

were ready to renew them, whenever the rulers of France should manifest a disposition similar to his own, &c. The government of France had now evinced such a disposition; and it was, therefore, incumbent on them to put its sincerity to proof. The Noble Secretary asked whether Buonaparte was prepared to make a variety of concessions. He would again answer, the best method of ascertaining that was to enter into negotiations. Six weeks were, it seems now, not a sufficient trial of the stability of a government; and yet our ambassador at Lille was empowered to negotiate with a government of only five days standing, which had obtained power by means the most violent. It was amusing to remark the contradictory inferences which had been drawn from the reports of citizen Monge and Boulay de la Meurthe, and the declarations of Talleyrand, which he garbled, and alternately praised and condemned, as suited the fleeting purpose of the moment. He should have recollected, before abusing Buonaparte, that he adopted the very language in which the latter condemned the proceedings of the Jacobins. It was not his object to enter into a justification of the character of Buonaparte, but he conceived he must be desirous of peace, because the French nation was anxious for peace; because it would tend to consolidate his own power; and because it had been found that when the reigns of government had been assumed by any set of men in that country, in the hope of effecting a peace, and they had failed in their object, that they generally made way for another set. Ministers ought, therefore to reflect, whether by refusing to treat with them, they did any thing more than give an opportunity for a worse being put in his stead. Buonaparte had, even in the preliminaries of the treaty which had been so frequently cited to his reproach, shewn views of moderation. He was desirous of ceding Mantua to the Emperor, and supported his wish, by observing in a letter to the Directory, that it was for the interest of all great Nations not to exact too much from the defeated party. But that Ministers should abuse Buonaparte, did not with him preclude the belief that they would yet treat with him. They had lavished their scurrility on all his predecessors, but when driven to negotiation, that circumstance never formed any impediment. They made overtures to any whom they found at the head of affairs. But while there remained to them any prospect of being able to continue the war, he did not suppose they would cordially enter into schemes of accommodation. They knew that while it continued, its events would occupy all the attention of the country; but that, on the return of Peace, the public would begin to enquire for what purpose, so much blood had been shed, and so much treasure expended. The present Ministers felt an interest in the continuance of the War, and therefore he despaired of the recurrence of so favourable an opportunity for treating while they held their places. The present was a crisis which involved the fate of existing men, and of succeeding generations. Nothing else could have induced him to give their Lordships the trouble of listening to him, or take himself the irksome task of addressing them; for irksome it must be to contend, as from all appearance he then did, without the prospect of producing any effect. But his sense of duty, his anxiety for the happiness of his country, did not permit him to remain entirely silent at so important a moment. Recollecting how often within those walls he had foretold the calamities which had already befallen this nation, he came down once more to warn them by all that they venerated and loved, to reflect upon the consequences of that night's decision; to remember that they were now called to throw away the scabbard, and plunge at once into all the horrors of eternal war. Such was in reality the nature of the contest, if the sword was not to be sheathed until the restoration of Monarchy in that country; and even on the supposition that Ministers bowed their views to compelling her to retire within her ancient limits, and to relinquish her projects of aggrandizement—what was it but saying, that we were to fight as long as we had power to wield our arm. If it was decreed that France and England should be rivals, let us resort to other means of establishing our superiority. Instead of lending millions to the slaughter, and ravaging the face of the earth, let us, in the bosom of Peace,

endeavour to relieve our people from the miseries under which they already groan; let us turn our thoughts to the extension of agriculture and commerce, and vie with each other in diffusing the means of happiness. In such a contest it would be worthy to excel. In our triumphs we might then exult without offence to our God, or horror at the means by which they had been attained. Such were his reasons, for addressing their Lordships—If by any exertions of his, such an object could be promoted, he would cheerfully toil day and night to accomplish it. But he lamented that he could entertain no such hope. There was no apparent change either in that House or in the People. Infringed and mutilated as he would maintain their privileges had been, they still possessed the power of addressing their Sovereign and their Parliament. Of this power, they had not availed themselves; and he must therefore suppose they continued to place the same confidence as ever in that Parliament. The English people loved their Constitution, and while there was any danger of its being torn from them, there was no evil to which they would not submit; but he would entreat the House to be cautious how that confidence was abused, and to recollect the responsibility which they incurred by neglecting every favourable opportunity to put an end to the evils which they had patiently endured for so many years. They were now bending under a load of taxes; it was for that House to take care they did not sink under them—to guard against their being reduced to the dreadful alternative of abject slavery or revolution. If driven to despair by the unfeeling gripe of the tax-gatherer, what could be expected, but that like France they would make an effort to redress their own grievances? These were the dangers, the calamities which he apprehended from a farther continuance of the contest. He hoped that the House would take warning before it was too late. But, if by that night's decision, he should find that there was no prospect of any change in that system, which had been so long pursued to the ruin and degradation of his country, he must abstain from any farther troubling their Lordships. He must abandon a scene where his efforts could be no longer serviceable, and in the bosom of retirement, administer that comfort and happiness to the few, which he in vain attempted to procure for the nation at large.

His Grace then proposed an amendment, in which he recapitulated the different communications from the throne on the subject of the present war, and the resolutions of the house on the same, and in which he recapitulated the leading points of his own speech, in order to shew that the different revolutions in France, and the instability of the Government of that country from time to time, did not furnish sufficient ground of argument to preclude the policy, prudence and wisdom of meeting the late overtures of the enemy, for the purpose of opening a negotiation for peace.

Lord BORRINGDON said, from all that he had heard, he trusted that he should not find himself under the necessity of trespassing; any length of time on the indulgence of the house. Many of the arguments adduced by the Noble Duke, whom he did not see in his place, had been anticipated by the Noble Secretary (Lord GRENVILLE) and the rest had been already disposed of by their Lordships. He should only observe that he did not think this was the proper time to risk a negotiation. From the perseverance of that House, from the energy of the Executive Government, and the public spirit this country had displayed, a spirit of enterprise unequalled in the pages of her former history, on the most trying and urgent occasion. What then would be the effect of a negotiation at the present moment? Might it not tend to damp the ardour of our navy and army, and to diminish that public spirit which rose superior to every difficulty it was called to contend with. His Lordship contended that either on a combined or separate view of the question, this period of negotiation was not that, in his opinion, which their Lordships in their prudence and deliberation ought to adopt as the most favourable; especially at a time when the Chouans were making peace with Buonaparte on equal terms. He did not wish to make any use of epithets. Buonaparte was certainly a very extraordinary and cele-

brated character; but was it from his former declarations with respect to this country that the house would be induced to listen to any pacific overtures that came from him? Did he ever mention this country previous to his present situation, but in terms that evinced the most rooted animosity to it? Was it then to be expected that of a sudden he should change those sentiments? Was it to be expected that his ambition was diminished and reduced to due bounds in consequence of his having usurped the Throne of power in France, where he exercised the most despotic sway? Was it to be supposed that he would be less prodigal of human blood in his present situation than he was at the head of his troops? Was it to be supposed that he would be more tenacious of his word now than on former occasions? So much for the personal character of the man, which he did not wish to mix with the general question; but which he thought might fairly enter into it. Was it then the supposed stability of the present government of that country that was to be held out as an inducement to negotiation? Revolution had succeeded to revolution in that unhappy kingdom, and what certainty was there that the present faction, which had raised Buonaparte to his present situation would not be overturned by another faction? Buonaparte had scarce been installed a month at the time he was speaking—Was that a period long enough to furnish any facts or experience of the stability of his government or the security to warrant their Lordships to listen to the overtures in question. Much stress had been laid by the noble Duke (Bedford) on a passage in the answer to the French Minister, which insinuated that this country would not listen to any pacific propositions till monarchy should be restored to that country.—He thought the plain interpretation of that passage was, that his Majesty, out of his anxious desire for peace, was ready to accede to a negotiation on that subject, when a government, capable of maintaining all the relations of it should be established in France. There was another circumstance which he did not wish to pass over in silence. In the ad note from the French Consul, it was proposed to open a negotiation with this country and with this country only; not one word of allies. He would then put it to their Lordships—what would be the result if this overture should it be listened to, and if it should in the end lead to a peace betwixt this country and the enemy? The answer was easy. The French would then have an opportunity of pursuing their favorite system of aggrandizement. They would then have an opportunity of collecting all their powers, and of directing them against our allies. Independent of the dignity of this country, what would be the consequences in a political point of view? Could we then hope for the tranquillity of Europe, one of the principal objects, for which we were now engaged in the most arduous and expensive war in which this country was ever engaged. Impressed with the justice of our cause, proud of the success of our arms, and the fidelity of our allies, and not having one fact before him to evince the stability of the present government of France, he should not hesitate to give his most cordial assent to the address.

Lord ROMNEY declared, that he never rose to deliver an opinion in that house under a greater degree of embarrassment, as it was not his intention either to vote with the noble secretary (Lord Grenville) who moved the address, nor yet with the noble Duke (Bedford) who moved the amendment: he was disposed, at the same time to place the greatest confidence in the zeal and exertions of his Majesty's Ministers; but he was as free to confess at the same time, that a middle course might be steered: he protested that he really thought the same of Buonaparte that the noble secretary, (Grenville) thought of him; but he really thought it would be wise and politic to have listened to the overtures from that general, because he was afraid, that by the rejection of it in the present manner, it might tend to divide the people of this country, who had been hitherto united; and that it might furnish the enemy with holding out to the people of France, that there was no disposition in the executive government of this country to lend an ear to any proposition of a pacific nature. He thought that they

ought to be met on their own ground that their sincerity ought to be put to the test. If sincere, the terms would then be seen; and if not, the people of both countries would be enabled to form a judgment of the deception. In recommending this measure, however, he certainly thought, as he knew it would be accompanied with caution, he did not entertain a higher opinion of Talleyrand than he did of Buonaparte; but, with respect to both, our motto on such an occasion ought to be—

*"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes."*

At all events, he thought the experiment ought to be made, not, indeed, under the circumstances of a suspension of arms, for that was what he would never bring himself to accede to. He thought the war ought to be pursued with much vigour; at all events, such a circumstance would have great weight and effect—in the first place it would not have all the effect of the address in question, as it would not tend to retard the war—and in the second place it would expose the arts of the enemy if the proposition was not founded in sincerity.

He knew nothing of the force of the Chouans but merely from the Newspapers. How a Treaty of Pacification would affect them he was not prepared to say, as he had not sufficient information on that head. What he said arose from his best wishes to this country, and not with the remotest view of throwing an imputation on the Noble Secretary. It was highly gratifying to mark that in all the different Revolutions in France the people evinced an indifference to any one of them; whilst in this country, the spirit of the people rose in proportion to the danger that threatened it—a convincing proof of the affection of the British Nation to their Constitution—under which the humblest individual found himself protected and happy; but in order to keep up that affection, he thought the overtures made by the Enemy ought to be met, in order to evince that no opportunity was omitted that might tend to restore the blessings of peace.

Lord CARLISLE was firmly of opinion that we had attained all the objects for which we persevered in the present War, namely, Security with respect to the internal enemies of this Country, who endeavoured to prey upon the core of the Constitution. Their number was pretty well ascertained, and their deeds counteracted; which added to the brilliancy of our Naval Victories, in every quarter of the world, left us, as he had already observed, in the possession of all those objects for which we are obliged to contend. But it would not be denied that the happy continuance of them should be placed on the most permanent basis. He really thought that it would have been sufficient to have returned his MAJESTY a mere vote of thanks for his most gracious communication. To proceed any farther was, in his opinion, unconstitutional, as it tended to trench on the prerogative of the Crown; because it went to diminish the responsibility of Ministers. It could not be supposed that Executive Government could submit their views, and the information of which they must undoubtedly be supposed to be in possession of, to the discussion of their Lordships. Such indeed would be as ill-timed as it would be impolitic; at the same time that he said, he protested most solemnly that it did not arise out of any want of confidence in his MAJESTY's Ministers, or that they were led to pledge that House to any views which they did not wish to entertain for the good of the public, and the security and happiness of the subject; for he was cordially disposed to give them his feeble support, because it was his real opinion that they had saved the country, and that if they had departed from that perseverance and firmness which they adopted in the beginning of the present War, that the consequence would be certain ruin and inevitable destruction.

Lord HOLLAND lamented that he had not the pleasure of being present as often as this subject came under the discussion of the House, yet he could learn from the votes and resolutions of their Lordships on this momentous question that his Majesty's Ministers had thought proper to shift their ground, and to debate the question on a new one as extraordinary as unexpected. The three noble Lords who had delivered their opinions, and who were in the habits of uniting