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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

A World Extraordinary

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A

W O R L D
E X T R A O R D I N A R Y.

* The following Paper having been transmitted to Mr. FITZ-ADAM's Bookseller on the very Day of that Gentleman's Misfortune, he takes the Liberty to offer it to the Public just as it came to his Hand.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

S I R,

AS the contagion of politics has been so prevalent of late, that it has even (I won't say, infected, but at least) infused itself into the † papers of the impartial Mr. Fitz-Adam, perhaps I may not make him an unacceptable present in the following piece, which will humour the bent of his disorder (for I must consider political writings as a distemper), and at the same time will cool, not increase, any sharpness in his blood.

Though the author of this little essay is retired from the busier scenes of life, he has not buried himself in such indifference to his country, as to despise, or not attend to, what is passing even in those scenes he has quitted; and having withdrawn from inclination, not from disgust, he preserves the same attachments that he formerly made, though contracted even then from

* It was published after The World had ceased, on the supposed death of the imaginary author.

† This alludes to N^o 207, which under bor-

rowed characters describes a revolution in the ministry, very favourably to the duke of Newcastle, and not at all so to Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt. esteem,

esteem, not from interest. He sees with a feeling concern the distresses and distractions of his country; he foresees with anxiety the consequences of both. He laments the discord that divides those * men of superior genius, whose union, with all their abilities, were perhaps inadequate to the crisis of our affairs. He does not presume to discuss the grounds of their dissensions, which he wishes themselves to overlook; and he would be one of the last men in England to foment division, where his interest as a Briton, and his private inclinations as a man, bid him hope for coalition. Yet he would not be a man, he might be a stoic, if even these inclinations were equally balanced: his admiration may be suspended, his heart will be partial. From these sensations he has been naturally led to lament and condemn the late torrent of personalities: he sees with grief the greatest characters treated with the greatest licentiousness: his friendship has been touched at finding one of the most respectable aspersed in the most injurious manner. He holds That person's fame as much superior to reproach, as he thinks himself inferior to That person's defence; and yet he cannot help giving his testimony to the reputation of a man, with whose friendship he has long been honoured. This ambition, sir, has occasioned my troubling you with the following portrait, written eight years ago; designed then as private incense to an honoured name; and ever since preserved by the author only, and in the fair hands to which it was originally addressed. I will detain you no longer than to say, that if this little piece should be accused of flattery, let it be remembered, that it was written when the subject of it was no minister of state, and that it is published now (and should not else have been published) when he is no minister at all.

I am, sir,

Your humble servant,

H. M.

* Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt.

To.

To the RIGHT HONOURABLE

LADY CAROLINE FOX.

M A D A M,

I HAVE been attempting to draw a picture of one of your friends, and I think I have in some degree succeeded; but as I fear natural partiality may make me flatter myself, I choose to submit to your ladyship's judgment, whose prepossession for the person represented is likely to balance what fondness I may have for my own performance. As I believe you love the person in question, as much as ever other people loved themselves, the medium between the faults you shall find, and the just resemblance that I see in the following portrait, is likely to be an exact image.

The gentleman I am drawing is about * three-and-forty: as you see all the fondness and delicacy and attention of a lover in him, perhaps your ladyship may take him to be but three-and-twenty: but I, whose talent is not flattery, and who from his judgment and experience and authority should at first set him down for threescore, upon the strictest enquiry can only allow him to be in the vigour of his age and understanding. His person decides rather on my side; for though he has all the ease and amiableness of youth, yet your ladyship must allow that it has a dignity, which youth might aim at in vain, and for which it will scarce ever be exchanged. If I were like common painters, I should give him a ruddy healthful complexion, and light up his countenance with insipid smiles and unmeaning benignity: but this would not be a faithful portrait: a florid bloom would no more give an idea of him, than his bended brow at first lets one into the vast humanity of his temper; or than an undistinguishing smile would supply the place of his manly curiosity and penetration. To paint him with a cheerful open countenance would be a poor return of compliment for the flattery that his approbation bestows, which, by not being promised, doubly satisfies one's self-love. The merit of others is degrading to their friends; the gentleman I mean makes his worth open upon you, by persuading you that he discovers some in you.

* This was written in the year 1748.

He

He has that true characteristic of a great man, that he is superior to others in his private, social, unbended hours. I am far from meaning by this superiority, that he exerts the force of his genius unnecessarily: on the contrary, you only perceive his prehemine in those moments by his being more agreeably good-natured, and idle with more ease, than other people. He seems inquisitive, as if his only business were to learn; and is unreserved, as if he were only to inform; and is equally incapable of mystery in pretending to know what he does not, or in concealing what he does.

In the house of commons he was for some time an ungraceful and unpopular speaker, the abundance of his matter overflowing his elocution: but the force of his reasoning has prevailed both over his own defects and those of his audience. He speaks with a strength and perspicuity of argument that commands the admiration of an age apt to be more cheaply pleased. But his vanity cannot satisfy itself on the terms it could satisfy others; nor would he thank any man for his approbation, unless he was conscious of deserving it. But he carries this delicacy still farther, and has been at the idle labour of making himself fame and honours by pursuing a regular and steady plan, when art and eloquence would have carried him to an equal height, and made those fear him, who now only love him—if a party can love a man who they see is only connected with them by principles, not by prejudices.

In another light one may discover another littleness in his conduct: in the affairs of his office* he is as minute and as full of application as if he were always to remain in the same post; and as exact and knowing as if he always had been in it. He is as attentive to the solicitation and interests of others in his province, as if he were making their fortune, not his own; and, to the great detriment of the ministry, has turned one of the best sinecures under the government into one of the most laborious employments, at the same time imagining that the ease with which he executes it will prevent a discovery of the innovation. He receives all officers who address to him, with as little pride as if he were secure of innate nobility; yet this defect of illustrious birth is a blemish, which some of the greatest men have wanted to make them completely great: Tully had it; had the happiness and glory of raising himself from a private condition; but boasting of it, might as well

* Secretary of war.

have been noble: he degraded himself by usurping that prerogative of nobility, pride of what one can neither cause nor prevent.

I say nothing of his integrity, because I know nothing of it, but that it has never been breathed upon even by suspicion: it will be time enough to vindicate it, when it has been impeached. He is as well-bred as those who colour over timidity with gentleness of manners, and as bravely sincere as those who take, or would have brutality taken for honesty: but though his greatest freedom is polite, his greatest condescension is dignified with spirit; and he can no more court his enemies, than relax in kindness to his friends. Yet though he has more spirit than almost any man living, it is never looked upon as flowing from his passions, by the intimate connection that it always preserves with his understanding. Yet his passions are very strong: he loves play, women more, and one woman more than all. The amiableness of his behaviour to her, is only equalled by hers to him.—But as your ladyship would not know a picture of this charming woman, when drawn with all her proper graceful virtues; and as that engaging ignorance might lead you even into an uncertainty about the portrait of the gentleman, I shall lay down my pencil, and am,

MADAM,

Your LADYSHIP'S

most obedient

humble servant,

VANDYKE.

The