

undoubted intentions of France to assist the Americans.

But this representation did not silence those who were of a disposition to require proofs of so flattering an assertion. They demanded an inquiry, and insisted upon such an exposition of facts as might remove all suspicion of matters being otherwise than they had been so confidently stated.

The reason they assigned for this demand was, that such an elucidation would revive the spirit of the nation, and depress that of its enemies in the most effectual manner. It would restore that confidence to ministry, which the suspicions universally prevalent of the neglected condition of the navy had so greatly diminished; and it would have a still more important effect, by deterring our enemies from the pursuit of the designs they were forming against us, when they perceived our ability to frustrate them.

They who opposed the demand, contended that a particular specification of the circumstances of the British navy, would be an act of the highest imprudence: it would be pointing out to the enemy where its deficiencies lay. No department, however carefully managed and well conditioned, was without its flaws. The strength and power of states consisted, in a great measure, in the secrecy and closeness with which its affairs were conducted.— They were shallow politicians who imagined that a manifestation of the exact state of our navy could answer any other purpose than to instruct our enemies in what manner to do it most detriment, and lay us open at the same time to the blame of all the judicious part of the world, for our weakness and want of discretion.

The ministry was however so closely pressed upon this matter, that a statement of the present condition of the navy was consented to. But when the