an honourable gentleman,[1] who now seldom favours us with his presence, when speaking of himself and his friends, "the few who express the voice of the people," which is nearly the same with the language of the honourable gentleman this night. But I must require a little more evidence than either of them ever produced, to prove that they speak, or ever have spoken, the voice of the country. On the occasion alluded to, when government thought it expedient to make an attempt at negociation, I deny that the voice of the majority of the country was for peace: but many entertained a hope that there was some chance of security in negociation, and wished the attempt to be made. Government coincided with them in opinion; but very few now regret, from what has since occurred in France, and from every part of her conduct, that the attempt did fail; and I am confident, that the majority of the country is not now represented by those gentlemen who are eager for negociation and who wish for peace without security and without stability. I am no enemy to peace; but I must think that the danger of patching up a peace without any probable ground of permanency, is greater even than that of carrying on a war. With respect to the negociation at Lisle, I believed at that moment that the prosecution of the war was fraught with more danger to the country than the establishment of peace, if peace could have been concluded on such terms as were then proposed to the enemy. It was the result of a comparison between the farther prosecution of the war, and the then existing state of the country; a state different from that in which, I am happy to say, the country finds itself at this moment. I am free, Sir, to say, that the prevalence of Jacobinical principles in France do not at present allow me to hope for a secure peace. As I declared upon a former occasion, without that attempt to obtain peace, we could not have made those subsequent exertions which have proved so successful. But because of our present increased means for carrying on war, I ask the

[1] **Mr. Fox.**

honourable gentleman, is it fair in him to argue that I was insincere in labouring for peace at a time, when the circumstances of the country dictated the expedience of attempting it?

We are told, however, that our policy ought to be changed, as the Russians are no longer to co-operate with Austria. But may not the Russians be employed with advantage in the common cause, though they no longer act immediately in conjunction with the Austrians? It is not for me to point out the particular way in which their force may be directed in conjunction with the moveable maritime force which this country possesses. I need not say how, while the frontiers of France are invested by a powerful military force, the Russians may co-operate in supporting those insurrections which actually prevail, and which threaten to break out in every part of France. May not these efforts produce a great and valuable diversion for the Russians? This is sufficient to show that their co-operation may still be extremely valuable. To say more would be no less improper than unnecessary.

If, however, the Russians are not to assist the cause by their efforts upon the continental frontier of France, does it not become the policy of England, does it not consist with the wisdom of parliament, to employ every means to supply the loss which their departure will occasion? The measure in question aims at that object. It aims at procuring such reinforcements to the military exertions of our allies as promise a vigorous and successful campaign. Upon a comparison, indeed, of the forces of France, with those which our allies will be enabled to bring against her, we will find that the latter are greatly superior. I cannot absolutely pledge myself that the forces of France shall not be increased in such a manner as to equal, if not outnumber those of the allies, but on every ground of conjecture the allies will maintain that superiority which they possessed last campaign. The measure in question is intended to secure that effectual co-operation, those military exertions which promise success; and if the propriety of persevering in the contest be admitted, as it has been, by the house, I cannot conceive what argument can be used against that which seems so necessary to its favourable issue.

An honourable gentleman[1] stated with a gravity which seemed to testify his sincerity in what he advanced, that twelve millions will be necessary to procure that supply of grain which this country requires. I trust that it will appear in the con-

1 Mr. Nicholls.

sideration of the report of the corn committee, that there has already been a very considerable supply of corn obtained, and that there is not so much to be apprehended on the score of scarcity as some suppose. But, besides that, the honourable gentleman exaggerates the supply that will be required, he infers that we shall not be able to find pecuniary resources both for the war and to obviate the danger of scarcity. Doubtless, however, there is no difficulty in supplying both demands. No man who thinks the war right and politic will suppose that we ought to withhold those supplies which are necessary to support the contest with vigour, and bring it to a successful termination, because there happens to exist a scarcity which has no connexion with the war, and which the prosecution of it can in no way affect. The fallacy of ascribing that scarcity to the war is no less unfounded in reasoning than it is mischievous in its consequences.

It is for the house, then, to decide whether, in supporting this measure, we have judged on good grounds. If any man thinks he sees the means of bringing the contest to an earlier termination than by vigorous effort and military operations, he is justified in opposing the measures which are necessary to carry it on with energy. Those who consider the war to be expedient, cannot, with consistency, refuse their assent to measures calculated to bring it to a successful issue. Even those who may disapprove of the contest, which they cannot prevent by their votes, cannot honestly pursue that conduct which could tend only to render its termination favourable to the enemy. God forbid I should question the freedom of thought, or the liberty of speech ! but I cannot see how gentlemen can justify a language and a conduct which can have no tendency but to disarm our exertions, and to defeat our hopes in the prosecution of the contest. They ought to limit themselves to those arguments which could influence the house against the war altogether, not dwell upon topics which can tend only to weaken our efforts and betray our cause. Above all, nothing can be more unfair in reasoning, than to ally the present scarcity with the war, or to insinuate that its prosecution will interfere with those supplies which we may require. I am the more induced to testify thus publicly the disapprobation which such language exacts in my mind, when I observe the insidious use that is made of it, in promoting certain measures out of doors; a language, indeed, contrary to all honest principle, and repugnant to every sentiment of public duty.

THE CRISIS AFTER MARENGO

June 27, [1] 800.[1]

SIR, having attentively listened to the observations made by the honourable gentleman, and considered the nature of his motion, I think myself warranted in maintaining that the whole of his argument applies to one or two propositions. His chief object is calculated to lead to an immediate peace with the French republic, or to induce the house to address his Majesty no longer to place his confidence in his present ministers. As far as the call of the house goes, I would leave it to others rather than take a part in the mere propriety of the measure; and I shall content myself with observing, that the call must in every possible view prove useless. It is evidently unnecessary, because if the question be admitted to possess strong claims to attention, its importance will operate as powerfully as any call of the house in producing the desired attendance. Were the house to acquiesce in the motion of the honourable gentleman, its compliance would produce many serious inconveniences. But, returning to the speech of the honourable gentleman, I cannot but remark, that if I were to argue on the reasons which he had stated, I should not trouble the house at any length ; nor indeed am I inclined to say much, as most of his arguments are founded upon the recent news[2] to which he has thought proper to allude, and which he undertakes to inform us is rendered so certain and authentic that it should, in his opinion, cause a complete change in the sentiments entertained and recognized by gentlemen during the whole of the session. I know not what to think of the honourable gentleman's idea of authenticity; but to draw any conclusion from the statements of the enemy alone, will scarcely convey to an unprejudiced mind a correct notion of authenticity. However authentic and official the articles of intelligence in question may be, though they do not even go so far as to be supported by the credit of the French papers—

[1] On a motion by Sheridan, **for a Call of the House on that day fortnight, Pitt rose and** replied.
[2] The defeat of **the** Austrians at Marengo.

for I certainly have not seen them there—yet to draw a conclusion from such authorities without any farther inquiry, upon a subject in which all Europe is implicated, and in the prosecution of which our exertions have been so honourable to ourselves, would be to decide without the common grounds necessary to form an opinion. On the imperfect and partial information of the enemy, the British house of commons is called upon to interpose its advice with the executive government; it is called upon to exercise a power which it should never exercise without the most mature deliberation, and in cases of urgent necessity, for it is an extraordinary power;— it is called upon to concur in an address to his Majesty, without investigation, without a fair comparison of facts; and all this strange and unaccountable interference, so eagerly pressed by the honourable gentleman, is made to rest upon the authority of French papers. It appears, that to propose this conduct to the house is to propose, that, without knowing the extent of the advantages gained by the enemy; without ascertaining the sum of the losses sustained by our ally; without consulting that ally with respect to the vigour of his present situation, and the magnitude of his future resources, whatever calamitous reverses he may have recently experienced, we should at once come to a decision, sudden and unexpected, where cool reflection and serious inquiry are most necessary. I trust, Sir, the house will never condescend to adopt a conduct so degrading, so imprudent, and so destructive of the dignified and exalted character which it has supported throughout the present arduous contest. We have escaped from dangers tenfold greater; we have surmounted obstacles much more difficult; we have extricated ourselves from perils more imminent and dreadful, than those upon which the motion is founded. We have triumphed in a crisis more alarming than the present; we have succeeded in rescuing our country from the ruin with which it was threatened, and afforded every chance of protection to Europe. When therefore we consider what we have done in times more pregnant with danger, shall we hesitate to declare that we will not, we cannot, shake the great and solid reputation we have acquired from our past exertions, by agreeing to a motion resting upon such feeble grounds? I believe the house will not hesitate to reject any measure of a similar tendency, and I am inclined to think that the honourable gentleman's friends near him would join in the opposition.

The honourable gentleman has told us, that all our exertions have failed, and he has enumerated, according to his own estimate, all those arguments which he supposes to have influenced us; but he has omitted the principal argument, and the very qualification upon which we all along stated the question of war. We did not rely upon the strength of Russia,—the services of Bavaria,—the sincerity of the Emperor of Germany, and the increase of his forces; nor did we depend, as has been so often urged by the honourable gentleman, upon the exhausted state and misery of the French finances; but we stated generally and clearly—" Is the situation of affairs such as to induce you to prefer peace to the continuance of war ? " We stated this to the country at large—we exhibited a fair balance of the advantages and disadvantages of both, and drew our conclusion in conformity to statements which were undeniable. That there is a serious change in military affairs, it would be idle to deny; but does it follow from any recent vicissitude that what we concluded formerly was not right then ? Did government promise, when it agreed upon facts and probabilities, that the Austrian army should be always victorious? Did it enter into a solemn engagement that no unexpected calamities should occur? Did it undertake to pledge itself that the talents of the Imperial commanders should be equal to every exigency? To terms of such a nature it never gave acquiescence; it never could have consented. But did we not expressly say, that if the worst instead of the best consequences were to happen, we should not therefore be dejected, but be prepared for the worst event, and exert our courage, talents, and resources, in proportion to the danger with which we might be threatened ? I must also observe, if it were even advisable, under all the circumstances, to negociate at the present moment, that I should consider the honourable gentleman's motion at least premature. It would, indeed, be inconsistent with every principle of prudence recognized in the system of human action to decide, without comparing the intelligence of the enemy with the advices of our ally, and to give complete credit to the information that came from a hostile source. To call upon the house to adopt a conduct of that kind, is to require it to do an act of imprudence, of which no person in the common affairs of life would be guilty. If the accounts respecting the successes of the enemy were actually correct and authentic in all their particulars—though upon that head I have my doubts, since it

appears from what has reached me that the contest has been more severe than generally represented; yet I must say, we should even in that case act more in favour of the enemy's views than in support of our own interest by agreeing to the motion. But it may be asked, do we know the resources and the determination of our allies? Are we to conclude, that though a convention may have been settled in one part of the theatre of war, our allies are not to prove victorious in any other part? Is the fortune of war fixed and riveted on the side of the triumphant enemy? Are we to come to a decision without gaining the necessary information from our allies with respect to their strength, their hopes, and their final resolution? But, still admitting our full acquiescence in these statements, I must further demand, should we agree to enter into a negociation in this place? I believe no gentleman in the house will answer in the affirmative. It would be to negociate without knowing the wishes and the views of the enemy; it would lead to a separation of interest between ourselves and our allies; it would transfer every advantage to France, and deprive us of the favourable means of terminating the negociation with honour and profit to our country. I cannot believe that a British house of commons will be induced to come to the vote which the honourable gentleman proposes. I cannot believe that we have so soon forgotten what we have been, and what we have done, from the commencement of the contest to the present moment; how we opposed jacobin principles with success, and saved our country from the depredations of jacobin arms, and how alone we triumphed over the insidious arts and open violence of the common enemy. Let us then preserve that character which constitutes the pride and glory of Englishmen—the character of meeting every vicissitude with courage, magnanimity, and perseverance: and let us look with unshaken confidence to the issue!—Upon these grounds, Sir, I feel myself justified in giving my most decisive negative to the motion.

PEACE OR WAR?

*November 11*1800.[1]

WHATEVER variety of opinion may occur in the progress of the discussion of those points to which the speech from the throne, and the address to his Majesty, direct the attention of parliament, I flatter myself, that when the real question for the decision of the house is fairly explained, all differences must cease, and all topics of division be suspended. Believing it to be equally the object of every man present to promote, to the utmost of his power, and to the best of his judgment, the alleviation of that distress under which the community labours, I cannot suppose that gentlemen will find any ground of dissension in an address, the chief purport of which is merely to

[1] Debate on the Address in answer to his Majesty's most gracious Speech on opening the session.

" *My Lords and Gentlamen,*

" My lender concern for the welfare of my subjects, and the sense of the difficulties with which the poorer classes particularly have to struggle, from the present high price of provisions, have induced me to call you together at an -arlier period than I had otherwise intended. No object can be nearer my heart, than that, by your care and wisdom, all such measures may be adopted, as may, upon full consideration, appear best calculated to alleviate this severe pressure, and to prevent the danger of its recurrence, by promoting, as far as possible, the permanent extension and improvement of our agriculture.

" For the object of immediate relief, your attention will naturally be directed, in the first instance, to the best mode of affotding the earliest and the most ample encouragement for the importation of all descriptions of grain from abroad. Such a supply, aided by the examples which you have set on former occasions, of attention to economy and frugality in the consumption of corn, is most likely to contribute to a reduction in the present high price, and to ensure, at the same time, the means of meeting the demands For the necessary consumption of the year.

"The present circumstances will also, I am persuaded, render the state of the laws respecting the commerce in the various articles of provision, the object of your serious deliberation. If, on the result of that deliberation, it shall appear to you that the evil necessarily arising from unfavourable seasons has been increased by any undue combinations or fraudulent practices, for the sake of adding unfairly to the price, you will feel an earnest desire of effectually preventing such abuses ; but you will, 1 am sure, be careful to distinguish any practices of this nature from that regular and long established course of trade which experience has shewn to be indispensable, in the present state of society, for the supply of the markets, and for the subsistence of my people.

" You will have seen with concern the temporary disturbances which have taken place in some parts of the kingdom Those malicious and disaffected persons who cruelly take advantage of the present difficulties to excite any of my subjects to acts in violation of the laws and of the public peace, are, in the present circumstances, doubly criminal, as such proceedings must necessarily and immediately tend to increase, in the highest degree, the evil complained of; while they, at the same time, endanger the permanent tranquillity of the country, on which the well being of the industrious classes of the community must always principally depend.

" The voluntary exertions which have on this occasion been made for the immediate repression " these outrages, and in support of the laws and public peace, are therefore entitled to my highest praise.

" *Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

" Under the circumstances of the present meeting, I am desirous of asking of you such supplies only as may be necessary for carrying on the public service, till the parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland may conveniently be assembled.

"The estimates for that purpose will be laid before you ; and I have no doubt of your readiness to make such provision as the public interests may appear to require.

thank his Majesty for the opportunity which he has given to parliament, of entering upon the consideration of the subject.

The speech, and the address founded upon it, comprehend two great leading topics. They state, and propose for the deliberation of parliament, the difficulties under which the public now labour from a succession of unfavourable seasons. They naturally point to an investigation of the causes of the calamity, and the remedies of which it is susceptible; and in allusion to the recent communications which have taken place with the enemy, they bring under review, in regular progress, the important question of peace or war. These, however, are questions which are rather to be entered for future deliberation, than brought forward for specific opinion and immediate resolve.

Upon the first of these objects, what does the speech recommend as necessary? What does the address desire the house to do? In both, a strong and anxious feeling is expressed for the miseries of the various classes who suffer by the high price of provisions, and the remedy proposed is an early, expeditious, and effectual mode of obtaining supply by importation, aided by a narrowed and economical application of the resources which our own means afford. Whatever difference of sentiment may exist respecting the causes of the evil; whatever views may be entertained respecting the most effectual remedies, all, I am persuaded, must feel how delicate the subject is, how difficult the discussion, how careful the legislature must be in the adoption of specific measures of remedial policy. But, aware of these circumstances, all must at the same time be sensible that two modes of relief, simple, practical, safe, and effectual, are placed within our reach. The first of these is

" *My Lords and Gentlemen,*

" I have directed copies to be laid before you, of those communications which have recently passed between me and the French government respecting the commencement of negociations for peace. You will see in them fresh and striking proofs of my earnest desire to contribute to the re-estabhshment of general tranquillity. That desire, on my part, has hitherto been unhappily frustated by the determination of the enemy to enter only on a separate negotiation, in which it was impossible for me to engage, consistently either with public faith, or with a due regard to the permanent security of Europe. My anxiety for the speedy restoration of peace remains unaltered; and there will be no obstacle o delay on my part, to the adoption of such measures as may best tend to promote and accelerate that desirable end. consistently with the honour of this country, and the true interests of my people; but if the disposition of our enemies should continue to render this great object of all my wishes unattainable, without the sacrifice of these essential considerations, on the maintenance of which all its advantages must depend, vou will, I am confident, persevere in affording me the same loyal and steady support which I have experienced through the whole of this important contest, and which has, under the blessing of Providence, enabled me, during a period of such unexampled difficulty and calamity to all the surrounding nations, to maintain unimpaired the security and honour of these kingdoms."

importation from abroad. Experience has sufficiently proved the efficacy of this resource. We know, by the most authentic documents, that the importation last year exceeded any thing that had ever taken place within the same space of time. The importance and necessity of this expedient must at once be recognized. We have likewise the satisfaction of knowing that we possess the means of rendering this aid effectual. Great as the last year's importation was, it is in our power to render that of the present more extensive. This is to be done by the use of bounties, on the principle acted upon last year, by which provision was effectually made that the expense of the bounty should never be imposed on the country, but when the necessity for it existed, and when the advantage of it was ascertained. That principle will be again applied, with the benefit of former experience. The assistance derived from it will be increased in proportion to the more favourable harvest in foreign countries : it is consolatory to know, that, on the continent of Europe, as well as in America, the crops have been productive; and no doubt can be entertained, that the wealth of this country must command a supply that cannot fail to relieve the difficulties under which we labour.

As to the other object, the diminution of consumption, and the employment of substitutes, the unfortunate experience we have had of the efficacy of these expedients enables us to call them into action with new advantage and effect. In 1795 and the course of last ye relief from the examples of economy which were set, and it will be our business now to practise upon the knowledge we have acquired. We shall now be able, upon an enlarged observation, to render substitutes available, to turn every thing to profit.

Thus much I have said upon the nature of the remedies pointed out in the speech and address, to show that in their nature they cannot produce any difference of opinion. They must be admitted by all to be salutary and indispensable. I hope too, that what I have urged will be considered as a full justification for proceeding with all possible expedition to give effect to them. I trust that it will be considered as a ground sufficient for me to propose, that, even before we separate, the house should resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to ascertain and vote the amount of the bounties which it will be proper to grant. It must be felt, that no measure presses so much as this; nothing can be more important than immediately to animate and to fix the exertions of the importer, by

specifying the allowance to which he will be entitled. The second object is one which requires no more delay in the adoption; but it is less a matter for legislative arrangement, though in that way, something may be done by regulation. From example it is most likely, however, to obtain its full operation. Upon the consideration of these simple and easy remedies, every man must see, that whether the harvest has been deficient in a greater or less degree, more will be done to afford effectual relief to the community than any doubtful experiment of regulation to reduce the price of commodities, and to obtain the supply of the market with all the effect which the most confident might ascribe to it, could ever produce.

I trust, therefore, that I have completely shewn the necessity of the measures recommended in the speech, and the propriety of adopting them without delay. Our agreeing to these preliminary steps by no means precludes farther inquiry, or more deliberate determination. But at present no procrastination, no inquiry can be necessary to authorise the expedients which are proposed. Let investigation, however, be pursued—let remedies be suggested; the house will hear with impartiality, and decide upon conviction. I do not hesitate at the same time to declare, that, to go beyond the remedy which is plain, practical, sanctioned by the soundest principles, and confirmed by the surest experience, must ever be a dangerous course :— it is unsafe in the attempt, it is unworthy of a statesman in the design, to abandon the system which practice has explained and experience has confirmed, for the visionary advantages of a crude, untried theory. It is no less unsafe, no less unworthy of the active politician, to adhere to any theory, however just in its general principle, which excludes from its view those particular details, those unexpected situations, which must render the scheme of the philosophic politician in the closet inapplicable to the actual circumstances of human affairs. But, if it be unwise to be guided solely by speculative systems of political economy, surely it is something worse to draw theories of regulation from clamour and alarm. If we ought not to bend observation and experience to any theory, surely we ought much less to make just principles and tried courses yield to wild projects, struck out from temporary distress, the offspring, not of argument, but of fear; not of inquiry, but of passion; not of cool reflection, but of inflamed prejudice. No man, therefore, who duly considered the causes from which the prosperity of the country had arisen, who well understood the

foundation on which it stood, could think for a moment that, to redress any supposed mischief which, in times of peculiar scarcity and distress, monopoly might be supposed to have occasioned, it would be right to strike at the freedom of trade, and the application of industry and capital. To do so, would be to bring us back to something worse than the system that prevailed five hundred years ago; inasmuch as the state of the country, the distribution of property, and the employments of industry, were so infinitely different from what obtained at the period when that system prevailed. Indeed nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that such a scheme, even though suited to the æra from which it is derived, could be applicable to the new interests and demands of another state of society.

But the system recommended by his Majesty is equally removed from these opposite extremes. It is that which true wisdom and enlarged policy alone will recognize; it is that alone, I am convinced, which the house will pursue in the application of the remedies which the case may require. Parliament will inquire, it will collect facts, it will seek information, it will examine evidence; and if an abuse is proved to exist, the remedy will be canvassed upon its own merits.

It is not my wish, in this stage of the business, to state any opinions which I may have already conceived upon the subject. In proceeding to the minute investigation of the subject, however, it is not amiss to point out the errors on both sides, from which remedial policy ought to be exempt. There are some sorts of remedies which it is right to shew can in no case be employed, as there may be abuses which it will be the desire of parliament to correct by every means in its power to employ. All, however, that the present question requires, is to express our readiness to concur in the measures necessary to promote importation and economy. For this purpose no time for deliberation can be requisite; we must already be prepared on these points with a clear opinion, and ready to pledge ourselves to give them the utmost effect.

On the causes by which the present high price is occasioned, there are, no doubt, many opinions; both the extent of the evils and the remedy have been disputed. The question is embarrassed by many prejudices. Some, whose motives are unquestionable, and the humanity of whose views is conspicuous, may have been led to give encouragement to the errors, and a sanction to the clamours which have prevailed on the subject. Others, whose motives are more doubtful, have endeavoured to

combine two distinct grounds of prejudice, and to connect the scarcity with the war. Thus upon two subjects, each in itself liable to much misconception, and in its nature demanding a cool examination, violent clamour has been raised ; I trust, however, that there are but few who think it wise or useful to connect the discussion of these two topics. The causes of the scarcity, and the policy and necessity of the war, present distinct subjects of consideration ; and none will blend the discussion of the latter with the former, who wish only to communicate information, and to suggest remedies.

An honourable Baronet,[1] and an honourable gentleman [2] near him have, indeed, attempted to connect the argument: but, with all deference to their talents, I confess I should, before advancing any thing in reply, wish to hear what more weighty arguments might be urged in support of the same side. It appears to me, that, on a general view, no man can contend that the war has any material tendency to increase an evil which can be traced to other causes. But, I perceive from the gestures of gentlemen opposite, that the doctrine, of which I had given the credit to the honourable baronet and the honourable gentleman who spoke last, is more generally entertained. On this point, then, we shall have an opportunity of a more detailed discussion on a future day. I must think, however, that it is not too much to expect from the candour, from the good sense, from the prudence of gentlemen on the other side, that the consideration of the high price of provisions should be guided only by views of public benefit; that no matter should be introduced into it for the purpose of collateral effect; for the purpose of creating undue feeling and unfounded clamours. By this candour I shall endeavour to guide my own conduct, and I shall be sorry to remark any deviation from it in others.

But, since this question has been started, I beg leave to hint a few general observations, which seem completely to overthrow the argument of those (if there be any) who seriously impute the dearness of provisions to the war. In a more detailed discussion I shall be ready to examine separately the effect of every tax which has been imposed since the year 1793 ; to state the utmost effect which it could be supposed to have produced directly or indirectly on the price of grain; and to prove that these taxes could form, even on the most exaggerated computation, a very inconsiderable part of the increased price of provisions. To shew that the war has not any general effect to

[1] **Sir Francis Burdett.** [2] **Mr. Robson.**

raise the price of grain, consider only the price of grain at different periods of the present war, though the argument would be strengthened by a review of former wars. Three or four years have been years of comparative high price. In the years 1794 and 1795 the Price was high: but in the interval of nearly three years that succeeded, that is from about Michaelmas 1796 to Midsummer 1799, the price sunk perhaps too low for the fair profit of the farmer. The general price then in England (to which I confine my remarks) was from 48s. to 49s. a quarter. From Michaelmas 1798 to Lady-day 1799 it was not above *48s.* How then, if the war were the cause of the dearness, did it happen that the effect, which on the hypothesis should have been increasing, was suspended during an interval of nearly three years; and when likewise, during these years, some of the taxes to which the effect is chiefly ascribed had been imposed ? Previous to the last-mentioned period (one of great cheapness), the triple assessment had existed a twelvemonth, and must have produced its full effect. This plain fact is alone worth a thousand inferences deduced by circuitous reasonings. I know not whether this fact will be an answer to the arguments that I have not yet heard, but I think it is at least a sufficient answer to those of the honourable baronet. In matters of this kind, it is the shortest way to employ such plain and familiar reasoning; and though it may not always be a safe and solid mode of argument to presume against the validity of an objection, I am persuaded that arguments like that which I have mentioned will often be found to answer by anticipation the statements by which they are opposed. I shall not enter into any comparative statement of the prices in former wars, nor insist on the ingenious arguments that have been adduced to shew that war is favourable to lowness of price. It is deserving of remark, however, that this country, which from the period of the revolution, for a great part of the present century, had been used to export great quantities of grain, ceased to export and began to import in the middle of that peace which succeeded the most successful war in which this country ever was engaged. Thus it is clear, from a deduction of facts, that war of itself has no evident and necessary connection with the dearness of provisions, and that there can be no reason for at all combining the question of scarcity with the distinct inquiry respecting the policy of the war.

There may, indeed, arise much difference on particular facts, on points of inference, and the nature of legislative operation;

but there are leading principles that must be common to all who enter upon the discussion with candid and liberal sentiments. In the consideration of the present calamity we ought, as men of humanity, to look at it with the deepest feelings of compassion for the distress of our fellow-creatures ; as public men, with a profound sense of the importance of watching over the welfare of the industrious classes of the community; as men of prudence, who are bound to provide for their interests, and who will not stoop to flatter their errors, we ought to consider it as a malady affecting the state; but one in a delicate spot, not to be incautiously touched—not to be treated with new and violent remedies:—to follow untried theories must be peculiarly fatal in a matter of so much nicety, and wherein errors must be of the most malignant and extensive mischief. In the prosecution of the inquiry, we ought to be open to information; indefatigable to examine, but careful to weigh, and cautious to proceed when the speculation of corrective regulation would lead to overthrow the good that we have proved, for projects not even recommended by plausibility.

As to the extent of the deficiency of the late harvest, it would be no less rash than unnecessary to give any opinion. For the practical remedies proposed, a knowledge of the precise deficit is not required. This, however, we know, that, notwithstanding the clamour about monopoly previous to the harvest, it is now universally admitted that the old stock was very nearly exhausted. An early harvest, therefore, found us with less stock than usual; of course that stock, unless aided by importation from abroad and economy of our own resources, must be applicable to the consumption of a shorter period of time than usual. Having already mentioned substitutes, and remarked that experience had rendered us more familiar with their utility and the mode of their application, I shall just mention how they may be rendered more effectual on the present occasion. We know that last year the corps failed almost generally in all articles of provision. This year, though wheat is short, several other kinds (particularly barley) are plentiful both at home and abroad. By the due application of the resources of economy and of substitutes, joined to importation, I am satisfied that the supply of the year will be made to answer the consumption. I do not wish to under-rate the difficulties of our situation; but this I will assert, that, if we employ proper precaution, and exercise becoming firmness, we have in our own power the remedy for the distress under which the country labours. I do

not imagine, indeed, that any extraordinary and rapid diminution of price is to be expected; but if we abstain from all rash experiment in the established course of trade, there is the best reason to think that there will be a considerable reduction of price, a reduction gradual and permanent, one that will alleviate the distress of the poor, without risking that increase of consumption which ought so much in the present circumstances to be avoided. Besides the actual deficiency this year, the late high prices might be accounted for on reflecting that the stock of last year was exhausted, that the farmer must have been unable both to provide for the demands of the market, and to prepare for the supplies of seed which a more favourable season had required.

This of itself is sufficient to explain the high price for several weeks, without supposing any great deficiency of crop, or any improper arts to keep back grain and to starve the market. It certainly was an unfortunate error to ascribe the prices too much either to the deficiency on the one hand, or to monopoly on the other. In the one case it gave a sanction to high price, and in the other to unfounded popular clamour. The past prices, however, I am fully convinced, ought not to be taken as a proof and index of what future prices may be. If the order of things by which the market had so long been regularly supplied be not disturbed by impolitic interference; if we are prudent to encourage importation, and firm to oppose all useless waste, there must in the course of the year be a gradual abatement of price. In fact, as soon as the effect of importation and economy begin to be felt, no regulation will be necessary to supply the market and to reduce the price. The most prejudiced will see, that the surest remedy for monopoly, if it has existed (and 1 do not believe it has existed to any considerable extent), is to increase the quantity and to diminish the consumption, to which highness of price must essentially contribute. If corn has been kept up, it will be sufficient to bring it out, to show both to the grower and consumer that we have the means of rendering the supply of the whole year adequate to the demand. A proper diminution of price will then ensue: for no man who truly estimates the difficulty of our real situation, and the means by which alone it can be relieved, would desire that in a time of scarcity the price should experience a temporary depression to what it would be in a time of plenty. This would be to remove the necessary and most effectual corrective of scarcity.

I trust, therefore, that one of our first measures will be, to go into a committee of the whole house, to fix the quantum of bounty to be allowed on importation. I should next propose, that a select committee be appointed to investigate the subject of the scarcity, and to this committee will be referred that part of the king's speech which refers to this point. I should propose likewise, that the committee shall from time to time recommend such measures as seem on the result of its inquiry fit to be adopted. I do not wish to anticipate any of their measures; but one suggests itself, which may be of great benefit as a regulation, particularly if sanctioned by example. This would be, to direct that all parochial relief, instead of being given in money, or wheaten bread, shall be given in bread partly made up of some wholesome substitutes. I believe that this practice has already made its way in some parts, and it appears to me that its extension would be attended with the most beneficial effects.

Thus much I have thought it necessary to state on the two leading points respecting the scarcity. On the question of peace or war, I shall only observe, that, as the papers on which the merits of the case must be decided are not yet before the house, it would be premature to enter at large into the discussion. There certainly is nothing in the address which pledges any opinion of the house on that point: this pledge it gives indeed, which no man I hope will shrink from, that if peace cannot be concluded on terms consistent with public faith, with the national honour and interests, we shall continue to support his Majesty with that firmness, decision, and energy which this house has uniformly displayed. I cannot anticipate any difference of opinion on this head. The speech states what will no doubt appear distinctly from the communications that are about to be laid before parliament, that his Majesty could not negociate without separating his interests from those of his allies; and the importance of those alliances is justified by the desire of the enemy to dissolve them. If, then, the enemy advanced a pretension so unheard of, as that his Majesty, as the price of connection with them, should break his faith to those allies with whom he was connected; if, as the price of being united in amity with his Majesty, France wished to put an end to the union which subsisted between him and his allies, surely I ought not to presume that in such a preliminary to a negociation, any member of this house **will**

find conditions, which prove the sincerity of those who pretend to be the friends of general tranquillity, or conditions to which his Majesty could have acceded. I trust, therefore, that as unanimity is desirable on every occasion, the house will without delay, and with a concurrence approaching to unanimity, proceed to declare its readiness to adopt such measures as alone are calculated to afford relief to the community. This is the only way to prove a sincere and enlightened regard to the interests and well-being of the poor. By shewing a real and substantial regard to their happiness, we shall guard against the consequences of the false and dangerous expectations with which, by factious persons, they have been deluded on the subject of the remedies of which their sufferings admit. Parliament cannot by any charm convert scarcity into plenty; but it is something to shew that no time is lost in adopting every practicable means of alleviating the present distress, and ensuring the regular subsistence of the people. In the further discussion let us proceed with caution, and examine with impartiality. Let us act with proper temper, firmness and sobriety, that we may be able to discover where the cause of the evil really rests, and apply the remedy which will be truly serviceable.

The house, after negativing an amendment proposed by Mr. Grey, agreed to the address without a division.

ON THE STATE OF THE NATION

November 27, 1800.

ON a motion by Mr. Tierney for the house to resolve itself into a committee, to inquire into the State of the Nation,

Mr. Pitt spoke to the following effect:

Sir,—The honourable gentleman[1] in the speech which he has just concluded, has gone over a most extensive range of argument, and indeed has extended the topics of discussion beyond the notice which he first gave of his intention. It seemed to be his original view to confine the object of the inquiry he proposed to move, to points connected with the high price of provisions. He talked of moving to have the governor of the bank examined respecting the influence which the operations of the bank and of paper circulation might have produced upon price; but he has now abandoned these

1 Mr. Tierney.

restrictive views; he has not mentioned a word of the examination of the governor of the bank, and has thought it better to move for a committee of the whole house on the state of the nation, as best fitted to investigate that infinite variety of subjects which he has dwelt upon as the grounds of inquiry. It is natural, therefore, that the honourable gentleman's topics should be numerous. The question of peace and war; the operations of our military force; the conduct of those by whom they are planned or executed; our alliances; our financial situation; the state of our constitutional rights, though introduced by the honourable gentleman in a paranthesis; our internal circumstances, with which the dearness of provisions and its remedies are all connected, thus form the natural topics to which a motion, like that which has been made, must be directed.

The honourable gentleman has said what is true, undoubtedly, of every important occasion in which this house is called upon to deliberate, that the eyes of the country are upon us. The eyes of the country indeed are most earnestly fixed upon us. They look with expectation, as they must feel the good or the bad consequences which result from our decisions. The measures in which the house had been occupied during the preceding part of the session have, in the highest degree, engrossed the attention of the public, and their hopes have not been disappointed. They see the attention of parliament directed to the consideration of the difficulties under which the community labours, and employing every practical remedy to alleviate their distress. I am convinced too that the people are well aware that those do most for their cause, and are most sincerely impressed with their sufferings, who confine themselves most closely to the immediate object of relieving the calamities under which they labour. I do not say that the whole situation of the country may not form a fit subject for inquiry in a committee of the whole house, if strong and conclusive grounds for it can be established. But I must contend that a committee on the state of the nation is that which, for the last hundred years, has very rarely been moved, and still more rarely complied with. The instances when it led to any practical advantage, are fewer still. It has indeed been employed in some urgent cases, where the topic of inquiry had a direct influence on the whole frame of the government. Such were the committee on the India bills, and, more recently, during the unfortunate illness of his Majesty, when

che question of the regency was to be determined. At present the only thing to be considered is, whether the circumstances of our situation be such as to demand that general inquiry which the honourable gentleman recommends, or specific investigations directly leading to practical measures.

With respect to the large and complicated question of peace and war, I believe that upon that, as upon every other point of national interest, the eyes of the people are turned upon parliament; but I do believe that at the present period they do not expect that they can form the subject of our decision or of our discussion. I believe, that the general feeling of the house and of the public upon the subject of peace and war is, that the question is no otherwise changed since we were last assembled, than in this respect, that since that period his Majesty has given the strongest and most unequivocal proofs of his sincere desire for peace: he has shewn his willingness to make great sacrifices for the attainment of so desirable an object; and his efforts have been frustrated by the unreasonable and unexampled demands of the enemy, which have prevented the setting on foot such a negociation. Under these circumstances, those who are anxious for the attainment of peace, if they want one consistent with the honour and safety of this country, will feel that the best way of contributing to that object will be to continue to place that confidence in his Majesty's government which they have hitherto done; to strengthen his hands; and to teach our enemies, that the support which has been given to his Majesty will be continued with that firmness and determination which has hitherto been attended with such happy effects. Having stated thus much, I think, upon these general grounds, it rests with the gentlemen on the other side of the house to prove, that when parliament is assembled for a particular purpose, and when, the general state of things seems only to confirm us in the determination, with which we so lately separated, of supporting this contest with steadiness, it rests, I say, with the gentlemen on the other side, to state what are the new grounds upon which they call upon us to inquire. When, Sir, I ask for new grounds, it may perhaps be a little uncandid with respect to the motion itself, because the greater part of the objects which the honourable gentleman has represented as calling for inquiry, are objects with respect to which it is impossible to give new grounds; for the house must have perceived, that most of the events to which he has alluded are such as he has had frequent

opportunities (and the honourable gentleman cannot be accused justly of having neglected many of them) of bringing under the consideration of the house. He has frequently made them the subjects of motions, and stated them as fit cases of inquiry; and the house has as often had opportunities of expressing its opinion on these points. Thus every part of his argument respecting the conduct of the war (except only that part of it which relates to events which have happened since the month of July last) has been over and over again discussed and decided upon. I might, therefore, upon all these topics, unless the honourable gentleman had advanced something new, which he certainly has not, have contented myself with referring to the former decisions of parliament upon them, when the events were still fresh in the memory of every one.

But, Sir, I confess that the mode of recapitulation which the honourable gentleman has employed I cannot allow to pass without animadversion. The honourable gentleman begins with remarking upon a declaration of my right honourable friend,[1] that the present was a war of unexampled success; but he did injustice to the assertion by omitting the limitation with which it was coupled, namely, that it was a war of unexampled success, in relation to the share which Great Britain had taken, and with regard to her peculiar interests. That my right honourable friend's position is strictly just, appears even from the admissions of the honourable gentleman. He allows that that part of our national force, that which he himself and his friends have extolled as the only service on which we should rely for defence, has been glorious and successful beyond any former example. Does not this prove that in regard to the peculiar share of this country in the contest, it has been most successful? Why then, even upon the view of a joint war of various success, and embracing so many objects, does the honourable gentleman choose to keep out of consideration that part of it recognized to be our particular province, and implying an exclusive merit? How can he affirm that the war has been full of disgrace, when our navy, by his own confession, has acquired such unrivalled distinction? This then is the candour with which the honourable gentleman commences a motion for such various and extensive inquiry. But does the honourable gentleman say, that, on the general view which he takes, those naval exertions

[1] Mr. Dundas.

in which he exults have been attended with no advantage to the cause of Europe? Does he think it nothing to have completely destroyed the navy and commerce of our rival? It is nothing to have protected our own trade, to have augmented our own resources, by the spoil of the enemy's possessions? But not to dwell on these clear and undeniable testimonies of separate success and peculiar advantage, will it be said that our allies have derived no advantage from the victories of the British fleets? If our military operations were even to be laid out of view; if we were to forget for a moment that our armies have, on different occasions, given the most important aid to the common cause; that they have never encountered in the field the force of the enemy without reaping their full share of glory; considering the benefits that have resulted from our naval exploits alone, have we had no share in contributing to the defence of Europe? Does the honourable gentleman recollect the achievement of the gallant Lord Nelson, whose merit he so highly extolled? Does he think that, great as was our share of the glory and success of that gallant admiral's exploits, we engrossed them all? Does he think that the fame of the battle at Aboukir did not pervade all Europe? Does he think that it was partial in its effects, or fleeting in its glory? No! The fame of that day spread itself to the remotest corner of the globe. It added a new lustre to the British character, and inspired a new reverence for the British name; which I will not say the honourable gentleman's speeches, but not even the effect of any future calamity, can ever be able to efface. The noble commander deserved the panegyric the honourable gentleman pronounced on him. It was he that gave the direction to the bravery of his companions, and to the force with which he was entrusted, which carried so plentiful a harvest of glory to the country. But it is no derogation from the merit of Lord Nelson, or from the zeal and courage of those who seconded his enterprises, to ask whose exertions made that fleet disposable? Was there no merit in supplying the means by which the battle of Aboukir was fought? The honourable gentleman asked, was not intelligence to be purchased? Might not ministers have ascertained the destination of the fleet that sailed from Toulon? To that species of foresight which determines by the event, there may seem no judgment requisite to weigh and to compare intelligence, and to draw a just conclusion from contradictory or doubtful information. Can it be for-

gotten with what unparalleled secrecy Sir Roger Curtis was detached to the Mediterranean, on pretence of being sent to guard Ireland against threatened invasion; and that he had actually arrived there before his coming was suspected—before it was known in this country that he had gone thither? Does the honourable gentleman think that this vigilance and precaution had no share in producing that achievement to which he pays so just a tribute of admiration? It is impossible. It requires but the short enumeration I have made to draw from the honourable gentleman's admissions a testimony in favour of the vigilance and conduct of administration. Review our operations; let us consider whether they have been of advantage to Europe. Can it be forgotten how often our successes have animated our allies, depressed and discouraged, to new efforts in their own defence? How often have the achievements of our navy enabled our allies to combine new measures of resistance against the common enemy? How often has the greatest separate success been felt, and recognized as a new impulse given to Europe—as new courage and confidence to those nations who had the fortitude to bear up against danger, and to prefer strenuous resistance to dastardly submission? When was it ever known in the history of the world, that the exploits of a nation limited by its insular situation to a certain sphere of operation, have produced such decisive results, and communicated such important advantages to remote and distant allies?

But the honourable gentleman says that the principal advantages we have obtained, in the view that he admits any advantages at all, have been at the expense of nations lately our allies. Are we to be told that the successes we have obtained over the Dutch and Spaniards are not to be viewed as acquisitions, not celebrated as triumphs? Is it nothing to have gained advantages over the vassals of France; over states that pusillanimously gave up their means and their resources to a power which they had not the courage boldly to resist? If the Dutch were forcibly converted into the allies of France, as I think they are, though the honourable gentleman on former occasions found it convenient to view them as willing ones, it might in particular circumstances have been disagreeable to direct against them the destruction of hostile operation. If they had boldly exerted the courage and perseverance of their ancestors in the defence of their independence—if they had demanded in vain the assistance of this country to combine its

efforts with theirs against the enemy of their liberties, and those of Europe—if, as some of the honourable gentleman's friends advised, we had, in defiance of the sacredness of treaties, refused to fulfil our engagements—if we had refused to lend them our troops to fight by their side, as in former times, against these invaders, then might we have been accused of turning against them our arms, when acting in a compulsive hostility, which we had contributed no friendly assistance to avert. But when we saw those resources, which, if manfully drawn forth, would have secured independence, employed to increase the wealth and to support the hostility of France, were we to hesitate to deprive them of that which was to be employed to our annoyance and destruction? If the wealth, the resources, the naval and military resources of the Dutch were identified with those of France, who will deny that it was politic and necessary to prevent the possessions of the Dutch from being converted into instruments of hostility in the hands of their subduers, against a people who had disinterestedly exerted themselves for their protection?

The same course of argument was employed in regard to Spain; we were told by the honourable gentleman that we had rendered Spain, but little inclined to annoy us, an active and important ally of our enemy. Spain, he says, was our friend. Well! Did she not abandon us in defiance of the most solemn engagements? I do not recollect that, in the discussions which the subject of the war has so often produced, a single voice was ever heard in this house to doubt the pusillanimity, the want of faith, the atrocity, which distinguished the treacherous departure of the councils of Madrid from the cause of Europe. Never was there a single voice heard to doubt the justice of our warfare against a state, that basely shrunk from the ties of a generous confederacy to the degradation of a hollow alliance with the foe she detested. If then Spain, like Holland, ingloriously forsook a manly, though a dangerous struggle, and became the humble vassal of France, were we to allow the preponderance of the enemy to draw forth and embody against us all the means of Spain? Were we to see the navy of Spain united to that of France, without an effort to disconcert or to punish that foul association? Can we forget that the only achievement of the French fleet, escaped for a moment from years of blockade, was to sail to Cadiz, and bring off, in triumph, the Spanish fleet, to be retained in Brest, partly as an hostage against

Spain, and as an instrument of hostility against this country? And does the honourable gentleman think it provoking the Spaniards; that it is unmanly, unnecessary hostility, to prevent the remnant of the navy of Spain from being surrendered into the hands of the enemy—no less as a badge of the ruin and submission of that wretched kingdom, than as affording additional means to our rivajs to execute their plans of inveterate acrimony towards the peace and prosperity of the British empire?

The honourable gentleman ran over the catalogue of the colonial possessions we had acquired with a strange air of indifference, as if what he enumerated had been something too vile and worthless to dwell upon. I do not intend merely more than the honourable gentleman to dwell upon these points, though the consideration that it was a review of our triumphs, of the memorials of our glory, might render the survey not unpleasant or unprofitable. Martinique, St. Lucie, Tobago! And does the honourable gentleman really proceed through the enumeration with that sovereign contempt which he professes? I recollect that, in the last peace, in which I had some share, these islands in the West Indies were supposed to have no small importance. The honourable gentleman was not then in parliament, and there is nothing of system or connexion in his opinion to lead me to conjecture what might have been his sentiments on the topics then disputed. But I remember well that some of those gentlemen, whom I have long been accustomed to see opposite to me, and one or two of whom I still perceive, particularly one honourable gentleman,[1] whose accuracy will correct me if I am wrong, contended strenuously for the importance of these islands. St. Lucie alone was represented to be something equal in value to Martinique, which was called the key of the West Indies. I know not, indeed, how their value may now have been sunk; though, in all the circumstances which attended the last peace, the cession of Tobago alone was considered as a shameful abandonment of our national interests. Those who clamoured for that peace were, I confess, sufficiently disposed to object to its provisions after it was concluded. But notwithstanding, however, the situation of the country, and the circumstances under which the American war terminated, all authorities admitted the importance of those islands which the honourable gentleman now holds so cheap.

[1] Mr. Sheridan.

The honourable gentleman mentions Newfoundland as another of our conquests. Newfoundland we could not conquer, because we had not lost it; but we took the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. I need not, I am sure, Sir, inform the house, that the fisheries of Newfoundland have been for a century the constant object of rivalship between France and England: from the peace of Utrecht to the present time, it has formed one of the most important points in every negociation; and one of the strongest objections to the last peace was, that the district reserved for our fisheries was not large enough: and therefore, Sir, I cannot think the catalogue of our conquests quite so trifling and unimportant as the honourable gentleman seems inclined to represent it.

May I venture to ask the honourable gentleman, whether the possession of Minorca is of importance to this country, though in enumerating our acquisitions it almost escaped his notice? The honourable gentleman did not indeed forget the capture of Malta; but he says, we must not mention it as an acquisition, because it did not belong to France at the beginning of the war. The honourable gentleman seems, indeed, to have set down a very extraordinary and whimsical regulation with respect to what we are to call acquisitions. He enlarges upon the injury which this country will sustain from the French being in possession of Egypt; but if it is an injury, surely our possessing Malta must be in our favour, either to facilitate our efforts for driving them out of Egypt, or to render their possession of it less disadvantageous to us. But mark the singularity and *consistency* of the honourable gentleman's argument; we must not take any credit from the conquest of Malta, because the French did not possess it before the war; yet the advantage which the French will derive from the possession of Egypt is strenuously insisted upon, though they were not in possession of it at the commencement of hostilities! But it is said that we have absorbed all the possessions of the Dutch. It is true that we have obtained possession of those places which, however little their intrinsic value to us, may be an object of great importance as the keys of the east. Will it be denied that, if ever the Dutch should again be disposed to renew that alliance with us, which in former times has proved no less beneficial to both countries than to Europe in general, it will be more advantageous for them to have those possessions under the guardianship and keep of Great Britain, than in the hands of France? We know that, in 1787, they would have been

seized as instruments of annoyance to this country: they would now have been employed to the same purpose. We were bound by self-defence to anticipate the enemy's designs—we were bound to prevent the wealth and resources of the Dutch, the means of feeding their riches, from being transferred to the enemy by whom they were oppressed.

Reviewing then the circumstances and success of this war, with the events of former wars, even those to which the public may look with particular triumph, or individuals with a fond partiality, I cannot think that the present yields, in the importance of its success, to the most brilliant period of our history. I shall not compare it minutely with the glory of the Duke of Marlborough's war, nor with the glorious successes of the seven years war. Its advantages have been as extensive, as solid, and as important as any that ever were purchased by our armies. There is one point which I have omitted, and which the honourable gentleman nearly forgot altogether, and that is, the glorious success which has attended our arms in India, under the direction of a noble friend of mine;[1] successes which have increased and consolidated our empire in that quarter of the world. The honourable gentleman wishes to compare what has been done lately in India with former achievements there: it is impossible to make the comparison. The noble Marquis has performed everything that could be done in the present moment. Will the honourable gentleman not admit, that the destruction of the power of Tippoo Saib was an event of the greatest and most important advantage to this country? Our conquests from Holland and Spain, are to be laid out of the question, because they were our friends: but was Tippoo our friend? Was he forced by France into the war against us? Was he not in India, what France is in Europe, the inveterate enemy of the happiness, the power, and the independence of Great Britain? Was he not in alliance with France? Did he not act in concert with her in the Egyptian expedition, the importance of which he extols so much?—Away then with such sophistries! they cannot have the slightest effect upon any man who has been a witness to the events which have happened since the commencement of the war.

I have now, Sir, stated my view of the general subject of the war. But there is another point of view in which we must consider it, and in which it must make a deep impression

1 Marquis Wellesley.

upon us; we are not merely to consider what we have taken from France, but what we have preserved. The honourable gentleman says, we entered into the war to curb the power of France. Sir, there is no end to the various definitions which those gentlemen give of the object of the war: but we know why we entered into it; we entered into the war because the French would not let us be at peace. We entered into the war because the French would not let us remain in tranquillity, unless we consented to sacrifice the independence of Europe, and the happiness, the safety, and the honour of this country. In *the* course of the contest, we have had to contend with great difficulties foreign to the war. One of these difficulties was such an one as we now experience, I mean that of scarcity : we had the misfortune four times in the present war to experience unfavourable seasons. We have had, besides, to contend with convulsions in the mercantile part of the public. This subject was discussed at the time when it happened, and it was then found not to have been in any material degree caused by the war. We have had, I admit, to contend against reverses and disasters; and I will venture to say, that those who lamented over them because they disappointed their hopes and wishes for the success of their country, and those who lamented over them for the purpose of depressing the public spirit, were equally unprepared for, and little expected, that extraordinary and unfortunate turn which the affairs of our allies took at the opening of the present campaign. But having to contend with all these events, we have had besides, and I am sorry I am obliged to admit it, to contend with an undue performance of stipulations by some of our allies; with a dereliction of their engagement by others; with a complete violation of the most solemn treaties by others (as in the case of Spain); and with an unaccountable and unforeseen change of conduct in others, from whose exertions, however, in some periods of the war, we have derived the greatest advantage—I allude, now, Sir, to the conduct of the court of Petersburgh. We have had, Sir, all these things to contend with; but can they, with any justice, be attributed as crimes to this country? And is it nothing that, in a contest into which we have been forced against our will, we have preserved our empire undiminished, maintained our constitution inviolate, and decreased, or, as the honourable gentleman thinks, destroyed that spirit of jacobinism which originated in, and has been supported by France ? But this is not all: you have not only maintained your possessions entire,

but have destroyed the maritime power, and taken the most valuable maritime possessions of your enemy; and in the course of all the changes and revolutions of surrounding nations, you have stood firm and even to the confederacy as you entered into it, and did not desert it in the hour of danger, or of peril, even while others were deserting you. Are these considerations nothing? Is it nothing that, having had to struggle, not for imaginary objects, but for our very existence as a free state, with our commerce marked out as an object of destruction, our constitution threatened, we have preserved the one unimpaired, and most materially augmented the other; and, in many particulars, increased our national wealth, as well as its glory? I say, it is thus the matter stands with regard to this country; and yet these are the topics, or at least some of the topics, on which the honourable gentleman chooses to say he has laid fair grounds before the house to call upon it to conclude with him (for so his motion would in its spirit indicate), that there is great misconduct in his Majesty's government.

The honourable gentleman has taken a general view of the affairs of this country; and I shall, without being too minute, endeavour to follow him over the outline of his observations. Some of them I need hardly touch upon, because they have been the subjects of repeated discussions in this house, in various stages of the present war. On all those points which were discussed before parliament, parliament have determined; and were I to argue them again, I could only expect to tire the patience of the house with unnecessary repetition: I need therefore, with reference to many of the topics insisted upon so vehemently by the honourable gentleman to-night, only remind the house of what it has already done, presuming that it will not now think otherwise than it has thought already, where no fresh argument, nor any new circumstance has appeared to alter its opinion. Many of the observations, however, of the honourable gentleman, although fallacious and inconsistent, I shall take notice of, not on account of their force, but of their extraordinary tendency. I hope the honourable gentleman used hasty words, such as may possibly escape a person in the heat of speaking, and that he himself considers the words that he used of that description—I mean the expression implying " that he thought our honour was lost and our character degraded in the course of the present war, and that by the manner in which our army had been employed

under the present administration." It will be seen, however, when the subject is inquired into, [" Hear! hear! " from the other side]—the gentlemen opposite are anxious to seize on a word which is employed to signify discussed—when the matter then is discussed, it will be seen to whom the blame of it is imputable, or rather, it will be proved that there is not the least foundation for the charges which the honourable gentleman has advanced. An inquiry is demanded; but is it possible that' the house could listen to motions of this kind every moment some persons thought proper to bring a vague and general charge of misconduct? It is enough, that, on general grounds of argument and presumption, it can be shewn that there is no necessity for supposing any thing wrong. It can never be the duty of this house to encourage such a disposition.

But the honourable gentleman is pleased to revive a phrase which was made use of by my right honourable friend,[1] who, with all the excellent qualities which belong to him, is more remarkable for the accuracy of his plans than for the measure of a sentence, and that the more especially when he happens to speak of what relates to his own conduct. He did not mean to say, that he wished to enter into a minute inquiry into every plan which he has been concerned in advising; he meant to profess, what he felt, a readiness to defend the measures of administration, if any one had a desire to object to any part of such measures : not that he thought it would be right that the time of the house should be taken up in discussing all the measures of administration, one by one, until the whole was examined; that would be an endless task, although I am confident it would be triumphant to my right honourable friend. He was ready then, and so he is now, to defend his Majesty's ministers in every measure adopted this war, provided somebody imputed any thing that was improper to us, and laid some ground which might call for an inquiry. I was therefore a little surprised to find such a construction put upon my right honourable friend's declaration as I have heard to-night, which was, that he wished from day to day to discuss all the measures of administration during the war. I should be glad to know what evidence it is of guilt for a man to deny a charge which is exhibited against him, and to argue upon the plain understanding of it, without any formal inquiry, which can never alter the facts that are obvious to all who see and hear ? This

1 Mr. Dundas.

is the common-place course with which loose charges of this kind are attempted, and have for the last hundred years been attempted to be supported upon these occasions; and they are generally maintained with a degree of vehemence in declamation, which is proportioned only to their weakness in point of reason. A loose, unconnected charge is made; and then, because those who are accused by it assign reasons why it should not occupy the time of the house, the party accused is immediately pronounced guilty.—I do not complain of this: the honourable gentleman has many precedents to plead in favour of this mode of argument, and I am not without some authorities on the part which I take in opposing him; neither is the honourable gentleman to take it for granted, that the public will think he is right, because he alleges that he is so; nor am I to expect a favourable sentiment in my behalf, on account of what I urge in vindication of ministers: the impartial part of the public will judge from the assertions of neither, but fairly on facts between both. Let it not be understood, that I admit there is any general rule to decide a question like this; ail that the house can do now, is to consider whether they will say that what they have already done was wrong: that will be the case, if they go into a come mittee to inquire into what they have already determined; for that is the case in most of the points to which the honourable gentleman refers.

The honourable gentleman has alluded to former wars, not only as to the force employed in them, but also to the expense with which they were attended. In the first place, we should consider, that, as to the article of expense, that has been in a progressive state of advancement for the last forty years; it is found to be so in all the common and ordinary affairs of life, and therefore it would be an extraordinary thing if the expense of war, which consists in paying for articles of use in common life, were exempt from advancement more than other things are. The army and the navy are fed like other men, and most of the expenses of a military station are like other expenses, formed chiefly on common articles of consumption. But what is rather curious is, that the honourable gentleman says we have double the force we had in a former war to which he alluded, and yet he affects to be surprised at the expense being double, although, upon his own reasoning, the same force ought to be allowed double the expense. Such is the argument of the honourable gentleman, and that is what he calls

a conclusive argument. The honourable gentleman thinks our present military establishment too much; and yet I have heard him, and those with whom he has been in the habit of acting, state with some animation, the prodigious exertions which France had made in the face of all the powers of Europe who opposed her. I have often considered those efforts of the French exaggerated pretty much in this house; but I always thought, and I have never attempted to disguise it, that France, from its very state, unfavourable as it was to any useful purpose, had advantages over others in the way of raising forces for the support of the war. The whole of their revolutionary policy was well adapted to this end; and now, although the objects which were pretended to be in view from that revolution are gone away, yet it possesses that strength in a considerable degree for the purpose of violent efforts. For the violent principle of taking, without regard either to justice or to policy, still remains in full force; they are still in a state to lay violent hands on any property they can find, for the purpose they want; and men they put in requisition wherever they are wanted. This has made me feel, and I have repeatedly said, that, in respect to sudden efforts to gain their object by force, they have an advantage over every legitimate government in Europe; and therefore it is not a matter of wonder that their exertions have sometimes surpassed any that were made under the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. But although this be the case, will any man tell me, that, because France has such means of making great exertions by violence, we, having to contend with such an enemy, are culpable because their violence is gigantic; and that it must be said that our affairs are ill-directed because we have not had twice the success we had in former wars, since we had twice the force we had in a former war? All this is insisted upon, as if the French force was not at all augmented; whereas the very arguments of the honourable gentleman, and indeed all others on the same side with him, have always had for their basis the tremendous force of the French. It is then asked, what have we done in the present war? I would answer, "You have given your enemy considerable annoyance, and might have done more, if others had adhered to the cause as you have done." There was a time when, if the combination had in all its parts been as true to its profession, and as steady to the general interest, as it is your glory to have been, you might have made, in conjunction altogether, a formidable attack in the interior of France—there

was a time when, in my opinion, that might have been done; but it did not happen that the opportunity was seized as it might have been: what then? It will hardly be said that the fault of neglecting it is imputable to his Majesty's ministers. Why then, under these circumstances, and in this condition of things, I would ask, what other object had we to look to, but that of endeavouring to diminish the force of the enemy? I do not mean to dwell on this point now, because it is one which the honourable gentleman did not dwell upon in his opening, and I am unwilling to take up the time of the house in the discussion of matters which are not insisted upon as those which require to be discussed. But the honourable gentleman says, that so many thousand British troops went upon an expedition, and so many thousand British troops returned. Now, upon that point I have to observe, that if you have in view an object which you have reason to conceive you are competent to carry, which it is important for you to carry, which by good information you are led to believe you could carry, or upon a full view of which there is a chance of success, and that there appears no great risk, and yet you find upon trial you are not able to succeed in your point, but can nevertheless, after all, retire without loss, I want to know where the great blame is that ought to attach to you for such a proceeding, or wherein is the folly of your conduct? This is the utmost that can be said against anything that we have undertaken; and this I am ready to maintain in the presence of any number of military men in Europe. It is not a point of military tactics, but of plain common sense; and I have mentioned this, because I could not avoid feeling a little on some of these points. As to the merit of any measures which may have been adopted by his Majesty's ministers, I feel it does not become me to say much: whatever that merit may be, a very large share of it falls to the lot of my right honourable friend;[1] but if there be any thing to blame, I have only to say, I will not admit that all the responsibility shall be exclusively cast on him. If there be any ground for criminality or for censure, I beg leave to say, that it must be divided among his Majesty's ministers, and that I am ready to take my share; and therefore the honourable gentleman will do well not to select my right honourable friend as an individual against whom to direct his objections. I wish the public to know, that it is not to one individual, but the whole of his Majesty's

[1] Mr. Dundas.

councils, that censure or applause should be given for any measure that may come before them to be judged.

The next point I shall take notice of, as brought forward by the honourable gentleman, is the state and condition of our allies. He has asked, what were our allies at one time, and what are they now? I consider this is a very important point. He has said, that we set out with Spain and Holland for our allies, together with a favourable disposition towards us on the part of Russia, whose court had expressed a strong desire of a just conduct to be observed towards neutral nations, together with a determined hostility towards France. Prussia and France were engaged in war before we became parties in the contest. Prussia was ready to enter into an alliance with you when you were, I will not say led, but forced into the war. 1 will not dwell on the conduct of that power, but I would ask, in what part of the government of this country was there to be found any blame for the steps which were taken by Prussia upon this occasion? That power stopped short, and got out of the confederacy on a sudden; but how was that imputable to us? The honourable gentleman laid great stress on this: and asked, on whom we were to look as a perpetual ally? But if none of them are to be regarded, the fault is none of ours; we availed ourselves of their assistance while we could have if: if they have been less attentive to their own interest than we have been to them and the common cause, the blame is not with us; we did not, nor had we the means of entering into their speculations; our object was to preserve good faith, and we did so; and if any of them at any time wavered, the concern is theirs; as to the question of honour, ours is entire.—I would ask, whether any man now doubts of the propriety of our availing ourselves of the aid of Austria and Prussia while we could obtain it? As to Spain, I have said already what I think of the shameful dereliction of that court; but that power is now in a condition that renders it very improbable that its hostility can be important to this country. In a word, as far as the question of alliance is applied to us, we have the satisfaction to feel that we have more than once rallied all the powers of Europe to make efforts in the common cause, to which we have contributed an ample share, and kept good faith inviolate. This is the real state of the case.

There is one objection which the honourable gentleman has stated to the conduct of his Majesty's ministers, and I admit, if there is any ground for it, they ought not only to be cen-

sured, but this house ought, without any delicacy, or apprehension for the present condition of things, to address his Majesty to dismiss them from his service at once; that is, that his Majesty's ministers form an obstacle to the attainment of a safe and honourable peace.—That we are to look for this, more from ourselves than from our allies, is unquestionably true; but what peace is it that we are to make? The honourable gentleman says, we have no security with regard to our allies: let us suppose, for the sake of the argument, that we have not; what then is to follow? That we are to try to obtain peace at all events? Shall we tell Buonaparte that we have no confidence in our allies, and that therefore we wish to treat with him for peace? I say, No! I say, if I had no confidence in our allies, I would not make that humble supplication for peace. I would at worst put forward the best resource of this country to maintain the contest until we should be able to obtain a safe and honourable peace; and I am persuaded that cringing for it is not the way to obtain an honourable peace. Having said this, I will add, by the way, that when gentlemen talk of peace, I cannot persuade myself they mean any but a safe and honourable one; and yet to bring forward into debate, in this house, topics which are calculated to impress upon ourselves at home, and our enemies abroad, an idea that we are distressed, and that we distrust our government, I cannot help thinking is a mode but ill adapted to the accomplishment of that object. It was indeed, if the house adopted this motion, the way to make the people distrust, and our enemies despise, our government. As to the conduct of our ally the emperor, I will repeat what I had occasion to state on a former night. I said, I had no idea, that, previous to the battle of Marengo, there was any intention on behalf of his Imperial Majesty to enter on a renewal of negociation with France, separately and distinctly. I did distinctly state, that at and from that period the First Consul of France made some proposals for that purpose; that, previous to the battle of Marengo, there was a proposal made to his Imperial Majesty, but that there was not any disposition shewn in the whole of that time, in the court of Vienna, to make a separate peace. I do declare that I believe we have the whole intelligence that belongs to that subject, nor have I the least distrust of the sincerity of his Imperial Majesty in refusing to enter into a separate negociation. Since that time we have assurances from the court of Vienna, of the most rigid adherence to the same principle of

refusal to enter into a separate negociation, and to pursue the same plan as that on which that refusal was founded. I stated this the other night to come up to the 4th of November: I am able now to carry the same intelligence to a later period by a few days, that is up to the 9th of November. I have no reason to distrust the sincerity of the professions of his Imperial Majesty, as conveyed by that intelligence. So stands that part of the case upon our alliance with Austria. But I know also, tfyat great and extraordinary exertions have been made. I should add, that I will not make myself a guarantee for what may hereafter happen; I will not be answerable, for I cannot prophesy what new events may happen, or whether any or what over-ruling necessity may change either the conduct or the councils of the court of Vienna. I can only say, that as far as I have known, and I have no reason to distrust my information, the court of Vienna is hitherto explicit. If I should be disappointed in my expectation, I can only say I cannot help it; but hitherto I have no reason to think I shall. The question therefore is, what is prudent for us to do in the prosecution of this contest? I say, the wisest course we can take is to preserve the character that we have for honour and good faith, on which may yet depend the safety of Europe.

I should now come, in order, to the parenthesis of the honourable gentleman on the state of our constitution. But, first, for the sake of connexion on the subject of our allies, I will say a word or two respecting the Emperor of Russia. Concerning the embargo, to which the honourable gentleman has alluded, though I have received no information on the subject, I am disposed to believe the intelligence true; particularly as we know that not long ago a similar measure was adopted; an embargo was laid on and taken off in a few days —a circumstance by no means unlikely to take place on the present occasion. Whatever may have dictated this rash and precipitate step, this much I can say, that nothing on the conduct of this government ever gave any cause why the magnanimity of the Emperor Paul should so suddenly have been withdrawn from the confederacy, in which his co-operation must have been attended with so much benefit to Europe; and that no ground of difference has ever existed between the two governments in any points, upon which any variety of opinions can take place in this country.

And now I come to observe upon the state of our constitution, as it was alluded to by the honourable gentleman. It is a

point on which I feel it would be improper for me to say much, for it has been discussed over and over again in this house. I contend that provisions have been adopted for the preservation of the constitution, which, but for such provisions, would have been destroyed, and the honourable gentleman would not to-night have been in this house to expatiate upon these topics, nor should I have been here to answer him. As to the influence of the crown, I will only say, that its increase is a topic often resorted to for the purposes of declamation; but I can hardly think that any man ever seriously regards it as matter for alarm ; but even supposing it to be increasing, which I deny, there certainly is no necessity for going into a committee of the whole house to consider of the state of the nation; in order to consider of that subject, there is, if necessary, a much more compendious way of arriving at it

The next point to which the honourable gentleman adverted, was that of the statement of finance and the internal state of the country, particularly the price of corn. As to the corn, I find the honourable gentleman wishes to inculcate this as an established principle, that the war is the principal cause of the high price of provisions, for which he stated three causes ; the increase of the consumption, arising from waste partly of the army and navy; the increase of expense, from importation; and the influence that the issue of paper has occasioned, which has arisen from the stoppage of the Bank from payment in specie. These were the points, and the last was the principal one on which he dwelt. Now, upon each of these I shall make some general observations; but as I did on the first day of the session, so I shall at the present moment, avoid detail upon these topics, partly because a minuteness in general is dry and tedious, and partly because I speak in the hearing of many who have better judgments than I have, especially on the subject of paper money. The preliminary observations are, that there is waste in the consumption of the army and navy ; there is great expense in importation from abroad; and there is a depreciation in the relative value of the circulating medium by the increase of the paper. First, I will observe, that all these causes are not peculiar to the present year; for, many of them have been stated to exist in as great, and some of them in a greater degree than they do at present. In the years 1798 and 1799, we had a greater number of military forces than we have at present; and as to the stoppage of the payment of the bank, that stoppage has taken place for some time, and the difference

between the paper circulating medium of that time and the present is very inconsiderable. As to the taxes, which are supposed most to operate to raise the price of articles, there are none of them that bear hard upon the farmer, and can therefore have no immediate effect upon the price of corn. None of these can have been the great cause of the high price of provisions, because, when these were at their height, provisions were infinitely cheaper than they are at present; nor can the war be the cause of the price, because the taxes have been felt as severely as they are now, (within about 400,000/. which was added last year,) and yet the high price of provisions was not known when all these causes operated.

Here Mr. Pitt took a view of the beneficial effects of the land-tax redemption bill, the operation of the sinking fund, and the policy of raising supplies within the year, as had been done by the assessed taxes and the income bill, which he considered indeed as a solid system of finance, but which he did not apprehend would become perpetual in time of peace, as the honourable gentleman had stated, for it was capable of modification as it now stood; and it would perhaps be prudent, after a given interval of peace, to relax its present exaction ; it would otherwise in some respects change its character, being only a war tax: however, opportunities would occur hereafter to consider these topics. As to exchequer bills, he had to observe, that they ought not to be considered as currency, except such of them as were of short dates. It was much talked of, that the exchequer bills were a mass of paper which was injurious to the public; but this year they had been circulated at a premium, instead of a discount, which they usually were at; this, he contended, proved beyond dispute that the market was not, as the honourable gentleman contended, overstocked with a circulating medium, for if that were so, these bills could not possibly be at a premium, they must of necessity be at a discount : from these points the honourable gentleman had given a general state of the finance of the country. He did not conceive that this was a time for going into a minute detail upon this subject; and he thought the house would feel no difficulty in deciding that it was not necessary to go into a committee on the state of the nation, in order to inquire into these things ; for many of them had already not only been discussed generally, but particularly, and very much in detail, in a committee of the whole house; various resolutions had been founded on them, and there had not been offered in this dis-

cussion any thing that ought to change the sentiments of the house upon the subject.

But the honourable gentleman had made one observation which merited particular attention: he had stated, by way of alternative, that either the present system must continue, and the bank payment in specie remain suspended (which he said would by and by ruin the country altogether), or else the bank should resume its payments in cash, and then it would be impossible to continue the contest. Now this was a dilemma in which he hoped the house would never find this country. He hoped and trusted that we were neither reduced to the one nor the other of these two points, but that we should be able to continue that system by which we had hitherto avoided danger, and that we were far from being under any necessity of changing it: nor did he believe the house would adopt any such doctrine as this; they would, on the contrary, explode it, for the tendency of it was to proclaim to the enemy our inability to continue the contest, in which our existence as a free nation was at stake. A feeling was always ready to manifest itself on the consideration of this subject, which required no aid from the eloquence of any man; the bare statement of it was sufficient. In one word, the motion of the honourable gentleman contained a naked proposition, which was this—"Whether the house would now, without reason, abandon a proposition which they had so often, and with the best reason, adopted, and uniformly acted upon?" As to the calculation of the probable expense of continuing the war, he should not now go into it; he was of opinion that it could not be materially different from that which attended it the last year; nor was this any thing of a reason for going into a committee on the state of the nation.

I therefore submit, Mr. Pitt continued, that, upon the whole of what has been laid before the house to-night, I have said enough to satisfy it, that upon none of the grounds stated by the honourable gentleman is he justified in calling upon this house to institute an inquiry into the state of the nation; that much of what the honourable gentleman has stated to-night arises out of matter which has been discussed over and over again, and well decided; that his facts are misplaced; and that, as far as he proceeds on reasoning, his reasoning is fallacious: and therefore do I conclude, that there is no just ground laid before you for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation. That is the general ground of opposition which

I state on the one hand:—on the other, I say that the internal state of the country requires your attention in a special mannei to other topics, and that your time ought not to be consumed in unnecessary discussions upon points which lead to no practical conclusion; that you will have a committee up stairs, which will take due care of the most immediate interests of the country at this important crisis; that this motion leads to no immediate or remote advantage; that it may do mischief, by holding out encouragement to the enemy, and by causing a diffidence, if not despondency, in the people of this country, by teaching them to suspect that there is something in the state of the nation which is alarming—for which there is no foundation. For all these reasons I do give my decided opposition to this motion.

ON THE STATE OF THE NATION

February 2, 1801.[1]

SIR, in rising to make some observations upon what has fallen from the honourable gentleman,[2] I cannot avoid noticing a curious proposition which he advanced in the early part of his speech, and which he repeated towards the conclusion of it,

[1] Debate on the address of thanks to his Majesty for his most gracious speech on opening the session.

The address being moved by Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, and seconded by Mr. Cornwallis,

Mr. Grey proposed the following amendment:—

"And that this house will proceed with all possible dispatch to make such inquiries into the general state of the nation, but more especially into the conduct of the war, and into our relations with foreign powers, as may enabje us to offer to his Majesty such advice as we may think most conducive to the honour of his crown, and the general interests of his people.

"And further, to assure his Majesty, that if, owing to any unjust and unreasonable pretensions on the part of the enemy, peace cannot be obtained on such terms as are consistent with security; if the representations which his Majesty has directed to be made to the court of Petersburgh, in consequence of the outrages committed against the ships, property, and persons of his subjects, have not received that reparation which the nature of the case requires; and if the differences which appear unhappily to have arisen between his Majesty and the other Northern Powers, are of a nature which presses for immediate decision; and the impossibility of any equitable adjustment renders new and more extended wars inevitable, we will give his Majesty every support which the means of the country can afford; in the just hope and confidence that his Majesty's paternal care for the welfare of his people will induce him to take such measures as shall prevent henceforward a calamitous waste of their remaining strength and resources, either by improvident and ineffectual projects, or by general negligence and profusion; and shall ensure a wise and vigorous administration of their affairs, under the unexampled difficulties in which they are now involved."

2 Mr. Grey.

but with less confidence, viz. that the minority in this house, in point of fact, speak the sense of fhe majority of the people. Upon what ground the honourable gentleman has made that assertion, I am utterly incapable of guessing; but if it be true, every one of those great and honourable efforts by which, in the course of nine years, we have secured the independence and exalted the character of this country, which have enabled us to withstand the dangers and vicissitudes of this most arduous contest, which have afforded the means of security to Europe, at the same time that they have hitherto saved this country from the calamities which have visited almost all the rest of the globe—if, I say, the honourable gentleman's proposition be true, then all these noble efforts have been made for nine years, not only without the consent, but against the opinion of a majority of this house and of this country. Before the honourable gentleman can establish that proposition, he must convince the majority that they ought now to act in direct opposition to every principle upon which their conduct has hitherto been founded; and I confess I do not expect that he will succeed in such an attempt. I do not believe there are any among us who sat in this house in the last session of parliament, who do not recollect the discussions which took place upon every subject which the honourable gentleman has commented upon in his speech, (except one, which forms the more immediate question before the house, and to which I shall come by-and-by ;) I do not believe, I say, that any of these gentlemen can lightly forget the opinions which they formed, and the principles upon which they acted. I do not believe, Sir, (being one of those who think as highly as my honourable friends who moved and seconded the motion for the address, of that important measure which has consolidated the strength of the empire), that these honourable gentlemen whom we have this day, for the first time, the happiness of seeing among us, will disappoint the sanguine expectations that we formed of benefits to result from that important event. I am sure they have brought with them the same zeal, and the same principles which have supported us against an host of enemies. These gentlemen have had, in another place, the severe duty imposed upon them of contending with jacobinism on their own soil, and I am sure they would not wish to infuse that timidity into us, the least mixture of which would have been certain ruin to them. Whatever may be the confident language which the honourable gentleman may think proper to

use upon this occasion, I cannot but believe that the present is a proper time for the discussion of that great and important question which is prepared for us by events, which we could not control, but which we must meet.

The honourable gentleman has, in the course of his speech, introduced several topics, which, he says, have been frequently discussed before, and which he expresses his hope will again be investigated. Upon both these grounds, I am not disposed to trouble the house at length, upon any of these subjects, at present. There is, indeed, but one new question before the house, I mean that which has been announced to us in his Majesty's most gracious speech from the throne, respecting our differences with the Northern powers. Sir, I must confess, that the manner in which the honourable gentleman has treated every part of this subject, has really filled me with astonishment, both when I consider the general plan of his speech, and the particular statements into which he went in support of his argument. The honourable gentleman thought it right, in the first place, to express his doubts of the justice of our claim with respect to neutral vessels; and in the next place (which appeared to me fully as singular) to question the importance of the point now at issue. But though the honourable gentleman seemed disposed to entertain doubts on points upon which I believe there is hardly another man to be found in this country who would hesitate for a moment, yet there were other points upon which his mind appeared to be free from doubt, and his opinion completely made up. If, after a full discussion of this question, it should appear that the claim which this country has made is founded on the clearest and most indisputable justice—if it should be proved that our greatness, nay, our very existence as a nation, and every thing that has raised us to the exalted situation which we hold, depends upon our possessing and exercising this—if, I say, all this should be proved in the most satisfactory manner, still the honourable gentleman is prepared seriously to declare in this house, that such are the circumstances in which we stand, that we ought publicly and explicitly to state to the world that we are unequal to the contest, and that we must quietly give up for ever an unquestionable right, and one upon which not only our character, but our very existence as a maritime power depends. This is the conduct which the honourable gentleman advises us to pursue at once, without determining, without investigating, whether it is compatible with our safety. I really find much difficulty,

Sir, in reconciling this language to that sort of spirit which the honourable gentleman talks of in another part of his speech, in which he says, he is far from wishing to make the country despond.—[Mr. Grey here said across the table, that he had been misunderstood.]—Sir, I am stating what the honourable gentleman said, and I shall be happy to find that he did not mean what he said.

I shall now, Sir, endeavour to follow the honourable gentleman through his argument, as far as I can recollect it, upon the important question of the Northern confederacy. In following the order which he took, I must begin with his doubts, and end with his certainties; and I cannot avoid observing, that the honourable gentleman was singularly unfortunate upon this subject, for he entertained doubts where there was not the slightest ground for hesitation; and he contrives to make up his mind to absolute certainty, upon points in which both argument and fact are decidedly against him. That part of the question upon which the honourable gentleman appears to be involved in doubt, is with respect to the justice of our claim in regard to neutral vessels. In commenting upon this part of the subject, the honourable gentleman gave us a lesson in politics, which is more remarkable for its soundness than its novelty, viz. that a nation ought not to enforce a claim that is not founded in justice, and that nothing would be found to be consistent with true policy that was not conformable to strict justice. I thought, however, I heard the honourable gentleman in another part of his speech, where he was arguing the question of the expediency and propriety of our negociating a separate peace with France, contend that no consideration of good faith to Austria ought to prevent us from entering into such a negociation.—[Mr. Grey said, he had not laid that down as a principle, but merely with respect to the circumstances under which we stood with regard to Austria.]—I am glad to hear the honourable gentleman contradict me, but I certainly understood him to say so. I am also glad to find, that when the issue of fact is found against him, he has no demurrer in reserve upon the principle. Upon the justice, however, of our claim, the honourable gentleman states himself to be wholly in doubt There is, Sir, in general, a degree of modesty in doubting, that conciliates very much, and a man is seldom inclined to bear hard upon an antagonist whose attack does not exceed the limits of a doubt. But, Sir, when a gentleman doubts that which has been indisputably established for more than a

century—when he doubts that which has been an acknowledged principle of law in all the tribunals of the kingdom, which are alone competent to decide upon the subject, and which parliament has constantly known them to act upon—when he doubts principles which the ablest and wisest statesmen have uniformly adopted—I say, Sir, the doubt that calls in question principles so established, without offering the slightest ground for so doing, shews a great deal of that pert presumption which, as often as modesty, leads to scepticism. I wish to ask every gentleman in the house whether it has not been always known that such was the principle upon which our courts were acting from the commencement of the present war up to the moment that I am speaking? I ask whether that principle has not been maintained in every war? Let me at the same time ask, whether, in the course of the speeches of the gentlemen on the other side of the house, any one topic ot alarm has been omitted, which either fact could furnish, or ingenuity supply? I believe I shall not be answered in the negative, and yet I believe I may safely assert, that it never occurred to any one member to increase the difficulties of the country by stating a doubt upon the question of right; and it will be a most singular circumstance, that the honourable gentleman and his friends, should only have begun to doubt when our enemies are ready to begin the combat But though I have heard doubts expressed upon a subject on which it appeared to me that a doubt could hardly have entered the mind of an Englishman, I have not heard one word to shew on what ground there can exist a doubt upon the justice of our claim—a claim which, until this house decides the contrary, I shall consider as part of the law of the land; for I consider the maritime law, and the law of nations, as acted upon in our courts, to be part of the law of the land. I speak in the presence of some learned gentlemen who are conversant in the practice of the courts to which I allude, and who, I am sure, will contradict me if I state that which is incorrect. I ask any of these learned gentlemen, whether they would suffer the principle, upon which our claim rests, to be called in question in any of their courts? But when we come to consider this question as applying to the contest in which we may be engaged, there are so many considerations that are decisive upon the subject, that I am really convinced by the manner in which the honourable gentleman treated it, that his doubts have all arisen from, his not having looked into the question.

There are two ways in which this subject is to be considered; the first is, what has been the general law of nations upon this subject, independent of any particular treaties which may have been made? The next is, how far any precise treaties affect it, with regard to the particular powers who are the objects of the present dispute? With respect to the law of nations, I know that the principle upon which we are now acting, and for which I am now contending, has been universally admitted and acted upon, except in cases where it has been restrained or modified by particular treaties between different states. And here I must observe, that the honourable gentleman has fallen into the same error which constitutes the great fallacy in the reasoning of the advocates for the Northern powers, namely, that every exception from the general law by a particular treaty, proves the law to be as it is stated in that treaty; whereas the very circumstance of making an exception by treaty, proves what the general law of nations would be, if no such treaty were made to modify or alter it. The honourable gentleman alludes to the treaty made between this country and France in the year 1787, known by the name of the commercial treaty. In that treaty it certainly was stipulated, that in the event of Great Britain being engaged in a war, and France being neutral, she should have the advantage now claimed, and *vice versa;* but the honourable gentleman confesses that he recollects that the very same objection was made at that time, and was fully answered, and that it was clearly proved, that no part of our stipulation in that treaty tended to a dereliction of the principle for which we are now contending. Besides, when it is considered how far the interests of this country can be implicated in a naval war in which France is neutral, it will not afford any proof either that we considered the principle as unimportant, or that we gave it up. I could, without in the slightest degree weakening the cause which I am endeavouring to support, give to the honourable gentleman all the benefit he can possibly derive from the commercial treaty with France, and from particular treaties with other states, and I should be glad to know what advantage he could derive from such an admission. If he could shew treaties with any given number of states, still, if there were any state in Europe with whom no such treaty was in existence, with that state the law of nations, such as I am now contending for, must be in full force. Still more, it will be allowed to me, that if there is any nation that has forborne to be a party of these treaties, that maintained this principle

and has enforced its rights; in such a case, no inference that can be drawn from treaties with other powers, can have any weight. The utmost the honourable gentleman could argue, and even in that I do not think he would be founded in justice, would be this—that, if there was no general consent with respect to the principles, particular treaties ought to serve as a guide in other cases. But what will the honourable gentleman say, if, instead of my stating an imaginary case, I give to him this short answer, that with every one of the three Northern powers with whom we are at present in dispute, independent of the law of nations, of our uniform practice, and of the opinions of our courts, we have the strict letter of engagements by which they are bound to us?—What will he say, if I shew, that their present conduct to us, is as much a violation of positive treaties with us, as it is of the law of nations? With respect to Denmark and Sweden, nobody here, I am sure, has to learn that the treaties of 1661 and 1670 are now in full force, and nobody can read those treaties without seeing that the right of carrying enemies' property is completely given up. With regard to Russia, the right of this country never was given by us. It undoubtedly was very much discussed during the time that the treaty of commerce with Russia was negociating; but I will not rest my argument upon negative evidence. In the convention signed between Great Britain and Russia at the commencement of the present war, the latter bound herself not merely to observe this principle by a convention, (not done away, unless we have unjustly commenced hostilities against her,) but she engaged to use her efforts to prevent neutral powers from protecting the commerce of France on the seas or in the ports of France. Laying aside then every other ground upon which I contend that the principle I am now maintaining is supported, still I say, that the treaties with these three powers, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, are now in full force, and I ask, whether it is possible to suggest any one ground, upon which it can be contended that these powers are released from their engagements to us? So much for the justice of the claim.

I will not, Sir, take up much more of the time of the house, because there will be papers laid before the house which will place the subject in a clearer point of view than can be done in the course of a debate:—but I must say, that with regard to these powers the case does not stop here. What will the honourable gentleman say if I shew him, that in the course of the present war, both Denmark and Sweden have distinctly

expressed their readiness to agree in that very principle, against which they are disposed to contend, and that they made acknowledgments to us for not carrying the claim so far as Russia was disposed to carry it? What will the honourable gentleman say, if I shew him that Sweden, who in the year 1780 agreed to the armed neutrality, has since then been at war herself, and then acted upon a principle directly contrary to that which she agreed to in the year 1780, and to that upon which she is now disposed to act? In the war between Sweden and Russia, the former distinctly acted upon that very principle for which we are now contending. What will the honourable gentleman say, if I shew him that in the last autumn, Denmark, with her fleets and arsenals at our mercy, entered into a solemn pledge not again to send vessels with convoy, until the principle was settled; and that, notwithstanding this solemn pledge, this state has entered into a new convention, similar to that which was agreed to in 1780? One of the engagements of that treaty is, that its stipulations are to be maintained by **force** of arms. Here then is a nation bound to us by treaty, and who has recently engaged not even to send a convoy until the point should be determined, that tells us she has entered into an engagement, by which she is bound to support that principle by force of arms. Is this, or is it not, war? Is it not that which, if we had not heard the honourable gentleman this night, would lead a man to think he insulted an Englishman by questioning his feelings upon the subject? But, Sir, when all these circumstances are accompanied by armaments, prepared at a period of the year when they think they have time **for** preparation without being exposed to our navy, his Majesty informs you, that these courts have avowed the principles of the treaty of 1780, known by the name of the armed neutrality; but then the honourable gentleman says, "we do not know the precise terms of the present treaty, and therefore we ought to take no steps until we are completely apprized of its contents." It is true, we do not know the exact terms of the treaty; but I should think if we demand to know, whether they have made engagements which we consider as hostile to our interests, and they tell us they have, but do not tell us what exceptions are made in our favour, we are not, I should think, bound to guess them, or to give them credit for them until they are shewn to us. How far would the honourable gentleman push his argument? Will he say, that we ought to wait quietly for the treaty, that we ought to take no step,

until we have read it paragraph by paragraph, and that then we should acknowledge to those powers that we are now dispirited and not prepared to dispute the point? Does he mean that we should give them time to assemble all their forces and enable them to produce something like a substitute for the fallen navy of France? Is this the conduct which the honourable gentleman would recommend to the adoption of this country? Are we to wait till we see the article itself, until we see the seal to the contract of our destruction, before we take any means to insure our defence?

Sir, I will not trouble the house any longer upon the question of right, I come now to the question of expedience, and upon this part of the subject the honourable gentleman is not so much in doubt. The question is, whether we are to permit the navy of our enemy to be supplied and recruited—whether we are to suffer blockaded forts to be furnished with warlike stores and provisions—whether we are to suffer neutral nations, by hoisting a flag upon a sloop, or a fishing boat, to convey the treasures of South America to the harbours of Spain, or the naval stores of the Baltic to Brest or Toulon? Are these the propositions which gentlemen mean to contend for? I really have heard no argument upon the subject, yet. [Mr. Sheridan and Dr. Laurence entered the house together, and sat down upon the opposite bench.] I suppose I shall be answered by-and-by, as I see there is an accession of new members to the confederacy, who will, I have no doubt, add to the severity and to the length of the contest. I would ask, Sir, has there been any period since we have been a naval country, in which we have not acted upon this principle? The honourable gentleman talks of the destruction of the naval power of France, but does he really believe that her marine would have been decreased to the degree that it now is, if, during the whole of the war, this very principle had not been acted upon? and if the commerce of France had not been destroyed, does he believe that, if the fraudulent system of neutrals had not been prevented, her navy would not have been in a very different situation from that in which it now is? Does he not know that the naval preponderance, which we have by these means acquired, has given security to this country, and has more than once afforded chances for the salvation of Europe? In the wreck of the continent, and the disappointment of our hopes there, what has been the security of this country, but its naval preponderance? —and if that were once gone, the spirit of the country would

go with it. If we had no other guide, if we had nothing else to look to but the experience of the present war, that alone proves, not the utility, but the necessity of maintaining a principle so important to the power, and even to the existence of this country.

There was something rather singular in the manner in which the honourable gentleman commented upon, and argued from, the destruction of the naval power of France: he says, her marine is now so much weakened, that we may now relinquish the means by which we have so nearly destroyed it; and, at the very same moment, he holds out the terrors of an invasion of Ireland. The honourable, gentleman says, "We are not now, as we were in the year 1780, shrinking from the fleets of France and Spain in the channel:" but, if that was our only excuse for not asserting the principle in the year 1780, we have not now, happily for this country, the same reason for not persisting in our rights; and the question now is, whether, with increased proofs of the necessity of acting upon that principle, and with increased means of supporting it, we are for ever to give it up?

As to the necessity of making inquiries into charges which are to be exhibited against any part of the conduct of administration, and which are to be founded upon a review of their past conduct, it is announced by the honourable gentleman, that we are to have them laid before us. We shall have opportunity of discussing them abundantly: none of them touch the point which is now before us; for the amendment, as it stands, would only be embarrassed by reference to these topics. I think the amendment calculated to obstruct the proceedings of this country, on which its safety depends. Many other topics alluded to by the honourable gentleman are important, but they are so only in a secondary degree. I think the question of right in dispute between us and the confederated powers, so eminently important, that it claims, at this hour, the undivided attention of this house. As to what has been said on other topics, of the censures which ought to be cast on the counsel we have had any share in giving, for the prosecution of the war, I have the consolation of knowing what they are likely to be, from a recollection of what they have repeatedly been—that they will most probably be put in the same way, and will admit of being answered in the same way, as they have been already answered as often as they were brought forward, **and** I cannot help flattering myself with the same success. I

hope also that the public will feel, as they have repeatedly felt, that the calamities which have overspread Europe, and which have affected, to a certain degree, this country, though much less than any other, have not been owing to any defect on our part, but that we have pursued principles best calculated for the welfare of human society, the nature and effect of which have been frequently commented upon by those who have opposed, and by those who have supported these principles, and with whom I have had the honour to act, and still have the honour of acting; on which, I say, the power, the security, the honour of this nation has depended, and which, I trust, the perseverance and firmness of parliament and the nation will not cease to pursue, while his Majesty's servants discharge their duty.

ON THE STATE OF THE NATION

***March* 25, 1801.**[1]

THAT after what the house had heard from his right honourable friend,[2] and much as he was interested in the question, and in some of the topics which were opened by the honourable gentleman whose motion was now before the house, he should have felt that he had but little excuse for troubling the house much at large upon the present subject, if the debate had not, from a few words which fell from another honourable gentleman, taken a turn totally different from that which was introduced by the honourable mover. The principal part of the time which he employed in the discussion was consumed in endeavouring to satisfy the house, that, as he now suspected some gentlemen had improperly resigned their situations under government, that was sufficient to induce the house to go into an inquiry into the state of the nation. If it had not been for some observations that were made upon those resignations, and he had been aware that no gentleman would give his vote this night upon any but a consideration of this simple question:—"Do the arguments this night alter the principles on which you yourselves have acted for nearly nine years?"—if, he said, it had not been for

1 On a motion by Mr. Grey, that the house resolve itself into a Committee to inquire into the State of the Nation.

2 Mr. Dundas.

some observations which were independent of that question, simply so stated, he should have felt it hardly necessary for him to have troubled the house at all, but to pass by in silence, and refer to the judgment of the house, everything which related to his own personal conduct. He hoped that this language would not be mistaken for indifference in him as to the opinion of the house, or of the country; for a contempt for either he had no wish to express. He pretended to no such philosophy as that which led to the species of indifference as to the opinion of others, which some persons chose to affect; nor was he indifferent to the circumstances of this country, nor to the opinion which the public might entertain of the share, the too large share, he had taken in them: on the contrary, he confessed, that these topics occupied his attention much, for events had happened which disappointed his warmest wishes, and frustrated the most favourite hopes of his heart; and he could have desired to have continued to pursue the object of such hopes and wishes to the end of that struggle, which he had worked for with anxiety and care. There never was a period in his life, in which these topics were indifferent to him. Much less could he be indifferent to the good opinion of those who had been induced, on so many occasions, to shew so much confidence in him—a confidence, however, which had always been constitutionally given, and to which he begged leave to say, every servant of the crown was entitled, until forfeited by his conduct. Neither was he indifferent to the many marked instances he had observed of the personal confidence in him, upon various occasions, and which he could not flatter himself with having merited.

Much, however, as he felt these sentiments, there were others which he felt still more strongly; and therefore he was under the necessity of submitting some ideas upon the subject before the house. This was not a question solely applicable to himself or to his colleagues; for if it were, however dear the topics of such a case might be to him, he should have been induced to give the house but little trouble on that account. No, this was a question which involved the honour of that house, and the character of the nation; the honour of the one, and the constitutional freedom of the other. This motion taken in that view of the subject, he would put to the house this question :—Whether it was prepared to retract all that it had declared and done for the last nine most eventful years, and had changed its mind on the nature of that struggle in which we had for that

period been engaged, and in which, not only so large a majority of that house had been so firm, but, as he had on a former occasion taken the liberty of expressing it, a greater majority of the people had supported uniformly and steadily, and which they had considered as nothing less than a contest for independence with the enemy abroad, and for a constitutional safety with the enemy at home? He believed, therefore, that the house would conceive its honour to be implicated in the question now before it, as well as the honour, and, in a considerable degree, the safety of the country. On these points, the decision of the house, and the judgment of the public, had been uniform and steady. If ever the moment should arrive, in which, under whatever mask, the attempt should be made to induce the house to forget the principles by which it had been so long guided—if ever the moment should arrive, in which the principles of those should prevail who had, by their arguments, supported the enemy, the counsels of those who had so often embarrassed our proceedings, and checked our efforts—counsels, which led to the surrender of our independence and constitutional freedom, instead of the counsels which tended to the preservation of both—if ever the moment should arrive, when the house, being told they should tread back their steps to avoid a general havoc over all Europe, instead of pursuing such steps uniformly and steadily should adopt the advice—if ever the moment should arrive, when the house would listen to and follow such counsels, he should then indeed begin to think that there was some ground for the prediction which had been uttered of the downfall of this empire : but, thank God! there was no appearance of any such downfall, because there was no probability that the advice and counsel he had just alluded to, was to be taken as a remedy for any evil which was alleged to afflict us.

He therefore spoke with less apprehension of danger than he should do if these things were doubtful, upon the motion of the honourable gentleman, and with the less anxiety as to many parts of that gentleman's speech, when he reflected on the manner in which it had been answered by his right honourable friend; indeed, he thought he perceived something which conveyed an idea, that the honourable gentlemen opposite to him, did not entertain any very sanguine hope that they would be able to prevail on the house to assent to the motion now before it; they did not seem to think they had laid before it materials, to call upon it to retract all it had hitherto asserted, or reverse

all it had hitherto done in the course of the present war. This consideration, therefore, supposing he felt no other, would have induced him to remain silent on this debate; but he felt a mixed sensation, from what had fallen from an honourable gentleman, and from a noble lord,[1] with whom he had the honour of being connected in kindred, as he had hitherto been in political sentiments. He felt grateful for the unmerited expressions of good opinion which his noble kinsman, and those with whom he was most immediately connected, had directed towards him; but he must confess, that he should have been better pleased, both as a public man, and a private individual, if he had heard sentiments that were less favourable to himself, and more favourable to others, who were now in his Majesty's service; and if he felt any other than such wishes, he apprehended he should have been unworthy of the good opinion which the noble lord had been pleased to express of him. Nor could he help saying, that those who, like the noble lord, were to vote for this motion, were, without intending it, adopting a course the most unfair, the most unkind, towards those to whom they professed friendship, that they possibly could pursue; and at the samc time, a course that would be the most mischievous with regard to the interests of the public.

Now, as to the word *unfair,* which he perceived had an effect on some gentlemen on the other side, which he did not intend to produce, he meant nothing uncivil to these gentlemen; but the house should judge whether his ideas were just or not. There were two sets of gentlemen who were desired to vote on precisely the same question, on two grounds, that were not only distinct, but opposite. Of this he thought himself entitled to complain. He thought he had some reason to complain, that his opponent was to have the benefit of the votes of some of the friends of the late administration, while he, who was one of such administration, had only the benefit of a speech from his friends; thus his noble relation expressed in him the fullest confidence, and yet pursued him to condemnation, because he did not choose to confide in those of his Majesty's servants who were now in office.

In the next place, he hoped he might he permitted to observe, that there was no point which had been more disputed in that house, (although the thing itself never appeared to him to be difficult,) than that of confidence in his Majesty's ministers.

[1] Lord Temple.

But the case was not to stop here. The question of confidence had nothing about it that was new. It attended the outset of his administration, and it had not deserted the close of it. In the outset of his administration, he understood it to be held by some people, that no person was entitled to common and ordinary confidence, until he had given proof of having deserved it. It never could be carried in substance to the length it here went in the letter; for it was impossible to say that a man should not have any confidence in a situation, because it was new to him, for that must be made applicable for every human creature; whenever he entered at first upon any employment, he must at some time or other be new in his employment: it was not therefore, at that time, judged that he should have no confidence personally, (for certainly that was not claimed for him,) but it was said, that he came into administration with sentiments opposite to those which had been held by men who preceded him in office, and who had enjoyed the confidence of the house, (he meant the sentiments of the honourable gentleman opposite to him [1]), and the question was then, whether he, who was then said to hold sentiments different from those which were said to have had the confidence of the house, should have any of that confidence placed in him; that was the way in which the point was put then. But the way in which it was put now was absolutely whimsical: for it was now stated, "Here is a ministry who have had the full confidence of the house of commons"—words which he did not presume to utter for himself, but which, for the purposes of this debate, were uttered by others for him—and gentlemen had said, that within a few hours of his departure there was an appearance of stability in his Majesty's government. But what was the complaint now? Not that the persons who now claimed the support of the house differed from those who had received that support, as he was stated to have done in 1783 (how correctly that was stated was another question), but that those who now claimed the confidence of the house, ought not to have it, because they professed the same principles as those who have so long possessed that confidence. The reason for this was a very curious one; it was stated by certain gentlemen to be that of their not knowing why his Majesty's late ministers had retired :—so that confidence was to be withheld from his Majesty's present servants till gentlemen knew why their predecessors went out of office, and till the new ones were known. He did not see

1 Mr. Fox.

why gentlemen were to withhold their confidence from his Majesty's present ministers because they did not know why their predecessors retired; he did not know why gentlemen wanted any more information on that subject than they possessed already. They knew almost all they should know, and, he believed, all they would know upon that subject. But here the public were to be deprived of the services of those who had been chosen by the crown, merely because there was, about the retirement of their predecessors, something which these gentlemen said they did not understand; and because the house did not know how the new ministers would act. He understood that they were persons who would act on their own judgment, as they ought to do in each particular, but that their general principles were the same; and then it came to this—that the supporters of the present motion said the house ought to withhold its confidence from the present ministers, not because they were the reverse, but because they were the same in principle with those in whom the house had confided. - But he would not stop here. If the house considered the points on which it usually afforded its confidence, it would find every reason for affording it to the present ministers. It was said, that ministers should be men known to the house of commons before the house confided in them. Be it so.—That could not be made applicable to the situation to which they were at any time to be appointed, because that would go to the exclusion of confidence in any man whenever he came into a new situation. There could be no experience of him in that situation until he was tried. But when persons were tried in one situation, and had acquitted themselves well, the rule was to give them credit that they would do so in any other situation, until proof of something to the contrary appeared. If this was not correct doctrine, he was very much deceived. He should like to know on what principle it was, that the propriety of supporting them should be questioned until they had shewn by their actions that they did not deserve to be supported. Were these gentlemen called to a situation that was new to them? Yes; but were they new to the public? Not so; for they were not only not new to the house and the public, but they were not new to the love and esteem of the house and the public, and that from sufficient experience as to their principles and talents.—One of them was a gentleman who was admired in private, as well as respected and esteemed in public, who had been long chosen into the situation of the

first commoner in this country, and had lately been unanimously re-elected to that high station.[1] Was this the person of whom the house of commons were to say, they would not confide in him, because, at a moment of difficulty, (dissembled by none, but exaggerated by some persons who loved to dwell on any topic which gave any thing of a gloom to our affairs,) he quitted a situation of the highest authority that a representative of the people could possess, for one of greater trouble and perplexity, and at a moment when honourable gentlemen were holding out the difficulties of the situation to be insuperable? To refuse confidence to such a person in such a situation, appeared to him to be repugnant to common sense and to common justice; and he could not help saying, that he was astonished at what his noble friend[2] and the honourable baronet[3] had said that night on some parts of this subject.

Again he would say, that if he saw a noble lord[4] called to the situation of a secretary of state, he was ready to ask, without the fear of receiving any answer that would disappoint him, whether gentlemen on the other side knew any man, who was superior to that noble lord; who for the last ten years had more experience of state affairs, and who had given greater proof of steady attention to public business; of a better understanding; of more information; who possessed in a greater degree all those qualities which go to qualify a man for great affairs? He was ready to ask gentlemen on the other side, if they knew any one among themselves who was superior to his noble friend? Let them give him the answer. He should like to take the opinions of the different individuals on the other side, if it were not a painful thing to put it to their modesty, whether any one among them, except one honourable gentleman[5] whose attendance was of late so rare that he might almost be considered as a *new* member—whose transcendent talents, indeed, made him an exception to almost any rule in every thing that required uncommon powers, but whose conduct was also what ought, generally speaking, to be an exception also to the rules which ought to guide the affairs of this country; which conduct had been at variance in some respects from that of almost every other public man, and which, if followed, must have been highly injurious to the true interest of this country—he repeated it, he knew of no one on the opposite side of the house (except the honourable gentleman

1 Mr. Addington. 2 Lord Temple. 3 Sir Wm. Young.
*** Lord Hawkesbury. • Mr. Fox.**

he had alluded to, whose experience was as great as his faculties were transcendent), that was more than equal to his noble friend in capacity for business. He did not mean to offer any incivility to gentlemen on the other side; but he did not think that he had offered either of them any disparagement whatever, when he said, that neither of them was more than equal to his noble friend.

Was it necessary for him to say much of the faculties and fitness, in every particular, of a certain noble lord [1] who was likely soon to have the custody of the great seal? He was, surely, not new to this country, whose character for legal knowledge, for integrity, and for a cluster of those qualities which fit him for that high office, had been long acknowledged. There was no pledge necessary on behalf of such a character.

Of other individuals of the new administration, he could say much; but if we were to indulge his feelings upon this topic, he should be in danger of wearying the house. There was, however, one character of whom he could not forbear speaking.—It would occur to the house, that it was not an easy thing to supply the place of the late first lord of the admiralty, Earl Spencer; and yet, he should think, that the name of Earl St. Vincent would appear in a satisfactory light to the house, even as the successor of the noble earl, or of any other man known to this country; and that the more especially in a period of war, which called for all the exertion of the executive government. Was this appointment not such as to support the hope of this country, that it would come soon to the termination of a contest which we had conducted near to a conclusion—["Hear! Hear!" from the other side.]—which he trusted we had conducted near to a conclusion. But whether the contest was yet to be long or short, until the object of it were secured, he hoped the spirit of the country would not be impaired, nor in any degree slackened, but exerted with vigour towards bringing it to a termination; or, if we were still to struggle with continued difficulties, he would ask, was not the name of that noble earl a shield and bulwark to the nation? He would therefore say, that gentlemen spoke with but little reflection, or even consideration, when they said the present administration were not entitled to the confidence of that house, or of the public—he meant, of course, no more than a constitutional confidence. All he contended for was, that unless some good reason were assigned to the contrary, the house was bound, by

[1] **Lord Eldon.**

the best principles of policy, as well as by the true spirit of the constitution of this country, to wait to see the conduct of the ministers of the crown, before they should withhold their confidence. On this subject of confidence, let not gentlemen suppose that a committee on the state of the nation could be of the least use, because nothing that could be there disclosed could give the house more information than the house possessed already on that matter; nor could any thing be done in that committee that could alter the present posture of the executive government, unless the committee should pass a resolution to withdraw its confidence from the present ministers of the crown, and to give it to their opponent[1] and his friends, in order to make them successors to them; which would be a pretty strong measure, and border on an encroachment on the prerogative, besides introducing principles the very reverse of those, which had hitherto invariably had the sanction of parliament. He did not mean to use any opprobrious epithets towards gentlemen on the other side; but he certainly did not say more than was warranted by fact, when he said, that, by the constant course of the determination of parliament, the principles of these gentlemen had been reprobated.

Having said this, he would now utter a word or two for his colleagues, and for himself. With regard to their quitting their offices, he did not see any mystery about that subject, and he thought he was entitled to rely on the candour of gentlemen on the other side for believing the sincerity of their declarations on the occasion. The honourable gentleman[2] who spoke first, was pleased to say, he would allow that, in case of a public measure of importance which a minister found he could not propose with success, or that he was not able to propose as a measure which was assuredly to receive the assistance of those who compose the executive government, and that such a measure a minister could not conscientiously give up or abandon—that such a condition of things would be sufficient to excuse a minister for retiring, and would, indeed, give a minister a right to retire. Now, after that allowance of the honourable gentleman, it was matter of astonishment to him that any doubt could have been entertained by that honourable gentleman on that part of the subject, or that he did not at once admit, that the circumstance which had been sufficiently explained already, had amounted, in the opinion of that honourable gentleman, to a complete justification of himself

[1] Mr. Fox. [2] Mr. Grey.

and others who had retired. He admitted, however, to the honourable gentleman, that if a person who filled an office of important trust under government, had formed the project of proposing some measure which did not appear to him to be of much public importance, although he had made up his mind upon it, but which he could not carry into effect, seeing clearly that the bent of the government of which he made a part was against him, then it was the duty of such a minister to forego that opinion, and to sacrifice rather than withdraw his assistance from government in the hour of peril.

Mr. Pitt said, it was extremely painful to him to be obliged to say so much, and so long to occupy the attention of the house ; but he would observe, that he had lived to very little purpose for the last seventeen years of his life, if it was necessary for him to say, that he had not quitted his situation in order to shrink from its difficulties; for, in the whole of that time, he had acted, whether well or ill, it was not for him to say, but certainly in a manner that had no resemblance to shrinking from difficulty. He might say this, if he were to strike the seventeen years out of the account, and refer only to what had taken place within the last two months ; and he would venture to allege, that enough had happened within that time to wipe off the idea of his being disposed to shrink from difficulty, or wishing to get rid of any responsibility. What had happened within that period had afforded him an opportunity of shewing, in a particular manner, that he was willing to be responsible to any extent which his situation cast upon him : in that particular he had had the good fortune, however unfortunate the cause, to have shewn that he was not only a party, but that he was the deepest of all parties in responsibility, in the adoption of a measure the most critical with regard to himself and his colleagues. He was therefore led to say, as to the measure which had induced him to quit his situation, that he did believe the importance of it, and the circumstances by which it was attended, to be such, that while he remained in office he should have been unable to bring it forward in the way, which was likely to be eventually successful; and therefore he judged that he should serve less beneficially the public, as well as the parties more immediately the objects of it, in making the attempt, than in desisting from the measure. His idea of the measure itself was, that it was one which upon the whole had been better adopted than refused under all the circumstances: such was also the idea of those who had acted with him, **and**

they had therefore thought it better that they should quit their offices, than continue under such circumstances in his Majesty's service. In doing this they had acted purely from principle ; they had acted in such a manner as had satisfied their own minds, which was to them important; and he hoped they had acted in such a manner as would, one day or other, be perfectly satisfactory to the public, so far as the public should ever think it worth their while to be concerned in his conduct.

The measure to which he alluded, had he proposed it, as at one time he wished, was not one which gentlemen on the other side of the house were likely to look on lightly, although he should have had the good fortune to have their support if he had brought it forward, that is on one part; but he did not think that he should upon the whole of it, nor did he believe those gentlemen would have favoured the whole of the principle on which he should have proposed the measure. He was not anxious to have the question agitated at all at this moment. I do not think, said Mr. Pitt, that this is a period in which it can be agitated beneficially to the public, or even to those who are more immediately the objects of it, and who are supposed to be so interested in its success; but whenever it is agitated, I shall be ready and I shall be willing to go fully into it, and to give at large my opinion on it. I will say only at present, that as to any thing which I and my colleagues meditated to bring forward, I disclaim the very words in common use, "the emancipation of the catholics," or " catholic emancipation." I have never understood that subject so—I never understood the situation of the catholics to be such—I do not now understand the situation of the catholics to be such as that any relief from it could be correctly so described; but I think the few remaining benefits of which they have not yet participated, might have been added safely to the many benefits which have been so bounteously conferred on them in the course of the present reign. I was of opinion, and I am still of opinion, that these benefits, if they had gone before the union, would have been rash and destructive. I was of opinion then,—I am of opinion now, that the very measure I allude to, as a claim of right, cannot be maintained ; and it is on the ground of liberality alone, and political expedience (and in that sense wisdom, as connected with other measures), that I should have thought it desirable, advisable, and important: but I would not have had it founded on a naked proposition, to repeal any one thing which former policy had deemed expedient for the safety of

the church and state. No, Sir, it was a comprehensive and an extensive system which I intended to propose—to relinquish things certainly intended once as a security, which I thought in some respect ineffectual, and which were liable to additional objections, from the very circumstance of the object of the union having been accomplished, and getting other security for the same objects, to have a more consistent and rational security both in church and state, according to the principle, but varying the mode, which the wisdom of our ancestors had adopted to prevent danger. The measure I intended to propose, I think, would give more safety to the church and state, as well as more satisfaction to all classes and all descriptions of the king's subjects, to take away that which no man would wish to remain, provided there could be perfect security without it. The house will, I am sure, forgive me for this part of my address to it.

As to what might be the nature of the measure, I am sure the house will in a moment feel that what I am going to allege will satisfy it, that nothing of this nature could ever be accomplished by having a committee of the whole house on the state of the nation; for, independent of the many things which would be necessary to be done, if such a measure were set on foot, there is one thing which will make it obvious how inefficient for such a purpose a committee on the state of the nation would be. In the first place, that committee would not have any power whatever to interrogate any one member of parliament; and therefore all that part of the speech of the honourable gentleman which tended to connect the committee on the state of the nation with the condition of the catholics in Ireland, although it might serve the purpose of engaging men's affections for a moment, had, in reality, nothing whatever to do with it; and gentlemen are not such novices in the affairs of parliament, as not to know that they may, whenever they please, move this or any other subject, independent of any other consideration, and that there is no necessity for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation for that purpose. I think, however, that the question with regard to the condition of the catholics, according to my view of things, cannot be improved by a committee on the state of the nation being brought forward at this time. It will cast no light whatever on any. one subject connected with the catholic question. I am absolutely certain, as little can it throw on the cause, or the propriety or impropriety of our resignation :—this is too obvious to require

any argument. How can the committee proceed to the examination of the cause of the resignation of his Majesty's ministers, to which some gentlemen, for purposes, perhaps, not very doubtful, have been pleased to attach so much importance? I know of no right which the house of commons itself, still less a committee, can have to require of any man to state his reasons for tendering his resignation to his sovereign; nor is it a common thing for the public to require it. A man very often, indeed, makes his appeal to the public on going out of office, and that sometimes as much with a wish to be re-instated as any thing; but I never heard of a man being called on to exculpate himself from the charge of resigning. But gentlemen say, that, by our being silent on the subject of the catholic question, we have brought the name of our sovereign into disrepute; and the honourable gentleman chooses to put a construction on our remaining silent, and then to ask a question, whether the catholics had or had not been deceived. And upon the obstacles to the measure, as they are stated in a paper, of which I shall take notice shortly, the honourable gentleman says, that *innumerable* obstacles are in the way of the measure. I do not know what paper he took up; I cannot be responsible for it; nor, indeed, for the verbal accuracy of any paper whatever. I believe the word which the honourable gentleman has alluded to was really *insuperable,* and not *innumerable.* Upon that subject, all I will say is this:—That although I wished to submit the question of the catholics to parliament, there were such objections stated as made me feel it impossible, with propriety, to bring the measure forward as a minister. These are the general words I choose to use upon the subject: the honourable gentleman shall draw from me no admissions, and no denials on this subject. He may argue as he pleases from the words I use. [" Hear! Hear! " from the other side.] Gentlemen may draw what inference they please.

But I shall say a few words more upon this subject. Gentlemen say, that I left this case in a state in which the name of the sovereign is brought into question; and they appear to be angry, because I will not tell them whether they ought to be angry or not. They wonder why I do not make it a matter of question, and they put distantly some points in the way of question; but I will not answer interrogatories. I will tell those gentlemen, however, that upon this subject they deceive themselves grossly. Should they be able to establish that the opinion of the sovereign made it impossible to bring

the subject forward, they would gain nothing by it; for, should the opinion of the sovereign be what it might, or the opinion of his servants what it might; of the sovereign to dispense with the services, or of the servant to tender his resignation, it would still remain the same. Let these gentlemen but once be able to shake this principle, and they will have done more than they will be willing to avow towards the destruction of the monarchy: they will have established the most extravagant part of an oligarchy that ever was erected in any state; for then neither the sovereign could dismiss, nor the subject resign, without an explanation being made to the public. So that the sovereign, the father of his people, could never part from his servants, unless he condescended to shew that they gave him bad advice; nor his servants tender their resignation, unless they could prove that something was attempted to be imposed upon them which they could not, in their consciences, approve. Now, I would ask, is that the state, or is it desirable it should be the state, of the monarchy of this country? Certainly it is not. The use of the name of the sovereign for the purpose of influencing opinions in this house, or in any deliberative assembly, is justly deemed unconstitutional. The sovereign exercises his opinion on the sentiments, as well as capacity, of his ministers; and if, upon either, he judges them to be incompetent, or in any degree unfit, it is the prerogative, and, with perfect loyalty, let me add, aye the duty, of the crown to dismiss such ministers. Allow me also to say, that if a minister feels, that, from a sense he entertains of his duty, he ought to propose a measure, but is convinced that his endeavours must be ineffectual, so that his services must be limited to a narrower compass than he could desire, and that success, in some material point, is impossible, he ought to be permitted to retire; but, in proportion to the difficulty which the sovereign may have in accepting the resignation of such a minister, ought to be his love for such a sovereign. I hope I am not deficient in my duty to the best of sovereigns; and I hope the whole ground and motive of my actions will continue to be justified during the whole of his reign. This is all I shall say upon this subject, which may perhaps be saying more than I ought.

With respect, however, to the assurances said, or supposed, to have been held out to the catholics of Ireland, I would add a few words. The honourable gentleman has alluded to a paper circulated in that part of his Majesty's dominions. It was a memorandum sent in the name of a noble lord at the

head of the executive government of Ireland—a character revered by all who know him, and whose name I am persuaded will not be profaned, nor mentioned in this country with any disrespect. I know it to be true that the noble lord did feel it right, as a matter of public duty, to make a communication to persons most immediately among the catholics, and to state the motives which led to the late change that took place in his Majesty's councils, in order to prevent any misrepresentation of that subject then adding to the danger of the public tranquillity. I beg to state that matter clearly and distinctly ; it was my express desire, not conveyed by myself, but through a noble friend[1] of mine sitting near me, that the noble lord should take the opportunity of doing this. I do not arrogate any merit for it; but I think it is an answer to any charge against us upon this subject for remissness, that we lost no time in making that representation and explanation of our motives; and the principle of it was this, that the attempt to realize our wishes at this time would only be productive of public embarrassment. The representation was therefore made; but with respect to the particular paper delivered, it was not pieviously consulted with me how it should be perused, and therefore, for the particular phrases of it I do not hold myself responsible. All the knowledge I derived or conveyed was founded on verbal interpretation. As to the tenor of the paper that I have alluded to, the sentiments in it are conformable to those which I have already expressed in this house, and shall again express whenever I have occasion to deliver my sentiments on that subject; and it is fit, not only that this house should know them, but also that the community at large should know them.—I mean this: that a measure of that sort appeared to me to be of much importance under all the circumstances; and that being unable to bring it forward as a measure of government, I thought I could not therefore in honour remain in the situation in which I then stood; and that I was desirous of letting it also be understood, that, whenever the objection I alluded to did not exist, the same obstacle did not interpose, every thing depending on me, as well as those who thought with me, I should do, for that I was desirous of carrying that measure, thinking it of great importance to the empire at large; but that, in the mean time, if any attempt to press it, so as to endanger the public tranquillity, should be made, or to pervert the affection of any part of his Majesty's subjects, we should take our full share in resisting such

1 Lord Castlcreagh.

attempts, and that we should do so with firmness and resolution. These are the sentiments which I expressed, and I did hope that the day would come when, on the part of the catholics, should such a measure be revived, it would be carried in the only way in which I wished to see it carried, which was certainly conformable to the general tranquillity of the empire. As to any other pledge, I beg leave to give none—I have engaged myself to give none—I will give none—either now or at any time. I have contributed, as far as peaceable endeavours could go, according to my judgment, in the best manner I could at the moment, for the general interests of the country.

This is all I shall say on this part of the subject, and I am ashamed to have been obliged to trouble the house so much as I have done, especially as another branch of it remains, and on which I must still say a few words—it relates to a question, Whether any of those who have retired from office, had so pledged themselves to the catholics as to be under the necessity of resigning their offices because they could not perform their pledge? I beg leave to deny that; and, what is more satisfactory, I believe I am authorized in denying that the catholics conceived themselves to have received any such pledge. I know that the noble lord to whom I have alluded, and my noble friend near me, who must have been a party to such transaction, if any such had passed, did not so convey to me. I do not now, nor ever did, so conceive it. That the catholics might have conceived such an expectation, is most natural.—Why? Because the more attentively I have reflected on it, especially after the union, the measure has appeared to me to be salutary and expedient; and I can have no reason to think that they were less sanguine in their expectations on that subject than I was. That they thought there was a very probable chance for the measure, is most certain; for I believe there was no one in this house, nor, I believe, in the other house of parliament, who, in argument, has attempted to deny that the difficulties would be considerably diminished on this subject, after the measure of the union was accomplished: I was of that opinion when this subject was debated—I am of that opinion still—and the reasons in favour of it do very much preponderate; this, however, was afterwards given up, on motives of expediency. An expectation in favour of this measure there was; but a pledge, I do distinctly state, there was none.

Having said thus much on the change of his Majesty's ministers, and the measure of extending the remaining privi-

leges to the catholics of Ireland, I shall not trouble the house, after the able and convincing statements of my right honourable friend, with any arguments as to the cause and progress of the war, which have been the subject of repeated votes in this house. But, if it were necessary, I could enter into a recapitulation of the same arguments used on the other side of the house, with a repetition of the same answers, and with a new force. I shall, however, say a few words with respect to the general plan of the war. That, in the origin of the contest, the re-establishment of royalty in France was desirable in itself, I do not attempt to deny; for, that end accomplished would have necessarily restored tranquillity to Europe; but I have never yet stated that its re-establishment was the *sine qua non* of peace. I may class the objects of the war under three different heads. The first was the restoration of royalty, and consequently the restoration of peace; the next was the security of internal tranquillity, and the suppression of destructive and anarchical principles; and the third was, the preservation of the national independence and prosperity. If we have failed in one of these objects, we have most completely accomplished the others; and it is no inconsiderable consolation to us, that we have at this moment, in the wreck of surrounding nations, the glory and satisfaction of maintaining the dignity and happiness of the country. We have kept our resources entire, our honour unimpaired, our integrity inviolate, amid all the discordant elements of jarring confederacies; while those states which did not act in unison with the manly protection which we afforded to their wants and prayers, became the victims of the common enemy. We have not lost, in the midst of all the dreadful convulsions which have devastated Europe, a single foot of territory; and we have given to the rest of the world many chances of salvation. These, Sir, were the general objects of the war; and the details of our operations and successes have been so amply enumerated by my right honourable friend, as to render any comment or observation from me unnecessary.

I have only one word to say on the state of the finances, as a charge has been thrown out that it has been a war of unexampled profusion. If on this head any specific charge be made, I can only say that I shall be at all times ready to meet it. I can, however, say, that I have at least the merit of rendering the system more plain than on any former occasion, even when the sums necessary to provide for the exigencies of the public service did not amount to one-tenth of the present dis-

bursements. That consideration, however, wants no committee on the state of the nation. It is a fair comparison made between the expenses of the present war, and that which preceded it; and it is considered at the same time, that the last war was one carried on and conducted by regular means and with accustomed method, and that the present is with a country which stakes its capital in the contest, which, unable to support the warfare with any regular revenue, is compelled to make an inroad upon its stock, and diminish the very source of revenue; and it will be found that the present war has been conducted with unexampled economy and frugality. That an universal pressure has been produced, bearing upon all orders of the people, cannot be denied; but the fact of economical expenditure during the present war must at the same time be admitted. I wish not to go deeply into the subject; but if gentlemen will look at the state of the revenue, excluding the taxes imposed during the present contest, and taking only the taxes which existed at the conclusion of the last peace, they will find that, allowing for some deficiency upon beer and malt, those permanent taxes have increased in produce about 4,000,000/. per annum since the period of that peace. They will also find, that, if they look a little further, the taxes appropriated to the sinking fund now produce little less than 5,000,000/. per annum, making together the sum of 9,000,000/. by which the amount of the permanent revenue has been increased since the conclusion of the last peace—a sum which is within 10,000,000/. of the amount of the interest of all the sums borrowed during the nine years that the war has unfortunately continued; that the expenditure of the present has been very considerably less than in all other former wars, cannot for a moment be disputed. The knowledge of this fact is, I hope, sufficient to operate as some antidote to that despondency which might be derived from a general mention of these topics without bringing them to the test of particular detail. This information is surely competent to annihilate all the alarm of lavish expenditure, and ruinous expenditure, which are so frequently sounded, and from which I know of no benefit that can ensue, but only that species of despondency, the tendency of which is immediately to impair the energy of the country, and rob it of half its vigour.

Late as the hour is, I must advert to one other topic, on which I think it necessary to make some observations, although I shall decline all minute investigation : I mean the subject of

neutral laws and neutral nations, respecting which gentlemen on the other side seem so much inclined to impute rashness, precipitancy, and impolicy to his Majesty's late ministers. They speak as if the blow was already struck, or had been inevitably decided on; but no man can say that all hopes of pacification with the northern powers are wholly excluded. It was the earnest wish of those ministers that the extremity of war might be avoided: at the same time they were prepared for both :—either to commence a war with vigour and energy, in defence of the dearest rights and interests of the country, or finally to settle the question in dispute on terms consistent with the honour and dignity of the country. Were his Majesty's ministers tamely to suffer the country to be borne down by the hostility of the northern powers, or were they quietly to allow those powers to abuse and kick it out of its right? They wished to bring the question to a prompt decision, whilst at the same time they rendered the fall smooth for pacific negociation—[Here Mr. Pitt went over the grounds of the question relative to neutral bottoms, denying that free bottoms make free goods; contending that contraband of war ought to include naval as well as military stores; maintaining that ports ought to be considered in a state of blockade when it was unsafe for vessels to enter them, although the ports were not actually blocked up; and denying the right of convoy to preclude neutral ships from being searched. In support of these opinions, he quoted the decisions of courts of law, and treaties entered into between this country and various other powers, in which he contended the rights now claimed by this country had been expressly acknowledged. He then proceeded as follows:]—It was during the short time, Sir, that the right honourable gentleman[1] filled the office of secretary of state, who, from the greatness of his genius, might have been led to those bold attempts which by common minds would be denominated rashness—it was during that short period that he advised his Majesty to cede these rights in behalf of the Empress of Russia, for the purpose of purchasing her friendship, and preventing that sovereign from joining France, with whom we were then at war. How far this was good policy I will not now pretend to discuss : but in this, as in every other cession of the same nature, it is plain the right rested in this country, since it could not give what it did not possess; it was ceded as a matter of favour, not given up as a matter of right.

1 Mr. Fox.

Let it, however, be granted, that it was an act of sound policy to make that cession to Russia, that it was so at that time when our naval inferiority was too unfortunately conspicuous—when we were at war with France, with Spain, and with Holland, and when the addition of Russian hostility might have been a serious evil; does it follow that, at the present moment, when the fleets of all the northern powers combined with those of France and Spain, and of Holland, would be unequal to a contest with the great and superior naval power of England—does it follow, that we are to sacrifice the maritime greatness of Britain at the shrine of Russia? Shall we allow entire freedom to the trade of France?—shall we suffer that country to send out her 12,000,000/. of exports, and receive her imports in return, to enlarge private capital, and increase the public stock?—shall we allow her to receive naval stores undisturbed, and to rebuild and refit that navy which the valour of our seamen has destroyed?—shall we voluntarily give up our maritime consequence, and expose ourselves to scorn, to derision, and contempt? No man can deplore more than I do the loss of human blood—the calamities and the distresses of war; but will you silently stand by, and, acknowledging these monstrous and unheard-of principles of neutrality, ensure your enemy against the effects of your hostility? Four nations have leagued to produce a new code of maritime laws, in defiance of the established law of nations, and in defiance of the most solemn treaties and engagements, which they endeavour arbitrarily to force upon Europe; what is this but the same jacobin principle which proclaimed the Rights of Man, which produced the French revolution, which generated the wildest anarchy, and spread horror and devastation through that unfortunate country? Whatever shape it assumes, it is a violation of public faith, it is a violation of the rights of England, and imperiously calls upon Englishmen to resist it even to the last shilling and the last drop of blood, rather than tamely submit to degrading concession, or meanly yield the rights of the country to shameful usurpation.

ON THE PRELIMINARIES OF PEACE

November 3, 1801.[1]

MR. PITT said, that upon a subject in itself of such importance, and one upon which it was unfortunately his lot to differ from some with whom it had been his happiness to have been connected by the strictest ties of friendship, for the greater part of his life, he was anxious to deliver his sentiments, before the attention of the house, and his own powers, should be exhausted by fatigue. In considering the question, whether these terms should be accepted or rejected, there was one proposition which he might lay down, with, he believed, but little danger of contradiction, and that was, that for some time past, all rational, all thinking men, had concurred in an opinion, that whatever their wishes might have been, whatever hopes might at different periods of the war have been entertained, yet, after the events which had taken place on the continent of Europe, the question of peace or war between Great Britain and France, became a question of terms only. In laying down this proposition, he desired not to have it admitted in words, and rejected in substance. After the conclusion of the peace between France and the great continental powers, after the dissolution of the confederacy of the states of Europe—a confederacy which he had supported to the utmost of his power, and with respect to which he still retained the same sentiments ;—after the dissolution, however, of that confederacy, it became merely a question of the terms to be obtained for ourselves, and for those allies who still remained faithful to us and to their own interests. In saying this, he was aware that he differed from many, of whose judgments he had the highest opinion, and whom he both loved and honoured; but it was the firm

[1] The house having proceeded to the order of the day for taking into consideration the preliminary articles of peace with the French Republic, that part of his Majesty's speech which related to the preliminary treaty, and also the treaty itself were read.

It was then moved by Sir Edmund Hartop,—" That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, thanking his Majesty for being graciously pleased to order the preliminaries of peace with France to be laid before that House—To assure his Majesty of their just sense of this fresh instance of his paternal care for the welfare and happiness of his people ; and to express their firm reliance, that the final ratification of those preliminaries will be highly advantageous to the interests, and honourable to the character, of the British nation."

conviction of his mind, and it was his duty both to the house and the public, fully and candidly to state his sentiments upon the subject. When he said, that the question of peace or war between this country and France was a question of terms only, he wished to be understood as being more anxious about the general complexion of the peace, as affecting the character of this country for good faith, honour, and generosity, than he was about any particular acquisition that might be made, or any specific object that might be attained.

In considering the terms that ought to be accepted, it would be necessary to inquire, in the first instance, what would be the expense of continuing the contest, what were the difficulties with which it would be attended, and what hopes could be entertained of its ultimate success? It was undoubtedly the duty of every government, in negociating a treaty of peace, to obtain the best possible terms; but it was sometimes difficult to know how far particular points might be pressed without running the risk of breaking off the negociation. For his own part, he had no hesitation to declare, that he would rather close with an enemy upon terms short even of the fair pretensions of the country, provided they were not inconsistent with honour and security, than continue the contest for any particular possession. He knew that when he had the honour of a seat in his Majesty's councils, if it had come to a question of terms, and the pacific dispositions of the enemy corresponded with ours, he for one should have acted upon that principle; and knowing that to be his own feeling upon the subject, he should neither act with fairness nor candour if he did not apply it to another administration. He did not pretend to state to the house, that this peace fully answered all his wishes: but the government had undoubtedly endeavoured to obtain the best terms they could for the country; and he was ready to contend, that the difference between the terms we had obtained and those of retaining all which we had given up, would not have justified ministers in protracting the war. He was anxious upon this subject to speak plainly, because it was one on which he ought to have no reserve, either with the house or with the country. What the terms were to which this country ought to look in the present state of Europe, had been, in his opinion, most accurately and most ably described by his noble friend.[1] The principle upon which administration acted, and in which he perfectly concurred with them, was, that in select-

1 Lord Hawkesbury.

ing those acquisitions which we wished to retain, it was our interest not to aim so much at keeping possession of any fresh conquest which we did not materially want, as to endeavour to retain those acquisitions which, from their situation, or from other causes, were the best calculated for confirming and securing our ancient territories. The object which must naturally first present itself to every minister, must be to give additional vigour to our maritime strength, and security to our colonial possessions. It was to them we were indebted for the unparalleled exertions which we have been enabled to make in the course of this long and eventful contest; it was by them that we were enabled, in the wreck of Europe, not only to effect our own security, but to hold out to our allies the means of safety, if they had been but true to themselves.

In thus concluding the subject, it was necessary to look to the leading quarters of the world in which we were to seek for this security. It was evident that our acquisitions were all in the Mediterranean, in the East and in the West Indies. Those who thought that this country ought to retain all its acquisitions, would of course consider any cession made by us as incompatible either with our safety or with our honour. But those who did not go that length, would agree with him in thinking, that when we were to give back a part, and retain a part of our conquests, it was our duty to consider, which of them were the best calculated to promote the two great leading objects to which he had before alluded ; and if it should appear, upon examining the present treaty of peace, that in two out of the three quarters which he had mentioned, viz. in the East and West Indies, we had retained such possessions, as were the best calculated to effect the security of our ancient possessions, we had, every circumstance considered, done as much as could be expected. Without undervaluing our conquests in the Mediterranean, and the gallant achievements by which they had been effected, especially the capture of Malta (and certainly no man was less inclined to undervalue them than he was), yet it must be admitted by every man acquainted with the real interests of this country, that, compared with the East and West Indies, the Mediterranean is but a secondary consideration: indeed this was a proposition so obvious, that it was unnecessary for him to enter into any arguments upon the subject.

Of the importance of the Levant trade, much had formerly been said : volumes had been written upon it, and even nations

had gone to war to obtain it. The value of that trade, even in the periods to which he had alluded, had been much exaggerated; but even supposing those statements to have been correct, they applied to times when the other great branches of our trade, to which we owed our present greatness and our naval superiority, did not exist—he alluded to the great increase of our manufactures—to our great internal trade—to our commerce with Ireland, with the United States of America, with the East and the West Indies: it was these which formed the sinews of our strength, and compared with which the Levant trade was trifling. In another point of view, he admitted that possessions in the Mediterranean were of importance to enable us to co-operate with any continental power or powers, with whom we might happen to be in alliance. He agreed with his noble friend,[1] that when there was not a powerful confederacy on the continent in our favour, this country, with all its naval superiority, could not make any very serious efforts on the continent; yet, in the case of such a confederacy, much undoubtedly would be done by the co-operation of the British navy in the Mediterranean. But at the present moment, and situated as Europe at present is, we ought not, upon any one principle of wisdom or policy, to prefer acquisitions in the Mediterranean, to the attainment of the means of giving additional security to our possessions in the East and West Indies. It was upon this principle that he heartily approved of the choice which ministers had made, in preferring our security in the West Indies to any acquisitions that we might have made in the Mediterranean; because he considered it as a rule of prudence which ought never to be deviated from, not unnecessarily to mortify the feelings or pride of an enemy—[" Hear ! hear!" from the other side]—Gentlemen, from their manner, seemed to think that he had not always adhered to that maxim : he would not interrupt his argument by entering into a personal defence of himself; but, whenever gentlemen were inclined to discuss that point, he was perfectly ready to meet them, giving them the full benefit of any expressions that he had ever used. Supposing the events of the war to be equally balanced, and in negociating for one or two possessions, both of equal value, but that our possessing one of them would hurt the feelings or mortify the pride of the enemy more than the other, he should think that a justifiable reason for selecting the other : he did not say this

[1] **Lord Castlereagh***

from any affectation of sentiment, or peculiar tenderness towards the enemy, but because an enemy would not give up such a possession without obtaining from us more than an equivalent. Upon this principle, he hoped the house would concur with him in thinking, that we ought not to insist upon retaining the island of Malta. If our object had been to retain any possession which had formerly belonged to the enemy, and which we had captured from them, with the view of adding to the security of our old dominions, then Malta did not come under the description, because it was not an ancient possession of the enemy, but had been acquired by him unjustly from a third power. It therefore appeared to him more consistent with wisdom and sound policy, rather to put Malta under the protection of a third power, capable of protecting it, than, by retaining it ourselves, to mortify the pride and attract the jealousy of the enemy.

The other possession which we had acquired, and upon the propriety of retaining which, much had been said, was Minorca. With respect to this island, he perfectly concurred in the opinion of his noble friend,[1] that it would always belong to the power who possessed the greatest maritime strength: the experience of the four last wars proved the justice of this observation; for Minorca had regularly shifted hands according to the preponderance of maritime strength in the Mediterranean. In time of peace, Minorca was a possession of no great importance or utility; in time of war, it could be of no use whatever, unless we possessed a maritime superiority; and if we did possess that superiority, experience had shewn that it would probably fall into our hands. Upon these grounds, he, for one, would not have advised much to be given in another quarter for the purpose of enabling us to retain the island of Minorca, doubting, as he did, whether in time of peace it was worth the expense of a garrison. He thought, therefore, that we were justified in looking to the East and West Indies for the possessions which it was our interest to retain; but he could not help expressing his regret, that circumstances were such as to prevent us from retaining a place so important in many points of view as the island of Malta: he lamented also, that it was not possible for us to have made a more definitive arrangement respecting its future fate; but unless we had been prepared to say that we would retain it ourselves, he did not know any better plan that could be

[1] **Lord Hawkcsbury.**

adopted, than to make it independent both of England and France.

In turning his attention to the East Indies, he certainly saw cause for regret, because the opinion he had been taught to entertain of the value of the Cape of Good Hope was much higher than that expressed by his noble friend. He knew there were great authorities against him; but on the other hand, from what he had heard from a noble marquis,[1] and from a right honourable friend[2] of his, who had long presided over the affairs of India, he was induced to think the Cape of Good Hope a more important place than it had been represented on this occasion. But thinking thus highly as he did of the Cape, he considered it as far inferior indeed to Ceylon, which he looked upon to be, of all the places upon the face of the globe, the one which would add most to the security of our East Indian possessions, and as placing our dominions in that quarter in a greater degree of safety than they had been in from the first hour that we set our foot on the continent of India. An honourable friend[3] of his, on the other side of the house, had lamented that we had not stipulated for the retention of Cochin, and stated, that in the former negociations Lord Malmesbury had been instructed to insist upon its remaining in our possession. How far Lord Malmesbury was instructed to insist upon, or recede from, certain points contained in that *projet,* he did not feel himself now at liberty to state; but he believed no man would be inclined to say, that it must of necessity be an *ultimatum,* because it was contained in *a.projet* Indeed one of the complaints which we had against the French upon that occasion was, that they wanted us, contrary to every diplomatic form, to give in our ultimatum first. He knew that it was the opinion, at that time, of a noble marquis to whom he had before alluded, and who had rendered such essential services in India—but he was wrong in particularizing India, for there was scarcely a quarter of the globe in which this country had not derived important advantages from the exalted talents and virtues of that noble person, who was now about to receive the last reward of his services, in putting the finishing hand to a treaty which would give peace to the world, after a war in which he had had so large a share in averting from this country the dangers which threatened the most vulnerable part of our possessions—that the retaining of Cochin was necessary to the

[1] **Marquis Cornwallis.** [2] **Mr. Dundas.**
[3] **Mr. T. Grenville.**

security of our ftidian dominions. But the noble marquis, he was sure, did not now retain the same opinion, because its importance then depended upon its being a frontier post, to secure us from an enemy whom we had since completely destroyed. It would not surely be contended for a moment, that, when the power of Tippoo Sultaun was entire, and when there was a direct road from his dominions into ours, Cochin was not of infinitely more importance than it could be now when his dominions were in our possession. He did not wish to give a ludicrous illustration of this argument; but he was really so much astonished at what had been said upon this point, that he could not help stating a case which appeared to him directly in point with the present. If we were to look into the ancient periods of our history, when Scotland was a separate kingdom, hostile to us, and in strict alliance with France, the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed was a place of the greatest importance to us as a fortified frontier post; but surely it could not be said to be of equal importance now, when Scotland and England are united into one kingdom. This parallel did not appear to him to be exaggerated; and if Cochin was of no importance as a military post, he was inclined to think that its commercial value was not very great. As to the advantages that we must derive from the possession of Ceylon, it was unnecessary for him to enlarge upon them—they were too obvious not to be felt by everybody. With regard to the Cape, he had before stated his opinion of its value; but if we could not retain it without continuing the war, he thought ministers had acted wisely in giving it up upon the terms they had, because, in point of value, it was inferior to Ceylon and Trinidad.

He now came to the consideration of our situation in the West Indies; and he was decidedly of opinion, that, of all the islands which the fortune of war had put into our hands in that quarter, Trinidad was the most valuable—he should prefer it even to Martinico—undoubtedly as a protection to our Leeward Islands it was the better of the two, and, in point of intrinsic value, the more important. As to its value as a post from which we might direct our future operations against the possessions of Spain in South America, it must be felt by every one to be the best situated of any part in the West Indies. He had always been of opinion, that when it came to be a question merely of terms between England and France, we ought to retain the possession of one of the great naval stations in the West Indies, because our great want in that quarter was a naval

port. The four great naval stations were Guadaloupe, Martinico, St. Lucia, and Trinadad; and those of Trinidad and Martinico were the best, and the former the better of the two.

He would now trouble the house shortly upon the subject of our allies. With respect to the Porte we had done every thing that we were bound to do: nay more—we had compelled the French to the evacuation of Egypt, and had stipulated for the integrity of her dominions. There was another object which we had obtained, and to which he did not think so much importance had been given as it deserved; he meant the establishment of an infant power, viz. the republic of the Seven Islands, which would perhaps have otherwise fallen under the dominion of France: this certainly was an acquisition of great importance for this country, not inferior, perhaps, to the possession of Malta itself. The only answer he had heard upon the subject was, that there had been a treaty concluded between France and the Porte, by which the evacuation of Egypt was stipulated for; but it could not be for a moment doubted that it was to the exertions of this country, and to the brilliant achievements of our army and navy, that the evacuation of Egypt must be attributed: and if France had, by a diplomatic trick, taken the advantage of this in two treaties, that could not derogate from the merit of this country.

With regard to Naples, we were not bound to do any thing for her. She had even desired to be released from her engagements to us: but she was compelled to this by an over-ruling necessity; and the government of this country, in its conduct towards Naples, had only acted in conformity to its own interests, and that upon large and liberal grounds, in endeavouring to repair the fortunes of an ally who had given way only to force. The honourable gentleman[1] had argued, that we ought to have guaranteed to Naples her dominions, because, from the contiguity of the Cisalpine republic to Naples, the French might, in pursuance of the treaty, evacuate their territories one day, and re-enter them the next; but if, from the situation of Europe, the present stipulation could not effect the security of Naples, it must be obvious that any guarantee would be equally unavailing.

With regard to Sardinia, the same observations were applicable; for we were not bound to interfere for her, unless it was to be maintained that we were to take upon ourselves the task of settling the affairs of the continent. But if we were unable

[1] Mr. T. Grenville.

to settle the affairs of that part of the continent which was in our own neighbourhood, with what effect of propriety could we attempt it in Italy? He was ready to grant that we ought to have claimed Piedmont for its sovereign, but could we have obtained it? Could we have procured its restoration, unless we could have disposed of the King of Etruria, unless we could have gained the Cisalpine and Ligurian republics, and driven the French from the mountains of Switzerland? Unless we could have done all this, it would have been in vain to restore the King of Sardinia to his capital, surrounded as he would have been by the French, and by their dependent and affiliated republics.

As to Portugal, every body must lament her misfortunes. But if it was right in her to ask to be released from her engagements to us, and if it was right in us to consent to it, then clearly we were absolved from any obligation to her, because an obligation which is put an end to on the one side, can, upon no fair reasoning, bo said to continue on the other. As to the cession of Olivenza, it certainly was not of any great importance: but much had been said about the territory which France had obtained from Portugal in South America, and a considerable degree of geographical knowledge had been displayed in tracing the course of rivers; but gentlemen should recollect, that a South American and an European river were materially different; for when you were talking of the banks of a river in South America, it was in fact very often little less than the coasts of an ocean. It had been said, "you affect to guarantee the integrity of Portugal, but it is only after France and Spain have taken every thing they wished for." But this again was not correct. The treaty of Badajoz certainly did not give to France all she desired, because France, by a subsequent treaty, extorts another cession of still greater importance to her. What happens then? Portugal has given up this second portion of her territory by force, when you interfere and cancel the second treaty, and bring them back to the stipulations in the first. To you, then, Portugal owes this difference in the limits of her South American empire, and to her you have acted not only with good faith, but with dignified liberality.

The only remaining ally was the Prince of Orange. From our ancient connexions, from our gratitude for the services of the house of Orange at the period of the revolution, from his connection with our sovereign, we could not but take a lively interest in his fate, and we had shewn it by our conduct: he

was not to be told of the guarantee of the constitution of Holland, without recalling to the recollection of the house the efforts we had made to defend, the unparalleled exertions we had used to restore him to his dominions. Even on the present occasion his interests had not been neglected: we did interfere for him; and we were told that his interests were at that time the subject of negociation, and that he would receive an indemnity. Even if we were to take that upon ourselves, it ought not to stand in the way of a great national arrangement. Thus stood the case with regard to our acquisitions and to our allies.

But it had been said, that we ought to have obtained more; that we ought to have obtained something to balance the great increase of power which France had obtained; that we have given France the means of increasing her maritime strength, and, in short, that "we have signed the death-warrant of the country/' Now, in the first place, if we had retained all our conquests, it would not have made any difference to us in point of security. He did not mean to say, he would not have retained them all if he could; but they were no more important than as they would give us a little more or a little less of colonial power, and only tended to promote our security by increasing our finance. But would the acquisition of all these islands have enabled us to counterbalance the power which France had acquired on the continent? They would only give us a little more wealth; but a little more wealth would be badly purchased by a little more war: he should think so, even if we could be sure that one year's more war would give it to us, particularly when it was recollected how many years we had now been engaged in this contest. In speaking, however, about our resources, he would take upon himself to state, (and he hoped the house would give him credit for some knowledge upon the subject,) that if any case of necessity should arise, or if our honour should require another contest, we were far, very far indeed, from the end of our pecuniary resources, which, he was happy to say, were greater than the enemy, or even the people of this country themselves, had an idea of. For the purpose of defence, or for the security of our honour, we had still resources in abundance: but they ought to be kept for those purposes, and not lavished away in continuing a contest with the certainty of enormous expense. We might sit down in a worse relative situation than we were in at present, our object not obtained, our security not effected. As to the

general point, we could not now think of balancing the powers on the continent. It was undoubtedly right, that if the French had conquered much, we ought also to endeavour to retain much; but in treating with France we were not to consider what France had got from other countries, but what was the relative situation between us and France.

Gentlemen had talked of the *uti possidetis;* but France had not insisted upon the principle in her treaties with the powers on the continent;—she had not retained the possession of all she had conquered, and consequently we could not be justified in insisting upon that principle. He admitted, that if a country had increased in power and territory faster than its natural rival, (for, without speaking hastily, he must consider France in that character) that might justify the engaging in a confederacy to bring him back to his ancient strength, but if he had been able to dissolve that confederacy, that would perhaps be the worst reason in the world why, when we came to make peace with him, we were 'o expect the more favourable terms. It would be but bad reasoning, if one power were to say to another, "You are much too powerful for us, we have not the means of reducing that power by force, and therefore you must cede to us a portion of your territories, in order to make us equal in point of strength." Gentlemen might undoubtedly wish this, but that which regulated wishes would not regulate actions : many things might be prayed for, that were hardly to be expected in reality. But he did not see that we were giving to the enemy all this colonial wealth and maritime power which had been represented; what we gave back was not only smaller than what we retained, but much of it was in a ruined state. He was therefore inclined to think, that, for many years at least, we should have the colonial trade, and that too increasing in extent and value. That we should not have been justified in asking for more, he did not mean to assert; but that we should have got more, or that we ought to have continued the war to increase our possessions, was a proposition to which he could not give his assent.

Allusions had been made to former opinions and language; upon this subject he should only say, that, peace having been restored between England and France, forbearance of language and terms of respect were proper; but it would be affectation and hypocrisy *in* him to say that he had changed, or could change, his opinion of the character of the person presiding in France, until he saw a train of conduct which would justify

that change. He would not now occupy the attention of the house by entering into a discussion of the origin of the war; the unjust aggression which was made upon us was established by recent evidence; but it was unnecessary to enter into it now, because upon that subject the opinion of the house and of the country was fixed. The great object of the war on our part was defence for ourselves and for the rest of the world, in a war waged against most of the nations of Europe, but against us with particular malignity. Security was our great object; there were different means of accomplishing it, with better or worse prospects of success; and, according to the different variations of policy occasioned by a change of circumstances, we still pursued our great object, security. In order to obtain it we certainly did look for the subversion of that government which was founded upon revolutionary principles. We never at any one period said, that, as a *sine qua non*, we insisted upon the restoration of the old government of France,—we only said, there was no government with which we could treat. This was our language up to 1796: but in no one instance did we ever insist upon restoring the monarchy; though, said Mr. Pitt, I do not hesitate to acknowledge, that it would have been more consistent with the wishes of ministers, and with the interest and security of this country. I am equally ready to confess, that I gave up my hopes with the greatest reluctance; and I shall, to my dying day, lament that there were not, on the part of the other powers of Europe, efforts corresponding to our own, for the accomplishment of that great work. There were periods during the continuance of the war, in which I had hopes of our being able to put together the scattered fragments of that great and venerable edifice; to have restored the exiled nobility of France; to have restored a government, certainly not free from defects, but built upon sober and regular foundations, in the stead of that mad system of innovation which threatened, and had nearly accomplished, the destruction of Europe.

> ***Me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam***
> ***AuspiciiS) et sponte mea componere curas;***
> ***Urbem Trojanam primum dulcesque meorum***
> ***Relliquias colerem, Priami tecta alta manerent,***
> ***Et recidiva manu posuissem Pergama victis.***

This, it was true, had been found unattainable; but we had the satisfaction of knowing, that we had survived the violence of the revolutionary fever, and we had seen the extent of its

principles abated:—We had seen jacobinism deprived of its fascination; we had seen it stripped of the name and pretext of liberty; it had shewn itself to be capable only of destroying, not of building, and that it must necessarily end in a military despotism. He trusted this important lesson would not be thrown away upon the world. Being disappointed in our hopes of being able to drive France within her ancient limits, and even to make barriers against her further incursions, it became then necessary, with the change of circumstances, to change our objects; for he did not know a more fatal error, than to look only at one object, and obstinately to pursue it, when the hope of accomplishing it no longer remained. If it became impossible for us to obtain the full object of our wishes, wisdom and policy both required that we should endeavour to obtain that which was next best. In saying this, he was not sensible of inconsistency, either in his former language or conduct, in refusing to treat with the person who now holds the destinies of France; because when he formerly declined treating with him, he then said, that if events should take the turn they had since done, he should have no objection to treat with him.

He would now add but very little more to what he had said. He could not agree with those gentlemen who seemed to think that France had grown so much stronger in proportion to what we had; these gloomy apprehensions seemed to him to be almost wholly without foundation. This country always was, and he trusted always would be, able to check the ambitious projects of France, and to give that degree of assistance to the rest of Europe which they had done upon this occasion; and he wished it had been done with more effect. But when the immense acquisitions which France had made were taken into consideration on the one hand, it was but fair, on the other, to consider what she had lost in population, in commerce, in capital, and in habits of industry: the desolation produced by convulsions, such as France had undergone, could not be repaired even by large acquisitions of territory. Comparing therefore what France has gained with what she had lost, this enormous increase of power was not quite so apparent as some gentlemen on the other side seemed to apprehend. When he took into consideration the immense wealth of this country, and the natural and legitimate growth of that wealth, so much superior to the produce of rapacity and plunder, he could **not** but entertain the hope, founded in

justice and in nature, of its solidity. This hope was strengthened by collateral considerations, when he looked to the great increase of our maritime power; when he cpntemplated the additional naval triumphs that we had obtained ; when he looked to the brilliant victories of our armies, gained over the flower of the troops of France,—troops which, in the opinion of many, were invincible—when he reflected upon these glorious achievements, though he could not but lament our disappointment in some objects, he had the satisfaction of thinking that we had added strength to our security, and lustre to our national character. Since the treaty which had taken place at Lisle, we had increased in wealth and commerce. But there were some important events which had given the greatest consolidation to our strength, and as such, should not be forgotten. The destruction of the power of Tippoo Sultaun in India, who had fallen a victim to bis attachment to France, and his perfidy to us, would surely be thought an important achievement. It had frequently been observed, that great dangers frequently produced, in nations of a manly cast of mind, great and noble exertions: so when the most unparalleled danger threatened the sister kingdom, the feelings of a common cause between the people of both countries had enabled them to overcome prejudices, some of them perhaps laudable, and all of them deep-rooted, and led to that happy union, which adds more to the power and strength of the British empire, than all the conquests of one and indivisible France do to that country. These were consolations which he wished to recall to the recollection of those who entertained gloomy apprehensions about the strength and resources of Great Britain.

If any additional proofs were wanting to prove her ability to protect her honour and maintain her interests, let gentlemen look to the last campaign, and, they would see Great Britain contending against a powerful confederacy in the North; they would see her fighting for those objects at once in Egypt and in the Baltic, and they would see her successful in both. We had shewn, that we were ready to meet the threatened invasion at home, and could send troops to triumph over the French in the barren sands of Egypt, before a man could escape from Toulon, to reinforce their blocked-up army; we had met the menaced invasion by attacking France on her own coasts, and we had seen those ships which were destined for the invasion of this country moored and chained to their

shores, and finding protection only in their batteries. These were not only sources of justifiable pride, but grounds of solid security. What might be the future object of the Chief Consul of France, he knew not; but if it were to exercise a military despotism, he would venture to predict, that he would not select this country for the first object of his attack; and if we were true to ourselves we had little to fear from that attack, let it come when it would. But though he did not entertain apprehensions, yet he could not concur with those who thought we ought to lay aside all caution; if such policy were adopted, there would indeed be ground for most serious apprehensions: he hoped every measure would be adopted, which prudence could suggest, to do away animosity between the two countries, and to avoid every ground of irritation by sincerity on our part. This, however, on the other hand, was not to be done by paying abject court to France. We must depend for security only upon ourselves. If, however, the views of France were correspondent with our own, we had every prospect of enjoying a long peace. He saw some symptoms that they were, though upon this he had no certain knowledge; but he would never rely upon personal character for the security of his country. He was inclined to hope every thing that was good, but he was bound to act as if he feared otherwise.

[He concluded by giving his assent to the motion.]

THE END

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