

toms of friendship to them." I agree with the right honorable gentleman, it was an abominable act.

I am not the apologist, much less the advocate, of their iniquities; neither will I countenance them in their pretences for the injustice. I do not think that much regard is to be paid to the charges which a triumphant soldiery bring on the conduct of a people whom they have overrun. Pretences for outrage will never be wanting to the strong when they wish to trample on the weak; but when we accuse the French of having seized on Venice after stipulating for its neutrality and guaranteeing its independence we should also remember the excuse that they made for the violence, namely, that their troops had been attacked and murdered. I say I am always incredulous about such excuses; but I think it fair to hear whatever can be alleged on the other side. We cannot take one side of a story only. Candor demands that we should examine the whole before we make up our minds on the guilt.

I cannot think it quite fair to state the view of the subject of one party as indisputable fact without even mentioning what the other party has to say for itself. But, sir, is this all? Though the perfidy of the French to the Venetians be clear and palpable, was it worse in morals, in principle, and in example, than the conduct of Austria? My honorable friend [Mr. Whitbread] properly asked, "Is not the receiver as bad as the thief?"

If the French seized on the territory of Venice, did not the Austrians agree to receive it? "But this," it seems, "is not the same thing." It is quite in the nature and within the rule of diplomatic morality for Austria to receive the country which was thus seized upon unjustly. "The Emperor took it as a compensation. It was his by barter. He was not answerable for the guilt by which it was obtained."

What is this, sir, but the false and abominable reasoning with which we have been so often disgusted on the subject of the slave trade? Just in the same manner have I heard a notorious wholesale dealer in this inhuman traffic justify his abominable trade.

"I am not guilty of the horrible crime of tearing that mother from her infants; that husband from his wife; of depopulating that village; of depriving that family of their sons, the support of their aged parents! No, thank Heaven! I am not guilty of this horror. I only bought them in the fair way of trade. They were brought to the market; they had been guilty of crimes, or they had been made prisoners of war; they were accused of witchcraft, of obi, or of some other sort of sorcery; and they were brought to me for sale. I gave a valuable consideration for them. But God forbid that I should have stained my soul with the guilt of dragging them from their friends and families!"

Such has been the precious defence of the slave trade, and such is the argument set up for Austria in this instance of Venice

"I did not commit the crime of trampling on the independence of Venice; I did not seize on the city; I gave a *quid pro quo*. It was a matter of barter and indemnity; I gave half a million of human beings to be put under the yoke of France in another district, and I had these people turned over to me in return!"

This, sir, is the defence of Austria; and under such detestable sophistry is the infernal traffic in human flesh, whether in white or black, to be continued and even justified! At no time has that diabolical traffic been carried to a greater length than during the present war, and that by England herself, as well as Austria and Russia.

"But France," it seems, "has roused all the nations of Europe against her;" and the long catalogue has been read to you to prove that she must have been atrocious to provoke them all. Is it true, sir, that she has roused them all? It does not say much for the address of his Majesty's ministers, if this be the case. What, sir! have all your negotiations, all your declamation, all your money, been squandered in vain? Have you not succeeded in stirring the indignation and engaging the assistance of a single power?

But you do yourselves injustice. Between the crimes of France and your money the rage has been excited, and full as much is due to your seductions as to her atrocities. My honorable and learned friend [Mr. Erskine] was correct, therefore, in his argument; for you cannot take both sides of the case; you cannot accuse France of having provoked all Europe, and at the same time claim the merit of having roused all Europe to join you.

You talk, sir, of your allies. I wish to know who your allies are? Russia is one of them, I suppose. Did France attack Russia? Has the magnanimous Paul taken the field for social order and religion, or on account of personal aggression? The Emperor of Russia has declared himself Grand Master of Malta, though his religion is as opposite to that of the Knights as ours is; and he is as much considered a heretic by the Church of Rome as we are.

The King of Great Britain might, with as much reason and propriety, declare himself the head of the order of the Chartreuse monks. Not content with taking to himself the commandery of this institution of Malta, Paul has even created a married man a Knight, contrary to all the most sacred rules and regulations of the order; and yet this ally of ours is fighting for religion! So much for his religion. Let us

see his regard to social order! How does he show his abhorrence of the principles of the French in their violation of the rights of other nations?

What has been his conduct to Denmark?

He says to her, "You have seditious clubs at Copenhagen; no Danish vessel shall therefore enter the ports of Russia!" He holds a still more despotic language to Hamburg. He threatens to lay an embargo on her trade; and he forces her to surrender up men who are claimed by the French as their citizens, whether truly or not I do not inquire. He threatens her with his own vengeance if she refuse, and subjects her to that of the French if she comply.

And what has been his conduct to Spain?

He first sends away the Spanish minister from Petersburg, and then complains, as a great insult, that his minister was dismissed from Madrid! This is one of our allies; and he has declared that the object for which he has taken up arms is to replace the ancient race of the house of Bourbon on the throne of France, and that he does this for the cause of religion and social order! Such is the respect for religion and social order which he himself displays, and such are the examples of it with which we coalesce!

No man regrets, sir, more than I do, the enormities that France has committed; but how do they bear upon the question as it at present stands? Are we forever to deprive ourselves of the benefits of peace because France has perpetrated acts of injustice?

Sir, we cannot acquit ourselves upon such ground. We have negotiated. With the knowledge of these acts of injustice and disorder we have treated with them twice; yet the right honorable gentleman cannot enter into negotiation with them again; and it is worth while to attend to the reasons that he gives for refusing their offer.

The Revolution itself is no more an objection now than it was in the year 1796, when he did negotiate. For the government of France at that time was surely as unstable as it is at present. The crimes of the French, the instability of their government, did not then prevent him; and why are they to prevent him now? He negotiated with a government as unstable, and, baffled in that negotiation, he did not scruple to open another at Lisle in the year 1797.

We have heard a very curious account of these negotiations this day, and, as the right honorable gentleman has emphatically told us, an honest account of them. He says he has no scruple in avowing that he apprehended danger from the success of his own efforts to procure a pacification, and that he was not displeased at its failure. He was sincere in his endeavors to treat, but he was not disappointed when they failed. I wish accurately to understand the right honorable gentleman.

His declaration on the subject, then, I take to be, that though sincere in his endeavors to procure peace in 1797, yet he apprehended greater danger from accomplishing his object than from the continuance of war; and that he felt this apprehension from the comparative views of the probable state of peace and war at that time. I hope I state the right honorable gentleman correctly. I have no hesitation in allowing the fact that a state of peace immediately after a war of such violence must in some respects be a state of insecurity; but does this not belong in a certain degree to all wars? and are we never to have peace because that peace may be insecure?

But there was something, it seems, so peculiar in this war, and in the character and principles of the enemy, that the right honorable gentleman thought a peace in 1797 would be comparatively more dangerous than war.

Why, then, did he treat?

I beg the attention of the House to this point.

He treated "because the unequivocal sense of the people of England was declared to be in favor of a negotiation."

The right honorable gentleman, therefore, confesses the truth that in 1797 the people were for peace. I thought so at the time, but you all recollect that when I stated it in my place it was denied.

"True," ministers said, "you have procured petitions, but we have petitions also. We all know in what strange ways petitions may be procured and how little they deserve to be considered as the sense of the people."

This was their language at the time; but now we find these petitions did speak the sense of the people, and that it was on this side of the House only the sense of the people was spoken. The majority spoke a contrary language!

It hence follows that the unequivocal sense of the people of England may be spoken by the minority of this House, and that it is not always by the test of numbers that an honest decision is to be ascertained. This House decided against what the right honorable gentleman knew to be the sense of the country; but he himself acted upon that sense against the vote of Parliament.

The negotiation in 1796 went off, as my honorable and learned friend [Mr. Erskine] has said, upon the question of Belgium; or, as the right honorable gentleman asserts, upon a question of principle. He negotiated to please the people, but it was defeated on account of a "monstrous principle advanced by France, incompatible with all negotiation."

This is now said. Did the right honorable gentleman say so at the time? Did he fairly and candidly inform the people of England that they broke off the negotiation because the

French had urged a basis that it was totally impossible for England at any time to grant?

No such thing. On the contrary, when the negotiation broke off, they [the ministry] published a manifesto "renewing, in the face of Europe, the solemn declaration that whenever the enemy should be disposed to enter on the work of a general pacification in a spirit of conciliation and equity, nothing should be wanting on their part to contribute to the accomplishment of that great object." And, accordingly, in the year 1797, notwithstanding this "incompatible principle," and with all the enormities of the French on their heads, they opened a new negotiation at Lisle.

They did not wait for any retraction of this incompatible principle; they did not wait even till overtures were made to them; but they solicited and renewed a negotiation themselves.

I do not blame them for this, sir; I say only that it is an argument against the assertion of an "incompatible principle." It is a proof that they did not then think as the right honorable gentleman now says they thought, but that they yielded to the sentiments of the nation, who were generally inclined to peace, against their own judgment; and, from a motive which I shall come to presently, they had no hesitation, on account of the first rupture, to renew the negotiation.

It was renewed at Lisle; and this the French broke off, after the Revolution at Paris on the 4th of September, 1797. What was the conduct of ministers upon this occasion? One would have thought that with the fresh insult at Lisle in their minds, with the recollection of their failure the year before at Paris, if it had been true that they found an incompatible principle they would have talked a warlike language and would have announced to their country and to all Europe that peace was not to be obtained; that they must throw away the

scabbard and think only of the means of continuing the contest. No such thing.

They put forth a declaration in which they said that they should look with anxious expectation for the moment when the government of France should show a disposition and spirit corresponding with their own; and renewing before all Europe the solemn declaration that at the very moment when the brilliant victory of Lord Duncan might have justified them to demand more extravagant terms they were willing, if the calamities of war could be closed, to conclude peace on the same moderate and equitable principles and terms which they had before proposed. Such was their declaration upon that occasion; and in the discussions which we had upon it in this House, ministers were explicit.

They said that by that negotiation there had been given to the world what might be regarded as an unequivocal test of the sincerity and disposition of a government toward peace or against it. For those who refuse discussion show that they are disinclined to pacification; and it is therefore, they said, always to be considered as a test, that the party who refuses to negotiate is the party who is disinclined to peace. This they themselves set up as the criterion. Try them now, sir, by it. An offer is made them. They rashly, and I think rudely, refuse it. Have they, or have they not, broken their own test?

But they say "they have not refused all discussion." They have put a case. They have expressed a wish for the restoration of the house of Bourbon, and have declared that to be an event which would immediately remove every obstacle to negotiation. Sir, as to the restoration of the house of Bourbon, if it shall be the wish of the people of France, I, for one, will be perfectly content to acquiesce. I think the people

of France, as well as every other people, ought to have the government which they like best, and the form of that government, or the persons who hold it in their hands, should never be an obstacle with me to treat with the nation for peace or to live with them in amity.

But as an Englishman, sir, and actuated by English feelings, I surely cannot wish for the restoration of the house of Bourbon to the throne of France. I hope that I am not a man to bear heavily upon any unfortunate family. I feel for their situation; I respect their distresses; but as a friend of England I cannot wish for their restoration to the power which they abused. I cannot forget that the whole history of the last century is little more than an account of the wars and the calamities arising from the restless ambition, the intrigues, and the perfidy of the house of Bourbon.

I cannot discover, in any part of the labored defence which has been set up for not accepting the offer now made by France, any argument to satisfy my mind that ministers have not forfeited the test which they held out as infallible in 1797.

An honorable gentleman [Mr. Canning] thinks that Parliament should be eager only to approach the throne with declarations of their readiness and resolution to support his Majesty in the further prosecution of the war without inquiry; and he is delighted with an address, which he has found upon the journals, to King William, in which they pledged themselves to support him in his efforts to resist the ambition of Louis XIV. He thinks it quite astonishing how much it is in point and how perfectly it applies to the present occasion.

One would have thought, sir, that in order to prove the application he would have shown that an offer had been respectfully made by the Grand Monarque to King William,

to treat, which he had peremptorily and in very irritating terms refused; and that upon this the House of Commons had come forward and with one voice declared their determination to stand by him with their lives and fortunes in prosecuting the just and necessary war.

Not a word like this; and yet the honorable gentleman finds it exactly a parallel case and a model for the House on this day to imitate. I really think, sir, he might as well have taken any other address upon the journals, upon any other topic, as this address to King William. It would have been equally in point, and would have equally served to show the honorable gentleman's talent for reasoning.

Sir, I cannot here overlook another instance of this honorable gentleman's candid style of debating and of his respect for Parliament. He has found out, it seems, that in former periods of our history, and even in periods which have been denominated good times, intercepted letters have been published; and he reads from the gazette instances of such publication.

Really, sir, if the honorable gentleman had pursued the profession to which he turned his thoughts when younger, he would have learned that it was necessary to find cases a little more apposite. And yet, full of his triumph on this notable discovery, he has chosen to indulge himself in speaking of a most respectable and a most honorable person as any that his country knows, and who is possessed of as sound an understanding as any man that I have the good fortune to be acquainted with, in terms the most offensive and disgusting, on account of words which he may be supposed to have said in another place.

He has spoken of that noble person, and of his intellect, in terms which, were I disposed to retort, I might say show him-

self to be possessed of an intellect which would justify me in passing over in silence anything that comes from him. Sir, the noble person did not speak of the mere act of publishing the intercepted correspondence; and the honorable gentleman's reference to the gazettes of former periods is therefore not in point. The noble duke complained of the manner in which these intercepted letters had been published, not of the fact itself of their publication; for, in the introduction and notes to those letters the ribaldry is such that they are not screened from the execration of every honorable mind even by their extreme stupidity.

The honorable gentleman [Mr. Canning] says that he must treat with indifference the intellect of a man who can ascribe the present scarcity of corn to the war. Sir, I think there is nothing either absurd or unjust in such an opinion. Does not the war necessarily, by its magazines, and still more by its expeditions, increase consumption? But when we learn that corn is at this very moment sold in France for less than half the price which it bears here, is it not fair to suppose that, but for the war and its prohibitions, a part of that grain would be brought to this country, on account of the high price which it would command, and that consequently our scarcity would be relieved from their abundance?

I speak, of course, only upon report; but I see that the prices quoted in the French markets are less by one half than the prices in England. There was nothing, therefore, very absurd in what fell from the noble person; and I would really advise the honorable gentleman, when he speaks of persons distinguished for every virtue, to be a little more guarded in his language.

I see no reason why he and his friends should not leave to persons in another place, holding the same opinions as them-

selves, the task of answering what may be thrown out there. Is not the phalanx sufficient?

It is no great compliment to their talents, considering their number, that they cannot be left to the task of answering the few to whom they are opposed; but perhaps the honorable gentleman has too little to do in this House and is to be sent there himself. In truth I see no reason why even he might not be sent, as well as some others who have been raised to the peerage.

But while he continues with us I really think that the honorable gentleman will find full employment for all his talents in answering the arguments which are urged in this House, without employing them in disparaging one of the finest understandings in this kingdom.

And now, sir, to return to the subject of the negotiation in 1797. It is, in my mind, extremely material to attend to the account which the minister gives of his memorable negotiation of 1797 and of his motives for entering into it. In all questions of peace and war, he says, many circumstances must necessarily enter into the consideration; and that they are not to be decided upon by the extremes. The determination must be made upon a balance and a comparison of the evils or the advantages upon the one side and the other, and that one of the greatest considerations is that of finance.

In 1797 the right honorable gentleman confesses he found himself peculiarly embarrassed as to the resources for the war, if they were to be found in the old and usual way of the funding system. Now, though he thought, upon his balance and comparison of considerations, that the evils of war would be fewer than those of peace, yet they would only be so provided that he could establish "a new and solid system of finance" in the place of the old and exhausted funding system; and to