

THE
SPEECHES
OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM PITT,
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

QUANTO MAGIS ADMIRAREMINI SI AUDISSETIS IPSUM!
CICERO.

THE THIRD EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM-WYNDHAM
LORD GRENVILLE,

FIRST LORD COMMISSIONER OF HIS MAJESTY'S TREASURY,
&c. &c. &c.

THESE VOLUMES

ARE,

WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS MOST OBEDIENT

AND OBLIGED HUMBLE SERVANT,

W. S. HATHAWAY.

LONDON, *November*, 1806.

P R E F A C E.

IN presenting to the public the following collection of Mr. Pitt's Speeches, the Editor would persuade himself that little apology is necessary, either for the motives which induced him to undertake the work, or for the plan upon which it has been conducted. Animated by an ardent zeal and a lively veneration for the memory of Mr. Pitt, and anxious that every vestige of that illustrious statesman's parliamentary career should be recorded as faithfully as possible, he has aimed at accomplishing this object by all the means that diligent and persevering research could afford him.

From the journals of Debrett and Woodfall, and from other public reports of admitted authenticity, the work has principally derived its materials. These, however, have not been the only

channels, through which intelligence has been received. Other sources of more difficult access, but at the same time of more authoritative information, have been consulted, and have contributed very valuable assistance: and it has been by collating these various authorities, by detecting the misrepresentations of some through the avowed fidelity of others, by discarding errors where they could be ascertained, and supplying defects where the means of amendment were within reach, that a compilation has been formed, not inadequate, it is hoped, to the expectations of the public. Some few of the speeches that appear in this collection underwent the revision of Mr. Pitt himself; some were communicated by respectable members of the House of Commons from private notes in their own possession; and of the remainder, the greater part has been sanctioned by the testimony of those, whose frequent observation of the style and character of the speaker enabled them to determine the degree of accuracy with which the speeches were reported.

Whilst the Editor presumes to offer this explanation, as to the merits of the collection in general, he is sensible that some exceptions must be admitted. Instances will occasionally occur, in which his efforts will be found unsuccessful; where either the speeches are presented in an imperfect form, or where the report of them has been entirely lost.

This is a defect, for which no remedy could be discovered — which the utmost caution has not been able to prevent, nor the most assiduous industry to supply.

In regulating the size of the work, the importance of the matter has been always the first object in view; nor has the privilege of rejection ever been resorted to, but in cases where the nature of the subject seemed to warrant the omission. Few readers, it is imagined, will make it ground of complaint, that, on questions of comparatively inferior interest, on local and incidental topics, which in many instances were discussed rather in the form of desultory conversation than of serious debate, the speeches have not been inserted: and to those, whose curiosity upon points connected with finance may experience a disappointment in the exclusion of any of the budget speeches, it may possibly afford some satisfaction to learn that the most celebrated of these have been retained — such as, though perhaps not superior to the others either in clearness of arrangement or precision of detail, exhibit matter more remarkable for novelty, and abound with a larger share of general information.

The prefatory and supplemental notes have been compressed and used as sparingly, as was found consistent with the necessary illustration of the subjects to which they refer.

With these introductory observations it was deemed expedient to prepare the reader, as to the nature and execution of the work before him. Of the exalted character, some portion of whose eloquence these pages have attempted to preserve, it is superfluous to speak. His talents, his patriotism, his virtues, are fresh in the memory of all; and his country will feel with long and deep regret its premature loss of them. “*Quidquid ex Agricola amavimus, quidquid mirati sumus, manet mansurumque est in animis hominum, in æternitate temporum, famâ rerum. Nam multos veterum velut inglorios et ignobiles oblivio obruet, Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus, superstes erit.*” (TACITUS IN AGRIC.)

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With regard to the honourable gentleman's question of the sincerity and reality of the explanation of the provisional articles, which he had just given, he knew not whether the honourable gentleman meant to insinuate that he would be guilty of equivocation, when he solemnly stood up as a minister in that house, and gave an explicit answer to a question explicitly put to him; but he trusted to his hitherto unimpeached character, that the House would not in candour suspect him to be capable of any such base and scandalous duplicity, till they had proof of his guilt; when they believed he was guilty, he should expect their detestation; but if the honourable gentleman now meant to impute any such charge to him, he should only say, that the imputation had, if it might be permitted to a young man to say so to one so much older than himself, his scorn and his contempt. If he had deceived the House in this instance, he desired to be considered no longer fit to be trusted in any degree. He pledged himself on his honour, that he would never sacrifice his veracity, nor be a party to a fraud, for any poor and inadequate advantages which he could reap from his continuance in a station, for which he did not think himself qualified.

The Address was afterwards agreed to.

February 17. 1783.

Debate on the Preliminary Articles of Peace with France and Spain, and the Provisional Treaty with America.

THE address approving of the treaties was moved by Mr. Thomas Pitt; upon which an amendment was proposed by Lord John Cavendish, omitting the expressions which pledged the House to the approval of the treaties, and promising that the House would proceed to take the same into their serious consideration.

Mr. PITT spoke in answer to the various arguments that had been adduced against the motion for the address to the throne.

He was pointedly severe on the gentlemen who had spoken against the address, and particularly on Mr. Sheridan. No man admired more than he did the abilities of that right honourable gentleman, the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns, and his epigrammatic points; and if they were reserved for the proper stage, they would no doubt receive, what the honourable gentleman's abilities always did receive, the plaudits of the audience; and it would be his fortune,

“ Sui plausu gaudere theatri.”

But this was not the proper scene for the exhibition of these elegancies; and he therefore must beg leave to call the attention of the House to the serious consideration of the very important question then before them.

The clamours excited against the peace were loud in proportion to their injustice; and it was generally the case that where men complained without cause, they complained without temper. It was necessary to look back, notwithstanding all that the honourable gentleman on the other side of the way had said, to the language of that House, and to the sentiments of that House on this very subject. Had they forgot the resolutions of last session, by which ministers were bound to recognize the independence of America? Had they considered that that resolution, in which he for one most heartily concurred, took at the same time from ministers their advantage ground in negociation; and deprived them of the opportunity of proposing independence as a boon to be conceded, as a matter to be offered as the price, or as the basis of peace? Had they forgot the application made by the right honourable gentleman over the way * to the Dutch, an application couched in terms to his feeling more degrading than any concession in the present peace? Had they forgot the language of that day, when we were told that we must have peace on any terms; peace for a year, for a day, just to give us a little breathing time? Were not these things to be remembered? or were they to be told, that times and circumstances were so completely changed, that what would have been desirable then,

* Mr. Fox.

would not be so now? Were the circumstances so materially changed? Yes, they were; for these opinions were given, and these assertions made, when the right honourable gentleman was in office, and when the task of making peace was likely to fall on his own head. This was the change; this was the material alteration of circumstances which had taken place, and which now called for different conditions. The right honourable gentleman was no longer in place; he was no longer responsible for the terms, and therefore the circumstances were changed.

But to shew that there was no other change of circumstances, he went into a long and particular detail of the relative situation of the belligerent powers — their strength, their resources, their wants, their objects, and their prospects, deducing from this the inference, that it was absolutely and indispensably necessary for this country to have peace, and that under all the circumstances of the nation at the time, the terms which he had procured, were fair and advantageous. That he might prove this to be the case, he examined the articles, and spoke particularly to the points which had been complained of — the boundaries of Canada, the fishery of Newfoundland, the cession of the Floridas, the abandonment of the loyalists, and the other topics which had engaged the attention of the House; recommending to them temper and moderation, and spurning at all unseasonable and invidious schemes of opposition, in a moment so calamitous and alarming to the state.

With respect to the unnatural alliance which it was reported had taken place, Mr. Pitt said, it was undoubtedly to be reckoned among the wonders of the age. It was not easy to reduce such an event to any common rule of judging of men. It stretched to a point of political apostacy, which not only astonished so young a man as he was, but apparently astonished and confounded the most veteran observers of the human heart. He was excessively severe on this junction, and spoke in most pointed terms of reproach.*

* Mr. Sheridan, in rising afterwards to explain, took notice of the personal allusions which Mr. Pitt had introduced in his speech. "On the particular sort of personality which the right honourable gentleman had thought proper to make use of he need not, he said, make any comment — the pro-

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February 21. 1783.

THE discussion of the Preliminary Articles of Peace with France, Spain, and America, being this day resumed, the following resolutions censuring the terms of the peace, were moved by Lord John Cavendish.

1st. "That in consideration of the public faith which ought to be preserved inviolate, this House will support His Majesty in rendering firm and permanent the peace to be conducted definitively, in consequence of the Provisional Treaty and Preliminary Articles which have been laid before the House."

2d. "that this House will, in concurrence with His Majesty's paternal regard for his people, employ its best endeavours to improve the blessings of peace, to the advantage of his crown and subjects."

3d. "That His Majesty, in acknowledging the independence of the United States of America, by virtue of the powers vested in him by the act of the last session of parliament, to enable His Majesty to conclude a peace or truce with certain colonies in North America, has acted as the circumstances of affairs indispensably required, and in conformity to the sense of parliament."

4th. "That the concessions made to the adversaries of Great Britain, by the said Provisional Treaty and Preliminary Articles, are greater than they were entitled to, either from the actual situation of their respective possessions, or from their comparative strength."

priety, the taste, the gentlemanly point of it, must have been obvious to the House. But, said Mr. Sheridan let me assure the right honourable gentleman, that I do now, and will at any time when he chooses to repeat this sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good humour. Nay, I will say more—flattered and encouraged by the right honourable gentleman's panegyric on my talents; if ever I again engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption—to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Johnson's best characters; the character of the Angry Boy in the Alchymist."

After Mr. Fox had concluded a very long and forcible speech in support of the resolutions,

Mr. PITT rose, and delivered his sentiments as follows :

SIR, Revering, as I do, the great abilities of the honourable gentleman who spoke last, I lament, in common with the House, when those abilities are misemployed, as on the present question, to inflame the imagination and mislead the judgment. I am told, Sir, "he does not envy me the triumph of my situation on this day," a sort of language which becomes the candour of that honourable gentleman as ill as his present principles. The triumphs of party, Sir, with which this self-appointed minister seems so highly elate, shall never seduce me to any inconsistency which the busiest suspicion shall presume to glance at. I will never engage in political enmities without a public cause. I will never forego such enmities without the public approbation : nor will I *be questioned and cast off in the face of this House, by one virtuous and dissatisfied friend.** These, Sir, the sober and durable triumphs of reason, over the weak and profligate inconsistencies of party violence ; these, Sir, the steady triumphs of virtue over success itself, shall be mine, not only in my present situation, but through every future condition of my life ; triumphs which no length of time shall diminish ; which no change of principle shall ever sully.

The fatal consequence of Tuesday's vote, which I then deprecated and foretold, is already manifest in this House, and it has been thought on all sides requisite, to give a new stability to the peace, which that vote had already shaken. But the proof which the present motion is about to establish, *that we are determined to abide by this peace*, is a declaration that we have examined the terms, and have found them *inadequate*. Still less consistent is this extraordinary motion with the language of Tuesday. It was then urged, that no sufficient time had been allowed us to determine on the articles before us ; and in the short space of two days, we are ready to pass a vote of censure on what we declare we have not had leisure to discuss. This, Sir, is the first monstrous production of that strange alliance, which threat-

* Supposed to allude to Sir Cecil Wray, Mr. Powys, &c.

ens once more to plunge this devoted country into all the horrors of another war.

It is not, Sir, an exception to any single article, if well-founded exceptions should really exist, that ought to determine the merits of this treaty. Private interests have their respective advocates, and subjects may be easily found for partial complaints: but private interests must bend to the public safety. What these complaints may prove is indeed yet unknown: for whilst the honourable gentleman alone is describing with so much confidence the distresses and dissatisfactions of trade, she herself is approaching the throne with the effusions of gratitude and affection. The honourable gentleman who spoke last, has fairly stated the terms by which the merits of this peace are to be decided — *the relative strength and resources of the respective powers at war*. I will immediately meet him on this issue.

I shall begin, Sir, with a most important subject, the state of the British navy; and shall refer myself for proofs of what I assert, to the papers now lying on your table. This appeal, Sir, to solid and authentic documents, will appear the more just and necessary, when I acquaint the house, that an noble lord*, from whom the honourable gentleman professes to receive *his* naval information, has varied in his statements to the cabinet, no less than twenty sail of the line.

We are informed, Sir, from the papers before us, that the British force amounted nearly to one hundred sail of the line.— Many of these had been long and actively employed on foreign stations. With diligent exertions, six new ships would have been added to the catalogue in March. The force of France and Spain amounted to nearly one hundred and forty sail of the line, sixty of which were lying in Cadiz harbour, stored and victualled for immediate service. Twelve ships of the line including one newly built by the United States, had quitted Boston harbour under Vaudreuil, in a state of perfect repair. An immense land-armament was collected at St. Domingo. These several forces were united in one object, and that object was the reduction of

* Lord Keppel.

Jamaica. Who, Sir, can suppose with serious confidence, that island could have long resisted a regular attack, supported by seventy-two sail of the line? Admiral Pigot, after his reinforcement from Europe, would have commanded a fleet of only forty-six sail, and it has long been acknowledged in this House, that *defensive war must terminate in certain ruin*. Would Admiral Pigot have undertaken at this time *offensive* operations against the islands of the enemy?—Those islands on which Lord Rodney, flushed with victory, could not venture to attempt an impression? Would Admiral Pigot, Sir, have regained by arms what the ministers have recovered by treaty? Could *he* in the sight of a superior fleet, have recaptured Grenada, Dominique, St. Kitt's, Nevis, and Montserrat? Or, might we not too reasonably apprehend the campaign in the West Indies would have closed with the loss of Jamaica itself, the remnant of our possessions in that part of the globe?

Let us next consider our situation in the east. A mere defensive resistance, however glorious, had entitled Sir Edward Hughes to the thanks of this House; but his success, if it may be termed a victory, had not prevented the enemy from landing a greater European force than we actually possess in India, and who at this instant are in conjunction with Hyder, subduing and desolating the Carnatic.

The prospect is by no means brightened when we look forward to the probable operations in the Channel, and in the Northern Seas, during the course of the ensuing summer. Thirteen new sail of the line would at that time have been added to the fleet of France; and the Dutch force, as it has been accurately stated, by a great naval officer*, in this debate, would have amounted to twenty-five sail of the line. What accession the Spanish force would have received, is not sufficiently known. It is enough for me to state, the fleets of Bourbon and of Holland would have doubled ours in our own seas. Should we have seized the intervals of their cruize, and poorly paraded the Channel for

* Commodore Keith Stuart.

a few weeks, to tarnish again, by flight, the glories of the last campaign? Or should we have dared to risque the existence of the kingdom itself, by engaging against such fearful odds? •

What were the feelings of every one who hears me (what were my own feelings it is impossible to describe) when that great man Lord Howe set sail with our only fleet; inferior to the enemy, and under a probability of an engagement on their own coasts? My apprehensions, Sir, on this occasion, however great, were mixed with hope; I knew the superiority of British skill and courage might outweigh the inequality of numbers. But, Sir, in another quarter, and at the same instant of time, my apprehensions were unmixed with a ray of comfort. The Baltic fleet, almost as valuable as Gibraltar itself, for it contained all the materials for future war, was on its way to England; and twelve sail of the line had been sent out from the ports of Holland to intercept them. Gibraltar was relieved by a skill and courage that baffled superior numbers: and the Baltic fleet was, I know not how, miraculously preserved. One power, indeed, the honourable gentleman has omitted in *his* detail:—But the *Dutch*, Sir, had not been disarmed by the humiliating language of that gentleman's ministry. They were warmed into more active exertions, and were just beginning to feel their own strength. They were not only about to defend themselves with effect, but to lend ten sail of the line to the fleets of France and Spain. Here, Sir, let us pause for a moment of serious and solemn consideration!

Should the ministers have persevered from day to day to throw the desperate die, whose successes had won us only a barren though glorious safety, and whose failure in a single cast would sink us into hopeless ruin? However fondly the ideas of national expectation had diffused themselves amongst the people, the ministers Sir, could entertain no rational hopes. Those columns of our strength, which many honourable gentlemen had raised with so much fancy, and decorated with so much invention, the ministers had surveyed with the eye of sober reason. I am sorry to say, we discovered the fabric of our naval superiority to be visionary and baseless.

I shall next, with submission to the right honourable gentleman who presides in that department, state, in a few words, the situation of the army. It is notorious to every gentleman who hears me, that new levies could scarcely be torn, on any terms from this depopulated country. It is known to professional men how great is the difference between the nominal and effective state of that service; and, astonishing as it may appear, after a careful enquiry, three thousand men were the utmost force that could have been safely sent from this country on any offensive duty. But, I am told, Sir, the troops from New York would have supplied us with a force equal to the demands of every intended expedition. The foreign troops in that garrison we had no power to embark on any other than American service; and, in contradiction to the honourable gentleman who spoke last, and to that noble lord whose language he affects to speak in this House, no transports had been prepared, or could have been assembled for their immediate embarkation. Where, Sir, should they have directed their course when they were at length embarked, but into the hazard of an enemy's fleet, which would have cruized with undisputed superiority in every part of the western world.

No pressure of public accusation, nor heat of innocence in its own defence, shall ever tempt me to disclose a single circumstance which may tend to humiliate my country. What I am about to say will betray no secret of state; it is known, for it is felt throughout the nation. There remains at this instant, exclusive of the annual services, an unfunded debt of thirty millions.—Taxes, Sir, the most flattering, have again and again been tried, and, instead of revenue from themselves, have frequently produced a failure in others, with which they had been found to sympathize. But here, Sir, I am told by the honourable gentleman who spoke last, *other nations would have felt an equal distress*. Good God! to what a consequence does the honourable gentleman lead us! Should I, Sir, have dared to advise a continuance of war, which endangered the bankruptcy of public faith; a bankruptcy which would have almost dissolved the bonds of government, and have involved the state in the confusion of a general ruin? Should I

have ventured to do this, *because ONE of the adverse powers MIGHT have experienced an equal distress?*

The honourable gentleman who spoke last has amused the house with various statements, on the different principles of *uti possidetis* and restitution. The principle of those statements is as false as it is unexpected from him. Did his great naval friend acquaint him with the respective values of Dominique and St. Lucia? that lord, who in His Majesty's councils had advised, and perhaps wisely, a preference of the former! The value of Dominique, Sir, was better known to our enemies; and the immense sums employed by them in fortifying that island, prove as well its present value, as their desire to retain it. That honourable gentleman has, on all occasions, spoke with approbation of the last peace: was St. Lucia left in our hands by that peace, the terms of which we ourselves prescribed? or was St. Lucia really so impregnable as to endanger all our possessions at the commencement of the present war?

It would be needless for me to remind the honourable gentleman who spoke last of any declarations he had made in a preceding session: professions from *him* so antiquated and obsolete, would have but little weight in this House. But I will venture to require consistency for a single week, and shall remind him of his declaration in Monday's debate, "that even this peace was preferable to a continuance of the war." Will he then criminate His Majesty's ministers by the present motion, for preferring what *he* would have preferred? or how will he presume to prove, that, if better terms could have been obtained, it was less their interest than their duty to have obtained them.

Was this peace, Sir, concluded with the same indecent levity, that the honourable gentleman would proceed to its condemnation? Many days and nights were laboriously employed by His Majesty's ministers in such extensive negotiations;—consultations were held with persons the best informed on the respective subjects;—many doubts were well weighed, and removed; and weeks and months of solemn discussion gave birth to that peace, which we are required to destroy without examination: that peace,

the positive ultimatum from France, and to which I solemnly assure the public there was no other alternative but a continuance of war.

Could the ministers, thus surrounded with scenes of ruin, affect to dictate the terms of peace? And are these articles seriously compared with the peace of Paris? There was, indeed, a time when Great Britain might have met her enemies on other conditions; and if an imagination, warmed with the power and glory of this country, could have diverted any member of His Majesty's councils from a painful inspection of the truth, I might, I hope, without presumption, have been entitled to that indulgence. I feel, Sir, at this instant, how much I had been animated in my childhood by a recital of England's victories:— I was taught, Sir, by one whose memory I shall ever revere, that at the close of a war, far different indeed from this, she had dictated the terms of peace to submissive nations. This, in which I place something more than a common interest, was the memorable æra of England's glory. But that æra is past: she is under the awful and mortifying necessity of employing a language that corresponds with her true condition: the visions of her power and pre-eminence are passed away.

We have acknowledged American Independence — that, Sir, was a needless form: the incapacity of the noble lord who conducted our affairs; the events of war, and even a vote of this House, had already granted what it was impossible to withhold.

We have ceded Florida — We have obtained Providence and the Bahama Islands.

We have ceded an extent of fishery on the coast of Newfoundland — We have established an exclusive right to the most valuable banks.

We have restored St. Lucia, and given up Tobago — We have regained Grenada, Dominica, St. Kitt's, Nevis, and Montserrat, and we have rescued Jamaica from her impending danger. In Africa we have ceded Goree, the grave of our countrymen; and we possess Senegambia, the best and most healthy settlement.

In Europe we have relinquished Minorca — kept up at an immense and useless expence in peace, and never tenable in war.

We have likewise permitted His Most Christian Majesty to repair his harbour of Dunkirk. — The humiliating clause for its destruction was inserted, Sir, after other wars than the past. But the immense expense attending its repair, will still render this indulgence useless: add to this, that Dunkirk was first an object of our jealousy when ships were constructed far inferior to their present draught. That harbour, at the commencement of the war, admitted ships of a single deck; no art or expense will enable it to receive a fleet of the line.

In the East Indies, where alone we had power to obtain this peace, we have restored what was useless to ourselves, and scarcely tenable in a continuance of the war.

But we have abandoned the unhappy loyalists to their implacable enemies — Little, Sir, are those unhappy men befriended by such a language in this House; nor shall we give much assistance to their cause, or add stability to the reciprocal confidence of the two states, if we already impute to Congress a violence and injustice, which decency forbids us to suspect. Would a continuance of the war have been justified on the single principle of assisting these unfortunate men? or would a continuance of the war, if so justified, have procured them a more certain indemnity? Their hopes must have been rendered desperate indeed by any additional distresses of Britain; those hopes which are now revived by the timely aid of peace and reconciliation.

These are the ruinous conditions to which this country, engaged with four powerful states, and exhausted in all its resources, thought fit to subscribe, for the dissolution of that alliance, and the immediate enjoyment of peace. Let us examine what is left, with a manly and determined courage. Let us strengthen ourselves against inveterate enemies, and reconcile our antient friends. The misfortunes of individuals and of kingdoms, that are laid open and examined with true wisdom, are more than half redressed; and to this great object should be directed all the virtue and abilities of this House. Let us feel our calamities — let us bear them too, like men.

But, Sir, I fear I have too long engaged your attention to no

real purpose; and that the public safety is this day risked, without a blush, by the malice and disappointment of faction. The honourable gentleman who spoke last has declared, with that sort of consistency that marks his conduct, "Because he is prevented from prosecuting the noble lord in the blue ribbon to the satisfaction of public justice, he will heartily embrace him as his friend." So readily does he reconcile extremes, and love the man whom he wishes to persecute! With the same spirit, Sir, I suppose he will cherish this peace too — *because he abhors it.*

But I will not hesitate to surmise, from the obvious complexion of this night's debate, that it originates rather in an inclination to force the Earl of Shelburne from the treasury, than in any real conviction that ministers deserve censure for the concessions they have made: concessions, which, from the facts I have enumerated, and the reasoning I have stated, as arising from these facts, are the obvious result of an absolute necessity, and imputable, not so much to those of whom the present cabinet is composed, as to that cabinet of which the noble lord in the blue ribbon was a member. This noble earl, like every other person eminent for ability, and acting in the first department of a great state, is undoubtedly an object of envy to some, as well as of admiration to others. The obloquy to which his capacity and situation have raised him has been created and circulated with equal meanness and address: but his merits are as much above my panegyric, as the arts, to which he owes his defamation, are beneath my attention. When stripped of his power and emoluments, he once more descends to private life without the invidious appendages of place, men will see him through a different medium, and perceive in him qualities which richly entitle him to their esteem. That official superiority which at present irritates their feelings, and that capacity of conferring good offices on those he prefers, which all men are fond of possessing, will not then be any obstacle to their making an impartial estimate of his character. But notwithstanding a sincere predilection for this nobleman, whom I am bound by every tie to treat with sentiments of deference and regard, I am far from wishing him retained in power against the public approbation; and if his

removal can be innocently effected, if he can be compelled to resign without entailing all those mischiefs which seem to be involved in the resolution now moved, great as his zeal for his country is, powerful as his abilities are, and earnest and assiduous as his endeavours have been to rescue the British empire from the difficulties that oppress her, I am persuaded he will retire, firm in the dignity of his own mind, conscious of his having contributed to the public advantage, and, if not attended with the fulsome plaudits of a mob, possessed of that substantial and permanent satisfaction which arises from the habitual approbation of an upright mind. I know him well; and dismiss him from the confidence of his sovereign, and the business of state when you please, to this transcendent consolation he has a title, which no accident can invalidate or affect. It is the glorious reward of doing well, of acting an honest and honourable part. By the difficulties he encountered on his accepting the reins of government, by the reduced situation in which he found the state of the nation, and by the perpetual turbulence of those who thought his elevation effected at their own expense, he has certainly earned it dearly: and with such a solid understanding, and so much goodness of heart as stamp his character, he is in no danger of losing it. Nothing can be a stronger proof that his enemies are eager to traduce, than the frivolous grounds on which they affect to accuse him. An action, which reflects a lustre on his attention to the claims of merit*, has yet been improved into a fault in his conduct. A right honourable gentleman who has exhausted his strength in the service of the state, and to whose years and infirmities his absence from parliament can only be attributed, owes to the friendship and interference of the noble earl a pension, which, however adequate to all his necessities and convenience in the evening of life, is no extraordinary compensation for the public spirit which has uniformly marked his parliamentary conduct. Surely the abilities and virtues of this veteran soldier and respectable senator, deserved some acknowledgment from that community in which they have been so often and so manfully exerted. Surely his age entitled

* Alluding to the pension granted to Colonel Barré.

him to a little repose in the lap of that public to whose welfare his youth had been dedicated. Surely, that principle of humanity, which stimulates those in power to commiserate in this manner the situation of neglected merit, possesses a nobleness, a generosity, a benevolence, which instead of incurring the censure of any, ought to command the admiration and praise of all.

I repeat then, Sir, that it is not this treaty, it is the Earl of Shelburne alone whom the movers of this question are desirous to wound. This is the object which has raised this storm of faction; this is the aim of the unnatural coalition to which I have alluded. If, however, the baneful alliance is not already formed, if this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnized, I know a just and lawful impediment, and, in the name of the public safety, *I here forbid the banns.*

My own share in the censure, pointed by the motion before the House against His Majesty's ministers, I will bear with fortitude, because my own heart tells me I have not acted wrong. To this monitor, who never did, and, I trust, never will, deceive me, I will confidently repair, as to an adequate asylum from all the clamour which interested faction can raise. I was not very eager to come in, and shall have no great reluctance to go out, whenever the public are disposed to dismiss me from their service. It has been the great object of my short official existence to do the duties of my station with all the ability and address in my power, and with a fidelity and honour which should bear me up, and give me confidence, under every possible contingency or disappointment. I can say with sincerity, I never had a wish which did not terminate in the dearest interests of the nation. I will at the same time imitate the honourable gentleman's candour, and confess, that I too have my ambition. High situation, and great influence, are desirable objects to most men, and objects which I am not ashamed to pursue, which I am even solicitous to possess, whenever they can be acquired with honour, and retained with dignity. On these respectable conditions, I am not less ambitious to be great and powerful than it is natural for a young man, with such brilliant examples before him; to be.

But even these objects I am not beneath relinquishing, the moment my duty to my country, my character, and my friends, renders such a sacrifice indispensable. Then I hope to retire, not disappointed, but triumphant; triumphant in the conviction that my talents, humble as they are, have been earnestly, zealously, and strenuously, employed to the best of my apprehension, in promoting the truest welfare of my country; and that, however I may stand chargeable with weakness of understanding, or error of judgment, nothing can be imputed to my official capacity which bears the most distant connection with an interested, a corrupt, or a dishonest intention. But it is not any part of my plan, when the time shall come that I quit my present station, to threaten the repose of my country, and erect, like the honourable gentleman, a fortress and a refuge for disappointed ambition. The self-created and self-appointed successors to the present administration, have asserted with much confidence, that this is likely to be the case. I can assure them, however, when they come from that side of the House to this, I will for one most readily and cordially accept the exchange. The only desire I would indulge and cherish on the subject is, that the service of the public may be ably, disinterestedly, and faithfully performed: To those who feel for their country as I wish to do, and will strive to do, it matters little who are out or in; but it matters much that her affairs be conducted with wisdom, with firmness, with dignity, and with credit. Those entrusted to my care I will resign, let me hope, into hands much better qualified to do them justice than mine. But I will not mimic the parade of the honourable gentleman in avowing an indiscriminate opposition to whoever may be appointed to succeed. I will march out with no warlike, no hostile, no menacing protestations: but hoping the new administration will have no other object in view than the real and substantial welfare of the community at large; that they will bring with them into office those truly public and patriotic principles which they formerly held, but which they abandoned in opposition; that they will save the state, and promote the great purposes of public good, with as much steadiness,

integrity, and solid advantage, as I am confident it must one day appear the Earl of Shelburne and his colleagues have done, I promise them, before-hand, my uniform and best support on every occasion, where I can honestly and conscientiously assist them.

In short, Sir, whatever appears dishonourable or inadequate in the peace on your table, is strictly chargeable to the noble lord in the blue ribbon, whose profusion of the public's money, whose notorious temerity and obstinacy in prosecuting the war, which originated in his pernicious and oppressive policy, and whose utter incapacity to fill the station he occupied, rendered peace of any description indispensable to the preservation of the state. The small part which fell to my share in this ignominious transaction, was divided with a set of men, whom the dispassionate public must, on reflection, unite to honour. Unused as I am to the factious and jarring clamours of this day's debate, I look up to the independent part of the House, and to the public at large, if not for that impartial approbation which my conduct deserves, at least for that acquittal from blame to which my innocence entitles me. I have ever been most anxious to do my utmost for the interest of my country; it has been my sole concern to act an honest and upright part, and I am disposed to think every instance of my official department will bear a fair and honourable construction. With these intentions, I ventured forward on the public attention; and can appeal with some degree of confidence to both sides of the House, for the consistency of my political conduct. My earliest impressions were in favour of the noblest and most disinterested modes of serving the public: these impressions are still dear, and will, I hope, remain for ever dear to my heart: I will cherish them as a legacy infinitely more valuable than the greatest inheritance. On these principles alone I came into parliament, and into place; and I now take the whole House to witness, that I have not been under the necessity of contradicting one public declaration I have ever made.

I am, notwithstanding, at the disposal of this House, and with

their decision, whatever it shall be, I will cheerfully comply. It is impossible to deprive me of those feelings which must always result from the sincerity of my best endeavours to fulfil with integrity every official engagement. You may take from me, Sir, the privileges and emoluments of place, but you cannot, and you shall not, take from me those habitual and warm regards for the prosperity of Great Britain, which constitute the honour, the happiness, the pride of my life; and which, I trust, death alone can extinguish. And, with this consolation, the loss of power, Sir, and the loss of fortune, though I affect not to despise them, I hope I soon shall be able to forget.

Laudo manentem ; si celeres quatit

Pennas, resigno quæ dedit —

————— *probamque*

Pauperiem sine dote quæro.

The three first resolutions were agreed to without opposition. Upon the fourth, the house divided,

Ayes.....207

Noes.....190

Majority for censuring the terms of the Peace 17*

March 31. 1783.

THE Earl of Surrey called the attention of the House to the unsettled state of the administration; and desired to know, from the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) who had just entered the House, whether an administration had yet been formed, or whether there was a near probability of such an event taking place; as if that was the case, he observed, the necessity that enforced his motion was superseded, and he should take pleasure in not being obliged to bring it forward.

Mr. PITT said, he was to inform the noble lord, and the House,

* Public affairs continued, for several weeks after this division, in a state of great disorder; no new administration was appointed, and the negotiations for power were, through the several conjunctions of parties, carried on with much violence and animosity.