

BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

MR. PITT'S SPEECH.

(Concluded from yesterday's Gazette.)

Now if we consider this system of proselytism, which is unearied and inexhaustible in its operation, which accommodates itself to every opinion, to every prejudice, to every set of men, and to every form of government, which is in Sardinia, in Italy, and at Rome, zeal for Popery; which is in Egypt zeal for Mahometanism; which is in India concern for its independence; which is in Germany, and in short in every country, the shape and the form which will be more attractive, which has for all its arts of seduction, which opens to all its arms: If we consider that such a mighty force is employed in aid of this system of proselytism, and if we add to these that perfidy which knows no bounds, that atrocity, and extortion, and injustice, and violence, and cruelty, which have marched forth, to the terror and dismay of France, of Europe, of the world, ought we not to pause before we conclude that this is a system with which we ought to negotiate? Is this the system with which the learned gentleman has told us that we ought to compromise, while we have yet arms in our hands? I would ask, is it against this that we defend ourselves by negotiation? Is it from this that we are to accept the precarious security of a treaty, for precarious must be the security upon which any treaty concluded with such a system, can afford; or shall we wait till we have seen whether this new government wears the same characteristic with the preceding ones, or whether it has really departed from the principles by which they were actuated, and whether its conduct will be different from theirs? Another characteristic of the French revolution, is the instability of the power of the different parties who have usurped the government; little hope of good faith could be entertained, to encourage to any negotiation with France, from the very nature and component parts of any of these governments, or from the tendency of the principles which they avowed. But that little hope is done away, when we consider that no one has lasted long enough to give any security, or even hope, of good faith to any nation with whom they are at war. The new government is indeed more defective than any that has preceded it. Even the shadow of liberty is now totally wrested from the people. But all have professed that they were for the world in general.—And even this government has not renounced the old principle. Every nation has been told, that the government of France, however temporary, was the government to which they were to be subjected. The French people have become quite passive un-

security in treaty or in negotiation arises from the consideration of his character or conduct? So much has already been said upon this subject, it is unnecessary to take up much of the time, or to exhaust the patience of the house, by dilating at much greater length upon it. Had there been seated upon the throne of France, or at least been invested with the royal authority of France, a man whose character was entirely unknown, whose name had never appeared in the history of the revolution, whose principles, whose views could not be ascertained from his past conduct, and concerning whose future views and actions, consequently no proper estimate could be formed. Had we seen such a man invested with such immense powers of legislation, of raising money, of disposing of the whole force of the nation, invested with power of making war or peace at his pleasure, with the command of armies, of drawing the whole resources of the country to farther and promote his views, and where all liberty of the press, which, by canvassing measures proposed, limits the power of governors, is abolished—had we seen such a person in such circumstances, should we not have paused before implicitly confiding in a mere personal assurance of a sincere desire of peace, before trusting the safety and honor of the nation upon such a slender security? But if we have heard of this man and of his satellites, if we have traced their course through scenes as horrible and as detestable as any that the history of the revolution, fruitful as it has been of horror and enormities, can furnish, ought we not to be doubly cautious, to be suspicious of the ground on which we walk, and to require something like evidence to counter-balance all former knowledge that we derive from past conduct? What do we know of Buonaparte? With regard to what is alluded to in his letter to the king, concerning his declared and evinced love of general peace, the expression was indeed mentioned in his first letter; but when he knew the declared determination of our cabinet not to treat, and their refusal on a former occasion to treat, except in conjunction with our allies, it is scarcely consistent with the sincerity of this wish for peace, that he did not, in the whole course of his second letter, make any mention of his willingness to negotiate at the same time with them.—And when was his wish for peace at all expressed? He must refer to the treaty of Campo Formio, immediately after which, as an evidence of his sincerity, as had been observed by his right hon. friend, Mr. Dundas, he undertook, and at the very time when he was probably planning the expedition to Egypt, which was to strike a most deadly blow at this country; and for what was he recalled from Campo Formio? To take the command of the army of England, and make a peace with this country, with his army behind him, on the banks of the Thames. I do not take this merely on report; I take it from the authority of Monge and Berthier, who declared to the Directory, in his name, that it was his intention to proceed immediately against England! for that now peace was established on the continent, and the republic of France and the constitution of this country could not exist together. What else do we know of him!

How shall we judge of the fidelity of the engagements which he may enter into with other countries, when we consider his fidelity to his engagements to his own? Is it not an unfair thing to judge a man by such a criterion; for how can others expect that he will be faithful to them, when he has proved himself perfidious to it? His first public act was protesting by an armed force, the constitution of the third year. I know not how often he was sworn to observe and maintain it, but I can tell of his making others repeatedly swear to maintain it. On the 4th of September on occasion of his receiving the sacred pretence of new banners from the Directory, he collected his army and made them swear and swore himself, fidelity to the constitution of the third year; and, passing over other crimes in which a similar mortuary of oaths was displayed, on the morning of the day which he had destined to close with the overthrow of that constitution, he received the oath as a mere business of course. Let us go yet a little farther, and look to the dreadful catalogue of perfidies, treacherous breaches of treaties, which are commensurate with the number of treaties made by the republic, and which attest the outrages, and horrors, and crimes of the revolution. To all or most of these, we shall find the name of Buonaparte annexed, and with them will his name be handed down to posterity, as the principal agent in the detestable and shocking scene. Let us look to the cases of Sardinia, Genoa, and Modena, as examples. With the first an armistice was made, a treaty followed; both were broken;—a contribution of five millions sterling was raised, partly by force, partly by imposing on the religious prejudices, call it if you will, superstition, of the people. With Genoa a treaty was also made, then a conspiracy was stirred up against the state, which terminated in its final subversion. The treatment of Modena was not marked with greater traits of justice. In Rome every cruelty was perpetrated, in open violation also of a treaty which he himself had concluded. The good old sovereign of that state was treated with sacrilegious cruelty and atrocity. His conduct to Venice heaped up the measure of his crimes, and exceeded in atrocity all that preceded it. He concluded a treaty with that state, in order to deliver it from the tyranny of Austria. In violation of this solemnly ratified treaty, he stirred up a conspiracy against the state; he made immense requisitions of money, of ships and of cloath-

ing for his army, in order to save the palaces from being plundered; and this very place he afterwards agreed to deliver over again to Austria. If we again follow him to Egypt, we shall find a similar conduct pursued. His last official paper to the Vizier, while he continued there, contained assurances that he had no design to make a permanent establishment in the country, and that his views towards the Porte had ever been pacific. Just after this paper was written, we find the date of his address to Kleber, on his quitting the army. In this address, he advises him to adhere, in his communications with the Porte, to the ground which he himself had taken, that he did not mean to keep possession of Egypt, but on the opposite column a different language is held, and there it appears that the favorite idea is still retained and observed, that a favorable opportunity may yet occur for establishing a settlement in Egypt. In this address too, we find an intimation mentioned of concluding a peace with England, or some of the other powers, our allies; but from the way in which it is mentioned, is there not ground at least for suspicion, that the same deception was intended to be used with them as with the Porte? Now if such are the only ground derived from the character of Buonaparte, do they, I would ask, sanction our confidence in his sincerity, or afford any prospect of security in treating with him? But another ground is still stated; his interest in making and observing peace. I will admit that it may be his interest to negotiate, and even to make a peace—but it is extremely doubtful if it is his interest to make it general, or to preserve it. Could he withdraw England or any of the other powers from the coalition, or could he even make a temporary peace with all, it would be for his interest, because this would leave him at liberty to resume any of his plans of aggrandizement and conquest, which in his present circumstances, it is impossible for him to prosecute. He had the same interest in making a peace of this kind that England has in rejecting it. But has he an interest in preserving it? His hold on France is by the sword; by the sword it was attained, and by the sword it must be continued. He writes in his person and conduct all that is detested by republicans, all that is hated by the Jacobins, all that is abhorred and abjured by the royalists. His dependance must therefore rest solely upon the sword. He has said himself, whenever any thing opposes his schemes, his dependance is upon his fortune, that is to say, upon the confidence which he has in an army attached to him from his military triumphs, and military reputation. And will he throw away the staff on which he leans, and suffer himself, no longer supported by any party, or any power, to fall a prey to another more successful candidate for sway. Will such a man as this, in such circumstances, really find it his interest to make a solid peace, and to preserve it? If not, the argument, from his interest, falls to the ground.

The principles of disunion, of sedition, and of rebellion, have long been cherished for purposes of ambition, by France in Ireland. The plan is not laid aside. The views on Egypt are still cherished; and will the moderation of the first Consul, his love of peace, his hatred of conquest induce him to sacrifice at once his own interest and favorite views of ambition, which have continued to be cherished since the first era of the revolution? This is the argument, from the change of persons, and here I shall leave it. Is there then security in the nature of the government which this change has introduced? It is so new a form and so unprecedented, that it is difficult to say what will be the effect of it. So long as that close corporation which has been named by Buonaparte continues under his influence, it establishes and maintains his power, and his interest will of course direct the whole. If some person should arise in it who shall put an end to that influence, a civil war must necessarily be pursued. But we must reason upon the stability of the French government from the stability of a military despotism. He had often heard that the best security which a government can give to others of its stability, is the security which it gives to itself: this in a military despotism, must ever be small; in a government springing from the French revolution, it must be still less. In the establishment of the present system, the force of opinion has been directly violated, indeed, it has been established in direct contempt of it. From this, what is the inference; not that we will never treat with Buonaparte, but we must wait for experience and the evidence of facts. Conviction, in my mind, must be slow in its progress and operation; every question of importance, and more especially one of war and of peace, must be considered in comparison and degree. If the efforts of France give more stability to the present system—if the efforts of the allies shall not produce new revolutions, I will answer for myself, and also for those with whom I have the honor to act as a servant of the crown, that our representations shall not be wanting to the Sovereign in favour of negotiation. But at present all the facts are one way; there is nothing to promise stability or give us a prospect of security in treating. On the other hand, as to our situation, every probability is, that it will be improved. But a state of war is always hazardous, and the fortune of war may change and make it worse. I speak, however, to wife and prudent men, and wife and prudent men will weigh probabilities, and from existing circumstances, determine what is the line of conduct which is most likely to be beneficial.

But the honorable gentleman says, what hopes are to be entertained from changes; and he asks whether I am anxious to compel the people of France to a return to monarchy; I never thought, I never hoped, I never wished this; but I have thought, and hoped, and wished that the successful progress of the Allies would be such, and their arms so powerful as to give effect to the wishes of the people of France. For I am sensible that monarchy can only be restored by the spontaneous wishes of the people of France; that it would be in vain to labor against these, and that it would be as improper as it would be vain. This experiment, however, I am convinced that we ought to make. I will not at present state all the grounds of my entertaining this opinion, but must observe, that when France saw, as my honorable friend stated, the power vested in a single person, however alien that person was to her—a Gorbican Adventurer—the expressed herself happy in the change, and that because it afforded the prospect of a termination of the Revolution. We have seen the war in the western parts of France smothered in the blood of its inhabitants, and we have seen it renewed—renewed, not as the honorable gentleman has asserted, by the interference and intrigues of England, but the rooted principle and attachment to royalty of those inhabitants, against the wishes, and notwithstanding the dissuasions of their friends in this country, who were anxious that they should wait for a more favourable period.—True it is, that in such circumstances it is our duty to resist it: to the question—For what length of time it will be necessary to persevere. I can only reply, that on this head no precise judgment can be formed; we ought certainly not to be discouraged too soon, considering the import of the subject, and the chance of success. But to the question, whether we should desire to see Bourbon on the throne of France, or Buonaparte in his place? Can there be a doubt in the mind of any man who has seen the character of the revolution? Is the last prize in the lottery of revolution to be left to successful adventurers? Are we to sanction in the person of this man, all the acts of the revolution, and to confirm the transfer of property which has been one of its consequences, from the lawful proprietors to new hands? This argument the honorable gentleman has endeavored to turn against us, and he says that if we mean to attack the transfer of property, it will itself prove one of the greatest obstacles in the way of a counter-revolution. But the revolution had been effected with all these circumstances of transfer of property, though of a much higher value than it is at present. It is a notorious truth, that the confiscated lands of the emigrants have been sold for cheap that the dereliction of them by the present holder to the former proprietor, for a very small consideration, might be a good bargain for both parties. This, therefore is surely a very superficial reason to prove the improbability of counter revolution when the original stable unshaken property of the country offered no resistance to the revolution in the first instance. The honorable and learned gentleman has told us of a mode of measuring his patriotism, which is at 3 per cents. Few men indeed, have a deeper or dearer stake in this article. I hope however, that his patriotism is a better pledge of his feelings in this respect, than any three per cents, he may possess, even supposing the value of stock to increase in as rapid a ratio as it has done during the period in which measures have been pursued diametrically opposite to his opinions. On this test of patriotism the French have performed an operation called revolutionizing, that is, cutting off two-thirds: they have lately, however, acted differently, they have changed three to five per cents. I enquired what might be the value of the five per cents, and was told seventeen per cent. I supposed that this meant that the five per cent stock sold at a depreciation of seventeen per cent, and I own I was jealous of the revolutionary credit; but upon enquiry I found that seventeen pounds was really the whole value of one hundred pounds of this stock. The new hopes conceived from the reign of Buonaparte, have actually raised the price of this stock to three and a half years purchase.—Such are the ties to the revolution, which are purchased by its friends. On the subject of the restoration of monarchy, we are to consider that France cannot but by the instrument of the revolution in the impaired state in which, thank God, she is, extort money for her yearly expenditure; her situation in the event of being under the power of the Bourbons, would be such that a long time must be spent before she can recover the wounds she has received. It must indeed be long under a regular monarch, with a limited power, before she could revive. Is the chance of a stable peace, therefore greater, under a Bourbon Prince or under Buonaparte, who, for purposes of ambition, sacrifices the little remains of the property of France? For my part, I see no possibility of a peace which will allow that intercourse of amity which is an essential incident to it. As I love peace, I must look for it in security, and honourable terms; I must not sacrifice the permanent interests of the country.—One word more I must add on the negotiation into which his majesty's ministers formerly entered with the directory. We did not do this because a large part of the nation required it, but because the gigantic system finance and requisition which was pursued in France, had exhausted the ordinary means of supply in this country by means of the funding system, and had made new plans necessary—plans which I could not attempt to carry into execution without the sincere concurrence of the people of England; and it became necessary to shew them the impossibility of peace, and the absolute necessity for such measures. The honorable gentleman had indeed given a very different turn to our conduct. He represents us not sincere, because we were aware of the dangers that were likely to ensue from peace. But if I thought there was danger

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May 6

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