

Mr. Wilmer said that he staid till past one o'clock, when he retired with fatigue.

Mr. Francis observed, that, at all times, distinctions were unjustifiable, and more particularly now; for the lower orders were the people most interested in the passing of the bills, and ought to be most favored, because the higher orders always had other avocations, and better means of access, to procure a redress of grievances.

Mr. Vanstittart observed, that the French, who had set out with the doctrine of equality, had now discovered that the preservation of society required various classes and ranks.—Here he was called to order by Sir Francis Basset, for speaking on a subject not connected with the question.

Mr. Sheridan presented a petition against the bills from the town of Dunfermline in Scotland.

Mr. Fox presented one to the same effect from the gentlemen, freemen and merchants of Dartmouth in Devonshire.—It contained one hundred and sixty names.

This drew forth a few observations from Mr. Fox and col. Rolle, upon the unanimity of the people in that county, which ceased by a call to order by Sir Francis Basset.

Mr. Coke presented a petition against the bills from a number of the most respectable inhabitants of the borough of Great Yarmouth, in the county of Norfolk. As that borough was immediately under the direction of government, he said, of course, there were many people there who had not signed it, among whom were the receiver-general and officers of the customs.

Col. Rolle presented a petition, signed, he said, by hundreds of people in the borough of South Milton, in Devonshire, requesting Parliament to adopt measures for the prevention of seditious meetings.

Mr. Thornton presented a petition from the inhabitants of Colechester against the bills. He took occasion to state, that it was signed by very many of the respectable persons at that place; that it lay for signatures only during the space of seven hours, from a fear that it would get too late to the House, and that it received in that time the sanction of 800 names. He expressed the greatest mortification that he could not join in sentiment with his constituents for as related to the bills before the House, but he fully coincided with them in their wishes for a peace, and hoped the House would hereafter come to such resolutions as would open a door for treating at the first favourable opportunity.

Mr. Sheridan commended the firmness and candor of the honorable gentleman, and hoped he agreed with his constituents, in their idea of the unexampled rapidity with which the bills were hurried through the House; and if he did, he hoped that it would prevail with him to urge the necessity of taking a longer time for their consideration.

Mr. Wilberforce presented an unanimous petition from the mayor, aldermen, and inhabitants of Leeds, for the adoption of measures to prevent seditious meetings.

Lord John Russell presented a petition from the city and suburbs of Winchester, against the bills, which was signed by a great number of respectable inhabitants regularly convened.

The Secretary at War brought up Col. Hay's letter of service, dated April 2, 1794, which was ordered to lie on the table.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer now moved the order of the day, for the House to resolve itself into a committee on the seditious meeting bill.

Mr. Curwen rose and stated, that on a former night he had intimated his intention of moving that the further progress of this bill should be postponed, to give the people in remote parts of the country, time to exert their right in petitioning the legislature. It was on the present occasion a matter of considerable regret to him, not to see in his place a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) as from the sentiments he manifested on a former discussion, he must hope from the number of petitions presented against the bills, to see him in opposition to the measure. He had said, that it would not become the house to proceed, if the majority of the country were against these bills; he gave him credit for the sincerity of the declaration—he had agreed to the call of the house on that principle—and now if he were present, he must admit, that probably on no other occasion did more petitions against any measure find their way to the house. Ministers were astonished at the circumstance, and the only subterfuge they had left was to say, they were procured by means of misrepresentation. The right honorable gentleman, who had enjoyed such an unrivalled share of popularity, could not, aided by this, and the representation of his friends, procure petitions in favour of those tyrannical measures, so repugnant to the feelings and the hearts of Englishmen. But when he saw how the right honorable gentleman applied his popularity, and the confidence of the people, to the ruin of the country, and when that gentleman was convinced that the eyes of the people were opened, he was not surprised to find him averse to delay.—The language which had been held at the ministerial side of the house, is drawing a marked, a wide line, between what some persons observed were the lower and higher orders, could not be sufficiently reprobated. The effect it will have on those who demanded or expected the protection of parliament, was that it was indifferent to their complaints, as the higher order only consulted its own interests. At no former period was any such language used—the measures, to give them dignity, secured delay; and the people, in proportion as they were aggrieved, would resent and condemn the precipitancy of ministers. But to this it would be answered, that the delay demanded was to excite clamour. If clamour had been raised against such harsh measures, never, he would insist, was the cause of clamour better grounded or better justified. The united voice of the people felt a lively interest in every thing that related to the king, and operated to alter the constitution.—They know how much they are interested in the welfare of both—and on the subject they had but one feeling.

The first day of the session, ministers, through

the medium of his majesty's speech, declared what their subsequent conduct contradicted. They now libel the people with a charge of being seditious, merely to introduce bills into parliament, of which they dare not avow the real purpose. But the people renounce the calumnious assertion of their being seditious or traitorous to their sovereign, and will, he hoped, ere long approach the throne with due humility, and petition his majesty to remove from his councils those men who abuse his confidence, andigmatize and libel his faithful people. The bill went farther than what met the eye; it created a wide distinction between the ranks in society, and made that difference between the electors and their representatives, which would operate to make the latter neglect their duty towards the former. When he considered that out of five millions and a half of people, only 4000 were concerned in the representation, the necessity of reform should not be rendered still more necessary by parliament refusing to hear the voice of even that number of constituents. The commons as being the democratic branch of the Constitution, was particularly consonant to the feelings of Englishmen; but when he saw the torrent of honor and emolument rush into the house—and when he saw a disposition not to hearken to the petitions of the people, it would lose its consequence, and forfeit the veneration of the country. Would it not then he asked, be folly and madness to attempt to pass the bill, contrary to the voice of the nation? there were two points which he wished to discuss—first, the necessity of the times; secondly, how far the necessity of the times required such a harsh measure! As to the necessity of the times, that was a question which every sober and dispassionate man would disavow, as from the most learned authorities, he could assert, that the existing laws were amply sufficient to carry into effect every purpose for which ministers pretended the bills were introduced. As to the harshness of the measure, its coercion was alarming and would defeat its purpose. He denied the necessity, because ministers refused to go into a Committee to demonstrate that seditious practices did really exist. If they did exist, how could they be suffered with impunity? The charges made of the circulation of seditious writings at Copenhagen-house, could not be borne out by a noble lord, aided by the scraps he produced; but he could not blush for the weakness of administration, because they did not blush for themselves. He next adverted to the alarms artfully raised by ministers during last year, of treasonable plots and seditious conspiracies, all of which were refuted by a jury of Englishmen. He cautioned them to beware how they stretched laws further than was required, without being informed, in a manner the most clear, of the magnitude of the danger. The house is told, the laws are not sufficient, but he cautioned parliament to beware how it extended the penal laws; for if justices conceived them coercive and severe, they would acquit the prisoner, and defeat the ends of those by whom they were enacted. The people should not be precluded from coming to the bar—the house should not put themselves in a situation of shewing indifference to the desires of the country; the people should be allowed time to discuss the bills, and to petition; and if they were dead to their liberties, they should wear their chains. But he was assured that they had roused from their slumbers, and that there was not a man in the country, who was not either a slave or a fool, who would not petition against the bill. When gentlemen at the other side of the house attributed unworthy motives to those who opposed the bills, they acted on narrow and unfair grounds. He imputed to no man interested views, for he had always acted for himself, without regard to party interest, or being actuated by party animosities.—If he had erred in judgment, it was a circumstance experienced by those who were fallible; but he was never biased by attachment to any private friend, to act contrary to his opinions as a faithful representative. As an honest man he must pronounce the present bills gross encroachments on the rights and privileges of Englishmen. If they were forced on the people, there was no moral obligation why they should submit. Let ministers delay and receive the sentiments of the nation; they may profit by the advice of opposition, as they had before, for to them were the country indebted in preventing a war with Russia, and hostilities with Spain. Englishmen had sucked in with their mothers' milk, a love of liberty; they would never submit to be slaves, and those who attempted to wrest from them their Constitution, would be lost, he predicted, in the struggle. Mr. Curwen concluded, by moving, "That the further consideration of the bill be postponed till this day fortnight."

Mr. Harrison rose to second the motion. He declared it his opinion, as far as he could judge, that the people of the country were totally averse to the bill. Time, he insisted, should be given to obtain the opinions of the people in the remote parts of the kingdom. It was a measure that ought not to be adopted by ministers, without they meant to insult the people, and alienate their affections from parliament. It was a measure in his mind not to be endured; for it was abominable, and destructive, and a most daring violation of the liberties of the country. Admitting the arguments of ministers in their full extent, and even allowing their calumnious assertions, still the measure ought to be spurned with indignation, and the people should manifest their abhorrence against a bill subversive of the Constitution. It was still more strange to see ministers, at this critical period, venture to introduce a measure that tore away the security of the subject, and destroyed the great charter of the nation, as established by the bill of rights.

Mr. Wallis affirmed, that the petitions had been obtained by means of the grossest misrepresentation; and delay would answer no purpose, but to create mischief. He saw the object of gentlemen when they called for procrastination, and who were averse to have the measure made more palatable, because it would not, in such a shape, occasion the opposition it deserved.—Their conduct in this business, shewed, they were not averse to illegal resistance, so far as it was revolutionary, but not connected

with what produced the revolution of 1688. That measure was attained without any violation of the constitution, but gentlemen at the opposite side of the house went further, and directly attacked the constitution, in support of which they affected to wince tenderness. They aimed by their language, to influence the freedom of debate, by raising the sword, and lighting up the flame of civil war. He maintained that the exertion, and propagation of the principles of the London Corresponding Society, by citizen Lee, were connected with the insult offered to the King. The attempt of ministers to defeat their machinations gave offence to some gentlemen; but he was convinced, that by adopting the present measures, the country would be saved. It had been advanced by an honorable gentleman, that it was immaterial whether the nation degenerated into a state of anarchy or of despotism; but the gentlemen who opposed the bills, would find in a state of anarchy, no protection for that property, which they boasted gave them as large a share of interest in the welfare of the country as others, and which may not be the case if the present necessary measures of his majesty's ministers were not adopted. He would not say that any of the parties who assembled at Copenhagen-house actually put the instrument into the hand of the miscreant who attacked the sovereign, but he would assert, that the language used at that meeting was such as to influence and work on the mind of the ignorant, and was calculated to produce every outrage against the laws. The best security of a British sovereign he admitted, was to live in the hearts of his people—his present majesty enjoyed in a pre-eminent degree, the affection of his subjects; but this could not protect him from the hand of the conspirator, who in aiming a blow at the king, aimed it also at every subject in the kingdom.

Mr. Whitebread said he rose to plead guilty to the charge made against his honorable friend who made the motion, and confessed his object was merely to create delay. The constitution, wisely authorized delay for deliberation—delay in this instance was congenial to the pure spirit of the constitution; and of the delay he was not ashamed. Parliament was answerable to the people for the preservation of the law, and it was its duty to protect the constitution and liberties of the country. Every moment's delay in the present business was a matter of triumph and exultation, for it operated to unmask ministers, and remove the veil from before the eyes of the people. The honorable gentleman who spoke last, asserted, and asserted roundly, that the petitions against these odious bills were obtained by means of misrepresentation. He denied the fact. Could the honorable gentlemen in conscience say, that he thought the petitions did not speak the sentiments of the people? They had, as far as they were enabled by the privilege of deliberation, by the result of that exercise, firm persuasion of the dangerous innovation of these measures on the constitution, and manifested their abhorrence of the detestable bill. Some gentlemen had argued, in his opinion, rather indecorously, that the petitions did not speak the sense of those people by whom they were signed; and others declared in rather a sarcastic tone, that they proceed from the poor, and not from the rich. This was a scandalous and invidious distinction, for in his opinion the indigent had more to stake than the opulent, for the latter could find the way to redress, when the former were shut out, if not sheltered by the constitution in preserving to them their inalienable right, the right of petitioning. The charge of misrepresentation rested with ministers; they misrepresent the bill themselves, in advancing that it will guard against the mischiefs which it is intended to correct, and against which they complain. Thus far it is a fatal and daring attack on the liberties of the subject, while it is inadequate to the purposes it professes to have in view. Ministers, if convinced that the measure only needed to be understood to be adopted, should certainly agree to the motion, confident that when the people were convinced of the propriety and adequacy of the measure, they would support government by their petitions. It had been insinuated that his honorable friend had disclosed their intentions, by not wishing it to go into a committee, for the purpose of suffering it to come before the public in its original and natural garb. To this assertion he was not dissuaded also to plead guilty. He was not averse to hear it come before the world in that questionable shape, to evince to the people the stretch of power at which ministers aimed, and not to let it go forth, after having been smoothed down, and fashioned, in conforming in a great measure, to the successful opposition which it endured. The voice of the people had the desired effect on ministers: he knew they wished to abandon the measure altogether; they made it now indeed a nullity, and were determined to preserve the shadow, merely, as they conceive, to preserve their credit; but he hoped the futility of the transaction would not be soon forgotten. The bills, it is said, are brought forward to protect the liberties of the people. But how were they to be protected? Was it like those flaming bigots who upheld their institutions by the rack and the stake? Did they, taking an example from the promoters of certain tenets of religion, wish to emulate the inquisition, by the harsh and coercive measures they have introduced. How must the house be shocked to see members, in support of the constitution, come forward with measures as despotic as any that have disgraced the most atrocious tyrant that ever crawled on the face of the earth? The constitution was founded on justice and mercy, and must sink, if attempted to be upheld by force and blood. In the bill there was nothing but mischief and horror! If any thing could add to the solemnity of the proceedings of the house, he advised parliament to hearken to the voice of reason, and hear evidence at the bar, and not calumniate with violence, and conduct without trial. It had been repeatedly asserted that the Corresponding Societies held seditious doctrines, and ministers have not done their duty, or exhibited the shadow of reason for the introduction of the bill, until they have actually proved their assertion. Until this is done, they remain rotund, and he in candour must advance, that no such doctrines as those which they attribute to that body of men have been uttered or advanced. Was it not notorious, that the ministers of the crown have deceived the country by forged plots, and unfounded conspiracies? Did they not, to serve their own views, to excite the honest feelings of Englishmen, for the purpose of aiming a dagger at the very vitals of our liberties, keep the country in a state of painful anxiety and distressing alarm, when not the least foundation existed for their interested and wicked rumours? He was borne out in this indisputable assertion, by a string of facts, fresh in the memory of the house. His right hon. friend had observed, in strong and pointed terms, on their last plot, during the summer, known by the name of the Pop-gun plot. When the house considered the despotic proceeding on that occasion, they will now refuse to call evidence to shew what foundation there is for the

present measures. The preamble of the bill contained, he insisted, a gross and unjustifiable calumny against his majesty's subjects, and the house did not do its duty if it did not enquire into the fact. If they continue to say it is a charge, and not a calumny, that was a miserable quibble, and to deny investigation in such a case, was neither creditable to their feelings as men, nor to their honour as legislators. It was the case, he would not be surprised even in this enlightened age, if men were put to the torture, when ministers were driven to the necessity of producing evidence in favour of their measures. If these men had transgressed against the law, or against the constitution, was it judicious in administration, to draw them beyond the pale of security, and exclude them from the protection of both, when they renounced it with respect to parliament, and shewed a disposition to prove the innocency of their conduct? Would it not be much better, would it not be infinitely more advisable to redeem them, than to drive them to despair? They evaded, by their petition, their duty to return to their duty, and they should be received. But nothing could out of ministers in their assumption of a few having signed, to pull all the whole people, without giving them an opportunity of confuting their calumnious assertions. The deliberations of the house, he pronounced, at the moment he was addressing parliament, were surrounded by the army. The military force was distributed, as in a few minutes to appear in any part of the city if necessity required. How to account for such measures, he could not say, except they proceeded from an unwarlike confidence, or an intention to keep up the favourite system of alarm. Did the bill give any additional security to the king? No, it gave the reverse of security. Was there, during the last year, any tumult to warrant the preamble of the bill?—none.

If the enactments of the bill were against the sense of the people, and if they were carried into effect, he would say with his right honourable friend, in that case, resistance will not be a matter of moral duty, but of prudence. He would not say by what means tyranny was carried into execution, whether by act of parliament or otherwise; in any case it was abhorrent to the feelings of Englishmen. If parliament sanctioned despotic acts, it became the accomplice of ministers—now, under the present bill, could the people complain of their grievances; the destruction given of the late meeting of the Common-hall, must convince the house, that under the operation of the present bill, from the acknowledgment of certain magistrates who gave an account of the proceedings, that assembly must become null and void. They would have taken care to dismiss men who paid so little attention to their honours. An honorable gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) declared his sentiments in favour of the bill, without recollecting, that if passed, no meeting would take place to petition against the slave trade, as that would be considered as approaching to French principles, and the assembly could consequently be dismissed. In case of dissolution of parliament, it was well understood that the sheriffs were nominated to answer the purposes of government. In case the present bill passed into a law, that abuse would take place annually, and in a short period, the constitution would be completely subverted. Under the present act, any magistrate can interfere with the privacy of domestic comfort—he can obtrude into a family, and enter the house without being responsible for such an unaccountable intrusion. Who could then support a bill liable to such objections; for if such were allowed, who was there who did not foresee that such a circumstance must be attended with bad consequences? Were they afraid of the meeting at Copenhagen-house? If the bill was not to operate as they assert, such meetings were not prohibited. How could rational beings stumble on such absurdities? Every measure of the present minister, his invading the country in war—his secess and disgraces—the blunders of ministry—said their prodigality, certainly rendered them unpopular, but never in any serious mind, operated to the insult of the sovereign. The bills, in fact, were calculated for their security, and not that of the king, on whom they meant to cast the odium of their misconduct and disgraces.

Who could read the atrocious libel, attributed to Reeves, and which was pronounced by the Secretary of War innocent in its nature without perceiving that chain of facts which led to the present despotic measures? Who could see without grief a distinguished leader in the present cabinet, who was the principal cause of exciting the American war, and the calamities that followed? When the Jacobites attempted to assassinate king William, no such laws were brought forward as the present. At the close of the American war, Englishmen should recollect that the corrupt ministers of the crown were dismissed, conformable to the petitions and voice of the people; a more disastrous period was drawing near; to suppress the voice of the people was the object of those who have plunged the country into ruin—the people may sleep, but they are not dead—they have roused from their slumbers, and are resolved to maintain their invaluable rights, and hurl destruction on the heads of the enemies to their liberties.

Mr. Addington conceived the present a salutary measure, but if the country was in a state of tranquillity, the house should pause a little before they agreed to the present bills.

Sir William Lemon declared himself a friend to the king, and an enemy to seditious meetings, but the present bill was such as must create the jealousy of Englishmen; he was, therefore, for delay, that the sense of the people may be heard.

### Philadelphia, MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23, 1796.

An Express from the Southward alighted at the House of the French Consul, on Saturday morning last.—We hear that he brought dispatches from Norfolk, which arrived there in a Corvette, in 36 days from France. Nothing new has yet transpired.

By Saturday's mail we received Charleston papers to the 5th February, inclusive—from which all the Foreign Intelligence in this day's Gazette is selected—except the articles by the Peggy, from Rochfort.

Extract of a letter on Doctor Perkins's Magnet remedy, from a Physician in Maryland.

"I am much obliged to you for your account of Doctor Perkins's magnet operation—of this mode of cure in certain chronic cases I have heard before, though never through evidence so authentic. If this theory of the electric could be reduced by clear experiment to certainty, how much would poor suffering man be relieved! though to tell you the truth I have not much faith in the durability of the cure. In two cases, since I received your letter, I have actually succeeded in removing an acute pain in the jaw, by the application of a steel magnet, by rubbing the end of it over the outside of the lower jaw, and keeping the mouth open—in a few minutes the pain ceased; but returned in about an hour with great violence."

### THE TWENTY-SECOND OF FEBRUARY.

This being the anniversary of the Presidents' Birth day, the dawn was ushered in with a salute of fifteen cannon, and a joyful peal from the bells of Christ's Church. At noon, the Members of both Houses of Congress, Heads of Departments, Foreign Ministers, The Reverend Clergy of all denominations, The Cincinnati, Civil and Military Officers of the Union and State, and many other respectable Citizens and Foreigners, waited on the President at his House to congratulate him on the occasion. The military companies in uniform paraded in honor of the Day—and this evening there will be the most splendid Ball ever given in the United States at the Amphitheatre, which has been prepared with a rich variety of emblematical devices, and every requisite accommodation.

Appointment—by Authority,  
WILLIAM J. MILLER, Esq. formerly of this city to be Consul for the United States at Calcutta.