

Foreign Intelligence.

BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Tuesday January 28.

HIS MAJESTY'S MESSAGE.

Lord Grenville moved the order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's message; which being read, together with the message itself, and the titles of the papers referred to in it;

His Lordship observed, that the conduct of his Majesty's ministers in this great object was so perfectly conformable with the views so often expressed from the throne, so often approved by the house, and conveyed in its addresses to the sovereign, that it would have been unnecessary for him to urge any preliminary observation in support of his motion, if it were not that by neglecting to do so he might be supposed to entertain any doubts upon a subject respecting which, of all others, he had the smallest question. Indeed, he should esteem it wholly superfluous to employ any arguments with the majority of their Lordships, who always held the same sentiments which influenced the government of this country in all its proceedings through this important contest; and as to those who, in spite of every danger, were neither warned by events, nor influenced by reasoning, he despaired of being able to convince them by any thing which he could say. There were other principles which should be kept in mind while investigating the subject: First, whether it was expedient at this time to enter upon a negotiation—secondly, whether such negotiation was likely to lead to peace—and thirdly, if it should terminate in a peace, whether there was any security that it would be faithfully maintained on the part of the enemy. Some people he knew, were ready to express an opinion, that, whatever may be the government of France, or whatever its dispositions, still it was far the interest of the country to entertain negotiations, because if they did not succeed, no injury would be done, and if they ended in a peace, the whole of our object would actually be gained. These, however, were only the sentiments of very short-sighted politicians. To enter into a treaty, without considering the character, views, and dispositions of the government treated with, never was, and, in the nature of things, never could be done with wisdom or security. But in the present instance, to agree to a negotiation, not only would be productive of no advantageous effect for ourselves, but might effectually serve the purpose of the enemy, by lowering the high tone, and relaxing the energy of this country, at the same time that it would deprive it of the friendship and confidence of those allies, who justly considered Great Britain as the support and firm bulwark of all Europe. The same motives which influenced those in the administration of affairs when forced into this war, and which unremittingly continued to actuate them through the whole of its progress, continued at this moment to operate as forcibly as ever; and so far from being induced to alter any former opinions in consequence of the overtures and professions lately made, they served only to confirm them more strongly in their fixed, and the trusted immutable principles. They could not rely upon vague and empty professions against the evidence of acts, and convinced as they and all Europe had, unfortunately, been of the enormous and continued aggressions and crimes of the French government heretofore; it was natural for them to examine whether the government which at present had the ascendancy, was ready to reprobate the conduct of its predecessors. Instead of this, however, they found that the present government of France, not only justified all former proceedings, but even incorporated and identified themselves, in that respect, with those which went before them. The French minister, Mr. Talleyrand, even went so far as to hold out a challenge on this head, as if it were a disputable point, and it was with some degree of unwillingness that he was induced to take up any of their Lordships' time, in advertising to positions that had to be often before refuted. In his letter, Mr. Talleyrand says—"Very far from its being France which provoked it (the war)—she had, it must be remembered, from the commencement of her revolution, solemnly proclaimed her love of peace, and her disinclination to conquests; her respect for the independence of all governments." That she proclaimed all this, he was very ready to admit, but in order to discover the true genius and active spirit of her revolution it was necessary to examine how far her conduct corresponded with her professions. In the first place, then, it was singular to remark, that this government, so much in love with peace, had, for the last eight years, been actually at war with every kingdom, nation, and state in Europe, with the exception only of two—namely, Denmark and Sweden; and even those two kingdoms were so little exempted from their oppressions and depredations, that the ministers of both courts had lately been recalled from Paris. This, then, was sufficient to exemplify her love of peace. The next consideration was how far it had shown its disinclination to conquests. After having made this declaration, the first successes of the French arms manifested its sincerity by the decree of the 19th of November, which was in fact a declaration of war against every nation, the principal object of which was to excite the people against their rulers; and this was invariably the principle upon which she acted, under every form whatever, to the present moment. With the utmost perfidy, in defiance of every treaty, and without the smallest provocation, she fell upon and conquered all the smaller States

that surrounded her. Was not Switzerland a conquest? Was not Holland a conquest? And was the Cisalpine and other republics, which happily subsisted no longer, any other than a conquest? In short, every state that surrounded her was in a greater or less degree conquered, with the exception of Great Britain, which was secured by a barrier which, he trusted, would separate them forever. As to her respect for the independence of other governments, it was precisely on a level with her other declarations; for no sooner did her arms enable her to gain possession of Savoy, the Netherlands, and other places, but she immediately hastened to annex them to the republic by indissoluble ties, if it was possible that such ties could be indissoluble. In former wars it frequently happened that nations committed aggressions, and even made conquests upon their neighbours, at the same time that they respected their national independence; but the system of France ever has, and ever must be, as long as she shall be directed by revolutionary principles, the total overthrow of every established government. It would be unnecessary to cite particular instances, while the face of Europe exhibited so many deplorable examples of the influence of this principle. The French minister, however, asserted, that, were it not for the conduct of foreign powers, France would have remained faithful to her declarations. To estimate the value of this argument, it would be sufficient to take a view of that fort of fidelity with which she had performed the engagements she had entered into. He held in his hand a book, in which were enumerated the different treaties with France, concluded from the commencement of the revolution to the peace of Campo Formio. He believed he should be warranted in saying, those treaties, numerous as they were, had every one been violated by the French; but of this he was confident, that if any person could show him one which had not been violated by them, he would produce five, or even ten, that had been violated. To go a little farther, he maintained that there was not a treaty the republic had been engaged in, which had not either been abruptly broken off, or continued under such insults towards the other party, as to a spirited nation would be intolerable. Some had been broken off with menaces, some continued under indignities, and such as were concluded afterwards, violated. These insults indeed, in them, were consummate wisdom, if any thing could be called wisdom which had so foul an object; for they tended to degrade the governments of all Europe in the eyes of those whose affairs they were to administer. Amongst these instances, he believed would not be forgotten, the negotiation at Paris and at Lisle; in the first of which, our ambassador was ordered from Paris, because he would not immediately state the terms of the negotiation; and in the second, sent off with equal contumely, because he would not consent to agree to whatever terms they might propose. This event happened at the crisis of one of their revolutions, and was sufficient to show how much their relations with foreign powers depended on the caprice or characters of the men who rapidly succeeded each other in the direction of their affairs. To show their want of faith in the observance of treaties, he would revert to that concluded with the king of Prussia, which fixed a demarcation of neutrality for the north of Europe. It was evident to every one, that while France was at war with so formidable a power as the Emperor of Germany, and while yet they retained Holland in a state of absolute subjection, to the exclusion of the family which had the hereditary management of its affairs, nothing was of more importance to it, than to court and preserve the friendship of the king of Prussia. Yet, with all these inducements to restrain the violence of the republic, she violated the treaty with Prussia, by demanding a contribution from Hamburg, a neutral state, which was within the line of demarcation, and which gave it no offence whatever. What rendered this infraction the more glaring, was, that the contribution was intended to enable France to make war upon these countries which were at the same time protecting the commerce of Hamburg, and maintaining its neutrality.—With Sardinia, also, the republic had concluded a treaty of peace, purchased at a considerable price, which, however, did not prevent its armies from invading that country, seizing upon the citadel of Turin, and afterwards obliging the king to become a fugitive and a wanderer, and without any other plea than that his dominions were necessary for the convenience of their military operations. The first treaty they concluded was with the duke of Tuscany; but in defiance of the most solemn obligations, they afterwards forcibly took possession of Leghorn; plundered the inhabitants, and only evacuated the place in consideration of a sum of money extorted under the pretence of having protected the people whom they pillaged; and which money was paid by the government of Tuscany. Notwithstanding all this they soon invaded the country again, and compelled the grand duke to fly from his dominions. They were under a similar treaty with the sovereign of Naples, and from the time of signing it had never desisted from committing some act of hostility. All this he bore, till they obliged the miserable republic of Rome, which had no other territory than the little districts which surrounded it, to declare war against that comparatively powerful monarch; and under the pretext of affording assistance to its allies, expelled him from his country. His Lordship then went into a long and circumstantial enumeration of their infractions of treaties, and the advantages they took of the suspension of arms in the smaller states of Italy and Germany, and particularly of their shameful pillage of the friendly dukedom of Modena, which they afterwards annexed to their creature, the Cisalpine republic. Swit-

zerland had presented a striking instance of their perfidy, cruelty, and ingratitude; inhabited by a happy, peaceful, unsuspecting race of men, who could not be believed, had been reduced under so degrading a yoke, but for the suspension of hostilities, which left them unprovided for repelling so formidable an attack. Thus was that neutral and quiet people now obliged to endure the calamities of war in a more severe degree, than had been experienced by any other nation. His Lordship then pictured the circumstances under which Rome had been compelled to adopt the revolution which the French government proposed to it. The republican ambassador in that city, and their Lordships could not forget who that ambassador was, (the brother of Buonaparte) fomented an insurrection in the Roman capital, which the troops of the government were called out to repress. This was construed into an offence which all the humiliations of the reverend old man, who wished to avert the misfortunes which he saw preparing for himself and his people, were not sufficient to do away. It was, however, expiated in the defraction of the government, and the death of the aged pontiff, under circumstances, in a place which must characterize his persecutors, who now affected to make him the object of regard and veneration. The Genoese too, as well as the Venetians, whose great fault was too much to befriend the ambitious views of France, and without whose assistance it could not have succeeded in the conquest of Italy, have shared the same fate as the other powers, who thought themselves protected by treaties. The Venetians were encouraged to enter into a war in which they had no interest. The French army entered into their territory under the avowed pretence of protecting them from the ambition of the house of Austria; after which they basely gave them up, bound hands and feet, that very power against whom they pretended to guard them. But let their Lordships look further for a moment even to those governments which were of their own creation; and first to the Cisine. It was proposed that a treaty of commerce and alliance should be concluded between that new state and the French Republic. This was objected to by the Cisalpine council of Elders, and what was the consequence? Twenty-one members of that council were immediately imprisoned, not by a general, or a minister, mistaking perhaps, the instructions of his constituents, but by an order of the French executive directory, as being influenced by the artifices and manoeuvres of its enemies. There was not a country with which France had formed any nominal treaty of alliance which was not, in fact, a conquest, unless Spain may be excepted; which, however, was placed with regard to the republic, in a state very little short of subjection.—How then did it conduct itself in regard to those allied states of Spain and Holland? When France, by the great reduction of its navy, thought proper to resort to the system of fitting out privateers to commit acts of piracy on any vessel they might meet, Spain and Holland found themselves even in a worse situation than the open enemies of the republic; for not only were the vessels of those two allied states seized on indiscriminately, but even Consuls established in the ports of Spain and Holland, with powers to condemn such ships as these privateers had captured. The United States of America were not exempted from the effects of this system, and in their own defence were obliged to commence hostilities. After retorting upon the British government the charge of aggression, Talleyrand went on to say that "that assailed on all sides, the republic could not but extend universally the efforts of her defence." There was something in this phrase which seemed to imply more than could be well conveyed in the translation, and it seemed to have been jargoned for the purpose of insinuating something which the French minister either dared not or did not think it prudent openly to avow. The French words were—*La République a dû porter partout les efforts de sa défense.* If he did not greatly misconceive the secret meaning of this expression, it implied something more monstrous and horrible than had entered into the system even of French morality even under the reign of Robespierre.—What he collected from it was this, that if France felt herself aggrieved by one power, she held herself justified in inflicting upon any other, the punishment of such oppression. It is certain that Egypt did not enter into any coalition, nor commit any act of hostility against France, yet France, thinking herself aggrieved by what she called the coalition, found it a perfectly justifiable thing to revenge herself upon Egypt. Should England therefore at this time conclude a peace with France, the continuance of that peace could not, according to this doctrine, depend upon the fidelity of England in the observance of that treaty, but upon the Mamelukes of Egypt, or any other person who, by giving offence to the republic of France, should afford it another occasion, to "extend universally the efforts of her defence." He was almost ashamed, he said, to waste the time of their Lordships, in defending this country, from the charge of being the aggressor. Those who thought proper to be the allies of the French upon this question were in the habit of confounding dates as well as facts. They had forgot that the continental war was commenced in 1792, and that it was not till the next year that England found herself compelled to take a share in the contest. Previous to this, M. Chauvelin was sent as Minister to Great Britain; and after the French king had accepted the constitution, M. Talleyrand, then ex-bishop of Autun was joined with him in the mission.—The kings of England and France had formerly been rivals; but when his misfortunes came on, the latter monarch could only view the former in the light of a friend, and possibly a protector. It was therefore

natural to suppose that any letters he wrote under such unhappy circumstances would be couched in the most amicable language; and the letters which accredited M. Talleyrand were not written by that monarch himself, but by the Jacobin party which then directed the government. Yet it was remarkable that even in the very letters the French monarch was made to thank the king of England for not having entered into the views of the coalition which was then supposed to exist. M. Chauvelin also in his dispatches represented it, not as the professions that were made to him, but as his own opinion, that the British government was averse to countenance hostile designs. In respect to the so much talked of coalition, it was necessary that he should declare himself explicitly. As to the final coalition of Prussia, it was absolutely chimerical, and never had existence. The treaty of Pilnitz was not a coalition of sovereigns against France, but a simple declaration which was purely of a defensive nature, and when it first began to be spoken of, and complained of by the French, the ministers of this country in foreign courts received instructions to employ their utmost endeavors to prevent it. So also, when the mediation of Great Britain was called for, the government of the country declined it, still cherishing the hope, that by observing a neutrality, it might be enabled to preserve peace. Peace was undoubtedly, under most circumstances, the more desirable thing for this and perhaps for any other country; and he was not so framed as to be inflexible of the interruptions which were sure to follow the interruption of it; but there was also one thing still more desirable than even peace itself, which was this security and preservation of the blessings we already enjoy. This and an overruling necessity were causes which compelled this country to enter into the war. He trusted their Lordships would not think that he would be forward in giving a false relation of such things as must have fallen within his own knowledge; and he unequivocally declared, that every means were taken to preserve peace with France, to much so that he was now of opinion England remained too long a quiet and unconcerned spectator of the events upon the continent. This, however, did not rest entirely upon his testimony; for it was notorious to all Europe, that as soon as Louis the XVIth. had accepted the constitution, the emperor Leopold determined to detach himself even from the terms of the former declaration, had acted so far upon this principle, that when war was commenced against his son, the reigning emperor, those parts of the Austrian possessions which lay most contiguous to France, were speedily over run in consequence of having no sufficient army to protect them. Having thus far adverted to the general arguments employed by the French minister, and showed, as he trusted, that there was nothing in the principles of the present government or constitution of France which differed materially, in relation to foreign powers, from those entertained by the former ones; he proceeded to examine the security that was to be met with in the personal disposition which the person now at the head of the government was said to have always shewn for the establishment of a general peace. He was aware that there were persons in this country so extremely tender of the characters of our enemies, as to think it highly impolitic that any thing should be said at which they could take offence; yet these same persons felt not the same delicacy in regard to the many calumnies and reproaches which the enemy had lavished on the government of this country; yet in the best periods of our history in the speeches from the throne, or in the addresses of the parliament there was no scruple observed in what we conceive to be the language of truth: Such was the practice in the reign of Louis XIV. and it was singular at the present time, that while gentlemen here were afraid of giving offence, the parties concerned received all those expressions with the utmost degree of indifference, and were not in the least intimidated from offering us overtures of negotiation. Such motives, he hoped, would never have any weight with a British Senate; and he, for one, was determined to speak what his real sentiments, as well as his duty suggested to him. In treating of Buonaparte, it was not a private character which came under their consideration, but the character of a man who, for the last three years bore a conspicuous part in the great events which must come under their contemplation. They were fit to consider his personal character; and, as to his dispositions he ever manifested towards the faithful fulfillment of the treaties he concluded. His first appearance, he believed, upon the theatre of revolution was, when with the mouth of the cannon he contributed to establish for a while the constitution of 1793, which he since overthrew at the point of the bayonet. Perhaps he was then the only officer in France who could be found to execute such a commission. The next time he appeared was at the head of the army of Italy, where his conduct certainly gave little promise which could induce this country to think that his disposition was much inclinable to peace, or that he was particularly observable of the faith of treaties. If Sardinia, if Tuscany, if Venice, if Genoa were deceived and undone by their reliance on the faith of treaties—it was to Buonaparte they owed it. If the destruction of the liberties of Switzerland, and the massacre of the people was proposed—it was done by Buonaparte, who now employed the same general Brune, at the head of 60,000 men, to shed the blood of the Royalists in the departments, as he had before done that of the peaceable and inoffensive inhabitants of the cantons. After enumerating the various cruelties and perfidies of the conqueror of Italy in Europe, his Lordship said, that the next step was to follow him into Egypt,

where, omitting the abominable massacre of the garrison and people of Alexandria, the sacrilegious despoliation of the French being the true mullmen, and the innumerable atrocities committed, and deceptions attempted, sufficiently evinced the principles entertained and relied upon by this military usurper. His own letters and those of the persons in the highest employments under him in the Egyptian expedition, as appeared by the intercepted correspondence, particularly that of Pouchigues, sufficiently shewed the policy of making peace, if possible with England, in hopes to embroil it with those allies of which it is now the principal support. The present overtures seemed to be a part of that policy, notwithstanding which he doubted whether it would be the interest of Buonaparte to conclude a peace with this country—that he would find it to be his interest to have an armistice for a while, was sufficiently apparent. It would as long as it lasted restore the commerce of the republic. It would open its now blocked up ports to receive provisions and naval stores of every kind. It would let the remnant of the French navy at liberty to fall from one port to another, and fortify places which were now accessible. It would give the means of recruiting the armies in the interior in such manner as may completely destroy all the hopes entertained by the Royalists, and what is also an important consideration, it creates distrust and disagreement between the allies. But, on the other hand, when he came to think of a general peace, he could see no interest the French Consul could have in concluding it. The armies now acting on the frontiers, having no farther employment, they must necessarily be brought into the interior of the Republic, and the history of all military despotisms shewed that too great a number of troops always led to their subversion from one part of the nation to the other. The usurpation of Buonaparte was only sustained by military violence, and when other armies were introduced, the same temptation might be offered by others which brought him to the helm of affairs. On the stability of such a government, on the character, caprice, even of a Chieftain placed in such a situation, it was impossible for any established government to have any prudent reliance. The usurper, to disengage him from the danger of the army, must always keep them in a state of warfare to divert their attention from his personal concerns. With this view, whatever may be the immediate objects of Buonaparte, no dependence could be placed on the sincerity of his overtures, supposing that in other respects, negotiation was advisable. In order to judge of the good disposition of this man towards England, he would recall their attention to the treaty of Campo Formio, the articles of which were remitted by him to the Executive Directory by his confidential friends and agents Monge and Berthier, who are now employed by him in the first offices of the State. On that occasion Monge in his speech to the Directory declared that the termination of the war, upon the Continent, would leave them at liberty to employ the whole of their efforts for the destruction of Great Britain, as the governments of England and France were incompatible with each other, and could not exist together. Such was the language of Monge, and such, no doubt, were the sentiments of the first consul, Buonaparte. He before observed that the existence of the present constitution in France depended on the life of its present ruler, and in the event of his death, who had we to treat with? The persons he employed in the principal offices of the State, were men hatched in the most monstrous crimes of the most monstrous periods of the French revolution; men who had acted as judges, as jurors, and as executioners in the criminal tribunals of Robespierre. Little expectation then could be formed from the disposition of Buonaparte, still less could be entertained from the dispositions of his political associates. After demonstrating that whatever may be the clamour of French adherents—in this country, the government never intended that the restoration of the ancient line of French princes should be the *sine qua non* of a peace with France, his Lordship reminded the house of that period when this country was deserted by all its allies, when the whole forces of France had no other view or object but the destruction of Great Britain; when much of our force was employed in suppressing a rebellion in Ireland; and if under such circumstances the Parliament of this country, trusting to its own resources, had determined to abide every chance of war, he made no doubt but in the present moment, when its successes and that of its allies, were sufficient to animate its hopes, and place it in a situation to demand terms of advantage and security it would manifest that, as it had already shewn itself ready to meet the proportion of the extent, so would it now exhibit its readiness to meet the duration of its dangers.

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