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THE
S P E E C H

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT,

IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS,

FEBRUARY 12, 1787,

In a Committee of the whole House, to consider of so much
of His Majesty's most gracious Speech to both Houses of
Parliament as relates to the Treaty of Navigation and
Commerce between His Majesty and the Most Christian
King.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR R. FAULDER, NEW BOND-STREET.

1787.

(2)

MEMORANDUM

TO : THE PRESIDENT

FROM : THE SECRETARY OF STATE

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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S P E E C H

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

W I L L I A M P I T T.

MR. BEAUFOY IN THE CHAIR.

SIR,

THE Treaty of Navigation and Commerce which has been concluded between his Majesty and the most Christian King, and signed at Versailles on the 26th of September, 1786, I have had the honour, some time ago, to lay before this House, in consequence of his Majesty's pleasure, signified for that purpose in his most gracious speech from the throne, at the opening of this Session of Parliament; and I have now the honour to submit that Treaty to the consideration and discussion of this Committee.

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The considerable length of time which this Treaty has been under the examination of the Public, and of the Members of this House, must have enabled people to form an opinion with regard to its tendency and policy; and it would not be surprizing, that on such a subject various opinions should be entertained. It has not, however, appeared that any great difference of opinion is entertained by the people at large, or by the individuals in this House with regard to this subject. It has indeed been alleged by some without these walls, and also by some gentlemen in their places in this House, that this Treaty contains regulations of the utmost novelty, magnitude, and importance: it has been represented as subversive of the whole of the commercial and political system of this kingdom; and accused of introducing plans of policy founded on rash speculations, which may be attended with the most dangerous and destructive consequences to the commerce, the
revenue,

revenue, and the politics of this country.—
 Whatever opinions are entertained with regard to this Treaty, and from whatever channel they may be brought forward, they certainly deserve due attention and regard; and as far as these opinions are founded on argument and reason, they merit to be fairly considered and discussed, and to have every weight to which they may be found justly intitled. But when opinions are held forth, containing fears and apprehensions of danger, without any arguments to support them, if they are not to be rejected altogether, yet they certainly ought not to impede deliberation and discussion with regard to the measure to which they relate.

In as far as these opinions assert that this Treaty militates against many ancient prejudices, and many ancient laws, and in as far as they represent this measure as most important to the wealth, the industry, the prosperity of this kingdom, I do not mean to controvert them.

I am ready to admit, that in a very great degree all the sources from whence this kingdom derives her power and greatness, and the subjects their subsistence and their wealth, must be affected by it. I am persuaded that our power and greatness will be extended and increased, and new sources of opulence laid open to the industry, activity, and exertion of this country, which will raise both individuals and the nation to a very high degree of prosperity, such as we have not hitherto known. But I also admit, that these opinions should undergo the most minute examination; and I do say, that it is the duty of this Committee, and that they are bound not to come to any resolution, without they are convinced that it is a measure accompanied with safety, and likely to be of benefit to this kingdom.

But I must also insist, that if it be true, that this measure contains in it every thing which can be of use to the manufacturers of this nation,

tion, and which must be of importance to them all; and if it be true, that it has been published above four months, and no objection has been found to it; if upon appealing to Members from every part of the country, who have had it in their power to be informed of the opinions of their Constituents relating to it, they have received no instructions to oppose this measure, no representations of its dangerous and destructive consequences, it certainly is not from the people of this country that we are to look for arguments to oppose this measure: I say, that in this state we must examine and discuss the Treaty itself in this Committee; and if any arguments shall be found why it should not have its full force, they are to be found, and found only within this House.

In this state, and in these circumstances, we come to this Committee with the addition of this only, of a petition signed by certain respectable gentlemen concerned in the manufactures
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of this country, who state no reason for being averse to the Treaty, no arguments for disapproving of it; but desire further time to make up their minds upon the subject. The opinions, even the doubts and the fears of any respectable body of the manufacturers of this country deserve every attention. But if it should happen that there has been every call to excite discussion, every means of information presented to them, and at the end of betwixt four and five months you do not learn from any petition from any part of the country; you do not hear from any part which is the seat of these manufacturers, that their interests are in danger; or any intimation that their interests are not to be benefited: and you hear, on the other hand, from certain manufacturers, that *they* did not know the stipulations of the Treaty, and that they do not desire delay for any reason, but because they cannot make up their minds on the subject; as far as we can see any reasons on which their petition is founded, by resorting to

to any proper, although not perfectly regular means of information, we should certainly think it our duty to comply with the prayer of it. For this purpose, therefore, I shall in the course of this discussion beg leave to read a paper which is represented as the foundation on which this petition of these manufacturers has been framed. But unless there can be suggested some ground for reasonable and material doubt, however laudable their motives, and I am far from supposing that their motives are other than an anxious desire for the interest of the country, however respectable their names, their petition alone cannot be any reason for the Committee delaying to come to any resolutions which they shall now judge expedient. And I must further observe, that if this measure is very beneficial to the manufacturers of this country, the more speedily we come to a decision, the sooner will they be enabled to avail themselves of the advantages which it holds forth to them;

them ; and it is our duty to grant them whatever advantages may result from it, by as speedy a determination as may be consistent with prudent deliberation.

We have therefore this petition, such as I have described it, praying only delay ; we have on the other hand the approving silence of all the manufacturers of this country.

Another transaction has been stated by an Honourable Gentleman,* and is likely to be frequently alluded to in the course of the evening. I have no objection it should be mentioned, as of all other arguments it makes the most for the inference I have just drawn from the silence of the manufacturers on the present occasion. And certainly the Honourable Gentleman did not allude to it without knowing that it proves, in the strongest manner, that the manufacturing interests of this country are alive to every thing relating to its commerce
and

* Mr. Sheridan.

and its manufactures. Does the Honourable Gentleman think, that they are inattentive to the regulations established by this measure?— Does the Honourable Gentleman imagine, or can any man be persuaded, that were the interest of the woollens of Yorkshire, the interest of the cottons of Lancashire, the interest of the cutlery and hard-ware of Birmingham or Sheffield, the interest of gauzes, a manufacture of much consequence to the inhabitants of another part of the kingdom, or were the interest of any other manufacture, not only likely to be injured, but even in hazard of not being benefited, that the persons who are concerned in those different branches would not have stepped forth, and objected to the Treaty? They have already been convinced, that this House is not very unwilling to hear what they say, or inattentive to what they hear. If after all, in the course of the next week, or the next month, they should come forward with their objections, I do not say they ought not be attended to: I mean to be understood, that at all times proper weight should be

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given

given to their opinions. But when no opposition to this measure appears, I do not think that we are bound to wait upon a presumption on which we have no room to argue from any thing now before us : And as we are not furnished with their sentiments and opinions on the subject, it appears to me not improper that the House should itself proceed to decision by its own judgment.

I do consider this silence as a decisive proof, that at least no great and palpable, no alarming and glaring danger attends it. It is strong and presumptive evidence, that this Treaty, which embraces so great a variety of objects, and has not produced any solid objection, must be attended with security to those who will most immediately feel its operation.

And further, I am speaking in the presence of many gentlemen, who know that there are in all the different parts of this country, those who feel upon this occasion, not merely security, but

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satisfaction, many who look at it with sanguine and great expectation of availing themselves of the advantages it holds out to them.—

Whether we listen or not to the prayer of the petition, let us seek for information where it is now only to be found, and that is in this Committee. Let us not deem any information too late; but let us not think that deliberation on those lights we now have, is wrong or precipitate.

So much it is necessary to say, to premise the propositions I have to make to you. Much as I wish to pay attention to the manufacturers, I do not think, considering the length of time they have had this Treaty in their possession, that in order to form our judgment with regard to this measure, it is at all necessary now to wait until they shall form their opinions. This Treaty is not founded on any laboured reasoning, on any peculiar political acumen, or minute and complex investigation; but upon plain, simple,
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apparent reasons ; upon obvious and natural facts. The merits of it are easily explained, and easily comprehended ; and with regard to which every Member may be able to decide, with satisfaction to himself, and safety to his constituents. My chief object will be to lay it before you, as briefly and as free from tedious discussion as the nature of it will admit, and to bring the leading features into one point of view with as much precision as I am able.

I do not mean to trouble the Committee this night with a general motion. I do not mean to press any decided resolution. But I wish to trouble the Committee, by laying before them, those steps which Parliament will have to take, to carry this Treaty into execution ; and moving certain resolutions leading to that object, but without binding the House to decisive determination.

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There are some parts of the Treaty on which I do not mean to touch. There are many articles which relate to maritime law, which belong to the prerogative of the Crown; and concerning which, the Crown can by that prerogative enter into, and conclude a Treaty with a foreign nation, without submitting it to this House, unless by peculiar grace, and which it would be derogatory to his Majesty to enter into the discussion of, without particular leave and permission. There are some other articles also, on which I shall only say very little, as they must be left to the regulation of Parliament, by particular laws for that purpose, such as that part which necessarily supposes and requires the prevention of smuggling.

What I chiefly mean to go into, are the leading principles of the commercial parts of the Treaty, which guide and limit all the other regulations contained in it. I shall endeavour to point out the whole as one system, and, by
displaying

displaying this in a concise manner, render the discussion less complex, and preclude the necessity of going over each article separately.

The leading principles are contained in the sixth, seventh, and eleventh Articles of the Treaty; and the general result will be that arising from the tendency of the whole Treaty, considered as one system.

First, That all manufactures and merchandize, the growth and produce of France, will be upon the same footing as that of the most favoured nation, except with regard to the Treaty subsisting between this country and Portugal.

Secondly, That whatever diminution of duties on any articles from other nations, or whatever advantages we may think proper to give to any particular goods and merchandize, the same shall be extended to the subjects of France.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, As to some particulars of more importance, they are not to be left to the general regulation, but will be burdened by those duties mentioned in the tariff, contained in the sixth Article.

I shall therefore take the whole commercial arrangement as one system, and consider as such its effect.

FIRST, On the different articles of manufactures to which it relates, and which form the chief part of the commerce of this country.

SECONDLY, I shall consider its effect upon the revenue of this country.

THIRDLY, I shall consider what weight is due to those objections upon which the greatest stress has been laid ; the influence of the Treaty upon the POLITICS of this kingdom.

I shall

I shall then conclude with simply moving a resolution with regard to that part of the agreement with France, which is left unprovided for by the Treaty, relating to those articles of growth, produce, and manufacture, not mentioned in the sixth Article, and which are to be imported into this kingdom, on payment of duties as low as any which are paid on the importation of the like articles from any other European nation.

In taking a view of the general tendency of this measure, it is natural in the first instance to inquire, whether it alters our commercial situation with regard to other countries? Whether, when it opens new channels of intercourse with France, it does not preclude any of those to which this country has been in the habits of resorting?

To this an answer is easily to be returned—That the Treaty places France only on the same footing with other nations, reserving every right to
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maintain those particular privileges of communication and commerce, which existed by special Treaty between this country and the only other country with which any exclusive intercourse was maintained.

I say, it leaves room for carrying into full effect the Methuen Treaty with Portugal, which has for many years been adhered to on her part very imperfectly, provided however that she shall perform those engagements it is her duty to fulfil, and our right to demand, (and I have reason to hope that she will see her interest sufficiently, to accede to the very reasonable propositions we have made to her ;) but if she should not, the Treaty must be at an end, and Portugal be placed on the same footing with other nations, and on the same with that on which this Treaty will place France. In considering therefore the effect of the present Treaty, we must inquire what are the articles on which we should be apt to gain or lose by our commerce with France ; or whether upon the whole, the contract is made on such terms of

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reciprocity

reciprocity and mutual convenience, as are not dangerous to the interests of this country.

I believe it is a fact that will not be denied, That in many of the greatest and most leading manufactures calculated for general consumption, the situation of this country is more flourishing than any country of Europe. There are many in which our actual superiority is confessed. In all of which it is clear and obvious, that at present the advantage will be on the side of this country, and that France cannot pretend to hold any competition with us in these leading articles. On the other hand, France possesses certain advantages entirely independent of manufactures, and which she owes to her soil and her climate: certain privileges, if I may call them so, which she derives from the bounty of nature, and with regard to which we pretend not to hold any competition with her.

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The question is then, whether upon the whole, there is a balance on our side, arising from the superiority of our manufactures over theirs, placed in opposition to the advantages they receive from those articles of natural production? I wish to meet the question fairly. There are more articles in France in which we cannot compete with them, than there are in this country in which they cannot compete with us. In wines, vinegar, and oil, we cannot pretend to form with them the smallest competition; articles which have become so necessary to the luxury of this country as not to be dispensed with.

The first question with regard to this, is, whether a Treaty upon these principles could be negotiated, so as to admit the produce of France under the competition mentioned, without injuring essentially the interests of this country? What is the real state of this matter? What are the articles we are likely to export to that country? What sort of advantages will attend such
 C 2 exportation?

exportation? Whether we can send our manufactures to France, so as to contend with those of that country in her market? Whether we are able to send our cotton manufactures to any amount, so as to be able to contend with those of France? Whether the same principle also will hold with regard to woollens? As to both of these manufactures, it is a fact, that they do now make their way to the French market through different channels, loaded as they are with overcharged import duties and high commissions to various people; and that they do in the French market hold by their intrinsic superiority, a successful competition under all these disadvantages. In hard-ware also, and manufactures of iron and steel, the undoubted pre-eminence we possess, have sent these articles into France, by a variety of different means of conveyance. And no person will say, that we are not likely to multiply in an infinite proportion, what has thus forced its way under many disadvantages, burdens, and prohibitions. The risk attending every species of contraband trade

trade is well known, and the price according to that risk must be so much the more increased ; and if even then, these different branches of manufactures make good their competition with France, what must they do when all these difficulties are taken away ?

There is no man who has inquired into this business, but does know, that we have not to look to reasoning, in order to determine to what this new system may give occasion. The experiment has already been made. Our manufacturers have had the opportunity of a competition with the manufacturers of France ; and this question only remains to be decided, whether they are to have that competition operating with the competition of France at once, or to have that competition under all the uncertainty and risk attendant on clandestine and indirect traffic, which must of necessity cramp and restrain every object of commerce, which the vender is under the necessity
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of carrying to a market under such disadvantages?

X And is there a man in this House, is there a manufacturer in this kingdom, that doubts that there is an evident pre-eminence in this country with regard to these manufactures? And if they are attended with a further superiority in this, that these articles are neither of partial, injurious, or transient consumption, will he tell me, that a market of so many millions of people, a market near our own, of expeditious and punctual return, is that in which our competition is not to be attended with a necessary advantage? If we know that the sure pledge of our safety and prosperity depends upon the flourishing state of our manufactures, and the extent of our markets, are we not to give a liberal equivalent for whatever can secure a valuable, great, and extensive vent for the leading and principal articles which employ the ingenuity and
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and industry of our people? But when that nation opens its arms, upon moderate, upon equal, upon tempting terms, are we to refuse the invitation? It is an object so clear, so manifest, so useful, that it would be a waste of time, and an affront to your understandings, to endeavour longer to explain it. What have we given that is detrimental to ourselves? Have we given that which has brought into danger any other interest? We have agreed to take upon duties very high, the productions of that country which the luxury of this has made necessary. We take the wines of France, one of the greatest and most important articles we have from that country, burdened with a duty not so heavy as formerly, but still very high, considering it as a subject of merchandize and revenue; and we do this, reserving to ourselves a power of giving all the advantages we have agreed to give to an ancient ally.

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These advantages must be secured indeed by lowering the duties on the wines we have from Portugal ; but we have every reason to believe, that the consumption will be so much greater, that it will make up for the proposed diminution. These wines will supplant only a pernicious manufacture in this country, injurious to the health of the community. It is not possible however to speak with regard to the operation of this regulation, with all the certainty one could wish ; but it is a fact, that the consumption of this country in the article of wines is beyond the legal importation, to an astonishing amount. The regulation which took place by the Act of last Session, has discovered the extent of this, and will put an end, for the future, to those poisonous home-made wines.

It has been found in the months of July and August last, months that are reckoned by those who deal in wines very unfavourable to the
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consumption of these articles, and a season at which they are not removed without risk of being injured in their quality, that the consumption has been so considerable, that, provided the consumption of the whole year should bear its due proportion to that of those two months, the whole quantity consumed within the year will amount to 25,000 tons, which exceeds the legal importation of former years by 10,000 tons and upwards.

This is enough to satisfy us, that there will be a great and material alteration in this matter, and that by lowering the duties on French wines, we are giving nothing to that country that is likely to be detrimental to our own interests at home, or likely to interfere with our interests abroad.

The next article of greatest consequence relates to the lowering the duties on brandies : and it will appear, with regard to this, that

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while we are granting to France what was only a just and a fair boon, we are acting upon the best policy, with regard to the interests of our own revenue.

Those who object to this measure do not know the immense extent to which the smuggling of this article is carried, by illegal importations into this kingdom. The only effectual mode of preventing it, is by reducing the duties. It is now three years since I proposed the lowering the duties on rum. The diminution of the duties on brandies, with the reduction of those on other spirits, in 1784, was not proposed, but I did intend to do so before I entered upon this Treaty; and the House is only taking this as a condition for receiving other advantages, which it would have been prudent to adopt without any such condition. And I believe, I shall make it appear that we ought to reduce the duties upon brandy still lower than we have bargained for by the Treaty.

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The great and important question is, how this is to be done so as to guard against the abuses of the smuggler, and to prevent spirits from becoming too cheap, which objects I shall hold constantly in view, whenever I come to state any thing upon that subject for your consideration? To such an enormous height has the practice of illicit trade arrived in this article, that, after having taken all the pains in my power to compute its actual amount, I find, that upon an average the legal importation does not exceed 600,000 gallons per ann. and that there is the greatest probability for believing, that the quantity smuggled amounts to above three or four millions of gallons.

It is certain that any diminution upon the duties on spirits must be attended with an increase of market to the fair trader: and that consequently, although it might be a difficult point to discover those duties which would drive

the smuggler out of the market, yet every diminution has partially that effect. When, in spite of prohibitions, when, in spite of all the risk attending on the illicit practices of the smuggler, he keeps possession of a greater market than the fair trader possesses by your laws, what are you about to do? Why, you are going to support the fair trader, to take profit out of the pocket of the smuggler, and convert it into a source of revenue.

I flatter myself, I have said enough to convince this House, that I have not done any thing to risk the interest of the revenue, or of the country, with respect to these articles.

With regard to vinegar and oil, they are matters of very little importance, articles which we do not produce ourselves, and of which we receive little from any other country. The duties on the former have been lowered from sixty-seven pounds

pounds to thirty-two, which bears a proportion to the diminished duty upon the wines: the latter is placed upon the same footing as from other nations.

There are also some articles of manufacture, in which it is not pretended that we have a competition with France, particularly cambric; the consumption of which is very general in this kingdom, and known to you all, although its importation is confined to a very few. The smuggling of this article is much greater than will be easily imagined; and the admission of it, although upon very moderate duties, will not injure any manufacture in this country, and will, by making the importation come into the hands of the fair trader, prove no contemptible source of revenue.

Linens are another subject. The stipulation is, that they are to come into either country on the same

same terms as from Holland or Flanders. Linen is in this country no very considerable manufacture, and the French, who are much inferior to Holland in that article, will not be able to interfere with the Irish, who are possessed of our market. And with regard to the importation from Ireland into France, Ireland will undoubtedly have the benefit of a direct conveyance of her linens on the same terms with Holland, instead of sending them, as hitherto, through Dunkirk. I have reason to believe that the people of Ireland do not apprehend much mischief from this species of importation: and if they had felt any alarm on the subject, it is evident they would not have remained silent, as they have done, since the publication of the Treaty.

The next article of glafs, particularly plate glafs, is, I imagine, superior in France to what it is in this country. But I believe, in those kinds calculated for common consumption,

tion, we are more likely to obtain the greatest market.

In the article of fadlery, our superiority is open and confessed, beyond all competition.

There is another article, the article of millinery, in which it is to be considered that we must divide the market with France, and in which they will have a part of the competition. It is not to be supposed that any regulation is meant to bear hard upon any part of the community, especially that which is formed by nature to excite particular sensibility and compassion. But if gentlemen will look more into this, they will easily see that there is no danger of this article coming in any considerable quantity into this country, as nothing can be imported under the twelve per cent. duty on this fabric, and if mixed with lace or ribbons, they are absolutely prohibited.

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I have now gone through most of the articles of manufacture which will be affected by the Treaty; and it appears, that in all the great and leading articles this country has the decisive superiority. I have admitted, that in some articles of manufacture, they are able to hold competition with us; but they are far from being of equal, or nearly equal importance. And there are several others of our manufactures which I have not mentioned, that are likely to come into very common use, and in which we excel France and all other nations. The articles, for instance, of pottery and earthen ware, the beauty and variety of which manufactures in this country, place them far beyond any competition of the manufacturers of France.

Have we not every reason to be persuaded, that great and beneficial consequences must attend this enlarged extension of our market? Can we entertain a doubt, that all these great
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and leading manufactures, which are of most advantage to this country, which are in a great degree the source of our prosperity and our power, will be essentially benefited? And what are the arguments by which these assertions are combated?

With respect to the great and leading articles it is said, that, although we possess the superiority at present, France will soon be in a state to hold a successful competition with us, to drive us out of her market, and take also possession of ours. Upon what facts, or reasoning, is this apprehension founded? We are told, that the manufacturers were afraid of a competition with Ireland, and that their fears in regard to that kingdom are much more strongly justified in the case of France, under the present Treaty.

How is this made to appear? Why, if the manufacturers are afraid, do they not step forward, and declare their fears, with the grounds on which

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they

they are founded? Does not their general silence with regard to this measure, prove that they have confidence in it? I know no one transaction which goes more to prove this confidence, than the objections made by them to the intercourse with Ireland; which shewed them to be attentive to every thing relating to the arrangement of the commercial interests of the country.

And although I am far from asserting, that their alarms with regard to Ireland were well founded;—I indeed think, they were not well founded; yet it certainly goes to prove, that had they apprehended any danger from the present measure, they would have been ready to declare it. And I am indeed well persuaded, that the general opinion of the manufacturers of this country is decidedly in favour of the Treaty. Is it possible that on a subject so interesting they can entertain other sentiments, and not have made them publicly appear, after a period of between four and five months, and not even to
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have instructed their Representatives to enter their protests against such a measure, upon their first making their appearance in Parliament? And shall we not draw this conclusion with more force, if gentlemen cannot stand up in their places in this Committee, and declare the sentiments and instructions of their Constituents, directing them to oppose this Treaty?

But I have been asked by an Honourable Gentleman,* whether the spirit of this Treaty is to be so far complied with, as to lead to any new arrangement with Ireland? I do not see that this Treaty lays us under any particular obligation to renew the offers we made to that country. Because Ireland refused to adopt those measures which were confessedly for her advantage; because that arrangement stopt on the other side of the water, merely because it held out too great benefits for that country—is that an argument for again presenting those offers?

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* Mr. Sheridan.

What arrangement may be proper to be made with respect to Ireland, must depend so much upon the temper and inclination of that country, and a number of other reasons so unconnected with the present subject, that I have the best reason for not being able to give that gentleman an answer to his question.

It has been asserted that no beneficial Treaty of Commerce can ever be formed between this country and France; that there is no line of reciprocity that can ever be adopted by this country, so as to make it prudent to form any Treaty that would lead to a mutual interchange of commodities. In order to ground this doctrine, it has been asserted, that the trade with France has always been detrimental to this country. They alledge, that in those periods in which the commerce has been open between this country and France, the balance has been uniformly unfavourable to us. The only periods from which this conclusion is drawn, are those of a few years
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in the reign of Charles the II. and the accounts of that period, depending upon such facts as were collected at the Treaty of Utrecht. These facts have been connected in such a manner, as to render this commerce in appearance unfavourable to this kingdom. But I can with safety assert, that after having taken much trouble to examine into this matter, I have found that the accounts collected on that occasion were not sufficient to lead to a judgment on this subject. They were taken from the Custom-House books, which appear to have been kept very inaccurately ; and all that can be deduced from them is, that to a certain degree the trade was upon the whole more favourable to France than to Great Britain. It is stated as uniformly unfavourable, which is by no means the truth ; for in some years the balance was considerably in our favour. But instead of our trade being open only for a few years, the truth is, that a constant and mutual commerce has been at all times carried on between the subjects of this
country

country and those of France. The only difference is, that this commerce has been carried on under all the disadvantages, risk, and expence attending mutual prohibitions and exorbitant duties ; and that we are now opening a legal mode of exchange, under a just and equal reciprocity, calculated for the benefit of both nations. What danger, what destructive and fatal consequences can attend a measure, which the actual state of things, and the situation of the two countries has thus presented, is not easy to be discovered, and certainly not the result of any fair deduction from experience and reason.—They are the offspring only of ill-grounded apprehensions and narrow prejudices.—Let us hear no more of them. No more of those fears and gloomy forebodings, contrary to common sense and to the interest of nations. Was it not the opinion of all men, even at that period which they refer to, not that the prohibitions were right, but that some commerce
might

might be formed with France beneficial to this nation? And at that time party interest, and since a variety of other accidents, have prevented any system with that kingdom being perfected.

But at the period which is stated as proving the disadvantages of a trade with France, it is to be observed, that the only articles which they had to send us, were what we had not; and we had none of those we have at present to send them. At that time we had no hard-ware, nor cutlery, nor cottons, and not even any considerable quantity of woollens, and none of the other manufactures we have in such perfection at present; and while they supplied us with those articles of produce which we have always had occasion for, it is not to be wondered that the balance should appear in their favour. And will any man say, that a reference to past experience has a parallel to the present moment, when all our great and leading manufactures, of which the pre-eminence is established,

had

had no place in the balance against their productions? Indeed, a *certainty of advantage* is not to be expected; the liberal and true ground is mutual reciprocity; and this is all we ought to be desirous of obtaining; and this is all our manufacturers can expect.

Besides this general argument, another is taken from a supposition of interfering with our engagements with another country. I have already said, that we have reserved the advantages of the Methuen Treaty, as far as we can secure them in point of justice and of interest. We have also reserved to Spain similar terms with Portugal, in case Portugal accedes to the propositions made to her. And this being the case, I must only recur to what I said before, that we have so avowedly superior a competition, that no danger can arise to any of our manufactures.

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The next thing to be considered, with regard to this Treaty, is its operation on the state of our revenue.

We have no reason to apprehend any very considerable reduction of revenue from the articles to be imported from France into this country, under the present Treaty. The only articles in which any thing of that kind can possibly happen, is on the duties on wines and brandies. This diminution can amount to no great sum. The decrease arising from the difference betwixt the former duties on French wines, and those now proposed, does not amount to more than 20,000*l*. The diminution of duty on Portugal wines will amount to a greater sum. If that Court, as I have every reason to hope, shall agree to conform themselves to the spirit of the Methuen Treaty, the duty on their wines must certainly be reduced one third.. The quantity imported from that country is about ten or eleven thousand tons a year, and the

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revenue will be reduced about a hundred and sixty, or a hundred and seventy thousand pounds. This however is by far the reduction of most consequence that can take place. The importation of brandies is not so easily calculated, but upon the reduced duty of two shillings and sixpence per gallon, the decrease of revenue on brandy imported from France may amount to about 20,000l. The small reduction on rum is not material.

I first beg leave to state upon this subject, that if a surrender of revenue is made, in order to gain great and essential commercial advantages, it is neither contrary to the policy nor practice of this country. And what policy can be so well grounded, as that which gives occasion to extend that very commerce, which is the great support of our prosperity, by a temporary surrender of duties, for benefits which in the end must considerably increase the revenue. But in fact, this revenue which we thus give up, to acquire solid advantages, is not granted out of that general

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ral flock of income, with which we have a right to lay our account for a supply of the public purposes of the kingdom; it is only taken from out of that superadded source of revenue which would have resulted over and above every national expenditure, and also over and above providing for the paying off our incumbrances, according to the plan settled for that purpose by the Act of Parliament for reducing the public debt passed last Sessions.

And as this is the true state, that it is not out of our existing revenues, but entirely out of a new source derived to this country, from the suppression of fraudulent impositions upon our revenue, and the destruction of a pernicious manufacture, there certainly can be no objection made to it.— If it had been otherwise, the policy of this country is in favour of the measure, and with the utmost reason.

Under these circumstances, I must take it for granted, that such a surrender of revenue would be of itself a wise measure; but in this case it is a measure by which we cannot possibly lose. And if what I have further stated be true, that the most fruitful source of revenue is to reduce those duties which give rise to clandestine traffic, this will prove an immediate benefit; and I am very confident, that when the effect of the new regulation with regard to wines fully operates, and the diminution of duties on that and other articles takes place, the revenue of this country will be much superior to what it otherwise could have been.

The duty upon the article of cambric alone will amount, by this regulation, to 50,000l. a year, which sum will be added to the revenue of this country. From what I have before said, with regard to wines and brandies, and by more attention to the enforcing the laws for the prevention of smuggling, and better collecting the revenue, I have every reason to think, that there is
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no well-grounded apprehension for any supposed defalcation of revenue; and upon the whole, I am not too sanguine in supposing, that the increase of duties resulting from the reduction on wines and brandies, will amount to more than the necessary deduction I have stated.

If then there is no injurious tendency, neither with regard to our manufactures or our revenue, let us see if there are any other arguments.

But before I touch upon those from which the greatest source of objection has been derived, to wit, the POLITICS of this country, there is a particular circumstance which deserves to be mentioned; that relating to the petition of the manufacturers now on the table. As I should wish to pay every attention to what these gentlemen would alledge with regard to this measure, and as they have not in their petition stated the reasons of their prayer for a delay of this Committee coming to a resolution upon the Treaty

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I shall beg leave to read a paper, presented as the Report of their Committee, and which is stated as the ground upon which they have gone, in resolving to petition this House.

This Report is stated in the way of doubts and queries with regard to the Treaty with France.

The first object of their alarm is stated, as arising from a fear, that by the fifth Article of the Treaty, a door would be opened whereby the law, as it now stands, might be evaded, and our artists and manufacturers be conveyed out of the kingdom, under the colour of their being servants to French subjects. To any assertion of an opening of this nature being left by the Treaty, I desire to be understood as giving my flat negative. There is not the smallest ground for supposing any repeal of the laws existing with regard to this subject.— They have undoubtedly their full force as much as if no such Treaty had been made.

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The second doubt that has arisen on this head, is, whether a number of laws now in force, with regard to the retaining certain raw materials and implements of manufacture in the kingdom, must not be repealed before the Treaty can be carried into execution? To this I must also give my negative, as there is not the smallest ground for asserting, that any tools or utensils, or any raw materials, such as wool or fullers earth, can be exported by this Treaty.

The next query is, what laws must be repealed, and how many, in order to carry this Treaty into effect? Such a question as this must undoubtedly appear extremely preposterous. In the first place, it does not appear by what right these gentlemen think proper to interfere with what peculiarly belongs to this House; and if even this House were to inquire what laws were to be repealed, such an inquiry would rather appear unnecessary, as it is very obvious that the resolu-

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tions of carrying the Treaty into effect, must, imply a repeal of all those acts which militate against the spirit of any of the articles of the Treaty. And are we to wait upon this occasion, until they have been able to inform themselves of those acts which we may think proper to repeal? And are they not able to judge of the tendency of this Treaty without such information? Are they not able to judge of the stipulations, with regard to wool, with regard to cotton, with regard to hard-ware, contained in the Treaty, without counting over Acts of Parliament? What has their opinion of the Articles of the Treaty to do with the number of Acts of Parliament we are to repeal, or the number of parchments we are to lay aside for the very interests of those manufacturers themselves, to whom we are so much obliged for wishing to take the business of making laws out of our hands?

The next question is, whether or no the Acts of the third of Richard the Third, and the second of Henry the Eighth, which hinder an alien from
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setting up a trade any where in this kingdom, are to be repealed? For the retaining these statutes, they seem to be extremely concerned. By these it is provided, that no alien whatsoever shall be permitted to sell by retail, or to take any lease of a house or shop to trade in. This subject of uneasiness seems to be rather ill timed; for that these laws are already repealed is the opinion of many of our lawyers; and however that may be, it is certain that they are not in force, and that they ought to be expunged as a disgrace to this part of our statute book. I am well persuaded, that this relaxation is so much approved of, that if there were a question proposed for the reviving these laws, there would not be found one person in the House who would support so illiberal and absurd a proposition: and this is one proof, how fit these gentlemen are for the task they have undertaken, of directing and instructing this House in the principles of legislation.

The next apprehension of these gentlemen relates to the Methuen Treaty betwixt this country and

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Portugal, and they desire to be informed with regard to its continuance. Their fears on this occasion seem to be as groundless as on any of the others. We have reserved the power of making good all the stipulations which this country is engaged to perform with regard to Portugal; and no reason can arise from this Treaty with France, to occasion any discontinuance of our commerce with Portugal. This depends only on herself, on her thinking proper to adhere to the spirit of her ancient engagements.

Much apprehension seems also to have arisen with regard to the protecting revenue laws, and the act of navigation. With regard to the revenue, no difference is made in the protecting laws for that purpose; and notwithstanding all that has been said about the latter, all that is provided is, that the French ships which are obliged, from distress, to put into any port, or that any goods that are shipwrecked upon this coast, are not to be subject to forfeiture. The power also of altering the entries of the master
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of a ship, should he make any error in the declaration of her cargo, is only intended to prevent any advantage from being taken, from an ignorance of the language or customs of the country, where there is no manifest appearance of fraud.

The next question is, what articles of French manufacture are now to be allowed to be imported, which were not by the Treaty of Utrecht. I answer, that silk was allowed to be imported then under a small duty, but is not at present even under a very high one; but this question is equally absurd with some others that I have mentioned. Why do they resort to the Treaty of Utrecht? Cannot they form their opinions of this Treaty upon its own merits? If they are afraid that their woollens, that their hard-ware, their cutlery, their cottons will be injured, why do they not speak out? Woollens were at that period by no means so considerable as at present; the other manufactures, as articles of trade, had hardly any existence.

In another part they say, that no stipulations are made upon the subject of draw-backs. Indulgences of that kind, it is well known, have been given by every nation for the purpose of enabling her manufacturers to send certain goods to market, upon better terms than her neighbours; and surely you may do this, whether it is for the interest of France or not; and there is nothing in the Treaty to prevent it.

With regard to the internal imposts in France, they have also expressed their alarm. It is provided for by the Treaty, that nothing of that kind is to be laid upon the manufactures of this country, that is not also laid upon their own; but to interfere with any internal regulation which France may think proper in this respect, would just be as if she should interfere with the tolls and imposts we in this country assess upon those who travel on the turnpike-roads.

These are the doubts which are to arrest this House, which ought to check the source of opening benefit, and to prevent free discussion and determination

termination on a question so important to their own interests and to the nation, to be as early decided as prudence will admit. The fair equality of a Commercial Treaty, is, that it should be founded upon terms of reciprocity, so as to give no superior advantage by existing duties to the manufactures of the one country, over those of the other; and the encouragement our manufacturers receive, is, that under moderate duties, they have a full opportunity to profit by that competition which their superiority affords.

A farther doubt is also stated, that although our competition may have the advantage at present, this may not continue for ever. With regard to this, it is certainly sufficient to say, that the Treaty itself is made only for twelve years, and it is not possible at this time to say, whether it may be proper for this country to continue it longer, or not; and on these grounds it is certainly sufficient for us, that the superiority is decidedly in our favour at present. The next doubt is, they are afraid of their lowering the duties in France on their own manufactures.

factures. This, as I said before, is also stipulated by the Treaty to be extended to those manufactures which are to be imported by us.

The House have now laid before them a fair deduction from those doubts which have given occasion to this petition of the manufacturers. It appears that any possible danger that can arise, is fully guarded against by the Treaty, and you are now to judge how far these apprehensions ought to arrest the determination of this House, and how far they are already removed: but it ought at the same time to be fully weighed, that if this Treaty is as advantageous as we flatter ourselves we have proved it, a compliance with the petition of these manufacturers is against the general interest of this country, and of these very people. And I must add, that I think I have made it appear, that their doubts and objections are absurd and contradictory in principle, and founded upon groundless apprehensions.

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The next question is that which has been often stated by those, whose eloquence in this House is so great, as to be very important, and likely to render any opinion they may please to adopt much attended to. The ground taken upon this matter, is, that this Treaty tends to produce an intercourse with France, dangerous to the political consequence of this country.

The first argument adduced to prove this, is an assertion that France is the natural, bitter, and determined enemy of this nation, and that nothing should be done to remove those animosities, and to compose those jealousies which have so long subsisted between the people of this country and those of France.

To suppose that the people of any country are so framed, as to entertain natural and determined hatred and animosity against the people of any other country; to suppose that any nation can be unalterably the enemy of another, is, I must own,
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a position which I never can admit. I cannot believe that two nations are formed for the purpose of tearing one another in pieces. Causes of hostility may have existed between any two kingdoms, which may have led them very frequently to oppose each other in arms ; but I cannot be persuaded that any two countries are so situated, that no circumstances can destroy those causes.

I am indeed surprised to hear gentlemen of such enlightened minds, defend those illiberal and ill-founded prejudices, which it is to be hoped are almost every where exploded. Instead of the people of this country and of France being naturally and necessarily enemies, the fact is directly the reverse ; for however ambition or accident may have embroiled the two nations, there has always been in the individuals a disposition towards friendly intercourse. France and Great Britain have each of them their good qualities, which the other has liberality enough to acknowledge and admire.

I allow

I own we have many instances of the hostility of France; and if any thing is done by this Treaty to diminish our ability to resist France, it would be a great reason for laying it aside. But I ask these gentlemen, whether we may not carry on a beneficial commerce in the time of peace, without destroying our power of going to war. If we take measures that will diminish our army, and that will prevent the increase of our navy, or if we take measures that tend to destroy the sources of our navigation, or by which this country may be laid open to the inroads and attacks of France; these are serious and weighty objections: but until solid arguments are adduced for this purpose, I must be excused from paying much attention to those founded merely on declamation. I do not mean to say, that this measure is a pledge of perpetual peace, but it tends to put off the season of hostility; which at the same time, it enables us successfully to renew, if we are called upon.—

Much has also been said about the little confidence that we ought to place in the professions of

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France, and about her infidelity in fulfilling her engagements. Although a Minister of this country, I do not hesitate to declare, that implicit faith is not to be given at all times to the assurances of France. But it is my duty to take them for true, unless I have reason to think they are false. At the same time it is but justice to declare, that if we may judge from the manner, there is reason to think this country has, in the course of the negociation of this measure, experienced every degree of openness and frankness on the part of France that we could wish. But although I do think it is a matter of great joy, that we find a disposition to extend the duration of the peace between the two kingdoms, we are not on that account to lessen our resources, or neglect the means of our defence; and although the duration of the Treaty may be the means of continuing this pacific disposition, I place no security even upon that. I do not suppose their own interest is always a security. It is not possible to say, whether wild ambition may not lead them to break the most advantageous Treaty. Yet I do apprehend,

apprehend, that by promoting the intercourse, many individuals will be interested in preserving the peace. And I do not suppose this to be the least advantage in the Treaty, that it enlists (as I may say) the individuals of that country in the interests of this; and that in a government, which, although arbitrary, is as much under influence of this kind as any other.

Much emphasis, and very high colouring has been used by gentlemen, in speaking of the great power of the French monarchy; and we have heard it asserted, that it has been the favourite policy of France, and her constant ambition, to lower this country; and that this uniform temper has induced her to take every opportunity to embarrass and distress this kingdom. Her interference in the last war is cited as an example: and it is asserted, that she is not likely to stop short here, but to go on till she has accomplished our utter degradation. If this

representation is made with a view to create and spread an apprehension of an attack from that quarter, I confess it has no such effect upon me, and it appears very inadequate to produce any effect also upon the nation. The situation of France, however splendid and respectable it may be, has never become so in consequence of any successes against this country; and I believe no Minister of France will ever look upon the event, or the consequences of the last war, as an encouragement to engage in a new one against Great Britain. Involved in a most expensive war, by our own misconduct, or at least by singular misfortunes, we have displayed an innate strength and vigour, which discovers the resources of this country to be almost inexhaustible. Attacked by France, at the head of the most formidable confederacy Europe ever saw, aided and assisted by a division of our own empire, we have been able to oppose successfully all she could attempt against us; and after having struggled through difficulties which appear-
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ed insurmountable, we have been able to raise our heads, and to shew the world that nothing can conquer us, not even our own misconduct and our own dissensions.

I think it is a just source of pride to find, that while our adversaries are embarrassed with the incumbrances in which their attack upon this country has involved them, we seem to have gathered new strength from our calamities. Our trade and commerce flourish with redoubled vigour; and we are not only able to support that enormous load of debt, which we have been obliged to contract, but have already been able to place our finances in such a situation, as to give us the prospect of being in time relieved from the burden. And we may well say,

*Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus
Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido,
Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso,
Ducit opes animumque ferro.*

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If in this situation a Treaty presents itself to us, accompanied with great and obvious advantages, why should we be afraid of entering into it from any apprehensions arising from the power of France? It has been asserted, that because the Treaty is framed upon terms of equal reciprocity, that the benefits must be equal on both sides; and that even at the best, no considerable advantage can be derived from it to either; but that whatever benefit would accrue must be wholly on the side of France. Nothing, however, can be a greater mistake. I believe the Government of France is well informed, and the Minister of France will see the advantage of giving fair operation to the Treaty, from its producing beneficial consequences to that country; but I do not hesitate to declare, even in the face of France, that the advantages in this arrangement are more on the side of Great Britain. France gains as we extend our market for her produce. We gain as she extends her market for our manufactures. France opens to us a market of above twenty millions.

millions. We open to her only a market of eight millions. Our manufacturers employ both a large capital and a multitude of hands; and according to their increase, afford a large surplus of productive labour to the country. Their articles of produce require few hands, and little labour to place them in a state fit for the market. We have, therefore, the greater market for that which is most productive of real strength to the nation. The high duty also which is laid upon their articles of produce, becomes a superior advantage to our revenue. When we send to them our manufactures to the amount of a million, France adds to its revenue only one hundred thousand pounds; whereas, if they import into this country produce to the amount of only one hundred thousand pounds, we shall receive more than that sum in revenue. We have heard of the high price of labour in this country; but, in fact, a great part of this is the taxes paid to government; and on this very account you will receive so much the more from the articles of your commerce. How much

much less will France be benefited by this view of the Treaty? She cannot send five hundred thousand pounds worth of brandy to this country without your receiving more than double that sum in revenue. But although I am not afraid of placing in open view the advantages of the Treaty to this country, I am far from thinking it is not beneficial to France. I think I see in it a wise and just policy. By adding to the extent of their produce, they give scope to that industry which her soil and climate point out to her people: but it is a measure of wisdom only, if they mean peace; it is otherwise, if they mean war.

This measure has also been represented as the effect of surprize on the part of the ministers of this country. I should be sorry if it was the effect of surprize; it is a measure which can arrogate no peculiar merit upon either side; it is that which results out of the very nature of things, and has its foundation in the peculiar situation of the two nations.

nations. Much has been given to France by the bounty of nature—a great part of the articles of her commerce depend upon the spontaneous offerings of her soil and her climate—The greatest part of ours, on manufactures which are not rendered perfect without much labour, and passing through a multitude of hands. It is not then surprizing, that superior advantages should attend this country from such a commerce. It is not surprizing, that what arises from the industry of freemen should be superior to the rude produce of the earth,

On the whole, there is nothing in this Treaty which can prove injurious to the trade and manufactures of this country, to the strength of our navy and our army, to the political power and consequence of the country. Neither is there any thing unjust in the negociation—the advantages in this part are as great as in any other. We shall acquire all the benefits which an extended market can give us, and preserve
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at the same time our old connections and ancient alliances. And whatever other profits may be found in this new source of commerce, it has this additional, that it takes away no source which we formerly possessed. It is a measure, in every view of it, productive of great advantages, obtained upon safe, easy, and eligible terms. We have been able to make a Treaty, by giving that to France which we could do without any difficulty ; and at the same time we annihilate a pernicious manufacture ; we suppress smuggling ; we add to our revenue, and destroy monopoly : and in return we acquire those advantages which are great, and will make this country the greatest in the world.

I ask pardon of the Committee for having detained them so long ; and shall now beg leave to move the following Resolution :

“ That it appears to this Committee to be expedient,
“ that all articles, the growth, produce, or manu-
“ facture of the European dominions of the French
“ King’