

ted him, and asked whether he had yet dismissed Mr. Trotter? He had, he said, explained himself on this subject the other night, and had informed the House that he had not then dismissed Mr. Trotter, because he thought it would be highly unjust to do so while this measure was pending. He was happy to think that other opinions, for which he should ever entertain the highest respect, coincided with his own, and that they all agreed it would not have been fit or proper that he, who was at the head of an office in which the person accused held a secondary situation, should be the first to stigmatise him before the subject was investigated, and thereby throw a great degree of odium on his character, which might operate very injuriously against him, in the opinions of those before whom his conduct was to be tried.—He did not, therefore, at that time dismiss him, but as soon as the judgment of the House was known on that subject, he did so. He had bowed with reverence and respect to their opinion and decision, and Mr. Trotter was no longer Paymaster. The Right Hon. Gentleman here adverted with great warmth to what had been urged the other night by Mr. G. Ponsonby on this subject; and said, that if the Hon. and Learned Gentleman were then present, he hoped he would come forward and own, that if he then spoke as a British lawyer—actuated by British principles, and British sentiments—the opinions he then delivered, and the harsh measures he recommended to be adopted, were cruel, tyrannical, and despotic.—(During his delivery of the latter sentences, the Right Hon. Gentleman repeatedly applied his right hand so forcibly on the red trunk on the table, as to excite a universal cry of hear! hear! hear!) A second question, he said, had been asked by the Hon. Gentleman who made this motion: whether Mr. Wilson was dismissed? to which he had answered no. Mr. Wilson, he said, during the transactions alluded to, stood in the situation of acting occasionally for, and doing the duty of, the Paymaster, and, as such, he had been obliged, in the course of performing that duty, to draw money on different occasions, as circumstances might require. When called upon to answer before the Commissioners, it was natural for him to consider, that he might subject himself to the danger of pains and penalties, and therefore he refused to answer. No charge whatever of his having received any emolument or advantage from any money he had thus drawn, or being in any manner implicated further in the transaction, than what he had stated, had ever been urged against him, and therefore, till this that he has done is determined by a legal tribunal to be an act of criminality, he should certainly retain him in the situation he had held. As to what the Hon. Gentleman had hinted at, as to circumstances that were mysterious, he could not conceive, but thought it extremely mysterious and incomprehensible to hear him attempt to make it appear that what Lord Melville had done as an act of humiliation, and to shew his respect for the opinion of the House, should be deemed a mark of perverseness.—He then observed, that from what had passed on this night, he thought it necessary to advert to the practice of the principles of former periods; and when the House recollected the warmth, energy, and manly eloquence, with which the Noble Viscount exerted himself in defending the characters of two Noble Commanders (Earl St. Vincent and the present Lord Grey, then Sir C. Grey), when they were attacked in that House in 1795, by a motion for an inquiry into their conduct; when they called to mind the zeal he testified to rescue them from all imputation, and the exultation with which he proposed and carried an address of thanks to them for their eminent services, they could not but be astonished to see with what extreme eagerness, at the close of his political career, Lord Melville was attempted to be hunted down by the friends of Earl St. Vincent and his colleagues.

Mr. GREY said, it was not his intention to have offered any observations to the House on the present occasion, had it not been for the reproaches made by the Right Hon. Gentleman against the relatives of two Noble Lords (Grey and St. Vincent's), whose battles in that House Lord Melville was represented to have fought with such valour and success. He, as one of the relatives of a certain Noble Lord alluded to, must disclaim any obligations on that score. The two Noble Lords had, indeed, been accused by an Hon. Gentleman; but all that they requested, all that they had occasion to expect or wish at the hands of the House was justice, and they had obtained it. Amongst the distinguished services performed in the course of the last war, theirs, perhaps, were the most singularly eminent.—They were, however, accused of misconduct; and how did they meet that accusation? Did they fly from trial? Did they seek delay? Had they recourse to any subterfuge? Did they claim the protection of men in power? No; they met the charge manfully; they were defended, and, because their actions were found more deserving of applause than censure, they were honorably acquitted. But for that, he, on the part of those Noble Lords, must disclaim even the acknowledgment of any obligation. Lord Melville at that time moved the counter resolutions, which reversed those against them, and gave them the thanks and approbation of the House; but he would ask the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Pitt) opposite to him, whether in the Amendment, which composed these Resolutions, the mover did not express the sense of the House upon the subject? So far from admitting it to be any merit in Ministers, that they appointed to the command of arduous and important military enterprises, men professing differences with them in political opinions, that he should censure it to be one of the severest and most heinous charges that could be brought against any Ministers, to say, that, on account of political differences, they would neglect to appoint such men as they thought best qualified to execute them with success, with honor to themselves, and glory and advantage to their country. The Right Hon. Gentleman therefore appeared to him extremely unfortunate in this application. There was not, as far as he could see, the least similarity in the two situations.—The charges against Lord Melville were substantiated by a majority the most respectable, considering the high quarter from whence it came. He did not then recollect what the majority was on the other, but he well remembered that the minority was no more than sixteen! Having been induced

to say thus much in reference to the ill-judged and ill-timed provocation given him, he would now say, in reference to the subject more immediately before them, that it was not in his nature, nor, he believed, in that of his Hon. Friend (Mr. Whitbread) to cherish a personal resentment against any man, and he disclaimed having any against the Noble Lord who was the object of this Motion. His Hon. Friend had shewn none of that bitterness which was the character of resentment, and, without any vindictive motives whatever, only submitted the propriety of following up what the House had already decided. For his own part, he thought it impossible for the House to stop here, and suffer the Resolutions to remain upon its Journals. The Right Hon. Gentleman who spoke last, without having recourse to any argument, was by no means wanting in misrepresentation. His Hon. Friend did not, as was said, state the resignation of Lord Melville to be an aggravation of his offences, but that it was not sufficient to satisfy the justice of the case. There certainly could be no great merit in his resignation, for were that Noble Lord to have met them this day, as first Lord of the Admiralty, the charge would be upon the heads of His Majesty's Ministers. The Right Hon. Gentleman, however, seemed surprised that we should expect the resolutions of that House to be a bar to Lord Melville's ever again holding any confidential situation; but, if such was the sentiment of His Majesty's Ministers upon the subject, it surely afforded the strongest argument, why the House should have a security for his now being so employed, by concurring in the Address now proposed to them. Though Lord Melville had resigned one of his situations, he was still a Privy Counsellor; and therefore the honour and consistency of the House required, that they should take such measures as were most likely to produce his dismissal from it.—The Noble Lord had indeed taken care to secure to himself some places for life; but there were others which he only held at the will of the Crown; and he asked, whether the honor of the House would allow him to retain for a while, and, after all his delinquency, these pensions and emoluments? The charge by the Right Hon. Gentleman against his Hon. Friend (Mr. G. Ponsonby), behind him, of tyrannical and despotic doctrines, was perfectly unfounded. His Hon. Friend had stated, that it would be necessary to take measures for securing the appearance of the offenders, to answer the charges against them, and in that he was perfectly correct, and justified by all legal analogy. In all cases, where a man was accused of an offence, it provided, that he should be secured, to abide the issue; but this was more than a simple accusation; for Lord Melville and Mr. Trotter were already found guilty, and, after the Report of the Commissioners, neither of them should have been one moment longer suffered to continue in any place of trust. He concluded by observing, that as nothing had hitherto been said in opposition to the motion, which in any way could apply to the reason of the House, he was determined to support it.

Mr. G. PONSONBY—"I rise, Sir, in consequence of the general allusion which the Right Hon. Gentleman has been pleased to make to me, and think it the more incumbent on me to do so, as the good opinion of the House of Commons, which has ever been dear to me, is now doubly endeared, by the august and venerable elevation to which the character of this great assembly has, by its vote of Monday last, been justly raised, in the grateful estimation of its Constituents. The Right Hon. Gentleman was pleased to say, that, were I a British Lawyer, I never would have expressed such harsh and tyrannical opinions. I am, Sir, however, a little more reconciled to these opinions, as a Right Hon. and Learned Gentleman opposite me (the Master of the Rolls), accustomed to preside in one of the highest tribunals of this country, with great honour to himself, and equal advantage to the public, and whose sentiments on legal, as well as all other subjects, are constantly received by this House with the greatest deference, did not, in that discussion, think them unworthy of his attention.—In the estimation, however, of the Right Hon. Gentleman, I am not, it seems, to be deemed as a British Lawyer.—Sir, I will tell that Right Hon. Gentleman, that I am not ashamed of my country, and, I hope, my country is not ashamed of me. If he sets so high and exclusive a value upon British blood, and every thing else that is British, I may, perhaps, be very little objectionable on that account; for, perhaps, I have as good British blood flowing in my veins, as can be boasted of by that Right Hon. Gentleman. Though I have not had the talents that could have raised me at so early a period of life to so exalted and lucrative a station, yet, at this late period, he has been the first to invest me with the character of being the advocate of tyranny and despotism. By my having said, that the Right Hon. Gentleman's having continued Mr. Trotter in office, must have proceeded from the conscious sense he had of that Gentleman's innocence; I do not consider myself to have advanced any thing irrational—for surely he would not have acted in a very unconstitutional manner, if, while those proceedings were pending, and the report of the Committee suspended over the head of Mr. Trotter, he had, for that interval at least, suspended him in the execution of a trust which he was charged with having so egregiously abused. Sir, with all the respect and reverence that I must bear for so young a man, in so high and confidential a situation, I should wish him to confine himself to what I actually did say; for, much as I admire his wonderful talents at so early an age, I assure him that I am not so ambitious as to wish that he should make speeches for me. To come now to the immediate question, I must confess, that however right it may be to follow up the late resolutions by an address to His Majesty, if I had the official and authentic security that the resignation of Lord Melville would be the end of his political existence, I should be disposed to acquiesce in the suggestion that this subject may not be pressed any farther.—But I cannot so easily account for the great anxiety prevailing upon this subject on the other side of the House, when I recollect that, in the Administration of the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Pitt), it has not been a very unprecedented thing for persons to be struck off the List of Privy Counsellors, against whom there were no such resolutions as these now before us. Though Lord Melville had now

resigned his office, there is no security against his being again restored to it, for the Right Hon. Gentleman would find no difficulty, by means of the press, to represent Lord Melville as an injured man; a victim to party projects, that the charges were aggravated, that he had not a fair trial, that he was not heard in his own defence, &c. and if these representations made any impression during the recess, the House need not be surprised at finding Lord Melville again in office at the next meeting of Parliament. If any man of authority would undertake that Lord Melville would bow before the House of Parliament, retire from the political, and be heard of no more, I would not insist upon proceeding; but hither he found no person willing to give any such security. With respect to the pecuniations, it surely was not to be expected that the public money should be suffered to remain in the hands of the delinquents, and they not be called upon to refund; that is a thing which I, for one, never will agree to. I will make no such compromise; and, however tenderly I may be disposed, in this instance, to treat the Noble Lord, with whom, at the same time, I never had the honour of exchanging a word in my life, I am inflexibly determined to use every exertion in my power, that the money thus so illegally appropriated to the personal use of the delinquents shall be refunded to the public. With respect to the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Pitt) himself, though I will not prematurely bring, at this time, a direct charge against him, yet I cannot avoid seeing that there is a serious charge of criminal laxity in the proceedings of the Treasurer upon the Report, and therefore must contend that there should be an investigation into the conduct of the superior, as well as into that of the inferior officers."

Mr. CANNING explained, that what he said in regard to the return of Lord Melville to office was, that it would not take place as long as the Resolutions remained unrescinded.

Mr. R. THORNTON stated, that a letter had been sent some time since, by Mr. Canning to the Bank of England, prohibiting the issue of any money to Mr. Trotter or Mr. Wilson, without an order signed by himself which had been strictly complied with. He also explained that, from the time when Lord Melville came into the office of Treasurer of the Navy, in 1786, down to the year 1793, no sums were issued from the Bank to the Paymaster without the purpose for which it was wanted being specified, but since that time to the year 1803, a contrary practice had prevailed. He said he had been near twenty years a Member of that House, and never in his life gave a more painful vote than that which he gave in favour of the resolutions, because he thought he connived at those practices; but as there was no proof of his having done so, from corrupt motives, he was determined to vote against the present motion.

Mr. BARHAM said, that when he accused two Noble Lords (St. Vincent and Grey) of misconduct in the West-Indies, on a former occasion, he did it from the information of others, and not from any personal hostility, as they themselves knew, but in discharge of the most painful duty of his life. As to the present motion, he said, he should support it, hoping that a man, so stigmatised by the resolutions of the House of Commons, would not be retained in His Majesty's Privy Council.

Mr. BANKES said, that as he had not the honour of any personal acquaintance with the Hon. Mover of this measure, he could not presume to offer him his advice; but if he may be so permitted, he should recommend to him to withdraw his motion, and not press it at this time; for the very same reasons which induced him to support the resolutions, would now determine him to vote against the Address. It was, he thought, a sufficient humiliation of Lord Melville, that he had been compelled to resign; and his having done so, probably preceded any thing in the way of dismissal which might have been intended by His Majesty or his Ministers. He saw no probability whatever that the Noble Lord could be restored to office while the enquiry was pending, and, therefore, he thought the motion was unnecessary. This was not the time for such a proceeding, as, perhaps, something, or even an impeachment, might hereafter be the result of the enquiry. He did not know that there was any precedent for such a proceeding, as, when discussions took place for similar addresses against Sir Robert Walpole, Lord Ranelagh, and others, those persons were in office at the time, which was not the case at present with Lord Melville.

Mr. WINDHAM observed, that he stood at present in his usual predicament, in relation to the Hon. Gentleman who spoke last, for they were scarcely ever on the same side, though they were frequently on the same bench. If he thought that the ends of the substantial justice should otherwise be answered, he had much rather that the present motion had not been brought forward, but as he now found it formally before him, he must, even in consistency, support it. He thought, however, that due decorum to the former decision of the House required that this should now proceed, and particularly as some surprise seemed to be expressed at the opinion that the resolutions of themselves would exclude the return of Lord Melville to office. If private motives of regard could be suffered, he should be inclined to adopt that mode which was thought the most lenient, but he found that was not to be done with security to the object of the Resolutions. It was true, this was a corollary upon the Resolutions, but the meaning of that corollary was, that Lord Melville should remain out of office, and be excluded from His Majesty's Council for ever, which object was not completely satisfied, by the process of the former act. Be that as it may, he must for one contend, that in the discussion of the former night, the House had the whole case substantially before them, otherwise he would not have agreed to the Resolutions, for it would then have been a determination on a case imperfectly proved. He did not conceive them to have then acted as if they were on a future occasion to be called upon to revise or rescind their own judgment. From that judgment it resulted that sentence had been pronounced upon Lord Melville, that he was not fit person either to remain in office, or ever to be employed hereafter. The House must be aware that Lord Melville was a man who had, for a long succession of years, filled situations of great splendour and authority; that he had means of bestowing the most extensive patronage; that he was highly connected in the land; that he was surrounded by most num