Miscellaneous works Of The Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl Of Chesterfield

Consisting Of Letters to his Friends, never before printed, And Various Other Articles

Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope of

Dublin, 1777

Section II.

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SECTION II.

1714. GEORGE the first, elector of Hanover, ascended the throne of Great Britain without any opposition. His title, though founded upon the principles of the revolution, upon repeated acts of parliament, and the choice of a free nation, was not however universally acknowledged. The government had been for many years in the hands of real or suspected enemies; whom it was equally dangerous to continue in power, or to dismiss. Their secret wishes, it was thought, had long been turned towards a competitor for the crown, who had been formerly acknowledged by Lewis XIV. and, while that monarch lived, was certain of finding in him, equally from motives of ambition and conscience, a zealous, though not an open, friend [1].

The new king arrived in England near two months after he had been proclaimed. The opposite parties were prepared for the struggle. Several changes had taken place; many more were expected, and a total revolution in the political system was, not without anxiety, foreseen.

This critical situation obliged the new ministry to call in to their assistance all those persons, who, from inclination and principle, were attached to their cause. Lord Stanhope was one of the first sent for. He owed this distinction to general Stanhope, grandson


EARL STANHOPE
Le Noir Sc.

ſon to the firſt earl of Cheſterfield by a ſecond wife, and uncle to his father. As this brave officer, to whom the nation owed the conqueſt of Minorca, was one of the principal leaders of the whig party, and had ſtood forth in defence of the Hanover family during the trying years of the laſt reign, he expected, and deſerved, to be nobly rewarded. He was immediately appointed ſecretary of ſtate, and ſoon obtained the greateſt ſhare in the affections and confidence of the ſovereign. His young kinſman could not have wiſhed for a more favourable introduction; and therefore, though he had intended to ſpend the next carnival at Venice, he did not heſitate to ſacrifice in this, as in many other inſtances, his pleaſure to his duty. 1714.

Upon his arrival in London, he was preſented to the king, and appointed one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber to the prince of Wales. This poſt was equally ſuitable to his birth, his age, and his inclination. His genius, application, and knowledge of the conſtitution, gave him the beſt opportunities of acquiring the language and ſcience of courts, of ingratiating himſelf with the ſucceſſor to the crown, and of transforming a German prince into a Britiſh king. He found by his own experience, as he ſomewhere obſerves, that young favor is eaſily acquired; and that, when acquired, it is warm, though perhaps not more durable than moſt other court attachments uſually are. 1715.

In a ſoil ſo unfavourable to the growth of virtues as courts generally are, it was our young lord's peculiar good fortune to meet with a man, whom Socrates would, probably, not have diſowned as a diſciple; and he had the good ſenſe to make that man his friend. Lord Lumley, afterwards ſo well known, ſo greatly eſteemed, and ſo univerſally regretted, under

1715. under the name of lord Scarborough, was at this time lord of the bed-chamber, and maſter of the horſe to the prince. The intimacy between theſe two noblemen was unreſerved, notwithſtanding the differences of characters and age, for lord Scarborough was ten years older; it continued unalterable amidſt the conflict of intereſts and parties. We need no other teſt of the characters of theſe two lords, than that, though courtiers, they loved, truſted, and eſteemed each other.

In theſe troubleſome times, a ſeat in parliament was not conſidered merely as an honor, but alſo implied a duty, the performance of which was expected from all thoſe, whoſe abilities were adequate to the taſk. They were called upon to make an open declaration of their ſentiments, and to employ their powers in the ſervice of their reſpective parties. For theſe purpoſes, lord Stanhope was elected into the firſt parliament under George I. as repreſentative of the borough of St. Germains, Cornwall.

But though the intereſt of his king and country was the primary object of his lordſhip's attendance in that great aſſembly, where public good is ſo much talked of, and private intereſt ſo often purſued; yet, perhaps, the thirſt of glory, that powerful incentive to great actions, was a motive of ſome weight with him. He knew that ſpeaking well in the houſe of commons was the only way of making a figure, and riſing to honors. Nature, by no means, if I may borrow his expreſſions, intended him for a *perſona muta*, and one of the *pedarii*. He could not, without the utmoſt violence to his character, reſolve to give ſilent votes. He tells his ſon, that from the day he was elected to the day that he ſpoke, which was a month after, he thought and dreamt

dreamt of nothing but ſpeaking; and, though much awed the firſt time, he acquitted himſelf in a manner, which raiſed the expectations of his friends as well as his own. 1715.

The circumſtance, in which he firſt took an active part, was delicate and in ſome degree deciſive. The principal miniſters of the late queen had been driven out of their country, or ſent to the tower. Their antagoniſts, perſecuted by them in the laſt reign, became in this, ſtill more from revenge than from intereſt, their perſecutors; and it is not unlikely that the rebellion which enſued, was as much the effect of the violence of the latter, as of the inclination of the former [2]. Articles of impeachment were drawn up by a committee of enquiry, compoſed of one and twenty members, againſt the principal contrivers of the peace of Utrecht. One of theſe was the duke of Ormond, who, as well as lord Bolingbroke, was prudent enough, to withdraw from the ſtorm, and to leave the kingdom. As the duke had never been a friend to the laſt-named lord, and ſeemed much leſs culpable than the other miniſters, ſeveral of the moſt moderate whigs were inclined to treat him with leſs ſeverity. The majority, however, were of a different opinion; and our new member, who, on this occaſion, ſpoke for the firſt time, appeared, what the well-meant zeal of inexperienced youth only could excuſe, particularly violent. He ſaid that, "he "never wiſhed to ſpill the blood of any of his "countrymen, much leſs the blood of any noble-"man; but that he was perſuaded that the ſafety "of his country required that examples ſhould "be made of thoſe who betrayed it in ſo in-"famous a manner [3]." This ſpeech, he owns to his ſon, was but indifferent as to the matter:

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1715. he even acknowledges that, if he had not been a young member, he certainly ſhould have been reprimanded by the houſe for ſome ſtrong and indiſcreet things which he had ſpoken. It went off however tolerably well, in favor of the ſpirit with which it was uttered, and the language with which it was graced. But, though he was not publicly cenſured, he could not eſcape private admonition. As ſoon as he had done ſpeaking, one of the oppoſite party took him aſide; and, having complimented him upon his *coup d'eſſai*, added, that he was exactly acquainted with the date of his birth, and could prove that, when he was choſen a member of the houſe, he was not come of age, and that he was not ſo now: at the ſame time he aſſured him, that he wiſhed to take no advantage of this, unleſs his own friends were puſhed, in which caſe, if he offered to vote, he would immediately acquaint the houſe with it. Lord Stanhope, who knew the conſequences of this diſcovery [4], anſwered nothing, but, making a low bow, quitted the houſe directly, and went to Paris, probably not much concerned at the opportunity afforded him of finiſhing his noviciate in that city [5].

In the mean while, the rebellion had broken out in ſome parts of England as well as of Scotland. The ſucceſs of this undertaking is ſufficiently known. Like all other precipitate and ill-conducted ſchemes, it was ſoon quelled, and only ſerved to diſtinguiſh the friends of government from its enemies. It is by no means improbable that lord Stanhope's expedition to Paris had more than view. During the life-time of the old French king, the cauſe of the rebels had been indirectly ſupported by that court; and even in the beginning of the regency, all the vigilance of the Britiſh miniſter was exerted to obſtruct

ſtruct this pernicious intercourſe [6]. Lord Stanhope, who, under the appearance of a man of pleaſure, knew how to conceal the man of buſineſs, may have been of ſingular ſervice in diſcovering ſecret intrigues and machinations, and could never have found a better ſchool to improve his talents for negotiation. All the motions of the Jacobites were narrowly watched; their correſpondence with thoſe, who had taken up arms in favour of the pretender, detected, and the ſupplies from his well-wiſhers in France in great meaſure cut off. Lord Bolingbroke, it is well known, was by the ambaſſador's influence reclaimed from the ſervice of the chevalier to that of the king; and he juſtified the account, which the earl had given of the ſincerity of his return [7], by ſecret aſſiſtance and ſeaſonable informations. The careful and ſpirited conduct of lord Stair was at that time greatly commended, though afterwards not ſufficiently acknowledged [8.] 1715.

The ſucceſs, which had attended the meaſures and arms of government, was not thought ſufficient to ſecure its ſtability. The raſhneſs and impetuoſity, with which the rebellion had been carried on, were proofs of the confidence, which thoſe who were concerned in it placed in their ſtrength, and ſeemed to indicate that they poſſeſſed reſources the more alarming, as they were concealed. The number of the diſaffected had on this occaſion been found to be much greater than was before ſuſpected. Without ſecret encouragement, the pretender would ſcarcely have ventured to come over to Scotland, and to ſuffer himſelf to be crowned after the overthrow of his forces. His friends abroad, though diſappointed, continued ſtill to threaten [9]; his partiſans in the kingdom, and even in both houſes, dropped hints of revenge. Though the majority in 1716.

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1716. the preſent parliament was greatly on the ſide of the whigs, the leaders of that party feared, or ſeemed to fear, that another election might not be equally favourable to them. This apprehenſion induced the miniſtry to bring in a bill for making this, as well as future parliaments, ſeptennial.

The duration of theſe national aſſemblies is well known to have varied at different periods. The time of their being convened has moſtly been unſettled, and though their meetings were ſometimes yearly, or perhaps more frequent, yet they commonly were occaſional, and dependent upon the buſineſs of the kingdom. The parliament became independent of the crown under Charles I. and with proper management might have become ſo of the people, under his ſons. The firſt error proved fatal to the king, the laſt might have been deſtructive of the conſtitution. To prevent both extremes, the reigning party, ſoon after the revolution [10], procured an act to limit the duration of parliaments to three years. Experience ſoon diſcovered, eſpecially in the following reign, the inconveniencies of too frequent elections, which often favor the ends of faction, and are the cauſe of unſteadineſs in the adminiſtration of affairs. The ferment, in which the nation was at that time, and the neceſſity there was of a firm and permanent miniſtry, rendered theſe conſequences more obvious and more dangerous. It was apprehended that the malecontents might wiſh for a time of general confuſion, as being the moſt favourable to their deſigns. A period of ſeven years was therefore propoſed to be ſubſtituted to that of three; and after a ſtrong debate, the motion was carried in both houſes. Lord Stanhope ſpoke in ſupport of this alteration, and we learn from himſelf [10], that this ſecond ſpeech was delivered with more

more freedom, and received more favourably than the firſt. His ſentiments on this ſubject ſeem to have continued the ſame through life [11], and though he often expreſſed in the ſtrongeſt terms his fears of the progreſs of corruption [12], he did not ſeem to think ſhort parliaments a certain remedy againſt it. Indeed, the ſcenes of violence and debauchery, inſeparable from popular elections, afford juſt reaſons to doubt whether the return to triennial or even annual parliaments would, in the preſent ſtate of things, contribute more to the advantage of liberty than to the encouragement of licentiouſneſs and the propagation of vice. 1716.

Our young ſenator continued from time to time to ſpeak in the houſe of commons, and it appears from his account [13] that he took pains to improve his manner, and ſhake off his apprehenſions. The advantage of his rank, the figure he made in parliament, his inſinuating graces in and out of court, muſt have raiſed him very ſpeedily to the higheſt employments, if an unforeſeen event had not for a time obſtructed his elevation. 1717.

This incident was the miſunderſtanding between the king and his ſon, which happened about this time. It took its riſe from a circumſtance, which would appear of little moment [14], if even the moſt trifling occurrences did not become important, by the greatneſs of the perſons concerned in them. There were, in this caſe, other cauſes, which contributed to the effect. The people in power had for ſome time been divided; and the principal of them, headed by lord Townſhend, were thought to be ſupported by the ſucceſſor. His ſpirits, and a better acquaintance with the language and laws of the kingdom, naturally drew after him a great number of adherents. More heat was ſhewn by the king on

1717. this occaſion than might have been expected from a man of his eaſy and benevolent diſpoſition, who in private life would have been loved and eſteemed as an amiable if not as a bright man. The prince of Wales was no longer appointed regent of the kingdom, in his father's abſence; he was ordered to quit the palace, no public honors were paid to his rank; he was ſeparated from his children, and a conſultation was held to appropriate to their maintenance part of his income of one hundred thouſand pounds. This laſt attempt did not ſucceed. Even court-lawyers decided, that, if the father and mother were not allowed to ſuperintend the education of their family, they ought to be excuſed from bearing any part in the expence.

During the time of this diviſion, no perſon was allowed to remain neuter. The courtiers deſerted the prince; and his friends were not received at St. James's. This was the caſe with lord Stanhope. Attached to one court, he could expect no favor from the other, where the influence of his friends muſt otherwiſe have ſecured his promotion. General Stanhope, by his merit and zeal, was grown all-powerful with the king, who readily formed private attachments. He accompanied his maſter, in all his expeditions to Hanover, both as a miniſter and as a friend, and was ſucceſſively advanced to the ranks of viſcount and of earl. When ſir Robert Walpole quitted the poſt of firſt lord of the treaſury, he was appointed to ſucceed him; and, having made an exchange with the earl of Sunderland, held the ſeals as ſecretary of ſtate. The intereſt of ſuch a man was therefore of the higheſt importance; it had proved extremely beneficial to another perſon of the family [15]; and it was lord Stanhope's fault, if he did not likewiſe experience its effects. The greateſt

greateſt efforts were made for ſome years to detach him from his preſent connections; and, by the price that was offered, we may judge of the value that was ſet upon his abilities. His father was to have been made a duke; but this offer could not tempt him. He was unwilling to barter his honor for any title; and thought likewiſe that the younger ſons of a duke ought to have larger fortunes than either his brothers or his children were likely to have. The old earl of Cheſterfield, though ſhy of the court, was leſs indifferent to its trappings. He expreſſed his diſpleaſure at his ſon's refuſal, and perhaps was happy in having a new excuſe to juſtify his ill-treatment of him. 1717.

Lord Stanhope was, unfortunately, obliged to divide for the firſt time againſt the court, in the conteſt for the repeal of the occaſional and ſchiſm bills [16]. Theſe two acts, which had been paſſed with much difficulty during the laſt years of queen Ann, excited great diſcontent. The moſt moderate of the tories, as well as the whigs, judged them extremely oppreſſive to a conſiderable part of the nation. Nothing gives a more convincing proof how far the ſpirit of party may carry people beyond their real ſentiments, than to ſee ſome great men, whom toleration had formerly favoured, now becoming the advocates of intolerant principles; and to obſerve ſeveral of the former oppoſers of theſe bills, now equally violent in their oppoſition to the repeal. I am told, ſir Robert Walpole particularly regretted his having joined the clamorous high-church men on that occaſion. Young lord Stanhope, who was in the ſame oppoſition, and voted on the ſame ſide, was more excuſable, as he probably ſtill laboured under ſome prejudices of education. "I thought it," ſays he "impoſſible, for the honeſteſt 1718.

1718. "man in the world to be ſaved out of the pale of "the church, not conſidering that matters of opi- "nion do not depend upon the will; that it is as "natural and as allowable that another man ſhould "differ in opinion from me, as that I ſhould differ "from him; and that if we are both ſincere we are "both blameleſs, and ſhould conſequently have "mutual indulgence for each other." His good ſenſe, however, did not ſuffer him to join in the new teſt, propoſed by lord Guernſey, which though ſupported by the great Mr. Addiſon, was rejected by a majority of the houſe [17].

1719. The prince of Wales's patience, we may ſuppoſe, was put to a trial, when the bill for limiting the number of peers [18] was brought into parliament for two ſucceſſive ſeſſions. However reaſonable this bill might be thought in itſelf, it ſeemed partial, ill-timed, and only intended to ſerve as a teſt between the worſhippers of the ſetting, and thoſe of the riſing, ſun. The loſs, which the crown would have ſuſtained in the power of acknowledging ſervices, and of ſecuring a majority in the upper houſe, could only be felt by the ſucceſſor; and, in proportion as it leſſened the future influence of the crown, it muſt neceſſarily diminiſh the number and zeal of the prince's friends. This conſideration, probably, had greater weight with the houſe of commons than the motives of emulation deduced from the ſituation of the temples of virtue and of honor, which were moſt eloquently diſplayed by one of the members. He ſeverely reflected upon a gentleman, who, having gained admittance into the houſe of peers, ſeemed to wiſh to ſhut the door after him [19]. Probably the deſire of ſhewing his gratitude to his benefactor influenced our young nobleman, as much as the utility of the bill and his own ariſtocratical principles,

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to divide with all the Stanhopes (20) in favor of the minority, which for the first time under this reign was on the court side. The bill, which had readily passed the house of peers, was by an equally great majority thrown out in the house of commons, and has never been introduced since. 1719.

Whether this ill success, or the confusion of affairs in the ensuing south-sea year, contributed to a temporary reconciliation in the royal family, is uncertain. The prince was restored to public honors, though not to public trust; and his friends were again well received at the king's court. It happened unfortunately for lord Stanhope, that his relation died suddenly in the meridian of his power, and was sincerely regretted by his master (21). But lord Townshend, who succeeded as secretary of state, became also lord Stanhope's patron, and lived ever after with him in as strict an intimacy as their different ages and situations would admit. 1720.

The prince of Wales had probably expected to bear a part in public affairs, and to be constituted regent during his father's absence. He was disappointed, however, in his expectations; for, when the king went to Hanover in 1720, the regency was put into other hands (22). The prince's friends voted next year on the side of the opposition. We accordingly find lord Stanhope's name amongst the speakers against the court, on a question concerning a small tax to be laid on civil employments. In this debate, he answered his friend and kinsman, Mr. Henry Pelham; as afterwards in the other house he frequently opposed the duke of Newcastle: but it was his maxim, that political affairs know no relations, friends, or acquaintance. 1721.

The alarm occasioned by the discovery of a new plot, for a time, put a stop to these divisions, and 1722.

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1722. united all thoſe who were well-affected to the family. The particulars of this intrigue, in which a catholic duke, a proteſtant biſhop, an Engliſh nobleman, an Iriſh peer, two divines, and a phyſician, were all ſuppoſed to be engaged, remain a myſtery even to this day. The danger, to which the proteſtant cauſe would have been expoſed if the conſpiracy had ſucceeded, made the friends to the conſtitution exert themſelves with redoubled vigor. As this was the period of elections for the ſecond parliament of this reign, great efforts were made on both ſides to procure a majority; but the court had manifeſtly the advantage. The king, with a view of increaſing his popularity, took his ſon with him in a tour, which he made through the weſtern provinces. He reviewed his troops encamped on Saliſbury plain, and appeared as the monarch of the ſea, on viſiting at Portſmouth the triumphant fleet lately returned from the glorious expedition to Meſſina.

The effects of theſe meaſures were obvious. In the firſt ſeſſion of parliament, a motion was made, and carried, to ſtrengthen the power of government, by an augmentation of 4000 men to the army. Lord Stanhope, then member for Loſtwithiel, in Cornwall, a borough for which, when he became a peer, his brother, John Stanhope, was elected repreſentative, ſpoke with great ſtrength in favor of the motion. He was undoubtedly glad of an opportunity of ſhewing his attachment to the reigning family, though he might, by this freſh inſtance of zeal, ſtill add to his father's diſpleaſure.

1723. He was ſoon after rewarded or this mark of fidelity, by being appointed captain of the yeomen of the guards. It is remarkable, that this favor was granted at the time that the king, on ſetting out

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for Hanover, again excluded the prince from the regency. Lord Townſhend, to whom he ſucceeded in this poſt, adviſed him, to make it more profitable, than he himſelf had done, by diſpoſing of the places. "I rather, for this time," anſwered lord Stanhope, "wiſh to follow your lordſhip's example "than your advice." Lord Lumley, who was become lord Scarborough by his father's death, had ſix years before obtained the ſecond regiment of foot guards. A happy conformity of principles between theſe two noblemen produced a ſimilarity of conduct in ſimilar circumſtances. None of the commiſſions were ever ſold by either. 1723.

On the revival of the order of the Bath, his lordſhip was offered the red ribband. This he thought proper to refuſe; and was not well pleaſed with his brother, ſir William, for accepting it. It is alſo ſaid, that his lordſhip took an opportunity of exerciſing his humorous talents upon this occaſion; for ſir William Morgan of Tredegar, one of the new knights, having loſt the enſign of the order, he made a ballad to turn it into ridicule. This ballad, I am informed, was equally witty and ſatyrical. 1725.

Whether this humorous piece of pleaſantry followed or preceded his lordſhip's diſgrace, is uncertain. But, when the king ſet out this year for Hanover, among the changes that were made at court, lord Stanhope ſhared the fate of Mr. Pulteney, and was diſmiſſed from his place.

I have been informed, that a ſingular circumſtance prevented his lordſhip from diſplaying his abilities in the houſe of commons, as he afterwards did in the houſe of peers. There was a member of that houſe, who, though not poſſeſſed of ſuperior powers, had the dangerous talent of making thoſe, whom he anſwered,

1725. answered, appear ridiculous, by mimicking their tone and action. Lord Stanhope was often expoſed to this unequal conflict, and always found himſelf hurt by it. Poſſibly, this circumſtance, had he remained long in the lower houſe, might have deprived his country of one of its fineſt orators.

1726. It was therefore fortunate, both for the public and himſelf, that the death of his father, which happened ſoon after, removed him to the houſe of lords. During the remainder of that reign, he continued true to his engagements, and ſpoke occaſionally on the ſide of the oppoſition. But he then had few opportunities to diſtinguiſh himſelf, in the manner he afterwards did in more important debates.

The complaint of a want of form in a meſſage from the king occaſioned a very ſmart conteſt in the houſe of lords. The earl of Cheſterfield, a few months after he had inherited the title, ſtood
1727. up in vindication of the privileges of the houſe. He likewiſe ſpoke the year after in a debate concerning a clauſe in a money-bill; which gave the ſovereign a diſcretionary power of applying part of the ſupplies in any way he might think proper, for the ſecurity of the kingdom, and the maintenance of the peace of Europe. In both caſes, however, lord Cheſterfield contented himſelf with ſpeaking, and avoided joining in the proteſts which were entered and ſigned by the diſſenting lords.

Nothing ſeems to have hurt George the firſt more than the frequent oppoſitions he met with on account of ſubſidies. Bred up in principles different from thoſe of the country which he was called to govern, he could not avoid complaining to his moſt intimate friends, that he was come over to England to be a begging king. He added, that he thought his

his fate very hard to be continually oppoſed in his applications for ſupplies, which he only aſked that he might employ them for the advantage of the nation. How far he might deceive himſelf in theſe notions can ſcarcely now be aſcertained. He is allowed, by thoſe who knew him beſt and were moſt attached to him, to have been ſomewhat inclined to parſimony, diffident of himſelf, and very partial to his electorate. But, if he was ſhy of appearing in the full ſplendor of majeſty, he was ſtill more averſe from any act of oppreſſion; and, contented to be beloved by a few, did not wiſh public incenſe. He died ſuddenly, of an apoplectic ſtroke, on his journey to Hanover, the 11th of June, in the ſixty-eighth year of his life; and left many private friends, who ſincerely lamented his loſs. 1727.

Perhaps, had he lived longer, he would have judged more favourably of his ſituation; and experienced, that to be truly a Britiſh king is in fact to be the greateſt monarch in Europe. The earl of Cheſterfield was not ſufficiently intimate with him, to make him ſenſible of theſe great truths, which lord Scarborough and himſelf endeavoured to inculcate into the mind of his ſucceſſor. Their endeavours may be ſuppoſed not to have been altogether fruitleſs, but might have proved ſtill more effectual, if other intereſts and connections had not concurred with the prejudices of a firſt and foreign education to leſſen their influence. Happy thoſe kings who have Sullys for their guides! and happy thoſe guides who have ſuch kings as a Henry IV. of France for their pupils!

Before we quit this period, in which lord Cheſterfield made his firſt appearance in the world, both as a ſenator and courtier, it will not be improper to take

1727. take a ſhort ſurvey of his talents, and of the opportunities he had, as well as of the means he employed, to improve them.

Genius is certainly not confined to place or time. Bountiful heaven has ſcattered it over the whole world, and, as far as we know, in proportions not very unequal. But the exertions of genius, and eſpecially its application to any particular object, ſeem rather to depend on circumſtances. Eloquence, which in this iſland, as in all free ſtates, opens the readieſt way to honors, is never in greater eſtimation, nor employed with more ſucceſs, than in thoſe critical times, when the higheſt intereſts become ſubjects of debate, and diſputes run leſs on the good of the ſtate than on its preſervation. It is with orators as with warriors; their numbers are increaſed in thoſe times when they become moſt neceſſary; and an age of dangers, difficulties, and ſtruggles, never fails of producing both.

This was evinced in the period which immediately ſucceeded the reign of queen Ann. A diſputed title, a foreign prince, two oppoſite factions violently exaſperated, and reſolutely bent on each other's deſtruction; invaſions from without (23), open (24) and ſecret conſpiracies within (25), an unſettled peace, a treaſury exhauſted, and the apprehenſions of a national bankruptcy (26); was the ſtate of the nation during the life of George I. His good ſenſe, knowledge of the intereſts of Europe, and (notwithſtanding what the pen of party, or even lord Cheſterfield, may have advanced to the contrary) his foreſight and activity, ſupported and firmly eſtabliſhed a throne raiſed on an unſtable foundation; and through his management the Britiſh crown was fixed upon his head by that power which had

had been moſt intereſted, as well as induſtrious, in endeavouring to deprive him of it (27). 1727.

To a man of moderate abilities, it might have ſufficed to have yielded to the impulſe of the times; but lord Cheſterfield was not contented to glide paſſively along with the ſtream. Many circumſtances enabled him to take a more active part; and he neglected none of the advantages, which fortune threw in his way. Born with a ſpirit of obſervation, he from his youth had remarkable opportunities of obſerving great men. The reſtoration and the revolution were both under his eyes. The principal actors in the buſy ſcenes of the preceding century were ſtill living. If he had not the happineſs of being informed and directed by his grand-father, Halifax, he was at leaſt introduced very early into the company of Halifax's rivals, as well as into that of his friends. Danby and Montagu, inveterate enemies under Charles II, whoſe ſchemes they had by turns encouraged and defeated, were now ſafely arrived in port. Free from thoſe tumultuous paſſions, which had ſo long kept them at variance, they daily met, like friends, at the houſe of lady Halifax; as the elder African's brother, and old Cato, may be ſuppoſed to have done at the houſe of the mother of the Gracchi (28). Under their eyes, the young eagle was made to try his wings, in order one day to ſoar above their reach.

Models of eloquence of all kinds were equally ſet before him. In the lower houſe, which he had juſt quitted, he had heard, and ſometimes borne a part in thoſe animated debates, in which Shippen, Wyndham, and Bromley, made a vigorous, though unſucceſsful, ſtand againſt thoſe whom they had formerly defeated. Walpole and Pulteney, united as they had been by party and by common danger, ſeparated

1727. ſeparated as ſoon as they were victorious. Walpole, born for buſineſs, indefatigable in labor, and ſupported by a powerful influence (39), was a clear, as well as artful, ſpeaker; and his cotemporaries allowed him to be at once the beſt parliament-man, and the fitteſt to take the lead in the houſe. Pulteney, by nature formed for ſocial and convivial pleaſures, excited by reſentment to engage in buſineſs, and raiſed by art to be the idol of the people, united all the qualities of a complete orator. He was florid, entertaining, perſuaſive, pathetic, and ſublime, as occaſions required. The firſt, equally maſter of his ſubject and of himſelf, appeared conſtantly calm, quickly diſcovered the diſpoſition of his hearers, and, never unprepared himſelf, knew equally when to preſs and when to recede: the ſecond, whoſe breaſt was the ſeat of ever-contending paſſions, with arguments, wit, and even tears at command, bore down all oppoſition, and ſometimes awakened the ſenſibility of thoſe whom he could not convert. Theſe two great men, ſo different in their manner, deſerved to be ſtudied, though not to be implicitly followed, by ſuch an original genius as lord Cheſterfield.

The upper houſe was no leſs fertile in great characters fit to attract his obſervation. Sommers indeed was then no more (30); but Cowper ſtill diſtinguiſhed himſelf by ſuperior powers of elocution (31). Harley ſtill ſpoke, and ſometimes ſtill with dignity (32). But, above all, lord Bolingbroke, whom lord Cheſterfield heard in his youth, had made the ſtrongeſt impreſſions upon him (33). Among the perſons, who ſucceeded to theſe eminent ſpeakers, ſeveral would have appeared with greater advantages, if the qualities of their hearts had equalled thoſe of their heads. The unprincipled

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and unthinking duke of Wharton disgraced the fin- 1727.
est parts and best education by the bad use he made of both; and, with the capacity of a Tully, became, like Clodius, a profligate and wretched incendiary (34). The restless bishop of Rochester, disappointed in his hopes of a primacy (35), with superior abilities, a classical purity of language, and an austere dignity of action, stood forth the champion of a constitution which he attempted to subvert (36), and of a church whose principles he possibly disbelieved (37). Human nature, degraded by these instances of the abuse that may be made of her gifts, seemed to recover her dignity in some men of great, though very different, merit. Slow in his parts, rough in his manner, impatient of contradiction, the humane, generous, and benevolent, lord Townshend, was inelegant in his language, often perplexed in his arguments; but always spoke sensibly, and with a thorough knowledge of the subject.

John, duke of Argyle, discovered the man of quality in all his discourses, no less than in all his actions: he was a most pleasing speaker, though perhaps not the closest reasoner; and, being himself moved, he warmed, he charmed, he ravished the audience (38). A happy mixture of the two preceding characters was found in lord Carteret. Master of ancient as well as modern languages, this great imitator of Demosthenes (39) possessed a most uncommon share of learning, and had made the laws of his own and of other countries his particular study. His political knowledge of the interests of princes and of commerce was extensive; his notions were great, perhaps not always just. As a speaker, he had a wonderful quickness and precision in seizing the weak and strong side of a question, which no art or sophistry could disguise to him; and his talents

1727. talents in the argumentative were not inferior to thoſe in the declamatory way. Lord Scarborough was a ſtrong, though not an eloquent or florid ſpeaker in parliament; his diſcourſes were the honeſt dictates of his heart. Truth and virtue ſeemed to borrow his voice, and give ſuch weight to all he ſaid, that he more than once carried an unwilling majority after him. The ſame thing may be ſaid of a nobleman cotemporary with thoſe I juſt now named; who, ſtill living, preſerves in the moſt advanced age that vigor and preſence of mind which diſtinguiſhed all his life, and will be remembered by poſterity with that reverence which is due to great honor and great truth [40]. Many other characters might be ſketched, and ſome will come in courſe in a ſubſequent period; but theſe may be ſufficient to give ſome idea of the eloquence of thoſe times. Beſides, I am ſenſible how unequal I am to ſuch ſketches, fitter for the maſterly hand of him whoſe picture I am attempting to draw.

Lord Cheſterfield's eloquence, though the fruit of ſtudy and imitation, was in great meaſure his own. Equal to moſt of his cotemporaries in elegance and perſpicuity, perhaps ſurpaſſed by ſome in extenſiveneſs and ſtrength, he could have no competitors in choice of imagery, taſte, urbanity, and graceful irony. This turn might originally have riſen from the delicacy of his frame, which, as on one hand it deprived him of the power of working forcibly upon the paſſions of his hearers, enabled him on the other to affect their finer ſenſations by nice touches of raillery and humor. His ſtrokes, however poignant, were always under the controul of decency and ſenſe. He reaſoned beſt, when he appeared moſt witty; and, while he gained the affections of his hearers,

hearers, he turned the laugh on his oppoſers, and often forced them to join in it [41]. 1727.

It might, in ſome degree, be owing to this particular turn that our nobleman was not heard with ſo much applauſe in the lower as in the upper houſe. Refined wit and delicate irony are often loſt in popular and numerous aſſemblies. Strength, either of argument or voice, a flow of pompous words, and a continual appeal to the paſſions, are in ſuch places the beſt arms to ſupport a good cauſe or to defend a bad one. The caſe is very different in the houſe of peers. Minds caſt in a finer mould, affect to deſpiſe what they ſtyle the vulgar arts; and, raiſed equally above fears and feelings, can only be affected by wit and ridicule, and love to find ſome of that elegant urbanity and convivial pleaſantry which charms them in private life.

Of all the modes of eloquence this ſeems to be the moſt difficult. As it cannot be practiſed without great variety, and is above the reach of moderate parts, it conſtantly ſtands in need of encouragements and aſſiſtance. A man of letters, not deſtitute of abilities and imagination, may in his ſtudy, by conſtant application to the works of the great orators of Athens and of Rome, acquire the knack (for often it is not much more [42]) of ſtriking his hearers with terror, of inflaming them with indignation, or of melting them into ſoftneſs and tears [43]. But the art of managing irony and pleaſantry with advantage is a peculiar gift, and requires a conſtant intercourſe with people of faſhion and men of wit. Lord Cheſterfield was early [44] acquainted with thoſe, who in his time deſervedly enjoyed the moſt diſtinguiſhed reputation; and he ſomewhere mentions to his ſon his happineſs, in having been introduced to theſe great men, notwithſtanding his inferiority

1727. riority of age. Among his friends, were Mr. Addiſon, ſir John Van Brugh [45], Dr. Garth, and Dr. Arbuthnot [47], Mr. Gay [48], Mr. Pope [49], and ſeveral more. Though the laſt of theſe great writers ſeemed in public converſation continually afraid that the man ſhould degrade the poet, and did not eaſily familiariſe himſelf with thoſe who wiſhed to procure an intimacy with him; yet he very ſoon attached himſelf to lord Cheſterfield, admitted him in his private parties, and was particularly deſirous of enjoying his company in his retirement at Twickenham. There he made himſelf moſt agreeable to thoſe whom he thus diſtinguiſhed. The wit and taſte of our Engliſh nobleman was not a little improved by this intimate intercourſe, in which he had opportunities likewiſe to obſerve the Engliſh bard's charitable diſpoſition, and natural benevolence of mind, notwithſtanding the load of infirmities which in ſome degree contributed to whet the edge of his ſatire, and induced him to treat without mercy thoſe who aſſumed any kind of ſuperiority over, or happened to offend, him.

It may eaſily be conceived that a ſociety, compoſed of ſuch men, muſt have been to the higheſt degree entertaining and inſtructive. It was ſo eſteemed; and is ſo ſpoken of by thoſe who had the honor of being admitted into it. At Mr. Pope's garden at Twickenham, eſpecially, the flower of the nobility met without any pageantry of ſtate, jealouſy of party, or diſtinction of ſect [50]. Amongſt theſe were, Cobham, Bathurſt, Queenſbury, Pulteney, Orrery, Lyttleton, Marchmont, Murray, names ſacred in the annals of their country, and immortaliſed by the poet they loved. The head and the heart were both improved by ſuch a familiar intercourſe of true greatneſs and genius. To theſe eminent

nent judges, as well as patrons of wit, the young author submitted his firſt eſſays, and received encouragement and advice. By their aſſiſtance and credit the veteran poet was often relieved, and ſometimes ſupported againſt the frowns of courts, and under the preſſure of old age and of want [49]. Sentiments of benevolence and generoſity were impreſſed upon the ſoul of him, whom pride was likely to miſlead, or avarice to corrupt. Such were the friends, whom lord Cheſterfield was ſo happy to be connected with; in their company, and by their joint aſſiſtance and encouragement, Pope ſketched his ethic epiſtles, which point out to man his grandeur and his weakneſs; and his immortal ſatires, which, in this iſland, have moſt ſeaſonably ſtopped the progreſs of pedantry and falſe taſte. 1727.

Swift ſeems to have been much leſs intimate with our earl, though he attempted to become ſo [50]. Perhaps it were to be wiſhed that lord Cheſterfield had maintained the ſame reſerve with lord Bolingbroke; but lord Bolingbroke was not to be reſiſted. In that extraordinary man, nature ſeems to have blended two different and oppoſite ſouls; and he might have been the greateſt character of his, or of any age, if, in many reſpects, he had not ſhewn himſelf the weakeſt [51]. Lord Cheſterfield's acquaintance with Bolingbroke commenced long before the great oppoſition to ſir Robert Walpole, and perhaps was begun at Paris. One reaſon of this connection was certainly, that much could be learned from him, particularly with regard to public affairs; and, though the earl by no means adopted either his political or religious principles in their full extent, he continued in great intimacy with him to his death. I have been told, that king George I. who owned himſelf under great obligations to lord Bolingbroke,

1727. intended, if he had lived to return to England, to have made him prime miniſter; and I ſhould believe this intelligence ſufficiently well-grounded [52], if, on the other hand, no leſs reſpectable authorities did not oblige me to ſuſpend my judgment on this point [53]. Poſterity will, perhaps, continue ſome time in the ſame ſtate of indeciſion.

Several foreigners, who have ſince made a ſhining figure in the republic of letters, viſited England during this period, and formed intimate connections with our earl. Some of the principal were Algarotti, the happy imitator of Fontenelle [54], Monteſquieu, and Voltaire. The author of the Perſian letters ſpent two years in this country, the beſt part of which were taken up in ſtudying that admirable conſtitution he was ſo fond of, and has ſo well deſcribed. He could not derive his informations from better authority than lord Cheſterfield. It is ſaid that Monteſquieu, in mixt companies, did not appear equal to the idea conceived of him; but he is univerſally allowed to have been moſt amiable, ſprightly, and univerſal, in ſelect ſocieties. Such a man could not fail to pleaſe; and, having once pleaſed, ſoon to become the friend of lord Cheſterfield. We find accordingly that they kept up a regular correſpondence, which only ended with Monteſquieu's life.

The young author of the Henriade came into England a few years before, with a view to publiſh his poem; and, at the ſame time, to improve his knowledge and his taſte. The patronage of the princeſs of Wales, afterwards queen Caroline [55], was procured by lord Cheſterfield, one of the beſt judges of ſuch a poem, and of the ſame age with the writer [56]. And, indeed, theſe conſiderations

ſeem

ſeem ſomewhat to have influenced his judgment, both of the poem and of the man. 1727.

It would be a matter of aſtoniſhment, if human nature did not afford numerous inſtances of ſimilar inconſiſtencies, to find that the ſame man, who was ſo delicate and ſo happy in the choice of his ſocieties, ſhould have ſhewn himſelf ſo defective in that of his amuſements. We wiſh it were poſſible to ſuppreſs this article; but, if the principal merit of a picture conſiſts in repreſenting faithfully its original, we cannot omit the ſhades occaſioned by his lordſhip's immoderate attachment to pleaſure, and particularly to gaming. This laſt paſſion, the leaſt excuſable of all, eſpecially when not foſtered by want, or accompanied with ſkill, was in every period of his life equally detrimental to his character and fortune [57]. It engaged him every night in the company of people, with whom he would have been aſhamed to have been ſeen at any other time. He knew, and deſpiſed, yet could not ſhun, them [58]. Crouds flocked round the gaming table, to enjoy ſo unequal a ſtrife; in which, while his pocket was picked, the applauſe, which the repeated flaſhes of his wit drew from all around, ſeemed to make him abundant amends for his loſſes [59].

Having thus deſcribed lord Cheſterfield's preparations for his political career, we ſhall now endeavour to give the beſt account we can of him in this new ſcene. But, on ſeeing him launch forth from a life ſpent in polite ſtudies, elegant converſation, eaſe and pleaſure, to one of labor, difficulties and dangers; we experience the ſame feelings, which would be raiſed by the ſight of a friend embarking, in order to purſue, upon uncertain ſeas, and in unexplored countries, that fortune and honor, which heaven gave, and he leaves behind him. Our admiration

1727. miration of his courage can only be equalled by our anxiety for his ſafety; and, while from the ſhore we follow him as far as our eyes are able to reach, we cannot help expreſſing our earneſt wiſh, that he may be reſtored to us not much the worſe for ſo perilous a voyage.

SECTION

Maurd ec.