

palsy at once the arms of Russia, or of Austria, or of any other country that might look to you for support; and then either to break off his separate treaty, or, if he should have concluded it, to apply the lesson which is taught in his school of policy in Egypt, and to revive at his pleasure those claims of indemnification which may have been reserved to some happier period.

This is precisely the interest which he has in negotiation. But on what grounds are we to be convinced that he has an interest in concluding and observing a solid and permanent pacification? Under all the circumstances of his personal character, and his newly acquired power, what other security has he for retaining that power but the sword? His hold upon France is the sword, and he has no other. Is he connected with the soil, or with the habits, the affections, or the prejudices of the country? He is a stranger, a foreigner, and a usurper. He unites in his own person everything that a pure republican must detest; everything that an enraged Jacobin has abjured; everything that a sincere and faithful royalist must feel as an insult. If he is opposed at any time in his career, what is his appeal? He appeals to his fortune; in other words, to his army and his sword. Placing, then, his whole reliance upon military support, can he afford to let his military renown pass away, to let his laurels wither, to let the memory of his trophies sink in obscurity? Is it certain that, with his army confined within France and restrained from inroads upon her neighbors, he can maintain at his devotion a force sufficiently numerous to support his power? Having no object but the possession of absolute dominion, no passion but military glory, is it to be reckoned as certain that he can feel such an interest in permanent peace as would justify us in laying down our arms, reducing our

expense, and relinquishing our means of security, on the faith of his engagements?

Do we believe that, after the conclusion of peace, he would not still sigh over the lost trophies of Egypt, wrested from him by the celebrated victory of Aboukir and the brilliant exertions of that heroic band of British seamen whose influence and example rendered the Turkish troops invincible at Acre? Can he forget that the effect of these exploits enabled Austria and Russia in one campaign to recover from France all which she had acquired by his victories, to dissolve the charm which for a time fascinated Europe, and to show that their generals, contending in a just cause, could efface even by their success and their military glory the most dazzling triumphs of his victorious and desolating ambition?

Can we believe, with these impressions on his mind, that if, after a year, eighteen months, or two years of peace had elapsed, he should be tempted by the appearance of fresh insurrection in Ireland, encouraged by renewed and unrestrained communication with France, and fomented by the fresh infusion of Jacobin principles; if we were at such a moment without a fleet to watch the ports of France or to guard the coasts of Ireland, without a disposable army or an embodied militia capable of supplying a speedy and adequate re-enforcement, and that he had suddenly the means of transporting thither a body of twenty or thirty thousand French troops; can we believe that at such a moment his ambition and vindictive spirit would be restrained by the recollection of engagements or the obligation of treaty? Or if, in some new crisis of difficulty and danger to the Ottoman empire, with no British navy in the Mediterranean, no confederacy formed, no force collected to support it, an opportunity should present itself for resuming the abandoned expedition to



Egypt, for renewing the avowed and favorite project of conquering and colonizing that rich and fertile country, and of opening the way to wound some of the vital interests of England and to plunder the treasures of the East in order to fill the bankrupt coffers of France? Would it be the interest of Bonaparte under such circumstances, or his principles, his moderation, his love of peace, his aversion to conquest, and his regard for the independence of other nations—would it be all or any of these that would secure us against an attempt which would leave us only the option of submitting without a struggle to certain loss and disgrace, or of renewing the contest which we had prematurely terminated, without allies, without preparation, with diminished means, and with increased difficulty and hazard?

Hitherto I have spoken only of the reliance which we can place on the professions, the character, and the conduct of the present First Consul; but it remains to consider the stability of his power. The revolution has been marked throughout by a rapid succession of new depositaries of public authority, each supplanting its predecessor. What grounds have we to believe that this new usurpation, more odious and more undisguised than all that preceded it, will be more durable? Is it that we rely on the particular provisions contained in the code of the pretended constitution, which was proclaimed as accepted by the French people as soon as the garrison of Paris declared their determination to exterminate all its enemies, and before any of its articles could even be known to half the country whose consent was required for its establishment?

I will not pretend to inquire deeply into the nature and effects of a constitution which can hardly be regarded but as a farce and a mockery. If, however, it could be supposed that its provisions were to have any effect, it seems equally adapted

to two purposes, that of giving to its founder for a time an absolute and uncontrolled authority, and that of laying the certain foundation of disunion and discord which, if they once prevail, must render the exercise of all the authority under the constitution impossible and leave no appeal but to the sword.

Is, then, military despotism that which we are accustomed to consider as a stable form of government? In all ages of the world it has been attained with the least stability to the persons who exercised it, and with the most rapid succession of changes and revolutions. In the outset of the French revolution its advocates boasted that it furnished a security forever, not to France only, but to all countries in the world, against military despotism; that the force of standing armies was vain and delusive; that no artificial power could resist public opinion; and that it was upon the foundation of public opinion alone that any government could stand. I believe that in this instance, as in every other, the progress of the French revolution has belied its professions; but, so far from its being a proof of the prevalence of public opinion against military force, it is, instead of the proof, the strongest exception from that doctrine which appears in the history of the world.

Through all the stages of the revolution military force has governed and public opinion has scarcely been heard. But still I consider this as only an exception from a general truth. I still believe that in every civilized country not enslaved by a Jacobin faction public opinion is the only sure support of any government. I believe this with the more satisfaction from a conviction that, if this contest is happily terminated, the established governments of Europe will stand upon that rock firmer than ever; and, whatever may be the defects of any particular



constitution, those who live under it will prefer its continuance to the experiment of changes which may plunge them in the unfathomable abyss of revolution or extricate them from it only to expose them to the terrors of military despotism. And, to apply this to France, I see no reason to believe that the present usurpation will be more permanent than any other military despotism which has been established by the same means and with the same defiance of public opinion.

What, then, is the inference I draw from all that I have now stated? Is it that we will in no case treat with Bonaparte? I say no such thing. But I say, as has been said in the answer returned to the French note, that we ought to wait for "experience and the evidence of facts" before we are convinced that such a treaty is admissible.

The circumstances I have stated would well justify us if we should be slow in being convinced; but on a question of peace and war everything depends upon degree and upon comparison. If on the one hand there should be an appearance that the policy of France is at length guided by different maxims from those which have hitherto prevailed; if we should hereafter see signs of stability in the government which are not now to be traced; if the progress of the allied army should not call forth such a spirit in France as to make it probable that the act of the country itself will destroy the system now prevailing; if the danger, the difficulty, the risk of continuing the contest should increase, while the hope of complete ultimate success should be diminished; all these in their due place are considerations which, with myself and, I can answer for it, with every one of my colleagues, will have their just weight.

But at present these considerations all operate one way; at present there is nothing from which we can presage a favor-

able disposition to change in the French councils. There is the greatest reason to rely on powerful co-operation from our allies; there are the strongest marks of a disposition in the interior of France to active resistance against this new tyranny; and there is every ground to believe, on reviewing our situation and that of the enemy, that, if we are ultimately disappointed of that complete success which we are at present entitled to hope, the continuance of the contest, instead of making our situation comparatively worse, will have made it comparatively better.

If, then, I am asked how long are we to persevere in the war, I can only say that no period can be accurately assigned. Considering the importance of obtaining complete security for the objects for which we contend, we ought not to be discouraged too soon; but, on the contrary, considering the importance of not impairing and exhausting the radical strength of the country, there are limits beyond which we ought not to persist, and which we can determine only by estimating and comparing fairly from time to time the degree of security to be obtained by treaty, and the risk and disadvantage of continuing the contest.

But, sir, there are some gentlemen in the House who seem to consider it already certain that the ultimate success to which I am looking is unattainable. They suppose us contending only for the restoration of the French monarchy, which they believe to be impracticable, and deny to be desirable for this country. We have been asked in the course of this debate: Do you think you can impose monarchy upon France against the will of the nation? I never thought it, I never hoped it, I never wished it. I have thought, I have hoped, I have wished, that the time might come when the effect of the arms of the allies might so far overpower the



military force which keeps France in bondage as to give vent and scope to the thoughts and actions of its inhabitants.

We have indeed already seen abundant proof of what is the disposition of a large part of the country; we have seen almost through the whole of the revolution the western provinces of France deluged with the blood of its inhabitants, obstinately contending for their ancient laws and religion. We have recently seen, in the revival of that war, fresh proof of the zeal which still animates those countries in the same cause. These efforts (I state it distinctly, and there are those near me who can bear witness to the truth of the assertion) were not produced by any instigation from hence; they were the effects of a rooted sentiment prevailing through all those provinces forced into action by the "law of the hostages" and the other tyrannical measures of the Directory, at the moment when we were endeavoring to discourage so hazardous an enterprise.

If under such circumstances we find them giving proofs of their unalterable perseverance in their principles; if there is every reason to believe that the same disposition prevails in many other extensive provinces of France; if every party appears at length equally wearied and disappointed with all the successive changes which the revolution has produced; if the question is no longer between monarchy, and even the pretence and name of liberty, but between the ancient line of hereditary princes on the one hand, and a military tyrant, a foreign usurper, on the other; if the armies of that usurper are likely to find sufficient occupation on the frontiers, and to be forced at length to leave the interior of the country at liberty to manifest its real feeling and disposition; what reason have we to anticipate that the restoration of monarchy under such circumstances is impracticable?

The learned gentleman has indeed told us that almost every man now possessed of property in France must necessarily be interested in resisting such a change, and that therefore it never can be effected. If that single consideration were conclusive against the possibility of a change, for the same reason the revolution itself, by which the whole property of the country was taken from its ancient possessors, could never have taken place. But though I deny it to be an insuperable obstacle, I admit it to be a point of considerable delicacy and difficulty. It is not indeed for us to discuss minutely what arrangement might be formed on this point to conciliate and unite opposite interests.

But whoever considers the precarious tenure and depreciated value of lands held under the revolutionary title, and the low price for which they have generally been obtained, will think it perhaps not impossible that an ample compensation might be made to the bulk of the present possessors, both for the purchase-money they have paid and for the actual value of what they now enjoy; and that the ancient proprietors might be reinstated in the possession of their former rights with only such a temporary sacrifice as reasonable men would willingly make to obtain so essential an object.

The honorable and learned gentleman, however, has supported his reasoning on this part of the subject by an argument which he undoubtedly considers as unanswerable—a reference to what would be his own conduct in similar circumstances; and he tells us that every landed proprietor in France must support the present order of things in that country from the same motive that he and every proprietor of three-per-cent stock would join in the defence of the constitution of Great Britain.

I must do the learned gentleman the justice to believe that