

THE
DEBATE
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS,

WHICH TOOK PLACE
ON THEIR TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION

THE

Report of the Committee,

Who were appointed to consider of the Agreement made with

MR. PALMER,

FOR THE REFORM AND IMPROVEMENT

OF THE

POST OFFICE, AND ITS REVENUE,

&c. &c.

ON FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1799.

As stated by Mr. WOODFALL in his REPORTS of the DEBATE
of both HOUSES of PARLIAMENT.

1799.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE REPORTER,

(Price One Shilling,)

And sold by T. CHARMAN, No. 151, Fleet-Street; T. WOODFALL,
No. 104, Drury-Lane; J. ST. JOHN, No. 49, Strand; E. WESLEY,
facing the New Church; and H. D. SYMONDS, Pater-Noster-Row.

ADVERTISEMENT.



THE eminent services Mr. PALMER has rendered to his Country by his Reform of the Post Office, and the great addition to its Revenues that his Plan has produced, are matters so well worthy general attention, that the Reporter was induced to believe, if he could lay before the Publick a distinct Debate upon the Subject, separate from his Work, [Parliamentary Reports] many Persons would willingly become Purchasers.

Queen-Street, Westminster,
July 24, 1799.

DEBATE

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

On Friday, May 31, 1799.



MR. PIERREPOINT moved the order of the day on the **IV** subject of the agreement between Mr. Palmer, the late Comptroller of the Post Office, and the Lords of the Treasury, on the subject of his plan of improvement in the Post Office.

The House having resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House, Mr. Pierrepoint spoke as follows:—

The hon. Gentleman who gave notice of a motion on the report made respecting Mr. Palmer's agreement for the improvement of the posts being doubtful, from the situation of his family, if he could attend, I have determined to bring the business forward before the House.

If this had been a question in which any party consideration could possibly be supposed, or of much difficulty, or had involved any legal argument, convinced as I am of the justice of Mr. Palmer's claim, I should have felt much hesitation in coming forward with the motion.

But it seems to me to depend on a few plain and evident propositions supported by clear and undoubted testimony.

It has been proved that an agreement was made with Mr. Palmer, by which he was to receive two and a half per cent. on the rise of the Post Office Revenue beyond a certain sum, if he carried his improvements into effect.

Mr,

Mr. Palmer did carry them into effect in the most compleat manner.

The observation that arises from this part of the case is, that Mr. Palmer having discharged his part of the contract, the public is bound to perform theirs, by making good to him the per centage for which he bargained and to which they agreed; nor could any act of Mr. Palmer have defeated his right to the per centage but a failure to make the improvement, which I presume never can be alledged. On the contrary, he far exceeded his original proposed improvements.

But it may be said, that other acts of Mr. Palmer have incurred a forfeiture of that right. I cannot conceive myself how that can be, even supposing him to have done these acts which are alledged against him. In the first place his general integrity is untouched.—In page 58 of the report, Lord Walsingham is asked—“Had you ever any reason to entertain doubt of the personal integrity of Mr. Palmer?”

His Lordship's answer is—“No, never, in the smallest degree.” The same question is put to Lord Chesterfield, who says, “He desires to abide by the answer given by Lord Walsingham.”

Nothing can be more decisive than this. Those Noble Lords knew nothing of Mr. Palmer, nor had any communication with him but as connected with the Post Office, and they vouch for his perfect and unblemished integrity. This declaration is therefore of itself a compleat answer to the attempts to blacken Mr. Palmer's character, through the treachery of Bonnor, or the malversation of White.

Having made these few preliminary observations, I will take the liberty of reading some facts which appear to me to warrant the motion with which I shall conclude.

Here Mr. Pierrepoint read the following facts in the printed paper, and then went on.

Facts established before the committee, and reported by them in the evidence laid before the House of Commons.

From this authentic statement, it appears that Mr. Palmer's contract with Government was, that if he should be able to carry his plan into execution for extending and improving the Posts, and for the more safe, expeditious, and regular conveyance of the Mails, he was to have for his life two and a half per cent. or the fortieth part only of all the future net increased revenue of the Post Office, but in case of failure, he was not to receive a shilling for his sacrifices in the neglect of his other concerns, expences, trouble, &c. It is to be observed, that during the 60 years preceding this agreement, notwithstanding the great increase in the trade and commerce of the country through so long a period, the net revenue

of the Post Office had experienced no increase whatever, except what it derived from an alteration in the postage and the restriction on trunks laid on in 1764-5. On the contrary, for the nine years preceding the adoption of Mr. Palmer's plan, it had decreased 13,168*l.* 13*s.* per annum.

So low a per centage was originally proposed by Mr. Palmer to avoid the possibility of any dispute about the objects from which it might arise, and he always openly professed the great expectations he had formed of the advantage that would accrue to his family from it, if the plan succeeded, and his life was prolonged.

In respect to the mode of payment by per centage, numerous instances occur of allowing 20, 30, 40, or even 50, none less than 10*l.* per cent. for the management of the Post Office business, and its revenue on the gross instead of the net receipts.

The late Secretary, Mr. Todd, enjoyed two and an half per cent. on the whole gross packet expenditure.

Mr. Allen, who in 1720, made some partial improvements in the cross-paths, as a reward for the benefit derived from it to the trade and commerce of the country, was granted a farm of those posts during his life, for above 42 years, and nearly the whole increased revenue, to the amount of above 12,000*l.* per annum, which the Postmaster-General declared to be only "the natural fruits of his own industry and services."

Mr. Palmer, having after some years perseverance against a continued opposition, effected his plan, and never having during the whole of that period, agreeably to his stipulation, received one shilling from Government, was then, for the first time informed, they wished a variation to be made in the plain and specific agreement before mentioned, and it was proposed, instead thereof, that he should accept a patent appointment for life under the Crown, with a salary of 1,500*l.* per annum, and two and an half per cent. on all future net increase of the Post Office revenue beyond 240,000*l.* which Mr. Palmer consented to, though it was 750*l.* per annum less than his original agreement.

Agreeably to this modification, mutually agreed to by both parties, a draft of an appointment for life under the Crown was drawn up at the Treasury, and to prevent future obstruction and injury to the public, independent of any controul whatever, that Mr. Palmer might be left to his own judgment in the improvement and conduct of his plan; this however did not take effect, because the Attorney General thought a new Act of Parliament necessary to confirm it.

The Board of Treasury being unwilling to apply for this Act, Mr. Palmer was unable to obtain a completion of this promised appointment, and proceeded in the extension of his plans with the limited authority he was obliged for the present to act with, necessarily depending on the faith and protection of his employers.

The commissioners of enquiry appointed by the House of Commons, report as follows, viz.

"The opposition which Mr. Palmer experienced from the eldest and ablest officers in the service, who represented his plan not only to be impracticable, but dangerous to commerce and the revenue, induced us to examine and weigh, with great attention, the numerous documents and informations which have been furnished us by both parties, in opposition to, and in support of the measure, in consequence whereof, we are enabled to state, that Mr. Palmer has exceeded the expectations which he held forth in his first proposal with regard to the dispatch and the expence; at the same time that the revenue is augmented, answers are returned to

letters in less than half the time, and with a degree of punctuality never experienced before; the expence is at a less rate per mile than upon the old plan, and has been effected for 20,000 less per annum than the sum first proposed by Mr. Palmer; and the accounts of the Post Office are an undeniable proof of the great increase of its revenue in consequence of his plan.

“As an engagement had been entered into, about the year 1720, by the Postmaster-General for the time being, with the late Ralph Allen, Esq. for farming the cross-roads, and which met the approbation of the Public, we were induced to enquire into the particulars, by which we found that these improvements were of a limited nature, and that Mr. Allen did not fully disclose his plan or mode of conducting it for above 40 years, and that the profits he derived therefrom were very large; whereas the improvements suggested, and already executed by Mr. Palmer, are far more extensive, and of so much importance to the commerce of this country, as to have justified the measure, although it had been accompanied with additional expence; at the same time, Mr. Palmer has acted with openness, and without reserve; nor is it probable he will ever reap the benefit Mr. Allen obtained.

“We must further observe, that Mr. Allen met with none of those difficulties that Mr. Palmer has experienced, and which required all his activity and perseverance, aided by the firm and liberal support of Government to surmount, against a most powerful opposition, and every obstruction that could be thrown in his way by officers of this department.”

And after going on to state the delay, irregularity, and confusion that prevailed in the office previous to the reform, and the beneficial effects arising from various, and extensive improvements he had carried into execution, they declare, “Under these circumstances, we are of opinion, that Mr. Palmer is justly entitled to the compensation he claims, being a very small part of that Revenue which his ingenuity, activity, and zeal have created over and above the convenience, and numerous collateral advantages which the public, and more particularly the commerce of the country, reap from the safe and speedy conveyance of the mails.”

It is presumed the Board of Treasury can produce no instance, from their earliest records, of an agreement more cautiously guarded on the part of Government, more advantageous to the Public, or more completely executed on the part of the individual contracted with.

Before the Reform.

The Post Office revenue, after the progress of near } £.
Two centuries prior to 1783, did not exceed } 150,000.

The number of news-papers, annually sent from the }
London Office, was less than } Two millions.

A very great annual expence was formerly sustained }
both by Government and individuals for expresses, and }
the number used annually to Bristol alone, to exceed } Two hundred
expresses for }
one city only.

The annual expence incurred in rewards for apprehen- }
sion, and costs in prosecution for mail robberies, was }
formerly very considerable; exclusive of less and incon- }
venience to individuals, it cost the public } Several thou-
sand pounds.

Since

Since the Reform.

The annual Post revenue in April 1798, had amounted } 600,000.
to above

Number of newspapers now annually sent by the Lon- } Eight mil-
don office (only) above } lions

Number of expresses to the whole kingdom, both for } Forty for the
Government and individuals, when last examined, did not } whole king-
amount annually to } dom.

As to expences for apprehension and prosecution of }
mail robbers, although the coaches have now travelled }
above 40 million of miles, not a single robbery has been }
committed, or a passenger insulted } . . .

The terms for the conveyance of the mails on the new plan, are 24,000*l.* per annum less than Mr. Palmer originally proposed and contracted for with Government, and with a saving of 12,000*l.* per annum in the expences of their conveyance by the old mode.

Having now laid before the House these facts, I will take the liberty of reading an opinion given upon the fullest consideration of the whole evidence.

Mr. Palmer having, by Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, requested performance of the agreement made with him, on the faith of which he undertook the Post-Office Reform, viz. "That if able to carry his plan into execution, he should have, during his life, two and a half per cent. on the future net increase of the Post-Office revenue, but not a shilling otherwise;" and the Lords of the Treasury having declined acceding to such request, Mr. Palmer, agreeably to the opinions of his counsel, applied to the House of Commons, requesting an investigation of his claims and conduct; in consequence of which a committee of that honourable House was appointed in April 1797, "to consider of the agreement made with Mr. Palmer for the reform and improvement of the Post-Office, and its revenue, and who were empowered to enquire into the cause of his suspension from the office of Surveyor and Comptroller-General of the Post-Office, and were instructed to report to the House the evidence which should be received by them respecting the several matters referred to their consideration."

The committee so appointed have, after an investigation which occupied thirteen days (exclusive of several adjournments for the purpose of receiving further proof on either side) reported the evidence, which was ordered to be printed, and is left herewith for your perusal.

And your opinion is now desired,

Whether such evidence has established Mr. Palmer's statement as to the agreement made with him, on the faith of which he undertook the Post Office Reform; and whether he does not appear to have fully performed such undertaking; and supposing him to have possessed the patent appointment for life, which was made out at the Treasury, and stopped in consequence of legal objections arising from the Post-Office Act (but if executed, would have rendered him independent of the Postmaster-General) could any thing now proved against him have afforded sufficient ground to vacate such patent?

OPINION.

We have perused the evidence contained in the report of the Committee appointed to consider of the agreement made with Mr. Palmer, for the

reform and improvement of the Post-Office, &c. and we are of opinion, that by that evidence, the agreement, as insisted upon by Mr. Palmer, is proved; by which, as it was originally made, Mr. Palmer would have been entitled to the per centage upon the increase of the then net revenue of the Post-Office; and that by the agreement as after modified, he was entitled to 1,500l. a year, and a per centage upon the net revenue exceeding 240,000. a year. And we are of opinion, that Mr. Palmer has fully performed his part of the agreement, much to the advantage of the Public. We are also of opinion, (which indeed it is impossible to doubt) that if a patent had been granted to Mr. Palmer, as originally intended, nothing which has since passed could have deprived him of the benefit of his agreement; because all that is imputed now to Mr. Palmer arises from misunderstandings and disputes between the Postmaster-General and him, and which could never have existed if a patent had been granted to him as originally intended, under which he would not have been in any respect dependant on the Postmaster-General. We are also of opinion, that though by the appointment which was granted to Mr. Palmer, different from that originally intended, he was made subject to the controul of the Postmaster-General, (because, by the constitution of the Post-Office, as established by Act of Parliament, no patent could be granted to him, by which he was to act independently of the Postmaster-General) yet there is nothing in the above-mentioned evidence which ought to deprive him of the benefit of his agreement, nor which would in a court of justice have that effect. It is established by this evidence, that the Public derived from Mr. Palmer's exertions all the benefit which he had held forth as likely to accrue from them; and that he acted with diligence, and with perfect integrity in the discharge of his duty. And although we do not approve of the letters written by Mr. Palmer to his deputy, Mr. Bonnor; which are the grounds for depriving Mr. Palmer of the benefit of his agreement, and we do not mean to say that a subordinate officer in any department, ought not to behave with respect to his superiors, we think those letters are far from a sufficient ground to deprive him of that benefit. We also think it very doubtful whether a court of judicature would have thought that any attention ought to be paid to those letters, because they were written in confidence to his deputy, and under an impression (though probably ill founded) that the Postmaster-General was unfavourable to him, or from mistake, or misconception, were thwarting or impeding him in the execution of his plan. And we think it appears from evidence, that the deputy who communicated those letters to the Postmaster-General, and thus betrayed his private confidential correspondence, was himself worthy of no credit, and acted a very blaineable part in the transaction with White, as appears from the Report.

J. MANSFIELD,
T. ERSKINE,
V. GIBBS,
WILLIAM ADAM.

April 24, 1799.

I shall trouble the House no further, only to say that the private letters which were given in evidence before the Committee, and which are referred to in the opinion, though not to be approved of on the principle of strict propriety, can never weigh against an agreement completely executed with so much public advantage, and so far beyond public expectation.

As

As a member of a populous and manufacturing county, which daily receives the utmost benefit from Mr. Palmer's plan. I have felt it my duty to bring this matter forward, and I feel confident that the House and this country, remarkable at all times for good faith and a rigid performance of its promise, will not permit Mr. Palmer's case to form an exception to the character they have uniformly maintained.

Mr. Pierrepont concluded with reading and moving the following resolutions.

I. That it appears from the Report of the Committee appointed to take into consideration the agreement made with Mr. Palmer for the reform and improvement of the Post-Office and its revenue; that an agreement was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the proposed improvement and reform, by which Mr. Palmer was to receive a certain fixed percentage on all the produce of the revenue of the Post-Office, over and above the annual sum of 240,000*l.* and a salary of 1,500*l.* per annum, as particularly set forth in the Report.

II. That it appears by the said Report, that Mr. Palmer has performed his part of the agreement; and that his reform and improvement of the Posts have proved highly beneficial to the trade and commerce of the kingdom, as well as to the revenue.

III. Therefore that Mr. Palmer is justly entitled to the full benefit of his agreement.

The question being put on the first Resolution,

Mr. Long said, he had formerly told Mr. Palmer what he would now deliver as his opinion in the House, that Mr. Palmer had forfeited his agreement made with the Commissioners of the Treasury. What was it that formed the ground of that agreement? Was it that Mr. Palmer was to carry into effect a certain plan, and then to receive a certain reward? Was it not rather that he was to be put into a Public Office, in order to controul the expenditure of the Public Revenue, and to improve the plan for the more expeditious conveyance of letters?—[To confirm this statement, Mr. Long read the Warrant of Appointment, and passages in Mr. Palmer's letters.]—Now, if it should appear that Mr. Palmer not only connived at, but actually countenanced frauds—if it should appear that he himself laid a plan to counteract his own, and to cause a later delivery of letters, instead of expediting them, surely it would not be too much to deny his being entitled to the full extent of the

original stipulation. In proof of what he alluded to, Mr. Long read several extracts of letters from Mr. Palmer to Mr. Bonnor, the tendency of which, Mr. Long argued, was to throw the Post-Office into "glorious confusion," by causing a late delivery of letters, and to cover that fraud of false and exorbitant bills on the office, which it was his duty to have detected. Mr. Palmer, he insisted, acted in this matter not from any sudden impulse of resentment, but systematically. The plan was mentioned by letter, dated May, 1789, and in the October following he gave positive directions to his Deputy for carrying it into execution.

Thus had he failed essentially in his part of the agreement with the public. With regard to the opinion of counsel which the hon. Member had quoted, he could not help saying that it was a most extraordinary opinion. What was it?—an opinion not upon any legal question, but upon a measure depending in Parliament, an opinion secured by Mr. Palmer, the object of which seemed to be to influence the votes and decision of that House—a conduct this which he thought was neither decent nor proper. Mr. Palmer had entirely lost sight of one part of the agreement.—He had positively recommended the payment of false bills to the contractor of mail coaches, to put in inefficient officers where efficient ones were necessary, and to cause a later delivery of letters. But it had been said that Mr. Palmer did not act upon this advice;—but was not a superior giving directions to an inferior officer, in fact acting upon it? He would acknowledge that Mr. Palmer had great merit with the public, if not *for inventing* the plan of the mail coaches, yet for his activity and perseverance in carrying it into execution; at the same time he must say that the paper which had been read contained a gross, fallacious, and exaggerated statement of these advantages, without taking into the account the increase of additional Post-Office revenue from additional taxes on letters, the increase of commerce, &c. He mentioned that Mr. Palmer was not entitled to what was now claimed; that he had forfeited all right to a continuance in his office in consequence of the endeavours he made to throw the Post-Office into confusion, and to cause the delivery of the letters to be materially delayed for some private reasons of his own, and upon the disclosure of which he discharged his Deputy; and not being able to clear up his conduct to the satisfaction of his superiors he was himself dismissed, the spirit of his contract having by this malversation been broken

on

on the part of Mr. Palmer, upon which, however, Government had allowed him a clear 3000l. a year, *in the receipt of which Mr. Palmer was at this moment, nor was there any idea of disturbing him in the enjoyment of it*; and, he would ask whether 3000l. a year was not a fit reward for his merits? — When he saw brave Lord Duncan and other gallant illustrious Admirals who had performed the most signal services to their country, allowed pensions of 2000l. a year, he could not think Mr. Palmer was unhandfomely rewarded with an allowance of 3000l. per annum.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, he should have given a silent vote, had he not heard the character of Mr. Palmer so severely attacked, and in a most serious way, as if he had forfeited the agreement made with him. The question divided itself into two parts: first, the nature of the agreement; and secondly, the conduct of Mr. Palmer in his official situation. With regard to the agreement made with Mr. Palmer in 1785, there could be no doubt upon that head; the only question was, whether Mr. Palmer had forfeited his right to claim it. As to the merits of Mr. Palmer's plan, it might be disputed whether or not he had increased the revenue to that degree of advantage which had been stated, yet it was unquestionable that his plan had considerably increased the revenue and commerce of the country, and he must think that it had increased both in a greater proportion than the hon. Gentleman was willing to allow. With respect to the question, whether Mr. Palmer was entitled to his agreement, great stress had been laid on the impropriety of his letters to his Deputy; but no allowance had been made for his feelings, smarting under a sense of injury, betrayed by Mr. Bonnor, who endeavoured to make him believe that he had been ill-treated by the Postmaster-General. He had not, however, acted upon the directions he had given. By the testimony of the Postmaster-General it appeared, that when Wilson, the contractor's, charge was to be settled, Mr. Palmer prevailed on him to accept of a moderate demand; and the same testimony acknowledged that Mr. Palmer's conduct, as to integrity, was unimpeachable; it could not therefore be believed, that Mr. Palmer was guilty of fraud or of countenancing fraud. With respect to his suggestion to Mr. Bonnor about the later delivery of letters, this evidently appeared to be a mere speculative hasty piece of resentment, not acted upon, it being two years previous to its actually taking place; and Mr. Bonnor himself afterwards attributed this delay,

delay, not to Mr. Palmer, but to the ignorance of the letterforters. It had been said, that no injury was done to Mr. Palmer, because a compensation had been granted him; but Mr. Palmer denies that what he has received has been a compensation to him. In 1793 he received the per-centage and the salary; a year after he had been suspended, but he had never made any acknowledgment of receiving a full compensation. With respect to the rewards granted by Parliament to Lord Duncan and the other noble Admirals, whose gallant achievements had obtained a remuneration, there was no parallel to be made, because they had entered into no previous agreement with the public; the two cases had no analogy. The case of Mr. Palmer was a civil case founded on a direct and well understood compact, antecedent to the service engaged for being undertaken; not so with the noble Admirals, who had so eminently distinguished themselves by their brilliant victories and thence rendered such essential service to their country. That country would have acted disgracefully, if it had not remunerated the Admirals who had rendered the State such important services. To reward them was a spontaneous act of national munificence; but with respect to Mr. Palmer, the making good the conditions of his bargain for services allowed to have been performed, and of acknowledged utility to the country, was nothing more than a fulfilment of good faith, and a due discharge of a debt of justice. Here was a contract, and Mr. Palmer denied that he had received a compensation. Had the Chancellor of the Exchequer made all his agreements so economically, there would have been no ground to have found fault with him for the expenditure of the public money. In Mr. Palmer's case, the per-centage was merely an allowance of one shilling for every forty gained to the public, added to which Mr. Palmer had taken all the risk upon himself. To his knowledge, Mr. Hobhouse said, a near relation of his own, a banker, had advanced Mr. Palmer several thousand pounds to carry on the plan; that Mr. Palmer had proceeded in it many years without receiving one shilling from Government, and had he failed in the undertaking, the securities he had lodged for the money must have been forfeited, probably to the ruin of himself and his family. With regard to the opinion of counsel, that was to be looked at in its true point of view, and then it could not fail to carry great weight with it; because it was neither more nor less than the explicit opinion of four gentlemen of acknowledged talents and high character in their profession, that if a legal mode of establishing the justice of the case, on the grounds of law had been resorted

to, a Court of Justice would have readily granted Mr. Palmer his claim. For his own part he was confident that the honour, the equity, and the liberality of Parliament would not refuse what a Court of Justice would have granted; and he was confident that no individual, circumstanced as Mr. Palmer was, would make his appeal to Parliament in vain.

Mr. *W. Dundas* denied that any grant could have been made to Mr. Palmer of an appointment for life independent of the Post-master General; his claim now was brought forward by appealing to Parliament for what he would have enjoyed to this time had it not been for his own misconduct, as appeared from his own letters to his Deputy. Was it not the dictate of plain sense, that Mr. Palmer should have fulfilled his part of the agreement? And was it not one part of that agreement that he should accelerate the delivery of letters? But was it not proved from his own letters, that he endeavoured to retard the delivery? Had he not been detected suborning an inferior officer, and that for the purpose of throwing blame on the Postmaster General? With regard to the Commissioners Inquiry, their report had been made without having had these letters of Mr. Palmer laid before them. Was the House to be led by the opinion of four counsel, feed by Mr. Palmer, on the question now under discussion? Respectable as these gentlemen individually were in their profession, yet he must be free to say, that he thought it as "nonsensical" an opinion, as he had ever read. After commenting upon their opinion, Mr. Dundas argued, that the agreement of Mr. Palmer of allowance per centage, was in consideration of his continued activity for the interest of the public. But had he done so? His letters testified against him. He had however received 3000*l.* a year for his useful plan; but if he expected more, he would most probably find himself deceived.

Dr. *Lawrence* said, if he could have staid to express his vote, he might have remained wholly silent; at least he should have waited to hear those, who were more entitled than himself on one side or the other, to take a lead in the debates of that House. But called away by the indispensable duties of his profession, he could not leave the discussion, without delivering his sentiments on a question, which though nominally affecting only the interests of an individual, did seem at the same time to involve principles of the first moment to the public service.

He agreed with the hon. Gentleman who had just spoken, that

that the written opinions of private counsel, however eminent, ought not to direct the decisions of Parliament; at the same time he could not help observing, with concern, that the very persons who objected to those authorities, had on many points argued more like counsel, than members of the Committee. They had endeavoured by minute calculations from official documents (some of them, he believed, not before the House) to lessen what was allowed as merit, and by detached passages of hasty and unguarded language picked here and there from a very free and confidential correspondence, to aggravate, what was imputed as demerit to Mr. Palmer. And such was their apparent disposition to do this, that one hon. Gentleman, otherwise of great accuracy, had fallen into a plain and palpable error, that seemed unaccountable. The Committee had been told, that during the nine years preceding Mr. Palmer's appointment, although there certainly was, as he had stated in his evidence, a decrease in the nett revenue of the Post-office, yet, in the gross revenue, there was a considerable increase; which, the Committee had been also told, was to be attributed solely to the increase of our commerce within that period. Now that period was nearly the same with the duration of the American war, which stands distinguished in the annals of this country from every other war of any length, by this peculiar circumstance, that never, in any one year of its continuance, did our exports and imports reach the level of the preceding peace: so that, clearly, it was not to the extension of our commerce, during these nine years, that any augmentation, if any actually existed, in the receipts of the Post-office, could be fairly attributed. The probable cause was the greater intercourse, and increased facility of communication within the kingdom, which it was the excellence of Mr. Palmer's plan to have systematically improved, and carried to perfection in the department, which he undertook to regulate and reform. But it was unnecessary to answer arguments of this kind in detail. The Lords of the Treasury had precluded them all, when, considering themselves as bound by no public faith, and having the whole of Mr. Palmer's conduct before them, not disposed, as it should now seem, to be too favourable to his claims, or too indulgent to any errors, which might be laid to his charge, they had ranked him among the greatest benefactors of his country: for it had been truly remarked, that the reward, which they had ultimately advised their Sovereign to bestow upon him, was equal to the
grant,

grant, with which the public munificence usually remunerated the most splendid achievements of those, whose victories had brought safety, or glory to the State.

The conduct of that board, in referring as it were, the question to the House, Dr. Laurence thought agreeable to their public duty. They found an Officer in one of the Revenue departments suspended by his lawful superiors; and that suspension, whether from the internal dissensions of the office, or on whatever other grounds, they judged it necessary not only to confirm, but to follow with a dismissal. According to the letters of the Commission under which he held his place, his emoluments ceased with his official situation. Combining all these circumstances, they might not regard it as consistent with their limited, delegated, and responsible power over the public purse to hear of a secret understanding and tacit construction, by which, contrary to the expression of the instrument itself, a considerable charge was to be entailed on the nation. They satisfied themselves therefore with handsomely paying what had actually been done; yet at the same time they consented that the whole claim in its fullest extent, should be submitted to the investigation of that House, to which alone it belonged in such cases, to exercise an equitable and wise generosity with the money of the people. Sitting in that Committee, even they who had before concurred in the grant already made to Mr. Palmer, were in no degree bound by their former decision; much less ought that decision to influence the judgment of others.

The true question was, whether taking the whole evidence into consideration, the spirit and essence of the original agreement, and not the mere words of the subsequent commission, were or were not binding in favour of Mr. Palmer? He did not mean binding with the force of a legal obligation; then the enquiry of that House would have been superfluous; but binding on the equity, the honour and liberality of the public.

The hon. Gentleman, who had last spoken, had very dextrously professed to pass over every thing anterior to what he had called the modified agreement of 1789. He could himself (Dr. Laurence said) by no means agree to this mode of viewing the subject. But there was one point which was settled by that modified agreement beyond all dispute. It ascertained with precision the extent of the reward which Mr. Palmer was to receive. It clearly fixed the nature of the augmentation from which he was to derive his per centage. He was to derive it from every augmentation over and above the sum of 240,000*l.* unless where the difference arose from any additional rates of postage, which the wisdom of Parliament in providing for the

exigencies of the public service might impose, or from any diminution, which new regulations or better œconomy might effect in the expenditure of the packet establishment. These two were the only exceptions expressed; and the introduction of these operated still more powerfully to the exclusion of all others, than if no exception whatever had appeared on the face of the instrument; since these irrefragably demonstrated, that all the various possible sources of future increase to the Revenue were not overlooked when Mr. Palmer's appointment was framed. To what purpose then served official documents, speculations, and conjectures intended to shew other causes of prosperity in the income of the Post-Office, than the excellence of Mr. Palmer's reforms? One purpose only could be served by them; that of confusing and misleading the Committee.

But the use that had been made of that instrument by the hon. Gentleman, who had thought it decisive of the tenure on which Mr. Palmer held his emoluments, was the last use, Dr. Laurence said, which he would consent to make of it. If the letter of Mr. Palmer's appointment in 1789 was conclusive, where had been the necessity of a long enquiry? Why had a Committee been appointed "to consider of the agreement made with Mr. Palmer for the reform and improvement of the Post-Office?" Why had that Committee produced a bulky report? And why was a Committee of the whole House now sitting on that report? The Commission of 1789 would have spoken for itself in a single line—in three words. He should therefore think himself at liberty to ascend much higher, and should wish to refer the Committee to another Commission, never executed indeed, but proved in evidence to have been prepared some time in the year 1785.

It had that night been intimated, that the draft in question could not now be found in the Treasury; that it was, therefore, a paper of doubtful authenticity; probably drawn up by some friend of Mr. Palmer; a mere project submitted to, but never approved by Government. This, however, was not agreeable to the evidence before the Committee. Some intended appointment or other, to the very same effect, is repeatedly mentioned about the time, in the negotiation which took place between Mr. Palmer and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, through the mediation of the present Lord Camden. Above all, the draft of the Commission itself was produced to the Post-Master General by Mr. Palmer, when, in 1790, he had some dissensions with the noble Lords who filled that office. Upon that he stood, as the real tenure of his situation. Fortified with that, he threatened them with a
reference

reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Could he, could any man in his senses have so acted, if he were conscious that the production of that very instrument would have ruined his whole cause with the judge whom he had chosen? Indeed the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself* has admitted that he “rather believes the draft to have been prepared at the Treasury, or by directions from thence, and from thence communicated to the Attorney General.”

What then was the language of that original draft? It was distinctly “*for life.*” Lord Camden, too †, represented it at

* Do you recollect generally what answer you gave to this proposal, after having considered it?

No answer was given that I recollect, in writing, and the subject was repeatedly discussed at different times. I cannot, therefore, at this distance of time, undertake to give any account of any one specific answer; but the general result of what passed, I conceive to have been, that the terms of Mr. Palmer's proposal appeared to me to be fair and reasonable, and that I was desirous of carrying it into execution, conceiving it would be of great public benefit. The outline of those terms, as proposed in 1784, I believe was, that Mr. Palmer should have some appointment for life, to superintend the execution of his proposal, with an allowance annexed to that appointment of two and a half per cent. on the amount of the increase which it might produce in the revenue. The appointment which took place afterwards, I believe in 1786, differed from that which had been in contemplation, and which I had originally intended to have acceded to. The difference was in consequence of legal objections arising from the Post-Office Act.—*Examination of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.* See REPORT, page 50.

† Copy of a Letter from the Hon. J. Pratt to Mr. Palmer.

Brighthelmstone, October 24th, 1785.

Dear Palmer,

I gave Pitt your letter; and I think, though he does not quite allow all you mention to be a fair demand, that you have reason to be satisfied with what he seems willing to grant; he likes your proposal for drawing the average of the net revenue of the Post-Office for ten years, and afterwards adding the tax, and giving the two and a half per cent. upon the surplus as you state it. He seems willing to allow that your salary of 1,500l. a year should commence when he came into office last, which is now very near two years, and he is certainly not accountable for any delay prior to that period; and this I own I think, a very handsome offer.

With regard to your expences being paid after your salary is fixed, if you remember, I told you you would find some difficulty in carrying that point, and I think it cannot be given, for in your first proposal the two and a half per cent. was to cover your expences, which would only be considerable for the first year or two, and the improvement on the revenue would amply pay you.

The present settlement is only a modification of your first proposal, and I think fairly takes in that part of it.

at the time, as the opinion entertained by the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself, that the appointment ought to be such as to secure Mr. Palmer against any change of administration. Could it then be supposed, that he was not to be secured against that very minister who wished him to be secured against all? That minister had himself fairly stated, that according to the outline of the original terms, "Mr. Palmer was to have an appointment *for life.*"

But all this, it was maintained, Mr. Palmer himself, in 1789, had voluntarily abandoned. Now what could have induced him so to relinquish at once what he had so long and so earnestly pressed in all his early negotiations with Government? How was he situated at the date of what is called the modified agreement? Did he lie under any temptation to accept less than he had always solicited? Does that agreement contain any compensation for that which it is said to have taken away? Nothing of all this. When Mr. Palmer first undertook the execution of his own plan, he was opposed by all the authority and information of the Post-Office. Volume was added to volume, folio to folio, of objection upon objection, to prove the whole scheme impracticable in all its parts. He defended himself as he could in this paper-war, and he triumphed in the experiments which he instantly made on some of the principal roads, at his own immediate expence, at his own ultimate hazard. He gave up his own private concerns, by no means inconsiderable; he dedicated himself wholly to the public service in which he had engaged; he urged it forward with an activity and perseverance, which had been said by one hon. Gentleman, and not said without a great degree of truth, to have formed a principal part of his merit. His plan gradually extended and developed itself in practice. Still he was thwarted and impeded by the officers of the old establishment, who, when they could not openly resist, secretly threw every little obstacle in the way of his

I dare say you will find no difficulty in having it secured to your family, if any thing should happen to you. This business seems now to be drawn to a conclusion.

I own, as far as I have been concerned, I cannot think of pressing any thing more. The offer in my opinion is liberal, and the manner in which it has been explained still more so. You will be to consider whether it will satisfy you. Pitt seems to think that the appointment should be such as to secure you against any change of administration. He goes to Town on Wednesday, and I think if you were to call or send, he would very likely see you; but if you should not see him then, he comes to stay the beginning of next week.

I am, sincerely yours,

J. J. FRATT.

prografs.

progress. Dr. Laurence said, he did not mean to impute this as misconduct to those who had so acted; it was the habitual disposition, and it was, in some sort, the virtue of men in official situations, to be slow and reluctant in admitting novelties. But every new difficulty which he had to surmount, gave additional merit to Mr. Palmer's success. He had surmounted them all; he had firmly and immoveably established his plan; the Commissioners of Public Enquiry had reported in its favour; the revenue of the state had felt its beneficial effects; it had risen much above the mark where his per centage was to commence; he had already earned the reward for which he had stipulated; when, as the Committee was now desired to believe, he all at once, without any assignable reason, knowingly and intentionally, consented to accept, instead of a per centage for life, the very same rate of emolument dependent on the pleasure of the Post-Master General; on the pleasure of persons, who from the first had been unfavourable to all his views, and with whom he had been in a perpetual contest. Was it possible to believe this? Could it be explained upon any known system of human action? Did he gain in power and patronage what he sacrificed in the security of his income? No; the very reverse.

He says, and in that he is confirmed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the original commission fixing his profits for life, and making him independent of the Post-Master General, was only laid aside because such a separate appointment was thought incompatible with the existing law. Had not that legal objection occurred, not to the nature of the reward which he was to receive, but of the powers which he was to exercise that would have been done which he wished, and to which the Minister intended to accede. When it was found that his commission could not be made out from the treasury, but that it must come from the Post-Master General alone, it was a necessary consequence that the compensation for his services should also be derived to him through the same channel. But he constantly regarded this as the form only, not the essence of his appointment. He always believed the real and true interpretation of both of his authority and of his emoluments, to be, in effect, the same as under the original agreement. This was clearly no after-thought on his part. While the transaction was fresh, the very year after his appointment, when the misunderstandings between him and the Post-Master seem to have reached a higher pitch than at any other period; since the first trial of his scheme, when he held forth, almost in a tone of wuencee, an immediate application
for

for the accustomed support of the Minister, it was upon this declared ground, that although he was nominally under the Post-Master, he was virtually under the Treasury. The manner in which his appointment was made out, he asserted to be but a matter of present necessity. And upon this occasion it was, that to shew the genuine nature of his employ he produced the unexecuted draft of the original warrant. Nothing then could be more manifest, than that Mr. Palmer never contemplated the commission which he took in 1789, as any modification whatever of the original agreement; nothing could be more improbable than that the Chancellor of the Exchequer could have designed it as such a modification (especially to affect the tenure of the emoluments, respecting which there had never been a question) when an objection raised not by himself, but by the Attorney General alone, prevented him from ratifying with all the binding efficacy of a patent, the original proposals of Mr. Palmer in their fullest extent. If then the equity, the honour, the liberality of the Public ought to look to the fair intention and spirit of the agreement, could there be a doubt but that Mr. Palmer ought to stand on as advantageous a footing as if the Patent-office once proposed for him had been actually signed and sealed?

But even a Patent Office, it would perhaps be said, might be in some cases vacated. Incontrovertibly it might. But what were those cases? And was the present one of the number? He had understood from men of eminence in that profession, which was more immediately conversant than his own, in the construction of instruments, that there were two grounds only of setting aside a Patent: one was corruption in the discharge of the duties annexed to the office; the other was more generally, any gross misbehaviour attended with actual injury to the service.

Of corruption Mr. Palmer was not accused. Both one and the other of the Noblemen, who filled the situation of Post-master General, having been examined before the Committee, bore positive testimony to his personal integrity. But one fact of his own conduct spoke more strongly in his behalf, than could any testimony of opinions, however respectable. He had actually effected his projected reforms for 20,000*l.* a year less than his own estimate, 20,000*l.* a year less than the sum with which Government on the part of the public was willing to purchase the benefits of his plan. Had he been a corrupt man, here was a fund, from which by connivance and collusion, from which by such a participation in the contracts as official men had sometimes been supposed to enjoy, he might

safely

safely have drawn to himself, secret profits much beyond all that can ever accrue from the allowance which he claims. But he resisted and broke the combination of contractors against him; he sought and he discovered one, who speculated more sanguinely or more correctly; by whose means he was able to reduce the charge of mere conveyance much below his public promises, below even his own private expectations. The name of this man was Wilson.

Now, after this, could the Committee pause a single moment on the charge, which was intimated against Mr. Palmer, of shewing too much partiality to this man? It was urged against him, that he favoured this man in getting some accounts passed, which he had himself pronounced to be extravagant. But these accounts all together were for no very large sum: it could not be surmised that Mr. Palmer had any concealed interest in them; he had not even the indirect interest of reputation seeking to cover any extravagance of his own. The simple truth according to the evidence was this: Lord Walsingham stimulated by a laudable zeal for his Majesty's accommodation during one of the Royal visits to Weymouth, had given to Wilson in the absence of Mr. Palmer, rather improvident orders without any limitation of expence; and with an intimation, that no expence would be scrupled. An undue advantage in Mr. Palmer's judgment, was made of this accidental opportunity. But what could he do? In this difficult situation he stood. If he suffered the man to be publicly discredited and disgraced, he feared that he might be thrown back into the hands of the combination, which that every man had been his principal instrument to break, and the public service suffer more beyond all comparison, than by any loss in a single and occasional expired contract; a contract too, which had not been made by him, but by the Postmaster General. On the other hand, he thought, that the success of such charges might produce consequences injurious to the terms of the standing contracts, in which he was more immediately concerned. He did, therefore, after much hesitation, advise Lord Walsingham to pass the accounts, while he at the same time privately reprimanded Wilson. He did more. He required and obtained an abatement in one heavy article; and the next year made a contract for the same service at less than half the price; at a rate, such in economy, as no subsequent instance has approached.

Another charge which had been suggested to his disadvantage, imputed to him that he had improperly favoured Mr. White, one of his clerks, in passing vouchers, which he must have

have known to be fictitious. The sum altogether was little more than 300*l.* part of an issue of 1200*l.* for the rest of which it did not appear but that White had regularly accounted. It was a bill for travelling expences, incurred in the business of the office during a period of four years, though it was said, that in the first of those years the journeys which this clerk had made were few and insignificant. Was this any very enormous charge during such a period? Certainly not. Had he really expended that money in travelling on the public service? There is no pretence set up to the contrary. There * were indeed genuine vouchers for nearly one third of the demand; but in some instances he had not kept a regular account, in others he had mislaid or lost his papers; he had not entered in his book every little toll which he may have paid at a turnpike, nor every trifling gratuity which he may have given to a waiter or a chambermaid; he had not preserved bills and receipts from all the various inns and public houses at which he had stopped or called in a variety of different journeys. Would it have been much to have allowed a demand of such a nature and to such an amount for four, or if you please for three years, without any vouchers at all? In his own judgment, Dr. Laurence said, it would not, if the superior was satisfied that the service had been actually performed, and the money expended. Had the deficiency not been so allowed, on whom would it have fallen? On White in the first instance, and there were considerable arrears due to him, which would have been liable to be stopped. At most, a part only of the deficiency could have fallen on Mr. Palmer in any event. And could he be suspected of intentionally encouraging a fraud to protect himself from the uncertain and contingent loss of so small a sum? Could this be the conduct of one who refused a proffered indemnification from the Public for the first trial of his scheme, and who embarked in it many thousands of pounds at his own private hazard, against all the information and all the resistance of the old Post-Office? But is it plain that in any event Mr. Palmer would have been a sufferer? He and his connections undoubtedly seem to have thought, that the loss if any,

* See the latter part of White's affidavit, Appendix to Report, p. 122, and his evidence, p. 23 of Report.

† See Appendix to Report, p. 143.—Part, at least, if not all of the fragment there stated to have been made to him must, from the date, have been subsequent to the accounts in question.—EDIT.

would have affected not himself but his deputy, who had immediately issued the money. And in a *letter, which attests at once the carelessness and the honesty of White; that deputy, Mr. Bonnor, represents himself, as having advanced cash without entries, and without a regular account to persons in the office, who kept no account at all, and at whose mercy, from their ignorance or inattention he conceives himself to be. Would it be said, that Mr. Palmer would have been legally responsible? However that might be, the question now was not how a Court of Justice might have

• “ Another source of great and unquestionable loss to me, attended also with circumstances of embarrassment and perplexity never to be overcome, arose from the depredation committed on my papers, when my desk and book-case were broken open and rifled, and my red box was stolen away. It is to this event I have to attribute almost all the confusion I have experienced to arise from the want of keeping a regular account of all cash matters; and I may very fairly consider it as the occasion of my losing some hundreds of pounds; for I was in the habit of transacting money concerns with different people about the office, who kept no account at all; and when my account was lost, I was left at the mercy of their ignorance of my fair claims at least, which subjected me to the same alarming consequences that a bad principle in them might have occasioned. I had instances in the adjusting one account only, which are sufficient to confirm my apprehensions, though I do not imagine there was any design to injure me; but in certain periods of White’s account, against which I happened to have memorandums of different sums I had advanced to him, there were omissions to the amount of between 300l. and 400l. and against such part of his account I had no check at all; the sums he had omitted he perfectly recollected when I brought them forward; but he was unable to recollect any omissions but such as I was able to point out, although in certain parts of the account the proportionate amount of monies admitted are so out of all comparison below what was advanced for similar periods under the dates, as to do away all doubts as to the omission of articles, to my irretrievable loss, and to a very severe amount, as between the month of February 1787 and March 1788, which was one month only before those papers were stolen, no more than 25l. 13s. is charged against him, although the usual demand for the months preceding was, upon the average, 25l. per month, and the subsequent considerably more, so that at the lowest computation I must be a loser of more than 200l.”

“ In doing this Sir, I hope I may be allowed, first of all, to suggest, that by making myself responsible, as I hitherto have done, for all the consequences of the loss of official documents, which it was not in my power to prevent, as well as from the various unquestionable advances of cash on your private account, of which no entry can be shewn, I certainly placed myself in a situation, which, however proper for me to sustain while things were in a progressive state of arrangement, ought not to subject me eventually to the making good to the utmost extent those losses which do not arise from my own personal misconduct, however certain it is that such must be the case to a very severe degree.”—*Extracts from Mr. Bonnor’s Letter of the 11th of June, 1791.*

determined such a point in a civil suit, but what were the actions and motives of Mr. Palmer; how far he was criminal; and how far, even if his conduct had been wrong, it was such as to forfeit the advantages of his original agreement.

Dr. Laurence did not find it established at all to his conviction, that Mr. Palmer was directly implicated in the fabrication of these accounts. From the confidential letters of Mr. Palmer to Mr. Bonnor, which had been made the subject of so much comment, a short extract of not quite two lines had been read very vague and general. Beyond this what was there? Mr. Bartlett knew nothing. Mr. Harraden, whom Mr. Bonnor had vouched, knew nothing, and had not even heard any thing from White to this purpose. Setting aside the contrary assertions of the late Comptroller-General and his late Deputy, there remained only White himself; and he referred the order, under which the account was made up, immediately to the Deputy; the whole, he says, was entirely done under the direction of the Deputy; he only supposes that there must have been an order from the Comptroller-General to warrant the conduct of the Deputy. To both these representations he adheres under all the pressure of a long and rigorous examination. What then said the affidavit which he had made soon after the suspension of the Comptroller-General? In the only interview between him and White which was there distinctly related, the former goes not one syllable further than to ask the latter "whether he could not recollect any fair articles of expence which he had omitted to charge?" Was this criminal? Was this in any degree improper? Beyond this, all was thrown into the convenient ambiguity of a narrative, which twice ostentatiously mentions the order of the Comptroller-General for White to attend the Superintendent of the Mails, without discriminating whether the order was given personally, or through the Deputy, as White now declared that it was; and which subjoins the purpose of that attendance, without indicating whether that purpose were so expressed in the order itself, or whether the addition be no more than the explanation of the deponent himself; though from the variation of the language in the two passages where it occurs, it can only be of the latter description. Was that affidavit, truly speaking, voluntary, as it purports to be? It was not. By whom was it suggested? by Mr. Bonnor. Who lent his ready pen to reduce it

it into its present form? Mr. Bonnor. Who dictated the letter which the affidavit was designed to verify? Mr. Bonnor. How came the first disclosure of the transaction to the Post-Master General to be made? At the instigation of Mr. Bonnor. And when was this disclosure made? After the suspension of Mr. Palmer on the re-instatement of Mr. Bonnor. Indeed the affidavit bore on the face of it the trait of an hand eager for Mr. Palmer's ruin. The unhappy man, who took it, in the second sentence was precipitated into a palpable perjury that unjustly criminated himself. He was made to swear, that the account was, from beginning to end, fictitious and false; then in the conversation with Mr. Palmer, that he had set down every fair charge which he could recollect; and finally, that nearly one third of the whole demand, which however is called "a few articles," is founded in truth. On such evidence could any man conscientiously venture to pronounce Mr. Palmer in any degree guilty?

For his own part, Dr. Laurence declared, he could not persuade himself that they who opposed Mr. Palmer's claims, could be serious in the two charges which he had thus examined. It was impossible that, let them believe what they would of the evidence against Mr. Palmer, they could really think either of the transactions with Wilson or with White to be such as to have forfeited all benefit of his agreement with Government, or even to render his dismissal necessary. And why? No interested, no corrupt motive whatever had even been imputed to him: at worst, it was no more than a culpable facility towards those over whom he should have kept a rigorous controul; and it was a facility against his own interests, for they were indissolubly bound up with those of the Public by the nature of his reward. But there was no doubt of the offence committed by Wilson; there was no doubt of that committed by White; there was no doubt of that committed, though not to the same amount, by Mr. Haskar, the superintendant of the mails; yet long after the full disclosure of every thing, when the Committee sat, the Public was still enjoying the benefit of Wilson's contracts; White had only been removed from his situation on a general regulation of the office; and Mr. Haskar still continued a meritorious servant of the Public in that employ, to which he had been originally named by the late Comptroller-General.

The remaining accusation was probably that on which most reliance was placed. And, indeed, it was of a nature which if the crime were fully substantiated against Mr. Palmer, would come nearest to the exigency of that case which justice would require, to work a forfeiture of his agreement, in whatever manner secured. It was imputed to him, that he had systematically thrown the office into confusion to the detriment of the public service; that he had himself created that delay in the delivery of letters which had occasioned the public meeting of the merchants of London in 1792, just before his suspension. The proof of his offence in this respect was attempted to be drawn from his confidential correspondence with his deputy. Dr. Laurence avowed his perfect accord with the hon. Gentleman who had spoken last, that whatever epithet might belong to the conduct which had produced such papers, entrusted without reserve in the sacred faith of friendship, yet, having been acknowledged by the writer, they were to be credited against him. At the same time every just and equitable principle of construction demanded that they should be candidly and favourably interpreted. A sudden impulse of irritation, a momentary stroke of pleasantry and ridicule, perhaps a little irreverent, an unguarded phrase of whatever kind, in the negligent security of familiar communication, ought to be carefully distinguished from premeditated declarations of cool and settled design; otherwise all the amiable ease of social intercourse must shrink and contract itself into caution, restraint, jealousy, and distrust. It must be remembered too, that one letter often echoes the sentiments or the passions of another. But here were wanting all the letters of Mr. Bonnor, whom in almost every instance before the Committee, Mr. Palmer had answered. It was impossible to know how far what seemed to come from the latter had been in reality suggested by the former. It could not be perceived what had been the representations, and what the arguments of the deputy, which for the instant may have warped the natural judgment of his superior, then at a distance, from more correct information. It had been observed, that these letters were by no means of one single period. It was true, there would be found dates of three different years. The Committee, then had not an accidental fragment of a correspondence, but a choice selection from materials studiously preserved, and brought forward with a disposition to suppress nothing that could injure Mr. Palmer. If in the whole course of

his connection with the office, he had ever been betrayed into a single indiscretion beyond what appeared, there was every reason to believe that it would then have been blazoned to the Public. If these letters were not sufficient for his condemnation, nothing yet undiscovered could be presumed, nothing conjectured, nothing suspected, nothing imagined to his prejudice.

The only letter of the year 1788 related to the affair of Wilfon. It did not apply to the present purpose, unless perhaps it might be thought to contain something a little indecorously ludicrous in the mode which the Comptroller General there points out for teaching men of high rank and high situation, that if they descend into the details which properly belong to subordinate officers, they will be in perpetual danger of losing their way in a strange country, of which they neither know the land-marks, nor understand the language to enquire their road.

The result of the single, solitary letter, in 1789, was to forbid what seems to have been suggested by the deputy, and to prevent mischief. So far that could not tend to criminate the late Comptroller-General. But it might be said, that he here suffered a principle of action to escape him, which he afterwards carried into practice. What then was that principle? To state it without aggravation, without extenuation, it was neither more nor less than this, that he might not have disliked such a total confusion as would have forced on a complete enquiry into the state of the office, and led immediately to some radical and effectual regulation upon some uniform and permanent system. He thought, after all this experience, as he had thought from the first, that a separate and independent authority was necessary to the purposes of his appointment, and he hoped in this manner to obtain it on a full investigation of all complaints.

Dr. Laurence professed that he did not love the use of indirect and crooked means for the attainment of any end, however good. By that feeling, that taste, that sentiment, or whatever it might be called, he had been guided in votes which he had given on opposite sides of the house; and no other rule would he ever wish any man to apply in estimating his actions. Yet in judging others, he trusted that he should ever be ready to make allowance for human infirmities. And there was not a more common, because there was not a more plausible—there was not a more successful fallacy, by which men were seduced

seduced into errors or crimes, than the slippery maxim, that the end sanctifies the means. Eager and ardent minds, in proportion as the object which they had at heart was fair and laudable, were impatient of every obstacle, attempted every path, and the impediment which they were unable by open force to overcome, they endeavoured secretly to sap and undermine. When in their earnest exertions to do good, they were checked by the controul of an over-ruling authority, they were too apt, without regard to the important interests which might suffer, to rejoice in any difficulties and embarrassments, which that adverse interposition might create. They considered nothing as wrong which tended to expose the imperfections of a system which appeared to them generally inexpedient, generally vicious, generally detrimental in its operation. This was more especially the case—it was almost inevitable where the passions had been enflamed by long contention.

In this light it was that he saw the inclinations, he would say, rather than the conduct of Mr. Palmer, during that period, to which all the rest of the letters applied. They were all written in the Autumn of 1790. And what was then the state of the office? During a short absence of the Comptroller-General there had been, as he stated in a *solemn remonstrance to the Postmaster General, a wanton

* Putney, October 12th, 1790.

My Lords,

I am concerned your Lordships attempt to supercede my Commission; and the ill effects which I apprehend may arise to the correspondence of the country, from your further interference with my regulations, oblige me to apply to the Minister for his accustomed support, by whose warrant I received that Commission, and to whom only I consider myself responsible for my conduct; for though I am nominally under the Postmaster General, I am virtually under the Treasury.

The original warrant, which I have the honour to inclose your Lordships, will shew you that it was intended I should hold my office under the Crown, and not the Post-Office, for reasons too obvious to the Minister. This warrant being submitted to the opinion of the Attorney General, he advised, that, according to the present constitution of the Post-Office, my employ could be legally held only under the Postmaster-General, by a warrant from the Treasury, directing them to grant such appointment, with the powers expressed in it. It was therefore made out in the manner I now hold it, as a matter of present necessity. Your Lordships therefore venturing to supersede a Commission, granted me under a warrant from the Treasury to former Postmasters General, for services the Lords Commissioners had expressed themselves to partial to, and under such particular circumstances, as will appear by the inclosed Treasury

ton interference threatening him, and insulting and disgracing valuable officers for their known attachment to him. He

Treasury minute; contradicting too the orders given by them in consequence of their circular letter to all Postmasters in the year 1785. has, I think, been rather a hasty and ill-advised measure, and not consistent with that judgment and temper which usually guide your Lordships' conduct. No man, I am sure, in this kingdom is more sensible than I am to the necessity of proper subordination, or to the respect due to the nobility of this country, or has higher obligations to them; and I am sure I cannot give a stronger proof of it, than in still retaining my respect and esteem for your Lordships, after the very unhandlome and unprovoked conduct you have used towards me.

Both your Lordships, on accepting your appointments, knew my situation in the office, and found me in the uncontrouled exercise of the powers the warrant from Government had directed to be given me; your Lordships have an undoubted right, if you saw me at any time proceeding wrong, or any ill effects arising from my conduct, to report it to the Treasury; but I challenge your Lordships to put your finger on one single blot committed by me, from the moment I took my appointment till this time. Why, therefore, this wanton interference, threatening me, and insulting and disgracing valuable officers, who are known to be attached to me, and at a time when they are particularly distinguishing themselves for the good of the service? Indeed, my Lords, if you persist in such treatment of them, I shall not have an officer of any value remain with me, if they can possibly get situations in any other employ.

Your Lordships have been informed of the disgraceful opposition to my plan, before I came into office, which made it necessary for the Minister to give me powers to act as I pleased in the arrangements of the Posts, and conducting its business; the inclosed letters to all Postmasters will shew it. And can it be supposed, that after the success and beneficial effects which were the consequence of those powers being given me, I am to be deprived of them, and expected to conduct so complex and difficult a business, or extend my plan with less powers; that my regulations should be submitted, in an office so liable to change, to every Postmaster General, to check or controul them, and to do which he must either advise with the officers under me, or those most active in a former opposition to ruin my plan. If this were the case, however well disposed your Lordships may be, do you think it could exist, or the Public be long in possession of its benefits?

Mr. Pitt, my Lords, has made a purchase of my ingenuity and judgment, such as it is, and I am to act upon that judgment, and no other person's whatever; subject, if I do wrong, to your Lordships' observations and report to the Treasury. Nor is this by any means new to the office: Mr. Allen, for a very partial improvement of the Cross-Posts, not only had the whole power and management delegated to him, but the estate itself, and that without any controul whatever; nor would he even inform the Postmaster General of any part of his plan. As soon as they were satisfied, from his character, and the few hints he gave them, that it would be a benefit to correspondence, and some advantage to the revenue, so far from being jealous of parting with their authorities, they solicited Government that they might do it, and gave him every possible encouragement. He had a complete farm of those Posts during his life;

He had written, that he hoped on his arrival to adjust every thing satisfactorily; but a peremptory decision was immediately

the time he held it forty-two years, and got, by his statement, above 12,000*l.* per year by them.

I have the satisfaction to remark to your Lordships, when I began the improvements in the Cross Posts, though the revenue was decreasing, that during the short time I have managed them, its revenue has increased considerably more than in the whole forty-two years Mr. Allen farmed them; indeed nearly double, notwithstanding the enormous increase of franks. The more extensive and superior advantages correspondence derives from mine, the Public as well as your Lordships must be sensible to; he had the whole of the increased revenue, and the most uncontrouled power in the management of these posts. I have two and a half per cent. on the whole revenue of the office, and am expected, for that consideration, to conduct and improve the whole Posts of the kingdom; and your Lordships command me to manage this plan, of so much greater magnitude, in trammels and fetters. From this feeling, I have delayed carrying into execution many of my plans, which would have given great accommodation to the Public, and proved very popular, as well as productive to the revenue, because I would not submit them to the judgment of others, and render myself liable to a renewal of former opposition.

In respect to any commands your Lordships may think proper to send me, I must observe, both our appointments and powers are derived from the same source, though for different considerations; your Lordships for that for which all power is delegated, to do good—mine, not only to do future good, but for having done great good in the department we both act in, preceding my appointment, which the former Postmaster General were expressly ordered to give me for these purposes and services. Whenever therefore your Lordships, from mistake or ill advice, shall send me any commands that I think may go to mischief instead of good, I shall most certainly not observe them; and if I apprehend ill consequences from any you may think proper to send to any of the officers under me, I shall take the liberty, for your Lordships' sake, as well as my own and the Public's, to contradict them; for if I had not done this in more than one instance, Lord Walsingham, with the best intentions, would have thrown the business into extreme confusion, and placed himself in a very unpleasant situation with that Public.

I beg leave, therefore, and that in the most earnest manner, and from the real esteem and respect I entertain for both, to caution your Lordships from further interference till Mr. Pitt's pleasure be known; for I am responsible only for my own acts, and you know not how delicate and dangerous an engine you are playing with.

When I reflect on this conduct of your Lordships, I am struck with astonishment, nor can I in any way account for the haste and violence of it; I am sure if Mr. Todd had been at home, it never could have happened.

I wrote to your Lordships I should be in town in a few days, and do myself the honour of waiting on you, when I hoped every thing might be adjusted to your satisfaction. You would not wait this short absence, but send me your peremptory decision; contradict orders given by former Postmasters General to Mr. Oliphant to obey my directions; supersede my commission, and send him papers to invite complaint and opposition against

diately passed unfavourable to him; the orders of former Postmasters General, subjecting all the officers of the kingdom to his authority were contradicted, and papers sent to invite complaint and opposition against his regulations. So at least had the measures of his superiors been represented to him by his deputy. And in what manner did he act? Did he aim by clandestine managements alone to defeat this interference? No. He avowed his sense of this usage. He boldly and strongly urged his grievances. He insisted on a reference to the arbitration and award of the Minister. At the same time he did, it could not be denied that he did in one letter intimate to his deputy a desire that he should not enforce the discipline of one particular department, in which the Postmaster had chiefly intermeddled. But was this malignantly done? Quite otherwise. Even when he thought the conduct of the Postmaster General what he most could wish, and what must end well for his purposes, he could not help expressing, confidentially *, his regret at the revival of old quarrels, and old feelings; and he found a consolation only in the reflection, that, notwithstanding the confusion which had been intro-

necessary regulations in his office, and which I am bound to overlook by my Commission, as well as all others concerned in the correspondence of the country.

Why is the per centage indeed given me, but to interest me in the care of every thing whatever by which the revenue of the office may be affected? Your Lordships cannot be injured in your fortune by a mismanagement of it; I may, and that to the ruin of my income.

When you read the inclosed letters from Mr. Freeling, I think it impossible but your Lordships must feel a concern for the conduct you have so hastily pursued; and the pain you have given to the mind of so worthy an officer, and be yourselves astonished at it; and when the whole of his report comes before you, and you see the labour and fatigue he has undergone, it cannot be but that you will order him some reward for his great trouble, and the services he has done; and as your Lordships have thought proper to appeal to Mr. Oliphant for his conduct, I have the fullest reliance on the truth and candour of that gentleman's report.

I have the honour to be,

With the greatest respect and esteem,

My Lords,

You Lordships' most obedient humble servant,

J. PALMER.

Mr. Palmer's Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Walsingham and the Earl of Chesterfield, his Majesty's Postmaster General.—Appendix to Report, page 130.

* Though the conduct of the Lords is the very thing I ought to wish, and must end well, yet it revives old quarrels and feelings, and tevers me in spite of myself.—*Extract from Mr. Palmer's letter to Mr. Bonnor, OB. 3, 1790.* Appendix to Report, p. 112.

duced, and which he confessed to have made him fore*, the business would be really and effectually done; that it could not be undone by any mismanagement of others.

† But did any mischievous consequence even for a time, for a day, ensue from the hint to his Deputy? No; Mr. Bonnor claimed it as a merit, that nothing of the kind was done. Was there any public complaint of the lateness of the delivery at that time? None appears. Did the delivery actually fall back? There is no trace of it in the evidence. One thing above all is clear, that these letters of the Comptroller General to his Deputy did not occasion that lateness in the delivery which afterwards attracted the attention of the public; the charge which the correspondence was originally brought to support. The dates alone are conclusive. There was an interval of considerably more than a year; and the official‡ documents which have been produced on the contrary side demonstrate the real cause which gave rise to that complaint of the merchants, in the beginning of 1792. It was the introduction of a new check in the office, which was the sole act of the Deputy, without the sanction of the
Comp-

* The foreness of the business is—Lord W. just after my last return from Scotland, went into a curious investigation, and a sort of reform of that office, without the least communication whatever with me, and in the coarsest manner to Oliphant, made some confusion, and did nothing. The business will now be really and effectually done, and without advising with his Lordship, and I will defy them to undo it.

General Post-Office, March 11th, 1792.

† The Postmaster General desire to know whether Mr. Bonnor has, or has not, taken off the cheques which had been recently imposed, and which the P. M. G. never saw till they had been carried into execution, and which they have as yet given no orders to remove. If these cheques do essentially delay the deliveries, Mr. Bonnor is at liberty to postpone them; but if they do not, and will answer the effect that was intended by them, they should by all means be continued.

W.
CH.

General Post-Office, March 13th, 1792.

One only of the new cheques has been discontinued, and that is the cheque on the charge-takers. The time lost by it was very considerable; but that loss of time proceeded not from the operation of the cheque itself, but from the ignorance and incapability of some of the inland officers, whose deficiencies it has been the peculiar merit of this cheque to detect, &c. &c.

Draft of a Commission, being the intended Appointment sent from the Treasury to the Attorney General.

‡ Whereas it has been represented unto us, that the appointment of a fit and proper person, to be Comptroller and Surveyor General of the Revenues of our Post Office in Great Britain, will greatly contribute to the advancement of the same: And whereas JOHN PALMER has been recom-
mended

Comptroller, as without the knowledge of the Postmaster-General: a proper check if expedition had not been too much sacrificed to accuracy; but on which it was on all hands admitted that it did actually occasion a considerable loss of time. On the 17th of January a regulation took place. And in the five subsequent weeks there were not three instances of a delivery so early as on the three preceding days in succession: there was not a single instance of one delivery so early as on the last day but one before the check was imposed. In the three preceding weeks, twice was the delivery as early as a quarter before ten; in the three subsequent weeks, twice only was it so early as a quarter

mended unto us for that purpose, he having invented, and partly carried into execution, a plan for extending and improving the poils, and for the more safe, expeditious, and regular conveyance of the mails within our said kingdom; which has already proved highly beneficial to the trade and commerce thereof; we do appoint him, for and during his life, Surveyor and Comptroller General of the General Post Office of Great Britain, with all its connections and dependencies of all Postmasters, Contractors, Deputies, Accountants, Comptrollers, Surveyors, Clerks, Sorters, Window Men, Letter Receivers, Carriers, Messengers, and other Officers and Servants thereunto belonging; giving and hereby granting, for us, our heirs and successors, to the said John Palmer, full power and authority to suspend any such officer or servants for neglect of duty, or of such instructions or directions as they have already received, or shall hereafter receive from our Postmaster General or the said John Palmer, for the above purposes, as well as for the better conducting the business of the said office. And in order to a due and strict examination of all expenses incurred in the management of the said revenues, it is our will and pleasure, that no bills whatever respecting the same shall be paid, till they are examined and signed by the said John Palmer or his Deputy, who are hereby authorized and required to call for such accounts, and order the same before them, from time to time, when they shall judge it necessary. And we having taken into our Royal consideration, the good and faithful services of the said John Palmer, for the advancement of our revenue, and the advantage of the commerce and manufactories of our kingdom of Great Britain, by greatly accelerating the conveyance of our mails and packets, are also graciously pleased, as well as a reward for such services, as to encourage him to continue his exertions for furthering the same, to give and grant for us, our heirs and successors, to the said John Palmer, an annual salary of 1,500*l.* to be paid to him without deduction or abatement of any sort, out of the revenues of our said Post Office; together with a further allowance of such sum of money, annually, as shall be equal to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the surplus of the said revenues, on making up the accounts at ^{over} and above the sum of 1. which accounts it is our will and pleasure shall continue to be made up, and the balance struck in the same manner as at present, in which, for the purposes aforesaid, no additional pension or charge on the said revenue of the General Post Office shall be included, as a deduction from the nett revenue on which the said per centage shall be calculated, except for salaries and expenses actually incurred in the management of the same.

after ten. Upon an average, during the whole time that the regulation prevailed, the letters were dispatched from the Office more than half an hour later than at any antecedent period. It was clear then by every kind of demonstration, that the hasty and unexecuted suggestions contained in the letters of Mr. Palmer were not, and that the measures carried into effect by his deputy were the cause of that delay which drew forth the complaints from the merchants of London, and for which Mr. Palmer was amerced in a fine enormous beyond all equitable proportion to the offence, even if every thing that was imputed to him had been true.

The Committee was now on a consideration of all these circumstances, to hold up an example which might one way or other be attended with consequences of no trivial magnitude. If the decision should be unfavourable to a claim of such acknowledged merit, Dr. Laurence said, he feared that men of talents who might hereafter be willing to employ their genius and their industry in the service of the Public, would discover only in the proceedings of that night, that Mr. Palmer had one fault greater than any which had been pressed against him – a fault of an over hasty and improvident zeal to do without regard to his own interest, whatever good it was in his power to do to his country. He had abandoned more than one lucrative speculation in which he was engaged: rejecting every offer of public indemnification, at the risk of his own private fortune, he made trial of the plan which he proposed for the improvement of the office which he undertook to reform; he undertook that reform against the most strenuous opposition of all those who might be supposed best to understand the subject; he established his plan triumphant over every difficulty; he demanded a reward small beyond all precedent for any similar service in the same department; he asked it on a principle which made his interests the best security for the faithful discharge of his duty to the Public; when he had done all this, he declared himself ready to forego the whole of the reward which he had stipulated, and which he had earned, if another branch of the same office might be put into his hands to reform and to manage for himself on terms materially benefiting the state: but Commissioners of Enquiry appointed by the House of Commons, objected to the acceptance of that proposal, merely because they thought it more beneficial to the state, that he should be interested in the whole revenue of the Office; yet all this was to be forgotten, all this was to be overlooked, all this was to be forfeited for ever; because he

had

had at last been so negligent of himself and his family, as when he could not legally obtain the powers which he always maintained to be necessary, to accept such as he could obtain, for the purpose of consolidating and compleating his great public schemes, trusting with unsuspecting frankness to the undoubted spirit and intention against the formal language and letter of the appointment. Whatever the country enjoyed from the exertions of Mr. Palmer, it probably owed to the generosity with which it had formerly rewarded much less important services of the late Mr. Allen, but the utility of that noble and wise example was now in danger of being lost to posterity. He knew what was incumbent upon him as a guardian of the public purse, Dr. Laurence said, but he was no admirer of that which had sometimes been called a cold œconomy. Parsimony was often more pernicious to the state in its effects than prodigality. The latter might produce a temporary addition to the burthens of the people, but the former, often blighted at the very root, all the growth of talents for the public service. He would, however, yet hope that when they who commonly accused the Minister of expofusion were inclined to recommend munificence, the majority on both sides of the House would concur in thinking, that no expenditure, however large, was worthy of consideration, in comparison with the equity, honour, and liberality of the public.

The *Solicitor General* said, that he always understood, when a man insisted upon the exact performance of a covenant, it was incumbent upon him to shew that he had performed his part of the contract. He would ask Gentlemen, whether, in their opinion, Mr. Palmer was a fit person to be reinstated in his situation of Comptroller General of the Post-Office, and if they were not of opinion that he ought, from what did that impression arise but from his letters—and the conduct of Mr. Palmer? Could they for a moment have confidence in the man who could write those letters which were stated in the Report of their Committee? It was also in evidence from many other circumstances, that Mr. Palmer was a man impatient of controul, and so desirous of getting rid of the authority of the Postmaster-General, that he forgot the duty which he owed to his superior Officer. But supposing the Treasury had made an improvident bargain, would that House force them to perform it? It was like the case of buying a horse a farthing a nail, and doubling it, which was in law an improvident contract, and not good. Though Mr. Palmer, from his conduct, was no longer

longer fit to remain Comptroller of the Post-Office, yet they acknowledged his merits in other respects, and he had accordingly received 3000*l. per annum*, as a compensation; and in his opinion he must make out a much stronger case before he ought to persuade the House to allow him a larger reward. He would add one word respecting the opinion of the counsel: he thought it not treating those Gentlemen well; their opinions were given in a sort of confidence to their clients, and it was disrespectful to the House, inasmuch as it was an attempt to influence their decision.

Lord *Sheffield* said, he observed that one set of gentlemen suggested, but by no means proved, that Mr. Palmer by forming a conspiracy, had counteracted the operations of the Post-Office: and on the other hand, there was the most unequivocal and the strongest evidence in favor of Mr. Palmer's integrity on the part of the Postmasters General, who were not supposed to be by any means friendly to Mr. Palmer; but these were not the points for the consideration of the Committee, nor should he take up their time with any examination, whether an opinion signed by four respectable Lawyers *out of the House* deserved the same attention as the opinion of as many very respectable Lawyers *in the House*. The question is, whether his Majesty's Ministers had entered into an agreement on the part of the public with Mr. Palmer, and whether Mr. Palmer had fulfilled his engagement. All agreements, especially of the kind in question, should be strictly observed. No man doubts the great advantage derived from Mr. Palmer's plan in respect both to public convenience and to revenue, and perhaps a better bargain has seldom been made for the public. The integrity of Mr. Palmer was not impeached, and as he had executed his plan, even beyond expectation or his own proposal, no wrangles in the Post-Office department should be suffered to deprive him of his promised reward; and it is the duty of Parliament to encourage and enforce the fulfilment of agreements made for the public benefit. He concluded by saying, that the City which he had the honor of representing, and he would add the whole kingdom, are fully sensible of the great advantages that have been derived from Mr. Palmer's exertions.

The *Attorney General* said, he must divest himself of his professional character, and speak only in his character as a Member of that House, upon the subject of the Counsels' opinion, which had been introduced upon the present question. When that paper was sent to him, he was led to enquire with what view it could be so sent; nor could he conceive

ceive with what view it could be supposed by his learned Friends who signed it to be taken, but for the purpose of influencing the House. He was sure it must be obtained by surprise from them, as one of them, Mr. Adam, had been long a Member of that House, and a more correct man never lived, either in professional or private life. He was sure that learned Gentleman would never have signed a paper which he supposed would be laid before him, in order to influence his vote in Parliament. Another of the learned Gentlemen was actually a Member of the House, but he did not see him in his place when any subject had a right to call for his opinion. But with respect to the question proposed to them, whether the evidence substantiated Mr. Palmer's agreement made with him. In their answer they paid no great compliment to the then Attorney General of the country. It was supposing that he would have drawn a patent or a bill, in which Mr. Palmer would have been secured his emolument, and no clauses or restrictions added by which the country would have been secured that he should have performed his duty in return. Then let the House next consider, whether his conduct had not been such, as would have warranted an Attorney General to have moved a *scire facias* for the repeal of his patent, and this he took to be the true state of the question. It was a known fact, that gentlemen sometimes gave very indulgent opinions, and it seemed to be so here; for he defied any man to say it was borne out by the evidence. They doubted that the letters were evidence, because they were improperly given up; but surely, even admitting that point, when Government were in possession of the facts they communicated, they were justified in acting upon it. The learned Gentleman then proceeded to read extracts from the correspondence of Mr. Palmer to Mr. Bonnor, from which he contended that Mr. Palmer had been justly dismissed from his situation in the Post-Office. He was willing to admit, for the argument's sake, that the communication might have been made wrongfully, but how did it become Government to act when they were in possession of the information? The question then came in this shape, whether as a Member of Parliament he thought the remuneration given to Mr. Palmer was sufficient and adequate for the service which it was admitted he had performed? After a consideration of the evidence, he was not anxious to enquire whether there was any specific agreement or not, but upon the former question he could not help declaring his opinion, that 3000l. per annum was recompense ample and liberal for the service he had done.

Mr.

Mr. Jekyll rose in reply to the Attorney General. He expressed his surprise that opinions of considerable men should have been treated with such unmerited contempt by learned and honourable members of his own profession. He defended the propriety with which they had been adduced as a part of his speech, by the honourable Member who with so much credit to himself had brought forward the resolutions—he denied that they had been offered to operate as an undue influence on the Committee—they had been offered to instruct and inform, and the honourable and learned Gentleman would hardly insist that such instruction and information Parliament are not continually in the habit of receiving from persons skilled in any subject under deliberation. As well might it be urged that in a bill relative to manufactures, the House would not listen to the opinion and information of artists on the particular topic. The subject here was, what would be the legal result on evidence of a contract so framed when relief was prayed for by an individual party to such contract.

It was true that opinions, as had been said by the hon. and learned Member, were sometimes hastily given by professional men. The hon. and learned Gentleman himself was an instance of the truth of his own criticism, for he had just delivered an opinion on the very voluminous Report now under the consideration of the Committee, avowing at the same time, that he had not seen it *three* hours before he came down to the House.

The hon. and learned Gentleman had challenged him to say how he would have delivered a judicial opinion if on such a statement of evidence such a question had gone to a jury? He would accept the challenge and say, that he would tell a jury they must take the whole of it together, and he had no doubt the jury would draw the same conclusion that was drawn by the Postmaster General on a review of the whole of Mr. Palmer's conduct, namely, that he was a man of the highest integrity and honour.

In return he would ask the hon. and learned Gentleman, as well as his hon. and learned friend (the Solicitor General) sitting near him, whether they would deny, as men conversant with the proceedings of a Court of Equity, that Mr. Palmer had not disclosed by evidence sufficient ground to file a Bill to compel the execution of a specific contract, if the question lay between two individuals of the state, instead of a question between an individual and the state.

He would ask of another hon. and learned Gentleman, an advocate

advocate in a court of common law, whether on similar principles Mr. Palmer could not have maintained an action? These were the remedies courts of justice held out, and shall it be said that Parliament will not act analogously where a specific grievance, out of the reach of the law, is complained of?

An hon. Gentleman (Mr. W. Dundas) who had presided in the Committee, had, he thought, gone a little out of his way in observing that when the letters which had been so much commented upon were produced, Mr. Palmer withdrew with feelings that evinced a consciousness of the impropriety of those letters—he begged to say, that this was much misconceived, as Mr. Palmer had, from motives of delicacy, been requested to withdraw by the Committee, and that, as to the letters subject to the explanation, as given by the Report, Mr. Palmer had no objection to their being read in every public place of this great City. Mr. Palmer has no such consciousness of impropriety in those letters, explained in the manner he has explained them himself, as the hon. Member imputes to him. Mr. Palmer is a man of as much honour in the estimation of those who know him, as of as high a sense of propriety as the hon. Gentleman himself, or any Member who composed that Committee.—Another hon. and learned Gentleman (the Solicitor General) had proceeded to ask, was Mr. Palmer, after these disclosures, fit to be reinstated? He would answer that question by asking another, Why was he not? Was it stated even by the Postmaster General, that he had been guilty of any malversation in his office? Nothing could be adduced against him but the expressions in his letters: expressions never acted upon, written under the irritation of a mind perpetually harrassed, and stimulated by the representations of his faithless correspondent, one whom he had fostered in his bosom, and who in return had stung his benefactor.

Thwarted, opposed and “pestered by the popinjays” around him, he answered “In his heat he knew not what”—perhaps too he might not be sorry to observe a confusion arising from the mismanagement of his opponents—were not these feelings incident to our nature, and would the Committee divest themselves as legislators of those sympathies they must avow as men?

The question was, whether a specific contract had been framed, it was admitted on all sides—one that would have been shaped into a patent, if legal objections had not stood in

the way. Had it been moulded into such a form, would any learned Gentleman in the Committee rise and say, that such a patent could have been vacated by what appeared in evidence?

The principle on which the law proceeds to create a patent office, is either where there is corruption in discharge of the duty of the office, or gross misconduct attended with actual injury to the service. The first point is negatived by the positive testimony of the Postmasters General. As to the second, the charge is attempted to be made out by the letters to Bonnor, as to the embarrassment of the office; an embarrassment occasioned by the very act of Bonnor himself. The charge respecting the fabrication of White's accounts seems indeed to be abandoned; as well it may, for if White is to be credited at all, it was a fabrication at the instance of Bonnor, of which Mr. Palmer was ignorant, and what degree of credit can be at all given to White, who, in his evidence, has falsified his own affidavit, the Committee will have no difficulty in coming to a just conclusion.

What was the transaction with Wilson? It arose from an extravagant and improvident contract made by Lord Walsingham with him, which, though Mr. Palmer could not rescind, he still found the means of correcting. Mr. Palmer had by the means of Wilson cheapened the rate of carriage through England:—Wilson had been one with whom the most beneficial contracts had been made, and it would have been the worst impolicy in Mr. Palmer to have broke with him, and would have annihilated all the benefit to the public.

These letters too rested in intention, and even in secrecy; were never executed and never could have been betrayed but by such a being as Bonnor. They were not even produced till the period of the supposed execution of such measures was long passed and gone. Where then exists the ground of repealing a patent on the head of misconduct in office, followed with injury to the public service?

As a contract for the benefit of the public, it must be admitted to the credit of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he never made a more wise or beneficial bargain. It must also be admitted that he held out at the commencement of Mr. Palmer's operations all his protection to free him from the dependency on the Postmaster General, as far as the protection of one branch of office could interfere with another; but that protection grew ineffectual; Mr.
Palmer

Palmer saw all his efforts towards the public service rendered abortive by the Postmaster General, what he could not do directly he was compelled to attempt indirectly:—"To do a great right he did a little wrong." He was placed in a most distressing situation; but even those transient speculations were never reduced to action; they could not be the ground of repealing a patent; they could not be the ground of rescinding a solemn contract between him and the State.

The honourable and learned Gentleman who had last sat down, conscious that it was necessary for his argument to change some terms in the proposition now to be discussed, had uniformly termed what Mr. Palmer was to receive a *compensation*. Mr. Jekyll contended that it was not to be deemed a compensation, what was now demanded from the justice of Parliament was the fulfilment of a specific and solemn engagement, to the fruits of which Mr. Palmer was as constitutionally entitled on the pledge of the public faith as a stockholder to his dividends on the funded debt of the country.

Mr. Jekyll concluded by adjuring the Committee to do that justice which he felt Mr. Palmer had a right to expect from the character of a British Parliament, and to remember what advantages his labours had procured for the whole empire; a plan which had been conceived with the greatest ingenuity, and carried into perfection by that unremitting spirit of enterprize which alone could have ensured the complete execution of it. To reject an application so substantially made out on the part of Mr. Palmer, and thereby to repress in future that enthusiasm, which alone could give effect to great and beneficial designs, would be equally an act of national impolicy and injustice.

The *Speaker* said, if an acquaintance with Mr. Palmer would justify him to vote for the motion, then he should have ample grounds for that conduct; but it was with regret he felt himself called upon to adopt a different line of conduct. If in the manner in which Mr. Palmer had acted, he saw nothing more than inadvertence or temporary gusts of passion, he should not have troubled the Committee upon the present occasion. The question appeared to him to divide itself into two parts:—the first, whether or not there was any specific agreement; and secondly, whether it was merely in remuneration of past services, or whether it had not also a prospective consideration, and if that reward had not been forfeited by subsequent conduct? It was admitted that the agreement had not legal validity, and,

therefore, must rest upon the good faith of the Treasury. He contended, that in every contract, and under all agreements the party to perform his part must act with diligence, fidelity, and integrity in the execution of his office. He would never underrate the merits of Mr. Palmer; he certainly had rendered essential service in that department; he had great merit in the invention, as well as his perseverance in overcoming the obstacles that impeded its being carried into execution; but the question was, whether he had received his recompense for future performances, it then came to be considered, whether Mr. Palmer had performed those duties faithfully and diligently, or whether he had not forfeited his future salary from his misconduct? Here he was grieved to say, that the Report, in his opinion, abundantly confirmed that fact, and he felt it his duty, as a Member of that House, to oppose the motion brought forward by the hon. Gentleman. In the Report there were three prominent features: The first relative to the contract of Mr. Wilson; the second of Mr. White, and the third relative to the delay of the delivery of the letters. The hon. Member then read extracts from the evidence to substantiate these facts. At the same time he must do Mr. Palmer the justice to declare, that he had not acted from corrupt motives; he seemed to be a melancholy instance of a man's going unwarrantable lengths to obtain a favourite object. It had been argued, that he had written those letters under an irritation of mind; but that irritation could not last for two years, and the letters were from 1788 to 1790. Nor did the whole depend upon the evidence of Bonnor—much was derived from Mr. Palmer's own letters. It had also been said, that nothing had been actually done, and that the whole of his misconduct was confined to his letters; but the Appendix to the Report would prove, that the delivery of letters was retarded, and the wish of Mr. Palmer, in his letter from Brighton, had in part been carried into effect. There were many other points which the consideration of the evidence presented, but he should not detain the House. It was his unalterable opinion that Government, with such facts staring them in the face, would act culpably if they over-looked them; it would spread to the other offices, and ultimately undermine the Constitution, and destroy the morals of the people.

Mr. Dundas explained.

Mr. Sheridan, after complimenting the talents and general conduct of the Speaker, and regretting that in the present instance he should have been so far mistaken, entered into a defence

defence of the Counsel, who, in their opinions, had been so indecorously treated. He observed, that in the recent case of the prison of Cold-Bath-Fields, a similar measure had been adopted by the gentlemen who so forcibly reprobated the present act. That Counsel had not a right to enquire into the object of the person who demanded their opinion; that no man would require an opinion for the purpose of locking it in his closet, it was to inform others, and it had long been even the established practice to obtain opinions for the absolute and avowed purpose of influencing by legal information the determinations of Parliament. Mr. Sheridan, in a strain of strong irony, animadverted on the arguments of the different Speakers, and particularly the Attorney General,* who, he observed, had admitted that he had once given an opinion, but that having been admonished by his master, that sage mentor of the law, the Master of the Rolls, he determined not to again act with the like indiscretion. Much had been said of the "*nonsensical opinion*" of Messrs Mansfield, Erskine, Gibbs, and Adam. He did not mean, because it was quite unnecessary, to panegyricise the talents of these gentlemen; but if persons thus eminently distinguished were so cavalierly treated, what would have become of the small fry of the law had they been in a similar predicament? Certain he was that to them such expressions would have been most injurious libels; but in truth he had not yet heard one single argument advanced to shake that opinion, nor was it in the wit of man to urge one. Was it credible that four gentlemen of the first character for professional ability and integrity, after a long and studious examination of the whole of the evidence, would deliberately sign their names to an opinion in a matter of such importance, that had so strongly interested the public mind, and was the general subject of conversation, that must be open to the observation of the whole world, but from the fullest conviction that it was founded in truth and justice, he would be bold to say, that there was not a man in the kingdom of common sense or common honesty, that would fairly and impartially read the evidence that could be of a contrary opinion. He (Mr. S.) regretted the asperity that had unnecessarily been introduced into the debate; he was far from attaching censure to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, acting for the public, had in this instance made a most provident bargain; and for

* N. B. It was the Master of the Rolls himself who had given the opinion, when Attorney General!

the support he had afforded Mr. Palmer in the completion of his plan, merited the popularity it had obtained for him, and which had largely contributed to carry the right hon. Gentleman through to the present period; for each individual in the empire experienced the benefits of this plan, and the multitude, possibly not enough enlightened to appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's merit in other respects, judging of the rest by this specimen, gave him credit for all together; and, though it might not be deemed very flattering by the right hon. Gentleman, it had been not unusual in the addresses of thanks to Mr. Palmer, to see the merit of Mr. Pitt tacked to that of Mr. Palmer; the Minister thus riding in the basket of Mr. Palmer's mail-coach.

Mr. Sheridan said, that the situation which he had held as Secretary of the Treasury afforded him an early knowledge of Mr. Palmer's plan, and of the extraordinary opposition it had experienced. Folio volumes had been written against it, in which it was represented that this plan, an inconsiderable moiety of the increased emolument derivable from which now appeared of so much importance, would destroy the revenue. These objections Mr. Palmer satisfactorily answered, and entered into an agreement with Government, by which it was specifically stated that in the event of his success, he should have two and half per cent. for his life on the future increased revenue of the Post-Office, and nothing more; not a farthing in the event of his miscarriage. Here Mr. S. entered into a detail of the opposition the plan had experienced from the Post-Office, which he declared his conviction could not have been surmounted by any other man in the empire than Mr. Palmer; and which appearing to convince the Government of the necessity as well as justice of Mr. Palmer's demand of full and uncontrouled powers; a draft of a Commission was made out at the Treasury, by which Mr. P. was appointed Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Post-Office for life, independent of the Postmaster General, with a per centage of two and half on the future net revenue of that department, above 240,000l. per annum, together with a salary likewise for his life of 1,500l. per annum. This Commission, admitted by Mr. Pitt in his evidence before the Committee, the Attorney General thought could not be executed consistently with the act of Queen Ann; but with whom rested the promised amendment of that act? Not with Mr. Palmer. The Minister alone had the power to execute what was so incumbent on him to perform, and the performance of which would have

have prevented all the ills resulting from the misconceptions that have arisen from the neglect of it. For Mr. Palmer uniformly contended for the power virtually and necessarily delegated to him to controul a plan originating with himself; from which the community had derived great advantages, hourly increasing, and by the increased revenue from which his talents, risk, time, and anxious labour were to be remunerated. An attempt had been made to depreciate Mr Palmer's merit by asserting that part of the increased revenue had proceeded from an additional tax on letters; but was not that tax a suggestion of Mr. Palmer, and would the Minister have attempted it if the advantages by which it was accompanied had not reconciled the public to pay the addition with cheerfulness? Preceding Mr. Palmer's management there had been for several years a regular diminution of Post-Office revenue, to the amount of above 13,000*l.* per annum, which was likely to increase with the progressive superiority of stage coaches over the mail carts; but Mr. Palmer by rendering the mail conveyance the quickest as well as the most regular and the safest in the empire, destroyed competition; whilst the Post-Office was but one of many departments to which Mr. Palmer, through the facility and safety of intercourse and correspondence, had afforded augmented means to contribute to the support of the State. Mr. Palmer had effected the most perfect, safe, and regular conveyance of persons and property, for which the Public paid a superior price than was paid for by any other carriages; by the happiest invention, he had blended this with the conveyance of the mails, in consequence the charge on letters was in a similar manner increased, and their monopoly in a great measure secured to the Post-Office. Whatever increase of letters, therefore, had arisen from the increase of commerce, their conveyance by the Mails would never have been secured to the Post-Office but by the establishment of Mr. Palmer's Plan.

Respecting the observation that a pension of 3,000*l.* a year given to Mr. Palmer for his life, as a reward for his services, was as much as had been conferred on any of our Admirals, he must observe that though the merit of those illustrious characters was beyond his praise, and equal to the highest admiration and remuneration of their country, the cases were by no means analagous. These gentlemen did not, like Mr. Palmer, embark their property, determinable on the issue of a precarious speculation. They did not, like him, encounter years of labour, whose reward should proceed only from the
revenue

revenue they should create. He did not mean to discuss the extent of Mr. Palmer's merit, it was fresh in every man's memory, and had not been denied in that House, but it should be recollected that Mr. Palmer did not now solicit a reward determinable at that period; he called upon that House for the due performance of a more than implied, a specific agreement for his life, made by the Minister on the part of the people, and in the fulfilment of which the national character was at issue.

In proving the agreement, Mr. Sheridan again adverted to Mr. Pitt's testimony before the Committee, to the report of the Commissioners of Accounts, and, amongst other documents, to the following letter from the Postmaster General, Lord Walsingham.

Letter from Lord Walsingham to Mr. Palmer, dated Dec. 28, 1787.

I have long wished to see that point cleared, of your plan costing less than the old one; for I have understood, invariably, that it cost more, but that the benefit overpaid the expence.

Be it one or the other, it was a most fortunate regulation, and you will well deserve the salary and commission on the increased revenue, for which the faith of Government is pledged to you.

Yours, &c. W.

It had been asserted as proof of guilt in Mr. Palmer, that he had shrunk from the production of his private letters before the Committee. If, upon the same principle, innocence were to be established by the reverse, his enemies must presently acquit him; because it was known not only to him (Mr. Sheridan) but to many Gentlemen then present, who had determined that no such evidence should be read, or such an undue advantage taken, that so far from Mr. Palmer having wished to avoid the reading of these letters, that he, though possessed of their purport, challenged their production, under a conviction of his own incorruptible integrity, and an impression that ingenuity could not pervert them into more than a trivial want of temper, and of that consideration which should prevent a man, in the unguarded confidence of friendship, in the moment of passion, or of pleasantry, writing to his greatest intimate any thing not entirely adapted for the inspection of the world. In the examination of them it would be seen that the first of these private letters was as far back as Oct. 16, 1788, the second May 22, 1789, Mr. Palmer's commission is dated September 11th, 1789, being written therefore previous to this commission, nothing contained in them could affect it.

As to the first, however, which respected Wilson's bills, and which had been so fully and satisfactorily explained in Mr. Palmer's evidence, as well as by the very able gentlemen

men who had preceded him, nothing could be more clear from this letter, than that Lord Walsingham's letters and orders justified any charge of Wilson's, had it been ever so absurd or extravagant; that, however, Mr. Palmer might endeavour, he could not possibly set aside the demand, and therefore after rating Wilson roundly for his conduct, he advises the payment, but at the same time, so to alarm Lord Walsingham on the disagreeable consequences arising from his wanton interference, so perplexing to Mr. Palmer and dangerous to the revenue, as might prevent his future intermeddling in a business he so ill understood; this plainly and manifestly was the whole just and meaning of the letter, and the end produced by it was, that Lord Walsingham heartily glad to get out of the difficulty he had involved himself in, left Mr. Palmer to settle the bills, who then prevailed on Wilson to make a considerable abatement from this charge, which a Jury must have allowed on proof of the orders given him by Lord Walsingham; another expected good effect arose from this letter, Mr. P. being left to make the next contract himself he engaged with this very Mr. Wilson at one third the expence of Lord Walsingham's contract with him; but mark the consequence of his suspension from the active controul of his plans, every subsequent contract has been made by the noble Lords on terms equally or even more extravagant than the first contract of Lord Walsingham; the subject of the letter, the meaning of which has been so insidiously distorted, as if Mr. Palmer meant to countenance that exorbitant charge which he had the skill and integrity to reduce, though no way responsible for it, or having had any hand in the contract.

The letter of May 1789, is clearly an answer to some scheme of his Deputy; Mr. Palmer here advises him to prevent the mischief, unless by obeying the Postmaster General's order to take an account they had directed, such a temporary confusion might arise, as would alarm and effectually cure them of their teasing and dabbling in his machinery, as had happily been effected for the revenue in the affair of the contracts; and it was curious enough to observe, that in February 1792, this very Deputy, agreeably to his original suggestion, of himself, when at variance with Mr. Palmer and without the least communication with him, established a check on the accounts that effectually answered his purposes in creating delay, confusion and public complaints, and which is proved beyond contradiction by the Postmaster Ge-

neral's minute and Bonnor's answer,* after Mr. Palmer's suspension, to have been solely his own act. It is impossible to read the evidence † and for a moment to entertain a suspicion that Mr. Palmer had any concern in it. The rest of the private letters were written in October 1790, within a few days of that period when their disputes had arisen to the greatest height and he had conceived himself most grossly insulted, when the Lords had interfered with his regulations in Scotland, in a manner he felt equally vexatious and mortifying, and had suspended his commission in that country, when he had himself in his public letter ‡ to them, in this same month that the private letters are written, thrown up his commission altogether, in as far as related to the least dependence on them or his being subject to their authority. At this moment cut to the soul by this wanton exercise of power, provoked still more by his Deputy's artful aggravation of these acts, in themselves too provoking, under the impulse of a wounded spirit he speaks the language of contempt, of resentment, of indignation; he wishes any thing might be done to prove the ill effect of their interference, to expose them, and convince the Minister of the necessity of performing his agreement and confirming the appointment of 1785; but no act whatever was done in consequence of those expressions, and if there had, the end to be obtained was perfectly consonant to the spirit of his agreement. In his contest with the office, with contractors, postmasters, &c. &c. against a host of enemies, and the numerous intrigues and machinations formed against him, he was sometimes reduced to oppose art against art, and had he not possessed this, as well as every other talent necessary to so vast and complex an undertaking, had he not unceasingly persevered with the utmost temper,

* Alluded to by an hon. Gentleman, Dr. Laurence, p. 127.

† When Mr. Church waited on Mr. Palmer by your Lordship's direction, did Mr. Palmer concur with Mr. Church in using his best endeavours to correct those inaccuracies of which your Lordship complained?

I understood that Mr. Palmer consented most readily to appoint two of his most efficient clerks to meet Mr. Church, and to settle with him such regulations as might correct the irregularities complained of, without prejudice to the morning deliveries, or to the expediting the mails in the evening, as will appear by a minute to which I shall refer the Committee by and by.

Were you induced, in the first investigation of the accounts, by any suspicion of misconduct in Mr. Palmer?

By no means.—*Lord Walsingham's evidence.*

‡ See Report, p. 123.

patience and resolution, bending every faculty of mind and body to this sole object for years, at every sacrifice of health, peace and fortune, the public would never have been in possession of the invaluable blessing he had procured them. If he meant to retaliate or prevent where he imagined injury might arise to the public or himself, the very habit of opposition he had been in for years to the scandalous intrigues of that office would be a sufficient excuse, and he could not but express his concern that any gentleman could be found who enjoyed in common with the whole kingdom the benefit of his exertions, who could endeavour to deprive him of his hard earned profits, or the country of his further services, on pretences so unjust, so frivolous and contemptible. Here Mr. Sheridan referred to and read many extracts from the evidence to prove what he had observed, and went on reading or further commenting on the letters, the whole of which he insisted gentlemen ought correctly to examine, instead of partial passages so malignantly misapplied; they would find in them the most ardent zeal for the good regulation of the office, the success of his improvements, the just and regular statement of all accounts, the most anxious solicitude to be on good terms with the Postmaster General, and though he would not forego his right to the appointment of 1785, or acknowledge their authority, yet he expresses his wish to submit his most material alterations to the Postmaster General, but that it was impossible with Lord Walsingham to do this. That his letters to them must prove every disposition on his part to go on well, but that they had left him no alternative but to appeal to the Treasury. He mentions that Lord Camden and Mr. Pitt were considering of means to settle proper powers for him, and his hopes at last of obtaining such as may prevent any further disputes or obstructions to his plan; with these private letters, likewise, if gentlemen meant to enable themselves to judge fairly, they must read his public letter to the Lords of October* 16th, the same month in which the private ones were written, and never was there a more clear or convincing one to his integrity, the nature of his agreement, the unworthy treatment he experienced, the powers which were promised and ought to have been confirmed to him, and the extreme injury the public sustained and still continued to experience from that necessary part of his agreement not being carried into execution. The whole must be taken and considered together,

* See Report, p. 123, 124, 125.

their evident intention and purposed end, but the very worst which the most ingenious malice could work out, or the severest inference that could possibly be drawn from even the most unguarded or objectionable passages of his private letters written at distant periods, many years before his suspension, some of them even before his appointment, provoked from him by villainy and misrepresentation, selected from numberless others and laid by for the worst of purposes, was, that anxious for the perfection of his plans he sometimes meant to effect that by policy he could not do by power; he acted according to his agreement, to the spirit of it, and for the public good, nor could one single act of his be shown contrary to that principle.

In respect to White's bill, after the contemptuous manner in which this charge had been scouted by the Committee, after White's total contradiction of his affidavit, and confessing that his letter to the Postmaster General, the affidavit, &c. had been the fabrication of Bonnor, and that he had been prevailed on by him to write the one and swear to the other; he could not have thought it possible, that any Gentleman could insinuate blame to Mr. Palmer from that transaction, it was, indeed, a most convincing proof how miserably his opponents were reduced for argument to palliate their conduct towards the public and that Gentleman, he would first observe from the evidence, that the Minister himself had expressed that he was satisfied with the answers given by Mr. Palmer to the charges preferred against him on his suspension, in which this of White's was included; * even previous to that man's recantation before the Committee. Lord Walsingham, after repeated testimonies to Mr. Palmer's integrity in his evidence before these Gentlemen, on being asked to this particular point—"Could Mr. Palmer's personal interests be at all affected by the settlement of White's account?" Replies, "I have no reason whatever to impute to Mr. Palmer in that, or in any other respect, his having any private interests of his own upon the making up of the Office accounts."

* How came you to know, that the answer given to the first body of charges, made against you by the Postmaster General, was satisfactory to Mr. Pitt?

I understood so both from the late and present Lord Camden.

Have you any reason to know, that the answer to the second body of charges was satisfactory to Mr. Pitt?

I understood from both these Gentlemen, that they were equally so.—

See Report, p. 10. Mr. Palmer's examination.

This

This account was entirely betwixt Bonnor and White—by their gross neglect it had been unsettled for four years, and part of the vouchers lost, it was at the repeated solicitation of his Deputy, Mr. Palmer, had kindly interfered, and endeavoured to get it adjusted for him, and directed Mr. Hasker, who had the controul of officers in White's situation, to assist White as far as he could in his recollection, as to the various journies he had made, and to make out to the best of his judgment a fair and just bill of the expences actually incurred. This was done by Mr. Hasker; the bill allowed, and Mr. Palmer, in a subsequent letter, congratulates his Deputy upon it, by saying, "I am glad White's bill is signed, for that was the awkwardest business before the Treasury." That the Board of Treasury, as well as the Postmaster-General, are satisfied the expence was actually incurred, though the vouchers were lost. Mr. Hasker, who made out the bills—is at this moment in the trust, and in the examination and allowance of every bill of this description at the Post-office. Bonnor's declaration in his evidence, that it was Mr. Palmer's money that was advanced to White is fully contradicted by one of his own letters to Mr. Palmer,* in which he declares it is his, Bonnor's own money advanced to White; that he is responsible for all the consequences of such advances, and that he must be a loser of at least 200l. by the settlement of his accounts by the loss of vouchers. It was needless to say more on this contemptible insinuation—but to remark on the horrid ingratitude of that Fiend, who could thus endeavour to turn this generous and humane interference to rescue him from the consequences of his negligence, to the disgrace and ruin of his patron and benefactor."

He could not but remark on the weak and futile attempt to call in question the agreement for life, made by Govern-

* In what manner did you direct White's accounts to be made out?

In consequence of my Deputy having frequently complained to me, that White could not be brought to any account with him for monies advanced, I directed Mr. Hasker, who had the controul of Officers in White's situation, to assist White, as far as he could, in his recollection, as to the various journies he had made, and to make out to the best of his judgment, a fair and just bill of the expences actually incurred.

Have you any reason to think, that the monies charged by, and allowed to White in his account, exceeded what he had actually expended, and was entitled to, or that you could have been a sufferer had such allowances not been made?

No; and in support of my opinion I beg to refer to a letter of the 11th of June 1791, from my Deputy—from which letter I beg to read the two following extracts.—These extracts are referred to by Dr. Laurence, p. 25.

ment with Mr. Palmer, and the infinite benefit derived to the commerce and revenue of the country from that agreement, * facts so fully established before the Committee appointed by

* Was there any verbal agreement made with the Treasury, for the reform and improvement of the Post-Office and its revenue?

Yes, with Mr. Pitt, through his secretary, Dr. Prettyman.

What was that verbal agreement?

I left some papers with Dr. Prettyman, stating, that if my plan succeeded, for the reform and improvement of the Posts, I demanded for my life two and a half per cent. on the future increased revenue of the Post-Office beyond the present net profits, and not to have one shilling if I did not succeed in my plan; this happened in the Spring, 1784. The answer brought to me by Dr. Prettyman, (Private Secretary to Mr. Pitt,) was, that the terms were thought fair, and would be fully complied with, provided the Plan succeeded.

Have you ever asked for a copy of the papers delivered in to Dr. Prettyman?

No, I did not, nor kept one myself: I believe it will not be denied on the part of Administration, that such a paper was delivered to Dr. Prettyman, and such an answer was returned by him.—Mr. Palmer's Examination. Report, p. 3.

On what surplus was the per centage to commence, stated in the agreement?

By the original agreement, it was to commence on the surplus beyond the average actual amount of the net revenue at the time the plan first commenced, supposed to be 150,000*l.* By this modified agreement, it was to commence after the addition of the tax of 1784, computed at 90,000*l.* to the 150,000*l.* making together 240,000*l.* and my per centage was to be upon the surplus of that sum—my per centage on 90,000*l.* being commuted for a salary of 1,500 a year. I suggested the tax to Mr. Pitt.—*Ibid.* p. 13.

What was your construction and understanding of the agreement under which you originally acted in the Post-Office?

My official situation I considered as the means only of giving me power to carry my plan into execution; and had I been permitted to proceed, my intention was so to arrange its various parts under the distinct controul and direction of various officers, properly instructed on the subject, that, after a certain time, it would have pursued its own natural progress without my assistance; and I conceive myself entitled, pursuant to the agreement made with me, to such an appointment for life, as placed me independent of the controul and interruption of the Postmaster-General. For the corroboration of which opinion I refer to the evidence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, given to this Committee.—*Ibid.* p. 62.

I should not have troubled you in the present situation of public affairs, but from the extreme inconvenience I experience in my arrears not being paid up, and the anxiety I feel to have my emoluments finally settled by you, under whose encouragement and sanction I had the honour to commence, and have perfected my undertaking for the improvement of the Posts.

I believe it is unnecessary to repeat my engagements; but least it should have escaped your memory, Sir, I beg leave to state, that if I succeeded, I was to have two and a half per cent. on the future increased revenue of the Post-Office for my life from its commencement, and to be paid for my

by that House, to examine into the business, to hear the evidence to be adduced, both by the Board of Treasury, as well as Mr. Palmer, and to report the whole—it was from that evidence so solemnly taken and fully reported, that the House was to form their judgment, and not from loose, or flippant declarations, or partial or prejudiced opinions from any character whatever, however otherwise respectable. In that evidence the original agreement that Mr. Palmer was to have two and a half per cent. for his life, on the increased revenue of the Post-Office, for his plan and the carrying it into execution was fully proved, that he had more than performed this engagement, and the public were, at this moment, in the full exercise of this plan, and the enjoyment of its great benefits, which must be permanent to the Public, though Mr. Palmer was to have but a very small share of the profits, and that for his life only. No witness is called by the Treasury to contradict this, nor did even the Chancellor of the Exchequer attempt to deny it in his examination, but with a candour that did him honour, acknowledged the modified agree-

ences and trouble from the time I was first employed, till the plan was suffered to be carried into execution. This sum was to include my salary for every duty of office, my travelling expences, &c.

I beg leave, therefore, Sir, to express my hopes that you will order a payment of such sum as you may think just for my time and trouble, from October 1782 to 1st August 1784. when my plan was first carried into execution; that an average be struck of the nett revenue of the office up to that time, and that a sum equal to two and a half per cent. on its increased annual revenue be paid me, which is to include my salary, all travelling expences, &c. whatever sums I have received from the office to be deducted from this account. That in future a sum be paid me quarterly, in a proportion within the supposed yearly amount of my per centage, and the balance to be paid me every year on settling the accounts in the April quarter.

I hope, Sir, it may not be imputed a vanity in me to mention, that though Mr. Allen (as appears by his narrative) derived upwards of 12,000l. per year from his very partial improvements of the Cross-Posts only, the regulations I have introduced, independent of their effect on the General Posts throughout the country, have increased that particular branch of the revenue more in the course of two years, than he did during the whole forty years he farmed the same.

It may not be improper to add, that I have long since had in contemplation various other plans, which I conceive to be of the greatest consequence to the correspondence of the kingdom, and more particularly of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, which I should ere now have digested and carried into execution, had the settlement of my affairs left my mind sufficiently at ease for that purpose. I have the honour to be, &c.

J. P.

Extract of Mr. Palmer's letter to Mr. Pitt, Dec. 30, 1788. Appendix to Report, p. 82.

* Page 19.

ment.

ment, and the consequent Commission drawn up at the Treasury in October 1785, to be held under the Crown with independent powers to extend and conduct his plan with the salary and then two and a half per cent. for life. The letter written by Lord Camden*, with the Chancellor's concurrence, explaining this modification, is another uncontroversial testimony—it even declares he would find no difficulty in having it secured to his family, should any thing happen to himself, so little idea was there, that it were possible he could be deprived of it during his life; and where part of his expences are refused to be allowed him, it is declared to be on the presumption, that the per centage on the increased revenue will amply repay him. When Mr. Palmer, therefore, had performed his part of the agreement, will any man contend that there ought to have been a moment's hesitation on the part of Government, to have performed theirs; or that if one old Act of Parliament stood in the way, another new one ought not to have been brought into that House for its completion; or if the Minister found a difficulty in confirming this agreement which he himself had modified to secure the great personal services of Mr. Palmer independent of a power which had been exerted in constant opposition to his plan, and so injuriously to the public. If he chose, from whatever motives, to decline this just and politic arrangement he had obtained for that public, this second agreement, was he not bound to resort to the first, and honourably to fulfil that? No one surely would contend that after Mr. Palmer had been led by degrees to abandon every lucrative concern he was engaged in and every flattering prospect in life, that he might compleat this great work, and dedicate that life to the public, that after performing his part of the engagement he was then to be driven from a plain, clear, specific agreement to a modified and complex one, and from this second agreement so fully considered by the Minister to be held independent and for life, he was to be likewise driven, and obliged to act on an appointment to be held under the very power that constantly opposed his plans, and at the command and the mere will and pleasure of every person that in the frequent changes of the Postmaster General might be placed at the head of that department, however adverse to him or ignorant of those plans. Had he possessed the powers promised him, no dispute could possibly have arisen, if any injury had occurred it is to be imputed solely to Government not having fulfilled this part of their agreement with Mr. Palmer, and indeed from this

* Page 19, 20.

breach of public faith, the loss to the public was incalculable, for who could know what his ideas were of the improvements that could be effected in that office, or the extent of them. Let the evidence be looked to,* as a proof

* Did the operations of your plan, so far as they were permitted to proceed, produce any, and what advantage to the revenue?

Lord Walsingham as well as the Earl of Chesterfield, have so handsomely acknowledged the benefits derived to the trade and commerce of the country by the plan, that I can have no scruple in acknowledging what their Lordships have hinted at, that the vast increase in that trade and commerce must have amply repaid to the post revenue such benefits: My agreement being for 2½ per cent. on the future increase of the Post-Office revenue, from the act of 1784, as well as every object whatever from which it might arise, it may not perhaps appear necessary for me to prove, which I can most clearly, the vast increase to the post revenue by the plan, independent of the tax laid by that act. In the first year of the trial it was clearly proved, to the satisfaction of the Lords of the Treasury, that the increase of the revenue from the tax on letters in those towns where the mail coach was established, compared with other towns served on the old plan, was in favour of the new plan in the proportion of six and seven to one. The advantage to the revenue was still further proved in the second year, for which I beg leave to refer to the plan, the observations and answers upon it, and the memorial from the Post Office to the Treasury, and my answer to the Treasury, in March 1786, to such memorial, which had been sent me from the Treasury. The increase of the revenue was greatly checked the first two or three years by the opposition from the office preventing my making my regulations perfect, and likewise from the vast increase of franks, as stated in my letter, dated 21st May, 1788, to the Commissioners of Inquiry, and inserted in their report laid before the House of Commons. Another proof of the benefits to the revenue is, that 380 towns which, previous to my plan, had a post of three times a week only, and 40 more, which had no post at all, had in consequence a daily post. The means of corresponding being doubled to them, must have occasioned a vast increase in the number of letters sent, and of course in the revenue arising from it. In addition to this, from the regularity and safety of the post, and the speed being doubled, twice the number of letters could be sent in the same space of time, as for instance; to Bath, Bristol, Norwich, Birmingham, and an infinite number of other places, a letter sent on the old plan on a Monday, could not receive the answer till the Friday following, such answer may by the new regulation be now received on the Wednesday, a reply to that may be sent the same evening, and another answer received on the Friday.

In the year 1724, the Post-Office revenue, in the progress	} £.
of more than a century, had amounted to only	— } 96,332
From 1724 to 1764, it decreased on the average, being,	} 77,795
in 1762	— — — — —
And, in 1763, no more than £.97,833.	
In 1764 and 1765, the franking act and other modifica-	} £.
tions increased the annual revenue	— — — — — } 157,571
The average produce from 1765 to 1774	} £.
was	— — — — — } 162,534
From 1774 to 1783 the revenue was	— 149,333

So that for nine years preceding my plan, }
there was an annual decrease of — } 13,198

only of a few which he submitted to the Minister, and for the success of which, he offered to pledge his private fortune; to effect these further plans, beyond his original one, for which alone the per centage for life was granted, he demands the per centage of his second agreement—the patent and powers. Possessed of that, he says, I will carry them into execution—under the controul of another, I will not—I cannot. In that incontrovertible evidence will be seen the fullest and

Between the establishment of my plan and April 1797, not quite thirteen years, the net revenue has gradually increased to — — — — —	} 513,350
So that the previous annual average having been, as I stated before — — — — —	} 149,333

It appears that the net Post-Office revenue has been within thirteen years increased beyond that sum — — — — —	} 364,016
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Exclusive of this, mail robberies, which formerly cost Government very large sums annually, and by which individuals suffered to a great amount, have been totally stopt, where mail coaches are used; government dispatches by messengers, which before cost large sums, are now comparatively very few; expresses, which formerly caused great risk, expence, and inconvenience to mercantile houses and individuals, are now scarce ever necessary; and letters, which were formerly sent by stage coaches for the sake of expedition, to the great detriment of the post revenue, and expence to individuals, are now naturally sent by the post, it not only being cheaper, but as it outruns every other conveyance.

Is the increase of the Post-Office revenue in any way to be attributed to the Post Office act in 1784?

Certainly; but the act of 1784 was framed on a suggestion of mine to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and constituted an integral part of my plan, given in October 1784, which by procuring an increase of dispatch, accommodation, and safety, it was expected would render it acceptable.

Has the revenue been increased on the Bye and Cross Posts, and the Scotch Posts, by the operations of your Plan?

It has, and in this manner: Independent of 250 of the towns before mentioned having a daily post instead of only three times a week on the Bye and Cross Posts, my plan has rescued those Posts from a state of delay and irregularity even worse than what existed in the General Post—the Bye Posts form the connection which each town has with the other, independent of the Capital—so that all the towns on the great roads partake of the benefits of my plan, equally with the General Post—the mails are now conveyed on many of the Cross Posts in a third and even a fourth part of the time taken formerly—the whole of these facts will be more fully explained by a reference to my plan, the objections to it, and my answers, and particularly to the extract from the objections of Mr. Allen, and my reply.—In 1784, when my plan commenced, the net revenue of the Bye and Cross Posts was 61,181l.—In April, 1797, it amounted to 182,587l. being an increase, in less than 13 years, of 121,406—In Scotland, the Post revenue has been also considerably improved, which I conceive to have in a great measure arisen from the numerous

and clearest proof of the advantage to the revenue from his plans, the integrity and purity of his conduct in that profligate

rous regulations established by me in my frequent journies through that kingdom.

Was the limitation of franking, which took place in 1784, any part of your plan?

Yes.

What are the particular advantages derived by the City of Edinburgh, with regard to the expedition of the conveyance of letters?

They arose from the great increase in the expedition, from the regularity as well as the safety of the mails, and their Posts being daily instead of five times a week in the General Posts, and three times a week in the Cross Posts, which are now also daily.

Is the new mode of conveyance by the mail less expensive than the old mode, and how?

By my first proposal, the conveyance for mails was to have been 3d. per mile each way per day, which, on 4,000 miles, being the number which the coaches travel (as appears by a paper before this Committee) would have amounted to 36,000l. per year. I reduced this charge to 1d. per mile, which saved the Public 24,000l. per annum. A short and simple mode of calculating the sum saved by the new mode of conveyance, in comparison with the old, is this; the least sum that could possibly be paid on the average, for the conveyance of the mails by cart or horse, on roads where the mail-coaches now travel, would be about 6l. or 7l. per mile per year, or 2d. per mile each way per day, which being 1d. per mile more than is paid for the conveyance by mail-coaches on the 4,000 miles, makes a saving of 12,000l. per year in that single article of reform, exclusive of the additional dispatch and accommodation.

Did you at any time suggest a plan for the reform of the Penny-Post-Office?

I did, and to this effect—I offered to the Board of Treasury, about the autumn of 1791, as I had before done to the Commissioners of Inquiry, to take a farm of the Penny-Post-Office for my life, at a rent equal to the highest net revenue it ever produced, as a full compensation for my general plan and the execution of it, and in satisfaction for my salary and per centage. This offer being declined, I afterwards proposed that the additional expence of this reform should not exceed, at the utmost, 4,000l. per annum, whereas the excess, over and above the former expence, has now amounted; as appears by the account before the Committee, to 16,000l. per annum, and the net increased revenue, instead of equalling my salary and per centage, has only amounted to about 1,600l. per annum over and above the former produce previous to the reform, notwithstanding the additional tax, which I think must of itself have amounted to 2 or 3,000l. per annum. In confirmation of many of these facts I beg to refer to the report of the Commissioners of Inquiry respecting the Post-Office, laid before the House of Commons.

What has been the excess in the expenditure in the General Post-Office, during the period of your suspension, beyond the average during the period of your management?

187,848l. in the whole.

Do you mean to say, that if you had continued in your situation of Comptroller-General in the Post-Office from the period at which your

gate office, the saving of 24,000*l.* per year in the contracts only, the enormous waste of the public money since his suspension, to the amount of above 187,000*l.* and the ignorant and extravagant mode in which one of his plans had been carried into execution, in an excess of 12,000*l.* per year beyond what Mr. Palmer had pledged himself completely to reform the Penny Post for; an attempt was made to controvert these facts before the Committee, but it totally failed, it was then declared that evidence should be brought forward to rebut this and other parts of it, but after the Committee had been kept open several days to receive this evidence, it was utterly abandoned; these facts could not be denied, and the Committee closed. There they are in their report—firmly substantiated, admitted, uncontradicted—in that report so decisive to his agreement, its advantages to the

suspension took place till the present time, the Post-Office revenue would have been benefited to the amount you have just stated?

In answer to this, I beg to observe, that in the execution of the various plans I proposed to Government, when left to my own judgment, I have not failed in one, and have invariably completed them at a less expence than I had proposed. The accommodation and revenue likewise have turned out greater than I had promised; looking, therefore, to the great expenditure in the establishment of my Penny-Post plan, since my suspension, so much beyond what I had proposed, and pledged myself not to exceed, in that petty branch of the Posts, as well as from other circumstances, I have no scruple in declaring that, had I been in the controul of the expenditure of the Post Office, I do in my conscience believe a very great part of the sum of 187,348*l.* would have been saved to the Public. I beg likewise to add, that I am not conscious, on any occasion whatever, of having appropriated one shilling of the public revenue to my own use, or connived at such improper conduct in others, or of ever having received the least compensation for any office, contract, or benefit I have obtained for others, or that I have ever made one bargain or regulation that has not been beneficial to the Public, or ever had even a thought, or used an expression that was not ultimately meant for the public good.

Did you make any proposals of any further improvements in the Post-Office to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1792?

In March 1792, I gave in to the Chancellor of the Exchequer several proposed improvements respecting the Foreign Post, Penny Post, Newspapers, regulations in Franking, and simplifying and modifying the partial rates of postage; and also for a more complete reform of the Cross-Posts, connected with the circulation of bye-letters through London on a Sunday—a General Express or Post on that day in London, as well as every other principal town in this kingdom—a more early and regular delivery to those towns, as perfect as the nature of their situations would admit, like that of the capital—likewise to guard some of the mails conveyed by cart or horse—and to extend the coaches to many other places, which, had I gone on progressively in my plans, as I originally wished, must have greatly added to the Post revenue, at least 80 or 100,000*l.* a year.—*Mr. Palmer's Examination, REPORT, Page 71.*

Public, and so highly honourable to the character and conduct of Mr. Palmer.

Does any man ask, after reading the evidence, Is Mr. Palmer a proper person to controul the Post-Office? I would ask, Can he point out any one man in this kingdom so proper, whose great ability and perfect integrity the public universally feel and acknowledge the benefits of, and to which his very opponents in that office had in the amplest manner subscribed their testimony. If further evidence were wanted, let them look at the Report of the Committee* of

* Extract from the Report of the Committee of Finance, on the Post-Office.

On the question relative to the mode of compensating the services of the late Comptroller General, we forbear to dwell, it being under the consideration of the House of Commons.

The last part of the instructions of your Committee being to report whether any and what further measures can be adopted for reducing any part of the expenditure of the public revenue, or for diminishing the total amount of the salaries and emoluments, without detriment to the public service. They think it their duty to premise that, in an executive office of the nature of the General Post-Office, where success depends upon a constant and unwearied attention to every department, it is not enough to introduce regulations of dispatch, security and economy. In order to maintain them, their execution must be frequently examined and revised, and every part of the complicated mechanism must be regulated by superintendants well informed in the mechanism of the whole, and regularly attentive to all the parts.

All measures for conducting the business of this department with safety and dispatch, acquire an importance proportionable to the increasing commerce of the country: And the ready means of augmenting the revenue, which the Post-Office affords to the public, without operating as any very considerable burthen upon individuals, make every suggestion useful, which may produce additional regularity and economy.

The patronage of the Post-Office is of a most extensive nature, obviously requiring great discretion in its exercise, much knowledge of the duties to be performed, and considerable attention to the characters of the individuals that are to be promoted.

The extension of the mode of conveyance by mail coaches is desirable on the principle of producing safety, even where dispatch and economy cannot be materially improved, but your Committee have found it impossible to form a judgment on that subject from any documents they could obtain, as so much depends upon the nature of the roads in the different parts of the island, and the degree of intercourse they afford, to encourage persons to undertake the conveyance of mails by coaches.

If your Committee are justified by those documents in the observations they have already submitted to your consideration, an active and vigilant superintendance would produce retrenchment and preserve the salutary regulations already adopted; without it the business of this important and extensive branch of the public revenue and expenditure, will always have a tendency to profusion; with it, regularity and economy will spread their influence

of Finance on the present state and conduct of that office, of the necessity of his controul, and of which, he was confident, there was but one sentiment out of that House.

In respect to the assertion that Mr. Palmer's conduct would have forfeited a patent place, nothing like it had been proved, it was miserable evasion, disgraceful chicanery, [*a loud cry of hear, hear.*] Mr. Sheridan observed, he wished the Gentlemen not only to hear, but to understand, and said Mr. Palmer could never forfeit what he had never held—Government had broke their faith with him and never given him this patent place, or ever yet performed either of their stipulated engagements, the shameful violation of which, nothing could either justify or palliate; the Post-Office disputes had nothing to do with his agreement, that was clear and distinct to the meanest capacity. He never agreed to take the appointment of 1789, in compensation for his original agreement or the promised patent place of 1785. It was clearly understood on both sides, that he held it for the present only*, and was to manage

influence through the different departments, and will justify your Committee, even at this period, in repeating what is stated by the Commissioners of Enquiry in their Report, "that though much has been done, much remains still to be effected."

It may therefore be worthy of consideration, whether a Board of Commissioners, upon the plan on which other revenue departments are conducted, would not secure the most effectual attention to the rapid and complicated business of this office, being a revenue department of extensive transactions, and much depending for its success upon the skill exercised in making its various and numerous contracts.

* Copy of a Letter from Mr. Palmer to the Right Hon. Wm. Pitt; in December 1785.

Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your kind declaration of yesterday by Mr. Pratt. Mr. Attorney General is so good as to give you this from me. He sees very clearly the necessity I every day feel more and more of my appointment being made out. I cannot too strongly express my obligations to you, for your wishes to give me every power the law will admit of. Whatever manner you determine, Sir, to have it done in *for the present*, will be perfectly satisfactory to me; but unless it is considered as a permanent one, and if the Post Office can entertain a hope that any one of theirs may overturn it, I am ruined.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

Appendix to Report, p. 90.

J. PALMER.

I found it so necessary to take some kind of appointment, to give me a power for the further establishment of my plan, and improvement of the Posts in Scotland, that I desired *for the present* they would give me an appointment in any way whatever as to profits, so as to give me any power to proceed with my plan, when an appointment was given me; Mr. Pitt assuring me at the same time, that my agreement should in every respect

manage with it as well as he could; with several of the Postmasters General, he went on very happily under it; they left

respect be completed to my satisfaction.—Mr. Palmer's Examination. Report, p. 4.

About the period of the appointment of the 11th September, 1789, had you any conversation with Mr. Pitt, relative to the powers that appointment conveyed to you under the Postmaster-General?

I always expressed my apprehensions to Mr. Pitt of the possible interference of the Postmaster-General, and the ill consequences that might follow, both to the plan, myself, and the Public, should it prove so, from the want of those powers agreed to be given me in the Commission of 1785. Mr. Pitt assured me, I need entertain no apprehensions on that score, and that my agreement was equally valid, as if sanctioned by an Act of Parliament.—Ibid. p. 8.

At the time of your appointment of the 11th September, 1789, being made out, did Mr. Pitt give you any assurances of the protection of the Board of Treasury against any controul or interference on the part of the Postmaster-General?

I was assured by Mr. Pitt, that I should feel myself equally protected by the Treasury, as if the Commission in October 1785 had been carried into execution; and there was little probability of any interference to the prejudice of my plan.

Did you ever consider yourself as acting under the controul of the Postmaster-General?

No—upon all occasions, where any directions of theirs were not prejudicial to the public Service, I acted agreeably to their wishes; when I thought otherwise, I resisted their commands, and asserted my independence of their power or authority, and that I held my Office agreeably to my Commission of 1785, and virtually under the Treasury.—Mr. Palmer's evidence. Ibid. page 9.

Did not Mr. Palmer frequently protest against the mode of transacting the office business, and corresponding with his subordinate officers by written minutes; and did he not claim a right to act uncontrouled in the management of his plan?

He certainly did claim a right to act uncontrouled in the management of his plan.

Do you recollect any instance of a personal meeting with Mr. Palmer, which had not the effect of adjusting any difference, or settling any proposed regulation, to your mutual satisfaction?

I of course saw Mr. Palmer frequently upon the business of the office, upon which we had many conversations from time to time. The proceedings of the office will shew, that notwithstanding those meetings, he still supposed himself to be vested with that authority which we thought we could not give him, even if we were disposed to do so.

Question repeated.

We had some personal meetings with Mr. Palmer, upon the subject of our disputes in 1790 and 1791. In 1790, at Baileys (at Lord Chesterfield's) in 1791, in town. I do not recollect that even at the time, the result of those meetings was such as to leave us reason to suppose that Mr. Palmer acquiesced to what we required, especially at Baileys.—Lord Walsingham's evidence.

Under such an appointment for life, as you have described to have been originally intended, do you conceive the enjoyment of it could depend on the will and pleasure of the Postmaster-General?

left him very properly to the sole conduct of his plans; and that was the utmost he required; but when he had impracticable people to act with, when teized, perplexed, and disturbed in his arduous and difficult undertaking, so far from fearing suspension or dismissal from this mockery of an appointment, this insidious and treacherous commission; he denied the authority of a Postmaster General over him, scouted and defied them, as he would the most indifferent persons, that stood in the way of his exertions, threw up the appointment altogether, and acted agreeably to the spirit of his original agreement. Would any one know the nature of his provocations, let them look at the minutes produced by the Lords themselves, to the observations of the Deputy on the margin of only one of them*, to Mr. Palmer's

mei's.

If such an appointment had taken place, and could be legally carried into effect, the enjoyment of it certainly could not depend on the will and pleasure of the Postmaster-General; and such an appointment, I conceive, could have been vacated on no grounds but such as would by process of law vacate any other appointment for life made by competent authority.

By whose authority was the draft of the original warrant made, to which the legal objection was made?

I am inclined to believe, that it was drawn up in consequence of different discussions on the subject, probably in consequence of suggestions from Mr. Palmer; but I rather believe prepared at the Treasury, or by directions from thence, and communicated to the Attorney General, though there is no trace that I know of for preparing it, or for a reference to the Attorney General.—*Mr. Pitt's evidence.* Report p. 51

Had you ever communicated this last plan to the Postmaster General?

Never—having always declared to the Lords of the Treasury, that I would not venture to carry any new plans into execution, but under my own management and direction.

Did you, in 1791, communicate to the Postmaster General your plan of the Penny Post-Office?

I did not, because I considered my original agreement to have been made with, and dependent only upon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.—*Mr. Palmer's evidence.*

* Minute of the Postmaster General, with Mr. Bonnor's Remarks.

General Post-Office, August 4th, 1791.

Mr. Bonnor's Remarks. The great object which the P. M. G. had in view was, to justify themselves, and not to censure others, but to expose the impossibility of the Comptroller General's Clerks being under the necessity, by their Lordships' minute, of doing the duty of Messengers, and of the business of the office being interrupted by Mr. Bonnor's doing the duty of the clerks. One of the rules which Mr. Bonnor lays down is, a bad one; viz. "In all cases where the P. M. G. asserts or directs a thing, he is to pay the most implicit deference to it, and enforce it immediately, waving at once all opinion of his own, &c.

There is no replying to this without risking a quarrel: but in this part of the P. M. G.'s object, their Lordships must understand by the D. C. G.'s last minute on the subject, that they failed completely.

mer's evidence, and say if it were possible for him to pursue his great work, pestered with, and demanded to reply to those volumes of slip-slop ridiculous trash and nonsense to endure such treatment, or proceed to any good effect under a power so exercised. Sure he was, no Gentleman in that House would say he would have endured it, or would not have resorted to any extremity to have shaken it off. Was there a banker, merchant, or manufacturer in this kingdom, who could conduct even a limited busi-

This would employ more time than the whole of their official duty requires; to represent, to vindicate their representations; to produce proofs; maintain arguments, in 9 out of 10 of which, though right, they would be obliged to yield; and 9 out of 10 of the points disputed, not worth saying 3 words about, or bestowing 3 minutes upon;

and so create fresh correspondence and fresh disputes.

It certainly is strictly, unless Mr. B.'s statement of his duties is erroneous, which the P. M. G. does say is the case.

The Comptroller General was distinctly allowed any one of the Messengers to be in waiting, vice Crompton, and they were to be exempted from all other duties during that time, for which see the words of both minutes; and if Mr. Bonnor had applied to any one of the extra Messengers, they probably would have undertaken it without much reluctance. If the misconception was accidental in Mr. Bonnor, it was by no means blameable, but no man who reads the P. M. G.'s two minutes can say, that the business of the office was interrupted by their Lordships refusing to the Comptroller General the substitute he wanted in Crompton's stead.

Appendix to Report, p. 160.

On the contrary, it is the P. M. G.'s constant desire, and was so stated in the first minute which their Lordships ever made in August last; viz. "That every person should represent against the impropriety or inexpediency of any order the P. M. G. can give, as their Lordships will be as ready to revoke it, as they can be to give it, if it is fraught with any material objections;" therefore Mr. Bonnor is to understand, that the P. M. G. are always willing and desirous to receive all necessary information upon the points about which they are giving direction. The P. M. G. are utterly at a loss to know, after the quotations they have made from their minutes, where is the positive order "not to employ a substitute for Crompton," as Mr. Bonnor knows the order was the direct reverse; viz. that the Comptroller General was expressly allowed a substitute, only he was to take him from the messengers, not from the letter carriers.

Whenever Mr. Bonnor discovers oversights or errors in the P. M. G.'s minutes, of which there are probably many, he should always point them out; sometimes they arise from miscopying, often perhaps from real mistakes, but never deliberately or intentionally. The P. M. G. observed, that no messenger was allotted to any other officer but the Comptroller General: In answer to which Mr. Bonnor cites Mr. Commins, the Chamber Keeper, whose duties are all domestic, and certainly not those of a Messenger, for he is to keep the door, the stationary, the coals, to overlook bills, to pump the well, &c. therefore that is no case in point.

W.

Ch.

ness so circumstanced, or was there one man to be found amongst them, who having made such an agreement and been so benefited, that would venture to break it, or dare shew his head in society, had he committed so base an act. Of this independant conduct, Mr. Palmer, gave repeated notice to the Board of Treasury, as the occasions arose, and demanded his agreement, &c. nor was the least pretence ever once set up on these occasions of a forfeiture from this conduct, from his defiance and opposition to the Postmaster General, or from a failure of want of subordination to his superiors. They were conscious of the agreement they had made with Mr. Palmer, and that he had an undoubted right from that, as well as his personal merit, to allow no superior to controul him in that office. Every projector was anxious for the child of his creation, jealous of interference, and thwarted in every possible way by these trifling, vexatious, and contemptible minutes. Mr. Palmer was roused with the feelings of a parent on seeing his favourite torn and mangled, and provoked to retaliation; every allowance should be made for the feelings of an enthusiast—none but an enthusiast could have imagined or formed such a plan—none but an enthusiast would have made such an agreement—none but an enthusiast could have carried it into execution; and he was confident no man in this country, nor in any other, could have performed such an undertaking, but that very individual John Palmer. He was not quite sure, but he thought some Gentleman had intimated that the agreement had been imprudent and ought not to be kept. Would any one say that in proportion to the benefit derived from it, should be the inducement to break it; could such a sentiment escape from a quarter where immense fortunes had been suffered to be acquired by the most scandalous perquisites, to our national disgrace and loss, where it had been asserted in the defence of a bad loan, by the friends of the Minister, and even by himself, that no sums whatever, not millions could compensate for the mortal stab public credit would receive, should that loose agreement not be confirmed, though it merely hung on the recollection of something like a promise made by the Chancellor. Mr. Allen, it appeared, for his very limited improvements, was granted the whole of the increased revenue from his plans, held for his life, for above forty-two years, which had amounted to 12,000l. per year, the evidence proved that the nett revenue, of the Post-office during two centuries, had gradually increased to 150,000l. per year only, and was decreasing when Mr. Palmer

under-

undertook it's reform 13,000*l. per annum*: his first incomparable plan recovered its revenue from this declining state, from a chaos of confusion it made correspondence perfect, and gave new spirit and energy to the commerce of the kingdom. Had his ingenuity and labours encreased the revenue 40,000*l. per year* only, would any one have envied him the 1000*l. per year*, centage on it, and if he had encreased it 400,000*l. per annum*, was he not equally or even more deserving his stipulated and small commission, his fortieth share on the encrease.

To this opinion the Commissioners of Enquiry, appointed by that hon. House, had reported most decidedly in the affirmative, to the absolute necessity likewise of a strong controul over the Post-Office, and he, Mr. Palmer's being interested in the whole of its revenue. If such a recommendation could have been so slighted, and such an agreement broken, on a principle of œconomy, never was a principle so prostituted or its misapplication so punished. The loss to the revenue from Mr. Palmer's suspension, was beyond all comparison what his *per centage* could possibly have amounted to. From the mass of evidence proved, from every consideration of justice or policy, the agreement must be confirmed; the maxim of the English law was, "that for every wrong there was a remedy," that was its great blessing, its great security—shall the exception be only in dealings with its Government! God forbid—for however some Gentlemen were in the habit of voting with the Treasury Bench, on the question of an agreement betwixt that Public Board and a private individual—personal attachment, or party consideration he trusted would have no weight. The agreement and its execution had been fully proved, its infinite benefit, and that no forfeiture had arisen. The opinion of those eminent counsel had confirmed the public opinion—it was clear and convincing to every impartial mind. It was understood that Mr. Palmer was to have every support in carrying this agreement into execution—it had been proved that he had experienced every possible opposition from the Office he was to reform, of the most insidious and dangerous nature, by the Officers obstructing and decrying the plan, encouraging public meetings to petition against it, fabricating false accounts to induce a belief at the Board of Treasury, of its lessening instead of encreasing the revenue, by delaying the delivery of the letters, and missending them in various parts of the kingdom, and in every shape working its ruin and threatening the projector with the consequences—for which he referred to Mr. Palmer's letters to

Mr. Pitt* and other evidence before the Committee.—
Having surmounted these difficulties, after infinite labour,
anxiety.

* Copy of Mr. Palmer's Letter to Right Honourable William Pitt.
Sir,

May 5th, 1785.

I had the honor of your letter on my return from Portsmouth, and immediately wrote to the Contractor at Nottingham to forward the carriages, &c. Soon as he is prepared, I will obey your commands in carrying the plan into execution on that road.

I have settled the regulations for the cross post from hence to Portsmouth; the alteration is much to the satisfaction of the different towns it will accommodate, and it starts next Monday.

They will now have a direct and expeditious post guarded, six times a week, instead of a slow and circuitous one unguarded, only three times a week. The terms with the Contractors merely the exemption from the turnpike tolls, and the allowance of guards, so that Government will save the greater part of the old expence.

I had agreed for the London mail to be conveyed to Portsmouth on the same terms, as the inhabitants had petitioned for the new mode, and were doubly anxious for it, their mail having been robbed a few months ago; but Mr. Todd, instead of sending letters to the Postmasters to observe my directions for that purpose, sent the same Surveyor who was so industrious to defeat the plan on the Bath road, last Friday only to Portsmouth, to agree with the different Postmasters to convey the mail seven miles an hour, for which they are to be paid an extra sum per mile more than the usual charge; [this price was 9l. per mile instead of the old charge of 4l. 13s. 4d.] which was to commence the very day I came there. I could therefore give the Postmasters no direction for that road, Mr. Todd chusing to do this without giving me the least information of his intentions. By this improvement at last, supposing it even to be kept up to, Government is at a much higher expence for conveying the mail than even before, instead of saving almost the whole of it. The inhabitants will have only four hours betwixt the arrival and departure of their mail, instead of twelve, as they would have by mine, and it remains unguarded: This he has done without any sort of communication with my Agent on the business, though he sees him almost every day, and I believe has fully understood from Government some time past, that the new plan was to be extended over the whole kingdom. Since my absence from town, he likewise has thought proper to suffer an entire alteration in the mode of delivering the letters, so that those by the new plan, instead of being delivered early in a morning, are not delivered till almost too late in the afternoon to send an answer. In this the Comptroller is as much or more blameable than himself. In short, they will remain firmly agreed together, to take each their turn to do the plan all possible mischief. I am sure, Sir, if you could be aware how complex a business it is, and how difficult to unravel what (though simple in itself) they have made so perplexed, to teach the Postmasters the new regulations, which will enable them to do their duty in a plainer manner and is liable to mistakes, to settle the different parts as I proceed, so as to fit in with the general plan, and suffer no present mischief, involved as you are in such various and greater concerns, you would yet spare a few minutes, I am sure you would, to put a stop to the rascality of that office, and to leave my mind free to pursue my plan, without having it taken up with guarding against and curing their shameful practices. I want no sort

anxiety, expence, and hazard, and executed his plan to the acknowledged satisfaction of Government.

After

of assistance from them; all I desire is, that they may not, be suffered to do injury.

The state of the interior management of the Post-Office business, is full as bad or rather worse than I stated in the memorial I had the honour to submit to the Treasury; the mistakes are innumerable, and the daily loss of the revenue very great, nor can it be otherwise on the present system; the remedy for it is even more plain and simple than that for the exterior department; and if you will permit me, I will regulate it in less than a fortnight, to your's and the public's satisfaction, even at a less expence to Government than the present mode, and with much more ease to the different Officers; indeed the plan cannot be further extended, till I am suffered to establish regulations within the office to fit the new ones without, as the new and old plan now act against each other. Having obtruded thus far on you, Sir, with my complaints, I must beg leave to trespass a little further, and have done.

It is nearly approaching to three years since I first submitted my plan to your judgment, that you kindly encouraged it, and I attended your commands in town. I have sent a statement of my journies, attendances, &c. to my good friend Lord Camden, for your inspection, by which you will see that, exclusive of my expences, almost the whole of my time and attention, from October 1732 to the present moment, has been employed in this business; and I submit to your justice, whether the expence actually incurred, prior to the first trial of my plan the 2d August last, should not now be paid, and my appointment made out.

Your obliging message by Mr. Prutt, before the trial, that if the plan did not succeed, I should be fully paid for my expence and trouble, if you recollect, Sir, I disclaimed, and chose to sit down in that case with my disappointment and loss, and let my reward rest only on my success.

My time and attention, prior to the trial, I do not recount; though, if I discovered any ingenuity, activity, or perseverance through it, my family might have been benefitted by their exertion to other objects.

The success of the plan, Sir, I believe, has exceeded both your's and the public's expectation. I am sure it has my own in some points, though not in others, but it has not fallen short in one. A circumstance, I believe, almost as new to Administration, in the various plans that are submitted to them as a popular tax, which the post tax really is, where the accommodation has been given with it.

It incurred no new expence or inconvenience in the old establishment, even in the trial, but what was occasioned by the opposition from the General Office.

It conveys the mails in half the time they used to be, and guarded under regulations that will, in a great measure, enforce themselves; and where it has been carried into execution, has immediately occasioned an increase of revenue to the Post-Office.

It having been proved, that it is scarce possible for greater neglect or abuses to prevail than in the conduct of the old post; that, in consequence of it, a great share of the correspondence was carried on by coaches to the detriment of the post revenue; that the new tax, coupled with the old plan, would have increased such defalcation, which the statement given into the treasury, comparing the great improvement of the revenue from the tax upon the new opposed to the old establishment, have been very fully proved.

It

After having so honestly and zealously fulfilled his part of the agreement, he then found difficulties and evasions on the part of Government. in performing theirs; he was not paid one shilling even towards his expences, until the expiration of four years; it was seven years before they paid him his arrears; two years after this they turned him out of the nominal Commission they had forced on him, to extend and controul this plan, on the information merely of such a character as his Deputy, for refusing, I think, to give him the key of a door, or some idle stuff; but upon no ground or evidence whatever that could justify such a proceeding from a commission subject to that very power that had always opposed his plans; not one single officer having been dismissed, suspended, or even censured for their scandalous conduct and obstructions to his plan in the outset of it, and to the infinite loss of the revenue, to the amount of near a million.

It was promised in the plan, to give the improved expedition and security to the great roads from London, and some of the cross roads, for the payment of 3d. per mile; the allowance for guards, and an exemption from turnpike tolls.

The contracts are made for the greater part of the kingdom from London for the allowance of guards, and the exemption of turnpike tolls only. Likewise for all the cross posts, six times a week instead of three, so as to make those posts as regular and perfect as the general one.

This accommodation will be given to the public, and the arrival and departure of the mails all over the country will now be regular, expeditious, and safe, on plain, simple and certain principles, instead of the reverse. It will not only save many thousands a year in the expences of the riding work, &c. but in consequence of the superior mode of conveyance to any other, add very greatly to the revenue, by the increase of correspondence through the Post-Office.

In the progress of this business, I have had every possible opposition from the office; I have neither spared trouble or expence to inform myself in every department of it, so that I might carry my plan completely into execution, and defeat their repeated attempts to ruin it. I have been perfectly open, and kept no one secret from Government, or derived one shilling advantage from any contract, but acted in every respect to the best of my judgment for the public; nor can I gain the least advantage from my agreement, till I have completed the plan over the whole kingdom, as my percentage on the increased revenue from the tax, without the accommodation, will not pay the very great expences I am obliged to incur in the establishing it.

I have only to thank you, Sir, for the very warm and steady support I have received from you in this business, without which, indeed, it could not have succeeded, and to hope, in addition to the rest of your favours, you will excuse this long letter.

I have the honour to be, &c. &c. &c.

Appendix to Report, p. 84.

J. PALMER.

See further objections to the Plan, Memorial from the Post-Office to abandon the plan, and Mr. Palmer's answer of March 1786, and other papers in the Appendix.

They

They then avowedly broke their engagement, and granted him a part only of its emoluments; to his memorial to the Board of Treasury on this gross injustice, they did not give at once a plain and decisive answer, as they would have done, had they been conscious they had acted justly; but he was held on with hopes and expectations of every thing being settled to his satisfaction for above eight months,* and then informed merely “that looking to the

* At any time, and when, was a warrant made out for allowing you 3,000*l.* a year?

On the 28th of June 1793,—an order of Treasury to take place from 5th April 1793.

Previous to the taking out this order, did Mr. Pitt, or any one authorized by him, communicate the nature of it?

I was told by Lord Camden, previous to such order, that such allowance was meant to be given me, upon which I declared, as I invariably had done, that I should consider myself extremely ill treated if I was paid in any degree short of my actual agreement; that Mr. Pitt had a right, if he thought proper, to dispense with my services, but he could not, as an honest man, dispense with the engagements he had entered into with me.

Was any reply made to that by Lord Camden?

He said he was sorry he could not prevail on Mr. Pitt to do more.

After this conversation with Lord Camden, did you present any memorial to the Board of Treasury?

I waited till the usual time of making up the accounts of the office, when I was accustomed to be paid the balance of my per centage, and then, in the autumn of 1794, I presented my Memorial to the Treasury, demanded the accounts and payment of the balance according to my agreement. I had written, on the 6th of August that followed the order of Council of the preceding June, to Lord Camden, expressing in the strongest terms the resentment I felt at the injustice which I conceived had been done to me, and that I would pursue every possible means, and would never rest till I had obtained justice according to the terms of my agreement, having more than completed every assurance I had made to Administration for the performance of my part of the engagement.

Had you any answer from Lord Camden to your letter of the 6th of August?

I had not.

Had you any answer to the Memorial presented in December 1794?

I had, from Mr. Long; and he assured me, that the Lords of the Treasury would give it their earliest consideration; that he thought it very probable that the per centage might be granted me; but as I had acted with contumacy towards the Postmaster-General, and disobeyed their commands, I might be deprived of the salary of 1,500*l.* a year. He stated to me, that he considered the per centage as the agreement for my plan, and the execution of it; and that the salary was for performing the official duties of my employment, and that appeared to him forfeited; at the same time, on a further explanation of the original agreement, and Mr. Pitt's modification, it appeared the salary had formed a part of the agreed for per centage; upon which he wished me every justice to the extent of my claims, but not being in office himself at the time the agreement was made, he could say nothing to that.

the public, the Lords of the Treasury could make no addition to the allowance granted him for life;" not the least attempt was made to answer the arguments, or deny the facts substantiated in that memorial to his remonstrances afterwards; in which he said he should appeal to Parliament if his agreement was not confirmed; though he was promised, that if their answer should be unfavourable, he should have it in time to make his appeal. They never sent this answer until after four months had elapsed, and not till the dissolution of that Parliament was resolved on, and it was too late. After repeated delays, he was now at last enabled to make his appeal to the justice of that House. Seven years had passed away the most anxious and fatiguing of his life, ere he was paid the arrears on his agreement. Seven years more had again passed over since he had demanded from the Board of Treasury their performance of that agreement. Seven long years of solicitation, expence, attendance, delay and anxiety. Was it possible that justice could be refused to claims so beneficial to the public, so proved, so acknowledged; that his family should be deprived of the fruits of those labours; valuable young men, who were at this moment distinguishing themselves in the

Had you any further answer from the Board of Treasury to your Memorial?

I applied repeatedly, during the course of the following eight months, and was repeatedly assured by Mr. Long, that I should have an answer speedily; but it was above eight months before I did receive such answer. I received a letter from Mr. Long, dated 25th August 1795.

Was that the last communication you had on that subject from the Board of Treasury?

No—during the recess of Parliament, in January 1796, I presented a remonstrance to the Treasury on the subject; Mr. Long returned it to me immediately, assuring me it was the invariable practice of that Board, after the consideration they had given my case, not to receive any remonstrance; yet if I particularly desired it, he would lay it before the Board, though that could be the only answer I must expect. I again returned it to him, desiring that he would lay it before the Board, and obtain me an answer, which, if not favourable, I meant to appeal to Parliament. He informed me, in consequence, that their Lordships had consented to receive the remonstrance, and would take it into consideration, and would give me an answer time enough to make my appeal; but I did not receive such answer till it was settled that Parliament should be dissolved in April 1796; when I informed Mr. Long of its being then too late to make my appeal that Parliament, and therefore I should lay it before the next.

At any time did you receive an answer to the remonstrance?

Yes—I think in April 1796, that they had taken it into consideration, and saw no reason to alter their former opinion.

Was that the final answer on the subject?

Yes.—*Mr. Palmer's Examination.* Report, p. 10.

army and navy, in the service of their King and Country? Was it possible he should not obtain equal justice in that House, to what he would have been certain of, could he have appealed to an inferior court, and an inferior jury; or should this reproach and national disgrace be incurred, that Mr. Palmer would have derived every stipulated advantage from his agreement, had he contracted with a private individual, for a private advantage—but found no protection in the laws of his country, having unfortunately made his agreement with a public Minister for a national benefit?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that after the length to which this debate had extended, he was sorry to be obliged to trespass shortly upon the time of the Committee. It was very painful to him to be obliged to speak with any degree of severity of Mr. Palmer, against whom he certainly had no prejudice; but he felt it his duty not to let the subject pass over without a few observations; and first, he must remark, that the nature of Mr. Palmer's agreement and the decision of the Board of Treasury upon it, was not a subject for the House to decide on, as it would be interfering with the Executive Government of the Country. Those gentlemen who had supported Mr. Palmer's claim had rested upon two grounds; first, that Government were bound to him by a specific contract—and the second was, that he was entitled by his merits to a greater remuneration than that which he now possessed. In the first place, suppose Mr. Palmer had obtained that which it had been contended he was entitled to, viz. a patent for his place, still he would have been liable to be dismissed for misconduct, because, by the law of England, there could not exist a patent in which there was not a condition, either expressed or implied, that the holder of the place might be dismissed for misconduct. Then, if Mr. P. had had this patent, he contended that the conduct which had been proved against Mr. Palmer, by the clearest evidence, was such as would have, in the fullest manner, justified his dismissal. He should be glad to ask the four learned Gentlemen, whose opinion had been alluded to upon this occasion, whether they would contend that an office granted for life, might not be taken away for such conduct as this? But suppose Mr. Palmer had been obliged by ill health to retire from the office, could it be contended that after he had quitted the office he would be entitled to his two and half per cent. upon any increase that might take place in the revenue? Certainly not. If then he would not be entitled to this per

centage, if he had retired after a faithful discharge of his duty, still less could he be entitled to it after having been dismissed. If there was any thing in which Government were blameable towards this gentleman it was, perhaps, for the lenient conduct they had observed towards him. He was very ready to admit the great services Mr. Palmer had rendered the country, though with regard to the increase in the revenue, they had been much over-stated; but it was the recollection of these services that justified Government in permitting Mr. Palmer to retire as they did. At the time that this transaction was recent, Mr. Palmer did not consider himself as ill-treated by the arrangement that was made; for he had written to him (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), expressing his thanks for the liberality with which he had been treated.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer then proceeded to comment upon the evidence contained in the Report of the Committee, which, he contended, was sufficient to prove, that even if Mr. Palmer had had a patent for his place for life, he ought to have been dismissed from it. He then adverted and commented upon different parts of the speech of Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Jekyll, and concluded with moving that the Chairman do leave the Chair.

Mr. Jekyll said, he would detain the Committee a very few minutes. The right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Pitt), had asserted, that when the pension of 3000l. a year was granted, Mr. Palmer and his friends had not only acquiesced, but had thanked him for the measure. The right hon. Gentleman went on to assert that this was a fact within his own knowledge, and that he (Mr. Jekyll), *could not* know the contrary. Mr. Jekyll said, he could not quarrel with the tone of arrogance in which this had been uttered, because the right hon. Gentleman had *of late* not been much habituated to the language of contradiction within those walls; but he would contradict that assertion, and leave it to the Committee to determine, whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be ignorant of the communication he was about to state, and consequently whether the assertion or the contradiction was most deserving of credit. He would produce two letters of the present Lord Camden and Mr. Palmer, written at the very period when the Chancellor of the Exchequer asserts this acquiescence in the pension took place.

The pension was given in the end of June, 1793. On August 2d, 1793, Lord Bayham (now Lord Camden), writes

to Mr. Palmer, that he is concerned at the dissatisfaction expressed by Mr. P. in a late interview at the allowance granted to him, and begging him to refrain from any public expressions against Mr. Pitt, as it might look like ingratitude after a favor conferred. Mr. Jekyll said, he would read Mr. Palmer's answer, which was in the following words:—

MY DEAR LORD,

Bath, August 6, 1793.

I have the honour of your letter, and am truly vexed that I should differ in opinion from your Lordship, whom I so highly esteem, or that I am driven to pursue a conduct not perfectly consonant to your wishes. Nothing but the respect I bore to your Lordship and Lord Camden, to your judgment and Mr. Pitt's situation induced me to act in the same manner I have done. Two sessions of Parliament have passed over, I have been suffered to sink quietly with the public, and turned out of my office with *not half* my agreement. The apprehensions of my friends too being excited that I might be deprived of every thing, perhaps, think me fortunate in the allowance granted me. I find it therefore every way necessary that this should be explained to the public, and, when it is, I do not believe, there is a man in this country so far from thinking me ungrateful, but will be satisfied, I have been most *infamously treated*.

A short conversation then ensued between Mr. Sheridan the Speaker, Mr. W. Dundas, Sir F. Baring and Mr. Bragge, respecting the condition of one of the Witnesses when examined before the Committee.

Sir *Francis Baring* denied, that the evidence White was intoxicated, when, as stated by Mr. Pitt, he contradicted his own affidavit.

Mr. *W. Dundas* and Mr. *Bragge* asserted the contrary.

The Committee then divided:

Ayes (for Mr. Pitt's Motion) - -	112
Noes - - - - -	28
	84
Majority - -	84