

was broken off was the question of the possession of the Austrian Netherlands, and that it is therefore on that ground only that the war has, since that time, been continued.

When this subject was before under discussion, I stated, and I shall state again (notwithstanding the learned gentleman's accusation of my having endeavored to shift the question from its true point), that the question then at issue was not whether the Netherlands should in fact be restored; though even on that question I am not (like the learned gentleman) unprepared to give any opinion. I am ready to say that to leave that territory in the possession of France would be obviously dangerous to the interests of this country, and is inconsistent with the policy which it has uniformly pursued at every period in which it has concerned itself in the general system of the Continent.

But it was not on the decision of this question of expediency and policy that the issue of the negotiation then turned. What was required of us by France was, not merely that we should acquiesce in her retaining the Netherlands, but that, as a preliminary to all treaty, and before entering upon the discussion of terms, we should recognize the principle that whatever France, in time of war, had annexed to the republic must remain inseparable forever, and could not become the subject of negotiation.

I say that in refusing such a preliminary we were only resisting the claim of France to arrogate to itself the power of controlling, by its own separate and municipal acts, the rights and interests of other countries, and molding, at its discretion, a new and general code of the law of nations.

In reviewing the issue of this negotiation, it is important to observe that France, who began by abjuring a love of conquest, was desired to give up nothing of her own, not even to

give up all that she had conquered; that it was offered to her to receive back all that had been conquered from her; and when she rejected the negotiation for peace upon these grounds, are we then to be told of the unrelenting hostility of the combined powers, for which France was to revenge itself upon other countries, and which is to justify the subversion of every established government, and the destruction of property, religion, and domestic comfort from one end of Italy to the other? Such was the effect of the war against Modena, against Genoa, against Tuscany, against Venice, against Rome, and against Naples, all of which she engaged in, or prosecuted, subsequent to this very period.

After this, in the year 1797, Austria had made peace; England and its ally, Portugal (from whom we could expect little active assistance, but whom we felt it our duty to defend), alone remained in the war. In that situation, under the pressure of necessity, which I shall not disguise, we made another attempt to negotiate. In 1797, Prussia, Spain, Austria, Naples, having successively made peace, the princes of Italy having been destroyed, France having surrounded itself, in almost every part in which it is not surrounded by the sea, with revolutionary republics, England made another offer of a different nature. It was not now a demand that France should restore anything.

Austria having made a peace upon her own terms, England had nothing to require with regard to her allies, she asked no restitution of the dominions added to France in Europe. So far from retaining anything French out of Europe, we freely offered them all, demanding only, as a poor compensation, to retain a part of what we had acquired by arms from Holland, then identified with France. This proposal also, sir, was proudly refused, in a way which the learned gentle-



man himself has not attempted to justify, indeed of which he has spoken with detestation. I wish, since he has not finally abjured his duty in this House, that that detestation had been stated earlier; that he had mixed his own voice with the general voice of his country on the result of that negotiation.

Let us look at the conduct of France immediately subsequent to this period. She had spurned the offers of Great Britain; she had reduced her Continental enemies to the necessity of accepting a precarious peace; she had (in spite of those pledges repeatedly made and uniformly violated) surrounded herself by new conquests on every part of her frontier but one. That one was Switzerland. The first effect of being relieved from the war with Austria, of being secured against all fears of Continental invasion on the ancient territory of France, was their unprovoked attack against this unoffending and devoted country.

This was one of the scenes which satisfied even those who were the most incredulous that France had thrown off the mask, "if indeed she had ever worn it." It collected, in one view, many of the characteristic features of that revolutionary system which I have endeavored to trace—the perfidy which alone rendered their arms successful—the pretexts of which they availed themselves to produce division and prepare the entrance of Jacobinism in that country—the proposal of armistice, one of the known and regular engines of the revolution, which was, as usual, the immediate prelude to military execution, attended with cruelty and barbarity of which there are few examples.

All these are known to the world. The country they attacked was one which had long been the faithful ally of France, which, instead of giving cause of jealousy to any

other power, had been for ages proverbial for the simplicity and innocence of its manners, and which had acquired and preserved the esteem of all the nations of Europe; which had almost, by the common consent of mankind, been exempted from the sound of war, and marked out as a land of Goshen, safe and untouched in the midst of surrounding calamities.

Look, then, at the fate of Switzerland, at the circumstances which led to its destruction. Add this instance to the catalogue of aggression against all Europe, and then tell me whether the system I have described has not been prosecuted with an unrelenting spirit which cannot be subdued in adversity, which cannot be appeased in prosperity, which neither solemn professions, nor the general law of nations, nor the obligation of treaties (whether previous to the revolution or subsequent to it), could restrain from the subversion of every state into which, either by force or fraud, their arms could penetrate.

Then tell me, whether the disasters of Europe are to be charged upon the provocation of this country and its allies, or on the inherent principle of the French revolution, of which the natural result produced so much misery and carnage in France and carried desolation and terror over so large a portion of the world.

Sir, much as I have now stated, I have not finished the catalogue. America, almost as much as Switzerland, perhaps, contributed to that change which has taken place in the minds of those who were originally partial to the principles of the French government. The hostility against America followed a long course of neutrality adhered to under the strongest provocations, or rather of repeated compliances to France, with which we might well have been dissatisfied. It was on the face of it unjust and wanton; and it was accompanied



by those instances of sordid corruption which shocked and disgusted even the enthusiastic admirers of revolutionary purity and threw a new light on the genius of revolutionary government.

After this, it remains only shortly to remind gentlemen of the aggression against Egypt, not omitting, however, to notice the capture of Malta in the way to Egypt. Inconsiderable as that island may be thought, compared with the scenes we have witnessed, let it be remembered that it is an island of which the government had long been recognized by every state of Europe, against which France pretended no cause of war, and whose independence was as dear to itself and as sacred as that of any country in Europe. It was in fact not unimportant, from its local situation to the other powers of Europe; but in proportion as any man may diminish its importance the instance will only serve the more to illustrate and confirm the proposition which I have maintained.

The all-searching eye of the French Revolution looks to every part of Europe and every quarter of the world in which can be found an object either of acquisition or plunder. Nothing is too great for the temerity of its ambition, nothing too small or insignificant for the grasp of its rapacity. From hence Bonaparte and his army proceeded to Egypt.

The attack was made, pretences were held out to the natives of that country in the name of the French king whom they had murdered. They pretended to have the approbation of the Grand Seignior whose territory they were violating; their project was carried on under the profession of a zeal for Mohammedanism; it was carried on by proclaiming that France had been reconciled to the Mussulman faith, had abjured that of Christianity, or, as he in his impious language termed it, of the sect of the Messiah.

The only plea which they have since held out to color this atrocious invasion of a neutral and friendly territory is that it was the road to attack the English power in India. It is most unquestionably true that this was one and a principal cause of this unparalleled outrage; but another and an equally substantial cause (as appears by their own statements) was the division and partition of the territories of what they thought a falling power. It is impossible to dismiss this subject without observing that this attack against Egypt was accompanied by an attack upon the British possessions in India, made on true revolutionary principles. In Europe the propagation of the principles of France had uniformly prepared the way for the progress of its arms.

To India the lovers of peace had sent the messengers of Jacobinism for the purpose of inculcating war in those distant regions on Jacobin principles, and of forming Jacobin clubs, which they actually succeeded in establishing, and which in most respects resembled the European model, but which were distinguished by this peculiarity, that they were required to swear in one breath hatred to tyranny, the love of liberty, and the destruction of all kings and sovereigns, except the good and faithful ally of the French republic, Citizen Tippoo.

What, then, was the nature of this system? Was it anything but what I have stated it to be—an insatiable love of aggrandizement, an implacable spirit of destruction against all the civil and religious institutions of every country? This is the first moving and acting spirit of the French Revolution; this is the spirit which animated it at its birth, and this is the spirit which will not desert it till the moment of its dissolution, “which grew with its growth, which strengthened with its strength,” but which has not abated under its mis-



fortunes nor declined in its decay. It has been invariably the same in every period, operating more or less, according as accident or circumstances might assist it; but it has been inherent in the revolution in all its stages; it has equally belonged to Brissot, to Robespierre, to Tallien, to Reubel, to Barras, and to every one of the leaders of the Directory, but to none more than to Bonaparte, in whom now all their powers are united.

What are its characters? Can it be accident that produced them? No, it is only from the alliance of the most horrid principles, with the most horrid means, that such miseries could have been brought upon Europe. It is this paradox which we must always keep in mind when we are discussing any question relative to the effects of the French Revolution. Groaning under every degree of misery, the victim of his own crimes, and as I once before expressed in this House, asking pardon of God and of man for the miseries which it has brought upon itself and others, France still retains (while it has left neither means of comfort nor almost of subsistence to its own inhabitants) new and unexampled means of annoyance and destruction against all the other powers of Europe.

Its first fundamental principle was to bribe the poor against the rich, by proposing to transfer into new hands, on the delusive notion of equality, and in breach of every principle of justice, the whole property of the country. The practical application of this principle was to devote the whole of that property to indiscriminate plunder, and to make it the foundation of a revolutionary system of finance, productive in proportion to the misery and desolation which it created.

It has been accompanied by an unwearied spirit of pro-

selytism, diffusing itself over all the nations of the earth: a spirit which can apply itself to all circumstances and all situations, which can furnish a list of grievances and hold out a promise of redress equally to all nations; which inspired the teachers of French liberty with the hope of alike recommending themselves to those who live under the feudal code of the German empire; to the various states of Italy, under all their different institutions; to the old republicans of Holland, and to the new republicans of America; to the Catholic of Ireland, whom it was to deliver from Protestant usurpation; to the Protestant of Switzerland, whom it was to deliver from popish superstition; and to the Mussulman of Egypt, whom it was to deliver from Christian persecution; to the remote Indian, blindly bigoted to his ancient institutions; and to the natives of Great Britain, enjoying the perfection of practical freedom, and justly attached to their constitution, from the joint result of habit, of reason, and of experience.

The last and distinguishing feature is a perfidy which nothing can bind, which no tie of treaty, no sense of the principles generally received among nations, no obligation, human or divine, can restrain. Thus qualified, thus armed for destruction, the genius of the French Revolution marched forth, the terror and dismay of the world. Every nation has in its turn been the witness, many have been the victims of its principles; and it is left for us to decide whether we will compromise with such a danger while we have yet resources to supply the sinews of war, while the heart and spirit of the country is yet unbroken, and while we have the means of calling forth and supporting a powerful co-operation in Europe.

Much more might be said on this part of the subject; but



if what I have said already is a faithful, though only an imperfect, sketch of those excesses and outrages which even history itself will hereafter be unable fully to represent and record, and a just representation of the principle and source from which they originated, will any man say that we ought to accept a precarious security against so tremendous a danger? Much more—will he pretend, after the experience of all that has passed in the different stages of the French Revolution, that we ought to be deterred from probing this great question to the bottom, and from examining, without ceremony or disguise, whether the change which has recently taken place in France is sufficient now to give security, not against a common danger, but against such a danger as that which I have described?

In examining this part of the subject let it be remembered that there is one other characteristic of the French Revolution as striking as its dreadful and destructive principles: I mean the instability of its government, which has been of itself sufficient to destroy all reliance, if any such reliance could at any time have been placed on the good faith of any of its rulers. Such has been the incredible rapidity with which the revolutions in France have succeeded each other, that I believe the names of those who have successively exercised absolute power under the pretense of liberty are to be numbered by the years of the revolution, and by each of the new constitutions, which, under the same pretense, has in its turn been imposed by force on France: all of which alike were founded upon principles which professed to be universal, and was intended to be established and perpetuated among all the nations of the earth. Each of these will be found, upon an average, to have had about two years as the period of its duration.

Under this revolutionary system, accompanied with this perpetual fluctuation and change, both in the form of the government and in the persons of the rulers, what is the security which has hitherto existed, and what new security is now offered? Before an answer is given to this question, let me sum up the history of all the revolutionary governments of France, and of their characters in relation to other powers, in words more emphatical than any which I could use—the memorable words pronounced on the eve of this last constitution by the orator who was selected to report to an assembly, surrounded by a file of grenadiers, the new form of liberty which it was destined to enjoy under the auspices of General Bonaparte. From this reporter, the mouth and organ of the new government, we learn this important lesson:

“It is easy to conceive why peace was not concluded before the establishment of the constitutional government. The only government which then existed described itself as revolutionary; it was, in fact, only the tyranny of a few men who were soon overthrown by others, and it consequently presented no stability of principles or of views, no security, either with respect to men or with respect to things.

“It should seem that that stability and that security ought to have existed from the establishment and as the effect of the constitutional system; and yet they did not exist more, perhaps even less, than they had done before. In truth we did make some partial treaties; we signed a Continental peace, and a general congress was held to confirm it; but these treaties, these diplomatic conferences, appear to have been the source of a new war more inveterate and more bloody than before.

“Before the 18th Fructidor (4th September) of the fifth year, the French government exhibited to foreign nations so uncertain an existence that they refused to treat with it. After this great event the whole power was absorbed in the Directory; the legislative body can hardly be said to have existed; treaties of peace were broken, and war carried every-



where, without that body having any share in those measures. The same Directory, after having intimidated all Europe, and destroyed, at its pleasure, several governments, neither knowing how to make peace or war, or how even to establish itself, was overturned by a breath on the 13th Prairial (18th June), to make room for other men, influenced perhaps by different views, or who might be governed by different principles.

“Judging, then, only from notorious facts, the French government must be considered as exhibiting nothing fixed, neither in respect to men nor to things.”

Here, then, is the picture, down to the period of the last revolution, of the state of France under all its successive governments!

Having taken a view of what it was, let us now examine what it is. In the first place we see, as has been truly stated, a change in the description and form of the sovereign authority. A supreme power is placed at the head of this nominal republic, with a more open avowal of military despotism than at any former period; with a more open and undisguised abandonment of the names and pretences under which that despotism long attempted to conceal itself. The different institutions, republican in their form and appearance, which were before the instruments of that despotism, are now annihilated; they have given way to the absolute power of one man, concentrating in himself all the authority of the state, and differing from other monarchs only in this, that (as my honorable friend, Mr. Canning, truly stated it) he wields a sword instead of a sceptre. What, then, is the confidence we are to derive either from the frame of the government or from the character and past conduct of the person who is now the absolute ruler of France?

Had we seen a man of whom we had no previous knowledge suddenly invested with the sovereign authority of the

country; invested with the power of taxation, with the power of the sword, the power of war and peace, the unlimited power of commanding the resources, of disposing of the lives and fortunes of every man in France; if we had seen at the same moment all the inferior machinery of the revolution, which, under the variety of successive shocks, had kept the system in motion, still remaining entire, all that, by requisition and plunder, had given activity to the revolutionary system of finance, and had furnished the means of creating an army, by converting every man who was of age to bear arms into a soldier, not for the defence of his own country, but for the sake of carrying the war into the country of the enemy; if we had seen all the subordinate instruments of Jacobin power subsisting in their full force, and retaining (to use the French phrase) all their original organization; and had then observed this single change in the conduct of their affairs that there was now one man, with no rival to thwart his measures, no colleague to divide his powers, no council to control his operations, no liberty of speaking or writing, no expression of public opinion to check or influence his conduct; under such circumstances should we be wrong to pause, or wait for the evidence of facts and experience, before we consented to trust our safety to the forbearance of a single man, in such a situation, and to relinquish those means of defence which have hitherto carried us safe through all the storms of the revolution? if we were to ask what are the principles and character of this stranger to whom fortune has suddenly committed the concerns of a great and powerful nation?

But is this the actual state of the present question? Are we talking of a stranger of whom we have heard nothing? No, sir; we have heard of him; we, and Europe, and the