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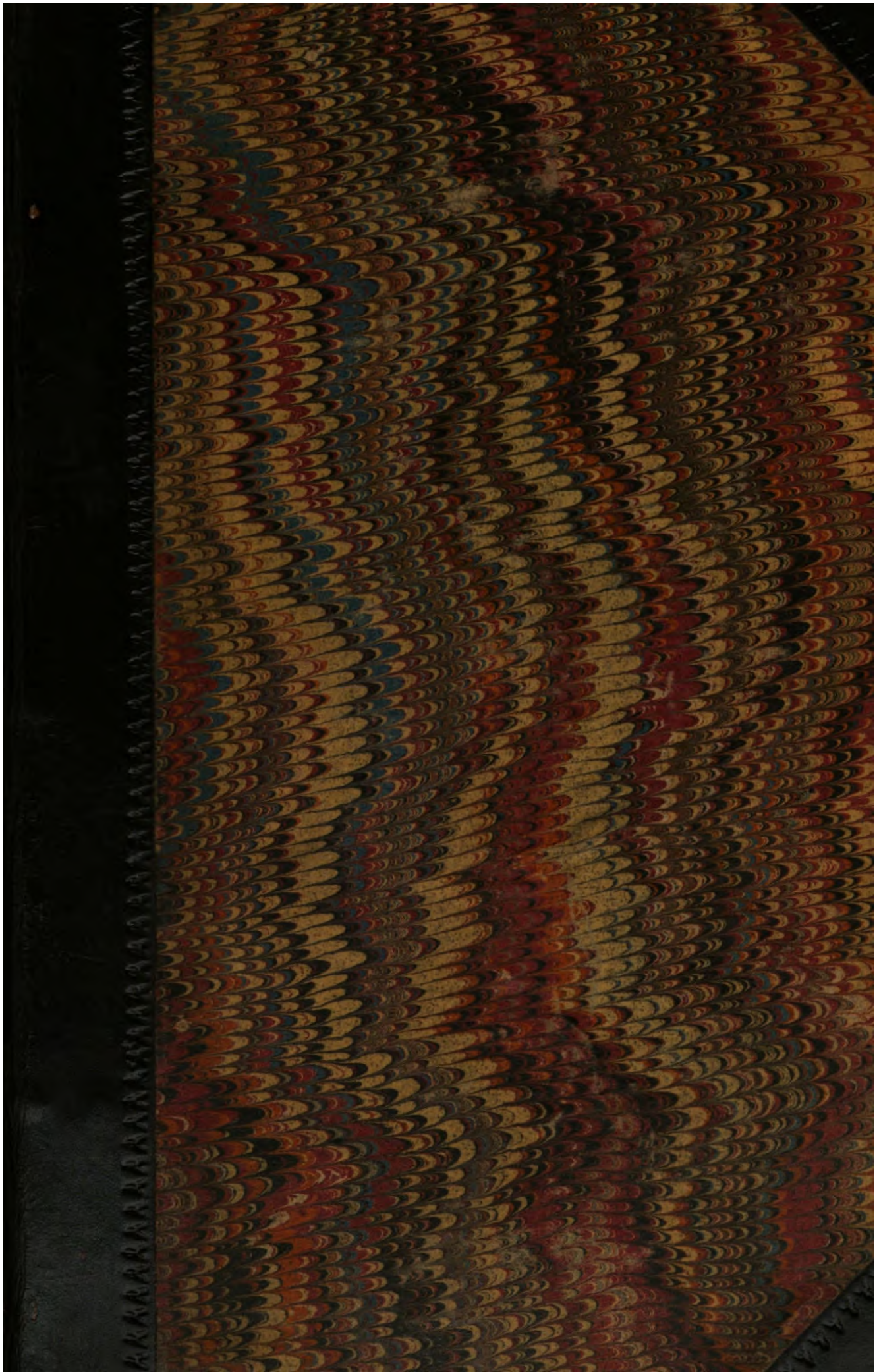
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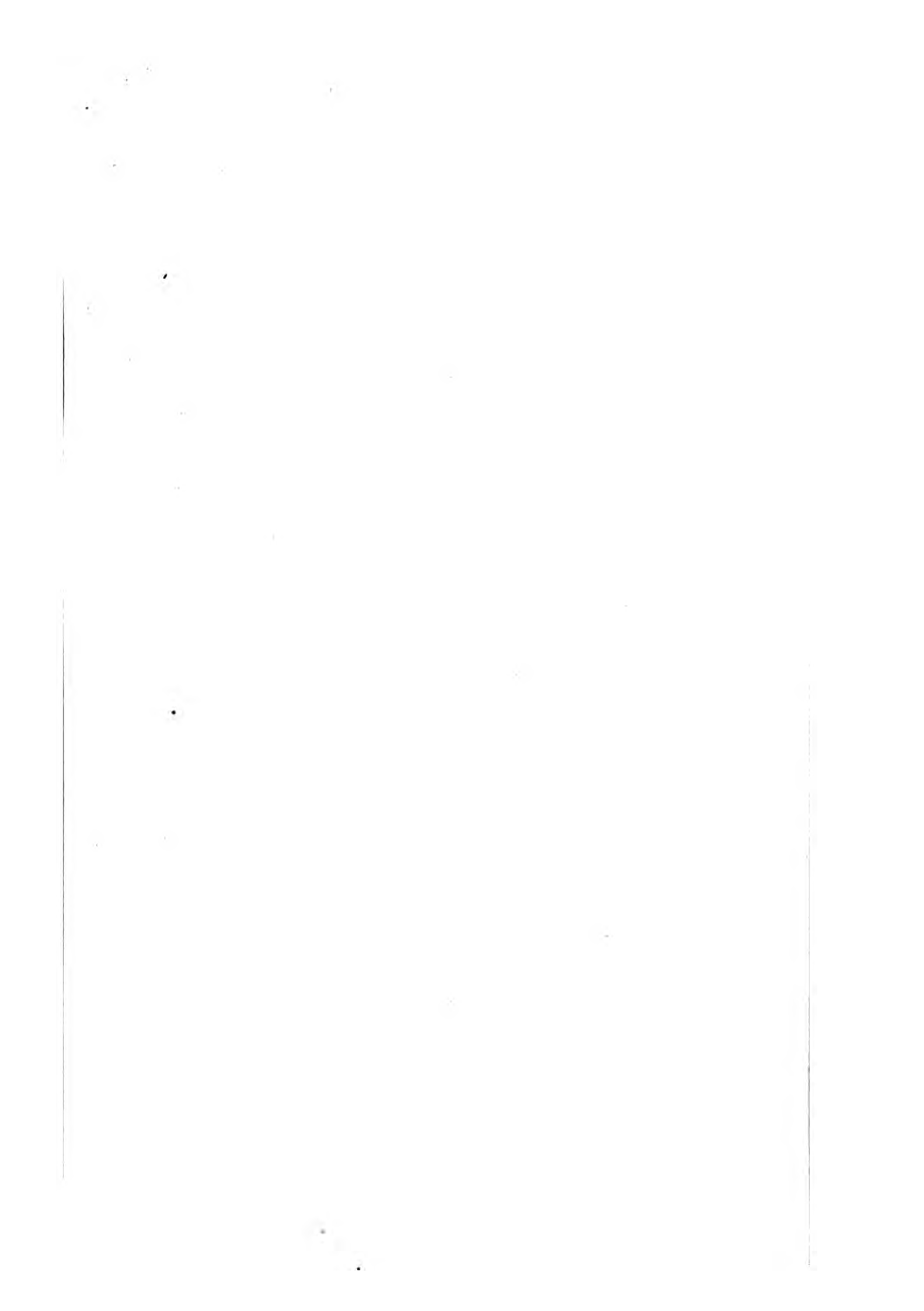
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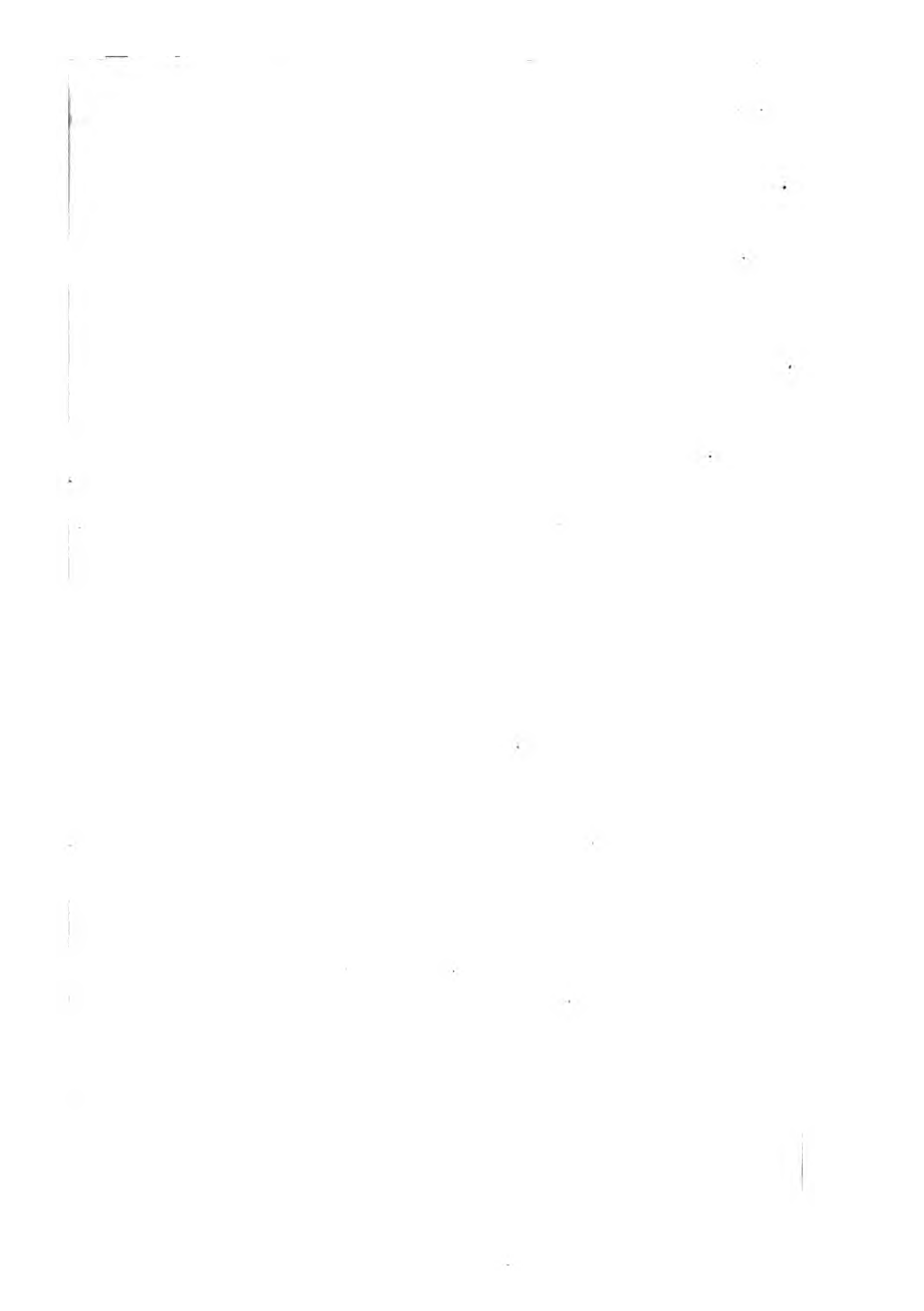
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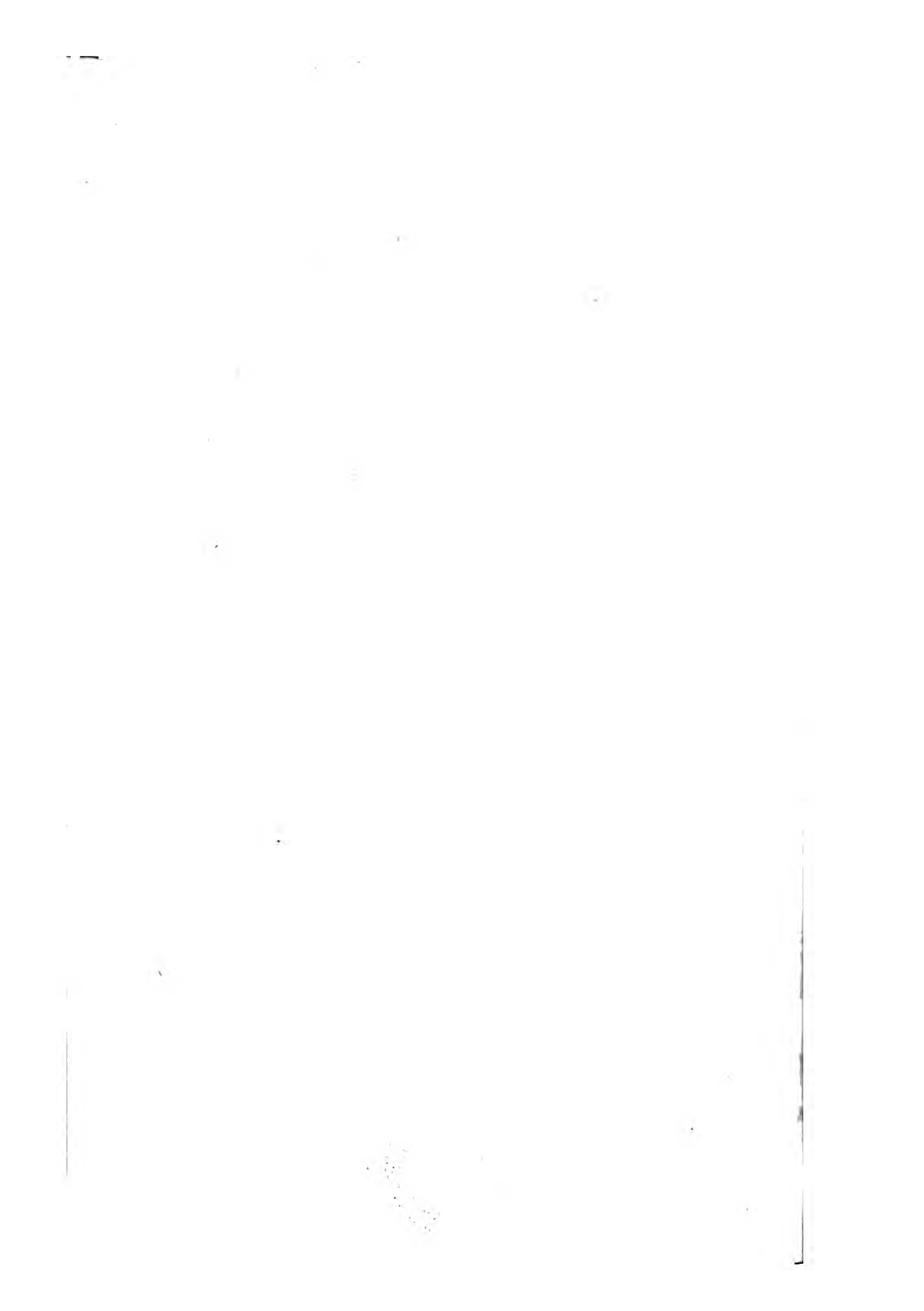
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THE
WORKS
OF
HENRY MACKENZIE, Esq.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

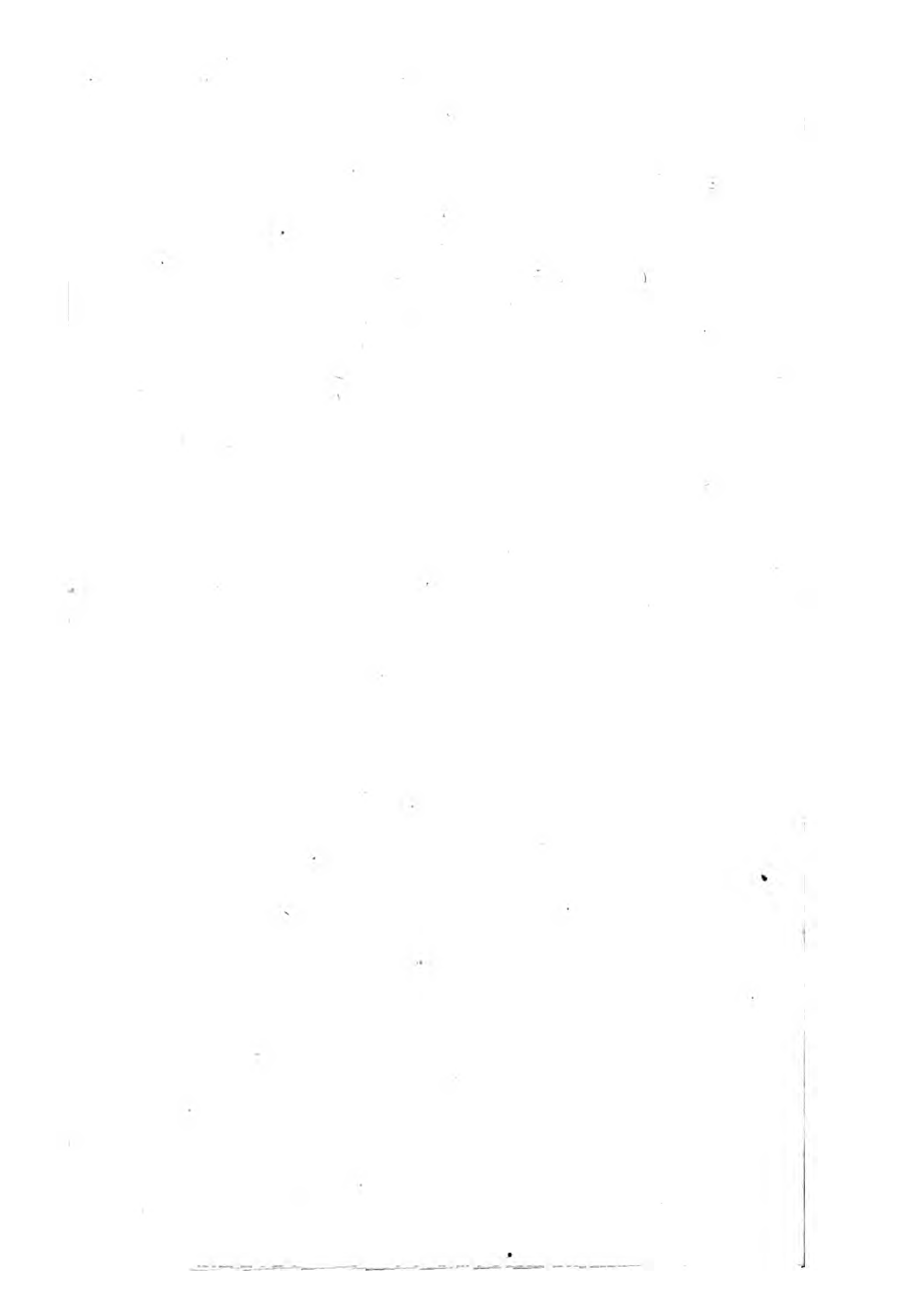
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PAPERS

FROM

The Lounger,

A

PERIODICAL PUBLICATION,

PUBLISHED AT EDINBURGH IN THE YEARS
1785 AND 1786.

VOL. VII.

A

11-11-11

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11-11-11

PAPERS
FROM
THE LOUNGER.
CONTINUED.

No. 99. SATURDAY, *December 23*, 1786.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE LOUNGER.

SIR,

WITHOUT being thought partial to the present times, I believe one may venture to say, that, in point of invention and discovery, this age very much excels any former one. In physics, in electricity, in chemistry, in mechanics, new worlds, if I may use the expression, have been

opened to our researches. But in Britain, we have a compendious way of calculating the number of inventions. If I am not misinformed, there have passed the offices within these twenty years no fewer than 667 patents; so that this island alone has in that very inconsiderable space added 667 discoveries to the stock of knowledge which our fathers possessed.

Nor has France been less productive than her sister-kingdom. Besides the balloon, of which she may certainly claim the practical application, if Britain shall dispute the discovery of the principle, there are many other inventions, equally wonderful, though less brilliant, which her philosophers have atchieved; and some of those which his British Majesty has sanctioned with his royal patent, are only naturalised subjects, which had their birth in the territories of the Most Christian King.

Of all discoveries ancient or modern,

the most useful perhaps, as well as the most wonderful, took its rise in Paris about three years ago ; I mean the Animal Magnetism of the illustrious Dr Mesmer. This has lately been imported into England, and is now practised with the greatest success by one of the doctor's disciples in London. To Scotland I believe it has not yet found its way ; which, considering the ingenuity of the people, is to me somewhat surprising. I hope I shall not be thought to trespass against the nature or design of your paper, if I wish to make it the vehicle for communicating this invaluable discovery to my native country ; for, notwithstanding I have resided chiefly abroad, I am proud to declare myself a Scotsman ; and though, in enumerating the properties of this wonderful art, I must necessarily make use of technical terms ; yet, as I know this city to be as it were the emporium of medicine, I flatter myself I shall here find a

multitude of readers, who could perfectly understand me, even without the translation, which I shall endeavour to affix to most of the medical phrases I make use of.

I do not know, Sir, whether the immortal Mesmer flourished at the time you were abroad. If your travels were before his time, you may not have heard of his process of magnetising. The ceremony is simple and beautiful. The company sit in a saloon fitted up in the most elegant style, round a *baquet* or large vessel forming a figure like the *a-la-ronde* of a cotillon. From the *baquet*, which is covered and ornamented as becomes the altar of Hygeia, rise those enchanted rods, if I may use the expression, by which the magnetic virtue communicated by the artist is transmitted. At the end of the apartment is a piano-forte and harmonica, from which the great man

himself, who, like his predecessor Apollo, cultivates both medicine and song, brings those lively airs, or dying falls, which assist or temper the effects of his divine art. Within the saloon is a smaller apartment, called the *Chambre de Crise*; but of this the secrets must not be "to mortal ears divulged." Suffice it to say, that that chamber has been witness to the most wonderful effects of the medico-magnetical art that ever astonished man. Such sublime agonies, such beautiful convulsions! I remember, before the apostate Deston had made the first schism in our faith, having assisted in the celebrated case of Madame de P——, where our master and all the body of the initiated were present. There was first a *Paracusis*, or imperfect hearing, changed into a *Surditas*, or complete deafness; changed into a *Pseudoblepsis*, or uncertain sight; changed into a perfect *Caligo*, or blindness; changed into a *Hallucinatio*, or

dulness; changed into a Morosis; changed into a Hysteria; changed into a Delirium; changed into a Mania, or raging madness! These, Sir, are the progressive miracles by which a physician shews the power and the utility of his art!

But my enthusiasm has carried me from my purpose, which was, humbly to announce myself as a disciple and initiated of the illustrious Mesmer, and to offer my assistance to the genteeler part of the community here, for a cure of most of the diseases to which they are subject. Though it is the advantage of our practice, that a knowledge of the patient's disorder is nowise necessary to the cure; yet, in order to shew that I am not an ignorant or illiterate quack, likely to be deceived myself, or to deceive others, I will state the maladies, as well idiopathic as symptomatic, to which patients of the fashionable and higher orders of the people are chiefly liable, which I flatter myself no

vulgar or empty smatterer in physic could have observed or delineated; all of which I undertake to cure by magnetism alone. In enumerating these disorders, I shall follow the classification usually adopted by the most eminent writers on nosology.

Under the class *pyrexia*, or fevers, I have observed such patients extremely liable to what medical writers term the *synochus hiemalis*,* or winter-fever. The symptoms are, a restlessness, a desire of changing place, and that sort of horror at being alone, which is common in diseases of this class; especially when, as is the case here, the brain is considerably affected. I mention this disorder first,

* *Vid.* the *Genera Morborum* of Dr Cullen, p. 70. It is unnecessary to make references as to every particular disorder mentioned in the course of this paper; the learned reader will easily perceive, that, except in one instance (the *Nostalgia*,) I have implicitly adopted the arrangement of that celebrated author.

not only from the order in which it is technically classed, but because I wish to excite the attention of your readers to it more immediately, this being the season of the year when it is apt to break out.

Another disorder of the same class, and nearly connected with the former, is the *synocha scarlatina*, a sort of scarlet-fever, which, like other disorders of the kind, principally appears in the face. This disease was scarcely known in Scotland till within these twelve or fourteen years, being of the endemial sort, with which only certain very large towns, like Paris and London, were supposed to be visited. Like other fevers of this tribe, it is subject to the *remissiones matutinæ*, and the *accessiones vespertinæ*, or, in common language, is hardly perceptible in the morning, but very observable in the evening; or sometimes it intermits for several days at a time, though it generally leaves a great degree of *icterus*, or yellowness, on

the skin. It is almost entirely a female disease, and has this peculiar circumstance attending it, which we may, perhaps, ascribe to the difference of climate, that in France, where it has long prevailed, it chiefly affects adults and married women, but in Britain, especially in Scotland, it is more frequent among the young and the unmarried.

On the other hand, there is a species of the *phrenitis*, to which matrons and women advanced to the middle stage of life are more liable than those of a more tender age; but as it is of a highly contagious kind, those young persons, who have frequent communication with them, are very liable to be infected with it. Its symptoms are exactly what medical writers impute to this genus of the *phlegmasiæ*, "*Rubor faciei, lucis intolerantia, et pervigilium*:" A redness of face, a hatred of the light, (that is, of the light of the sun,)

and a wakefulness (or very late sitting up.)

Under the class *neurosis*, or nervous, there is a great variety of disorders to which people of the highest ranks are liable, (to whom I beg leave to repeat, that my practice is entirely confined, which the medico-magnetism entirely eradicates. The *hypochondriasis*, or spleen, which is a sort of generic name for a great variety of those disorders, it perfectly removes. I have known several pretenders to science prescribe, as a cure for this disorder, something which was evidently borrowed from our method of performing the magnetic operation ; their patients sat round a bowl instead of a baquet, and were touched with glass instead of steel. But besides that this was only to be practised with male patients, it is, in fact, a mere palliative, not a radical remedy, and after frequent use is extremely apt to bring on a hydrophobia.

Under this class may be properly enumerated the varieties of the order *Spasmi*, or irregular motions to which people of fashion are peculiarly liable. Young ladies are frequently attacked with this disorder, particularly in public places and crowded rooms, or at the near approach of the young, the fashionable, the rich, or the noble of the other sex. This species of the *Chorea*, which I have had occasion to remark in such circumstances, is perfectly cured by that art which I have the honour to profess; it arises, indeed, from a superabundant degree of animal magnetism, and is not more remarkable in the female sex, than is the negative state of those persons of the other by whose approximation it is caused, who generally exhibit every mark of lassitude, indifference, and inanition, or, as some modern physicians write that term, inanity. A closer connection, however, between these two sets of patients, as may easily be ac-

counted for from natural causes, commonly restores the equilibrium : or sometimes the magnetical proportions are reversed ; the female becomes the negative or the indifferent, the male the positive or irritable subject.

Under this class of the nervous, and of the order to which physicians give the appellation *vesaniæ*, may be mentioned the various kinds of *melancholia* to which the higher ranks of life have been lately subject, particularly among the men. The *melancholia religiosa* is now scarcely known, or at least is nothing different from the *melancholia vulgaris*, to which my prescriptions do not apply. But there are other species now very frequent, which were formerly little known, though they had always a place in the lists of nosology ; such is the *melancholia errabunda*, the wandering melancholy ; the *melancholia saltans*, the dancing melancholy ; and that variety known by the name of

melancholia hippantropica, or horse-jockey phrenzy; the first is commonly caught abroad, the last more frequently at home.

Under this genus, though I know it is differently classed by several eminent medical writers, I would enumerate the *nostalgia*, or that longing desire for particular places, which affects the mind and the health of the patient. In French this is called the *maladie de pays*; but the species most common in my experience is the *maladie de la ville*, to which country ladies in particular are extremely liable. It has this material difference from the other, that the *maladie de pays* is cured by allowing the patients to visit their natal soil. Now, though that may succeed with natives of countries such as Switzerland or our Highlands, who are afflicted with what physicians term the *nostalgia simplex*, and whose complaint a single visit to the land of their nativity generally removes; yet, with the disease in ques-

tion, the *maladie de la ville*, one, or even two or three visits to town, rather increase than abate the disorder, and absence is found to be a much better remedy. My magnetism, however, effectually relieves it. There is another species of the *nostalgia*, which we may call the *nostalgia politica*, or political love of our country, which my art also entirely removes, though I must candidly own, that this disorder is frequently cured by other metals besides the magnet. Of this political distemper there are some species that rather come under the genus of the *tympanites*, of which the symptoms are given by nosological writers, *Partis morbidæ tumescencia sonora, cum rejectione aeris frequenti, et cæterarum partium debilitate maxima.*" (a disorder puffed up and windy, with a great weakness of parts.) It used to be felt in this country only in that particular slighter sort, now little known, which physicians term the *tympanites Stewartii*,

but of late it has raged with great violence in every species and degree.

Since I am mentioning Switzerland, I may take notice of another disorder, or rather external deformity, which used to be reckoned peculiar to the inhabitants of the Alps, the *barba helvetica*, or *gouet-re*; but of late this unnatural protuberance has made amazing progress among the female world in Great Britain; and within these few weeks begins to appear also under the chins of the male.

As I must have already trespassed on your patience, I forbear to enumerate a variety of disorders under the class of the *locales*, or local affections to which the fashionable world is subject, and which I engage perfectly to cure by my medico-magnetical process. Such are many of the *dysosthesiæ*, or depravation of the senses; for example, the *dysopia proximorum*, and the *pseudoblepsis mutans*, in which diseases, persons quite near, and

formerly well known, are neither seen, nor remembered. With this last disorder, I have seen some female patients so much affected, as not to know their husbands from other men; while, among the other sex, I have seen husbands, who took half a dozen other women for their wives.

Among the diseases of the ear, one of the most prevalent is the *paracusis imaginaria*, to which both sexes are equally liable; and another variety of the same tribe, more frequent among female patients, called the *susurrus criticus*, or scandal buzz.

Of the genus *paraphoniæ*, or disorders of the voice, we have frequent occasion to observe the *paraphonia puberum*, with which so many of our boys are affected; and the *paraphonia clangens*, or *resonans*, which is so common a disorder among our young ladies.

All the above-mentioned diseases, and many others which I have not room to

enumerate, I undertake entirely and effectually to remove by magnetism alone, without the intervention of any other external application, or the exhibition of any medicine whatsoever. I trust, Sir, the dignity of your paper is too well known, and I am conscious that my own intentions are too pure, to give room for supposing, that any thing else than the love of science, and a regard for our fellow-creatures, could induce either of us to communicate to the public, that I possess and mean to use this art for the benefit of people of rank and fashion in this metropolis. Such will be informed of the particulars of my plan, by inquiring for Dr F. at Dunn's hotel, St Andrew's-street, left-hand side of the way.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L. F.

Member of many Academies.

No. 100. SATURDAY, *December 30*, 1786.

AMONG the cautions which prudence and worldly wisdom inculcate on the young, or at least among those sober truths which experience often pretends to have acquired, is that danger which is said to result from the pursuit of letters and of science, in men destined for the labours of business, for the active exertions of professional life. The abstraction of learning, the speculations of science, and the visionary excursions of fancy, are fatal, it is said, to the steady pursuit of common objects, to the habits of plodding industry which ordinary business demands. The fineness of mind, which is created or increased by the study of letters, or the admiration of

the arts, is supposed to incapacitate a man for the drudgery by which professional eminence is gained; as a nicely-tempered edge, applied to a coarse and rugged material, is unable to perform what a more common instrument would have successfully atchieved. A young man destined for law or commerce is advised to look only into his folio of precedents, or his method of book-keeping; and Dulness is pointed to his homage, as that benevolent goddess, under whose protection the honours of station, and the blessings of opulence, are to be attained; while learning and genius are proscribed, as leading their votaries to barren indigence, and merited neglect. In doubting the truth of these assertions, I think I shall not entertain any hurtful degree of scepticism, because the general current of opinion seems of late years to have set too strongly in the contrary direction; and one may endeavour to prop the failing

cause of literature, without being accused of blameable or dangerous partiality.

In the examples which memory and experience produce, of idleness, of dissipation, and of poverty, brought on by an indulgence of literary or poetical enthusiasm, the evidence must necessarily be on one side of the question only. Of the few whom learning or genius have led astray, the ill success or the ruin is marked by the celebrity of the sufferer. Of the many who have been as dull as they were profligate, and as ignorant as they were poor, the fate is unknown, from the insignificance of those by whom it was endured. If we may reason *à priori* on the matter, the chances, I think, should be on the side of literature.

In young minds of any vivacity, there is a natural aversion to the drudgery of business, which is seldom overcome, till the effervescence of youth is allayed by the progress of time and habit, or till

that very warmth is enlisted on the side of their profession, by the opening prospects of ambition or emolument. From this tyranny, as youth conceives it, of attention and of labour, relief is commonly sought from some favourite avocation or amusement, for which a young man either finds or steals a portion of his time; either patiently plods through his task, in expectation of its approach, or anticipates its arrival, by deserting his work before the legal period for amusement is arrived. It may fairly be questioned, whether the most innocent of those amusements is either so honourable or so safe, as the avocations of learning or of science. Of minds uninformed and gross, when youthful spirits agitate, but fancy and feeling have no power to impel, the amusements will generally be either boisterous or effeminate, will either dissipate their attention or weaken their force. The employment of a young man's

vacant hours is often too little attended to by those rigid masters, who exact the most scrupulous observance of the periods destined for business. The waste of time is undoubtedly a very calculable loss; but the waste or the depravation of mind is a loss of a much higher denomination. The votary of study, or the enthusiast of fancy, may incur the first; but the latter will be suffered chiefly by him whom ignorance, or want of imagination, has left to the grossness of mere sensual enjoyments.

In this, as in other respects, the love of letters is friendly to sober manners and virtuous conduct, which in every profession is the road to success and to respect. Without adopting the common-place reflections against some particular departments, it must be allowed, that in mere men of business, there is a certain professional rule of right, which is not always honourable, and though meant to be selfish, very seldom profits. A superior edu-

cation generally corrects this, by opening the mind to different motives of action, to the feelings of delicacy, the sense of honour, and a contempt of wealth, when earned by a desertion of those principles.

The moral beauty of those dispositions may perhaps rather provoke the smile, than excite the imitation, of mere men of business, and the world. But I will venture to tell them, that, even on their own principles, they are mistaken. The qualities which they sometimes prefer as more calculated for pushing a young man's way in life, seldom attain the end, in contemplation of which they are not so nice about the means. This is strongly exemplified by the ill success of many, who, from their earliest youth, had acquired the highest reputation for sharpness and cunning. Those trickish qualities look to small advantages unfairly won, rather than to great ones honourably at-

tained. The direct, the open, and the candid, are the surest road to success in every department of life. It needs a certain superior degree of ability to perceive and to adopt this; mean and uninformed minds seize on corners, which they cultivate with narrow views to very little advantage; enlarged and well-informed minds embrace great and honourable objects; and, if they fail of obtaining them, are liable to none of those pangs which rankle in the bosom of artifice defeated, or of cunning over-matched.

To the improvement of our faculties, as well as of our principles, the love of letters appears to be favourable. Letters require a certain sort of application, though of a kind perhaps very different from that which business would recommend. Granting that they are unprofitable in themselves, as that word is used in the language of the world, yet, as developing the powers of thought and reflection, they

may be an amusement of some use, as those sports of children in which numbers are used, familiarise them to the elements of arithmetic. They give room for the exercise of that discernment, that comparison of objects, that distinction of causes, which is to increase the skill of the physician, to guide the speculations of the merchant, and to prompt the arguments of the lawyer; and though some professions employ but very few faculties of the mind, yet there is scarce any branch of business in which a man who can think, will not excel him who can only labour. We shall accordingly find, in many departments where learned information seemed of all qualities the least necessary, that those who possessed it in a degree above their fellows, have found, from that very circumstance, the road to eminence and to wealth.

But I must often repeat, that wealth does not necessarily create happiness, nor

confer dignity ; a truth which it may be thought declamation to insist on, but which the present time seems particularly to require being told. The influx of foreign riches, and of foreign luxury, which this country has of late experienced, has almost levelled every distinction, but that of money, among us. The crest of noble or illustrious ancestry has sunk before the sudden accumulation of wealth in vulgar hands ; but that were little, had not the elegance of manners, had not the dignity of deportment, had not the pride of virtue, which used to characterise some of our high-born names, given way to that tide of fortune, which has lifted the low, the illiterate, and the unfeeling, into stations of which they were unworthy. Learning and genius have not always resisted the torrent ; but I know no bulwarks better calculated to resist it. The love of letters is connected with an independence and delicacy of mind, which is

a great preservative against that servile homage which abject men pay to fortune ; and there is a certain classical pride, which, from the society of Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Atticus, looks down with an honest disdain on the wealth-blown insects of modern times, neither enlightened by knowledge, nor ennobled by virtue. The *non omnis moriar* of the poet draws on futurity for the deficiencies of the present ; and even in the present, those avenues of more refined pleasure, which the cultivation of knowledge, of fancy, and of feeling, opens to the mind, give to the votary of science a real superiority of enjoyment in what he possesses, and free him from much of that envy and regret which less cultivated spirits feel from their wants.

In the possession, indeed, of what he has attained, in that rest and retirement from his labours, with the hopes of which his fatigues were lightened, and his cares were soothed ; the mere man of business

frequently undergoes suffering, instead of finding enjoyment. To be busy, as one ought, is an easy art ; but to know how to be idle, is a very superior accomplishment. This difficulty is much increased with persons, to whom the habit of employment has made some active exertion necessary ; who cannot sleep contented in the torpor of indolence, or amuse themselves with those lighter trifles, in which he, who inherited idleness as he did fortune, from his ancestors, has been accustomed to find amusement. The miseries and mortifications of the “retired pleasures” of men of business, have been frequently matter of speculation to the moralist, and of ridicule to the wit. But he who has mixed general knowledge with professional skill, and literary amusement with professional labour, will have some stock wherewith to support him in idleness, some spring for his mind when un-
bent from business, some employment for

those hours which retirement or solitude has left vacant and unoccupied. Independence in the use of one's time is not the least valuable species of freedom. This liberty the man of letters enjoys ; while the ignorant and the illiterate often retire from the thralldom of business, only to become the slaves of languor, intemperance, or vice.

But the situation in which the advantages of that endowment of mind which letters bestow are chiefly conspicuous, is old age, when a man's society is necessarily circumscribed, and his powers of active enjoyment are unavoidably diminished. Unfit for the bustle of affairs, and the amusements of his youth, an old man, if he has no source of mental exertion, or employment, often settles into the gloom of melancholy and peevishness, or petrifies his feelings by habitual intoxication. From an old man, whose gratifications were solely derived from those sensual appetites

which time has blunted, or from those trivial amusements of which youth only can share, age has cut off almost every source of enjoyment. But to him who has stored his mind with the information, and can still employ it in the amusement of letters, this blank of life is admirably filled up. He acts, he thinks, and he feels, with that literary world, whose society he can at all times enjoy. There is perhaps no state more capable of comfort to ourselves, or more attractive of veneration from others, than that which such an old age affords; it is then the twilight of the passions, when they are mitigated, but not extinguished, and spread their gentle influence over the evening of our days, in alliance with reason, and in amity with virtue.

Nor perhaps, if fairly estimated, are the little polish and complacencies of social life less increased by the cultivation of letters, than the enjoyment of solitary or retired leisure. To the politeness of form

and the ease of manner, business is naturally unfavourable, because business looks to the use, not to the decoration of things. But the man of business, who has cultivated letters, will commonly have softened his feelings, if he has not smoothed his manner, or polished his address. He may be awkward, but will seldom be rude ; may trespass in the ignorance of ceremonial, but will not offend against the substantial rules of civility. In conversation, the pedantry of profession unavoidably insinuates itself among men of every calling. The lawyer, the merchant, and the soldier, (this last perhaps, from obvious enough causes, the most of the three,) naturally slide into the accustomed train of thinking, and the accustomed style of conversation. The pedantry of the man of learning is generally the most tolerable, and the least tiresome of any ; and he who has mixed a certain portion of learning with his ordinary profession, has generally cor-

rected, in a considerable degree, the abstraction of the one, and the coarseness of the other.

In the more important relations of society, in the closer intercourse of friend, of husband, and of father, that superior delicacy and refinement of feeling which the cultivation of the mind bestows, heighten affection into sentiment, and mingle with such connections a dignity and tenderness, which give its dearest value to our existence. In fortunate circumstances, those feelings enhance prosperity ; but in the decline of fortune, as in the decline of life, their influence and importance are chiefly felt. They smooth the harshness of adversity, and on the brow of misfortune print that languid smile, which their votaries would often not exchange for the broadest mirth of those unfeelingly prosperous men, who possess good fortune, but have not a heart for happiness.

No. 101. SATURDAY, *January 6, 1787.*

Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.

VIRG.

MY latest predecessor has compared the opening Paper of a periodical publication, to the first entry of a stranger into a room full of company. I think I may borrow his idea, and not unaptly liken the concluding Paper of such a work to a person's going out of such a room. The same doubt whether he shall go or remain a little longer, the same reflections on what he may have said in the openness of his heart during his stay in the company, the same solicitude about what people will think of him when he is gone, attend the periodical author and the guest. And though the ease of modern manners has relieved

us in a great measure from the ceremonial of such a situation ; yet still an author, like a person of consequence, cannot with propriety take what is called a French leave of his company, but must formally announce his departure as an event in which the persons he is about to quit are considerably interested.

The author of a periodical performance has indeed a claim to the attention and regard of his readers, more interesting than that of any other writer. Other writers submit their sentiments to their readers, with the reserve and circumspection of him who has had time to prepare for a public appearance. He who has followed Horace's rule, of keeping his book nine years in his study, must have withdrawn many an idea which in the warmth of composition he had conceived, and altered many an expression which in the hurry of writing he had set down. But the periodical essayist commits to his readers the

feelings of the day, in the language which those feelings have prompted. As he has delivered himself with the freedom of intimacy, and the cordiality of friendship, he will naturally look for the indulgence which those relations may claim ; and when he bids his readers adieu, will hope, as well as feel, the regrets of an acquaintance, and the tenderness of a friend.

There is somewhat of this regret, and somewhat of this tenderness, in the last farewell we take of any thing. That place must have been very unpleasant, that companion very disagreeable indeed, whom, after a long sojourn or society, we can leave without some degree of melancholy, in thinking that we shall see them no more. Even that abode, or that society, with which we have been for months or years disgusted and distressed, long habit and acquaintance so ally to our minds, that we often wonder why we are so little rejoiced at the arrival of a period for

which we have frequently wished ; that our parting should rather be sad than gay, and bring us, amidst the reflections of relief, an involuntary feeling of regret.

But as the Lounger flatters himself, that he has not been altogether an unentertaining, or at least not a disagreeable companion to his readers, he may hope for a parting on more favourable terms : that on the morning of next Saturday, they will miss his company at the accustomed time, as something which used to be expected with pleasure ; and think of the papers which on that day of so many past weeks they have read, as the correspondence of one who wished their happiness, and contributed to their amusement.

If he may judge from what himself has experienced in similar circumstances, they will be apt to indulge a personification of the author of these sheets, and give him “ a local habitation and a name,” according to the ideas they may have formed in

the course of his performance. When such a writer has withdrawn himself from that sort of authority which he claimed for his opinions, that sort of credit which he assumed for his situation, we are naturally inclined to examine the reality of each; as at the death of an acquaintance, we talk with more precision and assurance than formerly, of his age, his character, and his circumstances. To ascertain, as well as to satisfy any such inquiry, the authors of the *Lounger* will fairly unfold themselves; not individually, for that were to assume an importance to which they are not entitled; but they have an aggregate name, by which, like corporations, they can be known and impleaded: they are the same society which, some years ago, published in this country their periodical essays under the title of the *MIRROR*.

In making this declaration, they incur as much danger, perhaps, as they assume distinction. He who has some merit of

ancestry to support, draws the attention more closely upon his own. During the course of this publication, they have sometimes been amused with the discovery of its inferiority to its predecessor; and have heard, with a mixture of mortification and of pride, some people express their regret, that the authors of the *Mirror* did not write in the *Lounger*, and rescue it from the less able hands into which it had fallen. It may still indeed be said, that an author is often *sibi impar*; that a second work is seldom equal in merit to the first. But they may be allowed to indulge themselves in the belief, that great part of the criticism arose from a natural enough propensity to undervalue what has not yet been sanctioned by the general opinion; from that disposition, common in every thing, not to be satisfied merely with what is good, but with what is called good. Be this, however, as it may, the authors of the two works found themselves somewhat

flattered by the remark ; as a mother can but slightly resent the criticism of her daughter's beauty, when it only discovers that she herself was handsomer some twenty years ago.

When thus, like Prospero, they "break their staff," and lay aside the airy power they had assumed, they feel, like him, the loss of that society which the Lounger had raised around them. The visionary characters with which he had peopled their acquaintance, they cannot help regretting as departed friends ; and it is not without a sigh, that they dismiss Peter from his service. But they owe that sort of disclosure of themselves which this paper has made to sincerity ; and there is something more solemn in their obligation to this avowal now, because it is the last time they will have an opportunity of making it. Particular circumstances induce them to declare, that they will not again appear before the public, as periodical es-

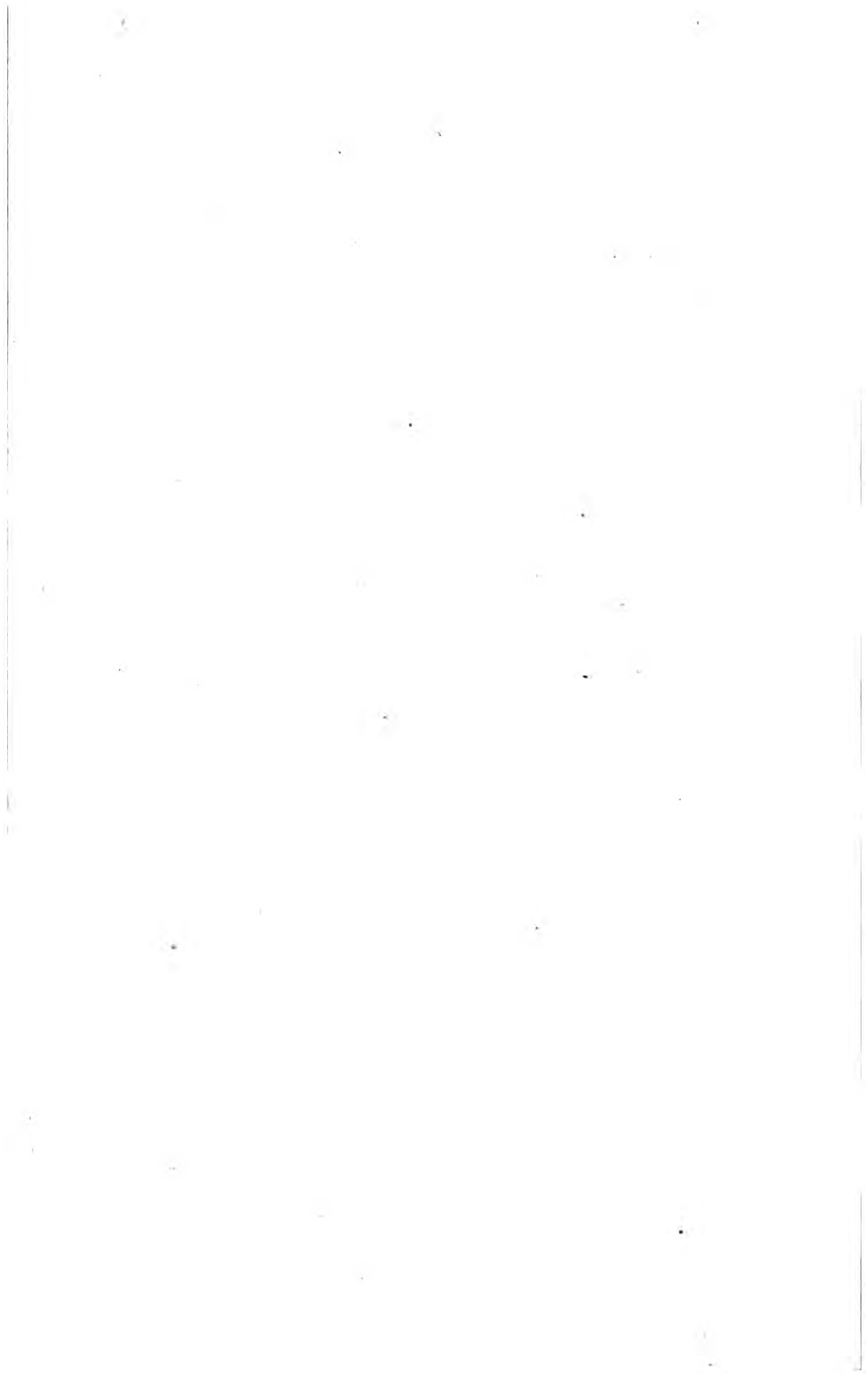
sayists, in any shape, or under any name. If any future work of that kind shall happen to come out, they will have no claim to its merits, nor responsibility for its defects.

It only remains for them to do justice to those correspondents to whose assistance they have been indebted during the course of their work. To correspondents they owe the following Papers : No. 7. ; the letter subscribed Mary Careful, in No. 8. ; Nos. 11. 16. 19. 24. ; the letters from Theatricus, in No. 25. ; from Philomusos, in No. 42. ; from John Trueman, in No. 44. ; the letters signed Almeria, in No. 46. ; Jessamina, in No. 53. ; and Hannah Waitfort, in No. 55. ; Nos. 59. 60. 63. 70. 79. and the Poem in No. 85.

Of their readers, as well as their correspondents, they cannot take leave without a very sensible and lively regret. While they dictate this concluding paragraph, it is with a melancholy feeling they reflect,

that it deprives them of an opportunity of cultivating that correspondence, and of committing to those readers the sentiments of their hearts ; that it drops the curtain on their mimic state, and surrenders them to the less interesting occupations of ordinary life. Yet twice to have made a not unsuccessful excursion into this region of fancy and of literary dominion, is to have atchieved something which falls but to the lot of few. They can anticipate, with a venial degree of self-applause, the talk of their age, recalling the period of their publications with an old man's fondness, an author's vanity, and a Scotsman's pride ; happy if any one of their number, who shall then be pointed out as a writer in the Mirror or the Lounger, needs not blush to avow them as works that endeavoured to list amusement on the side of taste, and to win the manners to decency and to goodness.

SOME ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
DR. BLACKLOCK.



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OF those whose writings have delighted the feelings, or attracted the admiration of mankind, it has generally happened that the lives have afforded but very few materials for biography. The “sequestered vale,” as one of themselves has term-

* Written at the earnest request of his widow, in 1793, and prefixed to a new Edition of his Works published in that year.

ed it, in which genius nourishes the swelling thought, or study pursues its elaborate research, has scarce any objects for description to embellish, or events to which narrative could give importance. The dispositions of such persons are generally as averse, as their situations are unfavourable, to the pursuits of interest or ambition, to those active pursuits which lead men through conspicuous events, or associate them with conspicuous characters. The lives of literary men are often the mere measure of a certain portion of time in which their works were produced, and have only that subordinate and unnoticed relation to those productions which the canvas of Guido had to his paintings, or the marble of Michael Angelo to his sculpture. Without the materials, the work would not have existed; but the material is of so little value in proportion to the work, that in the contemplation of the latter, the former is forgotten.

Yet a shred of that canvas, or a fragment of that marble, on which either of those great men wrought, would bear a value in the imagination of a lover of the arts in which they excelled. And, in like manner, they who have perused with pleasure the works of an author, are solicitous to know the particulars of his life, to learn the employment of those hours in which he did not write, and to see him in that ordinary state in which he left the elevation of genius to concern himself with common things ; to trace him back from that period when his fame was at its full, with the same sort of curiosity with which we follow up the track of some mighty stream, to the little rill that is acknowledged for its source.

This propensity, which is always natural, may sometimes lead to more than amusement. Besides the general advantage which results from examining, in whatever direction, the progress and powers

of the human mind, particular circumstances may exist to render the situation in which an author was placed, a theme for interesting speculation, or a study of useful example. In the powers or in the weakness, in the attainments or the defects, in the enjoyments or the distresses, of men eminent for intellectual endowments, their successors may learn a better direction of their own talents, or a juster value of their own pursuits; to abate the pride by which genius is hurtfully misled, or to overcome the mortification by which it is unnecessarily depressed; may be taught to avoid those fair-seeming paths that lead to disquiet and disappointment, and be led to sources of content and consolation amidst prospects the most gloomy and unpromising.

The life of Dr Thomas Blacklock, author of the following poems, may, I think, assert a claim to notice beyond that of most authors, to whose story the public

attention has been called by the publication of their works. He who reads these poems with that interest which their intrinsic merit deserves, will feel that interest very much increased, when he shall be told the various difficulties which their author overcame in their production; the obstacles which nature and fortune had placed in his way to the possession of those ideas which his mind acquired, to the communication of those which his poetry unfolds.

He was born in the year 1721, at Annan, in the county of Dumfries, in Scotland. His parents were natives of the bordering English county of Cumberland. His father was by trade a bricklayer; his mother the daughter of a considerable dealer in cattle; both respectable in their characters; and it would appear, possessed of a considerable degree of knowledge and urbanity; which, in a country where education was cheap, and property then

a good deal subdivided, was often the case with persons of their station.

Before he was six months old, he lost his eye-sight in the small-pox. This rendered him incapable of any of those mechanical trades to which his father might naturally have been inclined to breed him, and his circumstances prevented his aspiring to the higher professions. The good man therefore kept his son in his house, and, with the assistance of some of his friends, fostered that inclination which the boy early shewed for books, by reading, to amuse him, first the simple sort of publications which are commonly put into the hands of children, and then several of our best authors, such as Milton, Spenser, Prior, Pope, and Addison. His companions, whom his early gentleness and kindness of disposition, as well as their compassion for his misfortune, strongly attached to him, were very assiduous in their good offices, in reading to instruct

and amuse him. By their assistance he acquired some knowledge of the Latin tongue, but he never was at a grammar-school till at a more advanced period of life. Poetry was even then his favourite reading; and he found an enthusiastic delight in the works of the best English poets, and in those of his countryman Allan Ramsay. Even at an age so early as twelve he began to write poems, one of which is preserved in this collection, and is not, perhaps, inferior to any of the premature compositions of boys assisted by the best education, which are only recalled into notice by the future fame of their authors.

He had attained the age of nineteen when his father was killed by the accidental fall of a malt-kiln belonging to his son-in-law. This loss, heavy to any one at that early age, would have been, however, to a young man possessing the ordinary means of support, and the ordi-

nary advantages of education, comparatively light; but to him,—thus suddenly deprived of that support on which his youth had leaned—destitute almost of any resource which industry affords to those who have the blessings of sight—with a body feeble and delicate from nature, and a mind congenially susceptible, it was not surprising, that this blow was doubly severe, and threw on his spirits that despondent gloom to which he then gave way in the following pathetic lines, and which sometimes overclouded them in the subsequent period of his life :

Dejecting prospect ! soon the hapless hour
May come ; perhaps this moment it impends,
Which drives me forth to penury and cold,
Naked, and beat by all the storms of heaven,
Friendless and guideless, to explore my way ;
Till, on cold earth, this poor unsheltered head
Reclining, vainly from the ruthless blast
Respite I beg, and in the shock expire.

Though dependent, however, he was

not destitute of friends; and heaven rewarded the pious confidence, which, a few lines after, he expresses in its care, by providing for him protectors and patrons, by whose assistance he obtained advantages, which, had his father lived, might perhaps never have opened to him.

He lived with his mother for about a year after his father's death, and began to be distinguished as a young man of uncommon parts and genius. These were at that time unassisted by learning; the circumstances of his family affording him no better education than the smattering of Latin which his companions had taught him, and the perusal and recollection of the few English authors which they, or his father in the intervals of his professional labours, had read to him. Poetry, however, though it attains its highest perfection in a cultivated soil, grows perhaps as luxuriantly in a wild one. To poetry, as we have before mentioned, he was de-

voted from his earliest days; and about this time several of his poetical productions began to be handed about, which considerably enlarged the circle of his friends and acquaintance. Some of his compositions being shewn to Doctor Stevenson, an eminent physician of Edinburgh, who was accidentally at Dumfries on a professional visit, that gentleman formed the benevolent design of carrying him to the Scotch metropolis, and giving to his natural endowments the assistance of a classical education. He came to Edinburgh in the year 1741, and was enrolled a student of divinity in the university there, though at that time without any particular view of entering into the church. In that university he continued his studies under the patronage of Doctor Stevenson till the year 1745, and in the following year a volume of his poems in octavo was first published. During the national disturbances, which prevailed du-

ring those years, he returned to Dumfries, where he resided with Mr M'Murdo, a gentleman who had married his sister, in whose house he was not only treated with all the kindness and affection of a brother, but had an opportunity, from the society which it afforded, of considerably increasing the store of his ideas. After the close of the rebellion, and the complete restoration of the peace of the country, he returned again to the metropolis, and pursued his studies for six years longer. During this last residence in Edinburgh, among other literary acquaintance, he obtained that of the celebrated David Hume, who, with all that humanity and benevolence for which he was distinguished, attached himself warmly to Mr Blacklock's interests, and was afterwards particularly useful to him in the publication of the 4to edition of his poems, which came out by subscription in London in the year 1756. Previously to this,

a second edition in octavo had been published at Edinburgh in 1754. To the 4th edition Mr Spence, professor of poetry at Oxford, who had conceived a great regard for the author, prefixed a very elaborate and ingenious account of his life, character, and writings; an account which would have rendered the present imperfect sketch equally unnecessary and assuming, had it not been written at a period so early as to include only the opening events of a life for which it was meant to claim the future notice and favour of the public.

In the course of his education at Edinburgh, he acquired a proficiency in the learned languages, and became more a master of the French tongue than was common there, from the social intercourse to which he had the good fortune to be admitted in the house of Provost Alexander, who had married a native of France. At the university he attained a knowledge of the various branches of phi-

losophy and theology, to which his course of study naturally led, and acquired at the same time a considerable fund of learning and information in those various departments of science and *belles lettres*, from which his want of sight did not absolutely preclude him.

In 1757, he began a course of study, with a view to give lectures in oratory to young gentlemen intended for the bar or the pulpit. On this occasion he wrote to Mr Hume, informed him of his plan, and requested his assistance in the prosecution of it. But Mr Hume doubting the probability of its success, he abandoned the project; and then, for the first time, adopted the decided intention of going into the church of Scotland. After applying closely for a considerable time to the study of theology, he passed the usual trials in the presbytery of Dumfries, and was by that presbytery licenced a preacher of the gospel in the year

1759. As a preacher, he obtained high reputation, and was fond of composing sermons, of which he has left some volumes in manuscript, as also a treatise on morals, both of which it is in contemplation with his friends to publish.

The tenor of his occupations, as well as the bent of his mind and dispositions, during this period of his life, will appear in the following plain and unstudied account, contained in a letter from a gentleman, who was then his most intimate and constant companion, the Rev. Mr Jameson, formerly minister of the Episcopal chapel at Dumfries, afterwards of the English congregation at Dantzic, and who now resides at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. "His manner of life," says that gentleman, "was so uniform, that the history of it during one day, or one week, is the history of it during the seven years that our personal intercourse lasted. Reading, music, walking, conversing, and dispu-

ting on various topics, in theology, ethics, &c. employed almost every hour of our time. It was pleasant to hear him engaged in a dispute, for no man could keep his temper better than he always did on such occasions. I have known him frequently very warmly engaged for hours together, but never could observe one angry word to fall from him. Whatever his antagonist might say, he always kept his temper. *Semper paratus et refellere sine pertinacia, et refelli sine iracundia.* He was, however, extremely sensible to what he thought ill usage, and equally so whether it regarded himself or his friends. But his resentment was always confined to a few satirical verses, which were generally burnt soon after.

“ The late Mr Spence (the editor of the quarto edition of his poems) frequently urged him to write a tragedy; and assured him, that he had interest enough with Mr Garrick to get it acted. Vari-

ous subjects were proposed to him, several of which he approved of, yet he never could be prevailed on to begin any thing of that kind. * It may seem remarkable, but as far as I know, it was invariably the case, that he never could think or write on any subject proposed to him by another.

“ I have frequently admired with what readiness and rapidity he could sometimes make verses. I have known him dictate from thirty to forty verses, and by no means bad ones, as fast as I could write them ; but the moment he was at a loss for a rhyme or a verse to his liking, he stopt altogether, and could very sel-

* Mr Jameson was probably ignorant of the circumstance of his writing, at a subsequent period, a tragedy ; but upon what subject, his relation, from whom I received the intelligence, cannot recollect. The manuscript was put into the hands of the late Mr Crosbie, then an eminent advocate at the bar of Scotland, but has never since been recovered.

dom be induced to finish what he had begun with so much ardour."

This account sufficiently marks that eager sensibility, chastened at the same time with uncommon gentleness of temper, which characterised Dr Blacklock, and which indeed it was impossible to be at all in his company without perceiving. In the science of mind, this is that division of it which perhaps one would peculiarly appropriate to poetry, at least to all those lighter species which rather depend on quickness of feeling, and the ready conception of pleasing images, than on the happy arrangement of parts, or the skilful construction of a whole, which are essential to the higher departments of the poetical art. The first kind of talent is like those warm and light soils which produce their annual crops in such abundance; the last, like that deeper and firmer mould on which the roots of eternal forests are fixed. Of the first we have seen many

happy instances in that sex which is supposed less capable of study or thought ; from the last is drawn that masculine sublimity of genius which could build an Iliad or a Paradise Lost.

All those who ever acted as his amanuenses, agree in this rapidity and ardour of composition which Mr Jameson ascribes to him in the account I have copied above. He never could dictate till he stood up ; and as his blindness made walking about without assistance inconvenient or dangerous to him, he fell insensibly into a vibratory sort of motion of his body, which increased as he warmed with his subject, and was pleased with the conceptions of his mind. This motion at last became habitual to him ; and though he could sometimes restrain it when on ceremony, or in any public appearance, such as preaching, he felt a certain uneasiness from the effort, and always returned to it when he could

indulge it without impropriety. This is the appearance which he describes in the ludicrous picture he has drawn of himself (page 160.) Of this portrait the outlines are true, though the general effect is overcharged. His features were hurt by the disease which deprived him of sight ; yet even with those disadvantages, there was a certain placid expression in his physiognomy, which marked the benevolence of his mind, and was extremely calculated to procure him attachment and regard.

In 1762 he married Miss Sarah Johnston, daughter of Mr Joseph Johnston surgeon in Dumfries, a man of eminence in his profession, and of a character highly respected ; a connection which formed the great solace and blessing of his future life, and gave him, with all the tenderness of a wife, all the zealous care of a guardian and a friend. This event took place a few days before his being ordain-

ed minister of the town and parish of Kircudbright, in consequence of a presentation from the crown, obtained for him by the Earl of Selkirk, a benevolent nobleman, whom Mr Blacklock's situation and genius had interested in his behalf. But the inhabitants of the parish, whether from that violent aversion to patronage, which was then so universal in the southern parts of Scotland; from some political disputes which at that time subsisted between them and his noble patron; or from those prejudices which some of them might naturally enough entertain against a pastor deprived of sight; or perhaps from all those causes united, were so extremely disinclined to receive him as their minister, that, after a legal dispute of nearly two years, it was thought expedient by his friends, as it had always been wished by himself, to compromise the matter, by resigning his right to the living, and accepting a moderate annuity

in its stead. With this slender provision he removed in 1764 to Edinburgh; and to make up by his industry a more comfortable and decent subsistence, he adopted the plan of receiving a certain number of young gentlemen, as boarders, into his house, whose studies in languages and philosophy, he might, if necessary, assist. In this situation he continued till the year 1787, when he found his time of life and state of health required a degree of quiet and repose which induced him to discontinue the receiving of boarders. In 1767 the degree of doctor in divinity was conferred on him by the University and Marischal college of Aberdeen.

In the occupation which he thus exercised for so many years of his life, no teacher was perhaps ever more agreeable to his pupils, nor master of a family to its inmates, than Dr Blacklock. The gentleness of his manners, the benignity of his disposition, and that warm interest in the

happiness of others, which led him so constantly to promote it, were qualities that could not fail to procure him the love and regard of the young people committed to his charge ; while the society, which esteem and respect for his character and his genius often assembled at his house, afforded them an advantage rarely to be found in establishments of a similar kind. The writer of this account has frequently been a witness of the family-scene at Dr Blacklock's ; has seen the good man amidst the circle of his young friends, eager to do him all the little offices of kindness which he seemed so much to merit and to feel. In this society he appeared entirely to forget the privation of sight, and the melancholy which, at other times, it might produce. He entered, with the cheerful playfulness of a young man, into all the sprightly narrative, the sportful fancy, the humorous jest, that rose around him. It was a sight highly gratifying to philanthropy, to

see how much a mind endowed with knowledge, kindled by genius, and, above all, lighted up with innocence and piety, like Blacklock's, could overcome the weight of its own calamity, and enjoy the content, the happiness, and the gaiety of others. Several of those inmates of Dr Blacklock's house retained, in future life, all the warmth of that impression which his friendship at this early period had made upon them; and in various quarters of the world he had friends and correspondents, from whom no length of time, or distance of place, had ever estranged him.

Music, which to the feeling and the pensive, in whatever situation, is a source of extreme delight, but which to the blind must be creative, as it were, of idea and of sentiment, he enjoyed highly, and was himself a tolerable performer on several instruments, particularly on the flute. He generally carried in his pocket a small

flageolet,* on which he played his favourite tunes ; and was not displeased when asked in company to play or to sing them ; a natural feeling for a blind man, who thus adds a scene to the drama of his society.

Of the happiness of others, however, we are incompetent judges. Companionship and sympathy bring forth those gay colours of mirth and cheerfulness, which they put on for a while, to cover perhaps that sadness which we have no opportunity of witnessing. Of a blind man's condition we are particularly liable to form a mistaken estimate ; we give him credit for all those gleams of delight which so-

* His first idea of learning to play on this instrument he used to ascribe to a circumstance rather uncommon, but which, to a mind like his, susceptible at the same time and creative, might naturally enough arise,—namely, a dream, in which he thought he met with a shepherd's boy on the side of a pastoral hill, who brought the most exquisite music from that little instrument.

ciety affords him, without placing to their full account those dreary moments of darksome solitude to which the suspension of that society condemns him. Dr Blacklock had from nature a constitution delicate and nervous, and his mind, as is almost always the case, was in a great degree subject to the indisposition of his body. He frequently complained of a lowness and depression of spirits, which neither the attentions of his friends, nor the unceasing care of a most affectionate wife, were able entirely to remove. The imagination we are so apt to envy and admire, serves but to irritate this disorder of the mind; and that fancy, in whose creation we so much delight, can draw, from sources unknown to common men, subjects of disgust, disquietude, and affliction. Some of his later poems, now first published, express a chagrin, though not of an ungentle sort, at the supposed failure of his imaginative powers, or at the fas-

tidiousness of modern times, which he despaired to please.

“ Such were his efforts, such his cold reward,
Whom once thy partial tongue pronounced a bard.
Excursive, on the gentle gales of spring,
He roved, whilst favour imp'd his timid wing.
Exhausted genius now no more inspires,
But mourns abortive hopes, and faded fires ;
The short-liv'd wreath, which once his temples graced,
Fades at the sickly breath of squeamish taste ;
Whilst darker days his fainting flames immure
In cheerless gloom, and winter premature.”

These lines are, however, no proof of “ exhausted genius,” or “ faded fires.” “ Abortive hopes,” indeed, must be the lot of all who reach that period of life at which they were written. In early youth the heart of every one is a poet ; it creates a scene of imagined happiness and delusive hopes ; it clothes the world in the bright colours of its own fancy ; it refines what is coarse, it exalts what is mean ; it sees nothing but disinterestedness in friendship, it promises eternal fidelity in love. Even

on the distresses of its situation it can throw a certain romantic shade of melancholy, that leaves a man sad, but does not make him unhappy. But at a more advanced age, "the fairy visions fade," and he suffers most deeply, who has indulged them the most.

One distress Dr Blacklock was at this time first afflicted with, of which every one will allow the force. He was occasionally subject to deafness, which, though he seldom felt it in any great degree, was sufficient, in his situation, to whom the sense of hearing was almost the only channel of communication with the external world, to cause very lively uneasiness. Amidst these indispositions of body, however, and disquietudes of mind, the gentleness of his temper never forsook him, and he felt all that resignation and confidence in the Supreme Being, which his earliest and his latest life equally acknowledged. In summer 1791, he was seized

with a feverish disorder, which at first seemed of a slight, and never rose to a very violent kind ; but a frame so little robust as his was not able to resist it, and after about a week's illness, it carried him off on the seventh day of July, 1791. His wife survives him, to feel, amidst the heavy affliction of his loss, that melancholy consolation which is derived from the remembrance of his virtues.

Of the writings of Dr Blacklock, I think it unnecessary to enter into any particular criticism or account. Prefixed to a volume of poems, the character of that volume will generally be supposed to contain a partial estimate of its merits ; and he must be very indolent indeed, who will be guided in his reading of the text by the directions of the comment. It may be allowed me, however, to express my opinion in general, that in this collection of poems, the reader will find those qualities of fancy, tenderness, and sometimes subli-

mity in the thoughts, of elegance, and often force in the language, which characterise the genuine productions of the poetical talent. One other praise, which the good will value, belongs to those poems in a high degree; they breathe the purest spirit of piety, virtue, and benevolence. These indeed are the muses of Blacklock; they inspire his poetry, as they animated his life; and he never approaches the sacred ground on which they dwell, without an expansion of mind, and an elevation of language.

The additional poems, now first published in this volume, will, I think, be found to possess equal merit with those which their author formerly gave to the world. There is perhaps a certain degree of languor diffused over some of them, written during the latter period of his life, for which the circumstances I have mentioned above may account; but the delicacy and the feeling remain undiminished: One

of those later poems, the "Ode to Aurora, on Melissa's Birth-day," is a compliment and tribute of affection to the tender assiduity of an excellent wife, which I have not any where seen more happily conceived, or more elegantly expressed.

His peculiar situation I do not mean to plead as an apology for defects in his compositions. I am sufficiently aware of a truth, which authors, or their apologists, are apt to forget, that the public expects entertainment, and listens but ill to excuses for the want of it. But the circumstances of the writer's blindness will certainly create an interest in his productions beyond what those of one possessed of sight could have excited, especially in such passages of his works as are descriptive of visible objects. Mr Spence, in his introduction to the 4to edition of those poems, published in 1756, has treated this descriptive power, which the poetry of Mr Blacklock seemed to evince in its author, as a

sort of problem which he has illustrated by a very great number of quotations from the poems themselves, by hypothetical conjectures of his own, drawn from those passages, and from the nature of a blind man's sensations and ideas; and by some accounts of such sensations in himself, which Mr Blacklock gave to Mr Spence in discoursing on the subject.

Without detracting from the ingenuity of Mr Spence's deductions, I am apt, in the case of Dr Blacklock, to ascribe much to the effect of a retentive and ready memory of that poetical language, in which from his earliest infancy he delighted, and that apt appropriation of it, which an habitual acquaintance with the best poets had taught him.

This, I am sensible, by no means affords a complete solution of the difficulty; for though it may account for the use which he makes of poetical language, it throws no light on his early passion for reading

poetry, and poetry of a kind, too, which lies very much within the province of sight ; * nor does it clearly trace the source of that pleasure which such reading evidently conveyed to his mind.

It is observed, and I think very truly, by Dr Reid, that there is very little of the knowledge acquired by those who see, that may not be communicated to a man born blind ; and he illustrates his remark by the example of the celebrated Sanderson. Another writer † seems disposed to extend a similar observation to some of those pleasures of which the sense of sight is commonly understood to be the only channel ; and he appeals, in proof of his doctrine, to the poetry of Dr Blacklock : “ Here,” says he, “ is a poet doubtless as much affected by his own descriptions as

* Thomson and Allan Ramsay were two of his favourite authors.

† Burke, in his Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful.

any that reads them can be ; and yet he is affected with this strong enthusiasm, by things of which he neither has, nor can possibly have, any idea, further than that of a bare sound." The same author mentions, as a confirmation of his doctrine, the scientific acquirements of Sanderson, which he seems to think explicable on the same principles with Dr Blacklock's poetry.

But, in truth, there appears to be very little analogy between the two cases ; nor does the genius of Sanderson furnish by any means so curious a subject of philosophical disquisition as that of Blacklock. The ideas of extension and figure, about which the speculations of the geometer are employed, may be conveyed to the mind by the sense of touch, as well as by that of sight ; and (if we except the phenomena of colour) the case is the same with all the subjects of our reasoning in natural philosophy. But of the pleasures

which poetry excites, so great a proportion arises from allusion to visible objects, and from descriptions of the beauty and sublimity of nature ; so much truth is there in the maxim *ut pictura poesis*, that the word imagination, which in its primary sense has a direct reference to the eye, is employed to express that power of the mind, which is considered as peculiarly characteristic of poetical genius ; and, therefore, whatever be the degree of pleasure which a blind poet receives from the exercise of his art, the pleasure must, in general, be perfectly different in kind from that which he imparts to his readers.

Sanderson, we are told, though blind, could lecture on the *prismatic spectrum*, and on the theory of the rainbow ; but to his mind the names of the different colours were merely significant of the relative arrangement of the spaces which they occupied, and produced as little effect on his imagination as the letters of the alpha-

bet which he employed in his geometrical diagrams. By means of a retentive memory, it might have been possible for him to acquire a knowledge of the common poetical epithets appropriated to the different colours: it is even conceivable, that, by long habits of poetical reading, he might have become capable of producing such a description of their order in the *spectrum*, as is contained in the following lines of Thomson:

—————“ First the flaming red
Sprung vivid forth; the tawny orange next,
And next delicious yellow; by whose side
Fell the kind beams of all-refreshing green;
Then the pure blue, that swells autumnal skies,
Ethereal played; and then of sadder hue
Emerged the deepened Indico, as when
The heavy-skirted evening droops with frost;
While the last gleamings of refracted light
Dyed in the fainting violet away.”

But supposing all this possible, how different must have been the effect of the

description on his mind from what it produced on that of Thomson? or what idea could he form of the rapture which the poet felt in recalling to his imagination the innumerable appearances in the earth and heavens, of which the philosophic principles he referred to afford the explanation?

“ Did ever poet image aught so fair,
Dreaming in whispering groves, by the hoarse brook;
Or prophet, to whose rapture heaven descends!
Even now the setting sun and shifting clouds
Seen, Greenwich, from thy lovely heights, declare
How just, how beautiful, the refractive law.”

Yet, though it be evidently impossible that a description of this sort, relating entirely to the peculiar perceptions of sight, should convey to a blind man the same kind of pleasure which we receive from it, it may be easily imagined, that the same words which in their ordinary acceptation express visible objects, may,

by means of early associations, become to such a person the vehicle of many other agreeable or disagreeable emotions. These associations will probably vary greatly in the case of different individuals, according to the circumstances of their education, and the peculiar bent of their genius. Dr Blacklock's associations in regard to colours, were (according to his own account) chiefly of the moral kind. But into this enquiry, which opens a wide field of speculation to the metaphysician, I do not mean to enter. I shall content myself with remarking, that in other arts, as well as those which address themselves to sight, the same distinction is to be found. What may be termed the arithmetic and mathematics of music and of the scale, depend not on a musical ear, any more than the theory of vision depends on sight. In both cases, pleasure and feeling are easily distinguishable from knowledge and science; the first require, and

cannot exist without an eye for colour, and an ear for sound; the last are independent of either.

It is indeed the boast of genius to do much on scanty materials, to create and "body forth the forms of things," to give character to what it has not known, and picture to what it has not seen. The genius of Shakespeare has entered into the cabinets of statesmen, and the palaces of kings, and made them speak like statesmen and like kings. It has given manners as well as language to imaginary beings, which, though we cannot criticise like the other, every one intuitively owns to be true. It has kindled the wizard's fire, and trimmed "the fairy's glow-worm lamp;" has moulded a Caliban's savage form, and spun the light down of an Ariel's wing. But this imaginative power, how extensive and wonderful soever its range, had still some elements from which it could raise this world of fancy, some

analogies from which its ideas could be drawn. To the blind no degree of genius can supply the want of these with regard to visible objects, nor teach them that entirely distinct species of perception which belongs to sight. "Objects of sight and touch," says Berkeley very justly, "constitute two worlds, which, though nearly connected, bear no resemblance to one another."

In the case of Dr Blacklock, we happen to be possessed of a piece of evidence more direct than any thing which a third person, however well acquainted with him individually, or however conversant with the subject in general, can produce with regard to his ideas on visible objects: I allude to the article *Blind* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, published at Edinburgh in the year 1783, which was written by him. In this little treatise, (which I will venture to recommend, not only on account of its peculiarity, as being the

production of a blind man, but of its intrinsic merit,) there are no marks of any extraordinary conception of visible objects, nor any allusion to those mental images which ingenuity might suppose deducible from the descriptive passages with which his poetry abounds. It contains chiefly reflections on the distresses and disadvantages of blindness, and the best means of alleviating them; directions for the education of the blind, and a description of various inventions for enabling them to attain and to practise several arts and sciences, from which their situation might seem to exclude them. The sympathy and active benevolence of Dr Blacklock prompted him to this composition, as well as to a translation of M. Haüy's account of the charitable institution for the blind at Paris, which is annexed to the present edition of his poems. "To the blind," says this article in the *Encyclopædia*, "the visible world is to-

tally annihilated; he is perfectly conscious of no space but that in which he stands, or to which his extremities can reach." - - - - "All the various modes of delicate proportion, all the beautiful varieties of light and colours, whether exhibited in the works of nature or art, are to the blind irretrievably lost. Dependent for every thing but mere subsistence on the good offices of others; obnoxious to injury from every point, which they are neither capacitated to perceive, nor qualified to resist; they are, during the present state of being, rather to be considered as prisoners at large, than citizens of nature."

In that part which relates to the education of the blind, one direction is rather singular, though it seems extremely proper. The author strongly recommends to their parents and relations to accustom them to an early exertion of their own

active powers, though at the risk of their personal safety.

“ Parents and relations ought never to be too ready in offering their assistance to the blind in any office which they can perform, or in any acquisition which they can procure for themselves, whether they are prompted by amusement, or necessity. Let a blind boy be permitted to walk through the neighbourhood without a guide, not only though he should run some hazard, but even though he should suffer some pain.

“ If he has a mechanical turn, let him not be denied the use of edge-tools; for it is better that he should lose a little blood, or even break a bone, than be perpetually confined to the same place, debilitated in his frame, and depressed in his mind. Such a being can have no employment but to feel his own weakness, and become his own tormentor; or to transfer to others all the malignity and

peevishness arising from the natural, adventitious, or imaginary evils which he feels. Scars, fractures, and dislocations in his body, are trivial misfortunes compared with imbecility, timidity, or fretfulness of mind. Besides the sensible and dreadful effects which inactivity must have in relaxing the nerves, and consequently in depressing the spirits, nothing can be more productive of jealousy, envy, peevishness, and every passion that corrodes the soul to agony, than a painful impression of dependence on others, and of our insufficiency to our own happiness. This impression, which, even in his most improved state, will be too deeply felt by every blind man, is redoubled by that utter incapacity of action which must result from the officious humanity of those who would anticipate or supply all his wants, who would prevent all his motions, who would do or procure every thing for him without his own interposition."

This direction was probably suggested from the author's own feeling of the want of that boldness and independence which the means it recommends are calculated to produce; as the following description of low spirits might perhaps be more strongly painted from that languor to which his sensibility of mind and delicate frame of body sometimes exposed him.

“ We have more than once hinted, during the course of this article, that the blind, as liable to all the inconveniences of sedentary life, are peculiarly subjected to that disorder, which may be called *tædium vitæ*, or low spirits. This indisposition may be said to comprehend in it all the other diseases and evils of human life; because, by its immediate influence on the mind, it aggravates the weight and bitterness of every calamity to which we are obnoxious. In a private letter, we have heard it described as a formidable

precipice in the regions of misery, between the awful gulphs of suicide on the one hand, and phrensy on the other, into either of which, a gentle breeze, according to the force of its impulse, and the line of its direction, may irrecoverably plunge the unhappy victim ; yet from both of which he may providentially escape. Though the shades of the metaphor may perhaps be unnaturally deepened, yet those who have felt the force of the malady will not fail to represent it by the most dreadful images which its own feelings can suggest. Parents and tutors, therefore, if they have the least pretence to conscience or humanity, cannot be too careful in observing and obviating the first symptoms of this impending plague.

“ If the limbs of your blind child or pupil be tremulous ; if he is apt to start, and easily susceptible of surprise ; if he finds it difficult to sleep ; if his slumbers, when commenced, are frequently inter-

rupted, and attended with perturbation ; if his ordinary exercises appear to him more terrible and more insuperable than usual ; if his appetite become languid, and his digestion slow ; if agreeable occurrences give him less pleasure, and adverse events more pain than they ought to inspire ;— this is the crisis of vigorous interposition.”

The imagination which the muse of terror indulges, while she sometimes suffers pain from the indulgence, may be traced in the cautions which he gives against allowing the minds of the blind to be impressed with frightful tales.

“ Those philosophers who have attempted to break the alliance between darkness and spectres, were certainly inspired by laudable motives. But they must give us leave to assert, that there is a natural and essential connection betwixt night and orcus.

“ Were we endued with senses to advertise us of every noxious object before

its contiguity could render it formidable, our panics would probably be less frequent and sensible than we really feel them. Darkness and silence, therefore, have something dreadful in them, because they supersede the vigilance of those senses which give us the earliest notices of things.

“ If you talk to a blind boy of invisible beings, let benevolence be an inseparable ingredient in their character. You may, if you please, tell him of departed spirits, anxious for the welfare of their surviving friends ; of ministering angels, who descend with pleasure from heaven to execute the purposes of their Maker’s benignity ; you may even regale his imagination with the sportive gambols and innocent frolics of fairies ; but let him hear as seldom as possible, even in stories which he knows to be fabulous, of vindictive ghosts, vindictive fiends, or avenging furies. They seize and pre-occupy every avenue of terror which is open in the soul ;

nor are they easily dispossessed. Sooner should we hope to exorcise a ghost, or appease a fury, than to obliterate their images in a warm and susceptible imagination, where they have been habitually impressed, and where those feelings cannot be dissipated by external phenomena. If horrors of this kind should agitate the heart of a blind boy, (which may happen notwithstanding the most strenuous endeavours to prevent it,) the stories which he has heard will be most effectually discredited by ridicule. This, however, must be cautiously applied, by gentle and delicate gradations.

“ If he is inspired with terror by effects upon his senses, the causes of which he cannot investigate ; indefatigable pains must be taken to explain their phenomena, and to confirm that explication, whenever it can be done, by the testimony of his own senses, and his own experience. The exertion of his locomotive and me-

chanical powers, (the rights of which we have formerly endeavoured to assert,) will sensibly contribute to dispel these terrors."

If we do not assign to Dr Blacklock any extraordinary, or what might be termed preternatural conception of visible objects, yet we may fairly claim for him a singular felicity of combination in his use of the expressions by which those objects are distinguished. The following descriptive strokes, most of which, with a great many others, Mr Spence has collected, are as finely drawn, and as justly coloured, as sight could have made them.

"Mild gleams the purple evening o'er the plain."

"Ye vales, which to the raptured eye
Disclosed the flowery pride of May;
Ye circling hills, whose summits high
Blushed with the morning's earliest ray."

"Let long-lived pansies here their scents bestow,
The violets languish, and the roses glow;
In yellow glory let the crocus shine,
Narcissus here his love-sick head recline;

Here hyacinths in purple sweetness rise,
And tulips, tinged with beauty's fairest dyes."

" On rising ground, the prospect to command,
Untinged with smoke, where vernal breezes blow,
In rural neatness let my cottage stand ;
Here wave a wood, and there a river flow."

" Oft on the glassy stream, with raptured eyes,
Surveys her form in mimic sweetness rise ;
Oft, as the waters pleased reflect her face,
Adjusts her locks, and heightens every grace."

" Oft, while the sun
Darts boundless glory through the expanse of heaven,
* A gloom of congregated vapours rise ;
Than night more dreadful in her blackest shroud,
And o'er the face of things incumbent hang
Portending tempest ; till the source of day
Again asserts the empire of the sky,
And o'er the blotted scene of nature throws
A keener splendour."

" O'er the burning lake
Of blue sulphureous gleam."

* The critical reader will perceive an inaccuracy in this line ; but it is an inaccuracy rather in the expression than in the picture.

“ All her snakes
Shall rear their speckled crests aloft in air,
With ceaseless horrid hiss ; shall brandish quick
Their forky tongues, or roll their kindling eyes
With sanguine fiery glare.”

There is equal force and justness in his
description of the terror of a guilty con-
science :

“ Curst with unnumbered groundless fears,
How pale yon shivering wretch appears !
For him the day-light shines in vain,
For him the fields no joys contain ;
Nature’s whole charms to him are lost,
No more the woods their music boast ;
No more the meads their vernal bloom,
No more the gales their rich perfume :
Impending mists deform the sky,
And beauty withers in his eye.
In hopes his terror to elude,
By day he mingles with the crowd ;
Yet finds his soul to fears a prey,
In busy crowds, and open day.
If night his lonely walk surprise,
What horrid visions round him rise !

That blasted oak, which meets his way,
 Shown by the meteor's sudden ray,
 The midnight murderer's known retreat,
 Felt heaven's avengeful bolt of late ;
 The clashing chain, the groan profound,
 Loud from yon ruined tower resound ;
 And now the spot he seems to tread,
 Where some self-slaughtered corse was laid ;
 He feels fixt earth beneath him bend,
 Deep murmurs from her caves ascend,
 Till all his soul, by fancy swayed,
 Sees livid phantoms crowd the shade ;
 While shrouded manes palely stare,
 And beckoning wish to breathe their care :
 Thus real woes from false he bears,
 And feels the death, the hell, he fears."

Nor are the following stanzas in the
 Ode to a Young Gentleman bound for
 Guinea, less remarkable for accuracy of
 epithet, than for tenderness of thought :

" The smiling plain, the solemn shade,
 With all the various charms displayed,
 That summer's face adorn ;
 Summer, with all that's gay or sweet,
 With transport longs thy sense to meet,
 And courts thy dear return.

“ The gentle sun, the fanning gale,
The vocal wood, the fragrant vale,
Thy presence all implore :
Can then a waste of sea and sky,
That knows no limits, charm thine eye,
Thine ear the tempest’s roar ?

“ But why such weak attractions name,
While every warmer social claim
Demands the mournful lay ?
Ah ! hear a brother’s moving sighs,
Through tears, behold a sister’s eyes
Emit a faded ray.”

In producing such passages as the above, the genius of the author must be acknowledged. Whatever idea or impression those objects of sight produced in his mind, how imperfect soever that idea, or how different soever from the true, still the impression would be felt by a mind susceptible and warm like Blacklock’s, that could not have been so felt by one of a coarser and more sluggish mould. Even the memory

that could treasure up the poetical attributes and expressions of such objects, must have been assisted and prompted by poetical feeling ; and the very catalogue of words which was thus ready at command, was an indication of that ardour of soul, which, from his infancy, led him

———“ Where the muses haunt,
Smit with the love of sacred song ;”

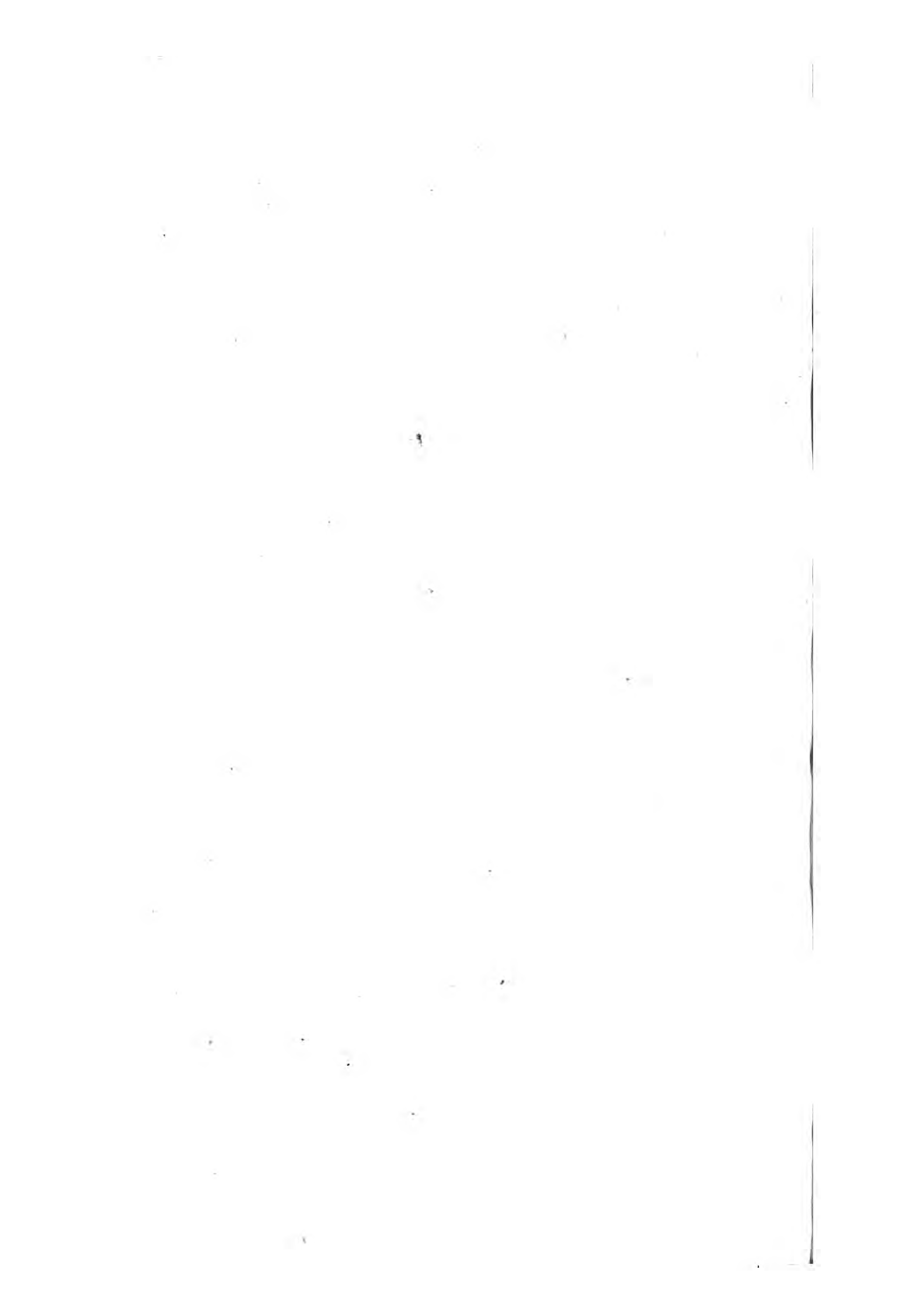
as the unmeaning syllables which compose a name give to the lover or the friend emotions, which in others it were impossible they should excite.

It was not, on the whole, surprising, that a learned foreigner, on considering Dr Blacklock's poems relatively to his situation, should have broke out into the following panegyric, with which we shall not be much accused of partiality if we close this account.

“ Blacklock will appear to posterity a fable, as to us he is a prodigy. It will be

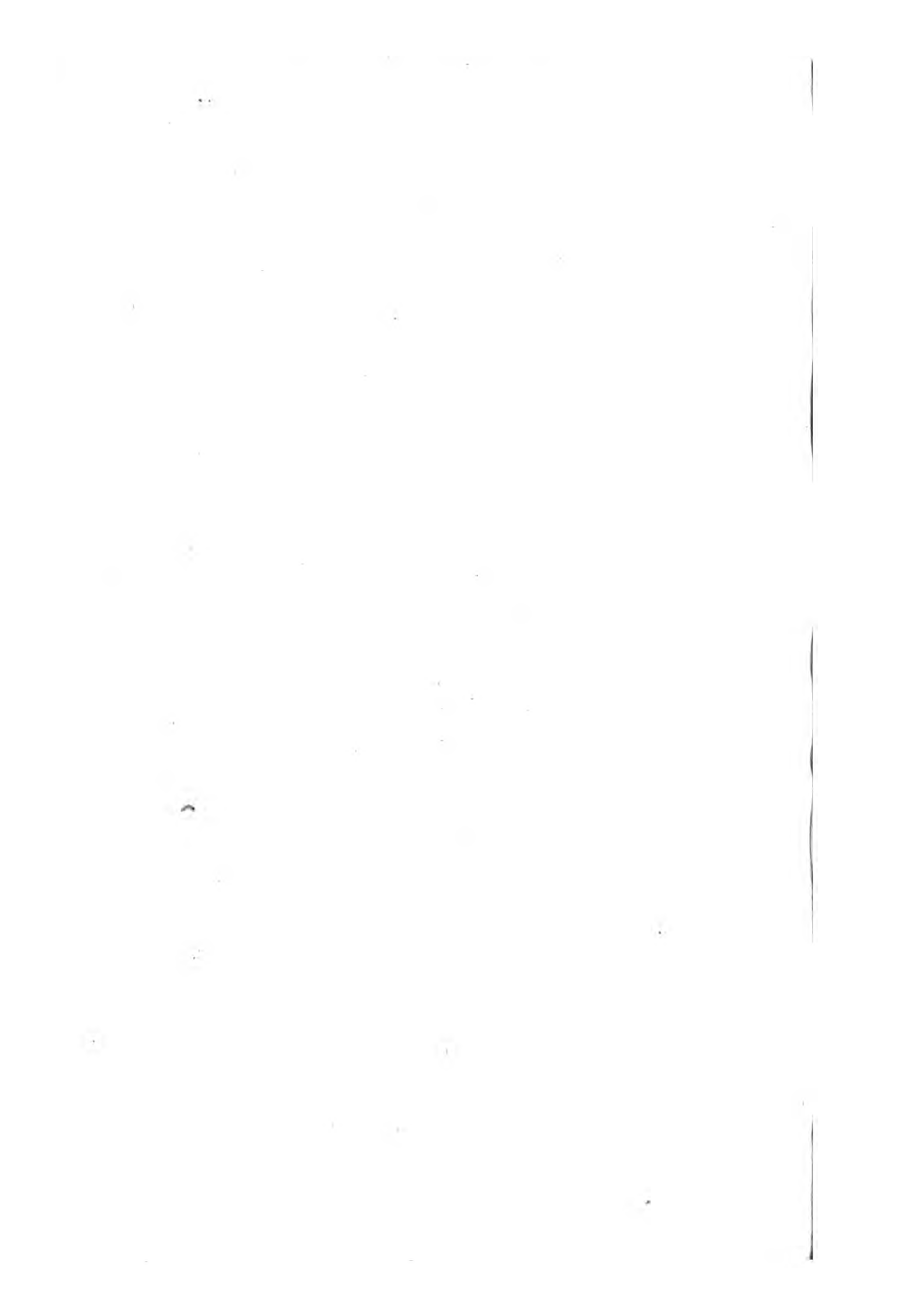
thought a fiction, a paradox, that a man blind from his infancy, besides having made himself so much a master of various foreign languages, should be a great poet in his own; and without having hardly ever seen the light, should be so remarkably happy in description.” *

* CARLO DENINA *Discorso della Letteratura*, cap. xi.



ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE
OF
LORD ABERCROMBY.

FROM
THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY
OF EDINBURGH.



ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE
OF
LORD ABERCROMBY.

[*Read by the Author, February 15, 1796.*]

THE life, of which I am about to give some account to this Society, cannot be called a literary one. Of literary lives only it is perhaps the proper business of the *Royal Society* to record the particulars; but it has been in the practice of allowing a wider range to this customary notice of its deceased members. Of the lives of

such as were eminent in station or in usefulness, in abilities or in virtue, it has been accustomed to hear a narrative, which, though not important to learning, is interesting to humanity. Under this title, it will indulge me with a short account of the life of Lord Abercromby.

HE was the youngest son of George Abercromby of Tullibody, a gentleman of a respectable family and considerable fortune in Clackmannanshire, and of Mary Dundas, daughter of Mr Dundas of Manor. He was born on the 15th day of October, 1745. His father still lives, at the very advanced age of ninety-one, and has had the singular good fortune to see two of his elder sons, who were both bred soldiers, appointed commanders in chief of the British forces, one in the West and the other in the East Indies, the most important stations with which their country could entrust them. His age indeed

has, within these few months, been clouded by the death of him who is the subject of this paper; but it is something for a father, it is something for his friends, to mix their sorrows with the general regret of his country.

His youngest son, Alexander, was early destined for the profession of the law, to which his father had himself been bred, at a time when the Faculty of Advocates comprehended one half of the gentlemen of Scotland. At that period, commerce and manufactures had not attained, in this part of the kingdom, that extension and improvement which renders them objects of pursuit to men of birth or fortune. The sword and the gown were here the only professions suited for such men; for our church did not, like those of England and France, offer endowments considerable enough to attract the interested, or to excite the ambitious. In Scotland, however, the profession of the law

was adopted by the eldest sons of the gentry, rather as conferring a sort of fashionable distinction, than as one from which they looked for business or emolument. It led to a learned, or at least a polite education, and gave a sort of dignity beyond the mere idleness of a man of pleasure. Hence, perhaps, there was in those times an elegance of manners, joined with a degree of knowledge and information, among the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland, not to be met with among any similar body of men in any other country. I mention this historically, because it does not perhaps exactly subsist at present, from causes which may be held not to improve the manners so much as, in a political and commercial view, they may be supposed to meliorate the situation of a country.

Mr Abercromby, with a view to the law, which his prospects made it necessary for him to follow as a profession, re-

ceived the customary education, at the University of Edinburgh. There the writer of this Memoir first knew him. He had abilities which qualified him for being more a scholar, than the vivacity of his disposition then allowed him to become. With uncommon beauty of countenance, and pleasantness of manner, the favourite of every relation and acquaintance, he did not then (as is common with young men so circumstanced,) apply to his studies with the constant and unremitting assiduity which is calculated to attain deep learning; but he had a readiness and acuteness that could easily perform his exercises, when he wished to perform them. After going through the ordinary course of classes at the University, consisting of the Latin and Greek languages, of Logic, Philosophy, the Civil and Scots Law, he was admitted advocate in the year 1766.

For some time after his coming to the

bar, he retained somewhat of that gaiety of deportment and of conduct, which are not exactly suited to the dry and uninviting paths that conduct men to legal eminence. His manners and disposition were better fitted for the less serious and more engaging society of men of fashion and pleasure. During several years, he lived a good deal in such society, and gave but little promise of that attention and application to business, for which he was afterwards distinguished. Though not unremittingly attentive, however, to his profession, he was never neglectful of its duties; and when any particular case was put into his hands, he gave very convincing proofs, both of his general talents, and of his power of application to business in detail.

But it was not long before he felt the propriety of secluding himself more than he had hitherto done, from the scenes of conviviality and amusement, which had

interfered with a more serious and determined application to his profession. He had lent to lighter society a certain gaiety and sportfulness of mind, which, in a character of less native vigour and ability, might have been fatal to the future prospects of his life. But he possessed an intrinsic character, which it was not difficult for him to resume; and from that pride and dignity of soul, which he always maintained in an uncommon degree, he felt it unworthy of him not to make every effort for rising into eminence in the profession which he had chosen, from which, being a younger son, and not likely to be possessed of a large patrimony, he was to derive support and independence.

An opportunity soon occurred of drawing the attention of the Court in which he practised, and indeed of the country at large, to the talents which he possessed, and to that exertion of them

which he could command. He was counsel in a cause, which, from its peculiar circumstances, had attracted much public curiosity, and divided for some time the public opinion. This was the case of *Wilson and Maclean*, in which a particular fact (the period of the death of a shipmaster, from whom a receipt was produced in bar of the plaintiff's claim, but which receipt was alleged to be a forgery,) was involved in so much uncertainty, and that uncertainty strengthened by the opposite depositions of such a number of witnesses, that it became a question of uncommon notoriety and expectation, not only from the extraordinary circumstances of that individual cause, but as involving a general legal consequence of the incertitude of oral testimony in fixing the date of not very distant events. In this cause, Mr Abercromby was employed for the pursuer or

plaintiff, and made a speech, in opposition to one of equal ability from Mr Blair, now solicitor-general, so conspicuous for the closeness of its deduction, the force and clearness of its argument, the eloquence and impressive sensibility of its declamation, as to excite a very strong sensation at the bar and in the public, and to mark him as an advocate from whom the most strenuous and successful exertions were to be expected. It is seldom that at the bar of Scotland, any appearance, however brilliant, has much effect in bringing a counsel into professional celebrity, or employment. From the constitution of the supreme civil court in this country, where trial by jury does not take place, and from the nature of its proceedings, which are chiefly carried on by written arguments, a speech, however remarkable, is rarely followed by those important consequences to a barrister's future business, of which there are daily

instances in Westminster-hall. But in this case, Mr Abercromby's appearance made such an impression in his favour, as very soon to place him among the most rising young men of the profession. He took advantage of this circumstance by a step, of which the expediency was doubted by many of his friends at the time, but was afterwards allowed by them all. Soon after his being called to the bar, he had been appointed sheriff-depute of Stirlingshire, which he now (in 1780) resigned for the less lucrative and more precarious situation of depute-advocate, on the idea of the latter office being more beneficial in its consequences, as not precluding him from business arising within the county of Stirling, where he had many connections both from relationship and acquaintance, but rather tending to advance his employment, from the opportunities it afforded him of appearing in public and criminal cases. This appointment of depute-ad-

vocate he held under Mr Henry Dundas, then Lord Advocate for Scotland, in conjunction with Mr Blair, since his Majesty's solicitor, and Mr Craig, now a Judge in the courts of session and justiciary. Those two gentlemen and Mr Abercromby were as much connected in private friendship as in public business; a friendship to which one who has known them long and intimately, may be pardoned for ascribing a considerable advantage towards the attainment of that professional eminence, as well as of that general estimation and respectability, which they have all enjoyed.

Mr Abercromby now rose with great rapidity in his profession, and was among the best employed barristers of his standing in Scotland. To this success he was not more entitled by his talents than by his assiduity; and it was a peculiar merit in him, who had once indulged so much in gaiety and amusement, and was so

much fitted by nature to shine among the gay and the amusing, to devote himself now to business with a rigid attention and punctuality, not always met with even among men of the most grave and serious dispositions. His speeches and his papers were held in equal estimation. His general method in both was, to state the fact which gave origin to the cause simply and perspicuously, and then to apply those principles and arguments in law which bore upon the case, from which he drew the conclusion in favour of his client. When the case admitted of it, he was fond of illustrating his argument by some apposite classical allusion, or some anecdote of ancient or modern times, with which his memory was abundantly stored. His expression was always elegant, and when the subject called for it, rose to a degree of animation and eloquence much beyond what business-men might think necessary in a mere legal pleading. He

excelled particularly in that indignant tone in which a good man rebukes injustice or oppression, and that pathetic in which he pleads the cause of the unfortunate; a style which his own mind, nice as it was in honour, and open to compassion, naturally prompted.

The laborious employments of his profession did not so entirely engross him as to preclude his indulging in the elegant amusements of polite literature. He was one of that society of gentlemen, who, in 1779, set on foot the periodical paper, published at Edinburgh, during that and the succeeding year, under the title of the *Mirror*, and who afterwards gave to the world another work of a similar kind, the *Lounger*, published at Edinburgh in 1785 and 1786. To these publications he was a very valuable contributor, being the author of ten papers in the *Mirror*, and nine in the *Lounger*. His papers are distinguished by an ease and gentlemanlike turn

of expression, by a delicate and polished irony, by a strain of manly, honourable, and virtuous sentiment. In some of them we find that unaffected tenderness, of which I took notice above as frequently distinguishing his professional labours. One of those papers I have often read since his death, with feelings which I believe to be so much in unison with those of my present audience, that I hope I shall not be thought to trespass on their time or patience, if I quote the conclusion now. In No. 90. of the Mirror, he mentions as one of the calamities of extremely lengthened life, the loss of friends, and gives a very natural and affecting account of his own feelings on an occasion of that sort. The picture contained in that paper is no fancy-drawing; it is a portrait of one of the earliest and most excellent friends of Mr Abercromby, and of the writer of this memoir, Mr Gordon of Newhall, whose accomplishments and whose virtues will not

be soon forgotten by some members of this society. Alas ! I did not imagine, when I heard Mr Abercromby read that paper of the Mirror, that, in a few years, it should be applicable to the loss of its author ! If any of those who now participate in this reflection, should one day have occasion to recal in this place the remembrance of him who reads the present account, may his memory be as dear to his friends, and as valuable to society, as those to whom his feeble words now endeavour to do justice !

“ There is one circumstance,” says Mr Abercromby, in the paper I allude to, “ which with me is alone sufficient to decide the question, (whether long life be an object much to be desired.) If there be any thing that can compensate the unavoidable evils with which this life is attended, and the numberless calamities to which mankind are subject, it is the pleasure arising from the society of those we love

and esteem. Friendship is the cordial of life. Without it, who would wish to exist an hour? But every one, who arrives at extreme old age, must make his account with surviving the greater part, perhaps the whole, of his friends. He must see them fall from him by degrees, while he is left alone, single and unsupported, like a leafless trunk, exposed to every storm, and shrinking from every blast.

“ I have been led to these reflections by a loss I lately sustained in the sudden and unlooked-for death of a friend, to whom, from my earliest youth, I had been attached by every tie of the most tender affection. Such was the confidence that subsisted between us, that, in his bosom, I was wont to repose every thought of my mind, and every weakness of my heart. In framing him, nature seemed to have thrown together a variety of opposite qualities, which, happily tempering each other, formed one of the most engaging charac-

ters I have ever known. An elevation of mind, a manly firmness, a Castilian sense of honour, accompanied with a bewitching sweetness, proceeding from the most delicate attention to the situation and the feelings of others. In his manners simple and unassuming; in the company of strangers modest to a degree of bashfulness; yet possessing a fund of knowledge, and an extent of ability, which might have adorned the most exalted station. But it was in the social circle of his friends that he appeared to the highest advantage; there the native benignity of his soul diffused, as it were, a kindly influence on all around him, while his conversation never failed at once to amuse and to instruct.

“ Not many months ago I paid him a visit at his seat in a remote part of the kingdom. I found him engaged in embellishing a place, of which I had often heard him talk with rapture, and the beauties of which I found his partiality had

not exaggerated. He shewed me all the improvements he had made, and pointed out those he meant to make. He told me all his schemes, and all his projects. And while I live, I must ever retain a warm remembrance of the pleasure I then enjoyed in his society.

“ The day I meant to set out on my return, he was seized with a slight indisposition, which he seemed to think somewhat serious; and, indeed, if he had a weakness, it consisted in rather too great anxiety with regard to his health. I remained with him till he thought himself almost perfectly recovered; and, in order to avoid the unpleasant ceremony of taking leave, I resolved to steal away early in the morning, before any of the family should be astir. About daybreak I got up, and let myself out. At the door I found an old and favourite dog of my friend's, who immediately came and fawned upon me. He walked with me through the park.

At the gate he stopped, and looked up wishfully in my face; and, though I do not well know how to account for it, I felt, at that moment, when I parted with the faithful animal, a degree of tenderness, joined with a melancholy so pleasing, that I had no inclination to check it. In that frame of mind I walked on (for I had ordered my horses to wait me at the first stage) till I reached the summit of a hill, which I knew commanded the last view I should have of the habitation of my friend. I turned to look back on the delightful scene. As I looked, the idea of the owner came full into my mind; and, while I contemplated his many virtues and numberless amiable qualities, a suggestion arose, if he should be cut off, what an irreparable loss it would be to his family, to his friends, and to society. In vain I endeavoured to combat this melancholy foreboding, by reflecting on the uncommon vigour of his constitution,

and the fair prospect it afforded of his enjoying many days. The impression still recurred, and it was some considerable time before I had strength of mind sufficient to conquer it.

“ I had not been long at home when I received accounts of his being attacked by a violent distemper, and in a few days after I learned that it had put an end to his life.

“ This blow, for a time, unmanned me quite. Even now, the chief consolation I find is in the society of a few chosen friends. Should they also be torn from me, the world would to me be as a desert; and, though I should still endeavour to discharge my duty in that station which Providence has assigned me in life, I should never cease to look forward, not without impatience, to those peaceful mansions, where the weary are at rest, and where only we can hope to meet again with

those from whom we have been parted by the inexorable hand of death.”

In 1792, when in this high and advancing situation at the bar, an offer was made to Mr Abercromby of the appointment of judge of the court of session, in the room of Lord Rockville, deceased. This appointment he hesitated for a considerable time to accept, from an idea he had formed of the difficulty of executing the office in that manner in which he conceived it ought to be executed, and of the laborious and fatiguing application and exertions of mind which its various duties required. He was at length prevailed on to accept of it, principally from the very handsome manner in which it was offered to his acceptance, and in compliance with the wishes of his friend Mr Secretary Dundas, who knew, from early and continued acquaintance, the value of that acquisition which he wished the bench to make, in the appointment of Mr Abercromby to

a judge's seat. That appointment accordingly took place on the 30th of May, 1792; and on the 14th of December following, he was called to a seat in the court of justiciary, on the vacancy occasioned by the death of Lord Hailes.

The manner in which he executed those very important offices, is fresh in the memory of every one. To the most assiduous and unremitting attention to his duty, and the most accurate consideration of the legal principles which were to determine his decision, he joined a talent for announcing that decision, and the grounds on which it rested, in such a manner as to give singular weight and dignity to his opinion, and to make the strongest impression on his audience. He did not speak often, but when he did, he never failed to throw light on the case before the court. He never forgot, (what is liable to be forgotten in a court, which, from the number of its judges, partakes some-

what of the nature of a popular assembly,) that he was delivering the opinion of a judge, not arguing the cause of a barrister. He never replied to any of his brethren, remembering that a judge does not speak for victory; that it is his business to pronounce his own opinion, not to combat the opinions of others. He spoke shortly, seldom on the circumstances of the case in detail, but on some leading and prominent point on which the opinion he was to deliver was founded. His expression was clear and perspicuous, correct, at the same time, and elegant. His speaking was slow and deliberate, and in that cool and solemn manner which becomes a judicial opinion; yet, like his appearances at the bar, it did not fail in animation when it was directed to the censure of unfairness, to the detection of dishonesty, or to the rebuke of oppression. He was of particular use in the civil court, by an attention to the

proceedings, and to the checking of any impropriety in the conduct of the business. On this ground, his own strict observance of propriety gave him great advantage. When he did censure, even when there was occasion for severity, it was with so much gravity and dignity of manner, and so much temperance of expression, as to ensure the approbation of the impartial, as to impress conviction, as well as to impose silence, on the censured. Lord Abercromby possessed those virtues and accomplishments which invest the station of a judge with an authority the most venerable and the most persuasive. Purity of mind and of character, a nice sense of honour and decorum, a delicacy of private and a dignity of public deportment; these are at all times most important qualities in a judge; at no time perhaps so much as at the present, when they are so essential to conciliate the esteem and to command the reverence

of the people for the magistracy and constitution of their country.

To the criminal court those qualities are peculiarly appropriate. In that court the judge is the organ of the offended majesty of the law; his deportment ought to be suited to that function, grave, deliberate, decided. Above the atmosphere of the passions, he may speak with severity, but never with resentment; and his duty is too solemn and too majestic, to admit of the light or the frivolous, either in manner or expression. Yet, amidst the unbending declaration of the law, and the steady decision of its minister, he may, and in some cases ought to feel that dignified compassion for human frailty, that tempers the rigour, but does not detract from the awfulness of justice. Such was the deportment of Lord Abercromby. The firmness of his mind, and the dignity of his demeanour, were particularly called forth at that momentous juncture,

when the decisions of the criminal court of Scotland vindicated the laws, and upheld the constitution, against the daring attacks of turbulence and sedition.

The last piece of duty which Lord Abercromby performed as a judge of the court of justiciary, (immediately after the admission of his friend Lord Craig as a colleague,) was the northern circuit in the spring of the year 1795. On that journey he felt himself a good deal indisposed, but returned to Edinburgh, restored, as he said, to his usual health, though his altered looks and appearance strongly excited the apprehensions of his friends. Those apprehensions were but too soon verified. He was attacked in summer 1795 with a breast complaint, attended with dangerous symptoms, for which, after some palliative means, to which his disorder never at all yielded, he was advised to try the milder climate of Exmouth, in Devonshire, a voyage to the

Continent being, in the present situation of public affairs, difficult to accomplish, and particularly disagreeable to his inclinations. He was accompanied in this journey by his nephew, the eldest son of his brother Sir Ralph Abercromby, who watched the last days of his uncle with that tender assiduity which, though the world can neither see its merit, nor feel its sufferings, is one of the most important and most disinterested of all the domestic duties. On the road to Exmouth, he was seized with still more violent symptoms than any his disorder had hitherto exhibited; and though he experienced, during the space of about two months, some temporary relief, he never gained any material advantage, and the disease made progressive advances, till at last it carried him off on the 17th day of November, 1795. He bore its sufferings with the greatest patience and fortitude; and though for some time he entertained hopes which

his physicians and friends saw to be but too ill founded, he met its conclusion with perfect composure and resignation.

The disorder which terminated so fatally was perhaps only the effect of a gradually debilitated constitution, not of any determinate and immediate cause. Yet some of his friends, with an anxiety natural in such a circumstance, have traced it to various sources. An accidental fall into the uninclosed foundation of a house in the New Town of Edinburgh, was by some, I believe not on any medical authority, supposed to have produced the complaint in his breast. The anxiety and application he bestowed on the duties of a very laborious profession, might contribute to exhaust the strength of his constitution; and, if mental affections are to be allowed such force, the uneasiness which for some years he experienced on the subject of public affairs, and the political state of his country, might impair

and weaken his health and spirits. Deeply impressed himself with the excellence of the British constitution, and of the happiness derived from it, he saw with horror and indignation (at a period considerably earlier than that which excited the apprehensions of most other people) the efforts of desperate and designing men to overturn it; he lamented the delusion of those who were misled to join them; and he trembled for the effects of that delusion in estimable and benevolent but visionary minds, who might indulge the pride of political theory and speculation, to the danger, as he conceived, of all good order and regular government, of all social happiness and social virtue.

Of the public virtues of Lord Abercromby, I have given a pretty full detail, because those speak loudest in example, and are most generally useful to mankind. Of his private virtues and accomplishments I might speak in this society on the testi-

mony of many of its members, who will long remember the excellence of his disposition, the worth and honour of his heart, the amiable and engaging manners which he exhibited. He had (to use his own favourite phrase) a nice Castilian sense of honour, which did not admit of that compromise with the world, which men of not less moral rectitude, but of less delicate feelings, are sometimes content to make. In the intercourse of ordinary society, this often disturbed his tranquillity, and perhaps latterly tended to injure his health. Such minds as his, the commonness of a different conduct in others (unlike its effect on more pliant dispositions) only irritates the more ; like some plants of delicate texture, which are hurt, not sheltered, by the common and coarser growth around them. From birth, from education, from native sentiment, and improved society, he cultivated, and was never a moment unimpressed with the feelings of

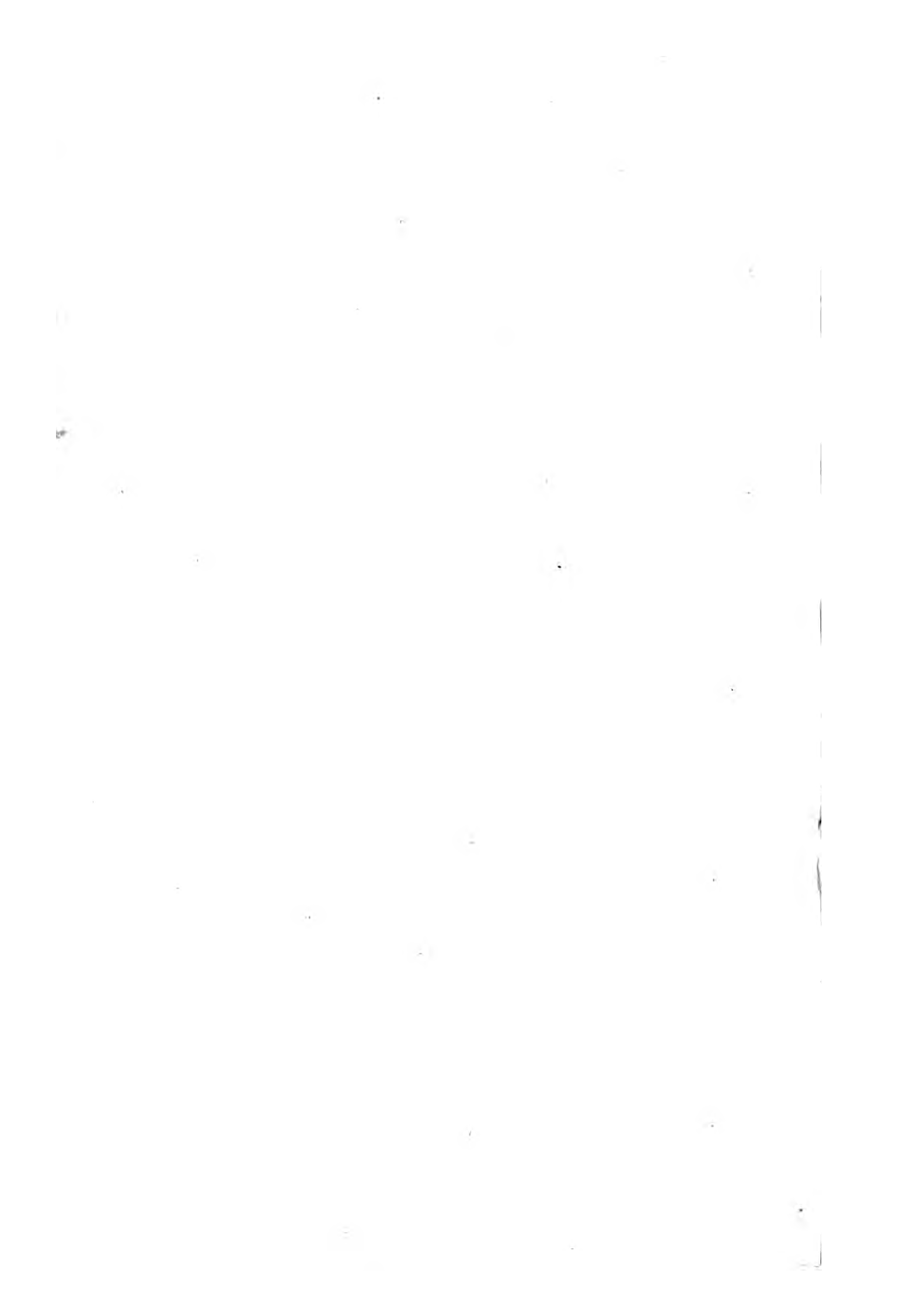
a gentleman, with that delicacy of mind, "above the fixed and settled rules," which polishes the manners, which refines morality, which dignifies virtue; of which such an example is the more valuable in these days, when I am afraid a style of life and manners has become in some degree fashionable, which destroys this honourable distinction; which degrades the higher ranks by vices and follies that used to be a reproach to the least worthy among the lower; in which name and station sanctify grossness in pleasure, and coarseness in demeanour, and wealth shoots out into caprice and absurdity, instead of expanding into generosity and usefulness.

The society will pardon this digression, which I confess to be unnecessary, and to some may appear ungracious; they will forgive it to him who, looking from the tomb of his friend on the world he has left, with that gentler misanthropy (if it shall be thought to merit that term) which

is made up rather of regrets than of resentments, naturally enough indulges in an aggravation of what he has lost, and, it may be, in an unfavourable estimate of what remains for him to enjoy.

Independently, however, of the estimation of friendship, it may certainly be affirmed, that in the death of Lord Abercromby, society has sustained a loss of no light nor common kind ; a loss which his friends and acquaintance will long and deeply lament ; and which, without disparagement to the virtues or the abilities of his survivors, will not be easily repaired to the public.

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
WILLIAM TYTLER, Esq.
FROM
THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY
OF EDINBURGH.



A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
WILLIAM TYTLER, Esq.

OF WOODHOUSELEE, F. R. S. EDIN.

(Read by the Author, June 20. 1796.)

THE custom which this society has established, of giving some account of the lives of its deceased members, is in every case gratifying to friendship, in many interesting to curiosity; but in those which serve to record the pursuits and occupations of men of letters, it is more strictly and pro-

perly an object coming within the views of a literary institution. The history of the authors is always in a great degree the history of the literature of a country; and even exclusive of an immediate relation to their works, the narrative of their private and domestic habits is often, in a moral point of view, useful and interesting to the scholar and the author. In both these respects, I may claim the attention of the society to the following short account of the life and writings of our late worthy colleague, Mr William Tytler.

Mr Tytler was the son of Mr Alexander Tytler, writer in Edinburgh, by Jane, daughter of Mr William Leslie, merchant in Aberdeen, and grand-daughter of Sir Patrick Leslie of Iden, provost of Aberdeen. He was born at Edinburgh, October 12. 1711. He received his education at the high school and university of his native city, and distinguished himself by an early proficiency in those classical

studies, which, to the latest period of his life, were the occupation of his leisure hours, and a principal source of his mental enjoyments.

In the year 1731, he attended the academical lectures of Mr Alexander Bayne, professor of municipal law in the university of Edinburgh, a gentleman distinguished alike for his professional knowledge, his literary accomplishments, and the elegance of his taste. The professor found in his pupil a congenial spirit, and their connection, notwithstanding the disparity of their years, was soon ripened into all the intimacy of the strictest friendship. So strong indeed became at length that tie of affection, that the worthy professor, in his latter years, not only made him the companion of his studies; but when at length the victim of a lingering disease, chose him as the comforter of those many painful and melancholy hours which preceded his death.

At the age of thirty-one, Mr Tytler was admitted into the society of writers to his Majesty's signet, and continued the practice of that profession with very good success, and with equal respect from his clients and the public, till his death, which happened on the 12th of September, 1792. He married, in September 1745, Anne Craig, daughter of Mr James Craig of Dalnair, writer to the signet, by whom he has left two sons, Alexander Fraser Tytler, his Majesty's judge-advocate for Scotland, and professor of civil history in the university of Edinburgh, and Major Patrick Tytler, fort-major of the castle of Stirling; and one daughter, Miss Christina Tytler. His wife died about nine years before him, and previously to that period, he had lost a son and a daughter, both grown to maturity.

It is perhaps only in smaller communities, like that of Edinburgh, that the union of business and literary studies can easily

take place. In larger societies, such as that of London, where the professional objects are greater and more extensive, and the different classes of men are more decidedly separated from one another, there is a sort of division of mind, as well as of labour, that makes the lawyer or the merchant a perfect lawyer or merchant, whose mind and time are wholly engrossed by the objects of his profession, and whom it might considerably discredit among his brethren of that profession, were he to devote any portion of either to classical study, or literary composition. In Edinburgh it is otherwise; the professional duties are not in general so extensive as to engross the whole man, and, his connections in society extending through many different classes of his fellow-citizens, he has opportunities of conversing, of reading, and of thinking on other objects than merely those immediately relating to the business which he follows. This is perhaps the

most agreeable state of society of any, which, if it may sometimes prevent the highest degree of professional eminence and skill, (though even on that ground many arguments might be offered in its favour,) certainly tends to enlarge the mind, and to polish the manners; to give a charm and a dignity to ordinary life, that may be thought ill exchanged for the inordinate accumulation of wealth, or the selfish enjoyment of professional importance.

Among that society, of which Mr Tytler, at the period I have mentioned, was admitted a member, the writers to the signet, there were always many individuals possessed of much general learning and knowledge; and the classical education which was generally bestowed on young men destined for that society, frequently led them to indulge in historical and literary disquisitions, little connected with the ordinary course of their professional

employments. Mr Tytler was one of those who, from his earliest years, had applied himself to letters and classical study; and, amidst an accurate knowledge and unremitting attention to his business, he never ceased to cultivate and to enjoy them.

The most remarkable feature of Mr Tytler's character was an ardour and activity of mind, prompted always by a strong sense of rectitude and honour. He felt with equal warmth the love of virtue and the hatred of vice; he was not apt to disguise either feeling, nor to compromise, as some men more complying with the world might have done, with the fashion of the time, or the disposition of those around him. He seldom waved an argument on any topic of history, of politics, or literature; he never retreated from one on any subject that touched those more important points on which he had formed a decided opinion. Decided opinions it

was his turn to form ; and he expressed them with a warmth equal to that with which he felt them. He took strong common-sense views of objects, not from want of acuteness to perceive less palpable relations, but from that warm and ardent cast of mind to which such views are more congenial than the subtleties of abstract or metaphysical disquisition.

Nor was it in opinion or argument only that this warmth and ardour of mind were conspicuous. They prompted him equally in action and conduct. His affection to his family, his attachment to his friends and companions, his compassion for the unfortunate, were alike warm and active. He was in sentiment also what Johnson (who felt it strongly in himself, and mentions it as the encomium of one of his friends) calls a good hater ; but his hatred or resentment went no further than opinion or words, his better affections only rose into action. In his opi-

nions, or in his expression of them, there was sometimes a vehemence, an appearance of acrimony, which his friends might regret, which strangers might censure; but he had no asperity in his mind to influence his actual conduct in life. He indulged opposition, not enmity; and the world was just to him in return; he had opponents, but I sincerely believe not a single enemy. His contests were on opinions, not on things; his disputes were historical and literary. In conversation, he carried on these with uncommon interest and vivacity; and the same kind of impulse which prompted his conversation (as is justly observed by an author, who published some notices of his life and character in the periodical work entitled "The Bee") induced him to become an author. He wrote, not from vanity or vain-glory, which Rousseau holds to be the only inducement to writing; he wrote to open his mind upon paper; to speak

to the public those opinions which he had often spoken in private; opinions on the truth of which he had firmly made up his own conviction, and was sometimes surprised when he could not convince others; it was fair to try, if, by a fuller exposition of his arguments, he could convince the world.

With this view, he published, in 1759, his “ Enquiry, historical and critical, into the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots, and an Examination of the Histories of Dr Robertson and Mr Hume with respect to that Evidence;” in which he warmly espoused the cause of that unfortunate princess, attacked with severity the conduct of her enemies, and exposed the fallacy, in many parts the fabrication, of those proofs on which the charges against her had been founded. This work was the first on that side of this celebrated question which interested the public in general, and appealed in

behalf of the queen to the judgment and feelings of the people. The learned and industrious Mr Walter Goodall had several years before published his examination of the Letters of Mary, on which her accusers had so much rested as evidence of her guilt; but that examination, however elaborate and acute, was not well calculated, either in form or style, for general perusal. Mr Tytler's work gave to the arguments of Goodall the conciseness and compression necessary to command the attention of the reader, supported them by a variety of new proofs and illustrations, and drew from the general history of the period in question, and from the characters of the leading actors of the scene, arguments more impressive and interesting than any which mere verbal criticism of the letters, or an examination of contemporary documents, could supply. The first editions of the Enquiry were in one volume 8vo; but the author

afterwards considerably enlarged it, particularly in the historical part, and published, in 1790, an edition (being the fourth) in two volumes of the same size.

The problem of Mary's guilt or innocence, (to use the language of a near relation of Mr Tytler's, expressive indeed of Mr Tytler's own sentiments on the subject,) if considered merely as a detached historical fact, would appear an object which, at this distance of time, seems hardly to merit that laborious and earnest investigation to which it has given rise: though, even in this point of view, the mind is naturally stimulated to search out the truth of a dark mysterious event, disgraceful to human nature; and our feelings of justice and moral rectitude are interested to fix the guilt upon its true authors. But when we consider that this question involves a discussion of the politics of both England and Scotland during one of the most interesting pe-

riods of their history, and touches the characters, not only of the two sovereigns, but of their ministers and statesmen, it must then be regarded in the light of a most important historical enquiry, without which our knowledge of the history of our own country, and of that political connection with England which from that time influenced all state-affairs in Scotland, must be obscure, confused, and unsatisfactory. In addition to these motives of enquiry, this question has exercised some of the ablest heads both of the former and of latter times; and it is no mean pleasure to engage in a contest of genius and of talents, and to try our strength in the decision of a controversy, which has been maintained on both sides with consummate ability.

If to persons, however, of cooler and less sanguine tempers, it should still appear singular, that any ancient historical disquisition should so keenly engage the

minds and the passions of literary men, it may perhaps be observed, that it is on objects of this sort that these are frequently more occupied and excited, than on others which might at first sight appear better calculated to occupy and excite them. On objects of present and immediate concern, the mind and the affections have certain limits to which the actual and known interest necessarily confines them. The others have a sort of ideal range, which no such fixed and certain boundary restrains. The interest is created, not found, and the fancy fosters and nourishes the subject of its own creation, till it engrosses the attention, and excites the passions to a degree that must appear very extraordinary to those who consider it in its natural and unexaggerated colours. Disputes of literary as well as political enthusiasm, have therefore been generally the most obstinate and warm of any; and this, which is quaint-

ly termed the Marian controversy, of all such disputes the keenest. Even Mr Hume, placid as he was from nature, and accustomed, from his earliest literary life, to contradiction and attack, lost somewhat of his usual temper on the occasion, and subjoined an angry note to the latter editions of his history, which I shall not quote, because, from my respect for his memory, I am rather inclined to wish that it had not been written.

Without venturing any opinion on the question itself, it may be sufficient in this place to say, that Mr Tytler acquired high reputation by his discussion of it. The Enquiry was universally read in Britain, and very well translated into French, under the title of "*Recherches Historiques et Critiques sur les principales Preuves de l'Accusation intentée contre Marie Reine d'Ecosse.*" The interest it excited among literary men, may be judged of from the character of those by whom it was review-

ed on its publication, in the periodical works of the time. Dr Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, Dr Samuel Johnson, Dr John Campbell, and Dr Smollet, all wrote reviews of Mr Tytler's book, containing very particular accounts of its merits, and elaborate analyses of the chain of its arguments. As an argument on evidence, no suffrage could perhaps be more decisive of its merit than that of one of the greatest lawyers, and indeed one of the ablest men, that ever sat on the woolsack of England, the late Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, who declared Mr Tytler's Enquiry to be the best concatenation of circumstantiate proofs brought to bear upon one point, that he had ever perused. What effect that body of evidence, or the arguments deduced from it, ought to have upon the minds of those to whom the subject becomes matter of investigation, I do not presume to determine. The opinion of the late Dr Henry, author of The His-

tory of Great Britain on a new Plan, may perhaps be thought neither partial nor confident ; who says, in a letter to Mr Tytler, published in the volume of Transactions of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland, that he would be a bold man who should now publish an history of Queen Mary, in the same strain with the two historians, (Mr Hume and Dr Robertson,) whose opinions on the subject the Enquiry had examined and controverted.

I cannot help observing, in justice to Mr Hume's impartiality, that no possible motive could be assigned for the prejudice which the favourers of Queen Mary have supposed him to entertain against her. As a party question, in which view Mr Tytler has placed it in his introduction to the latter editions of his work,* Mr Hume

* "The character, accomplishments, and misfortunes of this princess," says the Introduction, "have been the subject of much writing and controversy among the British historians. Republican writers,

had surely no bias to mislead him in the consideration of it; and it is a circumstance rather singular, that while he has generally been charged with Toryism by one party, he should, on the other hand, be accused by implication of Republicanism in this question on the history of the unfortunate queen of Scots.

The other illustrious historian, whose opinions Mr Tytler controverted in his Enquiry, though of opposite sentiments from Mr Tytler as an author, lived with him in habits of private friendship and familiar intercourse. The last time Mr Tyt-

equally averse to monarchy and to the house of Stuart, have drawn her picture in the blackest colours, by traducing her as an accomplice with the Earl of Bothwell in the murder of the Lord Darnley her husband. On the other hand, the writers attached to the ancient constitution of their country, and to the family of Stuart, have regarded that unfortunate princess as one of the most virtuous and accomplished characters of that age, and as a victim to the secret conspiracies carried on by some of the heads of the reformed party in her kingdom for her destruction.”

ler dined at Dr Robertson's, he saw with peculiar satisfaction Hamilton's historical picture of Queen Mary, with the portrait of the doctor on one side, and his own upon the other. Dr Robertson, talking accidentally with the writer of this account on the subject of the Marian controversy, said, "I have told Mr Tytler, that nothing but a regard for what I conceive to be historical truth, could have given my history that complexion which is so different from what he thinks it should have worn. Mary was the natural heroine of my history, if truth had allowed me to make her so."

Such would have been the natural vanity of an author; nor was the national vanity of a Scotsman less interested in the fate of this beautiful and unfortunate Queen, whom her evil destiny transplanted from the sunshine of a gay and gallant court to a barbarous and unfriendly clime; to a clime, shaken by the storms of faction,

and desolated by the furious contentions of a tyrannical and savage aristocracy. It has been matter of regret with some who feel for the princess in this view of her history, that her advocates have not left her cause to those feelings, but have pushed very far her pretensions to unimpeachable conduct and princely virtues, instead of pleading an apology for error or weakness, from the circumstances of the times, and the intricacies of her situation. Even in the pages of Robertson, after all that he has allowed of presumptive evidence for her imprudence or her crimes, the sentiment of the reader, let his historical opinion be ever so adverse to the queen, prevails over his justice, and the dramatic effect of the story is uniformly, compassion for the princess, and resentment against her enemies.

To him who looks on that portion of history rather with the eye of a moralist than of an antiquarian, her marriage with

Bothwell is the most unfavourable passage of her life, both as affecting the propriety of her conduct in that particular, and as tending to corroborate the evidence produced by her enemies on the great charge of privacy in the murder of her husband. Of that marriage, Dr Henry thus expresses himself, in the letter I mentioned above, written to Mr Tytler on the 20th of July 1790, a few months before his (Dr Henry's) death. "Her last marriage," says the Doctor, "was the most unhappy, and there seems still to be some difficulty in vindicating her conduct in contracting that marriage. Was she seized by Bothwell in her passage from Linlithgow, in consequence of a pre-concert, and with her own consent; or was it by mere violence, and without her having any intimation, that such an attempt was made? If I could answer that question, I should know what to think of several other things."

In consequence of this letter from Dr

Henry, Mr Tytler wrote a Dissertation on the Marriage of Queen Mary with the Earl of Bothwell ; which, with the letter that occasioned it, was published, in 1792, in the Transactions of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland, of which Mr Tytler was one of the vice-presidents. In this Dissertation, he maintains, in conjunction with Whitaker and Stewart, that the queen's marriage with Bothwell was an object which the treacherous Murray and his associates had all along wished to accomplish, and that it was at last brought about by the daring ambition (encouraged by them) of Bothwell himself, who, having seized the queen on her return from visiting her son at Linlithgow, carried her prisoner to Dunbar, where, by the most flagitious and violent means, he first obtained the privilege, and then the legal character of a husband.

I have placed this Dissertation next in order to the Enquiry, because both relate

to the same historical fact, though in point of time it was the last of Mr Tytler's compositions. Before that Dissertation, he had produced several other works on historical and literary subjects; namely,

I. *The Poetical Remains of James the First, King of Scotland.*

in one volume 8vo, published at Edinburgh in 1783. The volume, of which the above is the general title, contains a Dissertation on the Life and Writings of King James the First; one of those princes, in whose lives, disastrous rather than unfortunate, adversity was the parent of wisdom and of virtue, and was cheered by religion, philosophy, and the muses. This Dissertation introduces two well known ancient poems, which Mr Tytler, on very strong grounds, ascribes to the king, viz. The King's Quair, and Christ's Kirk on the Green. The poem of the King's Quair,

or, in modern English, the King's book, is a very striking proof, not only of the poetical genius and imagination of its author, but of a taste cultivated and refined by an acquaintance with the classical poetry of the ancients, and the works of those eminent bards who were his contemporaries, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. The subject of the poem is the passion of James for his lovely mistress Jane, daughter of the earl of Somerset, who afterwards became his queen; and the chief circumstances of the poet's life, the misfortunes of his youth, his long captivity, the incident which gave rise to his love, its purity, constancy, and success, are well described under the quaint, but at that time fashionable figure of poetry, allegorical vision. This work, which is mentioned by John Major as the composition of James, and which in later times had been seen by Bishop Tanner in an ancient MS. among the Seldenian archives in the Bodleian

library at Oxford, was, in consequence of a diligent search made at Mr Tytler's instigation, happily recovered, and by him now for the first time given to the public, with explanatory, critical, and historical notes. The poem of Christ's Kirk on the Green was well known to the public, and had long been admired for its wit and humour; but it had been ascribed, even by antiquarian writers, to James the Fifth of Scotland, the author of the Gaberlunzie Man, and other ludicrous compositions. It occurred to Mr Tytler, that the public was in a twofold error respecting this favourite poem; first, in considering it merely as a *jeu d'esprit*, or fanciful display of the author's imagination and powers in the ludicrous; and secondly, in attributing the composition to James the Fifth. In the Dissertation on the Life of James the First, he has argued, with much ingenuity, that the scope and view of the work was political and patriotic; its end, the best

purpose of a Sovereign's writings, the improvement of his people. The English at that time excelled all other nations in the use of the bow. James, on his return to his kingdom, was mortified by the striking inferiority of his own subjects, in that particular, to their warlike neighbours. The practice of archery, and of weaponschawing, a military exercise, had gone into shameful neglect during the weak administration of the regents of the kingdom. To remedy this defect, a more regular discipline was enforced by the young monarch, by statutory regulations; who tried at the same time the efficacy of ridicule, in composing this ironical satire, (for such, according to the ingenious supposition of Mr Tytler, is Christ's Kirk on the Green,) on the awkward management of the bow, and the neglect of archery among the Scots. In the age of James the Fifth, the vulgarly reputed author of the poem, the use of fire-arms had completely super-

seded the bow as an engine of war. The laws of James the Fifth required, that every man should arm himself with a hackbut, or musquet. In that era, therefore, the satire on the want of skill in archery would have been lost or misapplied, its irony no longer felt, its salutary end no more perceived. Besides this argument from the general tenor of the poem, Mr Tytler has adduced the intrinsic evidence arising from the language of the piece, as clearly ascertaining its date to belong to that period to which he has assigned it.

At the end of the poem of Christ's Kirk on the Green, is a note by Mr Tytler, in which he pays a just tribute to the worth, as well as genius, of our celebrated pastoral poet Allan Ramsay, and contradicts, from his own personal knowledge, the absurd story of Ramsay's not being the author of the well known pastoral drama, *The Gentle Shepherd*,

Subjoined to the *Dissertation and Poems*,

is an Essay by Mr Tytler (first annexed to Arnot's History of Edinburgh, published in 1788) on the Scottish music. This last was very properly included in the volume above mentioned, from its connection with the history of the Prince, whose poems it was the chief purpose of that volume to record and illustrate; the system maintained by Mr Tytler in this essay on the Scottish music, being, that the style of the ancient melodies of this country was first introduced by King James the First. This was chiefly founded on a passage in the *Pensieri Diversi* of Tassoni, better known as the author of the celebrated mock-heroic *la Secchia Rapita*, who, mentioning the musical talents of this monarch, ascribes to him the "invention of a new kind of music, plaintive and melancholy," which Mr Tytler, in this essay, supposes was the original of those beautiful and pathetic airs, which are known and

distinguished as the national music of Scotland.

II. *Observations on the Vision, a Poem, first published in Ramsay's Evergreen.*

These observations, which vindicate Allan Ramsay's title to the poems in question, were published in the before-mentioned volume of the Antiquarian Transactions in 1792.

III. *An Account of the fashionable Amusements and Entertainments of Edinburgh in the last Century, with the Plan of a grand Concert of Music (performed there) on St Cecilia's Day, 1695.*

Mr Tytler was likewise the author of a Paper in the Lounger, No. 16. Defects of modern Female Education in teaching the Duties of a Wife.

On all Mr Tytler's compositions, the character of the Man is strongly impressed, which never, as in some other in-

stances, is in the smallest degree contradicted by, or at variance with, the character of the author. He wrote what he felt, on subjects which he felt, on subjects relating to his native country, to the arts which he loved, to the times which he revered. A zealous Scotsman, a keen musician, an old man with his youthful remembrances warm in his mind, he wrote on the history of Scotland, on music, and on the amusements of former times in Edinburgh; and I confess, that from a knowledge of this circumstance, I read his works with an interest which I should not feel, if I considered them as flowing from a pen which was the instrument of the author's ingenuity rather than of his heart.

His heart, indeed, was in every thing he wrote, or said, or did. He had, as his family and friends could warmly attest, all the kindness of benevolence: he had its anger too; for benevolence is often the

parent of anger. There was nothing neutral or indifferent about Mr Tytler. In philosophy and in history, he could not bear the coldness, or what some might call the temperance, of scepticism; and what he firmly believed, it was his disposition keenly to urge.

His mind was strongly impressed by sentiments of religion. His piety was fervent and habitual. He believed in the doctrine of a particular providence, superintending all the actions of individuals, as well as the great operations of nature; and he had a constant impression of the power, the wisdom, and the benevolence of the Supreme Being.

His reading was various and extensive. There was scarcely a subject of literature or taste, and few even of science, that had not at times engaged his attention. In history he was deeply versed; and what he had read his strong retentive memory enabled him easily to recal. Ancient as

well as modern story was familiar to him, and in particular the British history, which he had read with the most minute and critical attention. Of this, besides what he has given to the public, a great number of notes which he left in MS., touching many controverted points in English and Scottish history, afford the most ample proof.

In music, as a science, he was uncommonly skilled. It was his favourite amusement; and with that natural partiality which all entertain for their favourite objects, he was apt to assign to it a degree of moral importance, which some might deem a little whimsical. He has often been heard to say, that he never knew a good taste in music associated with a malevolent heart; and being asked, what prescription he would recommend for attaining an old age as healthful and happy as his own? "My prescription," said he, "is simple: short but cheerful meals,

music, and a good conscience." In his younger days, he had been a good performer on the harpsichord; but his chief instrument was the German-flute, which he thought peculiarly adapted to the expression of those natural and simple melodies in which he most delighted, the Scottish airs. He was one of the original members of the Musical Society of Edinburgh, in which he continued, during a period of near sixty years, till his death; during the greatest part of which time he was a director of that society, and felt for its permanence and prosperity that warm and lively interest, which animated him alike in business, in study, and in amusement.

In person, Mr Tytler was rather thin, and somewhat below the middle size. His walk, even at the latest period of his life, was of that quick and springy sort which accorded with the activity of his mind. In his youth, he was fond of manly exer-

cises, and often talked with regret of those which the gentlemen of Scotland had lost in the refinement or effeminacy of modern times.

Endowed with so many qualities adapted for friendship, Mr Tytler had many friends, and among these were some of the most distinguished literary characters of the age. In that number were the late Dr John Gregory, Principal Campbell, and Dr Gerard of Aberdeen, Dr Reid, Dr Beattie, Lord Kames, and Lord Monboddo. A man who lives so long must necessarily lose much of his contemporary society; but the loss was compensated to him more than it generally is to persons of his age, by that interest which he took in the conversation and in the amusements of the younger people, who were the acquaintance or companions of his children.

He was indeed of a temper remarkably social, and found, from the congenial ardour of his own mind, particular delight

in the company of young people; to whom, from the store of anecdotes he possessed, regarding the incidents, the manners, and the habits of former times, his conversation was equally instructive and entertaining. He was, however, one of those fortunate praisers of times past, who are perfectly alive to the enjoyment of the present; whose partial recollection of former times, and former joys, results from the same warm and active temperament, that still preserves cordiality for present friends, and spirit for present amusements. He retained this ardour and activity to the close of life; and at fourscore, was as ready as ever to join in the conversation, to participate the mirth, even to enter into the innocent convivial frolic of his young friends and relations. At his country-seat of Woodhouselee, distant about six miles from Edinburgh, where he saw them with peculiar satisfaction, he had

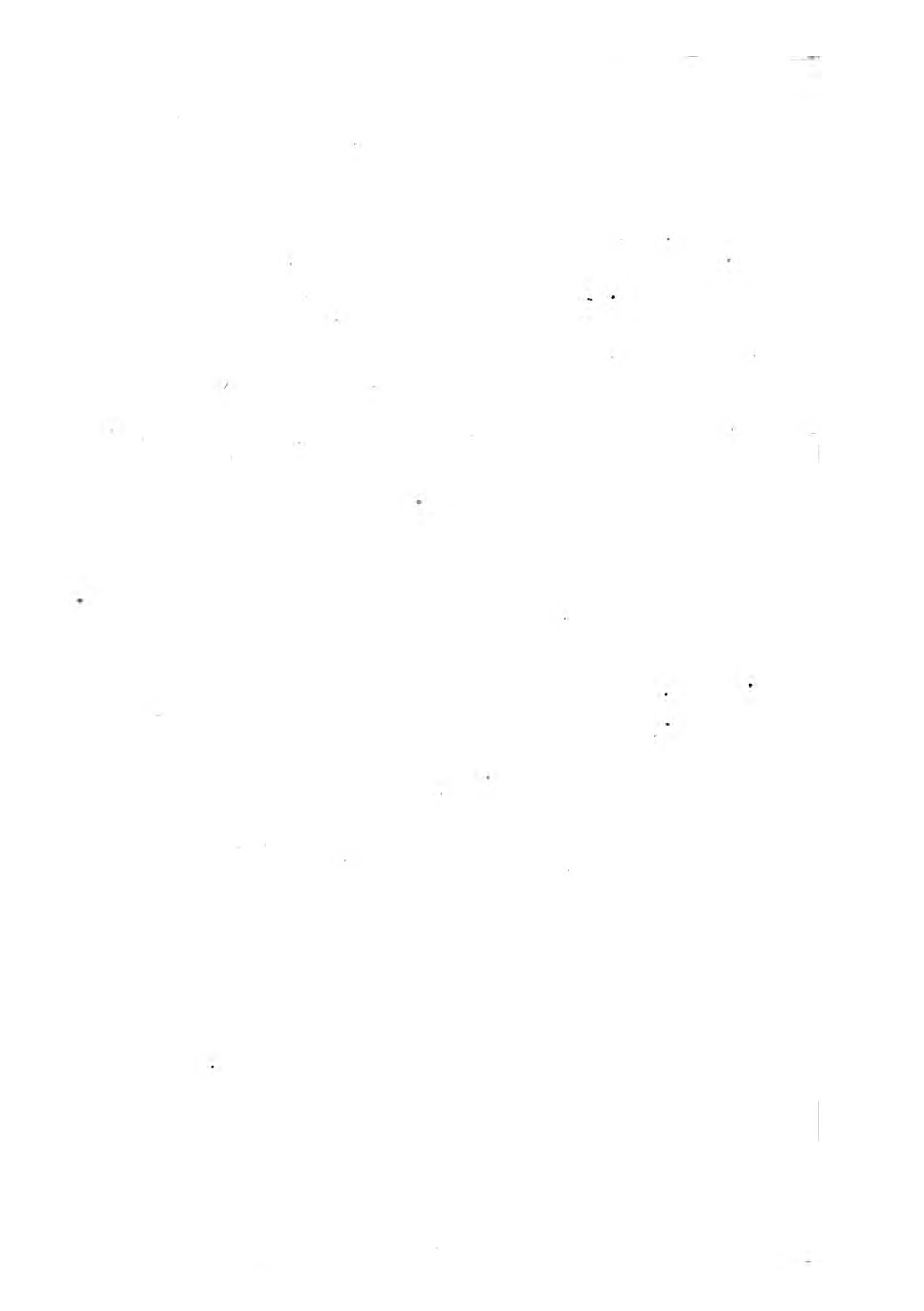
erected in a private and sombre walk, an urn, with this inscription :

Hunc lucum
Caris mortuis amicis
Sacrum dicat
W. T.

Yet from this walk, from the indulgence of the remembrance and regrets which it inspired, he would return to the social circle within, with unbroken spirits and unabated cheerfulness.

In domestic life, Mr Tytler's character was particularly amiable and praise-worthy. He was one of the kindest husbands and most affectionate fathers. At the beginning of this account, I mentioned his having lost, at an advanced period of life, an excellent wife, and a son and daughter both grown to maturity, who merited and possessed his warmest affections. The temper of mind with which he bore those losses, he has himself expressed in a MS.

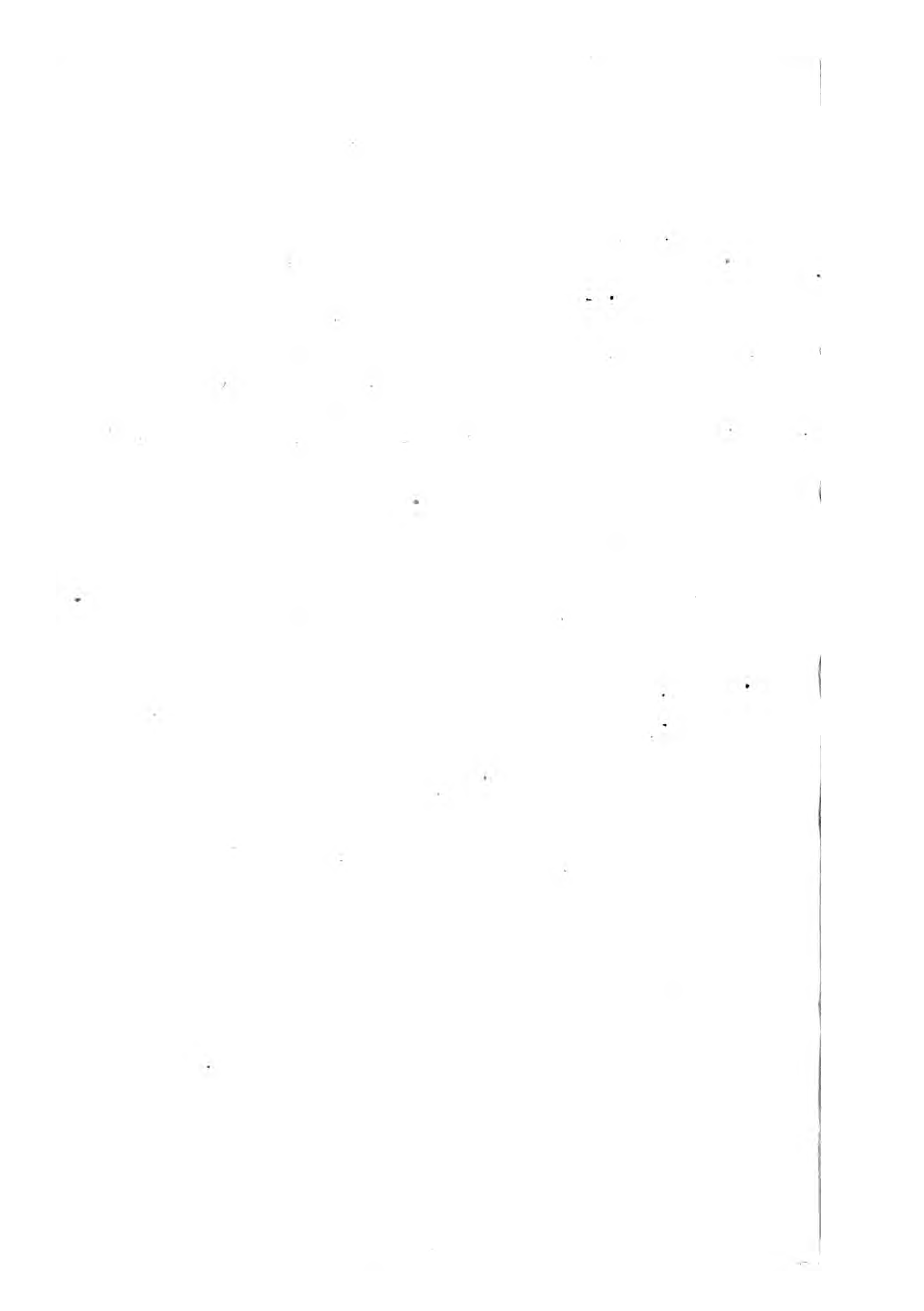
note, written not long before his death ; with which, as it conveys a sentiment equally important in the consideration of this life, and in the contemplation of that which is to come, I shall conclude the present Memoir : “ The lenient hand of time,” says Mr Tytler, after mentioning the death of his wife and children, “ the lenient hand of time, the affectionate care of my remaining children, and the duty which calls on my exertions for them, have by degrees restored me to myself. The memory of those dear objects gone before me, and the soothing hope that we shall soon meet again, is now the source of extreme pleasure to me. In my retired walks in the country I am never alone ; those dear shades are my constant companions ! Thus, what I looked upon as a bitter calamity, is now become to me the chief pleasure in life.”



A
REVIEW
OF THE
PRINCIPAL PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
PARLIAMENT OF 1784.

VOL. VII.

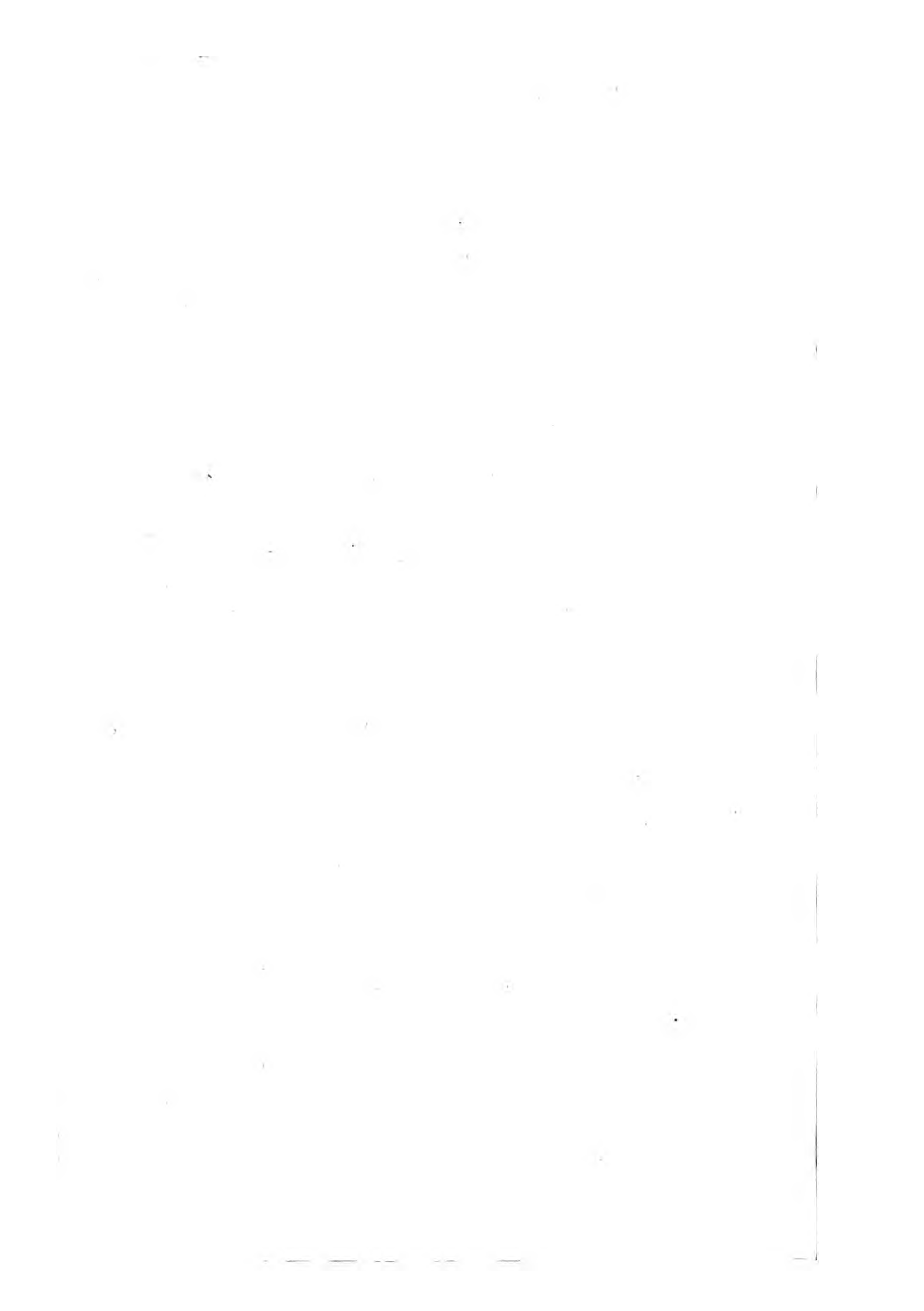
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A
REVIEW
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PARLIAMENT OF 1784.

VOL. VII.

M



ADVERTISEMENT.

Any writings which I ever ventured on political subjects, I recal (when I am able to recal them) with less satisfaction than any others of my composition. The greater part I could not republish, even were I inclined to do so, having copies of but a few, and having almost entirely forgotten several which attracted some notice at the time of their first publication. Yet they were meant to be of some use to my country, and contained, I hope, invariably, the sentiments of a good citizen. The most numerous class of them were intended to oppose a sort of epidemic insanity now past and forgotten, or if remembered, remembered with astonishment at its having ever prevailed, which set up certain idols, under the names of Liberty, Equality, and the Rights of Man, to which every virtue, and every comfort of social life, were to be sacrificed. Jacobinism is no

more ; but it is yet perhaps to be wondered at, that there are men respectable in station, and in talents, who at this moment declaim, with inconsiderate violence, against evils which seem to them (I hope conscientiously) to be so deeply rooted in the present political state of Great Britain, that it were worth while to attempt their cure by remedies very little different from those which Jacobinism, in its wildest mood, recommended. They have, I think, forgotten (to use the mildest language with regard to them) the numerous blessings which, with all the defects of this corrupted system, as they term it, the subjects of Britain enjoy beyond those of any other country ; the security of property, and of personal freedom ; the impartial, and the pure administration of justice ; the proud equality of the respective rights of every class of citizens ; the open channels for the amelioration of public, and the advancement of private condition ; the liberty and the effect with which the sentiments of the people are uttered and heard, yet with that salutary counterpoise of government, which gives time to think, to reason, to calculate, to foresee, to save the people from that worst enemy of purely democratic states—the people themselves. All this, I think, scarcely any man

will be hardy enough to deny that we possess, though there are some men bold enough to recommend our putting it all to the hazard of untried change, and of unweighed speculation. The only political tract of which I hazard the republication in the present edition, is the following account of the Proceedings of the Parliament of 1784; proceedings which, though they have now lost their interest in the awful importance of subsequent public events, were, at the time when this publication was written, held to be of no inconsiderable moment. In one respect, they may still be viewed in that light, as having laid the foundation of that system of finance and of public credit, which has given to this country resources equal to the great contest which she has been able to maintain against the gigantic power that has desolated Europe. None of those considerations, however, would, I confess, have induced me to republish this tract, were it not for a circumstance which it flatters me to recollect, and which I think the public will feel some interest in being told,—that it was anxiously revised and corrected by that Great Statesman, by whom that system was founded, by whom those resources were so nobly and so successfully employed. It might perhaps give some slight

*idea of the turn of his mind, and of his style, if I were able to shew the passages which he altered or added; but this I have no sufficient materials for doing. In the opinion of my friends, he sometimes weakened the force of the sentiment, and of the language; but this pamphlet, which was known to be sanctioned by government, was to speak with a caution becoming government to observe; that was not to be forgotten for the sake of vigour in the thought, or beauty in the style.**

** It is scarcely worth while to remind the reader, that this edition being arranged, and made ready for the press, in the beginning of Summer last, these remarks were written before the appearance of a very able article in the Edinburgh Review for July 1807, (a criticism on Cobbet's Political Register,) containing some of the same, or nearly the same observations. These, indeed, are sufficiently obvious to every man accustomed to think on the subject with moderation and impartiality; and their obviousness is the great proof of their justness.*

INTRODUCTION.

THE maxim of the Roman moralist, “that the present day should be a disciple of the past,” may be applied, with equal, or perhaps greater force, to nations, as well as to individuals. In proportion to the extent and intricacy of public concerns, is the value of that safe and salutary counsel which experience affords for their direction. The interests of individuals, theory may sometimes venture to balance and decide; but he must be confident indeed, who will commit to her guidance the interests of nations, complicated and uncertain as they are, if he can find in practice

and experience a sure foundation on which to build his opinions.

Events, however, will sometimes arise, for the conduct of which no precise direction can be drawn from the history of former times. In the management of such events, a statesman must rely upon his own capacity and genius, unsupported by precedent, and unassisted by example.

Events of this kind have been more frequent during the space of a few years back from the present time, than in any period of the same duration with which we are acquainted. In this country, we are happy to think, the occurrences have been important, but not disastrous; the scene has been changeful and busy, but it has been marked with no distressful catastrophe; we can look back on it for comfort as well as instruction, and profit from the warnings of vicissitude, without the severer corrections of adversity.

The history of the Parliament 1784,

comprehends a series of events, involving in a very uncommon degree the most important interests of Great Britain. The revision of these transactions can scarcely be a matter of indifference to any subject of this country; their importance, indeed, has been felt by the people, and they have pronounced, with very little reserve, on the nature and tendency of the measures adopted during that period by their representatives. This judgment of the people, if properly regulated, is one of the most useful qualities of a free government. It anticipates the historic fame of a good and a pure administration, the infamy of a wicked and a corrupt one. It gives to the present time that jurisdiction, which, in arbitrary governments, is only exercised by posterity, and substitutes an actual and solid advantage, in place of useless regret or empty encomium.

But the people, it has been repeatedly observed, though always right in senti-

ment, are not always right in opinion. Their opinions are liable to be misled by the warmth of momentary impressions, or by the prescriptive authority of certain popular ideas, which form the political creed of the great bulk of the community. It may be worth their while sometimes to retrace those impressions; to reconsider the justice of those ideas; to weigh, with retrospective calmness, the reasons for their applause of some measures, for their censure of others; to regulate the measure of their future confidence, and to restrain the hastiness of future mistrust and apprehension.

With this view, it may be allowed to one of their own number, to recal to their remembrance the conduct of the late Parliament, in some of those very important proceedings in which it was its fortune to be engaged. Some of these may now be traced in their effects; and all of them may be considered with a greater degree of impartiality than was consistent with

the immediate warmth of party-debate, or the agitation of opposite and contending interests. From the same consideration, he may also venture to suggest a review of those transactions to the present representatives of the people. This is the first period at which such a review could be properly recommended to their attention. During the last session, besides the ordinary business which always attends the opening of a new Parliament, there were other circumstances not favourable to deliberate discussion. With the prospect of peace, which the result of the late negotiations on the Continent, and the general sentiment of European politics, may now reasonably afford, the present Parliament, we flatter ourselves, may have leisure for the undisturbed exercise of its deliberative functions ; may have a full opportunity of providing for the completion and permanency of every useful regulation already es-

tablished, as well as for the adoption of those of which its own wisdom and information may suggest the expediency.

SECTION I.

INDIA.

India Bill of 1783.—India Bill of 1784.—India Declaratory Bill.—Impeachment of Mr Hastings.

IN looking back to the commencement of the late Parliament, it is impossible to forget the conclusion of that immediately preceding. The measure which produced its dissolution was one of that kind which holds no middle place in the political system. It was of a magnitude that roused the attention of every man to whom the constitution of his country appeared an

object of importance. The introduction of Mr Fox's celebrated India Bill was favoured by the necessity which was felt of some reform in the administration of our eastern possessions. The empire held by Great Britain in the East, had by that time grown much too unwieldy for the government of a mercantile company, with whose very nature and constitution were interwoven so many obvious causes of the mismanagement and oppression of those territories. The interposition of the British legislature to regulate that government, and to restrain that oppression, was loudly called for by the justice and humanity of the nation. But those very feelings were alarmed by the provisions which this bill contained, equally, as its opposers maintained, violent and unnecessary, tending to annihilate and destroy not only the power, but the property and the commerce, of the East India Company. This struck the feelings of the people at large, which are

easily awakened to a sense of immediate oppression and injustice; but to those who could investigate more deeply, the danger with which the bill in question seemed to threaten the British constitution, was a deeper and more extensive object of apprehension. The immeasurable influence and patronage which it placed in seven commissioners named by Parliament, in violation of the rights of the executive branch of the government, whose unity it destroyed, and whose exertions it must frustrate, created, it was said, a new power in the state, of such a nature, and such an extent, as to overbear every wholesome check which the wisdom of our forefathers had contrived against the encroachments or preponderance of any one order of the state.* A foundation, it was argued, was

* The extent of this influence is very fully and justly stated in an excellent pamphlet, written at the time by Mr Pulteney, one of the most intelligent and independent members of the House of Commons. His

laid for an aristocratical despotism, by which the liberties of most European states have been fatally overturned ; a despotism

words on that head are, "The whole influence of the offices of every kind in India, and at home, belonging to the company ; and the whole influence arising from the transactions of their trade, in the purchase of goods for exportation, furnishing shipping, stores, and recruits ; and the influence arising from the method of selling their goods, by bringing forward, or keeping back goods at the sales, or giving indulgencies as to payments, so as to accommodate those who are meant to be favoured ; the influence arising from the favour they may shew to those who are now in England, and have left debts or effects in India, as to the mode of bringing home and receiving their fortunes ; the influence of contracts of all kinds in India ; of promotions from step to step ; of favour in the inland trade ; of intimidation with respect to every person now there, who may come home with a fortune, both with regard to recovering his debts, and the means of remittance, and with regard to inquiries into his conduct ; the influence upon foreign companies or foreign states, who have establishments in the country ; the influence upon the native Princes of India, some of whom have already found the way of procuring the elections of members of Parliament ; and many other means of influence which it is impossible to foresee or to trace."

by which the people had even in some instances been driven, as feeling it a lesser evil, to throw themselves on the arbitrary rule of a monarch.

With these arguments against the India bill of 1783, the public opinion seemed to coincide; and the nation beheld rather with satisfaction than surprise, the dismissal of the ministers by whom it had been introduced, though such dismissal was resisted by various resolutions of the House of Commons. That ministry had, indeed, in its formation, the seeds of great unpopularity. The

The seizure of the Company's warehouses, goods, books, &c. which this bill enacted, its usurpation of their whole commercial management, seemed, at first view, to the public, a mere wanton exertion of arbitrary and extravagant power; but those who had considered the subject more closely, allowed it, at least, the merit of a motive; it was a part of that rapacity of patronage which was the distinguishing feature of the bill.

alliance of the two adverse parties of which it was composed, seemed so much beyond the usual pliancy even of politicians; the personal violence of their former hostility seemed so repugnant to every idea of junction, that the natural integrity of the people felt the coalition as one of those public violations of consistency, one of those public derelictions of principle, which destroy all future confidence, and forfeit all future esteem.

A majority of the House of Commons, constituted in this manner, and excited to such a purpose, did not carry its usual and natural weight in the adoption of public measures. That majority complained loudly of the disregard that was shewn to its remonstrances; impartial men felt as a precedent of ill tendency, the abuse and consequent disrespect of a power which the House of Commons had often exerted, for the benefit of its constituents, with a vigour and an effect in which the friends

of liberty rejoiced and triumphed. They saw, with peculiar regret, that, in this war of party, the weapons which had been so often wielded in defence of the public, were blunted by the injustice of the cause in which they were employed. They lamented, that, in this instance, the constitutional language and principles, which every lover of his country wishes to preserve in their fullest force, were perverted, as the people believed, to cover party machinations and designs of inordinate ambition; they thus lost the sacredness of their ancient authority, and the democratical part of our constitution was exposed to a danger, of which it was fortunate for the public tranquillity that the moderation of the crown was not in the smallest degree disposed to take advantage.

In the dissolution of the Parliament the crown acted with a reluctant slowness, which at the time was blamed by some

of its friends as unnecessary and hurtful. But it was a measure proper to be adopted, only on that necessity which deliberation could not overcome, and on that strong and imperative voice with which the people continued to demand the dissolution of the representative body, who, in their opinion, had attempted to violate those great constitutional principles which their constituents had entrusted them to guard.

The bill which was introduced in the new Parliament, in the room of the former which the House of Lords had rejected, was founded on the principle of controlling an authority which had been misemployed, and of correcting abuses which had existed in the government of our Asiatic possessions. It was essential, for those purposes, to establish somewhere a superintending and corrective power, to resist and remedy that corruption which had so shamefully pervaded the adminis-

tration of Indian affairs. To rescue the natives of that great country, which was now become a part of the British empire, from the rapacious tyranny to which they were exposed; to rescue the company itself from the ruin which was likely to result from the malversations of its servants; and, above all, to save the empire from that enormous mischief which the corruptions of those distant provinces were likely to bring upon it; were objects to which no slight inconvenience to individuals could, in sound principles of national policy, or of national justice, be opposed. But to make the provisions remedial, not oppressive, to limit their extent to the necessity that occasioned them, and to commit their execution to persons neither interested to strain their severity, nor to relax their justice; these were the objects to which it became the Legislature to confine itself in the exercise of the corrective functions which it

was now called upon to employ. It restrained therefore, though it did not abrogate, the powers of the India Company in its political concerns; but it left uncontrolled those strictly commercial transactions, which did not interfere with the government of Asia, or the welfare of Britain.

In the constitution of that board to which the superintendance of Indian affairs was to be intrusted, the new bill endeavoured to provide for the unbiassed exercise of that superintendance, by withholding as much as possible the temptations of influence, or patronage. It gave the commissioners the power which was necessary for correction and controul; but it denied them that which was likely to be subservient to domestic ambition, or to endanger that counterpoise by which the British constitution is supported.

For the correction of abuses in India, a stronger and more efficient government

was necessary in that country. We had suffered as often from the want of power, as from the want of integrity or ability in our governors. The bill in question lodged in the hands of the governor-general and council in Bengal a degree of authority calculated to enforce the measures of reform and good government, which the interests of both the parent-state and the provinces required. It took away the necessity which had sometimes existed, of compromising with abuses from the weakness of the hand that should have checked them. It gave an immediate efficient controul upon the spot, subject again to the superintendance and revision which it had established at home, in order that the redress of wrongs might neither be tardy or defective from the want of power, nor be precipitate or immoderate from the want of responsibility. The same supreme effective authority in one of the presidencies over the others, was necessary towards

the unity of political transactions, which had been formerly often conducted with the weakness of divided councils, acting independently of each other. But the bill, with peculiar care, drew the line respecting the power of declaring war, and commencing hostilities; at the same time that it studiously prohibited all schemes of offensive war, founded merely on the desire of conquest, and of extension of empire, it provided the means of acting with vigour and effect in every case where war might become necessary on the principle of self-defence; and it gave to the government on the spot the power of immediately adopting such measures, and entering into such engagements, as might be necessary for the purpose of obtaining adequate reparation, and providing for future security.*

* 24 Geo. III. C. 25. Sec. 34.

“ And whereas to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India, are measures repug-

Among the provisions which this bill contained for the prevention and punishment of Indian delinquency, that to which

nant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of this nation, be it therefore further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that it shall not be lawful for the governor-general and council of Fort William aforesaid, without the express command and authority of the said Court of Directors, or of the secret committee of the said Court of Directors, in any case (except where hostilities have actually been commenced, or preparations actually made for the commencement of hostilities against the British nation in India, or against some of the princes or states dependent thereon, or whose territories the said united Company shall be at such time engaged by any subsisting treaty to defend or guarantee) either to declare war or commence hostilities, or enter into any treaty for making war against any of the country princes or states in India, or any treaty for guaranteeing the possessions of any country princes or states; and that in such case it shall not be lawful for the said governor-general and council to declare war, or commence hostilities, or enter into treaty for making war against any other prince or state than such as shall be actually committing hostilities, or making preparations as aforesaid, or to make such treaty for guaranteeing the possessions of any prince

the chief opposition was made, was the institution of a new board of judicature for the trial of offences committed in India.

or state, but upon the consideration of such prince or state actually engaging to assist the Company against such hostilities commenced, or preparations made as aforesaid; and in all cases where hostilities shall be commenced, or treaty made, the said governor-general and council shall, by the most expeditious means they can devise, communicate the same unto the said Court of Directors, together with a full state of the information and intelligence upon which they shall have commenced such hostilities, or made such treaties, and their motives and reasons for the same at large."

The provisions of this clause could not have been more explicit, if they had been made with a view to the actual circumstances which compelled the government of India to enter on the present war with Tippoo, and to the measures which they thought necessary for the vigorous prosecution of it. It seems particularly to recognise (what indeed is obvious) the necessity of decisive measures in case of an attack, or even preparation for an attack, not only against the British nation, but against any of its allies; and it expressly gives in this case a liberty, which it withholds in ordinary times, to contract such engagements with other powers in that coun-

But the strong national attachment to the jury trial of England, naturally over-ruled the objections against this mode of trial, when it was observed to be formed as nearly on the same model as the circumstances of the case appeared to admit; and that in the construction of this judicature every precaution was taken that could tend to secure its respectability and impartiality. It seemed indeed very difficult, if not impossible, to give either efficiency or promptitude to any tribunal, of which the proceedings should be regulated precisely by the ancient customary forms of the English law. The failure of national justice in the punishment of Indian offences had been but too often observable. In the present instance, the objections to a judicature, formed for the attainment of that justice, could not, it was said, be con-

try as may induce them effectually to co-operate with us in the prosecution of a just and necessary war.

sistently urged by men, whose eloquence had frequently lamented the oppression of Asia, which in Britain they found no adequate means to redress, or to expiate.

Less animadversion was made on the clauses enacting a public disclosure and record of the fortunes brought by individuals from India, though these provisions might be deemed of an inquisitorial kind, averse to the genius of our law, and degrading to the national character. But the country was so strongly impressed with the necessity of correcting the speculation and corruption with which the management of those distant provinces had been sullied, that it was willing to venture remedies of a strong and somewhat invidious kind, if they were such as did not trench on the public safety. This measure, however, produced very great discontents in India, and was afterwards repealed by the amending act of 1786. This last-mentioned law made another

material alteration in the statute of 1784, by enabling the governor-general, or the governor of any of the subordinate presidencies, in any case where he believed a measure to be essential to the interests of the company, to order such measure of his own authority, even against the opinion of all the other members of the council; but it coupled this power with an obligation on such governor to make oath to his belief of the utility of such measure, and an acknowledgment of his sole responsibility for its consequences. This amendment was made on the principle already mentioned, of the necessity of a strong efficient government in India. It is a general truth in the character of mankind, that great situations make great minds, especially when men are deprived of the shelter of divided responsibility, and can look in their own individual persons to the pride of good actions, or the disgrace of ill ones.

Let it, however, be remembered, that this observation is not an argument in favour of arbitrary government, but rather one of the many proofs of the advantages of a free constitution, which is enabled on great emergencies to delegate the necessary degree of discretionary power, because it can provide a responsibility adequate to the importance of the trust.

Such are the principal outlines of that statute, which was one of the first great public acts of the last Parliament. It was a measure indispensable in the circumstances of the empire; a duty in the legislature, which had been often recommended to them by the Sovereign. It became the virtue and the dignity of Parliament to interpose in this vigorous and coercive manner, for the interests of the state, as well as for the sake of public justice and humanity; it was consonant to its wisdom, to endeavour to accomplish those ends, without forgetting the regard that is due

to the franchises of individuals, and the great political rights of the community.

Amidst the weakness and corruption of the India Company's government, its finances could not but suffer a consequent derangement. Its situation was held out by the supporters of Mr Fox's India bill to be so desperate, as to amount to bankruptcy ; and indeed, even in the sober colouring of truth, the view of its affairs was so gloomy, that it required an immediate and vigorous exertion of parliamentary interposition and assistance to redeem them. To provide for the discharge of its debt, and at the same time not to sink its credit by a sudden reduction of its dividends, required an arrangement of its future transactions, and a rigid adherence to its future economy, which the operation of the regulating law, and the strictest attention of the Board, which it had established, could only effect. But in great concerns like those of the East-India Company, the

reform, as well as the abuse, in detail produces a result which always exceed common expectation. By the effect of the salutary measures adopted for the restoration of its affairs, the Company has been enabled so effectually to retrieve them, as to be in a condition to provide for the payment of its debt, and to increase its trading capital to the extent which the commutation act has necessarily occasioned. The confidence of the public in the present situation of the Company, and in the present management of Indian affairs, is best ascertained by the present rate of its stock, which from 120 per cent. at which it stood before the passing of the act of 1784, is now at 188, even amidst the uncertain events of a distant and expensive war. The events of that war, (occurring indeed out of the period to which this Review particularly applies,) shew, in a very pointed manner, the effects of the present management of India on the revenues of

the Company. Notwithstanding the immense exertions that have been made, and the very great expence attending them, an expence swelled beyond all probable calculation by untoward and unlooked-for accidents, the treasury of the Company in India is able to answer every exigency of the war, without disappointing its mercantile investments.

This department of finance, though originally arising out of the management of a commercial company, may now be fairly reckoned a national one. Parliament considers it as such, and expects it to be annually laid before them, not only in the arithmetical result prescribed by the bill hereafter to be mentioned, but with that particular detail which is open to examination and canvass.

This expectation, indeed, did not so much arise from Parliament itself, as it was suggested to them by the laudable

practice of the gentleman who presides at the Board of Controul.

There was indeed, as I have noticed above, in the construction, as there is in the conduct of the Board of Controul, a principle of pure and disinterested management, which naturally led to economical arrangements. A province was assigned to it separate from that of the former managers of India, so frequently censured, in which immediate advantage and immediate patronage were often at war with the great and permanent interests of the Company and the empire. The situation of the members of the Board of Controul, is one which presents objects as an inducement to the discharge of their duty, capable of furnishing the highest possible gratification to an honourable ambition; on the other hand, the proportion of patronage, and the means of abuse, will be found to be so inconsiderable, that even in the most unfavourable view of human

nature, they can hardly be thought to operate as a temptation in the opposite scale.

This subject being very much connected with the debates respecting the powers intended to be vested by the India bill of 1784 in the Board of Controul, which took place on occasion of the declaratory bill brought into Parliament in 1788, it may be proper, though not in the order of time, to take notice here of the proceedings on that declaratory law.

On the alarm occasioned by the disturbances in Holland, the directors of the India Company had concerted with government, to send out to India four regiments of the king's forces, which were to be transported in the ships of the Company, and the expences incident to which were to be defrayed out of its revenue. But when the Dutch business was settled, and affairs had resumed their former pacific appearance, the directors, with that

economy which, in mercantile men, perhaps sometimes supersedes foresight, declined burthening their military establishment with what they conceived an unnecessary reinforcement. The Board of Con-
troul, who had the best authority for believing the proposed augmentation to be essential to the safety of the Indian territories, insisted on sending the regiments by their own authority, in virtue of the powers conferred on them by the act of 1784. But doubts having arisen on the construction of that act, and opinions of very respectable weight in the law having been given on the side of the directors, it was judged proper to sanction the measure by the interposition of Parliament ; and the minister accordingly brought in a bill “ for removing any doubts respecting the powers of the commissioners for the affairs of India, to direct, that the expence of raising, transporting, and maintaining such troops as may be judged ne-

cessary for the security of the British possessions in the East Indies, should be defrayed out of the revenues arising from the said territories and possessions.”

This measure was immediately represented as an attempt to acquire power of a dangerous extent ; and the recollection of the strong and violent provisions of the bill of 1783, while it made the public awake to every impression of this nature, was a motive for opposition to canvass the present bill with all the acrimony which the disappointment and unpopularity of their own measure naturally inspired. In this question there was more than the ordinary object of resistance to administration ; it was the contest of rival pretensions, on a subject which had thrown the one party out of power, and invested the other with their present authority.

Against the principle of the bill it was contended, that a declaratory law cannot supply the omissions, or, enlarge the pro-

visions, of the original statute which it is meant to explain ; for this would be to declare what never existed. Parliament, by passing such a declaratory law, usurps in its own cause a judicial power to which it is only entitled on an obvious ambiguity of expression in the statute to be explained, or the clashing of judicial decisions in the courts. Let this be called an enacting law, and the absurdity of its title at least would be avoided. But whatever name it assumed, it was equally (said the opposers of the measure) a violent and unjust attack upon the rights of the East-India Company. It went to the annihilation of the power of that Company as much as the bill of 1783, against which so much clamour had been raised, but it did that insidiously and indirectly, which the other meant to do in an open and manly manner. “ This bill, they argued, gives to the Board of Controul complete power over the whole revenue of India ; under

the pretence of providing for the safety of their territories, that Board may employ what force it pleases ; apply the revenues to the maintenance of that force, and so disappoint the Company of its necessary investments. This virtually goes to the controul of their commerce, which it was expressly declared, the bill of 1784 was to leave at the absolute disposal of the Company. It gives to the Board all the patronage which the disposal of the revenue creates, all the power which that necessarily infers ; power in the worst possible way, without responsibility.

“ In a constitutional view, it was urged, besides this enormous patronage, which had in the act of 1783 been deprecated as a means of overthrowing the balance of the constitution, there was in the present bill an accession to the power of the crown of the most alarming kind ; a power of maintaining what troops it pleased in India without the consent of Parliament.

That, in the case in question, the sending those regiments to India would be attended with the most hurtful effects to the service there, by the offence which it could not fail to give to the officers of the Company, under whom their arms had hitherto triumphed over the numerous enemies with which their territories were surrounded. If the justice of their claims was not listened to, let the danger of disregarding them be considered. Let it be remembered, that to such discontents in the French army the ruin of their affairs in India might be imputed ; and that there were not wanting instances of the most serious danger to ourselves from the operation of such discontents in our own army."

In defence of the bill it was urged, " that it only went to declare that power which the former law had undoubtedly meant to lodge in that Board, which it constituted for the controul and superintendance of Indian affairs, and which power the Board of

Controul had accordingly exercised since the earliest period of its institution. That Board, in its very establishment under the act of 1784, had been meant and declared to be an active and efficient institution. But if it were to exercise the crippled and imperfect jurisdiction which it was now contended was only meant by that act to be given it, its activity would be useless, and its efficiency would be destroyed. The commissioners were responsible for the safety of the territorial possessions, for the political government of India; they must therefore have the disposal of the revenue arising out of the provinces applicable to their defence and security. Of all powers, it was said, this is the most necessary to the Board, because it is a controul of what was most likely to be faulty in the management of the Company. Immediate profit and emolument is the natural object of trading companies; but the Board of Controul must not forget, that the defence

of a country is more necessary than its opulence, and must provide for the first of these objects, if they shall happen to interfere, in preference to the latter. The directors indeed might be naturally supposed, in the present situation of the Company, to have an additional motive for preferring investment to security, in the view of the approaching expiration of their charter ; but the great use of the Board of Control was, to look to the permanent interests of the empire, and not to barter national security for commercial emolument. For attaining this security, the measure of sending out the regiments in question was necessary ; nobody could say how pressing that necessity was ; entrusted as that Board was with the political interest of the Company and the nation, with the safety of provinces so essential to both, was it to wait the slow progress of judicial decision, and suffer meanwhile the territories of the Company to be lost or endangered ? If

interference with the revenues of India in the Board of Controul was illegal, and an usurpation of the rights of the Company, it was now for the first time that it was discovered to be so. That interference had benefited the Company many crores of rupees annually ; it had re-established their credit abroad ; it had furnished the means of paying a large part of their debts at home ; it had given security to the landholders in India. As early as the year 1785, it had prevented a mutiny in their army, by applying the revenue in the first instance to the payment of the troops, in preference to all other demands. Even in a mercantile view it had benefited them essentially ; because it had enabled them to increase their investments by the regulation of their affairs, and an economical retrenchment in the expences of their establishment.

“ As to the unconstitutional power which this bill was said to lodge in the crown, it was argued, the idea was found-

ed on a mistake. Every British soldier, wherever employed, is under the controul of Parliament; and for the very regiments now in question, the House of Commons had voted the estimates. The mode of raising those regiments was absolutely necessary towards the expedition with which they were required. The nomination of their officers was of course with the crown; but the crown had allowed to the Company one half of the appointments; a proportion as high as could reasonably be expected, when it was remembered, that there were 2800 officers on the half-pay list to be provided for, many of whom had served with distinction in India, and helped to maintain and defend the territories of the Company."

The candour of the minister in his defence of this declaratory bill made a strong impression on the House. He declared his own perfect conviction, "that the bill introduced by him in 1784, gave to the

Board of Controul the power which this bill declared, otherwise he should have thought himself blameable for bringing in a bill so inefficient and nugatory. But he would not stand on the question of construction ; he called on the House to consider the operation and tendency of the bill ; to look to every question it involved. Questions had been started on it, more important than the powers of the Board of Controul, the conduct of the East-India directors, or even the territorial acquisitions of the Company ; questions affecting the constitution of Great Britain, which he held paramount to all others. If there were in this bill, or in that of 1784, any principles hostile to the constitution, better that this should be thrown out, and the other repealed, than that any such principles should be entertained by a British legislature. But before such an alarm was taken, let the House consider its reality. This bill, he was decided in opinion,

gave to the crown no power to maintain an army in India independent of Parliament; if that were so, he would be the first to vote against it; but nothing appeared to him so mistaken a notion. Parliament voted every soldier in the army wherever employed; part of it was sent to India, as it might be to any other part of the empire; but the controul over its existence rested, and God forbid that it should ever cease to rest, with Parliament.

“With respect to the patronage said to be conferred by this bill, he must repeat, that the leading and anxious feature of his bill had been to give superintendance and controul, but to withhold patronage. For remedy of the abuses in India, and for the future prevention of them, there must be an accession of power somewhere; but his great object from the beginning had been, to give the Board of Controul every power and faculty necessary for those salutary purposes, but without the patron-

age, of which he knew the danger to the constitution. Every appearance of that danger, however, was too alarming to him, and he hoped to every member of the House, not to be provided against by every possible means. He begged, therefore, that gentlemen would sift the bill in this respect to the bottom, and he would thankfully receive any provisions against such danger that could be proposed, let them come from what quarter of the House, or be delivered with what asperity of language they might. Himself would, in the mean time, propose some clauses, which he thought would effectually remove such apprehension, either from the power of the crown, or the patronage of the commissioners."

Three clauses were accordingly added to the bill by the committee; 1st, for limiting the number of the king's troops and the Company's European forces in India; 2d, for preventing the increase of

any salary in India, or the payment of any extraordinary allowance from the Company's revenue there, by the Board of Controul, without the consent of the directors, and an account laid before Parliament; 3d, for the directors to lay every year before Parliament an account of the annual produce of the revenues, the debursements, and debts of the Company.

It may be gratifying to the public to recollect the particulars of this discussion, and to compare them with the succeeding events in India. This augmentation of our force fortunately took place before any occasion arose of actually putting our strength to a trial; the war which has since broke out, and the events which have attended it, are a sufficient proof of the necessity of these precautions; and the prospect of final success may principally be ascribed to that state of complete preparation, which enabled us to meet this

sudden emergency with a promptitude and vigour before unexampled. Enough of the administration of India is now known to qualify us to judge of the effects of the power of the Board of Controul, which was represented as so dangerous; by the exercise of that power, the Company has been enabled to attain its present state of growing wealth and credit, and to furnish those resources, the extent of which has been so fully manifested in the operations of the present war. As to the fears of the effect of this bill on the Company's army in India, they will best be answered by its late services; by its discipline, and its valour.

Previous to those permanent laws for the regulation of the affairs of the India Company, Parliament had frequently taken occasional and temporary measures, with a view to correct the abuses which had occurred in the management of its political and territorial concerns. Among

these was the appointment of committees, particularly of the secret and select committees in 1781, which had investigated, with unwearied assiduity, the subject of Indian government, and had laid before the House reports, containing a very large and interesting body of evidence on that subject. One of the members of the select committee was a gentleman not more admired for the extent of his information, the depth of his knowledge, and the brilliancy of his talents, than respected for the virtues of his private character. In the course of his enquiries in this department, he had conceived a very strong and decided opinion, that the late governor-general of Bengal had been guilty of great official malversation; and had often signified to the House, in very pointed terms, his intention of making the various abuses of that gentleman's government the subject of parliamentary enquiry. Some of the friends of Mr Hastings, with a zealous

attachment to his person, and a perfect confidence in the merits of his administration, had frequently pressed this gentleman to come forward with his threatened accusations; which they said Mr Hastings, now returned from his government, was extremely desirous to meet. Mr Burke, thus called upon, at last brought forth the charge he had meditated; and on the 17th of February, 1786, (after having read a resolution of the House in 1782, which contained a censure on certain measures of the governor-general, and declared the opinion of the House of Commons, that he ought to be recalled,) he proceeded to move for certain papers to be laid before the House, on which he meant to found an impeachment against Mr Hastings, for his various delinquencies in India. He afterwards collected his charges into one paper, which was laid before the House, and circulated through the nation. The nation, though never deficient in a

sense of justice and humanity, was in this case favourably disposed to the person whom these charges held forth as a delinquent. The impression of the vigour and ability of his government in India, during a crisis very important to this country, had been pretty generally received. He had been continued in his government there, subsequent to those resolutions in 1782, which his accuser had assumed as the foundation of his charges; and it was a prevailing opinion among men most conversant with India, that his conduct in that government had extricated this country from the various difficulties and dangers of a war, which had threatened the very existence of the British power in that quarter of the globe. Success is too often the criterion of the people's opinion. In this case, they compared the success of Mr Hastings in India, with the national disasters in another hemisphere, where the enormous corruption and abuse

of individuals had not been redeemed by a single advantage to the public. The character of Mr Hastings's accuser, though highly respectable for its virtue and its ability, was tinctured with a degree of enthusiasm, of which the public was disposed to doubt the discretion, or the justice. In pursuit of a favourite measure, with all its intrinsic worth, its native energy, and its acquired endowments, the mind of Mr Burke was often a less safe guide of public opinion than those of much inferior men. Its qualities were frequently carried to an excess, in which they lost their estimation and their use. The warmth of his feelings sometimes betrayed him into what had the effects of inhumanity, and his sense of right pushed, to an extreme, became injustice.

Distrustful of the warmth of his accusation, and inclined to give Mr Hastings credit for the successful issue of his government, without examining too nicely

the detail of his conduct, the public looked to the impeachment as a measure which the House of Commons was not likely to adopt. They expected Mr Hastings to have answered with that general reference to the success of his administration which themselves were accustomed to make: "I preserved for the Company and the nation their Asiatic dominions, when assailed by a combination of powerful and determined enemies; amidst a war in most other places disastrous, my exertions repelled the attacks of their enemies, maintained the reputation of your army, and the security of your possessions, and finally accomplished that peace which laid the foundation of the extended commerce, and the increasing revenue, of your East India Company. If, in the attainment of these great and arduous ends, some irregularities may have occurred, which the nature of the country, the extent and multiplicity of objects, or the exigency and the pressure of the time,

may have occasioned, these are the tax which is commonly paid for the efficiency and vigour of public measures. These I leave to your judgment, and abide the censure which you shall think they deserve. It may perhaps blunt your censure, it will at least alleviate my feeling of it, to reflect, that by those means, in which my accusers may find imperfections and error, I have saved an empire to my country."

Such was not the kind of defence on which Mr Hastings chose to rely. He stepped from behind that shield, which the opinion of his services, and the gratitude of the public, might have spread before him, and challenged an enquiry into every separate transaction which his accuser had detailed against him. He gave to the House of Commons, and to the public, a particular and elaborate answer to every article of the charge which Mr Burke had exhibited. That answer was

unfortunate in some points; and as to these, Mr Hastings was afterwards obliged to depart from it. This threw a discredit on his defence in general, while the mode of it remained as objectionable as before. It obliged the House of Commons to pronounce on each separate individual charge, on which Mr Hastings was thus at issue with his accuser. After an assiduous and impartial examination of the evidence, their decision was unfavourable on many of those articles; and in consequence the impeachment was voted.

That impeachment is still depending; and in such a stage of the business, it were improper to enter more particularly into its nature, or its progress. It has produced one important consequence, in settling the constitutional point of the non-abatement of an impeachment by a dissolution of Parliament; a point which it is for the honour of the times, that the ministers of the crown warmly contended to establish. The

adherents of Mr Hastings, with a friendship almost always misapplied, a zeal almost always mistaken, resisted the continuance of a proceeding, by which alone the honour of that gentleman could be cleared from the attacks which had been made upon it; and on some subsequent occasions, seemed to resent the opinion which the immediate officers of the crown had given on that subject, so much to the honour of their unbiassed integrity. On the other hand, the long continuance and enormous expence of this prosecution, have impressed the public with an idea of the hardship of the proceeding by impeachment, and brought somewhat of odium and disrepute on this great prerogative of the people. But it is not the less salutary in its existence, though in this particular instance it may have been a hardship on the individual. That it should be sparingly exerted, is equally suitable to its dignity and its justice; but that it should be ca-

pable of exertion, is important to the purity of public trust, to the safety and the freedom of the community.

SECTION II.

TRADE.

Irish Propositions. — Commercial Treaty with France. — Consolidation of the Customs. — Trade with America. — Comparative State of Trade and Navigation.

ANOTHER part of the empire, which, equally with India, seemed to require the immediate attention of government, was Ireland. At the period of distress and embarrassment which Great Britain felt during the course of the late unfortunate war, Ireland had wrung from our weakness, or our fear, what our justice should have formerly allowed her, a participation of the benefits

of commerce with foreign countries, and with our colonies. But the commercial intercourse between this country and Ireland was liable to a variety of restrictions and prohibitions, of which Ireland then loudly complained, as tending to create an inequality in the encouragement of the national industry of the respective countries ; and which inequality she threatened to take measures of an unfriendly sort to overcome. To remove this ground of complaint ; to adjust the commercial intercourse between the two countries on a fair and equitable footing ; to unite both kingdoms, if possible, by reciprocal advantage, and to take away that sort of mutual jealousy and alienation which the prohibitions against a free interchange of the commodities and manufactures of each necessarily tended to create, were objects which had been particularly recommended to Parliament from the throne, and which every person wishing well to the

happiness of either country could not fail to desire. With a view to attain these objects, certain propositions had been brought into the Irish Parliament by his Majesty's ministers in that country, on which a set of resolutions had been adopted by the Irish Parliament, which were soon after submitted to the consideration of the British House of Commons, for its acquiescence in the general measures they suggested. The basis of these resolutions was, as the first of them expressed, the extension and encouragement of the trade between Great Britain and Ireland, so important to the general interests of the empire ; and a settlement and regulation of the intercourse and commerce of the two countries, on permanent and equitable principles, for the mutual benefit of both. The particular propositions arising out of this general principle were briefly as follow :

That foreign articles should be importable from either kingdom into the other,

under the same regulations and duties as when imported directly from the place of their growth or manufacture.

That on articles of the produce or manufacture of either country, no prohibition should exist to prevent their importation into the other country ; and that if subject to a duty, such duty should be equal in both countries. That for this purpose, articles charged in either kingdom with an internal duty on the manufacture, or a duty on the material of which it is composed, should be charged on importation from either kingdom into the other, with a duty equal to such internal tax on the manufacture, or to an amount to counter-vail the duty on the material.

That in order to give permanency to the settlement, no prohibition, or additional duties, should hereafter be imposed in either country on the importation of any articles of the produce or manufacture of the other, except what might be

necessary to balance the duties on internal consumption before mentioned ; and that no such prohibition, or additional duty, should be hereafter imposed in either kingdom on the exportation of any native article to the other, except where prohibitions already exist which are not reciprocal, or duties which are not equal. And the same regulation was adopted to equalize bounties.

That the importation of foreign articles into either kingdom should be so regulated from time to time, as to afford a preference to the importation of similar articles, the produce or manufacture of Great Britain or Ireland.

In return for the benefits which she was supposed to receive from this commercial regulation, Ireland agreed to contribute towards the naval force of the empire, whatever sum the hereditary revenue of that kingdom should produce beyond 656,000l., which was its amount at the time.

Between the time of the first introduction of these propositions in the House of Commons, and the day to which their consideration was adjourned, a report was laid before the House, from a committee of the Privy Council, (now the only substitute for the Board of Trade, abolished by Mr Burke's reform bill,) who had been assiduously employed in considering the effects of these propositions, and in examining many of the principal merchants and manufacturers, with regard to their probable tendency.

Mean time the natural jealousy of trade, even exclusive of the alarm which party opposition might be supposed to excite, had prompted several meetings of persons interested in the articles of commerce and manufacture to which the propositions related; in which meetings, their effects on the home and foreign markets for such articles were canvassed. Many of the principal manufacturers were examined

before the committee of the House, in addition to the evidence which had before been taken by the committee of Privy Council. It is but justice to those gentlemen to remark, that most of them delivered themselves with a candour and liberality, as to the probable competition of Ireland, beyond what has been generally allowed to the prejudices of professional character; though in some instances perhaps there appeared a tincture of that spirit of monopoly, which dreads any chance, however distant, of the participation of others in its profits.

From the information thus obtained, many new lights were thrown upon a subject of a very extensive and complicated kind; and the minister was enabled, at the distance of several months from the first introduction of the propositions, to lay before the House a set of resolutions formed, with considerable alterations and

the general propositions on the basis of those transmitted from Ireland. These consisted principally in the following particulars :

A stipulation for the exclusive trade of the East-India Company, by Ireland's being debarred from trading to any of the countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan ; giving, however, certain advantages to Ireland from the commerce of that Company, by allowing it to freight ships from that country, to send its vessels to Ireland in their voyages from Britain, and to take on board there the commodities and manufactures of that kingdom.

A security for the execution of navigation laws which Great Britain should find it necessary to enact for the increase and encouragement of her marine, by stipulating, that the legislature of Ireland should pass the like laws, in order to impose the corrections with respect to the detail of

same restraints, and confer the same benefits, on the subjects of both kingdoms.

A protection against introducing foreign spirits, that is, spirits not the produce of our own colonies, into Great Britain from Ireland.

Certain provisions for the security of the revenue in both countries, by the use of bonds, cockets, and other custom-house instruments, in the trade between the countries; and of plantation certificates for West-India commodities imported from Ireland into Great Britain.

An exception of corn, meal, malt, flour, and biscuits, from the free importation stipulated for the articles of the one country into the other; restrictions on these articles being deemed necessary to be allowed in time of scarcity, incidental to either country. A stipulation was likewise annexed to the proposition for a reduction of the duty in the kingdom where it was highest, to its amount in the kingdom where it was

lowest, provided such reduction should not bring it down below the rate of $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

An equalization in the two countries of duties and burthens on the imports from, and exports to, the British colonies in the West Indies and America, or settlements on the coast of Africa; and a like equalization on goods imported from the North-American states.

To these propositions, brought before Parliament in this amended form, a very violent opposition was made. A variety of objections were urged against those which related to foreign commerce, as well as those which regulated the mutual intercourse between the two countries. "The former, it was said, exposed this country to the danger of having the produce of her own colonies brought to her market through the medium of Ireland, which would thus reap the advantage of being the carrier for Great Britain if she did not

even import them on her own capital. In the last case, she would send her manufactures to the colonies cheaper than England, and by exchanging them for colony produce, undersell this country. That there was a farther and still greater danger from the smuggling of foreign colony produce from Ireland into great Britain, under colour of its being the growth or produce of British colonies. That by these propositions, we entrusted the execution of our navigation laws to Ireland, whose attention to their observance we could not expect, and whose encouragement to their violation there was reason to fear. That the guard we meant to provide for these laws in the new propositions, by which it was conditioned that the Irish Parliament should pass similar laws for Ireland to those which Great Britain should hereafter find it necessary to enact for the benefit of her marine, was a stipulation which the Irish would never agree to, as it would in fact

be a renunciation of that right to legislate for themselves, which they had so nobly struggled for and obtained. Against the other part of the propositions which regarded the interchange of commodities between the two countries, it was urged, that the cheapness of provisions, and low price of labour in Ireland, would give a decided advantage to that country in the sale of such commodities. That an emigration of our artisans and manufacturers was on these accounts a danger reasonably to be feared; and that by the encouragement which these propositions held forth to Ireland, we risked the existence of our manufactures, and that very great internal revenue which the state draws from their produce.

“ The compensation, it was argued, which Great Britain was to receive for the boons now granted to Ireland, was nugatory in the extreme. The hereditary revenue of that kingdom at present yielded

little more than one half of the sum now stipulated to be first appropriated to Ireland, after which Britain was only to receive the surplus. That this surplus, if ever it amounted to any thing, would be received by Great Britain in a manner adverse to the wise and salutary guards of her constitution, which granted money for the executive purposes of government only by way of temporary supply, and not for a permanent and independent period."

In vindication of this measure, and of its general tendency, it was argued, "that it was only a necessary supplement to those measures which had been formerly adopted for the purpose of more closely uniting and securing the connection between the two countries, so necessary towards the safety and prosperity of both. Parts of the same empire, Great Britain and Ireland were not to look on the growing prosperity of each other with the unfriendly aspect of foreign rivalship. Connected

as they were, it was not to be assumed that whatever one country gained was lost by the other ; on the contrary, the fair and equal extension of their industry and commerce would, in most cases, be the mutual advantage of both countries, and increase the separate wealth, population, and power, of each, as well as the aggregate belonging to both nations jointly, as forming the two great limbs of the British empire."

In the detail of the propositions, it was contended, " that most of the objections on the score of foreign commerce, and the intercourse of Ireland with the British colonies, were founded on inattention to the present situation of that kingdom in those particulars. Under the laws at present subsisting, Ireland could freely trade with every foreign state, supply them with her produce and manufactures, and bring home theirs in return. She had a similar privilege of a direct trade with the British co-

lonies, and could supply the British market with the produce of those colonies in Irish ships freighted immediately from the colonies to Great Britain. The only advantage, therefore, which Ireland was to derive from the present propositions in this respect was, that she could land colony cargoes in Ireland, and thence export to Britain the surplus which herself did not consume, for the chance of an eventual market there. It was not likely that, by this circuitous trade, she could undersell Great Britain in the British market; the only chance she had for an advantageous sale there was, the extravagant monopoly price which colony produce may sometimes bear in this country, of which the reduction is a measure expedient, as well as just, on the truest principles of policy and of commerce. That as to the danger of foreign colony produce being smuggled through Ireland into this country, besides that the risk would be run only for the

chance of the surplus of the Irish consumption, it was a double risk, first, against the provisions of the Irish, and next, against those of the British revenue laws, which was not near so likely a method for the smuggler to practise as that which at present was open to him, of smuggling articles from foreign colonies into our islands, and thence importing them under false certificates into this kingdom. That the objection, of these propositions trusting the execution of our navigation laws to Ireland, applied to the acts already passed in the 20th and 22d year of his present Majesty's reign, and yet that we had heard of no complaint of any hurtful relaxation of those laws by the Irish officers. To the objection, on the other hand, that Ireland could not be expected to consent to the adoption of our future regulations for the benefit of our marine, because that would be to allow our Parliament to legislate for Ireland, it was answered, that the very reference to the

Parliament of Ireland made in the proposition alluded to, was an acknowledgment of the independent legislation of that country ; but that the stipulation to adopt similar laws to those which this country should enact, was a condition necessary to the common safety and protection of the empire, which depended on the proper support of her naval force ; and that it was no more a dependent and absolute obligation on the Irish Parliament, than several of the other reciprocal obligations contained in this agreement, or than any stipulation by treaty between two absolutely independent states.”

In reply to the objections against the second part of the propositions, relating to the intercourse between the two countries, it was contended in general, “ that the nominal cheapness of labour, and the low price of many articles of provisions in one country, was amply compensated by the superiority of skill and of capital

in the other. That there was a distinction between the rate of wages and the rate of labour; and though the first might be lower in Ireland, yet, in fact, the last was rather cheaper in Britain, as had appeared from the evidence of a principal Irish manufacturer. That the removal of an established manufacture was everywhere a matter of the greatest difficulty; and that Ireland was in a situation by which that difficulty was exceedingly increased. That the duty of $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. was a fair protection for the home manufacture, because it was unwise in either country to apply its labour or its capital to any manufacture in which the other could undersell it with the burthen of $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. superadded to the necessary expence of carrying it to the market of the neighbouring kingdom. That of the articles at present prohibited from Ireland, or of which the importation is restrained by high duties, the principal are such as

England possesses great advantage in, from her having the raw material cheaper, or more at command; and that, with regard to the others, the equalizing duties in proportion to our excise on the manufacture, would fully protect us from any bad effects which might arise from their introduction into Britain.”

The compensation to Britain by an appropriation of the excess of the Irish hereditary revenue, beyond a given sum, to the support of the naval force of the empire, was defended from the charges made against it in both the points of view above stated. “It must from its very nature increase,” it was said, “in proportion to the prosperity of Ireland, which she was thus to recompense Great Britain for promoting. The permanent grant of it was a necessary exchange for the permanent benefits it compensated; and being subject to the application of Parliament, could never tend to that unconstitutional relaxa-

tion of the checks on the executive power, which was held forth by the opposers of the measure, as a danger to be apprehended from its appropriation."

Such were the principal arguments urged on either side, in a question equally delicate and momentous to both countries. After a discussion of several months, the propositions were assented to by a large majority of both Houses of the British Parliament; and a bill founded upon them was brought in, and read a first time before the close of the Session of 1785.

It remained to procure the assent of the Parliament of Ireland to those propositions now returned to them, with the amendments deemed necessary to secure an equality in the agreement to Great Britain. In the Parliament of Ireland, they were opposed as strenuously as they had been by the minority in that of Britain. The commercial mischiefs to be

apprehended from them to Ireland, were now argued as decidedly on that side of the water, as the disadvantages which they were to produce to the sister kingdom had been held forth on this. The pride of newly-acquired power rejected any thing which looked like an infringement on the national independence of Ireland. Great offence was taken at the supposed attempt to trench on the legislative authority of her Parliament; and the appropriation of the surplus of her hereditary revenue, low as it stood in the present period, was considered as equally derogatory to her dignity, and disadvantageous to her interest. The order for bringing in a bill for carrying the propositions into effect was carried by so small a majority, that the officers of the crown in Ireland did not think it proper to persist in a measure repugnant to the wishes of so considerable a part of the representatives of the people.

Such was the reception of those propositions in Ireland. It had been imagined by men, who had considered this subject with the calmness of philosophy and experience, that any measure which connected Ireland with a country so much more advanced in civilization, in arts, in commerce, and manufactures, as Great Britain, would be received with avidity. It is no part of the plan of this work to enter into an invidious detail of the circumstances which counteracted the natural influence of these considerations; from whatever causes they proceeded, it must be the deliberate judgment of history, that they obstructed a measure, the consequences of which would have been highly beneficial to Ireland, as well as to Great Britain.

Another measure adopted by the late Parliament, founded on the same liberal principle, but of a more fortunate issue

than the preceding, was the commercial treaty with France.

National prejudices, in conjunction with those of commerce, had hitherto shut the markets of France and England respectively against many of the commodities of the other. Between those countries there was a war of prohibitions and high duties, which, in most articles of their mutual consumption, threw the trade into the hands of smugglers. The publications of an author, in whose mind, beyond that of any writer of his time, was genius chastened by wisdom, and wisdom enlightened by knowledge, had changed in a great measure the opinions of mankind on the subject of commercial restrictions, and shown how much was to be gained by restoring to trade its natural freedom, by which the surplus commodities of one country could be fairly exchanged for those of another. France and England felt in a particular manner the justice of his doc-

trines; and it was an article in the peace of 1783, that the two countries should take measures for settling a commercial treaty between them.

In pursuance of this agreement, Mr Eden was dispatched to Paris in the beginning of the year 1786, to negotiate a treaty of navigation and commerce with France. That treaty was concluded on the 20th of September in that year. Particular notice was taken of it in his Majesty's speech on opening the session in January 1787; and it was soon after laid before Parliament, for the purpose of their taking such measures as might be necessary for carrying it into effect.

The provisions of this treaty were calculated to take off those restraints which the two countries had heretofore mutually imposed on their commercial intercourse with each other—to give to the subjects of either country that protection for their persons and properties which is dictated

by the liberal humanity of modern times—to establish a tariff to fix the rate of duties, which for the most part was not higher than 12 per cent., on the importation of those articles of the produce or manufacture of the respective kingdoms, which were most likely to be the leading objects of their commerce—to put on the footing of the most favoured nations the goods not particularised in that tariff—and to avoid, by stipulations of a friendly sort, the occasions of misunderstanding and quarrel, which might chance to arise in the navigation or commerce of either power with other countries.

In the discussion which this treaty met with in Parliament, considerable objection was made to it in a political view, as tending to throw Great Britain into the arms of France, and to blunt that wholesome jealousy which this country had always entertained of her rival nation. “ France, it was maintained, was the unalterable po-

litical enemy of Great Britain, and indeed the political enemy of the liberties of every state of Europe. Amidst the levity and mutability of her national manners, her cabinet had pursued an uniform invariable system of universal dominion. In this system she had been checked and baffled by the opposition of England, whose power had often rescued the liberties of Europe from the attacks of her restless ambition. It was unwise therefore to agree to any measures tending to abate our national distrust and jealousy of France, which had so often afforded a barrier against her encroachments on the liberty and independence of the nations around her."

In a commercial view, the treaty was opposed as a rash and unadvised alteration of a system, under which this country had attained a very high degree of eminence and prosperity. "The great advantages we possessed ought not, it

was argued, to be staked against the prospect of distant and speculative benefits. In our commercial intercourse with France, we are to take her produce which is exclusively hers, and in which, from soil and climate, we never can rival her. But in the articles of our manufactures, she has already made considerable progress, and in a little time will be able to enter into competition with this country. The tariff established between the two nations, would, it was observed, cause a great and immediate diminution of our revenue, by the lowering of the duties on the staple commodities of France, her wine and brandy, and the consequent abatement that must be made on the rum of our own colonies, and the wines of Spain and Portugal."

The danger to which this treaty with France exposed our commerce with other countries, and particularly with Portugal, was strongly urged by the members in op-

position. The importance of a rigid adherence to the Methuen treaty, was argued from the advantages which it afforded us in a great annual balance of trade in our favour, besides the acquisition of two millions of pounds of cotton, the raw material of one of our most valuable manufactures.

The arguments for the measure were drawn from the relative situation of the two countries, which pointed out, it was said, in the strongest manner, the advantages to be derived to both from a mutual exchange of their respective commodities. "By nature, France was much more richly endowed than Britain; but the equality of our laws, and the freedom of our government, gave to our enterprizes an energy, to our industry an animation, which fully balanced these advantages of soil and climate. France had her produce to send to Britain; Britain her manufactures to barter with France. Such interchange, it

was argued, was peculiarly favourable to Britain, who obtains a market of twenty-four millions of people in exchange for one of eight millions. France gained a market for her produce, which employed in its preparation but a few hands, gave little encouragement to the navigation, and comparatively but little increase to the revenue of the state. Britain opened a market for her manufacture, which employed in their immediate operation a great number of her people, and in their distant effects, the importation of raw materials and consumption of various commodities, paying internal duties, contributed most extensively both to the public force, and the public revenue.

“ In its political aspect, it was argued, the treaty promised that most essential advantage to both nations, the promotion of a friendly intercourse between them, and the removal of that sort of prescriptive animosity, which had been the cause

of so many wars, destructive alike to both countries. The doctrine of unalterable hostility between two nations was reprobated as the weakness of vulgar prejudice, neither founded on the experience of nations, nor the history of man. But even if this argument, implying a satire on our species, and a libel on political institutions, were allowed, the present treaty would not be affected by it. It gave up none of our political power to France; it weakened none of our national energy; it lessened none of our national revenues; on the contrary, as it increased our commerce, it necessarily added to both.

“ The danger of an interference with our commerce with other nations, it was said, was perfectly unfounded. The instance of Portugal, so much insisted on by the opposers of the treaty, did not in the smallest degree apply. Explicit provision was made for the fulfilment of our engagements with Portugal. The interests of that

country and Great Britain are reciprocal, and therefore it is to be presumed that the good sense of both countries will attend to them. But if there had appeared on the part of Portugal any inclination to deviate from the spirit of the Methuen treaty, the ministers of England would be more likely to obtain a fair and full execution of it, having this commercial arrangement with France in their hands, than they could expect to obtain without it.

“ The probable effects of this treaty on our revenue were argued as precisely opposite to those which the members in opposition predicted. When it was considered, that the present high duties on our French articles of consumption threw by much the greatest part of the trade in those articles into the hands of the smuggler, from which France drew all the benefit which she would do in a lawful importation, while we lost the whole pro-

duce of the duties due on such commodities, it was a well-warranted conclusion that our revenue would be increased, instead of being diminished, by the lowering of the duty on the articles specified." *

To the alleged danger to our manufactures a general answer was given, "that the manufacturers themselves, generally quick-sighted and attentive to their interests, had, on this occasion, acquiesced in the provisions of the treaty, and several of them had indeed signified their approbation of the measure, as one calculated to increase and encourage the industry of this country."

In one of the debates on this treaty in the House of Commons, Mr Burke expatiated, in that glowing language for which he is so conspicuous, on the advantages and influence of British capital. "The

* How this has turned out in experience, see afterwards under the subject of Finance.

powers of this capital," he observed, "were irresistible in trade: it domineered, it ruled, it tyrannized in the market: it enticed the strong, and controlled the weak." It could only be from party prepossession, that a mind so penetrating and comprehensive as that of Mr Burke, did not see how strong an argument this afforded for that extension of the sphere and operation of this capital, which was furnished by the treaty in question. His extravagant ingenuity suggested the danger arising from that sort of partnership, which an open commercial intercourse might give to France in the English capital; and attributed to the French councils the depth of such a design, for which they were content to allow to England some temporary advantage in the present commercial stipulations.

It was remarkable, that, in the debates on the French treaty, pointed reference was made by the minority to the Irish

propositions, and to the opinions of the manufacturers on that subject, from which they argued a similar danger to the British manufactures from the present measure, though the manufacturers themselves, tempted by the prospect of immediate advantage, had not come forward to state it. Administration, though they still contended that the objections against the Irish propositions were ill founded, endeavoured also to show the difference between the two cases, and to refute the analogy observed between them. That there were differences between the two cases, must be allowed. On one hand, the Irish were to receive some advantages, which the present treaty did not give to the French; and Great Britain had not, in the proposed intercourse with Ireland, the same prospect of an immediate and extensive market, as in that with France. On the other hand, her close connection with her sister kingdom placed her communication with that

country in a very different point of view ; the benefits to be derived by Ireland flowed not, as might be argued of those to France, in a rival or adverse channel, but would naturally tend to the general prosperity of the empire. But, to an impartial observer, the leading principles of both cases were the same; the extension of productive industry, and the intercourse of beneficial commerce between the two kingdoms. An impartial observer of the present time will argue from what are the effects of the French treaty to what would have been the effects of the Irish, the mutual advantage of both countries.

To the common eye, however, this mutual advantage is not always visible, and ancient prejudice does not easily give way to truths which contradict her habits of thinking, however demonstrative they may seem to wisdom or philosophy. It is, I believe, a fact pretty well known, that the cotton manufacturers of Normandy re-

monstrated with M. de Vergennes on the ruinous effects which the proposed commercial treaty with England would have on their establishments. That sagacious statesman replied, that if the stipulated duty of 12 per cent., added to the expences of transport on the English commodities, were not sufficient to protect those of Normandy, it was a proof either that industry was wanting to the success of the latter, or that their industry was misapplied to an improper object.

A measure coeval and connected with the commercial treaty, was the bill for the consolidation of the customs, excise, and stamp duties. The branches of those revenues, particularly of the customs, were composed of such a number of minute and complicated imposts, which had been laid on at different times, as the necessities of those periods required, that to compute the total aggregate of duty on any article, was a matter of much intricacy and dif-

difficulty, and no man who was not constantly employed in the practice was equal to it. This had thrown such computation and charge entirely into the hands of the officers of the revenue, on whom the merchants were, therefore, in a great measure, dependent for its accuracy; and from the same cause there was a sort of agency established in the former for the affairs of the latter, improper in their respective situations. The plan, therefore, which this bill adopted, was to abolish those various and complicated branches, and to substitute in their stead one single duty on each article, equal in its amount to the total of such branches. By a reference to this single charge in the tables containing the different articles of merchandize, the duty due on each was instantly ascertained, and all the inconvenience, difficulty, and delay, so long felt and complained of in such business, were removed. The public gained, on the whole, a small advantage by

this measure, as on most of the articles where a fraction was found in the total of the branches, the integer sum immediately above such fraction was adopted. This trifling addition was more than compensated to the trader, by the facility which it afforded in the transaction.

This measure was so obviously expedient, that all parties concurred in its approbation. To a man conversant in the subject of revenue regulations, it might perhaps suggest another, in some degree congenial to its spirit and tendency, a consolidation of the laws, as well as of the duties, of the various departments of the public revenue. These are now so numerous and so complicated, as to form one of the largest and most difficult parts of the national code; and from the various references with which each subsequent statute is loaded, an obscurity and perplexity attends them, often embarrassing to the officer, or oppressive to the trader in the

execution of their provisions. The task of reducing these into a system, and forming a revenue code, simple and uniform in its enactments, would indeed be a business of considerable difficulty, and might not meet with so favourable a reception as that just mentioned, from the different parties concerned in its effects. But it would certainly be a useful, and not an impracticable task, and might be performed under the auspices of a vigorous and popular administration.

Under the subject of commercial arrangements may be mentioned the regulations for the trade with America, which was one of the earliest proceedings of the Parliament of 1784 ; for this, in the new situation which the independence of America presented, it was necessary to provide in such a manner as to give to the trade of the country, and her still remaining colonies, every advantage which intercourse with the American states could produce,

yet so regulated as to increase the marine of Great Britain, and to draw to the parent state those benefits which she had formerly bestowed on provinces now severed from the empire. The regulations for these purposes were first provided for by orders in council, under authority of temporary acts of Parliament, and were afterwards, in 1788, settled by a permanent statute. These were an allowance of the immediate transportation of lumber (i. e. timber, barrel staves, and several other articles of the like nature, which are immediately necessary to the trade and manufacture of the West India islands) from America to our islands, but that importation confined to British ships navigated by British subjects. The direct exportation of sugar, and other articles of the produce of these islands, is allowed to America; but under the same condition of its being carried in British vessels, conformably to the salutary principle of our

navigation law. By these provisions, and the allowance of her bringing her produce to Great Britain in her own vessels, America has that degree of favour with this country, which it seems so expedient to allow her; while the restriction which is certainly the most useful, or, as some later political economists maintain, the only useful, restriction in our commercial system, is kept up in favour of the marine of this country. The anxious provisions of our law for the encouragement of our navigation, have been enforced by several statutes passed in this Parliament, containing regulations with regard to shipping, which seem to be formed on a very perfect knowledge of this great national object, without the severity which has been sometimes complained of in laws of that kind, as affecting the interests and embarrassing the transactions of fair and extensive commerce.

The commercial intercourse with America is an object of the first importance to Great Britain. America is now, and will probably for a considerable time remain, in such a situation, as affords an extensive market for the produce of British industry and manufacture. The natural fertility of the soil of most of the provinces of America, and the great quantity of unoccupied ground which these contain, will give to their industry and capital a natural tendency towards agriculture. It will be long before they will leave that first stage of labour for the more complicated business of manufacture, or the distant speculations of commerce. They will find in the manufactures of this country what the wants of such a situation require, for which their natural produce may be advantageously exchanged; and the increasing population, to which the agricultural state is peculiarly favourable, will increase the number of

consumers for those articles which the British artizan or merchant can afford them. To the British artizan or merchant they will naturally be directed, not only by the superiority of the articles which these can afford them, but by two circumstances which must always have a powerful effect in associating and connecting the two countries,—a common language, and a common religion. This amicable and mutually advantageous intercourse has already begun to heal that animosity, which rankled in the bosom of America from the recollection of the late unfortunate contest; and it is some compensation to this country, for the loss of honour and waste of treasure, with which that contest was attended.

To what extent the policy of those commercial regulations, of which the foregoing sketch has been given, has contributed to the present state of the trade of Great Britain, it may not be easy pre-

cisely to determine. That they have essentially contributed to it, is a conclusion which will naturally be drawn by the unprejudiced. The result, however, from whatever cause it may be held to arise, it is highly gratifying to state. It appears, from the latest and best authenticated accounts, that the increase of the trade and shipping of this country, since the conclusion of last war, has been greater than the most sanguine ideas could have reached. In the year 1783 there were cleared outwards from the various ports of the kingdom, of

British vessels,	-	7329
Foreign,	-	1544

In the last year of which an account has been taken, to wit, in 1790, the number was as follows:

British,	-	12,762
Foreign,	-	1,140

Of our imports and exports, during the

same period, the increase has been proportional.

In 1783, the value of our im-

ports was - - £.13,122,235

In 1790, - - 19,130,886

In 1783, our exports amount-

ed to - - 14,756,818

In 1790, to - - 20,120,121

It will not escape observation, that though the increase of either sufficiently marks the growing commerce of the state, yet the great augmentation of our export trade is a flattering proof of the thriving situation of our manufactures, and the demand which is made for them in foreign markets.

SECTION III.

FINANCE.

Commutation Act.—Reduction of Duty on Spirits.—Excise upon Wine and Tobacco.—Act for the Prevention of Smuggling.—Manifest Act for appointing Commissioners to audit the public Accounts.—Regulations respecting Revenue.—Additional Taxes.—Act for applying the Annual Million.—Comparative State of Revenue and Expenditure.

THERE is no department of public business to which the Parliament of 1784 paid a more unremitting or a more successful attention than that of Finance. A

report of a committee, instituted for the purpose of inquiring into the abuses of smuggling, was given in to the House of Commons before the close of the preceding Parliament; but the situation of affairs at that time was such as to suspend any measures for checking these abuses; they were consequently left to the active exertions of the succeeding Parliament. It will be satisfactory to the public to trace their effects.

The great articles on which the enormous frauds, reported by the committee, arose, were tea, spirits, wine, and tobacco. To these, therefore, it was necessary for Parliament to direct its particular attention. The two first were already subjected to every regulation and restraint which the mode of levying and securing duties by excise, provides against fraud. But in articles of general consumption, if the duties are high, the encouragement to

smuggle overbears the risk, at the same time that it sharpens ingenuity to defeat the provisions of the law. In such cases, the lessening that encouragement by a diminution of the duty, is the only means left to prevent smuggling.

With regard to the first of these articles, Tea, this object was endeavoured to be attained by the act of Parliament passed in 1784, known by the name of the Commutation Act. It was an experiment in finance which had been distantly proposed at various periods, and which the necessity of counteracting the alarming frauds reported by the committee, now induced the minister at the head of the treasury to bring forth for the sanction of Parliament. The quantity of tea annually smuggled into the kingdom, appeared, by the best founded calculations, to be not less than twelve or thirteen millions of pounds weight, double the quantity legally imported by the East

India Company. To take away from the smuggler the advantage under which this very great importation was made, the plan of the act was to lower the duties on tea to about one-fourth of their former amount. But as that would cause a defalcation of revenue of about 600,000*l.*, it was proposed to compensate this by an additional duty on houses and windows. The principle of the new tax, it was contended, was as nearly that of commutation, as it could be said to be in the case of any new duty on two different subjects; because, tea being now, by the habits of life, become a necessary of universal consumption, almost every person paying the new tax on windows, would be freed from an equal amount of the old tax on tea. This principle of commutation was warmly disputed by the members in opposition; tea being, as they contended, a luxury, which might or might not be consumed; but lodging and light being ne-

cessaries which could not be dispensed with. In some few instances this argument might hold; but in general it was certainly true, that the great body of the people received, in the abatement of the duty on the one article, at least an equivalent to the advance on the other. And even if the title Commutation should, strictly speaking, be denied it, the broad and general principle was founded in true political economy, that a tax by which a fraud was practised on the public revenue to so enormous an amount, and which tended so much to increase smuggling in other articles, was such as ought to be repealed, and a substitute as little oppressive as possible, and as fairly, universally, and equally leviabie, should be provided to replace it. The event justified the policy of the measure. The public has gained in point of revenue on this substituted tax, and the remaining duty on tea, about 60,000*l.* per annum; but its

operation has been infinitely more important in contributing to the general suppression of smuggling, and the great augmentation of other branches of the revenue; besides the extensive commercial advantage to the nation of importing directly for ourselves this very great article of our consumption, a large portion of which was before supplied through the channel of the smuggler, by foreign countries. The relief which this measure also afforded to the finances of the East-India Company, in which the nation is materially interested, is an additional proof of its wisdom and utility. *

* The increase of revenue arising from the Commutation Act, upon a comparison of the average produce of four years succeeding it, with the average produce of five years prior to it, is — £.79,907

But it is fair to deduct the sum by which the average produce of the old window duty fell short of its average produce prior to this act, — — 19,139

Increase, £.60,768

The same principle of taking away the temptation to smuggle, by lowering the duty on legal importation, was adopted on the article of Spirits.

The stipulation with regard to the brandies of France in the commercial treaty,

But the most important advantages which the public have derived from this act are as follow :

- 1st. The increase of British shipping, taken upon an average of the last five years, compared with five years immediately preceding the passing of this act, is 14,089 tons; some of this shipping was taken up at a high freight; but at the present freight, which is on an average 22l. per ton, the annual amount of the increase would be, — £.309,958
- 2dly. The total value of exports to China, from 1776 to 1783, was £.995,673
From 1784 to 1791, — 6,698,221
The amount of the value of the increase is, — — 5,702,548
Which, on an average, is annually 712,818
- The private trade has likewise much increased.
- 3dly. Since this act passed, being seven years and a half, there

lowered, of course, the duty on that article; but the object of effectually preventing smuggling, made it desirable to reduce the duty even lower than to the stipulated amount; and with the same view it was necessary to make a proportionate

has been sold 121,730,453 lbs.
of tea, which, duty included,
sold for ————— 21,058,497

The same quantity of tea, and of
the same quality, at the average
price of tea ten years prior
to the act, (including the duties,
would have amounted to 40,876,730

The conclusion from this is, that
there has been a saving to the
public upon the amount of what
the same quantity of tea would
have sold for at legal sales, if
the Commutation Act had not
passed, of ————— 19,818,233

The average upon seven years and
a half is ————— 2,642,430

And this gain is to be set against the charges
brought upon the public by the imposition of this
tax.

reduction on other species of foreign spiritous liquors. Yet so far was this reduction from having any effect prejudicial to the revenue, that, on the contrary, the duty on the article of spirits increased, after such reduction of its rate, to a very large amount. In 1786 the total net produce of the duty on foreign spirits was 713,376l.; whereas in 1790, that produce amounted to the sum of 1,082,264l.—an increase of no less a sum than 368,888l. Besides this gain to the revenue, the same sort of advantage as before observed on the commutation act, is in some measure produced by every fair trade, in opposition to a contraband one; that in the first, the national merchant profits, and the national seaman is employed; in the latter, the foreign or the outlaw smuggler derives the chief profit of the trade, and the capital centres in a foreign country.

In the two other articles, which have been before mentioned, of wine and to-

bacco, the effect of excise regulations, which appeared applicable to both, had never been tried. This experiment, with respect to wine, was made in the year 1786, and succeeded so well, that, notwithstanding the lowering of the duty in consequence of the commercial treaty with France, so considerably below its former rate, the total amount of revenue received for that article has annually increased; the average receipt for three years prior to the commercial treaty, and the excise regulations, having been 625,454l., and that for three years posterior to those events 714,010l., and in the year 1790, 804,167l.

The regulations of excise were likewise, in the year 1789, extended to the article of tobacco; and though the provisions of this bill have not yet been completely effectual, and tobacco is still one of the very few articles in which a contraband trade

continues to be carried on, the benefit nevertheless has already been extensive, and such as fully justifies the measure. The duty on tobacco on an average of three years, immediately previous to the commencement of this act, amounted to the sum of 505,708l., and the drawback 81,996l.; whereas the amount of duty in the year 1790 was 676,273l., while the drawback has increased only to 86,027l.

But the Parliament of 1784 was aware, that though the reduction of duty upon particular articles would effectually counteract the smuggler with respect to such articles, yet that smuggling prevailed to so alarming an extent, as to threaten the total ruin of the public revenue, if such measures were not taken as would effectually suppress the general practice of it. With this view a bill was introduced in the year 1784, for the better prevention of smuggling. The objects of which were, to extend the hovering laws, enabling the

officer to seize vessels employed in smuggling at a greater distance from the shore—to prohibit the building or navigation of vessels of a certain description, known to be those employed by the smuggler—to prevent vessels, when lawfully condemned, from being sold as they formerly had been, in a manner which enabled the smuggler to recover the possession of them—to suffer no vessel to be armed beyond a certain extent, without a license from the admiralty—to regulate the clearances of vessels of all descriptions—and to enlarge the powers of seizure, by authorizing revenue officers to seize vessels, having on board contraband commodities in packages of a smaller bulk than allowed by law.

These were the principal regulations of this bill; and its effect was to check, in a great measure, that branch of smuggling which at that time was carried on, in notorious defiance of the law, to a greater

degree than had ever before prevailed in this country.

To the same object the attention of Parliament was directed in passing the Manifest Bill in the year 1786. Frauds to a considerable extent were practised by the masters of such as were apparently regular trading vessels; to prevent which, the bill requires every master of a trading ship to produce the manifest of his cargo, containing every article of which it consists, and prohibits the importation of goods into Great Britain, without the production of such manifest. The act likewise makes some very important regulations to check the frauds practised in the exportation of goods entitled to drawback, or bounty—and gives to the commanders of his majesty's ships a power to seize vessels or goods subject to forfeiture.

It is impossible to ascertain what precise effect these acts have had in the in-

crease of our revenue; but it is well known, that they have answered the purposes aimed at by the legislature; and it is probable that a great part of the increase arises from their beneficial effects.

Besides these measures, which were directed to the improvement of the permanent revenue, an equal attention was shewn to other objects connected with general principles of economy, and tending to give the public the benefit of other resources, which might be applied in aid of the annual taxes to meet the necessary expences.

It is now scarcely credible, that, prior to the year 1785, the public accounts of the kingdom were passed in either of the offices of the auditors of the imprest, who acted by deputy, and this single person decided on the particulars of the account. Without any reflection upon the character of whoever might be in such a situation, the impropriety of accounts between

government and individuals, in which millions were frequently to be decided upon, being examined in this manner, must strike every one who considers the subject, where large balances remained due to government—many accounts were unsettled, and, perhaps, others passed without the necessary investigation which accounts of this importance required. The act of 1785 appointed five commissioners for the purpose of examining and auditing the public accounts of the kingdom, and invested them with all the powers necessary to render their appointment efficient.

The benefit the country has derived from the appointment of these commissioners, in the regularity of examining and passing the public accounts, and in recovering large sums due to the public, which have been paid in consequence of the steps taken by them for that purpose, is the best encomium upon the measure itself, and upon those commissioners who have so

faithfully and diligently carried it into effect.

The same disinterested principle which has governed every proceeding of the present administration respecting matters of revenue, is observable in the mode of making loans and conducting lotteries. Formerly the necessity of the public, to avail itself of these means of raising money, was made an engine of corruption; and loans, lotteries, and contracts, were formed, not with a view to the public service, but for the emolument of the individual to whom they were given. The mode adopted during the period included in this work, has been that of receiving public proposals, and accepting the offer which is most advantageous in its turn; the theory of reform is always popular, but it is seldom that, in a government constituted like ours, there is public virtue enough in the minister to bring reform into action, and abridge his own patronage.

Though the regulations above referred to have answered the purposes for which they were made, and proved highly beneficial to the public, it was obvious at the very beginning of this period, that the effect of regulation alone could not render the revenue equal to the expences which had been entailed on the country by the effects of the war; it became therefore an indispensable duty to find productive taxes to such an amount as, added to the benefit derived from these regulations, might render the income equal to the expenditure, and ensure a surplus applicable to the reduction of debt. It is no small proof of the perseverance of the legislature, and the resources of the country, that productive taxes, to an amount exceeding one million annually, were imposed in the course of the last Parliament; and that although every resource had been supposed to be previously exhausted, they neither interfered with other branches of

the revenue, or checked the commerce of the country; both of which, on the contrary, have increased with unusual rapidity.

While Parliament was thus successfully employed in rendering the public revenue more effectual, it was proper, at the same time, to take measures for applying that revenue in a direction most profitable to the state. By the report of a committee appointed in 1786, the probable surplus of the public income, after paying the interest of the national debt, and providing for the various establishments, was calculated at 90,000*l.* per annum. To this was added 100,000*l.* levied by a part of the additional taxes before referred to; the amount of both was vested in commissioners, to be appropriated to the extinction of the national public debt, by the purchase of stock, on behalf of the public. The effects of this operation, acting, as it does, with a progressive increase,

are beyond what a slight view of the subject would lead one to suppose. The sum paid off at the 1st of February, 1791, was 6,772,350l.; the interest on which amounting to 203,170l., together with 51,634l. of expired annuities, amounting in the whole to the sum of 254,804l., are, according to the tenor of the plan, added to the annual million for the reduction of the national debt, and increase at compound interest in favour of the public.

The appropriation of this million is a trust for posterity, and never should be infringed. For contingencies beyond the ordinary and established expence of the nation, the most manly, as well as the most economical mode of provision, is by raising the capital of the sum laid out within a short determinate space of time. Of this an example was shewn, in the last session of Parliament, on occasion of providing for the expences incurred in our dispute with Spain. These expences a-

mounted to a sum of about 3,000,000l. Temporary and productive taxes were provided to the amount of 800,000l. per annum; part of which were to remain till a large portion of this debt was extinguished, and the remainder till the whole should be completely discharged, which would be effected in about four years. Except some unforeseen event shall arise, for which the nation cannot provide in this manner, there will be nothing to counteract the rapid effect which the appropriation of the surplus revenue must produce in no very distant period, towards relieving the country from a large proportion of its heavy incumbrances.

It will be a subject of just satisfaction and triumph, to every one who feels for his country, to recapitulate the advantages which have been produced within the period of this statement, partly by the measures now detailed, and still more by the natural effects of peace, and the continu-

ally increasing exertions of national industry. Few instances occur in history, of so rapid and unexpected an improvement in the situation of public affairs ; and the change becomes more striking, from having immediately followed a period, equally remarkable for as sudden a transition from a state of opulence and prosperity to weakness and distress. A war which was productive of nothing but calamity, and which terminated by the separation of thirteen flourishing provinces from the empire, had, in the course of seven years of fruitless contest, added above one hundred millions to the capital of the national debt. The taxes imposed to defray the interest of this sum, had fallen short of the total amount of the interest actually incurred during that period, by much more than two millions. They left, at the conclusion of the war, an annual deficiency in those funds only, of near 400,000*l*. The rest of the revenue, destined in times of peace to pay the in-

terest of debt previously contracted, or to support the ordinary establishments, had in the mean time declined; and the whole of the annual revenue, including the produce both of the taxes subsisting before the war, and those imposed in the course of it, amounted, at the end of 1783, only to about one million six hundred thousand pounds more than in 1776, though a debt had been incurred in the same period, either funded, or remaining to be funded, the whole interest of which would occasion an addition to the annual, and (as it was then thought) the perpetual charge on the public, of a little less than five millions.* The total of the permanent annual charges on the aggregate fund, including the civil list, and the addition of the interest of exchequer bills, as they stood at that period, was 10,600,000l., and the total of the an-

* The total amount of interest on the national debt, at the end of the year 1776, was 4,575,000l., and in 1786, 9,273,000l.

nual revenue arising from the permanent taxes was about 10,200,000l.

In addition to this deficiency, there remained the whole burden of providing for the annual expences of the army, the navy, the ordnance, the charges for the plantations, and the other necessary services, the amount of which could not be calculated at less than 4,000,000l. To meet these charges, the only remaining resource, without recurring to fresh taxes, was the annual vote of the land and malt, which is nominally estimated at 2,750,000l., but which in fact produces about 2,550,000l. The melancholy result of the whole was, that there existed a deficiency of the actual amount of the revenue below the annual expenditure, on the lowest estimate, of above 1,800,000l.

Some relief was undoubtedly, under any circumstances, to be expected from the return of peace; but it seemed less to be relied upon at this period than at any which

had before occurred. Besides the difficulties already mentioned, the public credit (which is the centre on which every thing turns, where a large debt has once been created) had sunk even more than the public revenue.

The price of annuities, at an interest of 3 per cent., which, in times of prosperity, had frequently been above par, and seldom lower than 90, had, at the conclusion of the year 1783, or the beginning of 1784, fallen to 55. This depression of credit had swallowed up and annihilated, for the time, almost half the value of the funded property of the kingdom. The price of lands had sunk from the same causes, though, perhaps, not in an equal degree.

The universal difficulty of obtaining money, and the actual scarcity both of specie and of bullion, had every where checked circulation. There appeared (as it were) a general stagnation in all the exertions of the country; clandestine and illicit trade was the only one which was

prosecuted with vigour; and the enterprise and industry, which had formerly contributed to the wealth of the nation, seemed to be flowing into channels, where it could only operate to complete the corruption of its morals, and the ruin of its revenue.

Under these calamitous circumstances, even the spirit of the nation was broken; the feeling and temper of people, of all descriptions, resembled the dismay of an army, which had sustained some unexpected and disgraceful defeat; when, unless means can be found to revive their courage, and inspire them with fresh confidence in themselves, they will never again be led to victory, and to glory. Everything depended upon the influence of opinion; but to remove the despondency, and to raise the hopes of the nation, seemed a task as difficult as to retrieve its credit, and to repair its resources. If it were practicable at all, it was thought to require an union of all the talents, and all the efforts of the different parties in the state. But

here unfortunately the danger was still increased; instead of either an union in the public cause, or a generous emulation and rivalry in support of the public interest, the nation was torn and distracted by the utmost violence of faction, which for a time suspended the functions of executive government, and even threatened the extremes of anarchy and confusion.

At length, however, the storm subsided, and as soon as there was the appearance of a settled government, an attempt was made, (under all the discouragements which have been stated,) the success or failure of which would be decisive on our future situation. The immense load of unfunded debt which had accumulated during the war, pressed more than any other circumstance on the credit of the country; its amount proved near 30,000,000*l*; yet large as this sum is, the effect of it operated in a still higher proportion, from its being neither liquidated, nor ascertained.

In the beginning of the new Parliament, measures were taken for funding the whole of this debt, and for providing efficient taxes to defray the charge which it would occasion. This alone was a pledge and earnest to the world, of a disposition to encounter all the difficulties of the situation, and to endeavour at least to equalize the public income to its expenditure. A single step of this nature went far to dissipate the gloom which then hung over the country. Men began to recollect themselves, to entertain truer notions of the extent of our resources, and to remember the first duty of good citizens, “ never to despair of the republic.”

The succeeding exertions of the country, and the measures taken for the improvement of the revenue, enabled Parliament, as early as the year 1786, after making good the deficiencies before stated, and allotting a sufficient provision for other necessary public expences, to ensure

(in the manner already stated) the appropriation of a million annually, at compound interest, to the discharge of the national debt. The commercial treaty with France succeeded, which put an end to a suspense unfavourable both to trade and revenue; and by opening to us an additional and extensive market on favourable terms, gave a new scope and a fresh incentive to the spirit of industry and commerce.

After these two events, the tide was completely turned, and its course ever since has been uniform and rapid.

Our revenue has been gradually rising, and in the last year has exceeded the amount of the year 1783 by nearly four millions sterling. About one million of this sum seems to have arisen, as has been already stated, from the imposition of additional and productive taxes; nearly an equal proportion has accrued on those articles which have been enumerated as

the subject of specific regulations ; the remainder proceeds from a cause still more satisfactory, a gradual augmentation diffused over almost every branch of the revenue, which can only be ascribed to the increased consumption and the increased wealth of the empire.

We have already seen, that a corresponding improvement has taken place in the state of our trade, which both furnishes an explanation of the great source of our advantages, and gives us just ground to expect their continuance. In the mean time, near seven millions of the capital of our debt have been discharged ; a sum larger than has ever been paid off in the longest interval of peace, since the commencement of the century. The sinking fund, now applicable annually to the discharge of debt, has already grown to about one million three hundred thousand pounds.

The rise in the value of the stocks seems

to open the prospect of a reduction of interest on those funds which are redeemable ; and if we were to look beyond the period to which this work is confined, we should perhaps find the prospect still brightening. . We may even be allowed to hope, that the moment is not distant, which may complete the contrast with our former distresses, and when, instead of increasing incumbrances, and impaired resources, we may find our revenue sufficient to accelerate the reduction of the national debt, and, at the same time, diminish in some degree the burthen of the taxes now levied upon the people.

SECTION IV.

*Interference of Great Britain in the Settlement
of the Affairs of Holland.*

THE internal arrangements of revenue and finance, though not interrupted in system, were somewhat abated in their effects, by accidental occurrences in foreign politics, which obliged Great Britain to interpose in the situation of countries materially connected with our own. It requires but little sagacity to pronounce, that the pacific system, now generally allowed to be for the interest of every country, is peculiarly for the interest of Great Britain. But to preserve peace, it is necessary to maintain the dignity of a nation

unimpaired ; to make her friendship valuable, and her resentment, when unavoidably roused to just resentment, formidable to other nations. It is with states as with individuals ; their independence and their power procure them friends and allies. The last unfortunate war had left us without an ally ; France had, by mutual advantages, drawn closer the ties of the family compact with Spain ; and she directed almost at will the councils of Holland. That country, with which, for more than a century before, Great Britain had been connected by numberless engagements, had, for some time past, been devoted to the interests of her rival power, who, seeing the importance of the acquisition, had, with unceasing policy, and at an enormous expence, prosecuted and attained the object of gaining an entire ascendancy in the Dutch government.

The disturbances which, during the year 1786, and for some time preceding,

had prevailed in the various provinces of the republic, were at last, by the violence of the anti-stadtholderian party, brought, in the spring of the succeeding year, to the issue of an armed contest. The mediation of France and Prussia had only produced, in its failure, that fresh and redoubled animosity, which always attends a fruitless endeavour at conciliation. The province of Holland adopted resolutions subversive of the union of the states, and in direct violation of the constitution of the republic; those resolutions it prepared to enforce by an army recruited with French soldiers, and assisted in its operations by French officers. A civil war had actually begun in the province of Utrecht; and in another quarter, the city of Amsterdam experienced a scene of confusion and horror, little short of the sack and devastation of a victorious and unrestrained soldiery.

In the progress of those violent mea-

asures, which the enemies of the stadtholder pursued, they committed a personal outrage on the princess of Orange, which roused the resentment, and justified the immediate interposition of her brother the king of Prussia. They refused the satisfaction which that monarch demanded for the insult offered to his sister, with an obstinacy and a confidence, inspired not less by the hopes of foreign succour, than by the strength of their party in the republic. The consequent measures of the court of Berlin are sufficiently known. They were taken with a promptitude and a decision which they could scarcely have possessed, without a reliance on that cooperation which Great Britain had resolved to afford in rescuing the constitution and rights of the united provinces from the tyranny of a faction as hostile to the interests of this country, as to the established government of its own. The court of France was too sensible of the im-

portance of maintaining its influence in the republic, easily to acquiesce in the defeat of that party by whose means that influence had been so long supported. Its resolution to interfere in support of that party, was notified to the court of Great Britain about the same time that the answer by the states of Holland, refusing the satisfaction which the king of Prussia demanded, was delivered to his ambassador. This was one of those critical junctures, in which firmness of councils and vigour of exertion were able to obtain an object of the greatest importance to the future political interests of this country. The immediate equipment of a formidable fleet, the increase of our own military force, and the subsidiary treaty with the landgrave of Hesse Cassel for a body of auxiliaries, put this country in a condition effectually to counteract the interposition of France on the opposite side. The suddenness and expedition of the prepa-

rations in this country, which actually took place within three days of the notification from France, and almost at the same moment that the Prussian troops were entering Holland, added not a little to the effect of the measure. This decisive conduct, so much beyond the energy she had lately found in the operations of this country, France appears not to have been prepared for; and at that juncture, pressed by the embarrassed situation of her finances, she was unable to withstand it. Awed by the firmness of the British councils, and the instant and formidable exertions of her national strength, she gave up the Dutch republicans to their fate; the stadtholder enjoyed the full fruits of the Duke of Brunswick's ably-conducted and highly-successful expedition, and was reinstated in the fullest powers which his family had ever held since the union of the provinces. In so short a space of time, and from the promp-

titude with which government took advantage of circumstances proceeding from causes in themselves inconsiderable, was that ascendancy which France had so long held in the administration of Holland, overthrown, and Great Britain freed from those dangers which the soundest of her politicians had often predicted from its effects.

When this business was laid before Parliament, the manner in which it had been conducted on the part of this country, received the approbation of all parties. The leaders of opposition, while they gave that approbation with a very laudable frankness and candour, remarked the wisdom, now proved by recent events, of that jealousy of France, which they had formerly recommended. In point of political forecast, they now ventured to recommend that system of continental alliance, without which Britain must be left, as was her misfortune in the last war, insulated and

friendless, amidst a combination of enemies ; that system which, tending to preserve the balance of power in Europe, gives the best assurance for its tranquillity, and is so essential to the interests and safety of Great Britain.

“ This system,” said Mr Fox, “ which has sometimes been called romantic, is a serious system, and such as it is the interest of this country to be governed by ; a system founded on that sound and solid political maxim, that Great Britain ought to look to the situation of affairs upon the Continent, and take such measures upon every change of circumstances abroad, as shall best tend to preserve the balance of power in Europe.” Upon that maxim, he said, he had founded all his political conduct ; and, convinced as he was of its justness, he should continue to adhere to it.

Mr Burke declared, “ that he highly approved of the system of measures pur-

sued with respect to Holland, and the renewal of continental connections. That was the system on which alone the country could expect to stand with safety and honour. It was during our adherence to that system, that Great Britain had been a glorious country, the object of the admiration of other countries. The subsidiary treaty with Hesse, as a single, unconnected measure, he must disapprove; because, by continuing our guarantee to that prince, we might be involved in a war on his account; but, as part of a system comprehending Prussia and Holland, it was a wise measure, and as such it should have his suffrage."

The expediency of this system of continental connections might occur to minds less enlightened than those of Mr Fox and Mr Burke. But the national prejudices of this country are against it. In every country the bulk of the people look not to distant events, nor will easily consent

to make provision for them at the expence of present inconvenience. If at any time the tide of this prejudice should run against the measures of government, it were perhaps more virtue than we are entitled to look for in a statesman, to contradict that prejudice in favour of a rival. System will probably then be forgotten, or that system only remembered which is paramount to every other, the system of party.

One of the most immediate advantages, though imperfectly known at the time, which Great Britain derived from this successful interference in the affairs of Holland, was the safety of our East-Indian settlements, on which the French party in Holland had meditated a very serious attack, in conjunction with France, and Tippoo Saib, who had lately succeeded his father, the celebrated Hyder Ali, in the sovereignty of Mysore.

Absolute sovereign, though under an usurped title, of an extensive and popu-

lous empire, the force of which is concentrated for attack, while itself is defended by a barrier of almost impassable mountains; with a restless and unbounded ambition, supported by great abilities, and unrestrained by good faith or principle; with that command over the minds of his followers, which is naturally inspired by his own talents, and which receives additional weight from the celebrity of his father's name; with an hatred, like that of Hannibal to Rome, hereditary and inveterate against the English nation; with an army regularly established, trained by the discipline, and assisted by the presence, of a considerable number of French officers and soldiers—Tippoo Saib is by much the most formidable enemy which Great Britain has to fear in Asia. With him, as with his father, France had been at great pains to connect herself. With him, in conjunction with the Mahrattas and the Soubah of the Decan, it is under-

stood that France, and Holland, under the influence of France, proposed to enter into an alliance offensive and defensive, against the British power in India. And there is great reason to suspect, that measures had been actually concerted for speedily carrying the scheme into execution.

The Dutch revolution, (if that term can be applied to the restoration of the constitutional government of the United Provinces,) joined to the embarrassed situation of France, which indeed was one great cause of the events in Holland, destroyed this dangerous combination. It did not, however, extinguish the restless and ambitious views of Tippoo, who, unsupported by any European power, has engaged in measures of aggression against an old and faithful ally of the British nation in India, under circumstances which will probably lead him to repent the folly and presumption of the attempt.

SECTION V.

Dispute with Spain.

ANOTHER dispute, which threatened to interrupt the tranquillity which Great Britain was so much interested to preserve, was that which arose with Spain, on the seizure of some British vessels at Nootka Sound, on the north-western coast of America. One of the last great public acts of the late Parliament, was to give its firm and decided sanction to the measures which his Majesty thought it adviseable to take, for maintaining the national honour, and protecting the national interests, against

the violence which had been offered to both.

The first intelligence of this event came through the channel of Spain itself. At the same time that it transmitted an account of the seizure of one of the ships in question, the court of Spain justified the detention of the vessel, on the ground that the trade and intended settlement at Nootka, which was the object of the voyage, were a direct violation of the right of the court of Spain to those territories, founded, as it was said, on original discovery, recognised by solemn treaties, and confirmed by immemorial possession; it even assumed, from these premises, the language of complaint against the subjects of this country, for an infringement of the rights of the Spanish empire, which it prayed his Britannic Majesty to prevent in future. At the same time, it signified an approbation of the governor of Mexico's conduct in releasing, as it was said he had

done, the vessel and crew which had been seized at Nootka, on the ground that nothing but ignorance of the rights of Spain could have induced the subject of any nation to resort to that coast, with the idea of making an establishment, or carrying on commerce there.

The extravagance of those pretensions, and the avowed act of injustice and violence to which they had in the present instance given rise, were of themselves sufficient to alarm the ministers of this country; but the arrival of Captain Meares, one of the owners of the vessels seized at Nootka, and the narrative given by him of the transaction, shewed the conduct of the Spaniards to have been even of a more hostile kind than the former intelligence had given any reason to suppose. From his relation it appeared, that, in consequence of a previous trade opened with the north-western coast of America, under the patronage of the governor-general

of India, he had, in conjunction with other British merchants, fitted out two vessels, with which he arrived at Nootka, in May 1788; purchased some ground from the natives for the purpose of a settlement; and had actually built a house, and hoisted the British colours. That in the following year two other vessels were sent by this associated company, with artificers of various kinds, and other persons intended as settlers at this part of Nootka. That after these vessels had been some time there, and one of them had been dispatched on discoveries to the adjoining coasts, a Spanish sloop of war appeared in that quarter, whose commander, after some mutual civilities which had been employed on his part to disguise the hostility of his design, seized the British vessels, and made the captain and crews prisoners, whom he treated with a wanton insolence and cruelty which not even an actual state of war would have justified, on the humane

and liberal principles of modern times. Accounts were at the same time received of certain warlike preparations of the Spanish court, which seemed to indicate her resolutions to support the pretensions of her sovereignty, if not to vindicate the acts of her officers.

In this posture of affairs, it became the duty of administration to take immediate measures for placing the country in a situation to enforce her demands of justice, if the court of Spain should refuse that satisfaction which this insult on the flag, this outrage against the subjects of Great Britain, required.

Notice of the business in agitation was sent to the different consuls in Spain; and on the 4th of May, a general and very effectual press took place. It was by this incident that the public were first led to the knowledge of any dispute between the two courts; a secrecy of a very uncommon, but highly useful kind, having hi-

thereto covered this transaction from the eye of every person except those whose confidential situation made them necessarily acquainted with its progress.

On the 5th of May a message from his majesty was delivered to both Houses of Parliament, informing them of the seizure of the vessels at Nootka Sound; the demand made by his majesty for an adequate satisfaction, which had not yet been made or offered, and the claim asserted by Spain to an exclusive sovereignty and commerce in that part of the world. That his majesty had instructed his minister at Madrid to make a fresh representation on the subject; but having in the mean time received information of considerable armaments in the ports of Spain, “ he had judged it indispensably necessary to make such preparations as might put it in his power to act with vigour and effect in support of the honour of his crown, and the interests of his people; and expressed

his firm reliance on the support of Parliament in taking such measures as might be eventually necessary for that purpose."

The answer was such as might be expected from a British Parliament on such an occasion. If limited monarchies sometimes want that prompt and speedy exertion, of which absolute governments are susceptible, they possess, on the other hand, that warm, that vigorous impulse, which the sentiment of a free country inspires, when satisfied of the justice of the cause which it is called to support. The answer of Parliament was unanimous and cordial; the feelings of the nation were in unison with the voice of its representatives, who expressed their determination "to concur with his majesty in the most zealous and effectual manner, in such measures as may become requisite for maintaining the dignity of his majesty's crown, and the essential interest of his dominions."

Fortified with this resolution of Parliament, and the congenial spirit of the people, administration continued their warlike preparations with such earnest and effective dispatch, that in the short space of about two months, a fleet of between fifty and sixty ships of the line was ready for sea. Nor did they seem wanting in foresight of future events, any more than in application to the present emergency. In America and the West Indies, it is understood, they had prepared the different governors for the possible event of a Spanish war, in such a manner as to prevent any danger of an unlooked-for attack in that quarter, where Spain might naturally be supposed most in condition to meditate such an attempt; and though the particular projects of the war were studiously concealed, the preparations made sufficiently shewed, that it was the intention to carry on the most vigorous operations in the southern hemisphere.

One of the most immediate objects of attention in the British government, and one which was attended with the most pleasing success, was the application to Holland for its assistance on this occasion, in virtue of the late alliance with the republic. The friendship of Holland was not only unequivocally declared, but its assistance was given with an alacrity and an activity which have not been often exemplified in the exertions of a country so constituted as that of the United Provinces. A Dutch fleet sailed to Portsmouth early in the month of July, and provision was made for a speedy reinforcement to this squadron if the exigency of affairs should require it. Assurances are also known to have been received from Prussia, of a readiness to furnish its stipulated succours, in any manner in which they could most contribute to the success and the exertions of this country.

These were the first fruits of that alliance, which our interposition in the affairs of the republic in 1787 had produced between Great Britain, Prussia, and Holland, and shewed the policy of a system, which attached to us one of the first military, and one of the first naval powers in Europe.

The formidable preparations which Britain was so soon enabled to complete; the zeal and ardour of the nation; the firmness of its councils, aided also by the particular situation of France, and its equivocal language on the subject of the Family Compact, induced the court of Spain, after some months of explanation and delay, to abate that lofty and unbending deportment which she had held on the first outset of this business. On the 24th of July, 1790, a declaration and counter-declaration was executed at Madrid between the ministers of Britain and Spain, by which the latter agreed to that satis-

faction for the injury committed, restitution of the vessels seized, and indemnification to their owners, on which the former had uniformly insisted as a preliminary step to every other adjustment of the present dispute, or arrangement for preventing such disputes in future. The accomplishment of such future arrangement was an object which it was highly important for Britain to obtain; and which, in the discussion of this affair in Parliament consequent on the king's message, had been mentioned by all parties as a measure which the present circumstances of the two courts afforded the best occasion to enforce. This was the subject of a negociation, which from its nature must have been of considerable difficulty, and which was not finally settled till the 24th of October. On that day a convention was entered into at Madrid, between the ministers of Great Britain and Spain, in behalf of their respective courts, by which, in addition to

the restoration of the property whereof the British subjects had been dispossessed at Nootka, and an adequate compensation for their losses, which had before been stipulated, the important concession of our equal right of navigation and fishery in the Pacific Ocean or South Seas, and of landing on the coasts unoccupied by the Spaniards, for the purpose of commerce with the natives, or of making settlements on such unoccupied places, was obtained for the subjects of this country. Amicable provisions were also made for a friendly intercourse of trade between the two nations on the north-western coast of America, and the adjacent islands; and for the prevention of any hostile or violent measures between their respective subjects in those distant regions.

The issue of this business was flattering to Great Britain. The resources and force of the empire were proved and exerted; and that power and dignity which the

misfortunes of the last war had been supposed so much to abate, were now restored to this country, and employed with a moderation, and at the same time with a firmness and an effect, which tended alike to exalt the national character, and to secure the public tranquillity.

SECTION VI.

Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

Two public measures of considerable importance, which have not yet been adverted to, were brought forward in this Parliament, and both of them were supported by a respectable part of the representative body, and of the people at large—I mean a motion for a Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and an enquiry on which to found a bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

Of these, although the first was rejected by the last Parliament, and the second has since been rejected in the present, it

seems proper, in this historical review, to take some notice, because they agitated at the time, and still continue to agitate, the opinions and the feelings of the public.

A petition of the dissenters, praying for a repeal of the acts above mentioned, was first presented to the House of Commons on the 28th of March, 1787, by Mr Beaufoy, and supported by Mr Fox, and several other very respectable members of the House.

In support of the petition it was argued, "That every man has a right to judge for himself in religious matters; nor ought his exercise of that right to be branded with a mark of infamy, such as the exclusion from offices and trusts, which is part of the punishment inflicted by the law on several infamous crimes. That it was disgraceful to a country so enlightened as England to retain, in the present mild and liberal times, so much intolerance

and persecution. That opinion merely, ought not to be at all subject to public cognizance, which should only be applied to men's actions. That, in fact, there is no test of civil opinion; for a man may hold opinions averse to every principle of the constitution, and yet attain the highest situations in the state.

“ The indecency and impiety of applying a sacred rite of religion, the sacrament of our Lord's Supper, to secular and political purposes, was warmly urged. That this kind of test is as inefficacious as indecent; because persons compelled by necessity, or allured by interest, may take the sacrament after the manner of the church of England, without supposing themselves by that compliance to declare their approbation of the form or constitution of the church; and Papists, against whom only, and not the Protestant dissenters, the test act was originally intended to operate, may, exclusive of the general

dispensation of their church, take this test, without conceiving it to bind their consciences; as many of them hold the Protestant church to be no church, its ministers no ministers, and its sacrament no sacrament.

“ The church of England, it was said, is secured in her doctrines, her discipline, and her privileges, without the test act, and its repeal would render more easy, as well as more pure, the exercise of one of the most sacred functions of her ministers, who, as the law now stands, cannot, without being subject to an action for damages, refuse the sacrament to any person who wishes to qualify himself for an office; and yet, by the solemn injunctions of the church, are charged not to administer it to blasphemers, adulterers, and others, in a state unworthy of receiving it.

“ The dissenters, said the friends of the motion, ask nothing derogatory to the es-

tablished religion of the country, or in the smallest degree trenching on her prerogatives; it is only a civil equality they sue for; a relief from those unjust and grievous disabilities which the present laws impose on them; incapacity of any civil or military appointment, of trust or office in any community or corporation, even though they should have established it by their industry, or endowed it by their benevolence; and, in case of holding any office without having submitted to this test, a proscription so cruel as the being legally incapable of maintaining any action at law, or suit in equity, of being a guardian, an executor, or even receiving a legacy.

“ In foreign countries, amidst all their religious bigotry, there is no exclusion by a religious test from civil or military appointments; the Episcopalians in Scotland, who are dissenters from the church established there, are subject to no such

test; in Ireland the dissenters obtained, in 1779, the repeal now solicited here; in none of those countries are any ill effects found to result from the want of this pretended guard to the religious establishment.

“ The dissenters, though incapacitated for the meanest office, are yet eligible to Parliament; so inconsistent, as well as unjust, are the exclusions against them. The advocates for such exclusion are reduced to the absurdity of confiding their religious interests to dissenting legislators, who, if they had the inclination, might possess the power of altering the church establishment; and yet of maintaining, that it is dangerous to trust dissenters with offices and appointments, which confer, in that respect, no power or influence whatsoever.

“ The impolicy of those statutes, it was insisted, was equal to their injustice; they separate and alienate from the general in-

terests of the state a large and respectable body of the citizens. Take away, it was said, this odious line of separation, and the dissenters will be mingled with their fellow subjects, and all distinction of a religious party will be for ever abolished and forgotten."

The prayer of this petition, and the motion in consequence of it, were opposed, among others, by the chancellor of the exchequer, and by Lord North, who, though he had a little while before had the misfortune to lose his eyesight, came down now, for the first time, to the House, to oppose a measure which he conceived so alarming to the safety and welfare of the country.

"The question, it was argued by the opposers of the repeal, when stripped of those colours in which eloquence and abstract arguments of natural equity might dress it, was simply this:—Ought we to relinquish, at once, those provisions which

had been adopted, by the wisdom of our ancestors, as a bulwark to the national church, of which the constitution and the safety were so intimately connected and interwoven with those of the state?

“ The reasonableness of toleration was not disputed; but it is not toleration, it was said, that is asked by the dissenters, but equality; the free exercise of their own mode of worship is not denied them; but it is to those only who follow the worship of the established church, that the constitution has thought proper to entrust the enjoyment of offices and appointments, with the administration of which the safety both of church and state is connected.

“ Restrictions applying to offices, which are objects of favour and of trust, must never be considered as an infringement on liberty. There are many instances of certain rights being confined to certain orders and qualifications of men; but the

title of the state to make such restrictions has never been called in question.

“ If actions only, and not opinions or tenets, were to be matter of public cognizance or provision, there would be an end of all that preventive wisdom which guards the avenues of danger to the community. In fact and experience, the test laws have been the bulwark by which the constitution has been saved. But for them, the family of Stuart might now have held the throne on its own despotic terms, and no constitution had been left us to value or to defend.

“ If an establishment of religion be at all necessary, (which will hardly be denied,) this advantage and protection are necessary to its support. Without any reflection on the dissenters, who are a very respectable body of men, and whose merits in several periods of public danger will readily be allowed, it may fairly be supposed, according to the principles they

profess, that any accession of power would be used by them against the established church; as honest and conscientious men, holding that church in a certain degree sinful and idolatrous, it is their duty to employ every legal means in their power for its degradation.

“ The penalties and disabilities which have been inveighed against as so harsh and tyrannical, do not apply to the religious tenets or writings of the dissenters. Against them there is no penalty whatsoever; only a preventive restraint of the law, that men holding such doctrines, shall not be entitled to offices and appointments, in which they might have the power of hurting the religious establishment of the country. The penalties so much complained of, are only incurred by a breach of that law; they are not provisions of the statutes in question, but sanctions to secure their observance,

“ In the foreign countries, cited as examples, it was said, the arbitrary nature of the government supersedes the necessity of such provisions as those contained in the laws wished to be repealed. The test act of England was founded on a jealousy of the monarch, natural in a free country, limiting his power of nomination to offices, by a restriction for the security of the church and the constitution. In Scotland the dissenters are chiefly Episcopalians, against whom the Presbyterian establishment is guarded by a solemn pledge at the Union. In Ireland, the non-conformity only to be dreaded is Popery, which there are other legal provisions to restrain.

“ A distinction was stated between the danger arising from the eligibility of dissenters to Parliament, and that which would arise from allowing them to hold offices or places in corporations. If dissenters, it was said, were admitted into

corporations, they might, in some instances, obtain an exclusive possession of them, and might return persons of principles wholly unfavourable to the church; whereas a dissenter at present has no chance of sitting in Parliament, unless his principles are so moderate as to induce members of the church of England to elect him their representative. It was admitted, that the principles before stated would have justified withholding even this privilege; but the circumstance of having granted it, when it was of little importance, could furnish no argument for other concessions of a more dangerous tendency.

“ It had been said by the friends of the motion, that if the repeal was granted, the dissenters would then rest satisfied, would trouble the legislature for no farther indulgence, and indeed would lose altogether the distinction of a religious party. But this, it was contended, was

contrary to experience and to human nature. Men are generally emboldened by success, and rise in future demands from having obtained the first. Some of the dissenters, it was affirmed, did not scruple to declare their aversion and enmity to the established church; and certain publications were quoted, to shew the designs which some of the leaders of that party harboured against it. The repeal of the test act would let in the most obnoxious and most violent, as well as the most moderate and inoffensive; or rather the first would be most likely to push forward into offices, and trusts, from a zeal of which it was prudent to watch the progress, and to guard against the effects."

This application to Parliament on the part of the dissenters, after being rejected on the present occasion, by a majority of 178 to 100, was afterwards twice renewed, with a perseverance, which, by its friends, was argued as a proof of the jus-

tice of the claim ; by its opponents as the effect of an obstinate combination, which might be the ground of alarm. In May 1789, it was brought forward again by Mr Beaufoy, when his motion was negatived by a division of 222 to 102; and in March 1790, by Mr Fox, when, notwithstanding the utmost exertion of his eminent abilities, the majority against it was considerably increased, the numbers being 294 to 105.

These increased majorities were probably more owing to the circumstances of the times when the question was renewed, than to any novelty or superior force in the arguments by which the measure was resisted. A spirit of innovation and revolution had begun to arise, of which prudent and moderate men were afraid, and which in a country, and at a period, that could boast so much actual prosperity and happiness, they saw no reason to encourage. The flourishing situation of that

body of men, on whose behalf this question was now stirred, did not seem to imply the existence of any material grievance, any oppressive restriction attached to their peculiar form of worship. The present measure, it was said, bore rather the appearance of a step towards encroachment on the rights of the established church, than of a mere defence of that of their own. Such, at least, it was asserted, might fairly be supposed to be the intentions of certain factious and designing men, of considerable influence among the dissenters, who had, in sermons and discourses, avowed their hopes of a speedy abasement of the hierarchy of the church of England ; and, in the same publications, had breathed a congenial spirit of disaffection to the wisely-established monarchical part of our civil government. Such, it was allowed, might not be the sentiments of the great body of the dissenters : they were too much interested in the national welfare to

risk its peace by such attempts ; but to men whose turbulence and ambition overcame at once the mildness of religion, the principles of patriotism, and the considerations of prudence, it was necessary to oppose any just and legal barrier which could guard the tranquillity of the empire, or the safety of the constitution.

SECTION VII.

Abolition of the Slave Trade.

THE idea of abolishing the Slave Trade had first arisen, several years prior to its being brought forward in Parliament, among the Quakers; a set of men whose principles of peace and meekness, often ill according with the corruptions of society, or the political interests of nations, were very naturally averse to a traffic which had its chief origin in war and rapine, and was supported by a great degree of violence and cruelty.

In Britain, the suggestions of benevolence are always listened to with partiality. The address of the Quakers on the

subject of the slave trade was favourably received in this country by many, whose feelings were interested by the humanity of its motives, without having had leisure to consider its policy. A society was formed in England for the abolition of the slave trade, and considerable subscriptions raised for the purpose of an application to Parliament in that behalf, and of carrying on inquiries tending to establish the justice and the expediency of the measure.

In this spirit of active humanity, petitions were presented to the House of Commons from several public bodies, praying an abolition of this trade. A very full and elaborate inquiry was made by the Privy Council into the subject, and a number of persons examined concerning the nature of this branch of commerce, from its first stage on the coast of Africa to the sale of the negroes in the West Indies. This inquiry also comprehended the treatment and condition of the slaves in the plantations,

and the consequences to be expected from the abolition or regulation of the traffic in question.

The matter of the before-mentioned petitions was first stirred in the House of Commons in the session 1788 ; but the general question of abolition being then postponed till the whole of this great question should be investigated to the bottom, a bill was in the mean time passed for regulating the transportation of slaves from Africa to the West Indies, in which various provisions were made for their health and accommodation, and bounties were humanely granted to the captains and surgeons of slave ships, of which the cargoes should be transported with the least possible loss upon the voyage.

On the 12th of May, 1789, Mr Wilberforce moved a string of resolutions declaratory of the existing abuses of the slave trade, and laying a ground for a law to abolish it. On this side of the argument,

embracing almost every topic that can give warmth to sentiment, or force to language, lay the field for eloquence : in the mover of these resolutions, a man of the most amiable and respectable character, that eloquence was known to be founded on principle, and kindled by humanity. He was supported by most of the leading members of the House ; among whom were the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr Fox.

Those resolutions, enforced with a zeal equal to the abilities of such men as I have mentioned, lay on the table of the House of Commons as a text for the future discussion of the subject. But a great variety of additional evidence, on both sides of the question, was afterwards taken by a select committee, which occupied the remaining period of the Parliament ; and it was not till the first session of the next that the House came to any decision.

“ The slave trade,” said Mr Wilberforce and the other supporters of his motion,

“might, *à priori*, from its very nature, be pronounced a trade of inhumanity, oppression, and guilt. But we are not left to supposition—a body of evidence is laid before the House, which shews it to be, in kind, what indeed we must have supposed it, but, in degree, beyond what the imagination of a good man could have led him even to conceive.

“ In its first stage, what a scene of horror and devastation does it produce! The wars of the Africans are not prompted by those motives, savage as they are, which have so often dazzled the fancy of cruel and unthinking men. Theirs is not the pride of conquest, or the plume of glory—it is the mere vulgar rapacity of a thief, or the avarice of a cheat, that rouses the kings of Africa to arms. We teach them wants, and the method of purchasing what those wants require, by the blood, or, in the properer phrase of the shambles, by the flesh of their own subjects, or the sub-

jects of their neighbours. The separation of parents and children, of husbands and wives, the tearing asunder every bond of affection or of tenderness, are the first evils to which the survivors of those wars are doomed.

“ But this,” continued the favourers of the motion, “ is only the opening scene of the tragedy. The transit of the negroes from Africa to the West Indies, so much misery condensed into so little room, it is hardly possible for those to conceive, who never gasped in the tainted air of a slave ship, under the heat of a vertical sun.” The detail of that situation was said to be too horrible and nauseous for repetition : they presented, therefore, a silent picture of it to the eye, which had a powerful effect upon the public—the section of a slave ship, shewing the manner of stowing the wretched negroes on board, where, in the close package of airless holes, they often endured every degree of pain, disease, and

filth, that is terrible or loathsome to nature. The mortality, in consequence, was affirmed to be enormous—about 50 per cent., which is ten times the amount of deaths in ordinary situations.

“ Did there,” it was said, “ exist a necessity (as our interested luxury uses the word necessity) for this cruel traffic for the cultivation of our West India islands, even that necessity would not justify the continuation of a trade so repugnant to justice ; but no such necessity exists, and the abolition of the slave trade is as reconcileable to our true political interests, as it is consonant to the eternal principles of right, of conscience, and humanity.

“ The interest of the planters,” it was argued, “ was hurt by the excessive loss of the imported slaves into the West Indies, and the very great expence in renewing them. This is owing to a variety of causes, which would not occur if the culture of the islands were carried on by any

other mode. The inequality of the sexes, the disorders contracted in the middle passage, the profligacy of their manners, the natural consequence of that neglect in point of instruction to which a slave must always be subject, who is considered as a beast of labour rather than a moral agent; the ill treatment they receive, particularly the females in a state of pregnancy, or of nursing their infants, from their masters, or still more from their managers or overseers; the scanty allowance of provisions, to which they were often stinted; all these evils," it was said, "would be prevented, or lessened, by the salutary necessity, which the abolition of the African market would impose, of a proper degree of care, attention, and mild treatment of the negroes. Besides the probable introduction of cattle and machinery, instead of slaves, in the culture of the plantations, the stock of negroes, if negroes must be used, may be profitably kept up without

importation : it is so in America, where, from good treatment, and a certain degree of domestication, their increase has been great and rapid ; and even in the West Indies, notwithstanding all the causes which still subsist for their decrease, most of which the abolition would remove, that decrease has gradually, from the late improvements in their treatment, diminished ; and in some of the last years, the native slaves in several of the islands have actually increased, the decrease being only on the imported slaves.

“ If we feel not for the unhappy Africans,” it was said, “ yet we may be touched with the distresses of our own seamen. To them this traffic is nearly as mortal as to the negroes ; and besides the loss by death, seamen often fall a sacrifice to the vengeance and retaliation of the Africans on the coast, or to the villany and covetousness of the masters of the slave ships, after the disposal of their cargoes in the

West Indies, who being obliged, for their safety on the passage thither, to have a greater number of hands than is necessary for their homeward voyage, take every opportunity of leaving part of their crew in the islands, or oblige them by ill usage to desert from their ships, when they often perish miserably from disease and want. Such are its effects on our marine, one of the grounds on which those who argued for the trade thought themselves strong. It has been defended as a nursery of seamen—it is, in fact, their dishonourable grave.

“ If, feeling its consequences in point of justice and humanity, we are to condescend to compute its advantages in a commercial view, those boasted advantages will be found to have been greatly overrated. In Liverpool, considered as the very centre of this commerce, it forms but a thirtieth part of the export trade, and is but a sort of lottery, profitable indeed to

individuals, but rather a losing trade on the whole. But if this inhuman traffic in men were abolished, Africa has many other articles for which a much more lucrative trade might be carried on: even in its present situation, that country affords these; but their increase would be infinite, if, instead of the idleness, the vice, the murders, we teach them by the slave trade, we taught them, by the communication and reciprocal advantages of an honest traffic, the habits of industry, and the arts of agriculture and of manufactures.”

The opposers of the abolition lay under many disadvantages, which the natural, it may be said the laudable, prejudices of mankind, the complexion of their arguments, and the appearance of partiality which their interest in the question threw upon those arguments, necessarily created. They endeavoured to appeal to the sober understanding, to the cool deliberate prudence of the House; and cautioned it

against the dangerous consequences which the legislature's yielding to this momentary ebullition of romantic humanity might produce.

“ Justice, they argued, is antecedent to compassion, and the rights of property are as sacred as those of humanity. The property vested in the West India islands, was so vested under the sanction of numberless acts of the British legislature, deliberately, and some of them recently passed, several of which expressly authorise and encourage the slave trade. Seventy millions of property is computed to be vested in the West India islands. Is Parliament prepared to strike off at once, or highly to endanger, this great mass of the national capital? to forego the industry it sets in motion, the revenue it produces, the seamen it employs?

“ The motive must be strong indeed that can authorise such a breach of public faith to the planters, such a violation

of the duty of Parliament to their country and their constituents. That motive is humanity; but the fanaticism of humanity, like the fanaticism of religion, is deaf to reason and to truth, and often destructive of the very virtue to which it pretends. Does our humanity never think of the consequence of the wished-for abolition to the thousands of our own countrymen, whom it will reduce to distress and poverty? What crime have they committed, that their possessions should be laid waste, and their property confiscated? These persons, our national humanity, now awakened by a society of enthusiasts, after it had slept for 200 years amidst all the virtue and wisdom of our ancestors, these it overlooks, to indulge in the ideal prospect of distant objects on the continent of Africa.

“ But even to the natives of Africa our mistaken compassion will not be humanity. We can only abolish this trade for ourselves, for no other nation will be so

unwise as to abolish it. In France, wilder than the wildest of us in abstract notions, fond as she is of revolution, and in the very honey-moon of liberty, the proposal of abolishing the slave trade was decidedly rejected by the national assembly. Other nations therefore will, as in every other case, command the market which we have relinquished. They will purchase only what slaves they chuse, and the remainder will be butchered by their owners, who, it is well known, take this method of disburthening themselves of the slaves they cannot sell. It is not in Africa, as in civilized countries, where the demand regulates the supply. The whole system of that great continent must be changed, before we can apply to it our ideas of political institution, or commercial arrangement. It is a system of despotism and slavery throughout, where a few tyrants command the lives, and have a property in the persons, of the millions who

inhabit it. The neighbouring nations go to war from a thousand different causes, as has always been the case in a barbarous country. The captives are either killed, or sold into slavery. The encouragement which the trade in slaves gives to some of these wars, will still remain, from the traffic carried on by other European nations on the coast. The price indeed will fall, from our declining the purchase; we shall not only lose the trade ourselves, but throw it, with a double advantage, into the hands of rival powers.

“ Many of the cruelties charged on the slave trade have, in truth, no relation to it, but arise from the depravity of individuals, which will every where be found to produce oppression and cruelty, if an inquisition like the present will but search and hunt for it. If our legislative humanity is to search after private abuses, there is scarce a trade or manufacture in this country where such abuses will not be

found to exist. In several of our manufactures, the mortality of the children brought by their parents (the word *sold* might be used, for the parents bring them for the gain they are to make by their labour) is treble the amount of that on a West India plantation, or even in a well-appointed and well-managed slave-ship.

“ The mortality indeed, both of the seamen and of the negroes, in the middle passage, has been greatly exaggerated. On board those in which a common degree of attention is paid to the health of the slaves, (to which their value, independent of all feeling in the masters of the vessels, naturally incites,) that mortality was by no means great, even before the regulation act of 1787. The provisions of that act will lessen it still farther. Regulation, the West India proprietors will gladly consent to, and adopt. Shew them any regulation that will tend to the health and comfort

of their negroes, and their interest, if you will not allow them any better motive, will keep pace with your humanity.

“ But you will not allow them to know their own interest, or the best method of carrying on the business of their plantations. You adopt that system of legislative interference and restriction on trade, which it is the greatest boast of modern philosophy to have exploded. You say that if the slave trade were abolished, they could keep up their stock more profitably by attending to the breeding up of their native slaves, than they now do by importation from Africa. They know perfectly well the inconvenience and expence of the importation, and the superior value of Creoles. But with all the attention which this experience can excite, they are not yet in a condition to keep up a sufficient stock for their plantations, without new purchases of negroes. The experiment has been tried in some of the Dutch plan-

tations, which, by an impolitic prohibition of foreign slave ships, were almost ruined. Most of our West India estates are under-stocked even in their present situation; but are they to be prohibited from any extension of their plantations, any means of improvement of those waste lands, amounting in Jamaica alone to about a million of acres, now patented from government, for which large quit-rents are already paid, and large sums invested? The calculations of the advocates for abolition, even allowing their data, which however are grossly erroneous, are made on the present extent of the plantations, and on the state of the stock in ordinary years; they make no provision for those disastrous seasons, in which hurricanes or epidemic diseases desolate the islands. They add to these natural evils the prospect of remediless bankruptcy and ruin to the proprietors; for a West India estate is but a sort of manu-

facture, and a prohibition to recruit the number of the hands employed in it, is a virtual confiscation of the property.

“ Equally fallacious are those methods of culture, which the theory of those who argue for the abolition have pointed out to the planters. Repeated attempts have been made of cultivating the plantations by whites, and even great encouragements held out by the colonial assemblies for that purpose; but even with those encouragements, the attempt was found impracticable. The same thing has happened with the experiments anxiously made of culture by cattle and machinery; but those things which their experience has long ago found impossible, the confident theorists of this new system hold out as easy, and even profitable.”

The ill treatment of the slaves in the West Indies was confidently affirmed to be neither general nor common; and appeals were made on that subject, to the

testimony of some of the most respectable characters in the army and navy of Great Britain, some of whom had resided long in the islands, and had the best opportunity of witnessing the treatment of the negroes. The fact was said to be, that they were not only mildly and humanely treated, but that they enjoyed a greater degree of ease and comfort than the common labourers in many parts of Britain. Instances of barbarity might no doubt be found; but such were known daily to happen in England, where apprentices have died under the cruelty of their masters; but the law did not therefore propose to abolish apprenticeship. Some of the opponents of the trade allowed a great improvement in the treatment of negroes in later times, and founded on the increase occasioned by it, an argument against the necessity of importation. "Suffer them then, it was said, to benefit by this gradual and progressive improve-

ment, and do not, with rash and unadvised hand, cut off the chance of future prosperity in the planters, and of the consequent melioration in the state of their negroes, whose situation must always be proportionate to the flourishing or distressed situation of their masters."

To some of these arguments in defence of the present system it was replied, "that granting Africa to be in a state of as much barbarity as was represented, that barbarity was maintained and increased by the trade in question. That if the other branches of commerce, of which that country is susceptible, were encouraged, which would be the natural effect of the abolition of the slave trade, industry and civilization would take place of those savage manners, which were now made an excuse for our own guilt and inhumanity, to which their continuance was chiefly to be ascribed."

The conclusion drawn from the interest of the slave merchant and the planter prompting their good treatment of the slaves, was repelled as contrary to all experience and knowledge of human nature. "Interest, it was said, has never been able to controul the violence of passion, or the extravagance of caprice, when there was an unlimited power of indulging them. The familiar instance of the treatment of our beasts of burthen, to which the condition of the negroes is too nearly similar, was cited as an example in point. Under this argument of the prevalence of interest over inclination, half the crimes and follies of civilized life, it was urged, might be demonstrated to be impossible.

"That the situation of the slaves was happy and comfortable, was said to be an assertion repugnant to every one's feelings. But there was a horrid proof of the contrary, in the many instances of suicide among the negroes. The insurrections,

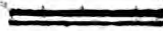
too, which they sometimes ventured, desperate and hopeless as they were, shewed strongly their sense of the sufferings they endured. This was one of those evils which the system of slavery necessarily inflicted on the masters of slaves; the suspicion, the fear, the danger, with which they were surrounded.

“ The argument against the interference of the legislature in the management or conduct of the planters, might, it was observed, be carried the length of precluding all improvement whatsoever. Here again, the argument of attention to their proper interests is set up, to prove the impracticability of any change in their mode of culture. But the indolence of habit overcomes in the bulk of men the motive of interest, if that interest is not a very direct and immediate one. The same objection of the impossibility of any other than the established mode of cultivation, might have been made some

centuries ago to any man who should have ventured to propose the emancipation of the Serfs as a practicable measure. Yet it will not be denied, that the improvement of modern Europe is chiefly owing to that circumstance."—

Notwithstanding the eloquence with which these arguments were enforced, and the weight and authority of those members by whom they were urged, the abolition of the slave trade, which had been only brought the length of enquiry in this Parliament, was negatived, at a pretty early period of the succeeding one, by a majority of 163 to 88.

SECTION VIII.

The Regency.

OF one event, fortunately as transient as it was unexpected, by which the deliberations of this Parliament on any other subject were for a time suspended, I have not hitherto made mention. I should, indeed, have been unwilling to take notice of it at all, had it not produced discussions, as well as resolutions of the representative body, of the first importance to the constitution. I mean the illness of the king, and the proceedings on the supposed impending Regency, in the end of the year 1788, and the beginning of 1789.

Parliament had been prorogued, in the customary manner, to the 20th of November, 1788, but without its being intended to meet at that time for the dispatch of business. The tranquillity, the even prosperity of the state, were such as not to require its meeting till a later period. But that tranquillity was interrupted by the unlooked-for event of his majesty's being seized with an indisposition of the most serious and afflicting kind, by which he was totally incapacitated from meeting Parliament, from any mental exertion, or from transacting any sort of business.

This was announced to the House of Commons, on the above-mentioned day of their meeting, by the chancellor of the exchequer, who at the same time moved an adjournment to that day fortnight. The House assented, with a silence impressed by the striking and melancholy event which had been communicated to them. The same impression was stamp-

ed on the mind of the people, who looked up to their representatives with that earnest and solemn expectation which distress excites, for a calm, deliberate, impartial determination, respecting the measures which it became them to take on this interesting and awful occasion.

The House was afterwards farther adjourned to the 8th of December, on which day a committee was appointed to examine the physicians who had attended his majesty during his illness. On the 10th of December that committee made its report. From that report it appeared, that his majesty was utterly incapable of exercising his functions; and though it contained strong hopes of his recovery, yet such expected recovery was too uncertain, and might be too distant, to admit of a delay in taking those steps which the exigency of the time required. Another committee was therefore appointed, "to search for and report precedents of such

proceedings as may have been had in case of the personal exercise of the royal authority being prevented or interrupted by infancy, sickness, infirmity, or otherwise, with a view to provide for the same."

It was on this occasion that Mr Fox brought forth that memorable claim, which provoked so much discussion both in Parliament and among the people, that "the Heir Apparent of the Crown, being of full age and capacity to exercise the royal power, has as clear and express a right to assume the reins of government, during the continuance of the illness and incapacity with which it has pleased God to afflict his majesty, as in the case of his majesty having undergone a natural and perfect demise."

This claim seemed, from the aspect of the House, to be favoured by a considerable party in it. By a majority, however, it was received with equal surprise and disapprobation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a warmth natural in the

cause of freedom in a free country, declared, "that to assert such a right in the Prince of Wales, or any one else, independent of the decision of the two Houses of Parliament, was little less than treason to the constitution. The assertion of such a right, he said, shewed, in the strongest manner, the necessity of the enquiry for which he had moved. It behoved them to meet this claim on the surest grounds; to learn and to ascertain their own rights; to protect the rights and interests of their constituents, and the interest and honour of a sovereign deservedly the idol of his people." He cautioned the House against "rashly annihilating and annulling the authority of Parliament, in which the existence of the constitution was so intimately involved."

Mr Fox, on a subsequent day, abated somewhat of the strength of the claim which he had made, by explaining his meaning, universally misunderstood be-

fore, to have been, not that this right was such as the prince could assume of himself, but such only as attached to him on the king's incapacity being declared by Parliament. Afterwards the party, who had rather unadvisedly brought forth this claim, wished to avoid its discussion altogether; and though one gentleman, affecting to be much in the prince's confidence, rashly ventured to throw out a sort of threat against provoking its assertion, the more politic members on the opposition side of the House argued the inexpediency of interrupting, or protracting their proceedings, by agitating a question of this abstract kind. But it was a question which, having once been stirred, was of a magnitude not to be overlooked. It produced a long and solemn debate, which ended in the adoption, by a considerable majority, of three resolutions, moved by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of which the second went directly to the determination

of this point, so essential to the constitution of the country. These resolutions were :

1st. " That his Majesty is prevented, by his present indisposition, from coming to his Parliament, and from attending to public business ; and that the personal exercise of the royal authority is thereby for the present interrupted."

2d. " That it is the right and duty of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons of Great Britain, now assembled, and lawfully, fully, and freely, representing all the estates of the people of this realm, to provide the means of supplying the defect of the personal exercise of the royal authority arising from his Majesty's said indisposition, in such manner as the exigency of the case may appear to require."

3d. " That for this purpose, and for maintaining entire the constitutional authority of the king, it is necessary that the said Lords spiritual and temporal, and Com-

mons of Great Britain, should determine on the means, whereby the royal assent may be given in Parliament, to such bill as may be passed by the two Houses of Parliament, respecting the exercise of the powers and authorities of the crown, in the name and on the behalf of the king, during the continuance of his Majesty's present indisposition."

With these resolutions, the voice of the nation seemed decidedly to concur. It was not, indeed, without a great degree of surprise, that the people had heard men, whom they had been accustomed to regard as the supporters of those maxims of a free government, known by the name of Whig principles, pronounce an assertion so nearly allied to that doctrine of hereditary and indefeasible right, which the present age can scarcely believe to have been one of the follies of the last. The claim in question was, indeed, so weakly defended at the time, and has since been so en-

tirely abandoned, that it may, perhaps, be thought needless to have mentioned it so much at large; but it is necessary to record public doctrines, however extravagant or ill founded, because, by an equal violence or blindness of party, they may, on some future occasion, be urged.

The right of Parliament being thus solemnly recognized, the mode, as well as the extent of its exercise of that right, was the subject of much future discussion and debate. As to the first, it was, indeed, difficult to apply to the mould of established forms a proceeding of a new and unprecedented kind. The mode proposed by the third resolution, of a bill to be passed by the two Houses of Parliament, receiving the royal assent in virtue of a commission, issued under the authority of an act of the Parliament itself, involved a legal fiction, which, though it might be justified by the necessity of the case, afforded much opportunity for the argument and the ri-

dicule of opposition. But it was a mode suggested by a just and scrupulous adherence to the analogies, and to the forms, of the constitution, and a respect, which, perhaps, the circumstances of the moment might strengthen for the regal office. It was important in providing for this exigency, that the power inherent in Parliament, as the organ of the people to supply in this emergency the deficiency of the executive government, should not go beyond the necessity on which it was founded; and that the mode of exercising it should recognise, on the very ace of it, the regal authority as an essential part of the constitution.

The discretionary exercise of this power involved several particulars, which were afterwards comprised in the Regency Bill, brought in by the minister on the 5th of February, 1789. By that bill, the Prince of Wales was empowered "to exercise the royal authority during his Majesty's

illness ;” with a provision, however, that the care of his Majesty’s person, and the management of his household, including the direction and appointment of all the officers and servants of that household, should be vested in her Majesty. The powers of the regent were subjected to certain restrictions. They were not to extend to the granting of peerages, except to any of his Majesty’s issue when arrived at the age of 21 ; nor to granting any office in reversion ; nor to granting for any other term than during pleasure, any pension, or any office, except such as the law directs to be granted during life, or good behaviour ; nor to granting any of the real or personal property of the king, except the renewal of leases held under the crown.

These restrictions were strenuously opposed in both Houses of Parliament. They were represented as laying a foundation for a weak, a defective, and a divided govern-

ment. The rights of the crown, it was contended, were given it for the benefit of the people, to enable it to carry on the functions of the executive power with that energy and effect which are necessary to the welfare of the state. The crippled and mutilated authority which this bill left with the regent, would be inadequate to those salutary purposes. Its restrictions, it was argued, separated from the regal office the royal functions and prerogatives which the constitution had determined to be necessary to support the legitimate power of the sovereign, which, without them, therefore, must be sunk below that place which the constitution had wisely assigned it.

It was maintained on the opposite side, that the restrictions in question were indispensable in the present case. Parliament was not now making a king ! it was only providing for a temporary suspension of the kingly functions ; and it was bound to consider the personal rights of the exist-

ing monarch, and to provide for his resumption of his political rights, whenever it should please God to restore his capacity of exercising them. The powers of the regent ought to be limited by the same unfortunate necessity by which they were created ; and Parliament was called upon, by every principle of duty to their country, by every feeling of loyalty to their king, to take care that his Majesty should find, on his recovery, his rights entire, un- infringed, and unabated, by any act of his people, or their representatives, during an indisposition, of which they hoped and must provide for the cessation.

In the House of Lords, the proceedings were similar to those in the House of Commons, and the arguments in debate were founded on the same principles.

In one of those debates, the Lord Chancellor, digressing from the abstract point in discussion, to the personal situation of the king, expressed his warm sense of his

Majesty's virtue and goodness, "which if I forget," said his Lordship, "may God forget me!"—An apostrophe so much in unison with the sentiments of the people, as to be strongly felt, and lastingly remembered.

During the debates which the various provisions and restrictions of the regency bill occasioned, which lasted till the middle of February, the public watched with a degree of interest and anxiety proportioned to the importance and nature of the subject, the opinions of individuals, and the movements of party. They had sometimes to regret the violence of the one, and the intemperance of the other, so ill according with that solemn and awful impression, which the consideration of their sovereign's afflictive state, and of the probable situation of public affairs, was calculated to produce. They heard expressions applied to the first, by men whose talents, and whose characters they wished

to respect, equally devoid of dignity, of delicacy, and of feeling.

The measures of these statesmen they contrasted with those of their opponents, with a partiality to the latter, which perhaps their master's situation tended to excite. Covered with the shade of his affliction, his ministers challenged the respect and favour of his people; who, with an equal zeal of patriotism, and a sympathetic affection of loyalty, saw them prepare, with a calm and conscious dignity, for a dismissal from place and power, regardless of themselves, and only tenacious of the rights of their fellow-citizens, and of their sovereign.

But the virtue which the people supposed in the one, or the ambition which they imputed to the other, were equally stopped in their exertion, by the happy event of his Majesty's recovery, which took place about the middle, and was communicated to Parliament before the end of

February. The joy of the nation was as unbounded as it was sincere ; and the king had the peculiar felicity to find himself restored to health, of which the enjoyment was rendered doubly a blessing by the most signal proofs of the fidelity and affection of his subjects. It was a situation new, as it was interesting, in the fate of a king, who can seldom have the good fortune to experience, after such a vicissitude, the pure affections of his people, unbribed by the hopes of favour, or undazzled by the glare of victory. To hear that voice (as the Apotheoses of the poets have feigned of kings after their death) which had certainly arisen undebased by the fears of the weak, the expectations of the selfish, or the flattery of the mean. The people, by a combination not less unusual, while they enjoyed the restoration of their monarch, felt the energy of the constitution, and triumphed in the virtue of the Parliament. They rested with peculiar satisfaction on

the late recognition of this great constitutional principle, that in Parliament alone, as their representative, resides the power of regulating every emergency not already provided for by the express law, or by the known established custom, of the realm.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE thus, with a slight, but I hope not unfaithful pencil, sketched the principal features of the Parliament 1784. Its proceedings were so momentous, whether we regard their importance at the time, or look to their consequences in future, that I think I shall be readily excused for recalling them to the remembrance of the public. Any comments with which I have ventured to accompany their recital, I leave to the judgment of my fellow citizens; with the more confidence, because I have only endeavoured to express what I believe to have been the sentiments of the unbiassed and respectable part of the community. But the impartiality of the people is not indifference; they feel, and I participate in their feelings, a proper gratitude to those

whose measures they believe to have conduced to the prosperity and honour of the state ; and they feel a proportionable disapprobation, when such measures are embarrassed and impeded, if they conceive the opposition to them to have arisen from envy, self-interest, or ambition. A preference founded on these considerations is not an attachment to party—it is the attachment of a good citizen to his country—of a good man to virtue.

Though it may not be a popular doctrine, yet I believe it is one which moderate and thinking men will admit, that in Great Britain, the nature of its government, the continual superintendance of Parliament, the weight of public opinion, and the influence which all these circumstances must have on the character and conduct of persons in official situations, afford a much greater probability than in other countries, that the administration will, ordinarily, be at least right in its inten-

tions, and will adopt its measures, from a belief, that they are such as will tend to the benefit of the nation. The men who attain the high departments of the state in Britain, are commonly such as, from their education, their habits of life, and their situation with regard to the community, have much stronger motives to purity and uprightness in their public conduct, than to the contrary. The aristocracy of Great Britain is essentially different from the aristocracy in other monarchical governments of Europe ; its rights are more attached to personal merit; and less to accidental advantages ; it is as much an aristocracy of talents as of rank. The term *gentleman* in Britain, is a title which is annexed not exclusively to birth, as in other countries, but to qualities generally indeed attendant on a certain rank in society, a liberal education, a well-informed mind ; to elegant deportment and honourable sentiments. Hence arises a very great

difference in this from other countries, both in that order of men out of which ministers are to be taken, and in that class also by which they are to be judged. The first has no privilege by which it can impose, nor the last any feeling by which it can be imposed on, in the conduct of public measures. There is in Britain no protection for the court against the prevailing opinion of the community, that could cover the dissipation, the debauchery, the capricious extravagance, the thoughtless inhumanity, which, from the interior of so many palaces, have spread oppression and ruin over devoted millions.

It is material to consider whence arises this general safeguard, which the public possesses against the malversation of ministers, against the intentional abuse, or the ignorant misapplication, of the powers with which they are intrusted. The popular nature of our government furnishes, as has been already stated, a check, of

which the operation is constant, because it is excited by natural and unceasing causes. The opportunity which Parliament affords to the young, the bustling, the ambitious, of canvassing public measures, is one of those salutary counterpoises which our constitution affords against the weight of the executive power. The opposition in Britain is a sort of public body, which, in the practice at least of our government, is perfectly known and established. The province of this ex-official body, when it acts in a manner salutary to the state, is to watch, with jealousy, over the conduct of administration; to correct the abuses, and to resist the corruptions of its power; to restrain whatever may be excessive, to moderate what may be inconsiderate, and to supply what may be defective in its measures.

In the exercise of its functions, if they may so be called, opposition has advantages by which those obvious ones, often

mentioned on the side of administration, are balanced ; if, on the one hand, patronage strengthens administration, on the other, the discontent and envy of the disappointed are often thrown into the scale of opposition ; if administration has superior opportunities of information, opposition is not restrained by official secrecy ; if administration imposes by its dignity, opposition wins by its familiarity with the people ; and if administration enjoys active occasions of acquiring popularity, opposition, on the other hand, suffers none of the embarrassments which result from delicate and perplexing situations. Censure has not the responsibility of action ; and in debate or discussion, he who objects or blames may often object at random, and blame without certainty ; the burden of proof is almost always thrown upon administration. Opposition is seldom obliged to act on the defensive, but

has always the warmth, the vivacity, and the enthusiasm of an assailant.

The respect, as well as the usefulness, of this censorial representative of the people, (if I may be allowed to give it that denomination) depends on the manner in which its faculties are exerted. If its resistance to the measures of government is unreasonable, or its objections captious; if it passes those bounds within which the justice of the people would confine its censure, and departs from that consistency in argument, or that principle in conduct, which their understanding is always able to perceive, and which their honesty always expects, the confidence of the public is proportionally withdrawn, and the respectability of opposition diminished. But, above all, if the purity of its motives be impeached, or the dignity of its character degraded; if it holds an interest opposite to that of the nation, of which it enjoys the calamities and repines at the

success ; if it breathes an ambition of that unprincipled sort that would build its own advancement on the ruin of the constitution,—no talents, no abilities, can redeem its reputation with the country.

The misapplication of those abilities, the perversion of those talents, may, however, sometimes have effects more pernicious than the authority of the men who possess them should be able to produce. Britain is fertile in speculation. In politics, as in science, there are so many speculatists in this country, that if opposition, or the worst and most desperate part of opposition, applies itself to make proselytes against the constitution, it will find, in the discontent of the splenetic, or the caprice of the fanciful, converts to any system that has novelty and boldness to recommend it.

In this situation, the people will judge for themselves ; they will not rest on the authority of men, whose talents, in their

perversion, are armed against the happiness of their fellow-citizens. They will review with impartiality the train of public measures which their observation has enabled them to trace, and consider the effects which those measures have produced on the nation. The distrust of power is natural, and an enquiry into the uses to which it has been applied is the privilege of freemen. The wise and the good, however, will certainly feel a satisfaction in the favourable result of such inquiry; to such men, to praise a minister will be more agreeable than to censure him; but that consideration is of little importance—the gratification which they will feel, is the prosperity of their country.

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

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