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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

Advertisement to Lord Whitworth's Account of Russia

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TO

LORD WHITWORTH'S

*ACCOUNT OF RUSSIA,

As it was in the YEAR 1710.

THE following short but curious account of the Russian Empire, as it began to emerge from barbarism in the year 1710, cannot but be acceptable to the public from the curiosity of the subject, and from the merit of the performance. Lord Moleworth's Account of the Revolution in Denmark, which totally overturned the constitution of that country, is one of our standard books. Lord Whitworth's little treatise will throw considerable lights upon the formation of the Muscovite power, and upon the plans of that extraordinary genius, Peter the Great. Each author shows what lasting benefits ambassadors and foreign ministers might confer on mankind, beyond the temporary utility of negotiating and sending intelligence.

Our author, Charles lord Whitworth, was son of Richard Whitworth, esq. of Blowerpipe in Staffordshire, who, about the time of the revolution, had settled at Adbaston. He married Anne Mosely, niece of sir Oswald Mosely of Cheshire, by whom he had six sons and a daughter. Charles; Richard, lieutenant-colonel of the queen's own royal regiment of horse; Edward, captain of a man of war; Gerard, one of the chaplains to king George the

* Printed at Strawberry-hill.

first;

first; John, captain of dragoons; Francis, surveyor-general of his majesty's woods, and secretary to the island of Barbadoes, father of Charles Whitworth, esq. member in the present parliament for Minehead in Staffordshire; and Anne, married to Tracey Pauncefort, esq. of Lincolnshire.

Charles, the eldest son, was bred under that accomplished minister and poet, Mr. Steyne, and having attended him through several courts of Germany, was in the year 1702 appointed resident at the diet of Ratisbon. In 1704 he was named envoy extraordinary to the court of Petersburg, as he was sent ambassador extraordinary thither on a more solemn and extraordinary occasion in 1710. M. de Matueof, the czar's minister at London, had been arrested in the public street by two bailiffs, at the suit of some tradesmen to whom he was in debt. This affront had like to have been attended with very serious consequences. The czar, who had been absolute enough to civilize savages, had no idea, could conceive none, of the privileges of a nation civilized in the only rational manner, by laws and liberties. He demanded immediate and severe punishment of the offenders: he demanded it of a princess, whom he thought interested to assert the sacredness of the persons of monarchs, even in their representatives; and he demanded it with threats of wreaking his vengeance on all English merchants and subjects established in his dominions. In this light the menace was formidable—otherwise, happily the rights of a whole people were more sacred *here* than the persons of foreign ministers. The czar's memorials urged the queen with the satisfaction which she had extorted herself, when only the boat and servants of the earl of Manchester had been insulted at Venice. That state had broken through their fundamental laws to content the queen of Great Britain. How noble a picture of government, when a monarch that can force another nation to infringe its constitution, dares not violate his own! One may imagine with what difficulties our secretaries of state must have laboured through all the ambages of phrase in English, French, German, and Rufs, to explain to Muscovite ears and Muscovite understandings, the meaning of indictments, pleadings, precedents, juries, and verdicts*; and how impatiently Peter must have listened to promises of a hearing next term!

* Mr. Dayrolles in his letter to the Russian ambassador, March 10, 1705, gives him a particular account of the trial before the lord chief justice Holt.

Vide Matthey's Life of Peter I. vol. ii. p. 57.

With

With what astonishment must he have beheld a great queen engaging to endeavour to prevail on her parliament to pass an act to prevent any such outrage for the future! What honour does it reflect on the memory of that princess, to see her not blush to own to an arbitrary emperor, that even to appease *him* she dared not put the meanest of her subjects to death uncondemned by law! "There are," says she*, in one of her dispatches to him, "insuperable difficulties with respect to the ancient and fundamental laws of the government of our people, which we fear do not *permit* so severe and rigorous a sentence to be given, as your Imperial Majesty at first seemed to expect in this case: and we persuade our Self, that your Imperial Majesty, who are a prince famous for clemency and for exact justice, will not require us, *who are the guardian and protectors of the laws*, to inflict a punishment upon our subjects, which the law does not empower us to do." Words so venerable and heroic, that this broil ought to become history, and be exempted from the oblivion due to the silly squabbles of ambassadors and their privileges. If Anne deserved praise for her conduct on this occasion, it reflects still greater glory on Peter, that this ferocious man *had* patience to listen to these details, and had moderation and justice enough to be persuaded by the reason of them.

Mr. Whitworth had the honour of terminating this quarrel. In 1714 he was appointed plenipotentiary to the diet of Aushourg and Ratisbon; in 1716, envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the king of Prussia; in 1717, envoy extraordinary to the Hague. In 1712 he returned in his former character to Berlin; and in 1721 king George I. rewarded his long services and fatigues, by creating him baron Whitworth of Galway in the kingdom of Ireland, the preamble of his patent, enumerating many of his virtues and labours, being as follows:

CUM alii homines re aliâ clari inclytique sese Nobis commendaverint, haud minorem tamen vel sibimet gloriam acquirere, vel Regnis nostris utilitatem conferre eos existimamus, qui res nostras apud principes statusque externos prudenter feliciterque administrant. Inter hosce quidem eminent plurimum tum longinquo usu atque exercitatione, tum solertiâ quadam singulari fidelis & dilectus nobis Carolus Whitworth Armiger. Variis in aulis externis perfunctis muneri-

* Mottley's Life of Peter I. vol. ii. p. 67.

bus sese antecessoribus nostris glorioſæ memoriæ, Gulielmo Tertio Regi, Reginaeque Annæ perſpectum imprimis comprobatumque reddidit. In Comitibus Ratiſbonenſibus, in Aula Cæſareo-Germanicâ, atque apud Czarem Muſcoviæ temporibus difficillimis res maximi momenti ſemper cum laude tractavit, ac meritis ſuis eximiis ſummos honores rerum exterarum curatoribus tribui ſolitos, legati ſcilicet extraordinarii et plenipotentiarii characterem conſecutus eſt. Ita ornatum, ita commendatum nos Eum accepimus, ac proinde ejus operâ in arduis compluribus negotiis tanto cum noſtro commodo tantoque omnium plauſu uſi ſumus, ut teſtimonio aliquo illuſtri ejus virtutes, intemeratam præcipuè fidem et conſtantiam, remunerandas eſſe cenſuerimus; et cum Majeſtatem imperii noſtri deceat, tum rebus tractandis pondus aliquod adjiciat nobilitatis ſplendor atque amplitudo, nos prædictum Carolum Whitworth, quem legati noſtri extraordinarii ac plenipotentiarii titulis inſignivimus ad tractatus pacis in congreſſu Brunſvicenſi proximo celebrandos, qui in Aula Berolinenſi, atque apud Ordines Generales Uniti Belgii, plenâ potentiâ res noſtras procurat, ad dignitatem gradumque Baronis in Regno noſtro Hiberniæ promovendum eſſe ſtatimus: Sciatis igitur, &c.

The next year his lordſhip was entrusted with the affairs of Great Britain at the congreſs of Cambray, in the character of embaſſador extraordinary and plenipotentary. He returned home in 1724, and died the next year at his houſe in Gerard-ſtreet, London. His body was interred in Weſtminſter-abbey.

Theſe ſhort memorials, communicated to me by his family without any oſtentation, are all I have been able to recover of a man ſo uſeful to his country; who beſides the following little piece, which muſt retrieve and preſerve his character from oblivion, has left many volumes of ſtate-letters and papers in the poſſeſſion of his relations. One little anecdote of him I was told by the late ſir Luke Schaub, who had it from himſelf: Lord Whitworth had had a personal intimacy with the famous czarina Catherine, at a time when her favours were not purchaſed nor rewarded at ſo extravagant a rate as that of a diadem. When he had compromiſed the rupture between the court of England and the czar, he was invited to a ball at court, and taken out to dance by the czarina. As they began the minuet, ſhe ſqueezed him by the hand, and ſaid in a whiſper, *Have you forgot little Kate?*

It

It is to be lamented that so agreeable a writer as lord Whitworth has not left us more ample accounts of this memorable woman. Even his portrait of her lord is not detailed enough to satisfy our curiosity. How striking a picture might an author of genius form from the contrast exhibited to Europe by four extraordinary men at the same period! Peter recalled that image of the founders of empires, of whom we read with much satisfaction and much incredulity in ancient story:—Charles the twelfth, of those frantic heroes of poesy, of whom we read with perhaps more satisfaction and no credulity at all. Romulus and Achilles filled half our gazettes, while Lewis the fourteenth was treading to universal monarchy with all the pomp and policy of these latter ages. William the third was opposing this modern Xerxes with the same arts; and (with perhaps a little of Charles's jealousy) had the good fortune to have his quarrel confounded with that of Europe. While Peter tamed his savages, raised cities, invited arts, converted forests into fleets, Charles was trying to recall the improvements of war to its first principle, brutal strength; fancying that the weight of the Turkish empire was to be overturned by a single arm, and that heroic obstinacy might be a counterpoise to gunpowder.

A philosopher in these four men saw at once the great outlines of what the world had been, and what it is.

Lord Whitworth's MS. was communicated to me by Richard Owen Cambridge, esq. having been purchased by him in a very curious set of books, collected by monsieur Zolman, secretary to the late Stephen Poyntz, esq. This little library relates solely to Russian history and affairs, and contains in many languages every thing that perhaps has been written on that country. Mr. Cambridge's known benevolence, and his disposition to encourage every useful undertaking, has made him willing to throw open this magazine of curiosity to whoever is inclined to compile a history or elucidate the transactions of an empire, almost unknown even to its cotemporaries.