

but ourselves, but the same thing may be said in a comparative degree, of the House of Peers in England, yet who will say that that illustrious Body has not been one of the safeguards of the Throne; while at times it has been foremost in securing or extending the liberties of the people, nor can we say how, in this democratic age, that the interests of the people of England require greater responsibility in that Body. Time will not permit me to enumerate the many instances to which I might refer, the records of Parliament abound with them, but I will refer to two remarkable ones. The Septennial Act, which altered and limited the duration of Parliaments. Prior to its adoption, the power of the Throne was great, and it was enabled to control the existence of a servile Parliament, whether such was in accordance with the interests of the people or not. Obnoxious members were sometimes provided for, and the prospect of continued position as a Representative sometimes closed the mouth of the greatest stickler for the people's rights, and complaint could not be heard, and the people had no remedy. Who put an end to this, was it the Commons? No! it was this irresponsible middle Branch, against the existence of which Mr. Smith declaims, and who he says represents nobody but themselves! They felt it to be necessary in order to check the power of the Crown, to introduce what is called the "Septennial Act," by which the duration of Parliaments was limited to seven years. This gave to the people of England a certainty that at least every seven years a period would arrive when the venality or corruption, the imbecility or political trickery of their representatives could be tracked out and punished. Yet this great measure had not its inception in that branch which Mr. Smith states, par excellence, represents the people, but was brought in by a Peer in the House of Lords. Again, we find, during the past century, at a time in the history of

our Mother Country when the political horizon was shrouded—was wrapped in a sable pall; when the old Colonies (now one of the powers of the World) had proclaimed and were fighting for their independence; England had landed her armies on this Continent, and surrounded the coast with her fleet; she hired foreign mercenaries, enlisted even the Indians in her service; she spent millions of pounds and incurred an enormous debt, which posterity has had to suffer for and will have to pay; she was engaged in war with the leading powers of Europe; both branches of the House of Bourbon were lending their best efforts to conquer and subdue her; the Dutch navy, then a power on the ocean, was ranged in the lists of her antagonist, indeed, she had engaged the great powers of Europe almost alone; the great minds of the nation felt that concessions, and moderation and extension of British freedom to the revolted Colonies at such a period, was the true policy of the Empire, and that when the fleets of France and Spain were approaching our shores for the purpose of invasion, it was no time to hesitate about the terms on which we should arrange our family quarrels; the King was obstinate, his Ministers powerful, and the Commons subservient; it was then the benefit of an independent and powerful Legislative branch was felt, low though it might be according to the views of such men as Mr. Smith, the representatives of nobody. The venerable Earl Chatham submitted his celebrated Resolution, accompanied by one of those great efforts of oratory with which his name has been associated, and though unsuccessful at the time, ultimately revolutionized public sentiment, and brought about that peace which the financial difficulties of the Empire made a necessity, and led to that amicable separation from our old Colonies, and the recognition of their independence, which the folly of their King, and the venality and servility of his ministers, had left as the only alternative. Did statesmen of that day find fault with Earl Chatham, or claim that the Branch of the Legislature of which he was a member, had exceeded its powers? No! Nor does he