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**The Works Of the late Right Honorable Henry St. John,
Lord Viscount Bolingbroke**

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Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

London, 1754

Of the state of Parties at the accession of king George the first.

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OF THE
STATE of PARTIES

At the ACCESSION of

King GEORGE the First.

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At the Accession of

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OF THE
S T A T E of P A R T I E S

A T T H E

Accession of King G E O R G E the First.

I PERCEIVE by yours that my discourse of the character and conduct of a PATRIOT KING, in that article which relates to party, has not entirely satisfied your expectations. You expected, from some things that I remember to have said to you in conversation, and others that have fallen on that occasion from my pen, a more particular application of those general reasonings to the present time, and to the state of parties, from the late king's accession to the throne. The subject is delicate enough, and yet I shall speak upon it what truth exacts from me, with the utmost frankness: for I know all our parties too well, to esteem any; and I am too old, and too resigned to my fate, to want, or to fear any.

WHATEVER anecdotes you have been told, for you are too young to have seen the passages of the times I am going to mention, and whatever prepossessions you have had, take these

VOL. III.

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facts for undoubted truths: That there was no design on foot, during the four last years of queen ANNE's reign, to set aside the succession of the house of Hanover, and to place the crown on the head of the pretender to it; nor any party formed for this purpose at the time of the death of that princess, whose memory I honor, and therefore feel a just indignation at the irreverence with which we have seen it treated. If such a design had been on foot, during that time, there were moments when the execution of it would not have been difficult, or dangerous enough, to have stopped men of the most moderate resolution. Neither could a design of that nature have been carried on so long, tho it was not carried into execution, without leaving some traces, which would have appeared when such strict inquisitions were made; when the papers of so many of the queen's servants were seized, and even her own papers, even those she had sealed up to be burnt after her death, were exposed to so much indecent inspection. But, laying aside all arguments of the probable kind, I deny the fact absolutely: and I have the better title to expect credit, because it could not be true without my knowledge, or at least suspicion of it; and because even they who believed it, for all who asserted it did not believe it, had no proof to produce, nor have to this hour, but vain surmises; nor any authority to rest upon, but the clamor of party.

THAT there were particular men, who corresponded indirectly, and directly too, with the pretender, and with others for his service; that these men professed themselves to be zealous in it, and made large promises, and raised some faint hopes, I cannot doubt: tho this was unknown to me at that time, or at least I knew it not with the same certainty, and in the same detail, that I have known it since. But if this
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was done by some who were in the queen's service, it was done too by some who were out of it, and, I think, with little sincerity by either.

It may well seem strange to one who carries in his breast a heart like yours, that men of any rank, and especially of the highest, should hold a conduct so false, so dangerous, always of uncertain event, and often, as it was in the case here mentioned, upon remote contingencies, and such as they themselves think the least probable. Even I think it strange, who have been much longer mingled in a corrupt world, and who have seen many more examples of the folly, of the cunning, and the perfidy of mankind. A great regard to wealth, and a total contempt of virtue, are sentiments very nearly allied: and they must possess the whole souls of men whom they can determine to such infamous duplicity, to such double treachery. In fact they do so. One is so afraid of losing his fortune, that he lays in claims to secure it, perhaps to augment it, on all sides, and to prevent even imaginary dangers. Another values so little the inward testimony of a good conscience, or the future reproaches of those he has deceived, that he scruples not to take engagements, for a time to come, that he has no design to keep; if they may serve as expedients to facilitate, in any small degree, the success of an immediate project. All this was done at the time, on the occasion, and by the persons I intend. But the scheme of defeating the protestant succession was so far from being laid by the queen and her ministers, and such a resolution was so far from being taken, that the very men I speak of, when they were pressed by the other side, that is from Versailles and St. Germain, to be more particular, and to come into a closer concert, declined both, and gave the most evasive answers.

A LITTLE before, or about, the time of the queen's death, some other persons who figured afterwards in the rebellion, entered in good earnest into those engagements, as I believe; for I do not know exactly the date of them. But whenever they took them, they took them as single men. They could answer for no party to back them. They might flatter themselves with hopes and dreams like POMPEY, if little men and little things may be compared with great, of legions ready to rise at the stamp of their feet. But they had no assurance, no nor grounds to expect any troops, except those of the highlands; whose disposition in general was known to every man, but whose insurrection, without the concurrence of other insurrections and other troops, was deemed, even by those that made them take arms afterwards, not a strength but a weakness; ruin to the poor people, and ruin to the cause. In a word, these men were so truly single in their engagements, and their measures were so unripe for action when the resolution of acting immediately was taken by them, that, I am persuaded, they durst not communicate their design to any one man of consequence that served at that time with them. What persuades me of it is this. One man, whom they thought likely to incline to them on several accounts, they attempted indirectly and at a great distance: they came no nearer to the point with him, neither then, that is just before the queen's death, nor afterwards. They had indeed no encouragement to do it; for, upon this hint and another circumstance which fell in, both he and others took several occasions to declare, that tho they would serve the queen faithfully, and exclusively of all other regards or engagements, to her last breath, yet after her decease they would acknowledge the prince on whom the succession devolved by law, and to which they had sworn, and no other. This declaration would have been that of the far greatest number

ber of the same party, and would have been stuck to by them, if the passions and private interests of another party had not prevailed over the true interest of a new family that was going to mount the throne. You may ask me now, and the question will not be at all improper, How it came to pass, if the queen and her ministers had no design to defeat the succession, that so much suspicion of it prevailed, that so great an alarm was taken, and so great a clamor raised? I might answer you very shortly and very truly, By the strange conduct of a first minister, by the contests about the negotiations of the peace, and by the arts of a party.

THE minds of some ministers are like the "sanctum sanctorum" of a temple I have read of somewhere: before it a great curtain was solemnly drawn; within it nothing was to be seen but a confused groupe of mis-shapen, and imperfect forms, heads without bodies, bodies without heads, and the like. To develop the most complicated cases, and to decide in the most doubtful, has been the talent of great ministers: it is that of others to perplex the most simple, and to be puzzled by the plainest. No man was more desirous of power than the minister here intended, and he had a competent share of cunning to wriggle himself into it; but then his part was over, and no man was more at a loss how to employ it. The ends, he proposed to himself, he saw for the most part darkly and indistinctly: and if he saw them a little better, he still made use of means disproportionate to them. That private correspondence with the queen, which produced the change of the ministry in 1710, was begun with him whilst he was secretary of state, and was continued, thro him, during the two years that intervened between his leaving the court, and his return to it. This gave him the sole confidence of the queen, put him more absolutely at the head of the party that came
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into power, and invested him with all the authority that a first minister could have in those days, and before any man could presume to rival, in that rank, and in this kingdom, the rank of the ancient mayors of the palace in France. The Tories, with whom and by whom he had risen, expected much from him. Their expectations were ill answered: and I think that such management as he employed would not have hindered them long from breaking from him, if new things had not fallen in, to engage their whole attention, and to divert their passions.

THE foolish prosecution of SACHEVEREL had carried party-rage to the height, and the late change of the ministry had confirmed it there. These circumstances, and many others relative to them, which I omit, would have made it impossible, if there had been honesty and wisdom enough to desire it, to bring about a coalition of the bulk of the Tories and Whigs at the latter end of this reign: as it had been brought about a few years before under the administration of my lord MARLBOROUGH and my lord GODOLPHIN, who broke it soon, and before it had time to cement, by making such an use of it as I am unable to account for, even at this hour. The two parties were in truth become factions in the strict sense of the word. I was of one, and I own the guilt; which no man of the other would have a good grace to deny. In this respect they were alike; but here was the difference: one was well united, well conducted, and determined to their future, as well as their present objects. Not one of these advantages attended the other. The minister had evidently no bottom to rest his administration upon, but that of the party at the head of which he came into power: if he had rested it there, if he had gained their confidence, instead of creating, even wantonly, if I may say so, a distrust of
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himself in them, it is certain he might have determined them to every national interest during the queen's time, and after her death. But this was above his conception as well as his talents. He meant to keep power as long as he could, by the little arts by which he had got into it: he thought that he should be able to compound for himself in all events, and cared little what became of his party, his mistress, or the nation. That this was the whole of his scheme appeared sufficiently in the course of his administration; was then seen by some; and has been since acknowledged by all people. For this purpose he coaxed and persecuted whigs; he flattered and disappointed tories; and supported, by a thousand little tricks, his tottering administration. To the tory party he held out the peace, as an æra when all they expected should be done for them, and when they should be placed in such fulness of power and such strength of party, "that it would be more the interest of the successor to be well with them, than theirs to be well with him." Such expressions were often used, and others of like import: and, I believe, these oracular speeches were interpreted, as oracles used to be, according as every man's inclinations led him.

THE contests that soon followed, by the violent opposition to the negotiations of peace, did the good hinted at above to the minister, and enabled him to amuse and banter his party a little longer. But they did great, and in some respects, irreparable, mischief to Great Britain, and to all Europe. One part of the mischief they did at home is proper to be mentioned here. They dipped the house of Hanover in our party-quarrels, unseasonably, I presume to think, and impopularly; for tho the contest was maintained by two parties that pretended equally to have the national interest at heart, yet the national interest was so plainly on one side of the question,
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and the other side was so plainly partial, at the expence of this interest, to the emperor, the princes of the empire, and our other allies, that a successor to the crown, who was himself a prince of Germany, should have preserved, in good policy, for this very reason, the appearance at least of some neutrality. The means employed openly to break the queen's measures were indecent and unjustifiable: those employed, secretly, and meditated to be employed, were worse. The ministers of Hanover, whose conduct I may censure the more freely because the late king did not approve it all, took so remarkable a share in the first, that they might be, and they were, suspected of having some in the others. This had a very bad effect, which was improved by men in the two extremes. The whigs desired nothing more than to have it thought that the successor was theirs, if I may repeat an insolent expression which was used at that time: the notion did them honor, and, tho it could give no color, it gave some strength, to their opposition. The Jacobites insinuated industriously the same thing; and represented that the establishment of the house of Hanover would be the establishment of the whig party, and that the interests of Great Britain would be constantly sacrificed to foreign interests, and her wealth drained to support them under that family. I leave you to judge what ingression such exaggerations must find, on such occasion, and in such a ferment. I do not think they determined men to Jacobitism. I know they did not; but I know that they disinclined men from the succession, and made many, who resolved to submit to it, submit to it rather as a necessary evil, than as an eligible good.

THIS was, to the best of my observation and knowledge, the state of one party. An absurd one it was, and the consequences of it were foreseen, foretold, and pressed upon the
minister

minister at the time, but always without effect, and sometimes without any answers. He had some private intrigue for himself at Hanover: so he had at Bar. He was the bubble of one in the end: the pretender was so of the other. But his whole management in the mean time was contrived to keep up a kind of general indetermination in the party about the succession; which made a man of great temper once say to him with passion, that "he believed no other minister, at the head of a powerful party, would not be better at Hanover, if he did not mean to be worse there."

THE state of the other party was this. The whigs had appeared zealous for the protestant succession from the time when king WILLIAM proposed it, after the death of the duke of GLOUCESTER. The tories voted for it then; and the acts that were judged necessary to secure it, some of them at least, were promoted by them. Yet were they not thought, nor did they affect, as the others did, to be thought, extremely fond of it. King WILLIAM did not come into this measure, till he found, upon trial, that there was no other safe and practicable: and the tories had an air of coming into it for no other reason. Besides which, it is certain that there was at that time a much greater leaven of Jacobitism in the tory-lump, than at the time spoken of here.

Now, thus far the whigs acted like a national party, who thought that their religion and liberty could be secured by no other expedient, and therefore adhered to this settlement of the crown with distinguished zeal. But this national party degenerated soon into faction; that is, the national interest became soon a secondary and subservient motive, and the cause of the succession was supported more for the sake of the party or faction, than for the sake of the nation; and with views

that went more directly to the establishment of their own administration, than to a solid settlement of the present royal family. This appeared, evidently enough, to those whom noise and shew could not impose upon, in the latter end of the queen's reign, and plain beyond dispute to all mankind, after her decease. The art of the whigs was to blend, as undistinguishably as they could, all their party-interests with those of the succession: and they made just the same factious use of the supposed danger of it, as the Tories had endeavoured to make, some time before, of the supposed danger of the church. As no man is reputed a friend to christianity beyond the Alpes and the Pyrenées, who does not acknowledge the papal supremacy, so here no man was to be reputed a friend to the protestant succession, who was not ready to acknowledge their supremacy. The interest of the present royal family was, to succeed without opposition and risque, and to come to the throne in a calm. It was the interest of a faction that they should come to it in a storm. Accordingly the whigs were very near putting in execution some of the wildest projects of insurrections and rebellion, under pretence of securing what there was not sufficient disposition, nor any preparation at all made to obstruct. Happily for the public these designs proved abortive. They were too well known to have succeeded; but they might have had, and they would have had, most fatal consequences. The storm, that was not raised to disturb and endanger the late king's accession, was only deferred. To a party, who meant nothing less than engrossing the whole power of the government and the whole wealth of the nation under the successor, a storm, in which every other man should be driven from him, was too necessary, not to be conjured up at any rate; and it was so immediately after the late king's accession. He came to the throne easily, and quietly, and took possession of the kingdom with as little trouble, as

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he could have expected if he had been not only the queen's successor, but her son. The whole nation submitted cheerfully to his government, and the queen's servants discharged the duty of their offices, whilst he continued them in their offices, in such a manner as to merit his approbation. This was signified to some of them, to the secretaries in particular, in the strongest terms, and according to his majesty's express order, before the whole council of state. He might I think, I thought then that he ought, and every man, except the earl of O—D, who believed, or had a mind to make others believe, that his influence would be great in the new reign, expected, that he would have given his principal confidence and the principal power of the administration to the whigs: but it was scarce possible to expect, that he would immediately let loose the whole fury of party, suffer the queen's servants, who had surely been guilty of no crime against him, nor the state, to be so bitterly persecuted; and proscribe in effect every man in the country who did not bear the name of whig. Princes have often forgot, on their accession to a throne, even personal injuries received in party quarrels: and the saying of LEWIS the twelfth of France, in answer to those who would have persuaded him to shew severity to LA TREMOUILLE, is very deservedly famous. "God forbid," said he, "that LEWIS the twelfth should revenge the quarrels of "the duke of Orleans." Other princes, who have fought their way to the throne, have not only exercised clemency, but shewn favor to those who had stood in arms against them: and here again I might quote the example of another king of France, that of HENRY the fourth. But to take an example in our own country, look back to the restoration, consider all that passed from the year 1641 to the year 1660, and then compare the measures that king CHARLES the second was advised to pursue, for the establishment of his government, in the cir-

cumstances of that time, with those which the late king was advised, and prevailed on, against his opinion, inclination, and first resolution, to pursue, in the circumstances I have just mentioned. I leave the conclusion to the candor and good sense of every impartial reader.

To these measures of unexpected violence, alone, it must be ascribed, that the pretender had any party for him of strength sufficient to appear and act. These measures, alone, produced the troubles that followed, and dyed the royal ermines of a prince, no way sanguinary, in blood. I am far from excusing one party, for suffering another to drive them into rebellion. I wish I could forget it myself. But there are two observations on that event, which I cannot refuse myself to make. One is, that the very manner in which this rebellion was begun, shews abundantly that it was a start of passion, a sudden phrensy of men transported by their resentment, and nothing less than the execution of a design long premeditated and prepared. The other is, that few examples are to be found in history, perhaps none, of what happened on this occasion, when the same men, in the same country, and in the compass of the same year, were ready to rise in arms against one prince without any national cause; and then provoked, by the violence of their councils, the opposite faction to rise in actual rebellion against the successor.

THESE are some of the effects of maintaining divisions in a nation, and of governing by faction. I might descend into a detail of many fatal consequences that have followed, from the first false step which was taken, when the present settlement was so avowedly made, on the narrow bottom of party. But I consider that this discourse is growing into length;

that I have had, and shall have occasion to mention some of these consequences elsewhere ; and that your own reflections on what has been said will more than supply what I omit to say in this place. Let me therefore conclude by repeating, that division has caused all the mischief we lament, that union can alone retrieve it, and that a great advance towards this union was the coalition of parties, so happily begun, so successfully carried on, and of late so unaccountably neglected, to say no worse. But let me add, that this union can never be complete, till it become an union of the head with the members, as well as of the members with one another : and that such an union can never be expected till patriotism fills the throne, and faction be banished from the administration.

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