## BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

August 4.

*Sheridan and Windham's skirmish in debate, on the defence of the nation.*

Mr. Windham wished that every man in the country, of military age, should be trained and disciplined. He considered it as the great advantage of the bill, that it would compel those persons to use themselves to arms, who would keep back from modesty, and from the shame of making an aukward figure at drill. He was averse to the extension of the voluntary system on the present plan. He deprecated the separation of masters from servants. It would create a lower order of atrocity, which would give rise to the greatest discontents, and attended with the most pernicious consequences. He said the measures of the general defence was one of such magnitude, that any man may well hesitate, and change his opinions upon it. He therefore blamed his majesty's ministers for bringing forward the business, on which the defence of this country principally rested, so late, and for hurrying thro' the house with so little consideration. The right honorable gentleman adverted also to the public prints, which, he allowed, shewed at the present moment a becoming activity in the public cause, though for a long time they had remained buried in the same supineness as his majesty's ministers.

Mr. Sheridan.—"I agree with the right honorable gentleman, that on a measure so new, so extensive in its operation, so complicated in its details, that any man of the best understanding might, like himself, waver, hesitate, doubt, alter, change, revise, and consider every opinion which he had first formed upon every suggestion which he had first submitted to his judgment; and I accepted this admission of his the more readily, because I find by his making it, he has surprised himself into a confession that the ministers who had first introduced the measure were at least entitled to all the allowances which he demands for himself, namely, to the waverings, doubts, pauses, hesitations, considerations, and re-considerations, alterations, revisions, changes of opinion on instructions, re-changes, and re-instructions—old ideas abandoned on new information, and new ideas adapted to new circumstances, and that the result must be a complete refutal of the charge he has so often urged against them; that this measure had been attended with an undue delay upon their part, and a complete admission that in the nature of the measure itself there existed such doubts and difficulties as imposed upon those who brought it forward, the duty of adopting distinct and clear principles, before they submitted it to parliament.—Before, however, sir, I proceed to comment on other parts of the honorable gentleman's speech, I cannot suspend the expression of the indignation I feel at the manner in which he has expressed his contempt of the use of the press of G. Britain, as far as relates to our diurnal journalists. He has condescended to admit in the mass of execrable trash in the newspapers, there is now and then something worth attending to." Sir, I cannot hear with patience this libel on what I consider to be the boldest, and, at the present moment, the most forward bulwark of our liberty and constitution." Among the provocations which our atrocious enemy has given us to renew the present war, I have considered his audacious attempt to bully our ministers into a surrender of the freedom of the British press to be the greatest. *(Loud cry of hear! hear!)* And I do not hesitate to say, that at the present crisis of impending peril to the safety of the throne, the safety of the constitution, the freedom of the people, and the protection of property, no country on earth through all its ranks and all its interests ever owed an equal degree of gratitude and obligation to any quarter or any protecting exertion as this country now owes to the spirited and principled exertions of the general press of Great-Britain. The right honorable gentleman, however, I am sure, does not mean to extend his censure or contempt to all periodical political publications. The poor daily prints are of a low rank, which he may despise—but the aristocratic dignity of a Weekly Register, I suspect is exempted from his sarcastic animadversions. There is no execrable stuff in that paper. Exhortations to mutiny in the navy and dock-yards, is loyal and salutary advice. Derision and contempt of the government, and of all the subaltern entrusted powers, is excellent and loyal council. I speak, sir, fairly of that paper. I have no reason personally to approve it—but I will contrast my candor with the right honorable gentleman's, when I say that though I disapprove of many things contained in it, yet there is much matter worthy to be attended to in it.—*(Here Mr. Windham bowed.)* The right honorable gentleman answers me with a condescending bow. I really did not know before, that in speaking sincerely what I felt, I was gratifying the feelings of any writer in that paper. I therefore forbear any further comment in deference to the blushing modesty of a present author." Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to reply to all Mr. Windham's & Mr. Wilberforce's arguments respecting the proposed alterations in the bill of defence. He shewed how little it had been understood out of doors, how little it was known, there was no man in the kingdom in the first class of requisition, of whatever rank and quality, who might not find himself in a month or a fortnight under that bill, if he was not a volunteer, a private in the line, to be marched with the regiment he was compulsorily attached to, to any part of England, Scotland or Ireland, to live as a private, with five others in a common tent, to be liable to be tied up to the halberts like a private for a wry word to a sergeant, and in short to be placed in a situation which men who had not read the bill accurately, could have no conception of. His support to the bill proceeded from its containing within itself the provision which suspended all its operations by volunteer exertion.—Mr. S. then stated, that it had not been sufficiently understood, and it was right it should be universally known that every volunteer was immediately discharged from all operation of this act. He concluded with exhortation, that we should not be deluded by the rising spirit which was disposed to do much in defence of the country; and that we should not rest or pause, till it could be said nothing more could be done. We were not to calculate upon existing or visible dangers, but to act upon the apprehension, but without dismay, that all that is calamitous and disgraceful that ever had happened, might occur. Until provisions was made against even these impossibilities, he would not more distinctly allude to them, we were not safe.

Mr. Windham.—"The honorable gentleman has shewn of late a very great facility of misconception, which is certainly not the least wonderful of the facilities he possesses. He has in the present instance acted in the same manner as on other recent occasions. He has shewn something like the zeal of new converts, which is prevented from being serviceable by its excessive ardor. He has on the present occasion declaimed against me as attacking his majesty's ministers, without allowing himself to observe that this was one of the few instances in which I did not attack them. The honorable gentleman with a bravery perfectly consistent with this sort of zeal, fired off his musket on the first alarm like a recruit, without giving himself time to distinguish his enemy, much less to take a steady aim *(a laugh)*; but the honorable gentleman must excuse me, if I return the fire in a different manner not on him alone, but on his friends who cheer him with so much exultation. I certainly did say, that the general defence bill was hurried through the house—and, I do think, that all measures of such magnitude, ought to be brought forward in proper time, so there may be an opportunity of watching their progress, and of considering them in every stage. This measure which should have been the first to be brought forward, was the last; and it is truly lamentable, that a great measure, on which the country is to rely for its defence, and which should have been brought forward in time to have its effect before now, should be still in such a state of backwardness. It is a measure which has its ages similar to those in which Shakespeare divides the life of man, and it is still in its infancy. Gentlemen will consider the time that is taken up in this house in notices, motions, bills, and the stages of bills. They will then consider the operations in the country in carrying these measures into effect; operations which the honorable gentleman is at present better acquainted with than I, and the effect of which is to put the whole country in a ferment, under the deputy-lieutenant, so that it resembles an assizes of a race week, every one being in motion. *—(a cry of hear! hear! from the treasury bench!)* If Bonaparte were to come now, and no one can be sure that he is not coming, let me ask, what position would he receive, or what check could be given to him by all this cluttering machinery? The tything man runs to the school master to get him to read the act for him, the school-master runs to the justice of peace to explain it, he writes to the lord lieutenant to remove his doubts, the lord lieutenant applies to the secretary at war, and he comes again to parliament *(a laugh)*: but I ask again what is done by all that, towards producing an effective force to be apposed to the enemy? All that has been done yet has not produced a single man, so far is it from producing a soldier "ready to seek reputation even in the cannon's mouth." The press, I allow, shews some ardour and energy now—but, I think, and every one who recollects the part it had, in bringing about the present state of things, must agree with me, that it has shewn that ardor rather late. If it had not adopted, and taken so much pains to dessemminate all the mischievous principles which it has maintained for the ten years of the last war, including those principles which the honorable gentleman himself supported during that time, the country would be much more indebted to it, and would be in a situation to dispense with its labors and its own. The press in this pursues exactly the same line of conduct that is followed by the honorable gentleman, having done all the mischief it could do, it comes now, when it finds that mischief gone too far to offer its services to check and retard it. In like manner the honorable gentleman says. "I'm your man—while I am in the house, let no body fear." After having set fire to the four corners of the world, he then comes with his little bucket, or rather his thimble, to extinguish the conflagration. As to the weekly paper to which the hon. gentleman has alluded, I concur in all the sentiments which he supposes me to entertain for it, and for its author. I respected that person before ever I saw him. I think his conduct in America rendered him worthy of a statue of gold—*(a loud laugh!)*—He exerted himself most ably in support of every good principle, and in opposition to all bad, including those which the honorable gentleman has so often urged in this house. His majesty's ministers have certainly varied their system, and I agree with the honorable gentleman behind me (Mr. Wilberforce) that the bill, as it now stands, has completely departed from the principles on which it set out. Thinking as highly as any man can do of the zeal and courage of the volunteers, I do not think these qualities alone sufficient to enable them to go through all the hardships to which, as soldiers, they may be exposed. But if the different orders of men are to be separated, I think the consequences are likely to be most mischievous." Here the right honorable gentleman entered again into the argument of the impropriety of encouraging volunteer corps, by exempting them from being drafted into the regiments of the line, while those that remained in the general levy under the device act, would be subject to that exercise of the prerogative. A system of this kind would destroy the whole benefit of the measure.

Mr. Sheridan was happy that the forms of a committee allowed him a second shot which he certainly did not mean to fire in the air. He really did not comprehend the pompous figure by which he was described as having, by his eloquence, set the four corners of the world on fire, and was now endeavoring to put it out by a small bucket of water. He had endeavored to stop the flames, while the right honorable gentleman was kindling war throughout the world, and now when peace could be no longer preserved, he wished to animate the people to the contest. The right honorable gentleman's metaphor, must certainly have been intended for some other occasion. He was described as acting with the zeal of a new *convert*, and the spirit of a fresh *recruit*. He was neither convert nor recruit. He needed no conversion to be persuaded that at a moment of imminent peril to the country, an honorable mind ought to lift itself above the little prejudices of party, that when the safety of the state was the question, there ought to exist no scramble for office and emolument. He needed no conversion to defend the liberty of the press, or to maintain that the discussion of domestic grievances ought to give way to resistance of foreign conquest. A *recruit* he was not; he neither had or would have rank or pay. His support to whatever measure he approved should be perfectly *volunteer*, but given with more earnestness, in proportion as he saw the government unfairly attacked. On the present occasion he was particularly bound to act so, for it seemed, that owing to his rash discharge, the right honorable gentleman had been induced to forego his intended lenity, and resolved, in revenge, to pour in a tremendous fire on the unoffending ministers. He would make them serious apologies if he had observed that they had suffered in the least from the volly. There was wit and anger, but no argument. The honorable member, contrary to the practice he recommends in drilling, appeared to him to have forgot to put ball into his piece.—There was a flash and noise, but no execution. His power in parliament was an artillery of great calibre, which no man at times knew better how to direct, but he usually preferred the amusement of throwing squibs and crackers in the faces of his antagonists, which he always had ready in his pocket. However, this dreaded attack, which the right honorable gentleman had, in mercy, intended to have suspended, turned out to be nothing more than the old stale charge often repeated, and confuted, that on the first moment of public notice of danger, ministers ought to have brought forward at once, and not in progression, all their measures of precaution and defence. Mr. Sheridan argued this point very forcibly, and shewed that people's minds, independently of other difficulties, were not prepared for such measure nor sufficiently awake to the danger, and that even the press, according to the right honorable gentleman's own admission, had not felt the necessity of allying itself to the cause. But the charge was most strange from that gentleman, who had till within these few weeks so uniformly and vehemently declared and deplored the base and abject state of apathy into which the minds of men were sunk: describing it to be such that they were more ready to resent and resist any strong measure calculated for their protection, than to rise with energy in defence of their country. Mr. Sheridan contended, that on this ground, if the delay had not been unavoidable, it would have been justifiable—and that the present measures of defence rested on the sound basis of the conviction of a willing people that they were necessary. But, most curious it was to remark, that the right honorable gentleman, who had been so indignant at delay, in bringing forward this measure to deliberation, now seemed equally angry at the rapidity with which it was attempted to be carried into execution. The whole country was in a bustle it seems; the scene was like a race course or a fair. The clack and clatter reminded him of the Norwich looms—noise, not now so familiar to his ear—nay, this activity of zeal in arming the country seemed to inspire him with feelings of disgust and disappointment. Here, said he, you shall see the tything-men make out lists—there you may see the constables fixing them on the church doors, then the head-boroughs running after the school masters—then you may see the deputy lieutenants deciding on appeals—ridicule so well timed and applied, that a stranger coming in must think he was hearing a rare-show man, and not a patriot member of parliament—but how did he conclude all this? how, but by a direct invitation to Bonaparte to seize the opportunity of this unarmed bustle to invade the country—positively assuring him that the bill had hitherto not produced a single man to oppose him Mr. S. could not tell whether the first consul accepted the invitation or not; but of this he was sure, that if he relied on the statement of the right honorable gentleman, he would find himself wofully mistaken; for he was confident that instead of not a single man having been produced by the defence bill, there had not been less since the short period of its introduction than one hundred thousand cloathed and trained volunteers added to the defence of the country. This on the arguments he had used in his former speech, was demonstrable to be attributed to that bill. The right honorable gentleman asserted that the language he had held had uniformly tended to raise and not discourage the spirit of the people. What, truly speaking, had been that language? The topics had been so often repeated, that no one but must recollect their division into four heads. First, to promote exertion in every individual as if upon him alone depended the salvation of the state, you are to assure them that the country is lost unless some specified individual is the minister. Secondly, to inspire them with a high idea of maintaining their honor and dignity, you are to assure them that since the accursed peace of Amiens, they have neither honor nor dignity left to contend for; they have touched the base string of humanity; that they have received kicks innumerable on the seat of honor—that they have irretrievably disgraced their ancestors, and must inevitably be the scorn of their posterity. This is the argument to raise a noble spirit in defence of character and honor. Thirdly, to encourage the martial hopes of the nation, knowing that you have but a very limited force of the line, and that it is absolutely impossible to increase it by any force that has experienced actual service; you are to endeavor to make it a matter of demonstration that all efforts of militia, yeomanry, and volunteer corps, will be perfectly inefficient and contemptible, when opposed to the disciplined armies which France alone will bring into this country. This is to inspire a martial confidence in three-fourths of all the force we have to resist the enemy.—Fourthly, in order to create a patriotic devotion in all ranks of people to offer their purses and persons to the disposal of government, you are to assure them that every deposit, either of wealth or force, placed in such hands, is not only a perfect waste of the resources of the country, but a mischievous deposit, placed in hands utterly incapable of applying them to any beneficial purpose. This was, plainly speaking, a summary of the right honorable gentleman's efforts to raise the spirit of the nation. He had heard of treatises on the art of war, the art of music, and the art of painting, &c. but he would be curious though sorry to see a treatise, to be entitled, "the art of raising the spirit of a country, by a late secretary of war;" a treatise, which, he had no doubt, would find a ready admission in the ex-secretary's favored weekly publication, the baneful effects of which, however, he hoped might be avoided by Bonaparte's active agents, buying up every edition as fast as printed, in order that they might be distributed for the encouragement of his own invading army. Mentioning that weekly publication, reminded him of the lofty panegyric which had been passed on it by that right hon. gentleman; he had declared, that he agreed in every sentiment contained in it, and that a statue of gold ought to be erected to the writer. Statues now a days, were not voted by the legislature, but upon private subscriptions. He hoped the right honorable gentleman would immediately commence one upon the stock exchange of the city of London. The writer, with whose every sentiment he agrees, having only maintained that the co-existence of the funds and the monarchy is no longer possible. He was therefore entitled to assume that the right hon. member agreed with Mr. Cobbett that the violation of all public faith, and the destruction of all public property, was an immediate and indispensable measure for the protection of the monarchy and constitution of the country. [*A groan*] I hear a groan, said Mr. Sheridan, from an honorable and learned friend of the right honorable gentleman. I rejoice to hear so forcible and surly an expression of his anger and disapprobation of the idea I have referred to. [Doctor Lawrence said across the house his meaning was mistaken.]—Then, said Mr. Sheridan, I am to understand that the learned doctor approves the unqualified panegyric bestowed upon Mr. Cobbett's suggestions, and that he equally wishes to see a statue of gold erected to him; nay, I must presume his wish to be not merely a statue, but a colossal statue." *(Loud laugh, in which the doctor joined very good humoredly, shaking his ponderous sides.)* Mr. Sheridan entered into other parts of Mr. Windham's argument, and ended with an exhortation, that if party spirit could not at this moment be extinguished, that at least its animosities might be postponed.

Mr. Archdale adverted to the language held by a member for a respectable county (sir F. Burdett) on a former night; this language was highly improper; but as the honorable baronet was not in his place he would not enter particularly into it. But he would ask the right honorable gentle- opposite (Mr. Windham) whether he recollected, in the publication of which he professed himself such an admirer, a number, in which the state of Ireland was represented in a manner calculated to make the very worst impression. It stated that there were no more than 18,000 men in Ireland, of which ten thousand were doing duty in garrisons, and that France may send over in four ships from Brest, as many men as would be sufficient to run from one end of the island to the other. He would ask, whether that was one of the sentiments which the right honorable gentleman was ready to approve and defend, and if it was one of those that entitled the writer to a statue of gold? *(A cry of hear! hear!)* This was not an attempt to set the four corners of the world on fire, as his honorable friend (Mr. Sheridan) was accused of having done, but it was certainly an attempt to set fire to the four corners of Ireland. The facts which it alledged were unfounded, and the assertion of them was likely to have the worst effects in encouraging the enemy, and the disaffected at home. As to his majesty's ministers, no man stood more independent of them than he; he had neither place, pension, office, promise or expectation, and that was what could be said by few on the floor of the house of commons *(a laugh.)* He thought, however that if any man conceived his majesty's ministers unfit for their situations the proper mode of proceeding was to move at once an address to his majesty to remove them *(hear! hear!)*. Nothing could be easier than for the right honorable gentleman to make such a motion; and there could be no doubt that the house would join him *(a laugh)* but to damp the public spirit at a crisis like the present, by making continued attacks on administration day after day was a proceeding that could be attended with no advantage and he thanked God that it had been inefficient. There was one observation the right gentleman had let fall, which with whatever propriety it may come from him as being of a privileged country, came, he thought, rather aukwardly from the right honorable gentleman. The right honorable gentleman would have volunteers by compulsion *(a laugh)*. For himself he thought it better that heart & hand should be united—he could not be satisfied if the mind was a deserter the hand held the musket *(hear! hear!)* He thought that both were united, and this force assembled, they would be the most infallible means of putting a stop to the enemy's designs, either by a battle or what would be still a better mode by prevention.

Mr. Windham, in explaination said, it was not fair to question him on every individual sentiment contained in the publication which he had panegyrised. He had himself never expressed an opinion on the subject alluded to by the hon. gentlemen.

Dr Lawrence vindicated the whole political conduct of his right honorable friend (Mr. Windham) and those who acted with him since the treaty of Amiens. He denied the charge that had been laid against them, of having invariably held a language in that house tending to depress the spirit of the country. They had never looked upon that treaty in any other light, than as an armed truce, pregnant with danger from the false security it created and the ill consequences that might arise from being thrown off our guard. The learned gentlemen then contended, that the practice of catechising members in that house was altogether unprecedented, and unparliamentary. He had so thought it when the honorable gentleman (Mr. Archdale) had put his list of questions to his right honorable friend.

Mr. Sheridan. As to the questions proposed by his honorable friend (Mr. Archdale) he observed that it would be in the recollection of the house that the right honorable gentleman had explicitly declared his full and unqualified concurrence, in every sentiment contained in the weekly publication alluded to. For his own part, he did not think it necessary to urge all the questions that had been put to the right honorable gentleman by his honorable friend. One would satisfy him, and he begged the right honorable gentleman to declare whether he subscribed to the opinion advanced in one of the numbers of that publication; that the existence of the funding system was incompatible with the existence of monarchy.

Mr. Windham, after the able manner in which the subject had been discussed by his learned friend (doctor Lawrence) did not feel it necessary to make any answer, but maintained that it was contrary to the usage of parliament, to press any member with such a number of questions.

The bill then passed through the committee.

## BY THIS DAY's MAILS.

BOSTON, September 16.

Arrived, ship Jenny, captain Crocker, from Antwerp, 33 days. Sailed in company with the Phœnix, captain Hancock, of Baltimore, bound to Bristol, E. Spoke, in Dover Straits, ship Betsy, of New-York, M'Dougal, from Hamburg 12 days out for Teneriffe. August 23, lat. 44, 13, long. 27, ship Portsmouth, Peterkin, of Baltimore, from London, 9 days out, bound home September 9, lat. 43, 17, long. 54. W. ship Hope, captain Ripley, of this port, for Liverpool, 9 days out.

Same day, ship Foxwell, Barnard, from Rotterdam, 53 days, 38 from land. Left Helvoet, July 24; but one American ship in the Meuse. August 6, spoke ship Numa, of Newburyport, for Liverpool.

Passengers in the Foxwell, R. G. Van Polanen, esquire, Miss Sarah and Miss Nancy V. Polanen; Miss Adalet Van Donick; Mr. A. P Swan; Mr. F. C. Rinck; M. G. D. Schruck; Mr. C. Smit; Mr. J. F. C. Smit; Mr. F. A Nittes.

Same day, schooner Venus, Healy, Yarmouth, 4 days.

September 17.

Arrived, the ship Charles, captain Oakes, 65 days from Russia. Sailed in co. with the following, among others, William and Henry, Pearce, of Cape-Ann; brig Massafuero, Stanwood, of do. Rover, Jeffry, of Salem; the brig ——, Hopkins, sailed 6 days before. Spoke, August 18, lat. 59, long. 19, sch'r. Powderpoint, Proctor, 18 days from Copenhagen, for Marblehead.

Same day, schooner Jane, captain Lombard, 33 days from Lisbon. Left brig Mary, Cook, for Providence, in 2 days; Felicity, Jenkins, for Portsmouth, in 4 days; Fox, Cook, for Boston, in 12 days; Richmond, Holland, from Philadelphia; Charlotte, Murdock, of Portsmouth, from Madeira, for London; schooner Frederick, Seymour, of New-York. Spoke September 4, lat. 42, 57, long. 50, 58