Prospects on the Rubicon

English Affairs·1787

OR AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

OF THE POLITICS TO BE AGITATED AT THE

NEXT MEETING OF PARLIAMENT

from the 1787 London pamphlet.

PREFACE

AN expression in the British Parliament respecting the American war, alluding to Julius Caesar having passed the Rubicon, has on several occasions introduced that river as the figurative river of war.

Fortunately for England, she is yet on the peaceable side of the Rubicon; but as the flames once kindled are not always easily extinguished, the hopes of peace are not so clear as before the late mysterious dispute began.

But while the calm lasts, it may answer a very good purpose to take a view of the prospects, consistent with the maxim, that he that goeth to war should first sit down and count the cost.

The nation has a young and ambitious Minister at its head, fond of himself, and deficient in experience; and instances have often shewn that judgment is a different thing from genius, and that the affairs of a nation are but unsafely trusted where the benefit of experience is wanting.

Illustrations have been drawn from the circumstances of the war before last to decorate the character of the present Minister, and, perhaps, they may have been greatly overdrawn; for the management must have been bad to have done less than what was then done, when we impartially consider the means, the force, and the money employed.

It was then Great Britain and America against France singly, for Spain did not join till near the end of the war. The great number of troops which the American Colonies then raised and paid themselves, were sufficient to turn the scale, if all other parts had been equal. France had not at that time attended to Naval Affairs so much as she has done since, and the capture of French sailors before any declaration of war was made, which however it may be justified upon policy, will always be ranked among the clandestine arts of war, assured a certain, but unfair advantage against her, because it was like a man

administering a disabling dose over-night to the person whom he intends to challenge in the morning.

PROSPECTS ON THE RUBICON, &c.

RIGHT by chance and wrong by system, are things so frequently seen in the political world, that it becomes a proof of prudence neither to censure nor applaud too soon.

"The Rubicon is passed," was once given as a reason for prosecuting the most expensive war that England ever knew. Sore with the event, and groaning beneath a galling yoke of taxes, she has again been led ministerially on to the shore of the same delusive and fatal river, without being permitted to know the object or the reason why.

Expensive preparations have been gone into; fears, alarms, dangers, apprehensions, have been mistically held forth, as if the existence of the nation was at stake, and at last the mountain has brought forth a Dutch mouse.

Whoever will candidly review the present national characters of England and France, cannot but be struck with surprize at the change that is taking place. The people of France are beginning to think for themselves, and the people of England are resigning up the privilege of thinking.

The affairs of Holland have been the bubble of the day; and a tax is to be laid on shoes and boots (so say the news-papers) for the service of the Stadtholder of Holland. This will undoubtedly do honour to the nation by verifying the old English proverb, "Over shoes, over boots."

But tho' Democritus could scarcely have forborne laughing at the folly, yet as serious argument and sound reasoning are preferable to ridicule, it will be best to quit the vein of unprofitable humour, and give the cause a fair investigation. But before we do this, it may not be improper to take a general review of sundry political matters that will naturally lead to a better understanding of the subject.

What has been the event of all the wars of England, but an amazing accumulation of debt, and an unparalleled burthen of taxes. Sometimes the pretence has been to support one outlandish cause, and sometimes another. At one time Austria, at another time Prussia, and so on; but the consequence has always been taxes. A few men have enriched themselves by jobs and contracts, and the groaning multitude bore the burthen. What has England gained by war since the year 1738, only fifty years ago, to recompense her for two hundred millions sterling, incurred as a debt within that time, and under the annual interest of which, besides what was incurred before, she is now groaning? Nothing at all.

The glare of fancied glory has often been held up, and the shadowy recompense imposed itself upon the senses. Wars that might have been prevented have been madly gone into, and the end has been debt and discontent. A sort of something which man cannot account for is mixed in his composition, and renders him the subject of deception by the very means he takes not to be deceived.

That jealousy which individuals of every nation feel at the supposed design of foreign powers, fits them to be the prey of Ministers, and of those among themselves whose trade is war, or whose livelihood is jobs and contracts. "Confusion to the politics of Europe, and may every nation be at war in six months," was a toast given in the hearing of the writer. — The man was in court to the Ministry for a job. — Ye gentle Graces, if any such there be, who preside over human actions, how must ye weep at the viciousness of man.

When we consider, for the feelings of Nature cannot be dismissed, the calamities of war and the miseries it inflicts upon the human species, the thousands and tens of thousands of every age and sex who are rendered wretched by the event, surely there is something in the heart of man that calls upon him to think! Surely there is some tender cord, tuned by the hand of its Creator, that struggles to emit in the hearing of the soul a note of sorrowing sympathy. Let it then be heard, and let man learn to feel, that the true greatness of a nation is founded on the principles of humanity; and that to avoid a war when our own existence is not endangered, and wherein the happiness of man must be wantonly sacrificed, is a higher principle of true honour than madly to engage in it.

But independent of all civil and moral considerations, there is no possible event that a war could produce either to England or France, on the present occasion, that could in the most distant proportion recompence to either the expence she must be at. War involves in its progress such a train of unforeseen and unsupposed circumstances, such a combination of foreign matters, that no human wisdom can calculate the end. It has but one thing certain, and that is increase of taxes. The policy of European Courts is now so cast, and their interest so interwoven with each other, that however easy it may be to begin a war, the weight and influence of interfering nations compel even the conqueror to unprofitable conditions of peace.

Commerce and maritime strength are now becoming the fashion, or rather the rage of Europe, and this naturally excites in them a combined wish to prevent either England or France encreasing its comparative strength by destroying, or even relatively weakening the other, and therefore, whatever views each may have at the commencement of a war, new enemies will arise as either gains the advantage, and continual obstacles ensue to embarrass success.

The greatness of Lewis the Fourteenth made Europe his enemy, and the same cause will produce the same consequence to any other European Power. That nation, therefore, is only truly wise, who contenting herself with the means of defence, creates to herself no unnecessary enemies by seeking to be greater than the system of Europe admits. The Monarch or the Minister who exceeds this line, knows but little of his business. It is what the poet on another occasion calls —

"The point where sense and nonsense join."

Perhaps there is not a greater instance of the folly of calculating upon events, than are to be found in the treaties of alliance. As soon as they have answered the immediate purpose of either of the parties, they are but little regarded. Pretences, afterwards, are never wanting to explain them away, nor reasons to render them abortive. And if half the money which nations lavish on speculative alliances were reserved for their own immediate purpose, whenever the occasion shall arrive, it would be more productively and advantageously employed.

Monarchs and Ministers, from ambition or resentment, often contemplate to themselves schemes of future greatness, and set out with what appears to them the fairest prospect: In the mean while, the great wheel of time and fate revolves unobserved, and something, never dreamed of, turns up and blasts the whole. A few fancied or unprofitable laurels supply the absence of success, and the exhausted nation is huzza'd into new Taxes.

The politics and interests of European Courts are so frequently varying with regard to each other, that there is no fixing even the probability of their future conduct. But the great principle of alliancing seems to be but little understood, or little cultivated in Courts, perhaps the least of all, in that of England. — No alliance can be operative, that does not embrace within itself, not only the attachment of the Sovereigns, but the real interest of the nations.

The alliance between France and Spain, however it may be spoken of as a mere family compact, derives its greatest strength from national interest. The mines of Peru and Mexico are the Soul of this alliance. Were those mines extinct, the family compact would most probably dissolve.

There exists not a doubt in the mind of Spain, what part England would act, respecting those mines, could she demolish the maritime power of France; and therefore the interest of Spain feels itself continually united with France. Spain has high ideas of honour, but has not the same ideas of English honour. They consider England as wholly governed by principles of interest, and that whatever she thinks it her interest to do, and supposes she has the power of doing, she makes very little ceremony of attempting. But this is not all —

There is not a nation in Europe but what is more satisfied that those mines should be in the possession of Spain, than in that of any other European nation, because the wealth of those mines, sufficient to ruin Europe in the hands of some of its powers, is innocently employed with respect to Europe, and better and more peaceably distributed among them all, through the medium of Spain, than it would be through that of any other nation. This is one of the secret causes that combine so large a part of Europe in the interest of France, because they cannot but consider her as standing as a barrier to secure to them the free and equal distribution of this wealth throughout all the dominions of Europe.

This alliance of interest is likewise one of the unseen cements that prevents Spain and Portugal, two nations not very friendly to each other, proceeding to hostilities. They are both in the same situation, and whatever their dislikes may be, they cannot fail to consider, that by giving way to resentment that would weaken and exhaust themselves, each would be exposed a prey to some stronger power.

In short, this alliance of national interest is the only one that can be trusted, and the only one that can be operative. All other alliances formed on the mere will and caprice of Sovereigns, of family connections, uncombined with national interests, are but the quagmire of politics, and never fail to become a loss to that nation who wastes its present substance on the expectancy of distant returns.

With regard to Holland, a man must know very little of the matter, not to know that there exists a stronger principle of rivalship between Holland and England in point of commerce, than prevails between England and France in point of power; and, therefore, whenever a Stadtholder of Holland shall see it his interest to unite with the principle of his country, and act in concert with the sentiments of the very people who pay him for his services, the means now taken by England to render him formidable, will operate contrary to the political expectations of the present day.

Circumstances will produce their own natural effects, and no other, let the hopes or expectations of man be what they may. It is not our doing a thing with a design that it shall answer such or such an end, that will cause it to produce that end; the means taken must have a natural ability and tendency within themselves to produce no other, for it is this, and not our wishes or policy, that governs the event.

The English Navigation Act was levelled against the interest of the Dutch as a whole nation, and therefore it is not to be supposed that the catching at the accidental circumstances of one man, as in the case of the present Stadtholder, can combine the interest of that country with this. A few years, perhaps a less time, may remove him to the place where all things are forgotten, and his successor, contemplating his father's troubles, will be

naturally led to reprobate the means that produced them, and to repose himself on the interests of his country, in preference to the accidental and tumultuous assistance of exterior power.

England herself exhibits at this day, a species of this kind of policy. The present reign, by embracing the Scotch, has tranquilized and conciliated the spirit that disturbed the two former reigns. Accusations were not wanting at that time to reprobate the policy as tinctured with ingratitude toward those who were the immediate means of the Hanover succession. The brilliant pen of Junius was drawn forth, but in vain. It enraptured without convincing; and tho' in the plenitude of its rage it might be said to give elegance to bitterness, yet the policy survived the blast.

What then will be the natural consequence of this expence, on account of the Stadtholder, or of a war entered into from that cause? Search the various windings and caverns of the human heart, and draw from thence the most probable conclusion, for this is more to be depended upon than the projects or declarations of Ministers.

It may do very well for a paragraph in a miserable common news-paper, or the wild effusions of romantic politicians, or the mercenary views of those who wish for war on any occasion, or no occasion at all, but for the sake of jobs and contracts, to talk of French finesse or French intrigue; but the Dutch are not a people to be impressed by the finesse or intrigue of France or England, or any other nation. If there has been any finesse in the case, it has been between the Electorate of Hanover, the King of Prussia, and the Stadtholder, in which it is most probable the people of England will be finessed out of a sum of money.

The Dutch, as is already observed, are not a people open to the impression of finesse. It is lost upon them. They are impressed by their commercial interest. It is the political soul of their country, the spring of their actions, and when this principle coincides with their ideas of freedom, it has all the impulse a Dutchman is capable of feeling.

The Opposition in Holland were the enemies of the Stadtholder, upon a conviction that he was not the friend of their national interests. They wanted no other impulse but this. Whether this defect in him proceeded from foreign attachment, from bribery or corruption, or from the well-known defects of his understanding is not the point of inquiry. It was the effect rather than the cause that irritated the Hollanders.

If the Stadtholder made use of the power he held in the government to expose and endanger the interests and property of the very people who supported him, what other incentive does any man in any country require. If the Hollanders conceived the conduct of the Stadtholder injurious to their national interest, they had the same right to expel him which England had to expel the Stuarts; and the interference of England to re-establish him

serves only to confirm in the Hollanders the same hatred against England which the attempt of Lewis the XIVth, to re-establish the Stuarts caused in England against France; therefore, if the present policy is intended to attach Holland to England, it goes on a principle exceedingly erroneous.

Let us now consider the situation of the Stadtholder, as making another part of the question.

He must place the cause of his troubles to some secret influence which governed his conduct during the late war, or in other words, that he was suspected of being the tool of the then British Administration. Therefore, as every part of an argument ought to have its weight, instead of charging the French with intriguing with the Hollanders, the charge more consistently lies against the British Ministry, for intriguing with the Stadtholder, and endangering the nation in a war without a sufficient object. That which the Ministry are now doing confirms the suspicion, and explains to the Hollanders that collusion of the Stadtholder against their national interests, which he must wish to have concealed, and the explanation does him more hurt than the unnecessary parade of service has done him good.

Nothing but necessity should have operated with England to appear openly in a case that must put the Stadtholder on still worse terms with his countrymen. Had France made any disposition for war, had she armed, had she made any one hostile preparation, there might then have been some pretense for England taking a step, that cannot fail to expose to the world that the suspicions of the Hollanders against the Stadtholder were well founded, and that their cause was just, however unsuccessful has been the event.

As to the consequence of Holland in the scale of Europe (the great stake, say some of the news-papers, for which England is contending), that is naturally pointed out by her condition: As merchants for other nations her interest dictates to her to be a neutral power, and this she always will be unless she is made war upon, as was the case in the last war; and any expectation beyond what is the line of her interest, that is, beyond neutrality, either in England or France, will prove abortive. It therefore cannot be policy to go to war to effect that at a great expense, which will naturally happen of itself, and beyond which there is nothing to expect.

Let Holland be allied with England or with France, or with neither, or with both, her national conduct, consequently arising out of her circumstances, will be nearly the same, that is, she will be neutral. Alliances have such a natural tendency to sink into harmless unoperative things, that to make them a cause for going to war, either to prevent their being formed, or to break any already formed, is the silliest speculation that war can be made

upon, or wealth wasted to accomplish. It would scarcely be worth the attempt, if war could be carried on without expence, because almost the whole that can be hoped at the risk and expence of a war, is effected by their natural tendency to inactivity.

However pompous the declarations of an alliance may be, the object of many of them is no other than good-will and reciprocally securing, as far as such security can go, that neither shall join the enemies of the other in any war that may happen. But the national circumstances of Holland, operate to insure this tranquility on her part as effectually to the power she is not allied with, as the engagement itself does to the power with whom she is allied; therefore the security from circumstances is as good as the security from engagement.

As to a cordial union of interest between Holland and England, it is as unnatural to happen as between two individual rivals in the same trade: And if there is any step that England could take to put it at a still greater distance, it is the part she is now acting. She has increased the animosity of Holland on the speculative politics of interesting the Stadtholder, whose future repose depends upon uniting with the Opposition in Holland, as the present reign did with the Scotch. How foolish then has been the policy, how needless the expence, of engaging in a war on account of the affairs of Holland.

A cordiality between England and France is less improbable than between England and Holland. It is not how an Englishman feels but how a Dutchman feels, that decides this question. Between England and France there is no real rivalship of interest; it is more the effect of temper, disposition, and the jealousy of confiding in each other, than any substantial cause, that keeps up the animosity. But on the part of Holland toward England, there is over and above the spirit of animosity, the more powerful motives of interested commercial rivalship, and the galling remembrance of past injuries. The making war upon them under Lord North's administration, when they were taking no part in the hostilities, but merely acting the business of merchants, is a circumstance that will not easily be forgotten by them. On these reasons, therefore, which are naturally deduced from the operative feelings of mankind, any expectation of attaching Holland to England as a friendly power, is vague and futile. Nature has her own way of working in the heart, and all plans of politics not founded thereon will disappoint themselves.

Any one who will review the history of English politics for several years past, must perceive they have been directed without system. To establish this, it is only necessary to examine one circumstance fresh in the mind of every man.

The American war was prosecuted at a very great expence, on the publicly declared opinion, that the retaining America was necessary to the existence of England; but America

being now separated from England, the present politics are that she is better off without her than with her. Both these cannot be true, and their contradiction to each other shews want of system. If the latter is true, it amounts to an impeachment of the political judgment of Government, because the discovery ought to have been made before the expence was gone into. This single circumstance, yet fresh in every man's mind, is sufficient to create a suspicion, whether the present measures are more wisely founded than the former ones; and whether experience may not prove, that going to war for the sake of the Stadtholder, or for the hope of retaining a partial interest in Holland, who, under any connection can from circumstances, be no more than a neutral power, is not as weak policy as going to war to retain America.

If England is powerful enough to maintain her own ground and consequence in the world as an independent nation, she needs no foreign connection. If she is not, the fact contradicts the popular opinion that she is. Therefore, either her politics are wrong, or her true condition is not what she supposes it to be. Either she must give up her opinion to justify her politics, or renounce her politics to vindicate her opinion.

If some kind of connection with Holland is supposed to be an object worthy some expence to obtain, it may be asked why was that connection broken by making war upon her in the last war. If it was not then worth preserving without expence, is it now worth re-obtaining at a vast expense? If the Hollanders do not like the English, can they be made to like them against their wills? If it shall be said that under the former connection they were unfriendly, will they be more friendly under any other? They were then in as free a situation to choose as any future circumstances can make them, and, therefore, the national governing sentiment of the country can be easily discovered, for it signifies not what or who a Stadtholder may be, that which governs Holland is, and always must be, a commercial principle, and it will follow this line in spite of politics. Interest is as predominant and as silent in its operations as love; it resists all the attempts of force, and countermines all the stratagem of controul.

The most able English Statesmen and Politicians have always held it as a principle, that foreign connections served only to embarrass and exhaust England. That, surrounded by the ocean, she could not be invaded, as countries are on the Continent of Europe, and that her insular situation dictated to her a different system of politics to what those countries required, and that to be enleagued with them was sacrificing the advantages of situation to a capricious system of politics. That tho' she might serve them, they could not much serve her, and that as the service must at all times be paid for, it could always be procured when it was wanted; and that it would be better to take it up in this line than to embarrass herself

with speculative alliances that served rather to draw her into a Continental war on their account, than extricate her from a war undertaken on her own account.

From this discussion of the affairs of Holland, and of the inadequacy of Holland as an object of war, we will proceed to shew that neither England nor France is in a condition to go to war, and that there is no present object to the one or the other to recompence the expence that each must be at, or atone to the subjects of either for the additional burthens that must be brought upon them. I defend the cause of the poor, of the manufacturers, of the tradesmen, of the farmers, and of all those on whom the real burthen of taxes fall — but above all, I defend the cause of humanity.

It will always happen, that any rumour of war will be popular among a great number of people in London. There are thousands who live by it; it is their harvest; and the clamour which those people keep up in news-papers and conversations passes unsuspiciously for the voice of the people, and it is not till after the mischief is done, that the deception is discovered.

Such people are continually holding up in very magnified terms the wealth of the nation, and the depressed condition of France, as reasons for commencing a war, without knowing anything of either of these subjects.

But admitting them to be as true, as they are false, as will be hereafter shewn, it certainly indicates a vileness in the national disposition of any country, that will make the accidental internal difficulties to which all nations are subject, and sometimes encumbered with, a reason for making war upon them. The amazing encrease and magnitude of the paper currency now floating in all parts of England, exposes her to a shock as much more tremendous than the shock occasioned by the bankruptcy of the South Sea funds, as the quantity of credit and paper currency is now greater than they were at that time. Whenever such a circumstance shall happen, and the wisest men in the nation are, and cannot avoid being, impressed with the danger, it would be looked upon as baseness in France to make the distress and misfortune of England a cause and opportunity for making war upon her, yet this hideous infidelity is publicly avowed in England. The bankruptcy of 1719 was precipitated by the great credit which the funds then had, and the confidence which people placed in them. Is not credit making infinitely greater strides now than it made then? Is not confidence equally as blind now as at that day? The people then supposed themselves as wise as they do now, yet they were miserably deceived, and the deception that has once happened will happen again from the same causes.

Credit is not money, and therefore it is not pay, neither can it be put in the place of money in the end. It is only the means of getting into debt, not the means of getting out, otherwise

the national debt could not accumulate; and the delusion which nations are under respecting the extension of credit is exactly like that which every man feels respecting life, the end is always nearer than was expected; and we become bankrupts in time by the same delusion that nations become bankrupts in property.

The little which nations know, or are some times willing to know, of each other, serves to precipitate them into wars which neither would have undertaken, had they fully known the extent of the power and circumstances of each other; it may therefore be of some use to place the circumstances of England and France in a comparative point of view.

In order to do this the accidental circumstances of a nation must be thrown out of the account. By accidental circumstances is meant, those temporary disjointings and derangements of its internal system which every nation in the world is subject to, and which, like accidental fits of sickness in the human body, prevent in the interim the full exertion and exercise of its natural powers.

The substantial basis of the power of a nation arises out of its population, its wealth and its revenues. To these may be added the disposition of the people. Each of these will be spoken of as we proceed.

Instances are not wanting to shew that a nation confiding too much on its natural strength, is less inclined to be active in its operations than one of less natural powers who is obliged to supply that deficiency by increasing its exertions. This has often been the case between England and France. The activity of England arising from its fears, has sometimes exceeded the exertions of France reposing on its confidence.

But as this depends on the accidental disposition of a people, it will not always be the same. It is a matter well known to every man who has lately been in France, that a very extraordinary change is working itself in the minds of the people of that nation. A spirit that will render France exceedingly formidable whenever its government shall embrace the fortunate opportunity of doubling its strength by allying, if it may be so expressed, (for it is difficult to express a new idea by old terms) the Majesty of the sovereign with the majesty of the nation; for of all alliances, that is infinitely the strongest and the safest to be trusted to, because the interest so formed, and operating against external enemies, can never be divided.

It may be taken as a certain rule, that a subject of any country attached to the government on the principles above-mentioned, is of twice the value he was before. Freedom in the subject is not a diminution, as was formerly believed, of the power of government, but an increase of it. Yet the progress by which changes of this kind are affected, requires to be nicely attended to.

Were governments to offer freedom to the people, or to shew an anxiety for that purpose, the offer most probably would be rejected. The purpose for which it was offered, might be mistrusted. Therefore the desire must originate with, and proceed from the mass of the people, and when the impression becomes universal, and not before, is the important moment for the most effectual consolidation of national strength and greatness that can take place.

While this change is working, there will appear a kind of chaos on the nation; but the creation we enjoy arose out of chaos, and our greatest blessings appear to have a confused beginning.

Therefore, we may take it for granted, that what has at this moment the appearance of disorder in France, is no more than one of the natural links in that great chain of circumstances by which nations acquire the summit of their greatness. The Provincial Assemblies already begun in France, are as full, or rather a fuller representation of the people than the Parliaments of England are.

The French, or, as they were formerly called, the Franks, (from whence came the English words Frank and Free), were once the freest people in Europe; and as nations appear to have their periodical revolutions, it is very probable they will be so again. The change is already begun. The people of France, as it was before observed, are beginning to think for themselves, and the people of England resigning up the prerogative of thinking.

We shall now proceed to compare the present condition of England and France as to population, revenues and wealth, and shew that neither is in a condition of going to war, and that war can end in nothing but loss, and, most probably, a temporary ruin to both nations.

To establish this point so necessary for both nations to be impressed with, a free investigation of all matters connected with it is indispensable: If, therefore, any thing herein advanced shall be disagreeable, it must be justified on the ground that it is better to be known in order to prevent ruin, than to be concealed, when such concealment serves only to hasten the ruin on.

OF POPULATION.

The Population of France being upwards of twenty-four millions, is more than double that of Great Britain and Ireland; besides which France recruits more soldiers in Switzerland than England does in Scotland and Ireland. To this may likewise be added, that England and Ireland are not on the best terms. The suspicion that England governs Ireland for the purpose of keeping her low, to prevent her becoming her rival in trade and manufactures, will always operate to hold Ireland in a state of sentimental hostility with England.

REVENUES.

The Revenues of France are twenty-four millions sterling. The Revenues of England fifteen millions and an half. The taxes per head in France are twenty shillings sterling; the taxes per head in England are two pounds four shillings and two pence. The national debt of France, including the life annuities (which are two-fifths of the whole debt, and are annually expiring) at eleven years purchase, is one hundred and forty-two millions sterling. The national debt of England, the whole of which is on perpetual interest, is two hundred and forty-five millions. The national debt of France contains a power of annihilating itself without any new taxes for that purpose; because it needs no more than to apply the life annuities, as they expire, to the purchase of the other three-fifths, which are on perpetual interest: But the national debt of England has not this advantage, and therefore the million a year that is to be applied toward the reducing it is so much additional tax upon the people, over and above the current service.

WEALTH.

This is an important investigation, it ought therefore to be heard with patience, and judged of without prejudice.

Nothing is more common than for people to mistake one thing for another. Do not those who are crying up the wealth of the nation mistake paper currency for riches? To ascertain this point may be one of the means of preventing that ruin which cannot fail to follow by persisting in the mistake.

The highest estimation that is made of the quantity of gold and silver in Britain at this present day is twenty millions: and those who are most conversant with money transactions, believe it to be considerably below that sum. Yet this is no more money than what the nation possessed twenty years ago, and therefore, whatever her trade may be, it has produced to her no profit. Certainly no man can be so unwise as to suppose that encreasing the quantity of bank notes, which is done with as little trouble as printing of news-papers, is national wealth.

The quantity of money in the nation was very well ascertained in the years 1773, 74, and 76, by calling in the light gold coin.

There were upwards of fifteen millions and a half of gold coin then called in, which, with upwards of two millions of heavy guineas that remained out, and the silver coin, made above twenty millions, which is more than there is at this day. There is an amazing increase in the circulation of Bank paper, which is no more national wealth than news-papers are; because an increase of promissory notes, the capital remaining unincreased, or not

increasing in the same proportion, is no increase of wealth. It serves to raise false ideas which the judicious soon discover, and the ignorant experience to their cost.

Out of twenty millions sterling, the present quantity of real money in the nation, it would be too great an allowance to say that one-fourth of that sum, which is five millions, was in London. But even admitting this to be the case, it would require no very superior powers to ascertain pretty nearly what proportion of that sum of five millions could be in the Bank. It would be ridiculous to suppose it could be less than half a million, and extravagant to suppose it could be two millions.

It likewise requires no very extraordinary discernment to ascertain how immense the quantity of Bank Notes, compared to the capital in the Bank must be, when it is considered, that the national taxes are paid in Bank Notes, that all great transactions are done in Bank Notes, and that were a loan for twenty millions to be opened at the meeting of Parliament, it would most probably be subscribed in a few days: Yet all men must know the loan could not be paid in money, because it is at least four times greater than all the money in London, including the Bankers and the Bank amount too. In short, every thing shows, that the rage that overran America, for paper money, or paper currency, has reached to England under another name. There it was called Continental Money, and here it is called Bank Notes. But it signifies not what name it bears, if the capital is not equal to the redemption.

There is likewise another circumstance that cannot fail to strike with some force when it is mentioned, because every man that has any thing to do with money transactions will feel the truth of it, tho' he may not before have reflected upon it. It is the embarrassed condition into which the gold coin is thrown by the necessity of weighing it, and by refusing guineas that are even standing weight, and there appears to be but few heavy ones. Whether this is intended to force the Paper Currency into circulation, is not here attempted to be asserted, but it certainly has that effect to a very great degree, because people, rather than submit to the trouble and hazard of weighing, will take paper in preference to money. This was once the case in America.

The natural effect of encreasing and continuing to increase paper currencies is that of banishing the real money. The shadow takes place of the substance till the country is left with only shadows in its hands.

A trade that does not increase the quantity of real money in a country, cannot be stiled a profitable trade; yet this is certainly the case with England: and as to credit, of which so much has been said, it may be founded on ignorance or a false belief, as well as on real ability.

In Amsterdam, the money deposited in the Bank is never taken out again. The depositors, when they have debts to pay, transfer their right to the persons to whom they are indebted and those again proceed by the same practice, and the transfer of the right goes for payment; now could all the money deposited in the Bank of Amsterdam be privately removed away, and the matter be kept a secret, the ignorance, or the belief that the money was still there, would give the same credit as if it had not been removed. In short, credit is often no more than an opinion, and the difference between credit and money is that money requires no opinion to support it.

All the countries in Europe annually increase in their quantity of gold and silver except England. By the registers kept at Lisbon and Cadiz, the two ports into which the gold and silver from South America are imported, it appears that above eighty millions sterling have been imported within twenty years. (1) This has spread itself over Europe, and increased the quantity in all the countries on the Continent, yet twenty years ago there was as much gold and silver in England as there is at this time.

The value of the silver imported into Europe exceeds that of the gold, yet every one can see there is no increase of silver coin in England; very little silver coin appearing except what are called Birmingham shillings, which have a faint impression of King William on one side, and are smooth on the other.

In what is the profits of trade to shew itself but by increasing the quantity of that which is the object of trade, money. An increase of paper is not an increase of national money, and the confounding paper and money together, or not attending to the distinction, is a rock that the nation will one day split upon.

Whether the payment of interest to foreigners, or the trade to the East-Indies, or the nation embroiling itself in foreign wars, or whether the amount of all the trade which England carries on with different parts of the world, collectively taken, balances itself without profit; whether one or all of these is the cause, why the quantity of money does not encrease in England is not, in this place, the object of enquiry. It is the fact and not the cause that is the matter here treated of.

Men immersed in trade and the concerns of a counting house, are not the most speculative in national affairs, or always the best judges of them. Accustomed to run risks in trade, they are habitually prepared to run risks with Government, and tho' they are the first to suffer, they are often the last to foresee an evil.

Let us now cast a look toward the manufactures. A great deal has been said of their flourishing condition, and perhaps a great deal too much, for it may again be asked, where is the profit if there is no encrease of money in the nation.

The woolen manufacture is the staple manufacture of England, and this is evidently on the decline, in some, if not in all its branches. The city of Norwich, one of the most populous cities in England, and wholly dependent on the woollen manufacture, is, at this day in a very impoverished condition, owing to the decline of its trade.

But not to rest the matter on a general assertion, or embarrass it with numerous statements, we will produce a circumstance by which the whole progress of the trade may be ascertained.

So long as thirty years ago the price paid to the spinners of wool was one shilling for twenty-four skains, each skain containing five hundred and sixty yards. This, according to the term of the trade, was called giving a shilling for a shilling. A good hand would spin twelve skains, which was six pence a day.

According to the increase of taxes, and the increased price of all the articles of life, they certainly ought now to get at least fifteen pence, for what thirty years ago they got a shilling for. But such is the decline of the trade that the case is directly the contrary. They now get but nine pence for the shilling, that is, they get but nine pence for what thirty years ago they got a shilling for. Can these people cry out for war, when they are already half ruined by the decline of trade, and half devoured by the increase of taxes.

But this is not the whole of the misfortunes which that part of the country suffers, and which will extend to others. The Norfolk farmers were the first who went into the practice of manuring their land with marle: But time has shewn, that though it gave a vigour to the land for some years, it operated in the end to exhaust its stamina; that the lands in many parts are worse than before they began to marle, and that it will not answer to marle a second time.

The manufactures of Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield have had of late a considerable spring, but this appears to be rather on speculation than certainty. The speculations on the American market have failed, and that on Russia is becoming very precarious. Experience likewise was wanting to ascertain the quantity which the treaty of commerce with France would give sale to, and it is most probable the estimations have been too high, more especially as English goods will now become unpopular in France, which was not the case before the present injudicious rupture.

But in the best state which manufactures can be in, they are very unstable sources of national wealth. The reasons are, that they seldom continue long in one stay. The market for them depends upon the caprice of fashions, and sometimes of politics in foreign countries, and they are at all times exposed to rivalship as well as to change. The Americans have already several manufactures among them, which they prefer to the

English, such as axes, scythes, sickles, houghs, planes, nails, &c. Window glass, which was once a considerable article of export from England to America, the Americans now procure from other countries, nearly as good as the English Crown glass, and but little dearer than the common green window glass.

It is somewhat remarkable that so many pens have been displayed to shew, what is called the increase of the commerce of England, and yet all of them have stopped short of the grand point, that is, they have gone no further than to shew that a larger number of shipping, and a greater quantity of tonnage have been employed of late years than formerly: But this is no more than what is happening in other parts of Europe. The present fashion of the world is commerce, and the quantity increases in France as well as in England.

But the object of all trade is profit, and profit shews itself, not by an increase of paper currency, for that may be nationally had without the trouble of trade, but by an increase of real money: therefore the estimation should have ended, not in the comparative quantity of shipping and tonnage, but in the comparative quantity of gold and silver.

Had the quantity of gold and silver increased in England, the ministerial writers would not have stopt short at shipping and tonnage; but if they know any thing of the matter they must know that it does not increase, and that the deception is occasioned by the increase of paper instead of money, and that as paper continues to increase, gold and silver will diminish. Poorer in wealth and richer in delusion.

Something is radically wrong, and time will discover it to be putting paper in the room of money.

Out of one hundred millions sterling of gold and silver, which must have been imported into Europe from South America since the commencement of the peace before last, it does not appear that England has derived or retains any portion of it.

M. Neckar states the annual increase of gold and silver in France, that is, the proportion which France draws of the annual importation in to Europe, to be upwards of one million sterling: But England, in the space of twenty years, does not appear to have encreased in anything but paper currency.

Credulity is wealth while credulity lasts, and credit is, in a thousand instances, the child of credulity. It requires no more faith to believe paper to be money, than to believe a man could go into a quart bottle; and the nation whose credulity can be imposed upon by bottle conjuring, can, for a time, be imposed upon by paper conjuring.

From these matters we pass on to make some observations on the national debt, which is another species of paper currency.

In short, to whatever point the eye is directed, whether to the money, the paper, the manufactures, the taxes, or the debt, the inability of supporting a war is evident, unless it is intended to carry it on by fleecing the skin over peoples ears by taxes; and therefore the endangering the nation in a war for the sake of the Stadtholder of Holland, or the King of Prussia, or any other foreign affairs, from which England can derive no possible advantage, is an absurd and ruinous system of politics.

France perhaps is not in a better situation, and, therefore, a war where both must lose, and wherein they could only act the part of seconds, must historically have been denominated a boyish, foolish, unnecessary quarrel.

But before we enter on the subject of the national debt, it will be proper to make a general review of the different manner of carrying on war since the Revolution to what was the practice before.

Before the Revolution the intervals of peace and war always found means to pay off the expence, and leave the nation clear of incumbrance at the commencement of any succeeding war; and even for some years after the Revolution this practice was continued.

From the year 1688 (the aera of the Revolution) to the year 1702, a period of fourteen years, the sums borrowed by Government at different times, amounted to forty-four millions; yet this sum was paid off almost as fast as it was borrowed; thirty-four millions being paid off, at the commencement of the year 1702. This was a greater exertion than the nation has ever made since, for exertion is not in borrowing but in paying.

From that time wars have been carried on by borrowing and funding the capital on a perpetual interest, instead of paying it off, and thereby continually carrying forward and accumulating the weight and expence of every war into the next. By this means that which was light at first becomes immensely heavy at last. The nation has now on its shoulders the weight of all the wars from the time of Queen Anne. This practice is exactly like that of loading a horse with a feather at a time till you break his back.

The national debt exhibits at this day a striking novelty. It has traveled on in a circular progression till the amount of the annual interest has exactly overtaken, or become equal to, the first capital of the national debt, NINE MILLIONS. Here begins the evidence of the predictions so long foretold by the ablest calculators in the nation. The interest will in succession overtake all the succeeding capitals, and that with the proportioned rapidity with which those capitals accumulated; because by continuing the practice, not only higher and higher premiums must be given for loans, but the money, or rather the paper,

will not go so far as it formerly did, and therefore the debt will encrease with a continually encreasing velocity.

The expence of every war, since the national debt began, has, upon an average, been double the expense of the war preceding it: the expence therefore of the next war will be at least two hundred millions, which will encrease the annual interest to at least seventeen millions, and consequently the taxes in the same proportion; the following war will encrease the interest to thirty-three millions, and a third war will mount up the interest to sixty-five millions. This is not going on in the spirit of prediction, but taking what has already been as a rule for what will yet be, and therefore the nation has but a miserable prospect to look at. The weight of accumulating interest is not much felt till after many years have passed over; but when it begins to be heavy, as it does now, the burthen encreases like that of purchasing a horse with a farthing for the first nail of the shoe and doubling it.

As to Mr. Pitt's scheme of reducing the national debt by a million a year, applied to the purchase of stock, it will turn out, to say no worse of it, a ridiculous and frivolous project: For if a Minister has not experience enough to distinguish a feather in the air, and such there always will be, from the God of War, nor the clamours and interest of those who are seeking for jobs and contracts, from the voice and interests of the people, he will soon precipitate the nation into some unnecessary war: and therefore, any scheme of redemption of the debt, founded on the supposed continuance of peace, will, with such conduct, be no more than a balloon.

That the funding system contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, is as certain as that the human body contains within itself the seeds of death. The event is as fixed as fate, unless it can be taken as a proof that because we are not dead we are not to die.

The consequence of the funding scheme, even if no other event takes place, will be to create two violent parties in the nation. The one goaded by taxes continually encreasing to pay the interest, the other reaping a benefit from the taxes by receiving the interest. This is very strongly shadowed forth, like the hand-writing on the wall, by the ingenious author of the Commercial Atlas, in his observations on the national debt.

The slumber that for several years has over-shadowed the nation in all matters of public finance, cannot be supposed to last for ever. The people have not yet awakened to the subject, and it is taken for granted that they never will. But, if a supposed unnecessary expenditure of between five and six millions sterling in the finances of France, (for the writer undertakes not to judge of the fact) has awakened that whole nation, a people supposed to be perfectly docile in all national matters, surely the people of England will not be less attentive to their rights and properties. If this should not be the case, the

inference will be fairly drawn, that England is losing the spirit that France is taking up, and that it is an ingenious device in the Ministry to compose the nation to unpopular and unnecessary taxes, by shamming a victory when there was no enemy at hand.

In short, every war serves to encrease every kind of paper currency in the nation, and to diminish the quantity of gold and silver, by sending it to Prussia and other foreign countries.

It will not be denied that credulity is a strong trait in the English character; and this has in no instance shewn itself more than in mistaking paper for money, except it be in the unaccountable ignorance of mistaking the debt of the nation for riches. But the suspicion is beginning to awake.

We will close this article with observing, that a new kind of paper currency has arisen within a few years, which is that of country Bank Notes; almost every town now has its Bank, its Paper Mint, and the coinage of paper is become universal. In the meantime the melting down the light guineas, and recoining them, passes with those who know no better for an encrease of money; because every new guinea they see, and which is but seldom, they naturally suppose to be a guinea more, when it is really nothing else than an old guinea new cast.

From this account of the money, paper, and national debt of England, we proceed to compare it with the money, paper and national debt of France.

It is very well known that paper has not the same credit in France which it has in England, and that, consequently, there is much less of it. This has naturally operated to encrease the quantity of gold and silver in France and prevent the encrease of paper.

The highest estimation of the quantity of gold and silver in England, as already stated, is twenty millions sterling, and the quantity of paper grafted thereon, immense.

The quantity of gold and silver in France, is upwards of ninety millions sterling, and the quantity of paper grafted thereon, trifling. France, therefore, has a long run of credit yet in reserve, which England has already expended; and it will naturally follow, that when the Government of France and the nation shall adjust their differences by an amicable embrace of each other, that this reserved credit will be brought forth, and the power of France will be doubly encreased. The adjustment of these differences is but the business of a day, whenever its government shall see the proper moment for doing it, and nothing would precipitate this event more than a war. The cry of war, from the injudicious provocations given by the British Ministry, and the disadvantageous effect of the Commercial Treaty, is becoming popular in France.

The near situation of France to Spain and Portugal, the two countries which import gold and silver, and her manufactures being better adapted to the warm climate of those countries, than the manufactures of England, give her superior opportunities of drawing money into the nation, and as she has but little trade to the East Indies, the money so drawn in is not drawn out again as in England. Another advantage is that, from the greatness of her dominions she has no occasion to waste her wealth in hiring foreign troops, as is the practice with England; and a third advantage is, that the money which England squanders in Prussia and other countries on the Continent serves to encrease the wealth of France, because a considerable part of it centers there through the medium of her commerce.

Admitting Great Britain and Ireland to contain ten millions of inhabitants, the quantity of money per head is forty shillings; the money per head in France is three pounds fifteen shillings, which is nearly double.

The national debt of England, compared to the whole amount of money in the nation, is as twelve is to one, that is, the debt is twelve times greater than all the money amounts to.

The national debt of France, compared to the whole amount of her money, is considerably less than as two is to one, that is, her debt is not so much as twice the amount of her money. France, therefore, as already stated, has an immense credit in reserve whenever the settlement of her present internal differences shall furnish her with the means of employing it, and that period, so much to be dreaded by England, is hastening on.

The annual interest of the national debt of England and France is nearly equal, being NINE MILLIONS sterling; but with this difference, that above three millions and a half of the annual interest of France are only life annuities. The interest, therefore, of her debt lessens every year, and she will have a surplus to the amount of three millions and a half, to apply to the purchase of that part of the debt which is on perpetual interest; therefore, without any new taxes for that purpose, she can discharge her whole debt in less than a third of the time in which it can be done in England, according to Mr. Pitt's plan, with his additional tax of a million a year.

But let the event of Mr. Pitt's plan be what it may, as to reducing the debt, there is one circumstance that cannot fail to accompany it, which is, that of making it the interest of Government, in executing this plan, to undermine the interest of its creditors, or the value of the funds, for the purpose of purchasing at a cheaper rate.

The plan is founded on the presumption of a long uninterrupted peace, and that future loans would not be wanted, which cannot now be expected, for France in her turn is getting into a temper for war. The plan naturally strikes at the credit of Government, in contracting further debts, for were a loan to be opened to-morrow, the subscribers, naturally perceiving

that it was the interest of Government to undermine them as soon as they became creditors, would consequently seek to secure themselves by demanding higher premiums at first. It is a question whether a premium of thirty per cent. is now as good as ten was before, and therefore the plan, in case of a war, instead of lessening the debt, serves to push it more rapidly on.

The Minister certainly never understood the natural operation of his plan, or he would not have acted as he has done. The plan has two edges, while he has supposed it to have only one. It strikes at the debt in peace, and at the credit in war.

The gentleman who originally furnished the Minister with this plan, now gives it totally up. He knew its operation both in peace and war, but the Minister appears not to have comprehended it: But if he has made a mistake, his youth and inexperience must be his apology.

The plan, unless it should be altered, that is given out for providing for the expence of the late armaments, is in reality no other than the American plan of paper money, and it is very probable that the Minister has received it from some American refugee.

The plan given out is that the Minister is to borrow the MONEY of the Bank. Here is the delusion. The name of MONEY covers the deception. For the case is, that the Bank do not lend the real money, but it issues out an emission of Bank-paper, and the presumption is, that there will be no run upon the Bank in consequence of such an extraordinary emission, but if there should, no man can be at a loss in foreseeing the issue.

There are those who remember that on a former run, the Bank was obliged to prolong the time of paying shillings and sixpences, and it is universally credited that a quantity of silver is now preserved in the Bank for the same purpose; but the device, to every person of reflection, shows that the capital is not equal to the demands, and that the Chapter of Accidents is part of the Bible of Bank.

It may be asked why do not the Government issue the paper instead of the Bank? The answer is that it is exactly the same thing in the end, only with this difference in the mode, that were the Government to do it, it would be too visible a system of paper currency, and that a disguise is necessary.

Having recourse to the Bank, is a kind of playing the Bank off against the Funds. Fighting one kind of paper against another, and in the combat both will be sufferers.

In short, the delusion of paper riches is working as rapidly in England as it did in America. A young and inexperienced Minister, like a young and inexperienced Congress, may suppose that he sees mines of wealth in a printing-press, and that a nation cannot be exhausted

while there is paper and ink enough to print paper money. Every new emission, until the delusion bursts, will appear to the nation an increase of wealth. Every merchant's coffers will appear a treasury, and he will swell with paper riches till he becomes a bankrupt.

When a Bank makes too free with its paper, it exposes itself in much the same manner which a Government does that makes too free with its power; too much credit is as bad as too little; and there is such a thing as governing too much as well in a Bank as in a Government. But nothing exposes a Bank more than being under the influence, instead of the protection of Government, and whenever either the property or the credit of a Bank can be commanded or influenced by a Government, or a Minister, its destruction is not far off.

We have now stated the comparative condition of England and France as to money matters. But there yet remain some things necessary to be touched upon.

It is an error very frequently committed in the world to mistake disposition for condition.

France, with a much better permanent condition for war than England, is in a less disposition to enter into one, and this want of disposition in her is mistaken in England for want of condition; and on the other hand, the apparent disposition in England for war is mistaken by her for a condition to undertake and carry one on.

There appears a uniformity in all the works of Nature, from individual animals up to nations. The smaller animals are always the most fretful, passionate and insulting. They mistake temper for strength, and often fall a sacrifice to vexatious impetuosity, while larger ones go calmly on, and require repeated provocations to incense them. France may yet be aggravated into war, and very probably will. Where the condition exists, the disposition may at any time take place. We may create temper, but we cannot create strength.

While the literature of England preserves an honourable rank among the nations of Europe, her national character is most miserably suffering in the world through her news-papers. The most barefaced perfidiousness, the most abandoned principles are daily propagated. A total disregard to all the obligations of national faith and honour are publicly professed. Instead of that true greatness of heart, that calm grandeur of sentiment, that generous disdain of vulgar littleness that ought always to accompany the disputes of nations, scarcely any thing is to be seen but mean abuse and low scurrility. This is not the case in any other country in the world but England.

We will now proceed to conclude with a few additional observations on the state of politics.

For several weeks the nation was amused with the daily rumors of some great Cabinet secret, and admiring how profoundly the secret was kept, when the only secret was that there was no secret to divulge.

But this opinion of a secret very well shews that the opinion of the nation was opposed to the opinion of the Minister, or the supposition of some great secret would not have taken place, as the affairs of the Stadtholder were then publicly known. It shews that the nation did not think the Stadtholder of Holland a sufficient reason for laying new taxes on England, and running into the risk and expence of a war, and great was the surprise when the declaration and counter declaration, like twin mice peeped from the Cabinet.

But there is one secret that requires to be investigated, which is, whether the Minister did not know that France would not engage in a war, and whether the preparations were not an idle parade, founded on that knowledge.

Whether it was not meanly putting England under the banners of Prussia, and taking thereby a dishonourable advantage of the internal perplexity which France was then in, and which in its turn may happen to England, to assume the air of a challenge, which it must be known would not be accepted, because there was nothing to make the acceptance necessary.

Whether this conduct in the Minister does not mischievously operate to destroy the harmony that appeared to be growing up between the two nations; to lessen, if not totally destroy, the advantages of the Commercial Treaty, and to lay the seeds of future wars when there was a prospect of a long and uninterrupted peace.

When there are two ways of accomplishing the same object it almost always happens that the one is better than the other, and whether the Minister has not chosen the worst. A few observations will elucidate.

It signifies not what airy schemes, projects, or even treaties may be formed, especially if done under the point of the bayonet, for all that can be expected of Holland is neutrality. Her trade is with all nations, and it is from her neutrality that this trade has arisen. Destroy this neutrality and Holland is destroyed. Therefore it matters not what sentiments party men may be of in Holland as to the Stadtholdership, because there is still a superior banner under which all will unite.

Holland will not expose her trade to the devastations of England by joining France in a war, neither will she expose it to France by joining England. It may very well be asked, what are England or France to Holland, that she should join with either in a war, unless she is compelled to it by one or the other making war upon her, as was the case in the last war.

Events may soon happen in Europe to make all the force that Prussia can raise necessary to her own defence, and Holland must be wise enough to see, that by joining England she not only exposes her trade to France but likewise her dominions, because France can invade her in a quarter in which England cannot defend her, for Holland lies open to France by land. It is, therefore, more immediately the interest of Holland to keep on good terms with France, neither can England give her any equivalent to balance this circumstance. How foolish then are the politics which are directed to unnatural and impossible objects. Surely the experience of a century past is sufficient to shew to any man, except one of yesterday, what the conduct of Holland in all cases must be.

But there is another circumstance that does not fail to impress foreigners, and especially Holland, which is, that the immensity of the national debt of England, the prospect of its still encreasing, and the exorbitancy of her paper currencies, render her too insecure in herself to be much confided in by foreign nations for any length of time. Because that which must happen may soon happen.

Concerning the rescript delivered by the French Minister, there is one certain explanation to be put upon it, which is, that if France had been disposed for war, she would not have made that communication. The very making it goes to a full explanation of the parts; and as soon as Mr. Pitt obtained this knowledge, it appeared to him a safe moment to gird on his sword, and when he found that France was as well weaponed as himself to propose to take it off again. This is in a few words the whole history of the campaign. A war Minister in peace, and a peace Minister in war. Brave where there is no danger, and prudent when there is.

The rescript could be nothing else than an explanation, on the part of France, of the situation she conceived herself to be subject to, and the probable consequences that might follow from it. This she was not obliged to make, and therefore her making it was a matter of civil communication towards a power she was at peace with, and which in return entitled her to a similar communication on the part of the British Cabinet. All this might have been done without either the expence, the tumult, the provocations, or the ill-blood that has been created.

The alliance between France and the Dutch, was formed while the Stadtholder was a part of the Government, therefore France could not, from that alliance, take a part either for or against him. She could only act when the whole interest of the Republic was exposed to a foreign enemy, and it was not pertain that this might not be the case.

The rescript, therefore, instead of being taken as a ground for war, was in itself a ground for peace, because it tended to bring on a discussion of all the circumstances of France and England relative to Holland, which would not have failed to place Holland in a state of

neutrality, and that only will be the final event now; because, independent of all parties, no other is consistent with the whole national interest of that Republic.

But this is not being done, it is now left to the Dutch to do it for themselves.

An alliance with England, at the same time there is one existing with France, will secure this neutrality so necessary to the Dutch republic. By this stroke of Politics she will be free from all obligations to join with either in a war, and be guaranteed by both. Her alliance with England will debar England from molesting her trade by sea, and that with France will debar France from the same thing, and likewise from invading her by land in all future cases. There are so many probable circumstances to arise on the Continent of Europe, that the situation of Holland requires this safeguard, more especially from France, on account of her land connection.

The rising greatness of the Russian Empire, the probable union of this Empire with those of Germany and France, and consequently with Spain, whose interests cannot be separated, and the probability of a rupture between the Emperor and the King of Prussia, are matters that cannot fail to impress the Dutch with the necessity of securing themselves by land as well as by sea, and to prevent their being drawn into the quarrels either of England or France.

Upon the whole, as there was a civil as well as an uncivil line of politics to be pursued, every man of humane and generous sentiments must lament it was not chosen.

A disposition for peace was growing up in every part of France, and there appeared at the same time a mutual one rising in England. A silent wish on both sides, was universally expanding itself, that wars, so fatal to the true interest and burthensome by taxes to the subjects of both countries might exist no more, and that a long and lasting peace might take place.

But instead of cultivating this happy opportunity, the pettish vanity of a young and unexperienced Minister, who balanced himself between peace and war to take his choice of circumstances, instead of principles, and who went into an expensive armament when there was none to contend with, and not till after the affairs of Holland might be said to be terminated, has destroyed those seeds of harmony that might have been rendered of more value to both nations than their fleets and armies.

He has permitted the nation to run mad under the universal influence of a groundless belief of vast hostile armaments in the East and West Indies, and the supposition of a secret that never existed. By this means the sparks of ill-will are kindled up afresh between the nations, the fair prospects of lasting peace are vanished, and a train of future evils fills up

the scene, and that at a time when the internal affairs of France, however confused they at present appear, are naturally approaching to a great and harmonious encrease of its power.

FINIS.

(THOMAS PAINE.

YORK STREET, ST. JAMES SQUARE,

August 20th, 1787.)

Footnotes:

1. From 1763 to 1777, a period of fifteen years of peace, the registered importations of gold and silver into Lisbon and Cadiz, was seventy millions sterling, besides what was privately landed.