

ers, who had entrusted him with a discretionary power on this expedition, the necessity of bringing some persons from Flanders, who were acquainted with the management of artillery; and as he hoped to have formed an immediate junction with the Royalists, he had appointed two French officers, of great merit, his aids-du camp, and another as his secretary; because he conceived, the junction once made, his little army was not to be grafted into that of the Royalists, but was to form a part of that which he had the honor to command. In these circumstances, he thought himself justified in making the appointments on which such animadversions had been made.

He concluded by saying, that he took the whole responsibility upon himself, because his Majesty's Ministers had fully approved of the appointment he had recommended to them.

Lord Lauderdale rose to justify the notice that had been taken in the House of Commons of these appointments. Had ministers been as candid and explicit as the Noble Lord, it would have been deemed satisfactory; but they had observed a full silence, and had not even deigned to give the least explanation on the subject.

Lord Greenville wished all responsibility for the measures adopted by Earl Moira to attach an administration, who, he contended, had acted legally and constitutionally.

NATIONAL CONVENTION.

TUESDAY, February 4.

The white colonist, admitted yesterday to represent St. Domingo, drew the picture of the actual situation of that island. After enumerating those particulars which are already known, he proceeded to state the burning Cape Francois, and the expulsion of Gallot, the friend of Dumourier, who in conjunction with the rich inhabitants, projected to deliver up the island to the English and Spaniards. He stated, that the blacks with the patriots, had fought against those traitors; and that the civil commissioners, to reward the blacks, had proclaimed the liberty of the slaves throughout the island; that the blacks had sworn perpetual allegiance to France, and the most vigorous resistance to the English, if they should dare to penetrate into the interior parts of the island.

The orator concluded his report by proving, that the rich planters, the ex-nobles, emigrants and rich merchants of St. Domingo, had projected to give up that island to the English.—Applause.

The National Convention then passed the following important decree—

The National convention decrees, that slavery is abolished in all the French colonies. It decrees in consequence, that all the inhabitants of the French colonies, of whatever colour, are French citizens, and from this day forward enjoy all those rights which are secured to them by the declaration of rights and by the Constitution.

A negress who heard this decree, fainted away, and did not recover but by the noise of acclamations, and the shouts of Vive la Republique!—Her sensibility was ordered to be recorded in the minutes of the day.

Danton, after having declared that this decree would KILL PITT, moved that the mode of its execution be referred to the committee of public welfare.—Adopted.

A motion for the annulment of the decree of arrest against Polverel and Santhonax, who are authors of the proclamation of August 29, granting liberty to all the blacks of St. Domingo, was referred to the same committee.

WEDNESDAY February 5.

The committee of public welfare presented the digest of the decree for abolishing slavery in the colonies.

Barrere, in the name of the committee of public welfare, having announced that the army of the North had put itself into motion and made victory the order of the day, proposed General Pichegru to replace Jourdain. Decreed.

FRIDAY, February 7.

A Black deputy ascended the tribune, to denounce several secret assemblies of colonists, whose design it was to restore and cement slaves.

SATURDAY February 8.

Baudouin, in the name of the committee of war and finance presented a long decree, respecting the allowances of meat to be granted to the army.

The Convention decreed it as a principle, that every military man, whatever his rank may be, shall be allowed the same ration that is allowed to all others.

SUNDAY February 9.

One of the Secretaries read a letter, dated Toulon, January 26, of which the following is an extract:

"Last night the bad weather drove into our Road a two masted English ship, laden with coffee and sugar. A republican sloop got up with her and brought her into port. This is another payment upon account." (Signed) "DEBENET."

This day was signalized by an action truly republican: As soon as the Spanish cannons were heard in the French camp, the soldiers who were prisoners at Saint Jan de Luz, for military offences, demanded to march against the enemy: their request was granted, and they were accordingly armed. After their party had gained the victory, these re-

publican soldiers retired quietly, and of their own accord, to their prison.

The convention received this account with transport, and immediately decreed the release of these prisoners.

The popular society of St. Quintin wrote to the convention congratulating it on the decree which made the negroes free, in the following terms:

"LEGISLATORS, "On hearing of the fraternal manner in which you received the two deputies of color from St Domingo, the fraternal embraces given them by the President, the fainting of the negroe woman for joy, we too wept with tenderness and gratitude. We had a negroman in this town, whom we instantly invited to our assembly, and made him a member of our popular society, the fraternal kiss was given him by our President, as a proof how much we are inspired by the emancipation of 700,000 of our brethren.

"Representatives of the people, a member very justly observed in the convention, that this day should prove a death blow to PITT:—Continue as you have always done, to deserve well of your country.

"Health and fraternity. (Signed) "TALBOT, President."

Mr. DEXTER's Observations concluded.

I respect the manly republicanism of America too much, to believe that the popular water-gruel, the milk for sucklings, with which some men strive to gain his favor, can either please his appetite or invigorate his system. There are discontented men in all countries; perhaps our own has fewer than any other. They hollow loud and often, and we are therefore led to think they are numerous. A tumultuous minority thus often imposes measures on a peaceful majority, against the first principle of Republicanism. The voice of the people is not for war, unless necessary for our safety and honor.—Many in this City may wish for it; but the majority through the Union are desirous of peace. Tho' they will encounter war bravely, if it shall overtake them, they are against running to meet it.

I will not detain the committee with stating the inconveniences we subject ourselves to, the difficulty of obtaining supplies from other countries during the convulsions of Europe, the loss of our articles of export, perishing on our hands from a retaliatory prohibition by Britain, the impossibility of executing such a law, or the encouraging of frauds to the ruin of the merchant of honor. These have already been the subjects of observation. The strong objection which arises from our constitution, I cannot omit. In the distribution of power to the several departments of government, the right of making treaties is given to the Executive. Of course the preparatory negotiation must belong to them as an incident of the authority. But we are now commencing a negotiation ourselves, and prescribing terms of a treaty. It is urged that this cannot bind the Executive.—They may make a different treaty, but our prohibition will still be in force. Do we intend to say then, that we will forbid our Citizens from Commerce with Britain even after the Executive, the only constitutional power, shall have settled all matters of difference, unless they will suffer us to dictate the mode in which they shall exercise their authority? This looks to me very much like usurpation, by whatever name we may chuse to call it.

It has been said, by a zealous friend of the supreme law of the land, by virtue of the constitution, and therefore would repeal this law. Perhaps it may in future be thought convenient to retract that doctrine. If it be true, it is idle to make the law. But sir, I doubt the truth of it. It appears strange to say that an act in its nature legislative, and such we are told this is, can be abrogated by an executive act. I know of nothing but the legislature which can repeal a law. It belongs either to legislative, or executive power. If the former, the legislative only, can abrogate it; if the latter, we ought not to meddle with it. We may as well carry thro' the negotiation, as begin it, and prescribe the terms of it. If the constitution had given us this power, we could not exercise it, from our numbers and mode of doing business. It will not be denied, that the Executive have a right to appoint and instruct a negotiator, as to the terms of settlement. Have we the same right—or even can we instruct him when they shall appoint? Suppose him thus doubly instructed by the Executive having constitutional authority, and by us who cannot tell from whence we de-

rive the power, and the instructions contradict each other; whom is the Negotiator to obey? None will say that the power of the Executive is not paramount all others as to treaties, and all foreign negotiations. Are we to make a law then which may be violated with impunity; nay more with propriety? I wish sir, that gentlemen who so often tremble for the sanctuary of Republicanism and deprecate usurpation of power, would apply these excellent feelings to this subject. We have been often told that something must be done, and that if we object to this measure we ought to show a better as a substitute. I have never thought this a difficult task; I will now state the outlines of what ought to be done. By a peculiarity in our constitution negotiation with foreign nations is altogether an Executive duty; but to declare war, is with the Legislature. In governments where the powers of negotiation and of war are in the same hands, the same officer can demand a recompence for an injury, propose his ultimatum, and declare war if it be rejected; but our Executive may be embarrassed in pursuing a demand of compensation to the last extremity, lest he should pledge the honor of the nation to war against the will of the legislature, who alone can make war. We ought therefore to pass a resolution requesting the President to pursue with energy a demand for recompence according to the custom of nations, and pledging ourselves to support him if the event should prove unsuccessful; and in the mean time we ought to prepare for war. I can see nothing further which is legislative in its nature, or committed to our care by the constitution; until it shall appear that the negotiation has failed of success. Then sir, it will be time enough to prohibit commercial intercourse, or declare war, or take any other measures to avenge our wrongs and vindicate the honor of our country. If we are to engage in war sir, I presume we must have some money to carry it on, unless in this instance also we are an exception from general rules. The measure now contemplated must almost annihilate our imports and we have not looked round for a substitute. We have heard of a land tax, but there are many objections to it. On the eve of war public credit is doubly important. Having lost our former resources, we must provide new funds for the punctual payment of the interest of the public debt, the expenses of government, and the innumerable expenses of war. We must not only suffer heavy taxes and burthens, but also an enormous increase of our debt. As I am not guilty of being a creditor of the union, perhaps I may be heard patiently on this subject. It has been often said here, that the public debt has enslaved our country, yet now we are urged to increase it beyond all calculation, without taking the usual measures for pacific accommodation.

Though I have labored in vain to understand how the public debt is an engine of slavery, and have sincerely thought our country a perfect model of civil freedom, yet I hope this argument will have some weight with those, who see that we are slaves and that the public debt has riveted our fetters. Here give me leave to answer an argument, which has been repeatedly pressed, and with apparent success. It is not denied that the first regular step is to demand a recompence for an injury; but it is said that Britain regards no laws of nations in her conduct to us, and therefore we are not bound to observe them towards her. I presume by this is not meant that we ought to do wrong, because Britain has done wrong; but that it becomes right for us to disregard those laws which she violates; let us examine this. The laws and usages of nations have prescribed certain modes of demanding redress of a nation for an injury; these of necessity can only be applicable to an injured nation, for no other can need redress. Can it then be true that the moment a nation is injured, and thereby is placed in the situation for which, and for which alone the rule was made, the rule ceases to be obligatory? A nation cannot be injured, unless the laws of nations with respect to her have been violated. According to this argument a very solemn rule of conduct has been established which is never to be complied with; not by a nation which has not received an injury, because there is nothing to redress; and not by a nation which has been injured, because with respect to her the laws of nations have been violated by the aggressing nation, and this dispenses with the rule. This answer,

to an argument so much relied on is to my mind perfectly satisfactory. I call on the gentlemen to shew it to be a fallacy.—Our situation sir is not new, though our conduct may be so. We have been Holland when neutral in former wars, suffering similar injuries; they did not pursue such measures as we contemplate, though better prepared for war: Neither their interest or their honor suffered by their moderation. The present neutral powers of Europe are fellow-sufferers with us; yet we do not hear of similar impetuosity of resentment. In all wars neutral nations are abused, in proportion as the powers at war are strong, and the neutrality weak. A stronger combination than the present perhaps never existed in Europe; and a neutrality can seldom be weaker. The principles of the present war are also peculiar; it is a desperate struggle for existence. The unusual circumstances of it have compelled the French with whom we are in friendship, not only to disregard our rights as a neutral nation, but to violate their treaty with us, though we have proceeded so far in friendship to them as to hazard our peace. Our merchants suffer severely from that nation; yet we are told that imperious necessity from peculiar circumstances is an excuse. I say not these things to criminate that nation; they have been civil enough to apologize and promise recompence; but we have not received even good manners from their enemies. The public mind appears to have suffered little irritation from this cause, and it is far from my wish to excite any. My motive is only to shew that this acquiescence in their apology proves our opinion, that the present war is peculiar in its nature. Tho' we owe nothing but indignation to Britain, yet we owe prudence to our country, and respect to ourselves. The present moment is infinitely valuable, and ought not to be trifled with. The present situation and disposition of Britain almost ensure us honorable peace, unless we provoke war. We have strong evidence that war with this country is against both their interest and their wishes. Though the measure under consideration is not in itself hostile, and violates no law of nations, were we to stop here; yet a little reflection must convince us that it tends to war. It is placing our negotiation for recompence from Britain on so new, and to them so humiliating a footing, that their pride must revolt; thus national honor must forbid a compliance. They will say to our negotiator, no nation ever addressed another in this way—Suppose we have injured you; it is not possible for us to treat with you respecting retribution on these terms: It is not an offer of peaceful accommodation, but an affront, a challenge. This refusal to treat, which the mode of making the demand renders certain, will then be urged as a refusal to make us a recompence; and war becomes inevitable.

Why sir should we be thus ingenious to avoid peace and rush hastily into the tragedy of Europe? At such a moment we ought to pause and enquire what we can gain by war. We now possess every blessing for which other nations contend; we may lose, but cannot gain by confusion. The price of our present political happiness was not small; we are now eating the fruit of that tree, which was watered with the blood of our fathers; yet we suffer the canker worm of jealousy to feed on its foliage, the whirlwind of discord threatens to root it up for ever. What attractions do we find in the desolation, the misery, the crimes of Europe? Their very virtues are shaded with horror; their rulers are the scourges of mankind; their business is oppression; their sport is violation; they trade in blood; the priests of Moloch offer daily Hecatombs of innocent victims; they fatten on human sacrifices; our former friends are insane; or rather their patriotic borders on phrenzy; Europe is at war with all the feelings of nature; they blaspheme her rights; they laugh at her agonies. Can it be necessary sir, to describe the happiness of our own country to shew the contrast? We are so familiar with public blessings, that we have almost forgotten their value. The voice of oppression is not heard. Our habitations are the dwellings of virtue and domestic happiness. The laws of morality and of our country are revered. We profane not the altars of religion. We have realized the golden age of fable. We have practised the publican visions. In this moment of danger our minds should dwell to the magnitude of the occasion. We ought to brave every danger to defend these inestimable advantages; but if we want prudence, we shall appear to want every virtue.—I have now done with the question. The measure appears to me to threaten great mischief to our country. If this shall be realized, tho' I shall state in the common calamity, a review of my conduct will not upbraid me. We may look back sir across a deluge of misery which may